

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

First Congregational Church of Westminster, MA UCC
Westminster, MA

Settled Pastor
UCC, SNEUCC

January 1, 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)

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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: First Congregational Church of Westminster, MA UCC
Street address: 138 Main Street, PO Box 477, Westminster, MA 01473
Supplemental web links: <http://www.westcong.org>

UCC conference: Southern New England
Association: Central
Area Conference Minister: Rev. Carol Steinbrecher
Phone: 508-244-4887
Email: steinbrecher@sneucc.org

Summary Ministry Description:

We are looking for a leader who can guide us spiritually in building membership and reconnecting the faith of the current members. We are seeking someone who can help us see the future of our church, embrace our challenges, and work together to overcome those challenges.



Westminster has been identified by many as the ideal location to live, work, and play due to its easy access to both Boston and Worcester for employment and entertainment. Route 2 and Route 140 are easily accessed near the town center. Westminster is bordered by the cities of

Fitchburg and Leominster to the east and Gardner to the west. Surrounding Westminster are the rural towns of Hubbardston and Princeton to the south and Ashburnham to the north. Westminster Center maintains the flavor of a small New England village.

Current size of membership: 136

Languages used in ministry: English

Position Title: Settled Pastor

Compensation Level: Full time

Does the total package meet conference compensation guidelines?

The compensation offered is based on local income data as well as church financials.

1B. SCOPE OF WORK

1. Congregational Ministry:

- A. **Worship and Sermons:** Our pastor is responsible for leading worship services, delivering sermons, and providing spiritual guidance to our congregation.
- B. **Sacramental Responsibilities:** This includes conducting baptisms, administering Holy Communion, and officiating at weddings and funerals.
- C. **Pastoral Care:** They provide emotional and spiritual support to members and the surrounding community during times of joy, sorrow, and crisis.
- D. **Teaching and Education:** Our pastor is involved in Christian education, offering classes, leading studies, and guiding on matters of faith.

2. Administrative and Organizational Duties:

- A. **Leadership and Governance:** We have a strong history of effective lay leadership. We would like the pastor to help lead the lay leadership in administrative and organizational duties.
- B. **Strategic Planning:** They contribute to long-term planning and visioning for the congregation.

3. Community Ministry:

- A. **Outreach and Service:** Our pastor is actively engaged in outreach and service activities in the broader community, representing the church's commitment to social justice and compassion.

- B. Collaboration with Local Organizations: They collaborate with local organizations, participate in ecumenical and interfaith initiatives, and work towards building strong community partnerships.

4. Wider Church Representation:

- A. Conference and Denominational Involvement: They actively participate in the activities and initiatives of the Southern New England Conference and the wider United Church of Christ.
- B. Denominational Leadership Roles: They may take on leadership roles at the conference or denominational levels, contributing to the broader mission of the UCC.

The congregation recognizes the importance of these various dimensions of ministry and acknowledges that each aspect contributes to the overall well-being and mission of the church.

Expectations regarding the pastor's time are structured to allow for a balanced focus on these different areas. Regular communication and collaboration between the pastor and the congregation help ensure alignment with the congregation's mission and values. This comprehensive approach reflects our commitment to being a vibrant, outward-focused, and spiritually nourishing community

Desired Core Competencies:

- A. Leadership: Pastors must be able to lead and manage their congregation effectively. They should be able to inspire and motivate others to work towards shared goals.
- B. Problem-Solving: Pastors must be able to identify and address problems within their congregation. They should be able to develop effective solutions to complex problems.
- C. Active Listening: Pastors must be able to listen attentively to their congregants with empathy and understanding to provide appropriate support to the congregation.
- D. Communication: Effective communication skills are essential. They must be able to convey complex ideas and concepts in a clear and concise manner.
- E. Counseling: Pastors must have a strong ability to provide counseling to those in need. This requires a deep understanding of human emotions and the ability to provide guidance and support.

F. **Spiritual Guidance:** Pastors must be knowledgeable about the religious beliefs and practices of their congregation. They must be able to provide spiritual guidance and support to those in need.

G. **Compassion:** Pastors must be compassionate and empathetic towards those in need. They should be able to provide emotional support and encouragement to those who are struggling

1C. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

Salary Basis:

We are willing to negotiate the salary, including benefits, based on our budget. We encourage potential candidates to present a breakdown of the benefits they desire within a total salary package.

Benefits (*choose one*):

Salary includes Optional Benefits

What is the expected living situation for your next minister?

If the pastor decides not to utilize the parsonage, we believe that living within a reasonable distance will help ensure the Pastor is able to attend important church and community events and programs. Specific events include Easter sunrise service, Christmas Eve services, and other Westminster-specific happenings.

We value the minister's presence beyond the regular worship and the attentiveness of our pastor to both the faith community and the residents beyond. Calling a pastor to our faith community is also a call of a pastor in service to our town.

Describe peer and professional supports available for ministers in your association/conference: In our Conference, ministers are fortunate to have access to a network of peer and professional support systems. These resources are designed to nurture their personal and professional growth, providing them with the tools and community they need to thrive in their ministry.

- A. **Clergy Support Groups:** These groups serve as invaluable platforms for ministers to come together, share experiences, and offer mutual support. They provide a safe space for continued learning and open and honest conversations, allowing clergy members to navigate challenges and celebrate successes together.
- B. **Continuing Education Opportunities:** Through programs like "Together We Thrive" and the "Center for Transformational Leadership," ministers have access to ongoing education and development. These opportunities empower them to stay current with best practices, deepen their theological understanding, and enhance their leadership skills.

C. Clergy Coaching: Arranged through "Together We Thrive," this coaching service provides ministers with personalized guidance and mentorship. Having a dedicated coach can offer valuable insights, assist with decision-making, and support ministers in their professional and personal growth. Subsidiary grants exist through conversation with our area minister.

These supports collectively create a nurturing environment for our ministers. They ensure that clergy members have the resources and community they need to navigate the challenges of their vocation while fostering their continued development and well-being. This network is a testament to the collective commitment of the Southern New England Conference to the flourishing of our clergy and, by extension, the strength of our congregations and communities.

If applicable, describe how your church will adopt part-time adjustments in the pastoral schedule to support a minister's bi-vocational employment:

We have traditionally had a full-time pastor who resides in the parsonage.

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

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”
Matthew 22:37 NIV

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

We envision our next minister working with the congregation to achieve several significant ministry goals:

A. Spiritual Guidance and Support:

- a. One of the primary goals of a pastor should be to help the congregation grow in their faith and relationship with God. This can be achieved through teaching, preaching, counseling, and creating opportunities for spiritual growth and development.
- b. Creating opportunities where diverse voices and perspectives are welcomed and valued, ensuring that all feel seen, heard, and respected.

B. Church Community Building:

- a. Another important goal for a pastor is to foster a sense of community and fellowship within the church. This involves creating an environment where members feel connected to one another and can support and encourage each other in their faith. This ultimately will lead to building the congregation membership.

C. Develop Leadership Skills in the Congregation:

- a. Encourage all members of the congregation to get involved in the community and to take on leadership roles. Provide opportunities for members to participate in various committees and events and encourage them to take on leadership positions within these groups.
 - b. Additionally, encourage experienced leaders within the congregation to mentor and guide those who are new to leadership positions.
 - c. Lastly, set a positive example for others by demonstrating strong leadership skills yourself.
- D. Invest in Personal Growth and Development.
- a. This may include attending conferences and workshops to learn new skills and connect with other pastors. These events often offer opportunities for networking and sharing insights and experiences.
 - b. It is important to take time for themselves to rest and recharge.

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

This leader will play a pivotal role in empowering our members to engage meaningfully with the wider community.

A. Facilitating Outreach:

- a. We expect our minister to be a visionary and strategic thinker. They should have the ability to identify key community needs and opportunities for service.
- b. A pastor should also be reaching out to those outside of the church and provide practical assistance to those in need and share their faith with others.
- c. Additionally, use current technology (website, social media, YouTube, etc) to reach out to the community with sermons and events.

B. Promoting Charitable Work and Social Justice:

- a. We envision our new minister to be capable of forming strong connections with local organizations, community leaders, and neighboring congregations.
- b. Leading by example and demonstrating a wholehearted commitment to service, our minister will motivate our congregation to embody the values of compassion, empathy, and generosity.

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.

- A. Exhibiting A Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice: It is important to us that our Pastor exhibit a strong spiritual foundation and ongoing spiritual practice. Their love of God and capacity to follow Christ will be seen in the examples they set for us of how they respond to our church community.

- B. Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions: Strong preaching that is relatable to the congregants' life experiences is highly valued. Many congregants are looking for sermons that are thought-provoking and provide us with the opportunity to think about how we use that message to make an impact in our society.

- C. Building Transformational Leadership Skills: We have a desire for a pastor who can navigate change with us in a way that is gentle and inviting. We hope for greater participation in conversations about church direction so that we can deepen our understanding of who we are. Then perhaps a more concrete understanding of where we are going.

- D. The Significance of Community Outreach for Congregants: Our congregation values community outreach, and we are searching for a pastor who can guide us in working together toward these missions. We need someone who can help us define our goals and work collaboratively to achieve them.



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 calling extends beyond our church walls, urging us to be a beacon of hope and a force for positive change in our wider community. We are being called to create a space where all individuals feel seen, heard, and welcomed.

God is calling us to be a living testament to grace, extending love and compassion both in our congregation and in the world around us.

We desire to be a congregation balancing old and new traditions. Our hope is a church building filled with the sounds of all ages joining in laughter, songs of praise, prayer, storytelling, and the important work of deeply understanding each other.

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

For example, describe two experiments your congregation has initiated or engaged in the past year, what were the results and where do you see your next steps? Has your church had a multi-year strategic plan or vision statement; if so, where do you see that plan/vision taking you?

In 2022, our congregation physically returned to worship in the church sanctuary, which was also a year of discovering new financial realities, namely in our capacity for income and staff compensation. Balancing responsible financial stewardship with the desire to empower meaningful ministry is a top priority for us.

We also have a challenge to evaluate the structural organization of the committee activities of the church. We have been articulating this for several years as our church community finds it increasingly difficult to bring people to do this work.

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 FINANCE
- F. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

3A. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

Describe your congregation’s life of faith.

For example, what beliefs and commitments are stated in your congregation’s purpose statement or membership vows? How is God most often described in worship liturgy? In what ways would you describe the Holy Spirit in your midst?

Mission Statement

The purpose of this Church shall be to worship God, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to celebrate the Sacraments; to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this Church and the Church Universal; to render loving service toward this community and to the world; and to strive for righteousness, justice, and peace.

Identity Statement

We are a Christian family that celebrates and shares God’s love, offers the acceptance that Jesus taught, and acknowledges that we experience the Holy Spirit in unique and personal ways. We express our beliefs through worship, education, and service to our community and our world, while striving to live our faith every day.

The preceding Statements are found in our Church Bylaws which are reviewed and amended as needed at least every five years. The Mission statement is the beginning statement at all Church meetings and Church Council meetings.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

- A. Love, Unity, and Care: The love that members have for one another serves as the bedrock of our congregation.
- B. Tenacity and Perseverance: The congregation's tenacity in facing challenges is a testament to their resilience. This quality helps them weather difficulties and emerge stronger as a result.

- C. Talents and Abilities: The congregation is blessed with a diverse range of skills, educational backgrounds, and talents, enabling the church community to offer a wide array of resources and support.
- D. Balancing Tradition and Growth in Worship
As a congregation, we've inherited many worship traditions from our previous pastors that have been passed down throughout the years. However, we're open to new perspectives and experiences that a new pastor can bring to the table in our quest for spiritual enrichment and growth. We're looking for a leader who can respect our shared traditions while also helping us break out of our comfort zones and find ways to sustain the church in the future.
- E. Commitment to Foundational Values: Adherence to foundational beliefs and creeds is a source of strength. It provides a sense of grounding and continuity, especially as our membership ages.
- F. Committed Membership: Those who actively participate in the church community demonstrate an elevated level of dependability and dedication.
- G. Legacy of Strong Leadership: Many of our past clergy members, though different in their approaches, share the common thread of being strong leaders deeply invested in the church and the community. This legacy sets a high standard for leadership within the congregation.
- H. Respect for Physical Space: The care and stewardship shown towards the physical building reflects a respect for the sacredness of space and its importance to the community.
- I. Community Outreach and Assistance: The congregation's willingness to open the doors and support the wider community demonstrates a spirit of generosity and a desire to make a positive impact beyond their membership. AA has met in the church for many years. Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, and Girl Scouts currently meet at least weekly, and the Community Food Pantry has been housed at the church for many years.
- J. Generosity of Spirit: The congregation's generosity, both in terms of resources and kindness, reflects a genuine desire to contribute positively to the lives of others.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

For example, where does worship take place, and what is it based around? What was a recent baptism like? What are some words used to describe good preaching?

When our congregation gathers for worship in our Sanctuary, we are among our Church family. We believe that our faith community extends beyond the confines of our church walls. Here are some key elements of our worship experience:

- A. Substance and Spirit: Worship for us is as much about the depth of meaning and substance as it is about the spirit.
- B. Awareness of Diversity: We recognize and honor the diversity within our community.
- C. Uniqueness: We acknowledge that everyone is on their own unique journey, and our worship embraces this variety of perspectives.
- D. Diverse Member Perceptions of Worship Services: Our members have unique experiences during worship services. For some, the service provides a comforting atmosphere that fosters a sense of belonging through familiar hymns, responses, and special services. Meanwhile, others find the service, primarily through the sermons, to be thought-provoking and empowering, encouraging them to spread the message to the community.
- E. Connection with the Holy Spirit: There is a sense of connection with the Holy Spirit, which is experienced within us, and collectively during communion with the congregation.
- F. Inspiration and Empowerment: Worship serves as a source of inspiration, which then encourages us to take meaningful action in the world, bringing our faith into tangible practice.
- G. Direction and Acceptance: In worship, we find both direction for growth and acceptance. It's a space where we're encouraged to expand our thinking and embrace new challenges.
- H. Rite of Baptism: Our congregation has always joyfully welcomed the newest members of our church community. We, as a congregation, vow to support the parents in raising the children in Christian faith. Our latest Baptism, in June of 2023 was identical twin boys about a year of age. These boys had been attending church with their parents since they were but 2-3 months old, so they were well known in the congregation.
- I. Words of Pastoral Assurance: Peace, comfort, hope, love, acceptance, positivity, connectiveness, outreach, inspiration, faith, growth

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

For example, how are young people in leadership? How do people continue to form their faith over a lifetime? Name a topic studied or curriculum used recently; what was the impact of this study on those who attended?

The educational program of our church is rooted in the belief that learning and spiritual growth should be accessible and engaging for all members of our church community. We recognize the

significance of building connections between generations and providing opportunities for meaningful encounters with scripture and the development of personal beliefs and a deep relationship with Christ and God.

We value the depth of knowledge within our community and are eager to explore scripture with fresh perspectives and historical context. Looking ahead, we are excited about the potential for more intergenerational learning experiences. We believe that shared learning strengthens our sense of community and fosters deeper connections among members of different generations.

Our aspiration to offer inviting Christian programming signifies our intention to extend a warm welcome to those seeking a supportive and caring faith community. We aim to be a place where individuals can reconnect with their faith and find a circle of individuals ready to embrace and love them.

In summary, our perspective on education and faith formation is one of inclusivity, accessibility, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

For example, how are decisions communicated in your church? How are teams or committees organized? Where does your church struggle for vision?

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

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

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?

Our congregation has a clear structure with defined roles and responsibilities, which can be shared with you, upon your request. We are, however, experiencing uncertainty around the clarity and structure of both. We find committees engaged in overlapping work.

Our organization faces the reality that only a small circle of members is involved in leadership compared to our overall membership size. These leaders often hold multiple positions.

Furthermore, there is a need for a centralized platform where committees can collaborate and communicate effectively regarding their plans before execution.

Our staff members report directly to committees that are actively involved in their respective ministry areas. Oversight of their performance is facilitated by those committees.

Within our church's structure, there are several committees that require the pastor's attendance per the bylaws. The decision of which committee meetings to attend and how frequently is up to the discretion of the pastor.

A copy of our bylaws and annual reports can be provided upon request.

3B. 11-YEAR REPORT

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

N/A

3C. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

			<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	136		Clerk records
Number of active non-members:	49		Estimate- many are spouses of active members
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	185		

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)
More than 10 years:	140	Estimate
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	35	Estimate
Less than 5 years:	10	Estimate

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>
0	0	8	4	14	15	42	39	77	yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	5%	Estimate
Households with minors:	5%	Estimate
Single adults aged 35-65:	5%	Estimate
Joint households with no minors:	45%	Estimate
Single adults over 65:	40%	Estimate

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	1%	Estimate
College:	75%	Estimate
Graduate School:	19%	Estimate
Specialty Training:	5%	We have several members with a connection to the local vocational high school, as well as skilled labor and military
Other (please specify):		

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	12.5%	Estimate
Adults who are retired:	75%	Estimate
Adults who are not fully employed:	12.5%	Estimate

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

Primarily, we have a substantial presence of working and retired professionals, bringing with them a wealth of expertise from various fields. This includes individuals working in healthcare, education, law, engineering, finance, manufacturing, and skilled labor which have played a vital role in shaping our community.

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?

We primarily consist of Caucasian members and welcome individuals of various backgrounds.

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:

- A. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Diversity: No significant conversation has ever taken place around Open and Affirming.
- B. Ethnic & Racial Diversity: In worship, it is important to consider how we can engage and include individuals from different backgrounds and identities through liturgy, activities, and community engagement. One of our congregation members has successfully hosted two International Fairs for the wider community with several other members of the congregation participating in each event.



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 CPR	11	Safe Church
Adult Groups or Classes Women's luncheons and Annual Dinner	20	Women's Fellowship Group
Adult Groups or Classes 1. Apple Pie Baking 2. Mini Christmas Fair Fundraiser	10	Women's Fellowship Group
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	3 (plus families and congregation)	Pastor with Deacons
Children's Groups or Classes	6	Christian Ed with Pastor
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	Estimated 30-50	Pastor with deacons and Music Director
Church-wide Meals	0	
Choirs and Music Groups	4	Music Committee, Pastor with Deacons
Church-based Bible Study		Pastor with Deacons
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	1/month	Pastor with Deacons
Community Meals	0	
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	0	Christian Ed with Pastor (formerly CE Director)

Drama or Dance Program	0	
Funerals (<i>number last year</i>)	2/year	Pastor
Intergenerational Groups (Advent Workshop)	annually	CE Committee, Pastor, Volunteers
Outdoor Worship (in 2022)	10-15	Pastor, Music Director, and Deacons
Meditation & Yoga	2 classes weekly	Church Associate
Public Advocacy Work	No	
Retreats	0	
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	0	
Weddings (<i>number last year</i>)	0	
Worship (time slot: 9:30 am)	1 time weekly	Pastor, Deacons, Music Director
Worship (time slot: _____)		
Young Adult Groups or Classes	0	
Youth Groups or Classes	0	Christian Ed
Other: International Fair	6	Church Members
Other: Community Events (poetry reading by a local poet, safety presentation by local fire and police)	10	Women's Fellowship

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).

<u>Name</u>	<u>Three- or Four- Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)</u>	<u>Ministry Setting</u>	<u>Type of Ministry Role</u>	<u>Retired? (Y or N)</u>
John Zehring	Unsure	Maine	Pastor	Y
Sally Calhoun	Unsure	Ashby, MA	Pastor	Y

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:

None

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
Secretary	No	Part-time	Trustees	10 Years
Sexton	No	Part-time	Trustees	2 Years
Music Director	No	Part-time	Music Committee	Currently vacant
CE Coordinator	No	Part Time	CE Committee	Currently vacant

REFLECTION

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

Several key reflections emerge about our congregation's overall ministry:

- A. Diversity and Inclusivity: What diversity we know stems from a range of age groups, occupations, and political perspectives.
- B. Strong Tradition and History: Our church has a respect for tradition and a deep connection to the church's history.
- C. Community-Centered Approach: Our congregation's commitment to work with our neighbors reflects a desire to make a positive impact beyond the church walls.

- D. Adaptability and Resilience: The ability to pivot to virtual worship and engagement during the pandemic demonstrates our congregation's adaptability and resilience in the face of challenges.
- E. Intergenerational Focus: The presence of younger families reveals an effort to engage and nurture the faith of the next generation.
- F. Commitment to Education: We are seeking to nurture spiritual growth and understanding across the lifespan. We desire pastoral time to be committed to offering Biblical exploration and worship opportunities for all ages.
- G. Our Congregation's Commitment to Love and Support: We are a congregation that has a genuine desire to be a source of love and support, both within the church and in the broader community. We are actively working to fulfill our mission.

3E. CHURCH FINANCES

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

The following is a representation of FY 2022. FY 2023 had not closed at the time of the writing.

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$ 114,954.00
Endowment Proceeds (<i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i>)	\$ NA
Endowment Draw (<i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal"</i>)	\$ 11,085.00
Fundraising Events	\$ NA
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose (restricted funds)	\$ 1864.00
Grants	\$ NA
Rentals of Church Building (preschool rental plus fellowship hall rentals)	\$ 14,404.00
Rentals of Church Parsonage (rentals began in 2023)	\$ NA
Support from Related Organizations	\$ 3106.00

<i>Womens Fellowship and Yoga Group</i>	
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$ NA
Other (specify): Unpledged Income	\$ 11,222.00
Other (specify): Loose Plate	\$ 3225.00
TOTAL	\$ 159860.00

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for the most recent fiscal year):
\$ 178306.00

To view the 2024 Approved budget, go to: <https://westcong.org/pastor-profile-appendix/> and use the password: PastorProfileAppendix138

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

For FY 2022 the expenses were \$178306.00 and minister support was *\$63438.00 equals 35.6%.

* Illustrated above are the months spanning from July to December, during which the current interim minister began rendering services in July 2022.

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)

Our congregation is a 5-for-5 congregation.

- 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 the operating budget, what is that percentage? (recommended 10%)

We demonstrate our support for the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of

Christ by donating 5.7% percentage of our income which reflects our dedication to supporting the broader mission of the United Church of Christ, through proportional giving.

What is the church’s current indebtedness? Total amount of loan debt:

NA

Are capital and other payments current?

All payments are current.

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. NA

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

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2019-2020	Church building: Replaced roof, steeple repair, fridge for the kitchen, ceiling repair from leaks, and chimney at the parsonage	\$ 135000.00	\$129785.15	

To view the 2020 Annual Report of the Capital Action Team, go to: <https://westcong.org/pastor-profile-appendix/> and use the password: PastorProfileAppendix138

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

Although funds were allocated for summer camp scholarships and Christian education, the high cost of repairs prevented the realization of the mission component.

Does your church have an endowment?

Yes

What is the market value of the assets?

\$411,636 (as of 11.24.23)

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

Traditionally, there is an endowment draw for operating expenses drawn in the 4th quarter if needed. It is a figure accepted in the Annual Budget adoption.

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

The draw is the same annually. It is up to 3% of the average value over the preceding eight quarters. This is to smooth out market volatility and cushion any large influx of funds.

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

In 2023, the church made its annual draw in July to meet operating expenses. In 2022, the church used its full endowment draw (\$11085). The church did not need to use the endowment draws in 2020 or 2021. The endowment draws in 2019 was \$6150, and in 2018, it was \$5000.

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

If the church uses a portion of the defined annual draw of the endowment (moving to reduce the need for the full draw of the past few years), it should last for several decades. If there is a significant physical building/property crisis, the endowment's sustainability could be reduced to as few as ten to twenty years. However, if the fund is used as a regular source (annual draw plus additional funds) to cover unaddressed operating shortfalls, the endowment will run out within 5 to 7 years.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

The survival of any non-profit organization is dependent on the ability of the trustees to grow, preserve, and properly utilize the institution's endowment. It is important to not only retain corpus but also to retain a portion of the earnings for growth. In addition to meeting fiduciary responsibilities, the endowment must be managed responsibly to demonstrate to donors that their generosity will be used effectively for future generations.

Other Assets

Reserves (savings):

NA

Investments (other than endowment): NA

Does your church have a parsonage? Yes

Fair market rental value of the parsonage: \$2400.00 monthly

How is the parsonage used?

The parsonage is currently rented, though the church will begin the necessary processes for it to be vacated when it is apparent it is needed for church use. This was specified in our current rental agreement.

Address:

20 Lovell Street, Westminster, MA 01473

Finished square footage:

1856 Sq Ft

Number of Bedrooms:

4

Number of Bathrooms:

1 1/2



Assessed real estate value:

\$400,000

Available for minister residence:

Yes

Expected minister residence:

Negotiable

Condition of structure, systems, and appliances

The Parsonage is in good repair, and many recent updates were made with the departure of our previous settled Pastor. Updates include the half-bath, redoing the cement floor in the garage, re-asphalting the driveway, painting, and other minor repairs.

Entity in the church responsible for review and needed repairs:

The Trustees

Describe all buildings owned by the church:

Our present-day church stands on the same ground as its predecessor, which was destroyed by fire. The main part of the current building, housing the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall, was erected in 1941.

Years later, in 1958, an addition to our church was added to house Sunday School rooms and church offices. In 1992, Sunday school classrooms were expanded, and Covenant Hall, a spacious meeting area, was added to our facilities. At that time some of the original Sunday School rooms were rented to a local preschool.

Our parsonage, which is situated on a quiet street in a small neighborhood, is just a mile away from the church. The colonial-style house was built in the late 1960s by the church on land donated by a Westminster resident. It features four bedrooms, one and a half baths, a two-car garage, and a full basement.

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

NA

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

- Sanctuary: Accessible through lift. May need assistance with wheelchair as there is carpeting.
- Fellowship and Covenant Halls: Accessible via a single-person lift.
- Food Bank and Community Rooms: Accessible through the lift.
- Church School Wing: Accessible through the lift.
- Parlor and Choir Room: While accessible, there is a narrow entrance to consider.

Concerns and Considerations:

- Office, Library, and Pastor's Office: Access to these areas requires entry through a separate door. It is important to note that from this area, there is no direct access to an accessible bathroom, necessitating a journey to the back of the building where the lift is located.
- Chancel Accessibility: The chancel and choir loft are not wheelchair accessible, which may be a consideration for individuals with mobility needs.

While our building is technically accessible, it is worth noting the specific considerations and potential challenges for individuals with mobility needs. This information will be valuable for ensuring that all members and visitors can navigate and engage with our church spaces comfortably and safely.

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

For example, when was a time the church made a major budget change? How is the budgeting process done? What new ministry initiative has your church financed?

Due to the decline in pledges to the operating budget over the last few years, the church is faced with the challenge of balancing staff costs against utility expenditures. As a result, starting from FY year 2023, we went to a ¾ time interim pastor, and in FY year 2024, we will have a ½ time interim. We will fund our new settled pastor as full-time.

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.

- A. The Impact of COVID-19 on Worship Practices at Our Church: The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected all faith communities, including our church. Despite these challenges, we have demonstrated our strength and adaptability in the following ways:
- a. The creation of a "COVID Advisory Committee" ensured that our members were promptly updated on health protocols.
 - b. We offered virtual services online and held outdoor services whenever possible.
 - c. Creative alternatives, such as "drive-by" ashes and palm distributions, were introduced.
 - d. Zoom meetings were utilized for committee meetings and remain an option today.
 - e. Weekly virtual church school sessions were held
 - f. Families were provided with take-home activities to enjoy together
- B. Revisiting the Holy Land: A Pilgrimage to Israel: Thirteen church members, including the former pastor and his wife, traveled to Israel and Palestine to retrace the steps of Jesus.

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

In 2022, our Christian Education Coordinator resigned due to a family illness. However, the Christian Ed committee worked closely with our Interim Pastor to identify an appropriate rotation curriculum. As a result, we have expanded the support of the church school. To enrich the learning experience, we encourage older children and youth to take on leadership roles in helping younger members of the classroom. Going forward, our goal is to establish age-appropriate learning opportunities.

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.

For example, what is an example of a recent conflict and something your congregation learned from it? Describe an occasion when your church experienced conflict without being able to resolve it well. Does your church have policies, protocols or structures for dealing with conflict?)

In 2020, our congregation experienced some tension due to our choice to follow federal, state, and local government guidelines, as well as the UCC's recommendations, regarding COVID-19. We required masks in the church building and eventually resumed in-person worship. However, some individuals and families disagreed with our decisions. Fortunately, our Bylaws provide a clear outline of the Church Council's responsibilities, as well as those of all committees and officers within the church's organizational structure.

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

Staff member’s name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Raymond Mederios	9	Y
Robert Duebber	5	Y
Martha Dickerman	3	Y
Donald Richter	15	Y

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

We value a pastoral partnership; one who can work alongside us, with gentle guidance to aid our process of decision-making.

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

Yes

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

Yes; it was held on January 14, 2004.

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

No; we have no record that indicates that.

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?

Over the past year, our congregation has actively extended our relationships and activities outward in service and advocacy through various initiatives:

Local Service Activities:

- A. Neighbors Helping Neighbors: Some members of our congregation volunteer in the Westminster Neighbors Helping Neighbors program, where they have completed numerous projects to assist those in our community. These efforts range from home repairs to providing essential supplies, and to demonstrating our commitment to service on a local level.
- B. Food Pantry Support: We continue to open our doors to the local food pantry, providing a vital resource for families experiencing food insecurity. We regularly gather food donations and make financial contributions.
- C. Supporting our Area Scouts: Our church sponsors Boy Scouts Troop 33 and provides them with the support they need. Moreover, we host a local chapter of the Girl Scouts.
- D. Residential Reunification Homes: The Outreach Committee organizes an online Giving Tree every holiday season, complete with a list of identified gifts for families and children in our local community. Congregation members are encouraged to select one or more gifts from the list and spread the spirit of generosity during this special time of year.
- E. Partnerships with Organizations: Our church maintains partnerships with organizations that focus on issues of justice and care. This includes things like the Crop Walk, Habitat for Humanity, Our Father’s House, Greater Gardner Relay for Life and special calls from the UCC for disaster relief assistance, along with other offerings of the denomination.

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

Our congregation has two dedicated delegates to the United Church of Christ. They attend the Conference’s Annual Meeting on our behalf and report back to the congregation through written and verbal reports. In their past, they served on Conference-wide committees and our area’s

Committee on Church and Ministry. They assist others in navigating registration for events being held by the Conference. There are several other ways we are connected to the denomination beyond Westminster:

- A. At times the members, who are on mailing lists for the Conference and/or denomination, will make the church community aware of an event, workshop, online program, or other offering that may be of interest.
- B. Several members of our congregation participated regularly in Super Saturdays when they were being offered. They still speak of the things they learned and experienced during those gatherings.
- C. We supported past ministers in their service to the Association's CCMs or Conference Boards and Committees.
- D. Many members actively connect what they have read from the UCCs Daily Devotional to conversations in Bible Study, Lenten and Advent programs.

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?

Our congregation is committed to social justice and inclusivity, and making a sincere effort to improve the world around us.

- A. Faithful and Welcoming: Our church is open and welcoming to all people who approach the church. This demonstrates our dedication to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.
- B. Global Mission Church: Our previous partnerships with organizations such as Heifer International highlight our dedication to global missions. Thanks to the generous donations of our members, we have been able to purchase two Arks over the years.
- C. Border and Immigrant Justice: The Outreach committee has launched an initiative to welcome 30 families from Haiti, in response to the State Housing Mandate.

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

Our congregation has a history of active participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities in our local community.

Our congregation has established strong ecumenical partnerships with St. Edward the Confessor's Catholic faith community. Notable events include the annual Blessing of the Animals and Thanksgiving service. A 2022 Easter Sunrise Service on Academy Hill was a significant interfaith gathering that brought together eight different faith leaders and their congregations.

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.

Our congregation is in a process of reflection and transition.

- A. Improving Committee Efficiency: The Importance of Communication
Committee work is typically done independently of one another. However, more communication is necessary to avoid duplicating work, make the most of our resources, and encourage a sense of community among congregants. Furthermore, effective communication through our website and social media can help us promote sponsored events and establish a stronger presence in our town and neighboring communities.
- B. Mission Statement and By-Laws Alignment: It's clear that there is a sense of disconnect between our congregation's Mission Statement and By-laws and the actual activities and engagement levels. Not all congregants know or understand the structure of the church.

- C. **Shift Towards External Engagement:** There's a recognition of the need to re-engage beyond the church building and become more active in the wider community.
- D. **Commitment to Governance:** While governance is important for the smooth operation of the church, it's worth considering streamlining processes and reducing the size of our structure. Filling the existing committees with willing and able members is an ever-increasingly difficult task.
- E. **Use of Technology:** Our church has a website and Facebook page that is currently being underutilized. Many congregants have been wanting to read the weekly sermons, view the service on YouTube (even post-COVID), and see events and daily devotionals being posted to Facebook. These were available with our past pastor and were valued by many as a way to stay connected when traveling or home ill. Additionally, we utilize Church Windows as resources for Membership and Donation information. This resource is relied upon for various committees to be able to manage their work. There are lots of opportunities within Church Windows to expand.
- F. **Revitalizing the Church Community through New and Old Programs:** Church committees and congregants are taking on new projects that extend beyond the faith community. One of these initiatives is the "Open Table" program, aimed at fostering intergenerational relationships. During our transition conversations, we discussed several future programs, including Memory Cafe, revived caregiver support groups, and Vacation Bible School.

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 anticipate that they will be actively engaged with other area ministries, as well as be knowledgeable about the community's issues and needs.

4B. MISSION InSite

We utilized MISSION InSite to collect demographic data for the towns of Westminster, Ashburnham, Hubbardston, and Templeton, as well as the nearby city of Gardner. Several of our congregants originate from these regions.

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

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?

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

To address the challenge of expanding the congregation, we need to look at the demographics of the area. Racial diversity is projected to remain the same over the next ten years. Families with and without children, as well as religious affiliation and spiritual beliefs, are also expected to remain relatively stable. Therefore, we must focus on other areas for growth.

A potential area for a plan to attract new members could be in the "Life Concerns" and "Program and Ministry Preferences" graphs. These graphs can offer valuable insights into the types of programs and educational opportunities that would appeal to potential members.

Household & Family Demographics

To view the data sheets and graphs, go to: <https://westcong.org/pastor-profile-appendix/> and use the password: PastorProfileAppendix138

What do you hear when you talk to community leaders and ask them what your church is known for? When speaking with community leaders about our church, they often highlight these key characteristics:

- A. Notable Community Engagements: Our annual tradition of placing mums on the front steps of the church has become a distinctive feature of our congregation, drawing attention and becoming a recognizable symbol in our community. Our past leadership of the Yankee Street Fair is often mentioned by others, as is our willingness to jump in and be a part of the community-wide Town Benefit Day by serving Strawberry Shortcake with enthusiasm.

- B. Support for Local Initiatives: Most notably, we are now recognized for the support of our local scouts. Many young people enter our building weekly and feel at home. Also, we are locally known for our hosting of the Food Pantry.

Our church is known for its active and impactful presence in the community, whether through inclusive practices, recognizable events, or meaningful service initiatives.

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

Numerous new members have cited our church's dedication to Christian education as a primary factor in their attraction to it. They have lauded our church for prioritizing and supporting this vital aspect of their faith journey, which sets us apart from other churches.



5. REFERENCES

This Section is being referred to the Pastoral Search Committee.

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. See Appendix A.

REFERENCE 1

Debra Perla, Owner/Director of Appleseed Academy of Child Development, Inc.
P.O. Box 795, Westminster, MA 01473
Mrs. Perla’s business rents space in the church.

REFERENCE 2

Stephanie Lahtinen, Town of Westminster Administrator
11 South St., Westminster, MA 01473
The church works closely with her on town-related matters and outreach.

REFERENCE 3

Tina Chiasson, Scout Master, Boy Scout Troop 33
bchaisson66@gmail.com
Our church sponsors Troop 33.

6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

A. CLOSING PRAYER

B. STATEMENT OF CONSENT

C. CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

6A. CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God,

We come to you seeking your guidance and wisdom as we search for a new pastor to lead our congregation. We know that you have a plan for us, and we trust that you will guide us to the right person to shepherd our community.

Please give us the discernment to recognize the right candidate when we see them. Help us to look beyond any superficial qualities or impressive credentials, and instead seek out someone with a deep love for you and a heart for serving others.

We pray that you will prepare the heart of our new pastor even now, wherever they may be. Give them a passion for your Word and a desire to lead our congregation in a way that honors you and strengthens our faith.

Above all, we ask that you be glorified throughout this process. May your will be done, and may your name be praised.

In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

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 a 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 Church Council appointed four members, with the interim minister's recommendation, to prepare the church profile. However, three of the four committee members withdrew over the course of a few

months. The interim minister and one remaining member prepared the draft profile. Upon receiving the draft profile, the Church Council then appointed four new members to review, edit, and finalize it.

Signed:

Name / Title / Date:

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. Carol Steinbrecher*

Name / Title: Rev. Carol Steinbrecher, Area Conference Minister, North Central Region

Email: steinbrecherc@sneucc.org

Phone: 508-244-4887

Date: March 21, 2024

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



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





TOWN OF WESTMINSTER
STEPHANIE LAHTINEN, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR
11 South Street
Westminister, MA 01473
slahtinen@westminister-ma.gov - 978-874-7400

February 12, 2024

Dear Ms. Ellen Holmes,

I am writing this letter to highly recommend the First Congregational Church of Westminister and commend their outstanding assistance and positive contributions to our community. As the Westminister Town Administrator, I have had the privilege of witnessing the dedication and community-minded spirit exhibited by the members of this church under its leadership and with the support of its congregation.

The First Congregational Church of Westminister has consistently demonstrated a commitment to providing valuable assistance to the residents of our town. Their various community outreach programs, charitable initiatives, and collaborative efforts have significantly contributed to the well-being and support of our local population. Whether through organizing food drives, participating in community projects, or offering support to vulnerable individuals, the church has proven to be a reliable and compassionate partner in our community.

Moreover, the members of the First Congregational Church of Westminister exemplify the true essence of good community membership. Their involvement in local events, willingness to collaborate with other local organizations, and active participation in town showcase a genuine dedication to the betterment of Westminister. The church's open-door policy and welcoming atmosphere have fostered a sense of unity and inclusivity, making them an integral part of our close-knit community.

I wholeheartedly recommend the First Congregational Church of Westminister for any recognition or support they may seek. Their positive contributions and unwavering commitment to the community have undoubtedly made a lasting and meaningful impact on the residents of our town.

If you have any further questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,


Westminister Town Administrator



*Appleseed Academy
of child Development*

P.O. Box 795 138 Main Street
Westminster, MA 01473
978-874-6166

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the First Congregational of Westminster. On a personal note, my family and I moved to Westminster 34 years ago. We began attending church services then and our children attended Sunday school classes throughout their childhood here. We met many wonderful people in the church over the years and felt very welcomed by this church community. We also enrolled our daughter in the preschool that was located in the church. I began teaching in the preschool that first year as well. Ten years later, I bought that preschool from the previous owner and created Appleseed Academy of Child Development, Inc.

On a professional level, I have shared a great Lessee/Lessor relationship with the First Congregational Church of Westminster for 24 years. They have always been responsive to our maintenance needs both inside and out. They have also been very fair with our financial arrangements. When COVID happened and we had to close our preschool for the remainder of that school year, all sources of parent tuition payments stopped and having to pay parent refunds due to the closure made it very difficult to meet financial commitments. However, the Trustees worked with me to make my situation a little easier. Then, they generously granted me the approval to use the downstairs space for a classroom so Appleseed was able to successfully re-open in September with all DEEC COVID re-opening health and safety regulations in place. This made all the difference in the world for Appleseed Academy to be able to continue operating and not have to close our doors for good.

Since then, the Church has also put into place further security measures to keep our students and staff safe and emergency systems to immediately be able to contact the fire/police station if needed. I am very happy with the support that our little preschool gets from the Church, hence this is why Appleseed Academy is able to continue to provide a quality early childhood education and care in a safe place for children in our community each year.

Sincerely,

Debra Perla,
Owner/Director of Appleseed Academy of Child
Development, Inc.

Troop 33 Westminster
Main Street
Westminster, MA

April 2, 2024

RE: Reference for the First Congregational Church of Westminster, MA

My name is Bettina Chaisson, Committee Chair for BSA Troop 33 Westminster, affiliated with the First Congregational Church in Westminster, MA. We have been chartered thru the church for just over a year. During this time, the troop and the church have had a wonderful working relationship, understanding our commitment to the values and duties to God, family, and the community in which it resides.

Since I have been involved with scouting at the church, I have witnessed the church's ministries and what they have to offer. They have a very close congregation in which you can see after the service during coffee hour with much of the congregation staying to socialize with one another. My scouts enjoy being given the opportunity to talk with the congregation and share their experience in scouting.

The church and their congregation have done much to guide, mentor, and assist the youth in our troop. We have reached out to members of the congregation for assistance on various issues and they have gladly volunteered their time and experience.

It has been my pleasure to be part of the First Congregational Church of Westminster's extended family, and I look forward to continuing that connection in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Bettina Chaisson

Troop 33 Committee Chair

978-630-2688

Bchaisson66@gmail.com