

Search and Call Tools for Congregations

Advancing the Spirit's guidance into God's future

INTRODUCING THE NEW LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

Who
are
we

Who
is our
neighbor

Who is
God
calling us
to become

?

The new Local Church Profile is not just for congregations in search of a pastor. *All* congregations are encouraged to engage in its process of discovery every 3-5 years. The UCC Local Church Profile reflects valuable data, assesses ministry, clarifies change, and helps advance the calling of the congregation. Not just to be completed by a search committee – the more participation, the better!

MINISTERIAL EXCELLENCE,
SUPPORT & AUTHORIZATION

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

The First Congregational Church of Portland
Portland, Connecticut

Settled Pastor – Full Time

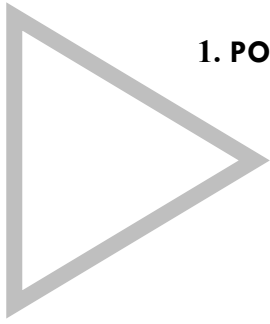
Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ

February 28, 2024

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE CONTENTS

- Position Posting
- Who Is God Calling Us To Become?
- Who Are We Now?
- Who Is Our Neighbor?
- References
- Consent and Validation

*“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

- a. LISTING INFORMATION
- b. SCOPE OF WORK
- c. COMPENSATION & SUPPORT
- d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

1a. LISTING INFORMATION

Church name:

The First Congregational Church of Portland

Street address:

554 Main Street, Portland, CT 06480

Supplemental web links:

<http://www.firstchurchportlandct.org>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX1ppt9kU5rWi6DPaLGv9Ilg?view_as=subscriber

We are an Open and Affirming Church. Our worship service is held Sunday mornings at 10:00 AM

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

None

Conference:

Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ

First Congregational Church was founded October 25, 1721, when early settlers formed what was then known as the Third Society of Middletown, later called Chatham and now known as Portland. The present church building is the third meetinghouse and was dedicated on December 18, 1850. The original Gothic revival style has changed over the years, but still stands as a tangible living link to the past. First Congregational Church joined the United Church of Christ in 1961.

UCC Conference Staff Contact Person:

Isaac Lawson

Area Conference Minister, South Central Region

lawsoni@sneucc.org

860-761-7188

Summary Ministry Description:

In a short paragraph, reflect on where your church is going and what it might look like when you get there. What do you need to get there? Who are you seeking to join you on this part of your church's faith journey?

At a time when many churches are having difficulty surviving, our church is growing. We have a church family that is deeply faithful and responds to needs of the congregation, local and wider community, and to world events. While we are committed and active, we need to learn how to become more attractive to a broader cross section of people. Once we gain that knowledge, we will have a climate that cultivates all visitors in a safe and loving atmosphere which will help grow our current membership base. We are looking for someone biblically focused in God's love to join us as we move faithfully into the future.

Photographs:

Our Sanctuary:





What we value about living in our area (*2 – 3 sentences*):

Portland is known to be one of the best places to live in Connecticut. It offers residents a suburban rural mix feel where most residents own their homes. A new luxury apartment building is currently being built in Portland overlooking the Connecticut River. We have quite a few great restaurants and parks such as the Riverfront Park, home to our summer concert series. In addition, Brownstone Quarries National Historic Site where a unique water park, craft fairs, drum circles and other festivities bring in many visitors from out of town. We are also known for having a large golf community including three public golf courses, driving ranges, virtual golf and pro shops. Other beautiful features of Portland include the Airline State Park Walking Trail, Meshomasic State Forest, natural reservoir and several busy marinas on the Connecticut River.

Current size of membership:

Our church consists of approximately 288 members

Languages used in ministry (*other than English*):

None

Position Title:

Settled Pastor

Position Duration:

A called position intended for longer-term ministry

Compensation Level:

Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

Yes

1b. SCOPE OF WORK

- Preparation and leadership of Sunday worship including scripture study, crafting of liturgy and bulletin, sermon preparation, guiding and sometimes finding lay liturgists, planning of music in coordination with musical staff or volunteers, preaching, offering of prayers, etc.
- Faith formation, vitality through prayer, Bible study, and involvement in Christian education for adults and children
- Leadership development by working with people in the church to create ministry and programs
- Pastoral care in collaboration with lay people by identifying resources and opportunities
- Community engagement and leading the way for the church to be an ambassador of God's love
- Weddings, baptisms and funerals for participants in the worshipping community
- Strategic planning for current and new directions in ministry
- Attend meetings and provide leadership as needed in collaboration with lay leadership
- Participate in wider church activities such as conference and association meetings
- Administration responsibilities (unless delegated) such as email, website, church supplies, etc.
- Faithful financial development and stewardship
- Responsibility for supervision of staff
- Availability to wider community as a representative of the church to local organizations
- Counseling, listening, and referral
- Study and prayer to increase faith to grow pastoral skills
- Energizing and deepening spiritual connections and faith understandings of others

Core Competencies:

We are seeking an authentic pastor who is a humble person of faith, compassionate, caring, and skilled at delivering effective sermons.

This pastor will revitalize our church with a contemporary style while maintaining the sacredness of tradition.

Our minister will be available for members, especially in times of crisis. They will build a strong rapport and instill a semblance of harmony within our congregation while maintaining the sanctity of confidentiality.

We desire a pastor that welcomes feedback and can address conflict in a healthy and positive manner.

1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

Salary Basis (*from the Call Agreement Workbook, equal to Cash Salary plus Value of Parsonage/Housing Allowance*): \$

Benefits (*choose one*):

Total Compensation: \$80,000 - \$100,00 (commensurate on experience)
(Salary, Benefits: Health/ Life/Disability, Housing Allowance, Minister's Annuity)

What is the expected living situation for your next minister:

Housing Allowance

Comment on the residential/commuting expectations for your next minister.

Ideally the called Settled Pastor will live within 30 miles of the church and is responsible for their own commuting expenses.

Describe peer and professional supports available for ministers in your association/conference:

Authorized ministers in the Southern New England Conference (SNEUCC) have access to a limited number of free or funded counseling sessions. Ministers enrolled in the UCC Pension Boards Health Care Plan also has access to the Member Assistance Program + Work/life Program. The SNEUCC also offers Clergy Communities of practice where ministers join with colleagues to share best practices, discuss current topics in ministry, etc. More can be found here: Clergy Resources - Southern New England Conference of the UCC (sneucc.org).

The Committee on Ministry for the Middlesex Association also offers opportunities for clergy gatherings including an annual retreat. The Committee on Ministry is also a source of support and accountability for ministers.

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

Describe the ministry goals you envision your next minister co-collaborating with the congregation to achieve.

Our congregation has clearly indicated that our settled pastor lead by example, be sensitive to differences, engage in acts of charity, and minister to persons in need. The pastor will teach and inspire us to accept all of God's children and embrace differences. We want our pastor to gently guide us in exploring new possibilities for the future of our church. We want our minister to help us build and sustain a reputation that we are a modern church family that receives and welcomes all people.

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

The pastor will ideally prepare us for the future by staying in the forefront of change while guiding us along God's path.

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

We require a proficient English speaker. Other languages are beneficial, but not required, as we learn to reach out to different cultures.

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.

1. Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice

- Loving God, following Jesus Christ and being guided by the Holy Spirit
- Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices
- Commitment of discernment of one's call in the community
- Exhibiting a commitment to spiritual development and faithful stewardship

2. Nurturing UCC Identity

- Participating in various settings of the UCC, including local churches, associations, conferences, general synod and global ministry

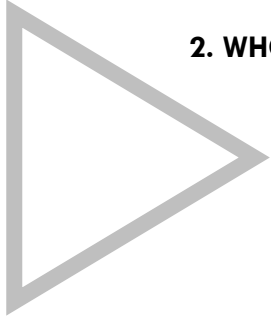
- Knowing and appreciating UCC history, policy and theology
- Committing to the core values of the UCC

3. Building Transformational Leadership Skills

- Empowering the Church to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission and open to the wonders of the Holy Spirit
- Strategically creating the future of God's church
- Encouraging self-development and member's development through continuing education and lifelong development

4. Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions

- Exhibiting knowledge, understanding and continuing study of the Old and New Testaments
- Bringing life to sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation and witness
- Leading faith formation across generations especially as with the holy sacraments



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)

Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?

Our church is being called to reach out beyond our boundaries to welcome new people. This includes being involved in our community by welcoming those who are different from us and those who might not always feel welcomed. We want to draw more young families and children into our fold. We are called to grow our Christian education programs and are looking for ways to enrich the spiritual growth of children and adults. Indeed, this past spring, we hired a new Youth Faith Formation Leader. She holds church school each Sunday and under her guidance the average number of children attending has tripled.

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

The year prior to everything being shut down due to COVID we started a new outreach program called God's Work Our Hands. Names of people in the community who needed help with yard work or small home repairs were gathered by working with area churches, town government, the senior center, and the food bank. The congregation volunteered to donate a Sunday morning to help complete needed tasks.

- Teams were sent to the homes for home repairs and yard work.
- A group went to sing at an area convalescent home.
- One team stayed at the church to sew dresses for girls in need internationally
- Another team stayed at the church to make lunch for the volunteers.

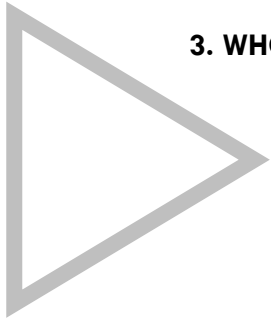
This effort was repeated this past spring. 75 volunteers of all ages gathered to participate in this well received outreach mission.

God's Work Our Hands group picture:



In November 2021, the church held a community meeting to explore the possibility of sponsoring a refugee family. The response was positive, so we moved forward in partnering with Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS). Fifty-two volunteers formed fifteen committees were formed with our church members chairing the majority of them. On March 30, 2022, we welcomed a family of 6 who had fled Afghanistan for their safety. Throughout this process our congregation continues to support the family in many different ways, allowing them to integrate into life in the United States. In turn, the experience has helped us see how we make a difference in the world.

First Church Nursery School has been in operation since 1990. We are a non-profit, non-denominational, non-discriminatory program that emphasizes social skills and provides opportunities for the development of the whole child, ages three to five. Our qualified teachers lead a curriculum that includes a balance of indoor and outdoor play, group and independent activities. Through this curriculum, each child is encouraged to grow in their own faith by reflecting such attitudes as thankfulness, love, kindness, joy, patience, fairness, forgiveness and respecting the rights of others. For the school year 2022-2023 we had 27 students between our two age groups. Our nursery school operates with the direction from a Managerial Board, which consists of church members.



3. WHO ARE WE NOW?

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

- a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS
- b. 11-YEAR REPORT
- c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS
- d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING
- e. CHURCH FINANCES
- f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

3a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

Describe your congregation’s life of faith.

Our congregation is open and affirming. Each worship service begins with words similar to “No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here”.

We describe God as our loving creator and redeemer.

This fall, we surveyed the congregation using the Hartford Institutes “Pastoral Search Inventory.” There were 82 respondents. Regarding the question “Overall, which ONE task does your congregation do best?”, the top two responses stood out:

Engaging in acts of charity and service to persons in need – 28 responses (41%)

Offering worship that provides a meaningful experience of God in the Christian tradition – 18 responses (26%)

Our following Mission Statement clearly describes our congregation’s life of faith:

We are called by God, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, to follow the teaching of Jesus Christ and to spread the gospel throughout the community and the work through our worship, hospitality, and service. We strive to build bridges.

Our sanctuary is a place of safety for anyone and everyone, and we welcome all persons to worship with us. We worship in a manner which is at times comfort, at times a challenge, at times a celebration, and always in a manner which helps us remember that every person is a child of our loving God.

Our hospitality is extended to anyone who wishes to enjoy it. Our fellowship and educational opportunities are open to all who come. In our life together, we strive to overcome the natural tendency to fear what is different. We celebrate the differences among people, and derive hope from that celebration.

In our service to others, and in the spirit of Jesus, we share our unique God-given talents and gifts, we seek to pass on to others the blessing that we have received, and we seek to receive graciously and gratefully the blessings others would pass on to us.

In all that we do, we open ourselves to the spirit of the ecumenical community, both locally and globally. We seek to be filled by God's presence: we seek to be fulfilled by discerning God's will and then action upon it in all aspects of our lives, in the conviction that it is God's Desire for us to live in a world at peace, and with justice for all.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

A large portion of our members are willing to help in any way needed. This includes such service as:

- Leading worship service
- Church administration and guidance
- Management and maintenance of the church facilities
- Missions, especially outreach for homeless and hungry in our community and neighboring towns
- Visitation of members in assisted living facilities
- Providing support to members when they are faced with life challenges. For example, we have a casserole crusade, etc.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

Worship occurs most often in our sanctuary, however in good weather we gather around our gazebo. We have also had services in the town riverfront park and a local quarry. Our services are also live-streamed and available on YouTube, which is a valuable way to connect with members who are unable to attend in person, and as an outreach to individuals, globally who may wish to worship with us online.

When asked recently a majority of the congregation described their preference for a Bible based sermon that inspires self-reflection, as well as points a way to leading a faithful life, supporting others in the community and globally.

Most Sunday services are traditional with occasional nontraditional elements. A typical service includes:

- Everyone is welcomed at the door by a deacon
- People mingle and talk, clergy included
- Worship starts with a welcome to all and a musical prelude
- Scripture readings
- Lord's prayer
- Children's message is offered before they are dismissed to Church School

- Prayers and music throughout the service
- Sermon delivered based on the scripture readings
- Offering is received
- Service concludes with benediction and postlude
- Coffee hour and fellowship follows

Describe the educational program/faith formation vision of your church.

Currently happening:

- The Board of Christian Education oversees all religious education programs.
- Church School is provided for children in kindergarten through 8th grade. Care is provided for infants and toddlers before and during worship as needed. Church school attendees are dismissed from worship after the children’s message is shared.
- Confirmation class is provided for 9th/10th graders, annually or biannually, as numbers dictate.
- Children & Youth Fellowship programs have included the Christmas Pageant, leading the service on Church School Sunday as well as other participation in worship.
- We have a new Youth Faith Formation Leader and since then child and youth attendance at Sunday school has increased.
- Adult Education programs are also available including Bible study, classes, and book discussion groups. These programs are somewhat limited but are enjoyed by those who can attend.

Opportunities for growth:

- Increase interest in Adult Programs and expand offerings.
- Develop program(s) for the teen youth group. An energetic and committed volunteer has stepped forward to lead this effort.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

Issues that require voting by members of the church are decided in a congregational meeting. Other decisions are made by the council which includes a representative from each board. Issues discussed and decisions that are made by the council are communicated back to the boards by their representatives.

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

The following committees meet monthly:

Committee	Hours per month
Council	2
Deacons	1.5
Music	1
Missions	2

Other committees that meet periodically include:

- Christian Education
- Facilities
- Pastoral relations
- Stewardship
- Personnel
- Flower
- Nursery School
- Membership
- Nominating
- Miscellaneous event committees

NOTE: Our bylaws are under revision with the goal of reducing the number of committees.

- Think of a time when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. How was that accomplished?
 - When COVID shut down in-person gatherings, the church moved quickly to establish online worship, church school classes, and meetings.
 - In 2022 the congregation raised money for Ukraine relief.
 - When the wildfire devastated Lahaina, Hawaii in August 2023 the congregation took up a collection.
 - Recently one of our members was diagnosed with a serious illness, many congregants as well as committees provided ongoing support for the family.
- 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/No]
Yes, we have included the bylaws and church operations manual. See Appendices 2 and 3. Please note that the bylaws are currently in the revision process.

3b. 11-YEAR REPOT

(add here the 11-Year Report developed with the help of your conference staff, UCC Data Hub, and MissionInsite)

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
ELEVEN YEAR CHURCH PROFILE BASED ON DATA REPORTED IN UCC
YEARBOOKS**



Church#: 786755
 Assoc: 928 Schedule: 0 First Congregational Church, UCC Portland CT 06480

YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	CONFIRMATION	CONFESSION	TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	NET MEMBS ADDS-REMOVED
2012	359	109	26	0	12	2	9	5	0
2013	374	94	52	13	0	8	1	5	15
2014	376	91	35	8	7	3	9	11	-2
2015	356	91	35	0	4	0	9	13	-18
2016	356	91	35	0	0	0	0	0	0
2017	358	94	35	11	11	3	6	17	2
2018	356	89	19	6	10	2	10	10	-2
2019	355	85	20	7	12	0	3	5	11
2020	350	74	15	0	0	1	6	0	-5
2021	363	74	15	10	4	2	3	0	13
2022	374	44	3	6	2	7	3	1	11

YEAR	CURRENT EXPENSES	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	BASIC SUPPORT	TOT OTHER UCC GIVING	TOTAL OCWM	OTHER GIFTS	WIDER MISSION	BASIC SUPP% CURR LOCAL	TOTAL EXPEND	PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS
2012	\$187,625	\$0	\$3,502	\$4,247	\$7,749	\$5,763	\$13,512	1.87	\$201,137	\$148,481
2013	\$190,951	\$0	\$3,836	\$5,570	\$9,406	\$9,091	\$18,497	2.01	\$209,448	\$162,177
2014	\$193,120	\$0	\$4,002	\$11,372	\$15,374	\$6,372	\$21,746	2.07	\$214,866	\$159,978
2015	\$218,779	\$0	\$4,045	\$10,821	\$14,866	\$15,000	\$29,866	1.85	\$248,645	\$161,810
2016	\$201,433	\$0	\$4,284	\$7,907	\$12,191	\$9,478	\$21,669	2.13	\$223,102	\$171,577
2017	\$222,717	\$0	\$4,271	\$2,464	\$6,735	\$0	\$6,735	1.92	\$229,452	\$170,853
2018	\$222,717	\$0	\$4,213	\$2,346	\$6,559	\$0	\$6,559	1.89	\$229,276	\$168,599
2019	\$231,466	\$0	\$4,486	\$5,092	\$9,578	\$0	\$9,578	1.94	\$241,044	\$179,523
2020	\$231,466	\$0	\$8,046	\$263	\$8,309	\$0	\$8,309	3.48	\$239,775	\$0
2021	\$43,332	\$0	\$7,768	\$2,085	\$9,853	\$0	\$9,853	17.93	\$53,185	\$186,664
2022	\$248,261	\$0	\$7,540	\$3,978	\$11,518	\$0	\$11,518	3.04	\$259,779	\$235,060

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2017-2022	4.47	-53.19	-91.43	-40.00	-82.61	11.47	71.02	13.22
2012-2022	4.18	-59.63	-88.46	7.14	-71.43	32.32	48.64	29.16

Please note: Zero values ("0" or "\$0") may reflect missing information in some years. Christian Education/Faith Formation refers to Church School Enrollment for all figures before 2007.

DATA FROM 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	176	✓
Number of active non-members:	16	✓
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	192	✓

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	76	✓
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	9	✓
Less than 5 years:	15	✓

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>
15	4	5	12	24	35	40	40	40	✓

Percentage of adults in various household types:

	%	<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	3	✓
Households with minors:	23	✓
Single adults age 35-65:	12	✓
Joint households with no minors:	42	✓
Single adults over 65:	20	✓

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

	%	<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	3	✓

DATA FROM 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

College:	40	✓
Graduate School:	30	✓
Specialty Training:	26	✓
Other (please specify):		

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

	%	<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	39	✓
Adults who are retired:	52	✓
Adults who are not fully employed:	7	✓

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

- Service workers 6.35%
- Clerical 9.52%
- Operative/laborer 1.59%
- Trades person 4.76%
- Sales 3.17%
- Professional 58.73%

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 predominately white. There are many ethnic heritages with the majority falling into the category of European descent. The greatest diversity represented in the congregation is that of religious background.

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

The topic of diversity has been discussed on a variety occasions, each worship service begins with welcoming all. When asked about the future direction of the church the need for diversity has been expressed.

DATA FROM 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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	varies	Lenten series- minister and diaconate
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	12	
Children's Groups or Classes		
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	Christmas eve- 4pm 70 10 pm 61 Easter sunrise 20 10 am 88	Minister and diaconate
Church-wide Meals	0	
Choirs and Music Groups	varies	Bell choir Senior choir Music director
Church-based Bible Study	none	
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	1 st Sunday	Minister/diaconate
Community Meals	0	
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	6	
Drama or Dance Program	none	
Funerals <i>(number last year)</i>	7	
Intergenerational Groups	none	
Outdoor Worship	Quarry service- 28 Blessing of the animals-12 Easter sunrise-20	

DATA FROM 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Prayer or Meditation Groups	none	
Public Advocacy Work	Missions board	
Retreats	Confirmation retreat -6 Women's fellowship-10	Confirmation – youth director and minister Women's retreat – fellowship board
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	none	
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)	2	
Worship (time slot: Sunday,10am)	Varies weekly	
Young Adult Groups or Classes	none	
Youth Groups or Classes	4 and growing	
Other		
Sunday School	Up to 10	

Additional comments:

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)
Ava Cudmore	3 way	full time	minister	No

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.

DATA FROM 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Youth Faith Formation Leader	No	Part time	Pastor and Personnel Committee	1 year
Music Director	No	Part time	Pastor and Personnel Committee	20 years
Sexton	No	Part time	Pastor and Personnel Committee	2 years
Electronic Communication Specialist	No	Part time	Pastor and Personnel Committee	4 years
Video Worship Assistant	No	Part time	Pastor and Personnel Committee	4 years
Office Manager	No	Part time	Pastor and Personnel Committee	16 years

REFLECTION

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

Our church offers insightful and creative worship services. We offer an opportunity during Lent for fellowship and a deeper understanding of our humanity through our Lenten supper series. We offer child care and Sunday school weekly as well as youth group opportunities. We are called to further expand our adult education programs through Bible study and offer more opportunities for adult Christian education and fellowship.

3e. CHURCH FINANCES

Current annual income (dollars used during most recent fiscal year) 2022 Annual report

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$ 190,279
Endowment Proceeds (<i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i>)	\$ 19,800

DATA FROM 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Endowment Draw (<i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, “drawing down the principal”</i>)	\$ 0
Fundraising Events	\$ 8,463
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$ 8,636
Grants	\$
Rentals of Church Building	\$ 860
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$
Support from Related Organizations (<i>e.g. Women’s Group</i>)	\$ 2,000
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$ 0
Other (specify): Nursery School	\$ 1,370
Other (specify): Miscellaneous	\$ 3,652
TOTAL	\$ 235,060

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): \$ 248,261

The 2023 Operations Budget is attached as Appendix 1.

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

45%

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*)

Yes - One Great Hour of Sharing

No - Strengthen the Church

Yes - Neighbors in Need

Yes - Christmas Fund

DATA FROM 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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

This year it was 3% of the operating budget.

What is the church’s current indebtedness?

Total amount of loan debt: 0

Reason for debt:

Are capital and other payments current? n/a

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.

We raised the money for a new roof for the church. Fundraising began in early 2023. \$38,000 was raised and the project was funded and completed by July of 2023. There was enough money to repair water damage to the interior. \$800 remains in the account.

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

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
	NONE	\$	\$	
		\$	\$	

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
	NONE	\$	\$	
		\$	\$	

Describe the prominent mission component(s) involved in the most recent (or current) capital campaign.

Does your church have an endowment?

We have 2 funds totaling 112,781. One is earmarked for youth (this is not used to pay for the part time Youth Development person) and the other is for major maintenance and the memorial garden.

DATA FROM 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

What is the market value of the assets?

\$ 112,781

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

In each year up to 5% of a rolling three-year average of the unrestricted investments is used towards the budget

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

It is the same.

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

Draws on income only, no draws on principal.

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

Indefinitely.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

We only use these monies for the purpose for which they were intended.

Other Assets

Reserves (savings):

\$ 34,595.

Investments (other than endowment):

\$ 437,086

Does your church have a parsonage?

No

Describe all buildings owned by the church:

The Church property is comprised of 2.18 acres. The church building has 7,787 square feet. There is a small gazebo at the back of the church property in the memorial garden. The most recent renovation to the sanctuary was in 2009.

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

None.

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? (worship space, pulpit, fellowship space, facilities, etc.)

The sanctuary (excluding the altar), fellowship hall, Minister's office, secretary's office, meeting room, kitchen, bathroom, 3 classrooms used by our nursery school.

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

Our church has been budgeting in the same manner for years. The finance committee works to set a budget based on pledges and the monies spent the previous years. Committees can request more money if they anticipate a greater need in the coming year. The budget is then presented to the church council for their approval. Each January a congregational meeting is held where comments are heard, and changes can be made. The budget is then approved.

Our church's approach to finances has been that when there is a need, people step up to meet it. This was clearly seen in our ability to quickly raise the necessary funds for a roof. When the plight of Ukrainians became apparent a special collection was held and \$3,477 was raised to support the UCC fund for them. This past year a young teen in church was diagnosed with cancer. Various groups in church have helped the family financially and practically. Beyond money our church responds with our talents.

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.

- In 2021, First Congregational Church of Portland celebrated its 300th anniversary. The rich history of our church has contributed to a powerful sense of tradition in terms of worship, music, and fellowship. It is important to note that while this historical foundation exists, there is also an underlying desire to discover ways to make our community and world a better place. This is evidenced by current mission efforts and outreach programs where there is still much opportunity and desire for growth. It is also worthy of note that a robust Women's Fellowship program has been an important source of strength and spiritual leadership.
- The Reverend Jane Hawken retired early in 2023 after providing 17 years of steadfast leadership. Her messages from the pulpit were thoughtful and introspective commentary offering guidance on making God and the Life of Christ the central part of our being. She was an advocate for equality and social justice and under her leadership we became an open and affirming Church. Her ministry touched people in different ways and at different times.
- It is no surprise that the pandemic of COVID 19 detected in 2019 had significant impact on all of humanity and First Congregational Church was no exception. Our initial reactions were no different than most. We closed the building and ended direct personal contact. Was it divine inspiration to find other ways to maintain our mission outreach, spread the word, and keep

Christ in our lives? First Church organized a Food Drive to help keep area food banks supplied. A person-to-person calling program was established to help stay in contact, show caring and address any needs. Prayer shawls and facial masks were collaboratively sewn in large quantity. Church meetings and Bible studies went the way of Zoom and technology gifted people stepped up to help. Sunday church services were and continue to be broadcast over YouTube.

Describe a specific change your church has managed in the recent past.

Every church has conflict, 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 has historically had many committees and boards that have been the backbone of our operations and have provided structure to responsibilities and decision making. There is a strong underlying element of trust in those people who are tasked with the various duties of these groups. Having said that, there is not always agreement within the groups or, from those outside the groups. There has been respectful debate, both logical and emotional discussions and ultimate achievement of resolutions.

Sometimes topics of a sensitive nature may not have transparency both in how and by whom an ultimate decision was arrived upon. That may be necessary due to the “sensitivity”, but it also can result in feelings of disillusionment or lack of empowerment. There is opportunity for growth in this area. A ministerial candidate that can facilitate and maximize open communication can make positive impacts will result in greater trust, and a stronger church as we pursue our faith’s journey together.

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

Staff member’s name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Reverend Jane Hawken	2006 – 2023 (17 years)	Y
Reverend Evelyn Eddy	2002 – 2004 (2 years)	Y
Reverend James Truesdell	1997 – 2000 (3 years)	Y
Reverend George Haskins	1991 – 1995 (4 years)	Y
Reverend Dwight Juliani	1973 – 1990 (17 years)	Y

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

We have learned that there are diverse leadership styles, areas of interest, and support methodologies when delivering the Word of God and making Christ's example a common goal of all our lives.

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

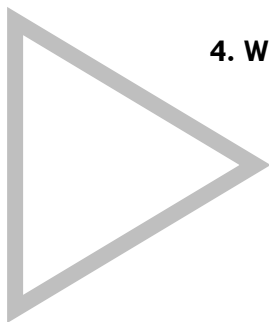
Yes, we would welcome discussion on this matter.

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)

a. COMMUNITY VISION

b. MISSION InSite

4a. COMMUNITY VISION

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

Our church advocated for refugee resettlement. A member of the congregation spearheaded this advocacy and connected with IRIS (Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services). Local churches and the wider community were also involved in the refugee resettlement effort.

A well-attended meeting was held at our church to provide information for potential volunteers. Volunteers were required to complete six hours of volunteer training as well as two hours of child abuse training. Fifty-one people signed on as volunteers. There were fifteen committees: fundraising, cultural integration, education, English as another language, housing, transportation, healthcare, interpreters, etc.

A spacious apartment was furnished, supplied with culturally appropriate food, clothing, and toys for the kids. The family of six, Mom, Dad and four young children arrived from Afghanistan after months of waiting. The family has become integrated into the community – they are working and attending school. Volunteers continue to assist the family when needed.

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

Our church is a member of the Middlesex Association of the SNEUCC and our previous minister attended the monthly meetings. The minister and a church member attended the annual conference meeting. The minister occasionally attended General Synod.

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.

- Accessible to All (A2A)
- Creation Justice
- Economic Justice
- Faithful and Welcoming
- God Is Still Speaking (GISS)
- Border and Immigrant Justice
- Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I'M)
- Just Peace
- Global Mission Church
- Open and Affirming (ONA)
- WISE Congregation for Mental Health
- Other UCC designations:
- Designations from other denominations
- 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?

Perhaps in the future some of the aforementioned statements of witness will be brought to the congregation.

In 1991 a second hour brought forth discussion of the concept of God is Still Speaking. We became a congregation that sought to show that God is indeed still speaking. The banner (from the UCC) was hung above the front doors. We participated in the 150th anniversary of our town with a float with the theme of God is Still Speaking. Members of the congregation rode on the float, others walked with the float.

After much discussion, we voted to become an Open and Affirming church. The vote was unanimous. Everyone is our neighbor, everyone is welcome.

The congregation is not designated as an Accessible to All (A2A). We strive to make the building accessible to all. There is a ramp in the front entrance giving access to the sanctuary. Wheelchair/walker access is available in one pew. Large print bulletins are available as well as earphones. A secondary access to the sanctuary is a seat, powered by electricity, to access the sanctuary from the back stairs. There are handicapped parking spaces and parking spaces along the driveway are available to those who have difficulty walking into the church. There is an additional ramp providing entrance into Fellowship Hall.

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

The congregation participates in the ecumenical Good Friday walk. Members of several churches walk together, stopping at local churches for prayer, ending at our church for refreshments. All denominations are

invited to the Easter sunrise service. On several occasions through the year, we worship with other churches in our community, particularly in the summer, we combine with two of Middletown's Congregational churches, rotating the location.

There is a monthly ecumenical meeting of Portland's clergy in which our pastor participates.

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.

Please see section 3a for our mission statement.

How we live this mission:

- As evidenced by our multiple mission and outreach activities, our church is living its mission statement
- We are an open and affirming congregation
- We work with other churches in our community as well as neighboring communities

We provide space and support for:

- A nursery school
- Several addiction recovery groups
- Youth group
- Women's fellowship

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?

The pastor first administers to the needs of the congregation.

The pastor then encourages and provides opportunity for committees to become involved with community outreach and projects.

4b. MISSION InSite

Comment on your congregation's MissionInsite report with data for your neighborhood(s) or area. What trends and opportunities are shown?

In 2021, Portland, CT had a population of 9,459 people with a median age of 38.7 and a median household income of \$88,164. Between 2020 and 2021 the median household income grew from \$76,908 to \$88,164, a 14.6% increase.

The 5 largest ethnic groups in Portland, CT are White (Non-Hispanic) (91.90%), African American (.89%), Asian (2.22%), Other Races (1.61%) and two or more races (3.38%)

None of the households in Portland, CT reported speaking a non-English language at home as their primary shared language. This does not consider the potential multi-lingual nature of households, but only the primary self-reported language spoken by all members of the household.

98.7% of the residents in Portland, CT are U.S. citizens.

In 2021, the median property value in Portland, CT was \$226,700, and the homeownership rate was 76.5%.

Most people in Portland, CT drove alone to work, and the average commute time was 26.9 minutes. The average car ownership in Portland, CT was 2 cars per household.

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?

Our demographics compare favorably to the Towns Demographics as stated in the 2021 census.

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

The church reaches out beyond our community demographics by participating with Streetfire Ministries.

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

Response from Robert Shea- Recently retired Chief, Portland Fire Department:

I have had the great fortune of both my daughters attending your Pre-school as well as confirmation classes. Although they have moved on in life and are no longer in the area, they both have fond memories of the church and its compassion to others and our community. Both my wife and I could not agree more. First Church has always been known in this community as a welcoming and supportive congregation.

Response from Christie Carpino, State Representative 32nd District, Cromwell and Portland:

The first thing that comes to mind is Community. Whether it be the Valentine's Day Chocolate expo or a gathering to celebrate a life lost too soon, the doors of your church are open to any that seek to enter. It says a lot in the world today.

Response from Ryan Curley- First Selectman, Town of Portland:

When I think of the First Congregational Church, I think of a few things. I think of the wonderful chocolate fest that was put on for so many years, I think of the First Church Nursery School that has taught so many of our children, but most of all, I think of the friendliness of your parishioners and the example that they set throughout our community.

I have nothing but positive thoughts when I think of your church and I wish you all luck on your pastoral search.

Michael Pelton -Board of Selectman, Town of Portland

Thank you for reaching out about my feelings and thoughts on the First Congregational Church. I've been in town since 2000 and many of my friends have been long time members of this church for a variety of reasons.

Previous pastors helped create a wonderful welcoming space of worship and fellowship across a variety of faiths - something quite rare but incredibly special.

I know a number of families that attend on a regular basis and they love the message as well as involvement in the various community activities. There's a feeling of connection that seems real and meaningful.

In addition, many of the members are actively involved in other projects in town and I think that brings a lot of talent and gravitas to projects that the church wishes to accomplish.

I've heard so many different reasons why people love this church but I feel these reasons distill the essence of the majority.

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

Response from New Member Melissa Kelley:

If I had to pick the biggest reason, we chose to join First Church it would be the people. The kind, warm and welcoming members of the church hooked us for sure! I've always had members of the church in my life in one way or another. Whether it be while my youngest were in preschool there, chatting with a member about the local garden club, or seeing other members at the local library. Knowing that so many people in our everyday lives belonged to First Church almost made me feel like I was missing something, something they knew that I didn't. I wanted to be sure that we found a church that was inclusive, welcoming and kind to everyone. Even on our first visit, I knew I had found just that.

Listening to [Interim] Pastor Julie welcome everyone and assure them that ALL were welcome was wonderful. That was important to me, especially in today's world. We strive to teach our children about kindness and inclusion, so to hear that message upon our arrival was so comforting. Arriving with three young children made me a little nervous, because it's hard to tell how they'll behave sometimes. However, the older two were kindly welcomed to church school, where they had a wonderful time despite not knowing what it would hold for them, and our tiniest of children was smiled at, waved to, and welcome to stay even if he did make some noise.

Each week we learn more about what the church does in our community; and what the members do for the church and the community. It's something that's very important to me and the way I raise my children. It's something I'm very happy to be a new part of.

Response from New Member Elizabeth Waller:

I quite frankly came for the bells, and stayed for the people (which I am putting on a tee shirt), and was very grateful it was so close to where I live (without a car). I also like the relative simplicity of the service.

I liked the feeling I got from people, felt a safety and comfort there, sensed people got along. Feel there is a respect for other's ideas even different from their own, and enjoyment of fellow congregants, and doing things for the community.

I also appreciate the attention to detail to make things elegant and nice. I also like the appreciation of history.

Other reasons for joining as mentioned to our members in 2023:

- Looked at a few local churches and chose this one
- Sermons and Service
- Wanted to get children into a church
- Friendliness of congregation



5. REFERENCES

Name up to three people who have agreed to serve as phone and written references. Advise the three references: “The contact information you provide may be shared publicly. Please use contact information that you feel comfortable giving to candidates so they can reach you with their questions.”

Make sure they are not members of your church but are persons who know your church well enough to be helpful to candidates seeking more information. Request a letter from each reference in answer to the four prompts below. Attach the letters (up to three) as desired.

REFERENCE 1

Sara Stall-Ryan/ Pastor/ Zion Lutheran Church, Portland CT
(678) 882-9011/ pastorsara2000@gmail.com / Pastor of another church in town

Pastor Sara’s response:

Describe some areas of strength in this church's ministry.

1. Social justice and mission outreach. First church is active in so many ways – refugee resettlement, St. Vincent de Paul, as well as other areas of giving and working.
2. First Church’s preschool is celebrated as a wonderful place for children to grow and learn. Many in our community speak very highly of it.
3. Stewardship. It seems as if members are very generous with their money and time in various ways. The building is always well cared for as well.

Describe some areas for improvement in this church's ministry.

I really don’t know First Church well enough to recommend improvements but I think all congregations in the 21st century need to work on collaboration with other congregations and organizations. Doing more things together will only makes us all stronger. In conjunction with collaboration, all congregations need to be more flexible. Times and culture have changed and we cannot always do things the way we did 20, 50, 100 years ago!

Describe a significant experience you have had of this church's ministry.

My most significant experience with this church’s ministry was through the Portland Refugee Resettlement Group. Honestly, while other congregations helped and participated, this ministry would not have happened without the dedication and oversight of First Church’s people. It really was an amazing gift to the Samimi family but also to the whole community of Portland.

Anything else you wish to share.

We are praying for you as you go through this time of discernment and hope that the Holy Spirit will guide you as you make decisions.

REFERENCE 2

Wallace Collins, Secretary – Streetfire Ministries, Inc.

(203) 631-1128 / wcollins49@comcast.net/ Leads outreach program supported by our congregation

have come to bring fire
on the earth, and how I
wish it were already
kindled! Luke 12:49



STREETFIRE MINISTRIES, INC.
BRINGING THE LOVE OF JESUS TO THE STREETS!

January 8, 2024

To whom it may concern,

It gives me great pleasure to recommend the First Congregational Church of Portland, CT. Streetfire Ministries Inc. joined forces with these brothers and sisters in Christ in the fall of 2020.

*He makes
winds His
messengers
, flames of
fire His
servants.
Psalm
104:4*

First Congregational Church meet us on the streets, where our clientele mingle, Thursday evenings before they hunker down for the night and Saturday afternoons. We worship our Lord and Savior, pray, provide hot meals, personal hygiene, warm clothing, sleeping bags and much more. Their community of faith has a knack for preparing bountiful and delicious meals, served with genuine love, peace and understanding. I've enjoyed the fellowship with their congregation, fresh relationships and our partnerships within the community. Equally important, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic when our members were most vulnerable and disregarded, First Congregational Church stuck with us as we showed the less fortunate love and reminded them that they are not forgotten.

Streetfire Ministries Inc. is a church without walls that serve the houseless, less-fortunate and recovery community of Central Connecticut. Our mission is to bring the Word of God and His Love to those who may never enter the doors of a traditional church. We aim to lead souls to Christ, help our clientele become healthy - spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically - encouraging them to be productive citizens and to share the Love of Christ with others.

In sum, the First Congregational Church of Portland, CT is genuine, friendly, welcoming, generous and diverse. I recommend them as a place to fellowship, a flock to shepherd and a community to work with in partnership.

Grace and Peace to you,

Wallace Collins, Secretary*
wcollins49@comcast.net

REFERENCE 3

Donna and Chris Cote / Local business owners/ Chris Cote’s Golf Shop/
860-342-2226



750 Portland-Cobalt Rd, Portland, CT 06480
860-342-2226

January 23, 2024
The Pastoral Search Committee
First Church of Christ Congregational
Portland, CT 06480

Dear Members:

We have lived and run a business in Portland, CT for 27 and 15 years, respectively. We enjoy living in Portland for its rural feel, yet proximity to larger cities. Our family is a member of another church in town and fortunately for us, our paths have crossed with First Church many times.

First Church has many strengths within its ministry. It has active members of all generations and participates in every ecumenical event in Portland. Our personal encounters with First Church are as follows:

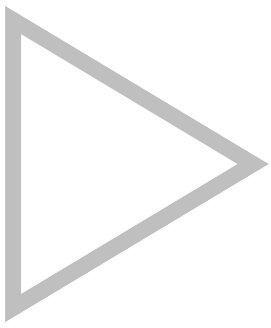
- The preschool program, which two of our children attended, was and continues to be top-rate. The church membership fully supports the preschool program. The teachers have long tenures and have been from within the church.
- The church is visible around town. We were delighted to see and talk with First Church’s minister and pre-school teachers after Portland High School’s graduation ceremonies.
- The confirmation program is above and beyond that of peer churches in town. The confirmands are supported by a volunteer education ministry, participate in ecumenical events, serve food at the homeless shelter, visit other places of worship and are guided by a sponsor from within the church. We attended a confirmation worship service and were impressed by the full attendance of church members, the personalization of the ceremony and the demonstrated relationship between minister and each confirmand.
- The church is famous for holding community events. Some are fundraisers for the church others are fundraisers for local causes. Each event is well planned, organized and run by church members of all ages.

Like any church, First Church struggles with declining interest among Americans to attend church on a regular basis. It is an area of improvement all churches encounter. First Church is rightly combining ministry and music, focusing on youth religious education and welcoming to families with children. They clearly understand that if the kids want to come, the parents will come. Perhaps the greatest testimonial is from our own children, now ages 26, 25 and 22. Off and on during past Christmases, we would attend the late Christmas Eve service at First Church since our church only offered an early service. During Christmas of 2022, we parents planned to attend the early Christmas Eve service at our church. We were unsure what our adult children would do. They decided together to attend the late service at First Church without us. They felt very comfortable going to First Church.

It is a blessing when a church has a say in who they call to lead their church. A strong pastor leads its church membership spiritually and in the community. We believe that churches provide the moral compass necessary to make a town a fellowship of

good neighbors. In turn, good neighbors are the best customers for local businesses. We pray for the best possible outcome for the Pastoral Search Committee.

Sincerely yours,
Donna and Chris Cote



6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

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

6a. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord and loving God,

We come to you now, asking for a beautiful gift, one that will enrich our lives and the life of our church. With a humble heart, we ask for the gift of a new pastor.

We first ask that you bless all those who are looking for a new ministry position. We pray they are answering Your call to do Your work with enthusiasm and grace. Bless them with the wisdom and patience necessary to find a position that suits them and lets them grow, not only as they search, but in their settled position, wherever it may be.

God, we thank you for the wonderful history that has held our church together for so many years. Many generations have enriched our church with their time and talents, and as a result, we have a bright future to look forward to.

We ask that you steer us towards this future by blessing us in our search. You always have perfect timing. Let us remain diligent, optimistic and confident that the right person will come in YOUR timing, not ours, and that this person will bring new ideas that will lead to successful results. Help us to find someone who has **GRACE**.

Gifted preacher, mentor, and friend.

Ready to take on their new role in our church and surrounding communities.

Accepting of the many differences we all have, that always seem to synchronize and work together beautifully.

Confident in their ability to relate to our church family, providing guidance, encouragement, support and good leadership.

Effective as they provide powerful messages for us to learn and live by.

Please bring to our congregation someone who is excited about the prospect of leading our church into the future, who will help us remain active in our mission endeavors and make a positive difference in our community, our state, our country and the world.

Lord, we ask these things in your name,

Amen

To our future Pastor,

The Lord said in Matthew 7:7-8, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

We hope and pray that our seeking of a dynamic pastor will bring a knock to our door. We look forward to opening the door and getting to know you!

Sincerely,
First Church Search Committee

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 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.

1. 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.*)

Pastoral Search Committee

Mary Clark, Beau Doherty, Jeff Fraulino, Beth Gould-Ruitto, Cari Klick, Michael Klick, Elaine Law, Rob Lentz, Kristin Medvecky, Karen Rettich, Louise Wright

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:
Looking forward to speaking with you!

Signed:

Pastoral Search Committee
January 25, 2024

6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

The congregation is currently in good standing with the association / conference named.
Staff Comment:

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

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

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature: *Rev. Isaac Lawson*
Name / Title: Rev. Isaac Lawson, Area Conference Minister, South Central Region, SNEUCC
Email: lawsoni@sneucc.org
Phone: 860-761-7188
Date: February 28, 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