



United Parish of Upton

A Federated Church of the
First Congregational Church of Upton (Est. 1735)
& United Methodist Church (Est. 1874)

Established 1970 - Open & Affirming since 2013

Southern New England Conference of the UCC

Pastor, Full-time settled position

Local Church Profile



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1. POSITION POSTING

1a. Listing Information

Church name: United Parish of Upton
Street address: 1 Church Street, Upton MA, 01568
Email: searchcall@sneucc.org
Website: www.unitedparishupton.org
Youtube: youtube.com/unitedparishupton
Facebook: facebook.com/unitedparishupton
Instagram: instagram.com/unitedparishupton

Additional ecumenical affiliations: United Methodist Church
Conference: Southern New England Conference
Association: Central MA Association
UCC Conference Contact Person: Rev. Carol Steinbrecher (she/her)
ACM, North Central Region
Phone: 508-244-4887
steinbrecherc@sneucc.org

Summary Ministry Description:

This is an open invitation to a community-oriented pastor who will serve with love, embrace change, challenge the status-quo, and who has innovative ideas to promote spiritual growth. The United Parish of Upton believes that we can make a tangible difference within our church family and the wider community when we align our endeavors with the teachings of Jesus. With the right partner, we feel we can create engaging programs and activities that serve a variety of community groups, regardless of affiliation. We want to identify the needs of our neighbors and serve them.

What we value about living in our area:

The United Parish of Upton is centrally located between Boston, Worcester, and Providence in what is considered the Metrowest Boston area. Nestled in the heart of the Blackstone Valley, we are close to all the amenities of a big city but with the quiet and peacefulness of the suburbs. We enjoy good schools, good health care, proximity to hiking and other outdoor activities, and communities that are generally open and accepting. We appreciate the history of living in the Blackstone River Valley, the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. There are many quaint old mill towns in the area but are mainly bedroom communities now. There is a comfortable blend of long-time residents and new neighbors who have worked together to improve the community.



Current size of membership:	174
Languages used in ministry:	English
Position Title:	Full Time Settled Pastor
Position Duration:	Settled
Compensation Level:	Full Time
Salary Basis:	\$68,000 - \$75,000 Plus Conference recommended benefits

1b. Scope Of Work

As the primary professional staff member of the United Parish of Upton, the Minister shall serve as the head of staff and provide oversight and leadership for the church's worship and organizational life.

Primary Responsibilities

Worship and Teaching

- Deliver inspiring and theologically deep sermons.
- Administer Sacraments.
- Encourage members to relate their faith to daily life.
- Support Christian education for adults and children.

Pastoral Care

- Exercise faithful pastoral care to all members of the congregation in times of crisis, concern, and celebration.
- Make pastoral calls to the hospitalized, the homebound, those in care facilities, and the general congregation.
- Provide spiritual guidance.

Administration

- Participate in Leadership Council and Diaconate meetings, Early Learning Center and other committees and groups as needed.
- Work cooperatively with the professional staff of the church providing oversight of their ministries and programs.
- Be well-versed in, and promote the use of electronic media.
- Identify opportunities to delegate responsibilities to support the breadth of pastoral work.



Outreach - Ministry and the Wider Church

- Be welcoming to members of the community who are interested in participating in the life of the church.
- Counsel and receive new members into the congregation.
- Learn about and become involved in the community.

Personal and Professional

- Maintain impartiality in dealing with the wide range of issues and interests in the church.
- Encourage participation in the activities of the UCC and the UMC.
- Participate in local clergy activities.
- Deal effectively with conflicts in accordance with our Personnel Pastor Parish (PPP) Conflict Resolution.
- Respect boundaries, both personal and institutional.
- Maintain a healthy work/life balance.

Collaborative work

- Guide, encourage, and empower the various lay-led programs and ministries.
- Develop multi-sensory, thematically cohesive liturgies for the services of worship in collaboration with the Minister of Music, Deacons and worship team.
- Offer Communion to the homebound and those in care facilities in collaboration with Deacons.
- Develop new ministries collaboratively with church leadership, the congregation, and community partners.

Core Competencies

The United Parish of Upton is seeking a pastor with a combination of spiritual gifts, values, attributes, knowledge, and character that will contribute to effective pastoral competence.

Compassionate:

The settled Pastor should be someone who approaches ministry with compassion, humility, respect, kindness, and Christian love. A commitment to compassionate pastoral care should include but not be limited to counseling, visitation, and the building of healthy interpersonal relationships with people of all ages and demographics.

Empowering:

The ability to develop and empower staff and ministry teams; knowing when and how to delegate responsibilities; working with the church to discover ways of inviting the stranger as well as those in need to become part of a growing congregation.

Insightful:

The pastor should possess spiritual, and theological discernment and insight. Pastoral responsibilities would include crafting and leading thoughtful, meaningful worship services that include insightful and relevant biblical teachings. Discernment and insight would also be welcomed in any other aspect of the church, including but not limited to ministries, marketing/branding, or financial health.

Organized:

Good communication skills, time management, and work-life balance.



1c. Compensation and Support

Salary Basis: \$68,000-\$75,000 Plus Conference recommended benefits

Benefits:

- Pension (14% of salary basis)
- Individual UCC Health, Dental, and Vision Insurance
- Life/Disability (1.5% of salary)

In addition, the church will provide:

- Employer Share of FICA (7.65% of Salary Basis)
- Reimbursement for mileage, professional expenses and continuing education
- Private office
- Phone
- Computer, with camera, microphone and speakers
- Vacation, sick and study time
- Potential 3 month sabbatical after 5 – 7 years of service

Expected living situation:

Our preference would be for a pastor who resides within our community or within a reasonable distance to allow for involvement in our ministries, community events, and emergencies.

Residential/commuting expectations:

The minister accepting this position must provide their own transportation, as public transportation in Upton and the surrounding towns is insufficient.

Peer and professional support available:

The Southern New England Conference has an active pastoral support network.



1d. Who Is God Calling To Minister With Us?

We envision our next minister will co-collaborate with us to expand our outreach and service goals to the community through our existing ministries. Some of our strongest ministries are:

- Food Pantry
- Community Supper
- Music Ministry
- Spiritual Formation
- Early Learning Center
- Soul Fuel Cafe

Our goals also include exploring new ministries in the following areas:

- Accommodating people with disabilities
- Housing crisis
- Poverty and human injustices
- Multigenerational outreach
- LGBTQIA+ youth

We envision a minister who will take an active role in our efforts towards service; a dynamic partner who will help us to build bridges and promote understanding among different communities. Our goal is to make an impact beyond our walls in the following ways:

- Working together for justice and mercy
- Strengthening inter- and intra-personal assets
- Exhibiting a spiritual foundation and ongoing spiritual practice
- Building transformational leadership skills

We would appreciate someone who is comfortable including and supporting culturally diverse elements in worship, such as through music and art. We require someone who is fluent in the English language, and we would welcome multi-language fluency.

2. WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME

Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?

We aspire to be a beacon of welcome, love, inclusivity, and service to the community and world. We aim to be a diverse community where people can further explore traditional and innovative worship and spiritual practices. We seek to offer opportunities for spiritual growth, social connections, and community involvement.

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

Some of our biggest challenges are:

Accommodating people with disabilities, community engagement, and non-religious cultural trends.

Accommodating Disabilities:

Our worship services are now accessible to those who are unable to physically attend our building. We offer live-stream services on YouTube for this purpose. Additionally, we provide assisted hearing devices and large print bulletins for those who attend in-person worship. We continue to struggle to find the resources necessary to upgrade our building to make it ADA Compliant.

Community Engagement:

Soul Fuel Cafe was established in 2021 with the goal of creating an inviting space within the church where everyone in the community and surrounding towns would feel welcome. The cafe provides a friendly atmosphere for people to hang out with friends, work remotely, hold business meetings, study, read, tutor or simply connect with others. It is run by volunteers, and all profits go towards supporting missions and ministries of the United Parish of Upton.

Non-Religious Cultural Trends:

We acknowledge this is a difficult challenge for most churches. We seek to challenge non-religious cultural trends by exploring non-traditional alternative forms of spiritual growth like yoga, meditation, Qigong, Reiki, and sound healing.

3. WHO ARE WE NOW?

3a. Congregational Reflections

Describe your congregation's life of faith.

As stated in our Vision Statement: "We believe God has called us to be centered and growing in Jesus Christ, celebrating God's love, nurtured by meaningful traditions and led by the Spirit in new directions. We are to be a multi-generational, family-centered congregation that invites all people to enjoy friendship with Christ and with one another.

We believe God has called us to tend the fabric of our congregational life with compassion and joy, fostering and nurturing relationships of care. We are to empower each other to express our spiritual gifts in every aspect of our lives.

We believe God has called us to use our strength to provide active and vital outreach ministries to our community and world. We are to actively and faithfully plan for the purposeful growth of our church."

The Holy Spirit is alive and vibrant in our midst. We feel it in worship through liturgy, testimony, prayers, music, and ministries. It is reflected to us in the mutual joy and gratitude of those we serve.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

The United Parish of Upton is known for being a welcoming, progressive, and service-oriented congregation. We have a strong music ministry that is often noted as a favorite aspect of worship. The ministries of our church are driven by empowered leaders. We have an eagerness to gain a deeper understanding of the teachings of Christ and are committed to expanding our knowledge of the world around us so that we can serve the community better.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

When people enter the worship space, it feels like a family reunion. Our worship services are highly participatory. There is a conscious intention to create scripture-based multi-sensory, relevant, worship with a deep connection between the spoken word, visual aspects, and music. Periodically, we invite lay people to engage in a process of intentional worship planning that has proven to be rich and rewarding. Communion is offered monthly.

September through June, worship takes place in our historic sanctuary adorned with a beautiful pipe organ. In July and August, we gather in the lower vestry where it is cooler and more intimate. After worship, we enjoy gathering in Soul Fuel Cafe for fellowship.

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

In recent years, a variety of lay-led small group programs have been offered:

- Read the Bible in a year
- New Testament Deep Dive
- Weekly Book Group
- Spiritual Formation
- Ecumenical Book Club

As a congregation, we have a great desire to include children and youth in the life of our church. It is becoming apparent that we need to discover what we can offer to these age groups so that they will feel compelled and welcome to participate. There is a Bible Live program that draws a few of them in to perform scripture stories once or twice a year. One is more likely to find youth hanging out in the cafe, attending the church pre-school or volunteering for one of the ministries rather than attending worship.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

We take pride in being a congregant-led church of ministry and mission. Committee members are voted in at the annual meeting and are the main contacts for their ministry. An appointed member of each committee attends a monthly leadership meeting. Leadership meetings are attended by the pastor, church moderators, committee chairs and any congregant wishing to be involved. Any major decisions that affect the congregation as a whole are presented for a vote at the annual meeting held in June or at a special called congregational meeting.

Communications are delivered in a variety of ways:

- Our monthly email newsletter, The Spire
- Website announcements
- Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube)
- Local Newspaper
- Mighty Network postings
- Announcements and bulletins
- Snail mail

Anyone can create or join a ministry and new ideas are welcomed and encouraged. We struggle with a lack of volunteers to carry out all of the visions and goals we have for our church.

Each committee meets monthly for at least an hour. The Leadership Council meets for 2 hours per month and the PPP meets quarterly for 2 hours. Additional hours vary based on the scope of the decision.

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

In the past year, there was a flood in the basement. When the members discovered it, they called the Chair of the Building and Grounds Committee. The chair contacted a parishioner, who is a retired fire chief in town. He alerted his contacts at the fire department, who brought a pump to remove the water. The Building and Grounds Committee subsequently identified the source of the leak, recommended a solution to church leadership, and made the repair. The response demonstrates the parishioners' knowledge of protocol and shows the deep roots our parish has with the town.

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



3b. 11-YEAR REPORT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST										
ELEVEN YEAR CHURCH PROFILE BASED ON DATA REPORTED IN UCC YEARBOOKS										
<div style="text-align: right;"> <i>God is still speaking,</i> UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST </div>										
Church#:	787004									
Assoc:	905	Schedule:	0 United Parish Congregational UCC			Upton		MA	01568	
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	220	98	120	0	5	1	5	0	1	
2013	235	93	106	14	8	0	7	0	15	
2014	238	91	114	0	5	0	4	0	1	
2015	238	81	62	4	3	0	5	0	2	
2016	234	78	60	0	0	0	4	0	-4	
2017	245	77	23	7	6	2	4	0	11	
2018	246	81	65	0	2	0	1	0	1	
2019	240	67	35	8	0	3	3	14	-6	
2020	238	60	0	0	0	0	2	0	-2	
2021	235	27	17	0	3	0	6	0	-3	
2022	232	34	34	0	4	0	7	0	-3	
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	\$221,898	\$0	\$5,000	\$534	\$5,534	\$2,000	\$7,534	2.25	\$229,432	\$161,323
2013	\$227,816	\$0	\$5,206	\$8,817	\$14,023	\$2,000	\$16,023	2.29	\$243,839	\$170,395
2014	\$251,132	\$0	\$1,110	\$4,782	\$5,892	\$4,000	\$9,892	0.44	\$261,024	\$174,577
2015	\$233,120	\$0	\$6,469	\$4,254	\$10,723	\$2,000	\$12,723	2.77	\$245,843	\$193,304
2016	\$229,637	\$0	\$4,021	\$4,415	\$8,436	\$2,000	\$10,436	1.75	\$240,073	\$184,096
2017	\$259,693	\$0	\$6,656	\$220	\$6,876	\$2,400	\$9,276	2.56	\$268,969	\$185,211
2018	\$290,794	\$0	\$3,872	\$0	\$3,872	\$2,000	\$5,872	1.33	\$296,666	\$170,136
2019	\$293,268	\$0	\$1,040	\$0	\$1,040	\$0	\$1,040	0.35	\$294,308	\$152,613
2020	\$266,863	\$0	\$5,168	\$0	\$5,168	\$0	\$5,168	1.94	\$272,031	\$172,460
2021	\$195,548	\$0	\$2,825	\$0	\$2,825	\$0	\$2,825	1.44	\$198,373	\$149,650
2022	\$183,559	\$0	\$3,600	\$200	\$3,800	\$0	\$3,800	1.96	\$187,359	\$142,810
% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		
2017-2022	-5.31	-55.84	47.83	-73.33	75.00	-29.32	-44.74	-30.34		
2012-2022	5.45	-64.58	-71.67	-33.33	40.00	-17.28	-31.33	-18.34		

3c. Congregational Demographics

Church Members and Non-Members:

		Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)
Number of active members:	143	
Number of active non-members:	31	
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	174	As of Oct., 2023

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church: *(Based on church members (143))*

		Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)
More than 10 years:	64%	
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	22%	
Less than 5 years:	14%	

Number of total participants by age: *(Based on church members (143))*

0-1	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)
3	8	16	11	5	24	33	26	17	x

Percentage of adults in various household types: *(Based on church members 143)*

		Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)
Single adults under 35:	17%	x
Households with minors:	19%	x
Single adults age 35-65:	11%	x
Joint households with no minors:	35%	x
Single adults over 65:	16%	x

Education level of adult participants by percentage: *(Based on church members 143)*

EDUCATION		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	10%	x
College:	69%	x
Graduate School:	11%	x
Specialty Training:	?	We do not record this
Don't know:	5%	x
Children not in high school:	5%	x

Percentage of adults in various employment types: *(Based on church members 143)*

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	47%	x
Adults who are retired:	24%	x
Adults who are not fully employed:	29%	These are part-time (19%) and not working (10%)

Reflection:

We have a wide range of occupations within our congregation. Some of these include: high-tech, healthcare, education, childcare, insurance, finance, and the sciences. The majority of our attendees are white/caucasian, but our ministries serve a diverse population. We successfully worked through the Open and Affirming (UCC) and Reconciling (UMC) processes in 2013. We welcome opportunities to address diversity in the future.

3d. Participation and Staffing

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings?
Adult Groups or Classes	12	Parishioner led, some pastor participation
Baptisms (number last year)	2	Pastor, family/mentors, Deacons
Early Learning Center (staff & students)	51	Director, teachers, pastor, advisory board
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	(138)+(87)	Pastor, Music Director, deacons

Church-wide Meals	30 (transition meetings)	Leadership team, Pastor
Choirs and Music Groups	1 adult choir 9-10 members, Accompanist and Music Minister	Pastor, Music Minister, Accompanist, Art Ministry lay leader, other lay leaders/deacons on occasion;
Church-based Bible Study	10 (deep dive bible group-2022)	Parishioner led, some pastor participation
Communion (monthly) (includes Communion at home)	44	Pastor and Deacons
Community Meals	45	Faith in Action Committee
Confirmation (number confirmed last year)	0	Last confirmation class was before Covid; Pastor planned
Drama or Dance Program	5	We have a lay leader who has organized a "Bible Live" drama group.
Funerals (number last year)	11	Pastor, Deacons
Intergenerational Groups	40	Choir Director and Lay Leaders
Outdoor Worship	40 (Easter Sunrise and Ash Wednesday candle light)	Pastor, Deacons
Prayer or Meditation Groups	10	Lay leaders
Public Advocacy Work (Food Pantry)	30 families 5 staff	Lay leaders and community volunteers
Retreats	20 Day retreat at Rolling Ridge	Pastor, Lay leadership
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community (Book Club, Bible Study and Spiritual Formation)	21	Lay leaders
Weddings (number last year)	0	
Worship (time slot: 9:30 a.m.)	40 in person, 10 on line	Pastor, Music Director, Deacons, Tech team
Young Adult Groups or Classes	0	
Youth Groups or Classes	5	Pastor
Other Soul Fuel Cafe (Volunteers)	15	Lay leaders and Community Volunteers

Members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers.

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
Fran Graveson	No	Worcester Area Mission Society	Approved for ordination pending call	N
Anine de Grood	No	Internship at United Parish of Auburndale	Member in Discernment	N
Rev. Dr. Hope Luckie	4 UMC	Preacher's Aid Society of New England	Director of Clergy-Family Services for SW NE	N
Mimi Wood Magee	4 UMC	Preacher's Aid Society of New England	Director of Clergy-Family Services for SE NE	N

Current Staff:

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full-time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Interim Minister	X	Full-time	PPP Committee	Since 7/23
Church Administrator		¾ time	Pastor	Since 7/06
Music Minister		Part-time	Pastor	Since 5/01
Accompanist		Part-time	Pastor	Since 3/23
ELC Director		¾ time	Pastor	Since 10/22
ELC Teacher		Part-time	ELC Dir.	Since 4/20/21
ELC Teacher		Part-time	ELC Dir.	Since 9/2017
ELC Teacher		Part-time	ELC Dir.	Since 9/2016
ELC Teacher		Part-time	ELC Dir.	Since 10/2022
ELC Teacher		Part-time	ELC Dir.	Since 1/2023
After School Teacher		Part-time	ELC Dir.	Since 1/2017
After School Teacher		Part-time	ELC Dir.	Since 1/2017
After School Teacher		Part-time	ELC Dir.	Since 1/2020



3e. Church Finances

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

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$141,728
Early Learning Center	\$210,000
Endowment Proceeds (as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return)	\$19,900
Endowment Draw (beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal")	\$0
Fundraising Events	\$9,500
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$16,004
Grants	\$40,000
Rentals of Church Building	\$5000
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$0
Support from Related Organizations (e.g. Women's Group)	\$0
Other (specify): Soul Fuel Cafe	\$10,000
Other (specify):	\$0
TOTAL	\$452,132

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): \$412,766

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support.

What is the percentage? 43%

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?

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

Note: We also pay into World Missions, New England Missions and Ministry support through the United Methodist Church. For The United Church of Christ we pay into World Missions/Disaster Relief funds, Proportional Giving.



In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of the operating budget, what is that percentage? 2%

What is the church's current indebtedness? 0

Total amount of loan debt: 0

Capital campaign:

We recently installed a new roof and boiler. The leadership team is restarting discussions about our building needs for the future. We do not have a capital campaign planned. We anticipate a future campaign to address accessibility issues to our church sanctuary and our Soul Fuel Cafe.

Does your church have an endowment? Yes

What is the market value of the assets, as of 3/29/2024? \$552,236

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

Funds are drawn only if needed, the maximum rate of draw is 5%.

Other Assets: Reserves (savings): \$0

Investments (other than endowment): None

Does your church have a parsonage? No

Describe all buildings owned by the church: Our historic church building.

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

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs?

The Vestry is wheelchair-accessible from the street. There is another wheelchair-accessible entrance in the ELC, through which one can access the church office, the minister's office, the Soul Fuel Cafe, and a restroom. The second floor of the ELC wing is also accessible by a chair lift.

Reflection:

Most of our ministries are strong and are sustained through donations and fundraising. We accomplish a lot with our limited resources.

3f. Historical Information

The United Parish of Upton started as two different churches, the First Congregational Church of Upton and the Upton United Methodist Church.

First Congregational Church

The First Congregational Church began in the early days of Upton. The town of Upton started because its settlers desired a central place to worship, somewhere closer to their homes and farms. At the time, the only other churches close by were in Mendon, Uxbridge, Hopkinton, and Sutton.



The colonial government was petitioned and articles of incorporation for the Town of Upton were passed on June 14, 1735. Residents voted in December of the same year to build a meeting house. Construction was completed in 1736, and the building was located near the corner of Mendon and Grove Streets. The first pastor was Reverend Thomas Weld.

The Rev. Elisha Fish, was ordained as the minister here in 1751. In 1770, while still under his pastorate, church members voted to build a new church on the common. The Rev. Fish served as pastor for the church through the Revolutionary War and until his death in 1795. The church owns several of his published sermons. The next minister, Rev. Benjamin Wood, was the church's second-lifetime minister. During 1848 and while under Rev. Wood's pastorate, a third church building was constructed. This church building is the same one we occupy today. We celebrated the 150th anniversary of our building's dedication back in 1998.

Upton United Methodist Church

The Upton United Methodist Church began with several Upton residents gathering to worship. By 1873 the group had grown large enough to rent space in the Crispin Building, which no longer stands. The church was officially organized on March 1, 1874, with the Reverend N.B. Fiske was appointed as the first minister. Just one month later, the church membership voted to build its own building. At the end of its first year, the Upton United Methodist Church had 66 members. Its church building, which now serves as the Upton Town Library and Historical Society rooms, was dedicated on March 8, 1876. When the two congregations merged, the building was donated to the town of Upton.



The United Parish

The process of considering the union of two churches began in 1967, with committees from both churches studying the potential. On January 15, 1970, the voting was unanimous in favor of forming a United Parish. The Reverend Jackman, of the First Congregational Church and Rev. William Mullins, Jr. of the Methodist church served together as ministers of the new church, the United Parish of Upton.

Significant Events:

- The merger of the First Congregational Church and the Upton United Methodist Church in 1970 (Federation)
- Opening the Early Learning Center in 1983
- Becoming Open and Affirming/Reconciling in 2013
- Starting the Community Supper in 2016
- Opening the Soul Fuel Cafe in 2021

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

The pandemic was a major challenge, which we managed through grant writing, the success of which allowed us to maintain our staff. We also began live streaming services and eventually moved to hybrid services, which we have continued.

Describe your congregation's values and practices when it comes to conflict.

We prioritize everyone's dignity and perspectives. Our bylaws outline procedures for conflict resolution that are coordinated by the PPP Committee, church leadership, and the Pastor.

Ministerial History

Staff member's name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Rev. Jennifer Geary	7/2/23-Present	UCC (Interim)
Rev. Lourey Savick	7/10/16-6/18/23 (7 ys)	UMC (Settled)
Rev. Virginia Child	8/16/15-6/27/16 (1 yr)	UCC (Interim)
Rev. Jan Gregory-Charpentier	11/28/99-6/7/15 (16 yrs)	UCC (Settled)
Rev. Leighton Foss	1997-1999 (2 yrs)	UCC (Interim)
Rev. James C. Hensley	8/1/85-6/20/97 (12 yrs)	UMC (Settled)

Has any past leader left under pressure or by involuntary termination? No

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?

4a. Community Vision

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

There is something happening at The United Parish of Upton every day. The majority of our work occurs through our outward-facing ministries:

MINISTRIES OF OUR CHURCH

Faith In Action

The Faith in Action is the heart and soul of our mission-focused church. These important ministries are explained in detail below.



Barnabus Barn for food drop offs



Food Pantry

The Food Pantry at United Parish of Upton serves residents from Upton as well as nearby towns. Proof of income or church affiliation is not necessary. We are committed to building relationships of trust and support with any neighbor experiencing hardship.

- It is run by church and community volunteers with additional assistance from Special Education students in the Vista program.
- We provide Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving dinner baskets for patrons who have been attending the food pantry for 6 months or more and sign up.

Soul Fuel Cafe

Soul Fuel Cafe ministry has been serving the community since June 2021. The cafe is a great spot to gather with friends, work, study, read a book, do a puzzle, or nothing at all!

- The Soul Fuel Cafe is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday
- Showcases local artisan products
- Available for special events
- Proceeds support the ministries and missions of The United Parish of Upton.





Community Supper

The Community Supper is a place where our guests can take a break from having to cook one evening a month. It's fun, neighborly, and busy, with the option to eat in or take out.

It offers a main dish, vegetarian option, salad, dessert, and beverage. Held September through June, every third Thursday at 5:30 pm.

Art Ministry

The art ministry offers opportunities to create projects in a fun, group setting. The altar cloth in our sanctuary was created in 2022. Using thread and imagination, "houses" were personalized and assembled to form our altar cloth. During COVID, the Youth Group decoupage "sea glass" votive holders, and take home ocean-themed crafts were created to celebrate Easter and Lent. Additional events have included plays, concerts, art exhibits, pottery and canvas painting, and our annual Valentine Card Making event."

- Trees for Hope
- Community Craft Events



Blackstone Valley Cold Weather Shelter

The church supports this ministry, which provides emergency shelter to those in need during the coldest nights of the winter.

Diaconate Board

The Deacons work with the Pastor to guide and support the worship life and spiritual nurture of the Parish. This responsibility includes worship support, including Sunday services, special services, baptisms, funerals, and weddings; serving Holy Communion in church and to members at home; welcoming visitors, tending to the spiritual needs of the congregation along with the Pastor; tending to their own growth as spiritual leaders of the church; scheduling greeters, ushers, readers; working with the call to care ministry to arrange visits with members at home who are infirm or otherwise unable to attend worship; providing financial support for immediate needs in the community through the deacons benevolence fund.

- Worship Support: Ushers, Readers, Greeters, Chair lift Operations, Sanctuary Decorations
- Benevolence Fund
- Communion at home
- Weddings, Memorials, Baptisms
- Dessert Auction



Music Ministry

The *Joyful Noise Music Ministry* of the United Parish of Upton has welcomed people of all ages and skill levels throughout its history. We currently have a small adult mixed choir that sings for Worship every Sunday from September to June. The goals of this ministry are as follows:

- To encourage and nurture each individual's musical abilities and talents
- To enrich and intensify the worship experience through the power of music
- To be receptive to the Holy Spirit as we come together in music and fellowship
- To offer each other support through Christian prayer and companionship

Early Learning Center (ELC)

Established in 1983, the United Parish Early Learning Center continues to provide a high-quality, developmentally appropriate preschool program where children learn through play and to meet the needs of the individual child's total growth. Our curriculum is intentionally planned to meet these goals based on the Massachusetts State Guidelines for Learning Experiences.

- Preschool for children ages 2.9 - 6
- Before and after school care for K-4th grade children
- ELC Advisory Board



Helping Hands Network

Our Helping Hands Network visits and assists people in the community with various tasks in times of need, regardless of church affiliation.

- Rides
- Meals
- Visits

Called To Care

- Home visits
- Provide meals for families/individuals in crisis

Technology

- Assisted hearing devices for worship
- Church Wi-Fi Network and IT Support

Communications Team (Comms)

- Live broadcast on United Parish Upton YouTube channel
- Church Website
- Mighty Network - Private Social Network

Buildings And Grounds

The Buildings and Grounds Committee oversees the physical needs of the church and grounds. Our projects are typically based on suggestions or needs communicated by the pastor, employees, and parishioners. Some of our duties include:

- Care, maintenance and safety of our church building and grounds
- Improvements and beautification projects
- ADA compliance planning

Small Group Ministries

- Book Club
- Spiritual Formation Group
- Prayer Network
- Read the Bible

Other Committees

- Leadership Council
- Business Committee
- Personnel/Pastor/Parish Relations (PPP)
- Safe Church
- Search Committee
- Transition Team

Community Meeting Space

- Weekly AA meetings
- Weekly Hindu Dance Classes
- Girl Scouts
- Boy Scouts
- Civic Groups
- Private Functions/Celebrations

Community Traditions

- Heritage Day Yard Sale
- Memorial Day Parade and Service
- Trunk-or-Treat
- Chili Cook-Off
- Holiday Bazaar
- Easter Sunrise Service





Partnerships

- We are helping settle refugee families in collaboration with the Jewish Family Service of Metrowest.
- We partnered with Safe Spaces, an LGBTQ advocacy group, to host a photo shoot that became part of a moving gallery.
- We have sent church members to assist in crisis situations through UMCOR.

Describe your congregation's participation in meetings, relationships, and activities connecting the wider United Church of Christ.

We send delegates to events of the Southern NE Conference of the UCC. In the past, we have had congregants attend the annual Women's Conference, Super Saturday, and NEAUCE (New England Association of United Christian Educators). The church donates yearly to the UCC Southern New England Conference and the New England Missions and Ministry Support. We give to the World Missions/Disaster Relief Funds through the cafe. Since we are a federated church with ties to the United Methodist Church, we also send delegates to conferences and other UMC events.

Describe your congregation's participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities.

Historically, our ministers have practiced pulpit swaps with ministers and priests from other denominations. We also participated in a group called Central Massachusetts Connections in Faith, a network of local individuals, places of worship, and community organizations to build bridges and friendships across cultures. In the past, we have participated in The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the Bethlehem Peace Light.

How does your mission statement compare to the actual time spent engaging in different activities?

Our ministries listed above are intentionally based upon our Vision Statement and align with time spent gathering, governing and going out.

Vision Statement

We believe God has called us to be centered and growing in Jesus Christ, celebrating God's love, nurtured by meaningful traditions and led by the Spirit in new directions. We are to be a multi-generational, family-centered congregation that invites all people to enjoy friendship with Christ and with one another.

We believe God has called us to tend the fabric of our congregational life with compassion and joy, fostering and nurturing relationships of care. We are to empower each other to express our spiritual gifts in every aspect of our lives.

We believe God has called us to use our strength to provide active and vital outreach ministries to our community and world. We are to actively and faithfully plan for the purposeful growth of our church.

4b. Mission Insite

Upton is a mostly white suburban community, with a population of 8,519 and comprised of 3080 households. Median household income is somewhat greater in this area (\$147,760), and poverty is significantly below state averages. The community trends toward white collar (77%). The town is experiencing moderate growth, although school-age children are in moderate decline. There are two high schools: Nipmuc Regional High School, serving the towns of Mendon & Upton, and Blackstone Valley Technical High School (BVT), serving 13 towns in the Blackstone Valley.

[Click here for QuickInsite Report PDF](#)

How do your congregation's internal demographics compare or contrast to:

a) the neighborhoods adjacent to your church?

b) other neighborhoods with which your church connects?

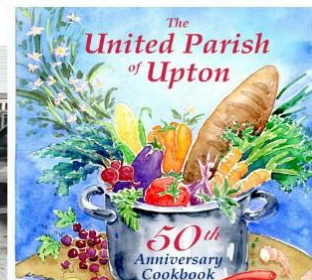
Our church reflects our town demographics. Some neighboring communities offer more affordable housing, job opportunities, amenities, and access to major commuter routes. Some have a more diverse population including Brazilian, Portuguese, Latino and Asian Indian.

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

The Food Pantry, ELC, and Soul Fuel Cafe ministries were created to address food insecurity, the need for child care, and a place for local connection. While we are proud of our current ministries, we remain open to God's call on how we can expand our outreach.

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

- Welcoming to all
- Church on the common
- Soul Fuel Cafe
- Active in the community
- Excellent music
- Early Learning Center
- Progressive Yard Sale
- Halloween Trunk or Treat
- Holiday Bazaar
- Food Pantry
- Food Events



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

The following quotes are from our church survey:

- All are welcome and accepted.
- My parents were active church members and role models.
- I wanted to make connections with other church members.
- To be the hand of God in the church, community, and world.
- I feel we truly reflect Jesus' love.
- I feel my work is for God.
- The personal, family feel of this church.
- The sense of community and support from the people.
- The opportunity to make a difference.
- A sense of purpose that feeds the soul.
- I feel God's presence here.
- To serve God and my neighbor.
- It's a welcoming community of volunteers.
- Because of Jesus' teachings.
- The leaders who volunteer inspire others.
- Gratitude for life.
- Supportive members who care for each other.
- It grows my faith.
- Working side by side with other people of faith who pray and talk about God.
- To represent my church by contributing to the community through service.





5. REFERENCES

The following three references are non-members of our church. When we asked if they would be willing to be a reference for us and potentially have candidates contact them for more information, they were more than happy to do so.

REFERENCE 1

Laurie Wodin / Soul Fuel Cafe Volunteer
(508) 529-4729 / lwodin@gmail.com

Dear Pastor candidates.

Thank you for considering United Parish of Upton as a place where you might like to do your next ministry. As a non-church member, I see United Parish as strong contributor to the larger Upton community. I was asked to write to you about the strengths of the church in our community, any improvements I might envision, and a little about the personal impact it has had for me.

Strengths:

United Parish of Upton's participation and visibility in our town.
They host events that are open to all community members.

- Town-wide yard sale
- Annual Turkey Dinners
- Chili Cookoffs
- Ham and Bean Suppers
- Black Lives Matter event
- Interfaith Hospitality Network "movable" shelter for 2 weeks annually
- Pre-Winter Holiday Bazaar and Santa Visits
- Memorial and Veterans Day events
- The Early Learning Center preschool (my daughter attended from 1996 -1998)
- Community craft and music events, art exhibits

Their location in the governing center of Upton combined with consistent participation in community events helps make them feel like an equal and contributing part of the community

The new cafe which parishioners envisioned, developed, implemented, and now run, has given United Parish an even larger presence in the community because now, everyone in town has a reason to come to the church. People bring their children, meet friends, have meetings, pass quiet time reading or working on their computers. The proceeds from Soul Fuel Cafe help people in need all around the world, so their presence is local but their reach is global. Proceeds from the cafe are donated to important national and international relief efforts and to support diverse communities. Although I am not a church member, I enjoy my weekly shift hosting at Soul Fuel Cafe.

Their decision to be a "Welcoming Community" with a visible commitment to supporting diversity.

They allow community members who are not church members to hold events at the church and to host groups. Events such as funerals, showers, community forums, meetings related to alcohol and drug addiction, etc. are among the kinds of gatherings that have occurred. They are very accommodating for special needs.



Improvements:

I would like to see a youth group. In past years, there was a group like this for children and teens. It would be wonderful for people in this age range and their families if something of this nature could be brought back.

Personal experience:

Some years ago, the church was looking for people to help when they hosted a "movable" shelter for 2 weeks every summer that was run by the Interfaith Hospitality Network. Each year, I volunteered to make, serve meals and visit with residents of the shelter and also stayed overnight one or two nights during this time. This was a deeply moving experience, and I am grateful to United Parish for hosting the families that needed this help and also for allowing me to help in that mission.

Upton is a small town, a hidden gem, amid several larger towns. Because of its proximity to major highways in the state (the Massachusetts Turnpike and Route 495), it is an easy commute to several cities, but despite this, it somehow retains its small-town charm. Recently, however, Upton is being "discovered," and is now beginning to grow more quickly. If people move to Upton and look for a church for themselves and their families, they would do well to consider United Parish of Upton. I have always found this church to be particularly welcoming, and at times, the church seems to function as an arm of the community rather than solely a place of worship that remains separate and only minimally involved with the community.

Thank you for your interest in pastor work here in Upton.

Laurie Wodin



REFERENCE 2

Dominique Ross / Girl Scout Leader
(617) 784-5116 / dominique.f.ross@gmail.com

Strengths of the United Parish ministry

The United Parish ministry visibly supports the community during Pride month, during the Memorial Day Parade, and during the town's Heritage Day in the early fall. The people of the ministry are known in town to be accepting and welcoming. The previous pastor was often seen at town events and was a familiar and friendly face. Furthermore, the Early Learning Center at the United Parish is well-known in the community, serves many children, and is highly regarded. The ministry is the home of our local food bank which is a wonderful resource.

Area for improvement in the ministries

While the ministry does a lot, they do not share with the community all that they do and the different ways/options to engage with the ministry. There is very little in terms of social media presence which is the primary mechanism for sharing information with the community.

A significant experience with the ministry

I have two significant experiences with the ministry. The first was pre-pandemic when my husband and I were looking for a place to baptize our youngest daughter. We reached out to Pastor Lourey at the time and she arranged, in response to our request, an exploratory 'class' to look at the culture and teachings of the UP ministry. The discussion in the class was heartfelt and meaningful and provided a lovely way to engage with the ministry and meet new people. The second was when the ministry hosted an LGBTQ+ supported activity and event. It was very encouraging to participate in this event and to see United Parish openly support it. It was evidence to me that the ministry is truly inclusive.



REFERENCE 3

Laura Hebb / Upton Selectboard member
774-804-1680 / LauraHebb@ERAKey.net

To Whom It May Concern:

By way of background, I'm a fifth-generation Upton resident. I was elected to the Selectboard in May of 2023 and am also currently Chair of the Upton Board of Health. I am the Community Liaison for the Upton Bloomer Girls.

My mother, Carol Hebb, is a formal member of the church, and previously served as a deacon. Carol was also one of the original Bloomer Girls. I am very familiar with the church as that was the church I grew up attending, participated in Sunday School, but never formally joined.

I've been asked to opine on your ministries. I am familiar with the Food Pantry, which does a spectacular job of meeting the community's needs. I think the addition of the drop-off shed is a wonderful idea, and hopefully has helped increase donations.

My oldest son attended preschool at United Parish; and I know your before and after school program is a much needed and well-attended program.

I have frequented Soul Food Cafe and feel it's a wonderful place for the Upton community to gather. I am familiar with the Community Dinners. My mother absolutely loved attending prior to the pandemic.

Unfortunately, after the pandemic, we tried to attend once. This was after Carol suffered a stroke, developed mobility issues, and now is living in long-term care. The Soul Food Cafe is absolutely in no way, shape, or form handicap accessible. It was an extremely difficult process to get Mom into the community dinner the one time we went. As I was concerned about her safety and a potential fall, we did not go back, much to her disappointment. The lower vestry is much better suited to the community, especially the elderly or those with mobility issues. I also believe if advertised that the community dinners will once again be held in the lower vestry, you'll see the attendance increase.

United Parish and in particular Pastor Lourey was a steadfast supporter of all things Upton. She was at every VFW and town event, and participated whenever asked. This was tremendous exposure for the parish and I believe a huge benefit to the town.

If you need further information or have questions about anything I've raised, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly.

Warm regards,

Laura



6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

6a. Closing Prayer

To our new Pastor:

Please know that we have been faithfully praying for you with gratitude, believing that God has already placed an undeniable calling within your heart to join us in ministry.

We are looking forward to meeting you, and believe we will recognize you as “the one whom God has called,” by the light and energy that surrounds you, by the love that emanates from your soul, by the peace and joy that fills your heart, by the wisdom and understanding that gives life to your thoughts and words, by the kindness and compassion in your demeanor, by the servant mindset that is reflected in your ministerial background, and by your commitment to daily spiritual practices that keep you open to the Spirit of God.

As you are being led to us, we pray that God will continue to fill you with the knowledge of God’s will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. We pray this so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please God in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to God’s glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Almighty, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. (Based on Colossians 1:9-12) - 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 a suitable new minister for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates. We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.



Contributors

Search Committee: Sue Poirier (Chair), Jeff Curl (Communications), Eric Bulock (Technology), Jessica Murphy (Editor/Writer), Sandy Leacu (Secretary), Susan Bonito (Chaplin)

Church Administrator: Sandra Ng

Interim Pastor: Rev. Jennifer Geary

Artwork: Leanne Luetkemeyer

Transition Team: Brian LeSuer, Beth Alletto, Wayne Phipps, Reverend Geary

Leadership Council: Brian LeSuer (Chair), Kathleen Ballard (Vice Chair), Jim Cozzens (Clerk), Beth Alletto (Treasurer), Sandra Ng (Financial Secretary), Caroline Stoffel (Historian), Kelly Luetkemeyer (Auditor); and chairs of each ministry.

Personnel/Pastor/Parish Relations Committee (PPP): Tally Reeverts (Chair), Jeff Curl, Kathy Crossley-Aiello

Business Committee: Brad Rolph (Chair), Cheryl Henderson, Sandra Ng, Beth Alletto, Chris Fitts, Kelly Luetkemeyer

Congregation: Participated in search committee surveys and Transition Team events.

Signed: 

Search Committee Chair

Sue Poirier

Date: 3/21/2024



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.

Rev. Carol Steinbrecher

Signature:

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

Email: steinbrecherc@sneucc.org

Phone: 508-244-4887

Date: April 2, 2024

