

## Local Church Profile for Churches Seeking a Designated Term Pastor (DTP)



### Church Contact Information

Full Name: First Congregational Church of West Brookfield, UCC  
Address: 36 N. Main St. PO Box 371, West Brookfield, MA 01585  
Website: <https://westbrookfieldcongregationalucc.org>  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/firstconglwestbrookfield>

Additional Denominational Affiliations: None

UCC Conference: Southern New England  
Association: Central Massachusetts  
Area Conference Minister Name: Rev. Carol Steinbrecher  
ACM email: [SteinbrecherC@sneucc.org](mailto:SteinbrecherC@sneucc.org)  
ACM phone: 508-244-4887

## Position Details

### 1. Describe the ministry position for which you are seeking a pastor

The First Congregational Church of West Brookfield is searching for a part-time Designated Term Pastor to lead us as we continue our pursuit of a meaningful relationship with God, increasing our understanding of our Creator and each other with patience and love. The DTP's work will include leading Sunday and other special services, providing pastoral care, and supporting our various ministries.

The congregation seeks a pastor who will give sermons that are relevant, challenging, and encourage us to explore our Christian faith and how it relates to the world and current events. We are looking for a pastor who will build compassionate relationships with members of the congregation and also with the local community through various outreach programs and social media. To assist us with social media, we recently hired a communications director to keep our website, Facebook, and Instagram pages up to date.

The current size and age of our congregation is a concern, so we are seeking a pastor who can help us review and strengthen our practice of being a welcoming church and expand our presence in the community.

The church has always had a strong commitment to mission work, responding with monetary donations to local, national, and global charities. Our bylaws guide us to pledge at least 8% of our annual budget towards missions, and last year it totaled \$6944. We also participate in many hands-on projects of support to meet local needs, such as the operation of the 'Sharing Cupboard' food pantry, monthly dinners with the gentlemen from the Dismas Farm, donations to 'School Backpack' drives, the collection of clothing items for those without homes in Worcester, and Christmas gift cards to the local senior centers.

Our diverse music program is cherished by our congregation. The previous music director inspired and delighted us for 14 years with a wide variety of genres ranging from traditional hymns, to jazz, to contemporary music. Currently, we enjoy the music provided by both a gifted jazz pianist and a trumpeter, in addition to our church choir, which performs twice each month. Our music program is a vital part of our ministry. It is essential that our pastor and music director work well together so the quality and diversity of our music can continue.

We understand, especially since this is a part-time position, that the DTP will need committed and sustained support to carry out the aforementioned duties. As outlined in the Designated Term Goals associated with this position, volunteers from our congregation have been invited and are already engaging in activities to begin this work, setting up our new pastor for success.

Ours is a fun-loving congregation. We relish creative events where we come together for laughter and fellowship. Highlights of each year include the town-sponsored Asparagus, Flower and Heritage Festival that is held on our beautiful Common in May. Our church is famous for our incredible secret-recipe asparagus chowder! Visitors come from miles away to enjoy this once-a-year treat. In September, we come together for our Flea Market on the Common. Started over 50 years ago, we rent space for vendors to sell their wares to shoppers from near and far. As folks are seeking bargains, the wonderful aroma of "dogs" and burgers being grilled wafts through the air. It's always a great day to end the summer and welcome in fall. The first Sunday in December brings *White Christmas in West Brookfield* to us. Our church participates by serving a glorious hot turkey sandwich luncheon, offering a huge baked-treats table, and a wonderful vendor raffle. In addition, we sponsor a handbell choir

concert and have a Christmas carol sing-a-long where we offer free cookies and cocoa to all present. We are a church community that works, worships, and enjoys each other's company in a variety of ways throughout the year.

We hope our DTP will consider the position of Settled Pastor after the DTP term ends if the 'fit' between the congregation and pastor is a good one for both.

2. Name 3 core competencies that you feel you will need in your DTP.

### 1. Worship

We seek a DTP who:

- ~ is an inspiring and challenging preacher and teacher
- ~ is well versed in biblical theology
- ~ develops creative and meaningful worship experiences

### 2. Pastoral Presence

We seek a DTP who:

- ~ is compassionate, caring and provides good pastoral care
- ~ is approachable, friendly and has a sense of humor
- ~ respects the dignity of all God's people

### 3. Administration

We seek a DTP who:

- ~ has administrative and computer skills
- ~ works well with parishioners and staff members as a team
- ~ is able to adapt to new opportunities

3. Position Scope: \_\_\_\_\_ Fulltime  ¾ time \_\_\_\_\_ ½ time \_\_\_\_\_ ¼ time

4. Position Duration: 3 years

5. Is the DTP eligible for the settled position? **Yes, potentially**

If yes, how will that be discerned?

Our hope is that by the second year of the DTP's time with us, both the congregation and the pastor feel aligned and are working together productively and joyfully, and can prayerfully discern if the DTP position will transition to a settled pastor. A vote of the congregation is required for a pastor to be called to our church's settled position.

## Designated Term Ministry Goals

*The focus of a designated term ministry is to work toward the church's declared purpose for a specific season. Whereas, the purpose of an Interim Pastor is to help a congregation prepare for their next Settled Pastor, a Designated Term Pastor is called to assist the church with meeting specific goals within a specific time period. These are the most common reasons that churches choose a Designated Term Ministry.*

1. Please choose all the reasons for choosing a DTM that applies to you.

- New ministry development, start or continuance  
 Revitalization of current ministries and church vitality  
 Legacy/hospice  
 Reassessment of ministry, which may include:
  - exploring merger, yoking or unification with another church
  - assessment of properties
  - Staffing restructuring Major conflict/healing

2. In a paragraph or two, explain how you discerned that a DTM was right for the church at this time.

In reviewing our church's present situation, our Area Conference Minister recommended that we seek another Designated Term Pastor to help us with some more important goals we would like to accomplish. Also, having a DTP seems appropriate as our church's ministerial position will, by financial necessity, be shifting from a full time to ¾-time position at present. We hope to be able to strengthen our church so it can transition back to a full time ministry in the future.

Please explain your goals for this Designated period using the table below.

	<b>Goal:</b> with specificity, describe what you hope to accomplish during this time.	<b>Commitment:</b> describe how the congregation will prioritize and participate in reaching this goal?	<b>Assessment:</b> describe how the congregation will know the goal has been accomplished
1	<p><b><u>Strengthen our Practice of Being a Welcoming Church</u></b></p> <p>~ With the help of our DTP we seek to find ways to expand and increase the welcome our church extends to all people who come to our church. To help us achieve that goal, we will learn from special programs, such as:</p> <p>~ The United Church of Christ's "Open + Affirming" program, which helps churches explore the concerns of LGBTQ+ persons and also ways to welcome them fully to participate in the life of our UCC churches.</p> <p>~ The United Church of Christ's</p>	<p>~ Volunteers from our congregation have been invited to work with our DTP to explore, develop, and administer such programs to review and strengthen our practice of being a welcoming church.</p>	<p>~ Various programs, like those mentioned, have been explored, participated in as considered appropriate, and we have a definite sense that our church has become more welcoming to a wider diversity of people.</p>

<p>“Mental Health Network,” which guides our UCC churches in helping persons with mental illnesses to “feel welcomed, supported, valued, and included in their congregations.”</p> <p>~ Also, participate in other special programs offered to help churches be more welcoming and accessible to people who have various health concerns and people from different ethnic and racial groups.</p>		
<p><b>2 <u>Expand our presence in the community</u></b></p> <p>~ We seek to make our church more visible and involved in our community, as a thriving “Center for Christian and Community Life” through numerous means:</p> <p>~ As feasible, we make our church building a gathering place for more special community events, such as concerts and other activities.</p> <p>~ We invite special community and/or support groups to meet in our church, such as Boy Scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous , Al-Anon, etc.</p> <p>~ As feasible, we rent areas of our building for the use of special community groups and local businesses.</p>	<p>~ Volunteers from our congregation have been invited to work with our DTP to explore, develop, and administer such programs to expand our presence in the community.</p>	<p>~ There will be an increase in the church’s involvement in our community, and it will be recognized as a thriving center for Christian and community life.</p>

## Who We Are

*In a paragraph or two for each item, please provide the following.*

### 1. Church’s Mission Statement:

**Our Mission and Vision Statement:** We are a church where all are welcome to worship together, to share in fellowship and to grow spiritually in our journey with Christ. We value justice, diversity, and freedom of expression. We strive to serve our community and all God’s creation and to spread the love of God to all people.

## 2. Brief Church History:

Our history is a long one. We share our early history with the other churches in the Brookfields, having all been one in 1665. At that time, they were a small group of colonists who called themselves The Quaboag Plantation. They built the first meeting house in the central location of Foster Hill. This meeting house was destroyed by the Wampanoags in 1675, during King Philip's War. As the population grew over the next 50 years, the inhabitants worshipped in the fortification known as Fort Gilbert on Foster Hill.

As the years passed, the town was divided into three parishes, each with its own church. In 1755, the site on Foster Hill was abandoned, and a new meeting house for West Brookfield was built near where our church now stands. Through many modifications over the years, it has evolved to become the beautiful, classic New England Congregational Church on the Common that we see today.

Abolitionist Lucy Stone grew up in West Brookfield and was a member of our church until 1851, when she was expelled for both her anti-slavery views and her determination to have her voice heard by voting. During our 300th Anniversary celebration in 2017, we apologized for the actions of our ancestors towards Lucy Stone, celebrated her leadership, and invited her back into membership through a dramatization held in our sanctuary.

In 1964, we joined the United Church of Christ. Our recent history includes being known in the community as the church on the Common that opens its doors in times of community strife (9/11 Ecumenical Service, Service of Comfort after the tragic deaths of a local family, etc.); the church that sponsors the Annual Flea Market on the Common; serves up gallons of our secret-recipe asparagus chowder each May at the town's Asparagus, Flower and Heritage Festival; participates in the town-wide White Christmas Celebration; regularly supports missions, locally, nationally, and globally; and offers vital support to address food insecurity in our community through The Sharing Cupboard food pantry.

History marches on, and so do we!

## 2. Significant Events:

~ **1964** - Joined the United Church of Christ

~ **2005** - Built new church kitchen and added space for the Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry

~ **2007** - Pastor Lisa Durkee was called to our church. This resulted in 8 years of inspiring, energetic, and lively ministry under her care.

~ **2017** - We celebrated our 300th anniversary. During this celebration, we rescinded our church's 1851 act of excommunicating former member, abolitionist and suffragette, Lucy Stone.

~ **2022** - Resignation of our long-time Music Director

~ **2023** - Departure of our Designated Term Pastor

~ **2023-2024** - Congregation approved purchase of a mini-split heating system and steeple repairs financed by a community-wide capital campaign to pay for the installations

### 3. Church Strengths:

Our iconic, traditional New England church is located on the beautiful, historic Common of West Brookfield. The common is a place where our community gathers for summertime concerts, festivals, sporting events, and peaceful relaxation. Geographically, we are centrally located between Springfield, Worcester, and Amherst, which gives access to quality cultural, recreational, and shopping venues. In addition, West Brookfield is only 60 miles from the historic and multi-cultural city of Boston. Our community boasts a highly-rated school system that focuses on both sports and academic achievement. Our library, senior center, and town Common Committee bring us a wide variety of cultural events for families and seniors. We have two other active worship communities in town: the United Methodist Church and Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church. Our church is a caring fellowship with members who are very committed to engaging in its ministry both within our church and beyond it. In our community, we are known as a very friendly church.

Our congregation includes individuals with project management skills along with financial expertise. These skills were evident when we selected an eco-friendly mini-split heating system and evaluated the need for structural repairs to our landmark church steeple. The projects were financed utilizing our endowment funds on a temporary basis and a capital campaign supported by donations from members of our congregation along with donations from individuals and businesses in our community. With a goal of \$60,000, we were all grateful to have raised over \$50,000 that fully funded both projects.

Our congregation values diversity in our Sunday morning worship music, which embraces a wide variety of genres and selections. We worked hard to fulfill the 2019 designated term goals of developing our Mission Vision Statement and improving our communication. Our church welcomes diversity and seeks to embody a spirit of openness. Our church has a strong mission outreach, which is seen, for example, in its work to provide food for those in need through our church's "Sharing Cupboard" food pantry. We look forward to a vibrant future for our congregation with the help of a Designated Term Pastor who will guide us in supporting our missions and help us to make a positive impact in our community and beyond.

### 5. Church Challenges:

Our church recognizes the challenge of expanding the number of people participating in its ministry, its membership, and the breadth of its important outreach to our community. Financial constraints have presently put our church in the position of seeking a ¾-time minister. We hope that our work with our new Designated Term Pastor will expand both our congregation and opportunities, to the point that our church can support a full-time ministerial position in the future. This will strengthen our church and its ministries within and beyond itself.

### 4. Experience of Conflict:

1. Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. On a scale of 1-5, where would you rank your church's level of conflict?     1

*(Based on this work by Speed Leas 1. Problem to solve 2. Disagreement 3. Contest 4. Fight or Flight 5. Intractable)*

## 2. Please explain why you chose this level.

Our church did have a challenging situation with the leadership of one of its ministerial search committees years ago, but that was resolved well with that committee's re-formation under new and more effective leadership. Also, more recently, there was disappointment that our previous Designated Term Pastor did not choose to be considered for a settled position. However, our church and its leadership are moving forward now in a very positive spirit of goodwill to embrace our future.

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

Our church leadership does its best to follow the requirements of our church's Behavioral Covenant [adopted in 2013] on communication. We did further work on communication, particularly in times of conflict, as part of our 2019 Situational Support Recommendations. Our leadership models and seeks tactfully to remind others to speak for themselves, repeat for understanding, not to interrupt, be respectful, and be good listeners. We have an active Pastor Parish Relations Board that is available to all, and their goal is to resolve any conflicts that arise for the betterment of our church. We understand that there can always be some conflict in a church, but with mutual respect and the care we have for one another, our hope is that it will be brief and resolvable.

### Basic Church Statistics

*Yearly average*

	Church Membership	Weekly Worship Attendance	Children & Youth Participation	Adult Ed Participation
Pre-pandemic	97	40	4	0
2023 year	74	40	4	6

	Income	Overall Budget	Mission Giving	Reserves & Endowment Principals
Pre-pandemic	108,487	123,688	7,000	434,294
2023 actual	121,754	89,563	6,944	461,535

### Compensation

**Total Compensation Package Amount or Range:**           \$64,500          

Package offered:            Total Package, no additional monetary benefits offered  
**(choose only one)**   **X**   Total Package Includes Benefits (please list the benefits that are offered)

Housing:

- X**   Housing allowance only  
       Parsonage only  
       Can offer either



Professional Expenses Mileage

Please explain briefly your process in discerning your compensation.

While we want to be fair to our pastor, the reality of finances faces us daily. Based on our annual budget, after considering conference guidelines regarding compensation for clergy, and after serious and prayerful contemplation, we came up with our compensation amount. We are aware of the education, experience, and commitment that ministers bring to their vocation, and they have our deepest respect.

+ + +

### 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 document 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 leader for the interim time 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.

\_\_\_Rev. Dr. Douglas K. Showalter\_\_\_  
Signature of Search Committee Chairperson  
(typed is sufficient)

\_\_\_6/7/2024\_\_\_  
Date