

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

First Congregational Church of Newbury, UCC

Newbury, Vermont

Pastor

Vermont Conference, UCC

February 22, 2024

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*“God is able to provide you with every blessing, so that, having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”
(2 Corinthians 9:8)*

1. POSITION POSTING

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1a. LISTING INFORMATION

Church name: First Congregational Church of Newbury UCC

Street address: 4915 Main St South, Newbury, VT 05051

Supplemental web links: n/a

Additional ecumenical affiliations (e.g. denominations, communions, fellowships):

Conference: Vermont Conference, UCC

Association: Grafton Orange Sullivan Association

UCC Conference Contact Person: Rev. Paul Sangree, Associate Conference Minister
802-728-4999 #5, sangreepucc@gmail.com

Summary Ministry Description:

First Congregational Church of Newbury (FCCN) is at a crossroads. We've lost a large number of older, long-standing members to death in a short period of time. This has coincided with a period of operating without a settled pastor and with pandemic-driven shuttering. So, not surprisingly, we are eager to grow again. Through our experience of creatively filling the pulpit and planning services with members and guests, we've gained strength and confidence in our resiliency and openness to innovation. We are also keenly aware that cooperation and sharing of resources are keys to moving forward. We are ready to embrace the opportunity for a shared ministry with West Newbury Congregational Church (WNCC). We seek an energetic, flexible pastor who would relish the challenge of helping both congregations build on their unique strengths while forging a bond of collaboration.

Photographs:

Sunrise



Fall 2023 Workday



Welcoming 4 New members and Deacons in February 2024



What we value about living in our area:

What always seems to come first to mind is the rural landscape with its river-bottom valley and its scenic hills above. But equally important are small-town relationships; we know our neighbors, we can make a difference by getting involved in local government or community organizations, and we share pride in our town.

Current size of membership:

35 Regular active members plus 2 associate members

Position Title: Pastor of West Newbury Congregational Church & First Congregational Church of Newbury

Position Duration: Settled – a called position intended for longer-term ministry in which the minister moves church membership to the congregation and moves standing to related association.

Compensation Level: Full Time (if part of a cooperative arrangement with West Newbury Congregational Church).

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines? Yes.

1b. SCOPE OF WORK

It is the mutual hope of the First Congregational Church of Newbury (FCCN) and the West Newbury Congregational Church (WNCC) to share a minister. While these are different churches and communities, they share important motivations, needs, and goals. These two churches have a history of sharing occasional special services or programs, such as Maundy Thursday worship. Working with each other in a shared ministry will be new to us. We see this as an opportunity to preserve and strengthen us both. Both churches are committed to overcoming any logistical or practical obstacles such as times of service. We are also currently exploring ways for various church committees to work together in order to simplify the work and schedule of a shared minister as well as to avoid unnecessary duplication of roles between our two churches.

Our goal is to see our two churches thrive and grow. We are looking for help to maintain a place for them in the community so they can serve its people and its institutions. We want to see our contribution to our world flourish, locally and beyond. The prospect of our two churches working more closely together is exciting, and it would be a blessing to have a shared pastor who serves as a common thread for our greater community.

Our minister should be prepared to write and give meaningful sermons, make visitations, engage with the wider community, and provide accessibility for spiritual counseling.

- Open to sharing pulpit, collaborating.
- Good speaker
- A person who can be flexible to deal with the unexpected things that might come up.
- Dedicated to the church community.
- Deep thinker
- Well-read
- People person
- Embraces rural life with both its joys and challenges.
- Adept at Bible studies
- Prioritizes music, engages it.
- Kind, compassionate, open and affirming
- Comfortable with technology

Core Competencies:

1. Friendly and cheerful with a good sense of humor
2. Able to actively listen and effectively communicate.
3. Visionary

1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

Salary Basis: \$

Benefits: Salary plus benefits.

Expected living situation for your next minister:

WNCC parsonage can be available. FCCN will contribute to that expense.

Residential/commuting expectations for your next minister:

We feel it is important for our minister to live in our community, whether in the parsonage or other housing of the minister's choosing.

Describe peer and professional support(s) available for ministers in your association/conference:

Grafton Orange Sullivan Association (resource & information sharing and support for pastors and congregations in our area of VT and NH)

Weekly Clergy Support on Zoom from the Conference staff and clergy colleagues

1d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

Our ministry goals we envision for our next minister co-collaborating with the congregation to achieve:

We seek a minister who will enthusiastically help us to support our aging members and seniors in the greater community with visits, calls, and pastoral counseling. A second priority for us is outreach to families with children. Our village school is nearby, and the town has a youth recreation department; there are untapped opportunities for connections. We are mindful that the Vermont population is increasingly unchurched. We look forward to discovering new ways in which our church can serve the world we inhabit. Finally, although our membership voted unanimously to educate itself on becoming an Open and Affirming church, we will welcome pastoral leadership in this effort.

Describe how your vision of the minister you are now seeking will assist the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls:

The Greenspace which our church created next to the vestry represents an example of how the church can spark community-minded efforts and partner with neighbors in the process. There is tremendous

potential for expanded use of the Greenspace. That project can also serve as a model for envisioning and implementing other good works.

For many years, our church has operated the Mustard Seed Thrift Shop in the former parsonage. This shop provides part-time employment for one staff person and volunteer opportunities for many others. In addition to providing low-cost goods, free items in emergencies, and an important outlet for community donations, The Mustard Seed makes annual charitable and scholarship awards. There are other, yet-to-be-imagined possibilities for increasing the impact of this mission.

Traditionally, our church has participated in UCC missions *One Great Hour of Sharing*, *Neighbors in Need*, and *Church World Service*. Recently, we have been considering how to expand the appeal for these drives beyond our immediate congregation.

Specify language requirements or culturally specific capacities preferred in a next ministerial leader, and why those matter to the congregation's sense of calling:

Experience with the UCC Open and Affirming position and process.

Based on what you have learned about who your church is, who your church's neighbor is, and who God is calling the church to become, describe four areas of excellence from *The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry* that your next minister will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas:

Caring for Others -

Our church has consistently identified this as a priority. We want to do a better job supporting elder members in our congregation and in the community, and we know that our future growth depends on making better connections with families and young people.

Building Transformational Leadership Skills -

We will welcome guidance in further discerning our mission as a church and in building healthier conflict-resolution strategies.

Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets -

Despite being quite monocultural, our congregation includes a wide spiritual spectrum. We see this as a strength, but one that needs nurturing and expanding.

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practices -

Many in our congregation will look to the pastor for a deepening understanding of our faith traditions and support in our faith journeys.

2. WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37 NRSV)

1. Become a more community-oriented place:

- Build an offering of programs, projects, events and meals that are freely open to the community.
- Partner with Oxbow/Rivendell/BMU school systems to engage students in community service projects.
- Expand leadership opportunities within the church and the community.
- Seek opportunities to partner with other community organizations & resources.
- Expand the Women’s Fellowship
- Expand our outreach through media.

2. Become a beacon of hope:

- Expand visitations by pastor and lay people, set up system so nobody is forgotten.
- Reach out in times of need: financially, meals, visits.
- Become an Open and Affirming church.

3. Become a spiritually growing place:

- Offer Bible Study, grow in prayer.
- Expand our ministries, both local and global – more active, increase communication in and outside of our church.
- Offer online worship.
- Promote a safe environment for all to have a relationship with God.

Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation.

Looking at our church’s particular resources and the interests and passions of particular members, we are called to more actively share our buildings and the Greenspace, to showcase and celebrate our wider community of musicians and artists, and to network more effectively with community partners. Our church family is a social one; we are called to build on our tradition of hosting potlucks, “mystery rides”, festivals, and ice cream socials.

God is also calling us to become a larger and more diverse congregation, recognizing that it is not enough to simply say “Welcome to All”. Becoming an Open and Affirming church is a priority. But we also want to make ample opportunity for spiritual growth according to each member’s needs.

3. WHO ARE WE NOW?

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

- a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS
- b. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS
- c. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING
- d. CHURCH FINANCES
- e. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

3a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

We are the second oldest congregation in Vermont. That history is precious to us, and we take pride in honoring our ancestors and preserving our traditions. But we are also a globally minded community that strives to make the world a kinder, more peaceful, and environmentally sustainable place, while keeping the needs of our own community at the forefront. We believe that God is love and that God happens between us. God is described in the Old Testament, New Testament, and contemporary examples. The Holy Spirit comes to us through the fellowship of our congregation.

We strive to be welcoming to all and community oriented, trying to attend to not only spiritual needs but needs and crises within our community. We provide musical events that tap into the multitude of talents of our community. Communication is encouraged through a church newsletter, a member directory, and periodic e-mail and postcard announcements.

Worship takes place in our sanctuary during spring, summer, and fall. In the winter we often worship in the vestry to conserve heat and to experience a more intimate setting. We also occasionally hold worship outside in The Greenspace. Worship is based around interpretations of God’s word in scripture, and the relationships of those lessons to relevant events in the larger world, and the environment. Much time is spent learning about each other and the challenges we face.

Good preaching can be described as welcoming, friendly and non-judgmental but challenging congregants to examine themselves. We seek a ministry that is open minded, engaging and thought provoking, spiritual, caring, compassionate, celebratory and inclusive.

Our congregation now includes two youths who take an active part in morning services and other events or activities sponsored by the church. With the help of pastoral leadership and outreach efforts by the congregation, we hope to build a youth group for educational and recreational projects and outings.

We have had a bible study group at various times, and it helped members grow spiritually. There is interest in having it again. This is an activity that might easily be shared by the two congregations. We believe that offering online worship could expand youth outreach. There is interest in bringing back Sunday School, but we realize that it may need to be reimagined.

When it comes to decision-making, how many hours are spent in meetings per month?

In recent years, Council meetings typically occur twice yearly, unless a particular issue demands attention. The Deacons meet regularly, generally on a monthly schedule. The Trustees meet every other month. Other committees (Stewardship & Missions, Investment, and Nominating) meet as needed.

Think of a time when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. How was that accomplished?

A few years ago, the property abutting our vestry was acquired by a volatile, hostile occupant who gutted the house and stored a number of broken vehicles on site. A vehicle fire nearly caused the loss of the vestry, averted only by the quick response of our fire department. Eventually, the property in question was foreclosed, but by then the house was not feasibly restorable. Our congregation took a leap of faith, successfully bid on the property, and secured additional financial support from the community. The house was demolished, and now the site is a public Greenspace overlooking the Connecticut River and White Mountains of New Hampshire. The Greenspace is open to all, and our village neighbors have continued to help with its stewardship.

Can you provide the next minister with a copy of an organization structure, bylaws and/or annual report to further explain the patterns of the church's activity and governance?

Yes, we have an Annual Report and Constitution that can be given by request.

3b. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	35	
Number of active non-members:	2	
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	37	

Participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	30	
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	3	
Less than 5 years:	4	

Number of total participants by age:

0-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	<i>Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
1	1	1			4	3	8	19	

Adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	1	
Households with minors:	2	
Single adults ages 35-65:	1	
Joint households with no minors:	8	
Single adults over 65:	9	

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	unknown	
College:	unknown	
Graduate School:	unknown	
Specialty Training:	unknown	
Other (please specify):	unknown	

Adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	14	
Adults who are retired:	18	
Adults who are not fully employed:	unknown	

Describe the range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:

The range of occupations represented in our congregation include farmer, writer, teacher, attorney, school administrator, postal carrier, cyber security architect, and municipal administrator.

Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up. Most UCC congregations tend to describe themselves as “diverse.” Yet, the vast majority of UCC congregations are mono-cultural. What does diversity mean in your context?

Our congregation is currently quite mono-cultural – it would be fair to say that we are all Caucasian.

Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one in the near future (perhaps using, for example, the Welcoming Diversity Inventory)? Please note the date. Comment after the exercise:

At our Annual Meeting in 2021, we voted to begin a process of self-education to learn what it would mean to be an Open and Affirming church. Since then, we have distributed reading

material supplied through UCC and developed a display of information in the vestry for a period of time. Unfortunately, lacking an active committee to drive this effort, it has languished.

3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

Complete the following chart. Please leave blank any fields that are not applicable to your congregation.

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings? <i>(list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff)</i>
Adult Groups or Classes	8-12	Women's Fellowship
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>		
Children's Groups or Classes		
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	50	Pastor, Deacons and members
Church-wide Meals		
Choirs and Music Groups	14 musicians Audience of 50	Annual Red Tractor Music Festival.
Church-based Bible Study		
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	12-18, Monthly	Pastor, Deacons
Community Meals	2	New Years breakfast, Cabin Fever potluck
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>		
Drama or Dance Program		
Funerals <i>(number last year)</i>	1	Deacons, Women's Fellowship
Intergenerational Groups		
Outdoor Worship	several	Pastor, Deacons and members
Prayer or Meditation Groups		
Public Advocacy Work		

Retreats		
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community		
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)		
Worship (time slot: __10:00 am____)	15-20	Pastor, Pianist, Deacons, Members and Guest Pulpit Supply.
Worship (time slot: _____)		
Young Adult Groups or Classes		
Youth Groups or Classes		
Other		

Additional comments:

The Vestry is used regularly by several municipal boards and local organizations for meetings.

List all members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers. Indicate those with current United Church of Christ Three-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a congregation) or Four-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a ministry beyond a congregation).

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or no)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
n/a				

If one or more previous pastors or retired ministers currently hold membership in the church, describe their role(s) in the life of the congregation:

List all current staff, including ministers. Exclude the position you are seeking to fill.

Indicate which staff person serves as head of staff.

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
none				

REFLECTION

Reflection: After reviewing the congregational demographics and activities above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's overall ministry?

Our congregation is stretching as widely as it can with small numbers, but we are big on hope and optimism for positive change.

3e. CHURCH FINANCES

Current annual income (dollars used during most recent fiscal year)

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$13,121
Endowment Proceeds (<i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i>) Bayley Fund	\$5,696
Endowment Draw (<i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal"</i>)	\$
Fundraising Events	\$13
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose - food shelves, Mentoring Project, Operation Santa, Atkinson Residence for the Retired and scholarships	\$855
Grants	\$
Rentals of Church Building	\$125
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$
Support from Related Organizations (<i>e.g. Women's Group</i>) Mustard Seed Thrift Store	\$991
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$35,000
Other (specify): Interest from CD	\$6
Other (specify): Lease of steeple to AT&T for cell tower antennas	\$12,058

TOTAL

\$67,865

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): \$56,231.

Attach the most recent church budget, spending plan, operating statement, or annual treasurer's report as shared publicly with the congregation, or – if your church does not pass an annual budget – list current budgeted expenses here.

2	Pastor Expenses		50	Church-Vestry Expenses	
3	Guest Pastor		51	Electric	2000
4	Salary		52	Propane	600
5	Social Security Offset		53	Oil	2000
6	Continuing Education		54	Water/Sewer	540
7	Conference Meeting		55	Sub Total	5140
8	Health Insurance & Retirement Expense		56	Other Expenses	
9	Telephone/Internet Expense		57	Trash Removal	100
10	Re-emburse Travel Expenses		58	Fire Extinguishers	150
11	Sub Total	5000	59	Phone	1300
12			60	Grounds (plowing,mowing,sanding)	1600
13			61	Advertisiing	200
14			62	Community Outreach	500
15			63	Youth Group	0
16			64	Missions XMas Funds	0
17	Organist	5000	65	Missions Strengthen the Church	0
18	Cleaning Church & Vestry & Cl. Spls	2000	66	Mission Our Ch Wider Mission	0
19	Sub Total	7000	67	Mission Neighbors in Need	0
20			68	UCC Per Capita	520
21	Music Expenses		69	Paper Products/Misc	300
22	Tuna/Repair Organ	800	70	Miscellaneous Gifts	100
23	Tuna/Repair Piano	200	71	Delegates	200
24	Clean Robes	0	72	Diaconate	180
25	Music Sheets/ETAL	50	73	Carillon	0
26	Sub Total	1050	74	Miscellaneous - Village Store	100
27			75	Fund Raiser	0
28	Church Administration		76	Sub Total	5250
29	BOOKKEEPER	1000	77	Grand Total	92690
30	Saxon/Pulpit Supplies	100	78		
31	Postage	250	79		
32	Devotionals	200	80	12-29-2023	
33	Church Office Supplies/Copier	250	81	2024 budget	
34	Post Office Box/bank box	150			
35	Sub Total	1950			
36					
37	Church Property				
38	Liability Insurance & Workers Comp	8000			
39	Maintenance - Church	3000			
40	Maintenance - Vestry	3000			
41	Maintenance - Parsonage	3000			
42	Greenspace	300			
43	Special Projects	5000			
44	Sub Total	22300			
45					
46					
47					
48					

2024 Budget

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage?

54%

Has the church ever failed to pay its financial obligations to a minister of the church?

NO

Is your church 5-for-5, i.e. does it include each of the following contributions during the church year? (indicate those included during the most recent fiscal year)

Recently, we have not been 5-for-5.

- Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)
- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Strengthen the Church
- Neighbors in Need
- Christmas Fund

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, what is that percentage? (recommended 10%)

What is the church’s current indebtedness?

Total amount of loan debt: None

Reason for debt:

Are capital and other payments current? Yes

If a building program is projected or underway, describe it, including the projected start/end date of the building project and the total project budget.

If the church has had capital campaigns in the last ten years, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2018	Repair and paint steeple and Clock	\$15,500	\$15,500	Project completed - responsible stewardship of building
2019	Purchase next door property and demo buildings	\$78,031	\$78,031	Neighborhood blight removed, Greenspace created, relationships built with community
2023	New Roof on Church	43,000	43,000	Roof replaced; leaks repaired

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2026	ADA bathroom	\$unknown	\$	
2025	Widen space between pews	\$unknown	\$	May be achieved with volunteer labor.

Describe the prominent mission component(s) involved in the most recent (or current) capital campaign. To properly maintain the building during our “watch”

Does your church have an endowment? Yes

What is the market value of the assets? 280,000

Are funds drawn as needed, regularly, or under certain circumstances? As needed.

What is the percentage rate of draw (last year, compared to 5 years ago)? unknown?

Describe draw on endowment, if any, to meet operating budget expenses for the most recent year and the past five years:

The Church has occasionally drawn from the endowment, as during the Covid shutdown, to meet expenses or fund major repairs.

At the current rate of draw, how long might the endowment last?

Indefinitely

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

Other Assets

Reserves (savings-special funds account): \$ 29,000.

Investments (other than endowment): \$

Does your church have a parsonage? No

Describe all buildings owned by the church:

The Sanctuary is a Greek Revival style structure, built in 1856 on the foundation of the prior building that burned that January and features extensive stained glass. The building seats over 200, is carpeted, and includes a tracker organ and grand piano. Entrance to the Sanctuary is accessible, although the pulpit is not.

The Vestry is a 2-story building with a large meeting room, full kitchen, two bathrooms, a small office, children’s room, and storage. The building entrance is ADA accessible, but the bathrooms are not.

The old parsonage is now used as The Mustard Seed Thrift Store and as a storage facility for the Town of Newbury’s Emergency Services Department. This building is not ADA accessible.

Describe non-owned buildings or space used or rented by the church: n/a

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? (*worship space, pulpit, fellowship space, facilities, etc.*) Worship space and vestry entrance are accessible. The pulpit and vestry restroom are not.

Reflection: After reviewing the church’s finances and assets described above, what does this information reflect about your congregation’s mission and ministry?

Especially since our membership is aging, we need to intentionally focus on some accessibility improvements. Our small congregation has demonstrated good resiliency during this time of being without a settled pastor; we hope to continue channeling our energies in ways which broaden our welcome.

3f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Name one to three significant happenings in the history of your church that have shaped the identity of your congregation. Add the most important event in the life of your church in the past 10 years.

Our congregation shared a ministry with the Wells River Congregational Church (WRCC) for seven years. This experience included much growth and learning but also serious conflict.

Every church has conflicts, some minor, some larger. “Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement....” Describe your congregation’s values and practices when it comes to conflict.

Our church and WRCC experimented with several models of shared ministry, beginning with separate services, followed by an extended period of doing joint services and rotating the venue every three months. A joint committee for envisioning our future worked to craft a mechanism for members to belong to both churches, as well as a proposal for a formal merger of the two churches. Efforts to reach consensus failed. Both congregations voted overwhelmingly against merging, and an overall level of tension and conflict lingered. Eventually, even the informal shared ministry was severed with poor communication in the process. As a result, we’ve learned that major changes must be gently introduced over longer periods of time. We also realized that we lack adequate structure for helping us manage conflict.

Ministerial History (include all previous ministerial staff for the past 30 years)

Staff member’s name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Rev. Michael Caldwell (Interim Pastor)	2019	Yes
Rev. Kate Maver	2014 - 2018	Yes
Rev. David Pruitt (Interim Pastor)	2010 - 2013	Yes
Rev. Ed Jager (Interim Pastor)	2009 - 2010	Yes
Rev. Ward Wilson	2006 - 2009	Yes
Rev. Susan Tarantino	2001 - 2004	Yes
Rev. Robert Faling	1991 - 1999	Yes

Comment on what your church has learned about itself and its relationship with persons who provided ministerial leadership:

We’ve been blessed with several exceptional spiritual leaders who have stretched our imaginations of what could be possible. We’ve learned that our firm hold on traditions can sometimes hold us back.

Has any past leader left under pressure or by involuntary termination?

Yes - Ask us.

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

No

Has a past pastor been the subject of a Fitness Review while at your church?

No

4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

4a. COMMUNITY VISION

How do the relationships and activities of your congregation extend outward in service and advocacy?

We have hosted events throughout the year for community participation, including music programs, festivals, and educational presentations. We also make our vestry available for civic use. Our Women’s Fellowship, the Mustard Seed Thrift Shop, and several special offerings during morning services have generated donations for charitable causes, both local and global.

Describe your congregation’s participation in meetings, relationships and activities connecting the wider United Church of Christ (association / conference / national setting).

During this period of dwindling membership, Covid restrictions, and lack of a settled pastor, our church has not been able to maintain an active relationship with the wider UCC.

Many local churches love to tell the story of what they are doing in the community to transform lives. Some have identified certain aspects of their witness into the wider community using language shared with other UCC congregations. (Find more information as desired at ucc.org.)

Check any statements below that apply to your UCC faith community.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible to All (A2A) | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Peace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creation Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Mission Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Open and Affirming (ONA) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faithful and Welcoming | <input type="checkbox"/> WISE Congregation for Mental Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> God Is Still Speaking (GISS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other UCC designations: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Border and Immigrant Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Designations from other denominations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I’M) | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

Reflect on what the above statement(s) mean(s) to your community. Is your congregation interested in working toward any of the above statements of witness in the near future?

We are open to exploring these possibilities, particularly with pastoral guidance.

Describe your congregation's participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities (with other denominations and religious groups, local and regional).

We traditionally take part in ecumenical Lenten services and suppers with several neighboring congregations. We and our sister churches in West Newbury and Wells River share invitations to special events, programs, and worship services so that many members of these congregations are comfortable participating in more than one church.

If your congregation has a mission statement, how does that mission statement compare to the actual time spent engaging in different activities? Think of the range of activities from time spent gathering, to governance, to time spent going out.

No current mission statement.

Reflect on the scope of work assigned to your pastor(s). How is their community ministry and their ministry in and on behalf of the wider church accounted for in the congregation's expectations on their time?

We are mindful that in seeking a shared ministry with W. Newbury Congregational, we will need to help our minister carefully prioritize his/her/their time and efforts. We hope to strike a comfortable balance with the congregations stepping up to support the minister's leadership.

4b. MISSION

How do your congregation's internal demographics compare or contrast to a) the neighborhoods adjacent to your church, and b) other neighborhoods with which your church connects?

Newbury and the surrounding communities are quite homogeneous. It would be fair to say that there is little difference.

How are the demographics of the community currently shaping ministry, or not?

The overall population of Vermont, as well as the town, is aging, with a low percentage of BIPOC residents. This is also one of the increasingly unchurched or de-churched states. We are mindful that we face a particular challenge in wanting to grow both in numbers and in diversity, yet we do!

What do you hear when you talk to community leaders and ask them what your church is known for?

Here is what we heard from one leader, and it seems quite representative:

“That’s a tough one, given what we know and hear about the state of organized religion and especially in Vermont. It seems like finding a niche is the best hope for sustainability and whether a partnership with W Newbury makes that happen? Who knows?? ...

The buildings and Green Space are valued and if they were repurposed, they’d certainly be missed.”

What do new people in the church say when asked what got them involved?

They say they felt warmly welcomed.

5. REFERENCES

REFERENCE 1

Alma Roystan

Selectboard Chair for the Town of Newbury, VT

802-866-5568 alma.roystan@gmail.com

To Whom it May Concern:

Since I first started visiting Newbury sixty years ago, and moved here in 1968, Newbury has felt like “home”.

While I am not an official member of the Newbury Congregational Church, I attend that church whenever my work schedules over the years, has allowed it.

The members, and nonmembers alike, (some attendees are “old friends” even though they are not members) are very open and welcoming. It feels like everyone is happy to see me. Me, and not because of any position I hold in Town.

The church regularly reaches out to welcome new members in the community and to support those who may be having difficult times.

There is a social time following the service that is an enjoyable time allowing everyone to mingle, share their week and deepen friendships—just visit. To me it feels like an important extension of the church service itself.

Like many organizations, the Newbury Congregational Church works with low active membership. This, naturally, hinders what the church can do, relying on a few who do the work of many.

Lastly, I would say the Newbury Congregational Church (which means the attendees) is a place I would feel “safe” to share the ups and downs in my life.

Alma Roystan

REFERENCE 2

Rev. Anne Rodman/Retired VA Chaplain/Manchester, NH
Cell phone: (603) 722-5538/Email: annelrodman@gmail.com
Relationship to FCCN: pulpit/pastoral supply

Dear Candidates for Settled Pastor,
I grew up in the village of Wells River which is in the town of Newbury, Vermont. Toward the end of my career in Chaplain Service I began offering pulpit/pastoral supply for rural churches in transition. After the Covid Pandemic I was fully retired and offered pulpit supply for both churches (WRCC and FCN) after they had decided not to have joint services. I’ve been offering pulpit supply at First Congregational; Newbury (FCN) a couple times a month from June 2022 to the present. Each time my husband and I have been with the FCN community we comment to each other about the love and friendship received.

Having been without a pastor since the retirement of their Interim in 2019, I admire FCN’s strength and resiliency, especially having been through the challenges of not having a pastor for several years, especially through the church closure during the pandemic and coming back from that. They have been made “strong and mighty” and have been creative in keeping the church open. There is a good time of fellowship after worship. I believe the Holy Spirit is moving gently in and through this church family and outward to the community.

A few areas of improvement could be: 1) Develop a mission statement that reflects what God’s more specific mission and purpose is for FCN and publicize it. 2) Develop a website and prepare for online worship. 3) Have several members become a designated Pastoral Relations Team to make transitions easier and to keep communication open and clear with the new pastor and the church.

The past couple of months as I’ve been through a surgery to remove cancer, the FCN church family have surrounded me with prayer, offers of support, care and flexibility in my schedule. This is a clear indication of how supportive they would be with their Pastor and family.

With prayers and blessings,
Rev. Anne Rodman

6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- a. CLOSING PRAYER
- b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT
- c. CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

6a. CLOSING PRAYER

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

6b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided information in this profile that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates.

As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending a suitable new minister for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates. We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.

Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile? (for example, church council or consistory, transition team, etc.)

The search committee and the whole church

Signed: 

Name / Title / Date: Daniel Burwinkel, Pastoral Search Committee Chair, February 17, 2024

6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

The congregation is currently in good standing with the Grafton Orange Sullivan Association of the Vermont Conference, United Church of Christ.

To the best of my knowledge, ministerial history information is complete.

To the best of my knowledge, available church financial information is presented thoroughly.

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature:



Name / Title: Rev. Paul Sangree, Associate Conference Minister

Email: sangreepucc@gmail.com

Phone: 802-728-4999 ext. 5#

Date: February 22, 2024

This document is created through support to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and is only possible through the covenantal relationships of all settings of the United Church of Christ.

“Jesus answered them, ‘Have faith in God!’” – Mark 11:22

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