

Name of Church

First Congregational UCC

Address1 Church St
Paxton, MA 01612**Conference:**

Southern New England

Association:

Central Massachusetts

Title

Senior, Settled Pastor

Start Date

n/a

Description

Local Church Profile for Settled Pastor search.

Church Contact Information

No contact information has been added to this profile.

Listing Information

Web Presences

<https://www.paxtonucc.org/>

Type: Professional

Additional Formal Ecumenical Affiliations

None

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person**Name:**

Rev. Carol Steinbrecher

Title:

Area Conference Minister

Phone:

508-224-4887

Email:

Steinbrecherc@sneucc.org

Summary Ministry Description

The First Congregational Church of Paxton is seeking a full-time, energetic and outgoing Settled Minister to help guide us forward as we continue our faith journey. The Settled Minister's primary mission is to help FCCP recuperate, reconnect and revitalize. This requires that the Settled Minister will, through their biblical preaching and community outreach, provide ministerial care, counseling and congregational leadership. Additionally, they will need to pro-actively work with church leadership to help build membership from Paxton and surrounding communities. This individual will help support the congregation so that it can continue to identify its mission and purpose as the body of Christ.

We are a joyful community committed to being a welcoming church. Our doors are open to all. Post-pandemic, we continue to maintain a strong presence in the community as the Protestant home of worship in Paxton. We successfully established a new community outreach initiative and continue to maintain an active 24-hour food pantry. Our fellowship hour, after Sunday service, is well attended, and a great time to meet and greet members and visitors to our church.

Church pictures**What we value about living in our area.**

Paxton feels rural, but is nine miles from the center of Worcester, the second-largest city in New England. We value our small town, and enjoy being close to the cultural, commercial, sports-oriented city. The people of Paxton are welcoming, very friendly and active. From infants at the library story hour to our K-8 local school and regional high school, as well as Anna Maria College students, we value our children and the safety and activity Paxton provides. Our seniors are very involved in town and the senior center is always busy. We also enjoy Moore State Park, a 700 plus acre oasis for recreation. There is no better place to raise a family, live all our lives and enjoy our autumn years.

Current size of membership

207

Average in person attendance

60

Does your church hold virtual worship services?

No

Languages used in ministry

English

Position Title

Senior, Settled Pastor

Position Duration

Settled

Compensation Level

Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

Yes

[Link to current Conference guidelines](#)

[Download compensation guidelines](#)

Scope of Work

Some fields reference [The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ](#).

The United Church of Christ recognizes *The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers* in the formation of ministers, in the practice of active ministry, and throughout life. For the purposes of completing a denominational Profile, ministers are asked to spend some time with the *Marks*.

The Scope of Work developed by our church using the [Call Agreement Workbook](#).

[Download scope of Work](#)

3 core competencies that we imagine could be foundational in our next minister's relationship with the church.

First:

We have a solid membership base but due to the pandemic and several recent changes in leadership our weekly attendance has dropped considerably. This is especially the case regarding the presence of the children who attend the services, presently only 2-6 on most occasions. Thus, the settled minister will need to work with the Council to increase participation in worship on Sunday and growing the church membership. That increase in participation would also include growing our Sunday School Program and youth group offerings.

Second:

We need support and guidance to develop strategies to increase church giving which would include pledge and non-pledge income. We are also looking to identify additional streams of revenue. Several years ago, we brought a day care center into our church building, and this has resulted in a steady income stream. We would look to identify other ideas for revenue to support both the local budget, as well as our mission budget. Ideas could include grants, additional consistent building use commitments, and fund raisers.

We have a gifted staff and want to make sure that they are paid an appropriate salary for their dedication and efforts. Parts of our church are over 250 years old and the cost to maintain the building is more challenging every year. As noted above, our financial commitment, although still significant, has decreased in these tougher times. Our goal is to not only get back to where we were but surpass our previous commitments.

Third:

- * Ability to collaborate with a dedicated staff and lay leadership.
- * Excellent communication skills and a willingness to learn new technologies to increase effectiveness of livestreaming and media presence.
- * Ability to identify and facilitate relationships with new partners, as we reconnect and build our membership and our outreach to the community.

Compensation and Support

The salary basis comes from the [Call Agreement Workbook](#), equal to Cash Salary plus Value of Parsonage/ Housing Allowance. The Conference can assist in determining these amounts or provide a worksheet to be used to calculate these values.

| SALARY AND BENEFITS OFFERED: SALARY BASIS: ITEM OFFERED | AMOUNT OR PERCENTAGE (IF DETERMINED) | IS THIS NEGOTIABLE | PASTORAL CANDIDATE DETERMINES |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Salary (Cash basis determined from Conference/ Association Guidelines) | 80000 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Housing Allowance | 6000 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Any Experiential Difference (Related to years of experience) | 0 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Salary Basis: 86000 | | | |
| Pension/Annuity | 1 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social Security and Medicare Offset | 1 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Medical/Dental Insurance | 1 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Life Insurance | 1 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disability Insurance | 1 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Worker's Compensation | 1 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The expected living situation for our next minister.

We have a parsonage but can make provisions for someone living nearby with a housing allowance,

If a parsonage is provided, will the church offer a home equity allowance to the pastor? (The recommended guidelines for a home equity allowance is equal to 1.5% of the average home value in the community; this is considered taxable to the minister. The Housing Equity Offset should not be calculated into the Salary Basis upon which other Benefits are determined. Churches should consult a tax advisor prior to establishing any account for an equity allowance to ensure compliance with IRS rules on nonqualified deferred compensation plans.)

Yes

The compensation package will be negotiated to determine the total % that would be allocated for salary and the % for housing by the Church Council.

How our church will adopt part-time adjustments in the pastoral schedule to support a minister's bi-vocational employment.

N A

Additional reimbursements the next Pastor can expect to receive as part of their employment:

Reimbursement for use of personal vehicle.
Cell Phone and/or Internet.
Conference and/or Association meeting registrations
Other meeting registrations (or educational requirement registrations).
Criminal background checks.
Community of Practice Participation.

Peer and professional supports available for ministers in our association/conferences.

Support services are provided by the UCC and our very capable ACM.

Who Is God Calling to Minister with Us?

The ministry goals we envision our next minister collaborating with the congregation to achieve.

We are a congregation who has undergone and embraced a considerable amount of change in the past several years. Change is certainly not a stranger to us. Even so, we still have our core beliefs and religious practices that have been formed over the course of our spiritual travels. So, we are definitely seeking a pastor who will partner with us in our journey to evolve as Christians. We are looking for someone who is willing to invest the time and effort to truly get to know us; who is able to collaborate with and guide us along the path to be even more mindful and committed Christians.

How our vision of the minister we are now seeking will assist the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls.

We look to increase our mission efforts both in the church and beyond. The pandemic forced us to take a look at how this was done in the past and to move forward with more programs like the 24/7 food pantry we have established. Our impact is only limited by our ability to engage volunteers for our programs, which currently include monthly meals for Dismas House, the food pantry and giving to various local needs.

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

English is the only requirement.

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

- Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice
- Engaging in Sacred Stories and Traditions
- Strengthening Inter- and Intra Personal Assets
- Caring for All Creation

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 God is calling us to become as a congregation.

Missions and individual spiritual growth have always been a primary focus here at the First Congregational Church of Paxton. Spiritual growth has been developed through well-crafted traditional worship services, as well as bible study and service activities. Mission's activities have also played a large part in developing our religious identity. FCCP has a significant effort in the area of mission and outreach. Our youth group was involved in ongoing projects in Worcester and Cambridge to address the issue of homelessness as well as with the Mustard Seed in Worcester. We have a commitment to Dismas House, a home for released inmates where we serve meals on a monthly basis. Our Sunday School was involved in a 5k and dog treat sales for a local animal project. Prior to the pandemic, adults and youth went to Puerto Rico and Houston on a church sponsored mission trip to provide relief after the hurricanes.

How God is calling us to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of our community and congregation.

This is an area where we especially need help and guidance. As a result of our recent drop in Sunday attendance numbers, our income streams have decreased but even more concerning is the reduced active family participation in internal and external activities. We are striving to build new connections with families and the community.

Congregation Reflections**We would describe our congregation's life of faith as...**

We believe that God is love and He wants to guide us into what is best for our neighbors and ourselves. A former pastor was fond of saying that God meets us where we are, but He loves us too much to leave us there.

It is our belief that the Holy Spirit guides each of us, as promised by Jesus, but He also reminds us that He also is guiding other people in the church. We are confident that God never will contradict Himself. With that background, we believe that members of our church seek to reach agreement as we trust that each other is being thus guided.

Strengths or positive qualities of our congregation.

Regarding the worship service:

Our congregation strives to provide a welcoming atmosphere. When visitors arrive, someone always ensures that they are provided with bulletins and that they learn that they are welcome at the coffee hours that follow each service. Most important, we project the love of God that leads us to be attendees and members.

From an organizational perspective:

- A large core of committed members that range from many long-term individuals to those who have fairly recently joined our congregation
- Consistent and substantial support of mission and outreach programs
- Diaconate that is fully active in all phases of worship and spiritual matters
- Strong Self-Governing council
- Solid financial foundation maintained for many years
- Staff is dedicated and capable
- Music ministry that includes a choir with many accomplished musicians and a very talented organist

A growing edge for our congregation and what we plan to strengthen as a congregation

- Church attendance and involvement
- Pledge income
- Fellowship opportunities outside our church walls
- In-person programming
- Finding new ways to engage and support children and youth ministry programs

What worship is like when our congregation gathers.

Our congregation gathers every Sunday for a service based on the teachings of Jesus and the writings of the Bible. We greet one another and start with announcements or information from committees. We follow a mostly traditional liturgy and enjoy our choir and hymns as well as a well-thought out and delivered sermon. Prayers are always said for both concerns and celebrations, which are shared by attendees.

Our most recent baptisms have been performed within Sunday worship. The minister blesses the baby and asks for participation and support from parents, gathered family and the congregation. The babies are usually "paraded through the streets" in our sanctuary and we gather after worship to celebrate. It's always a very joyful and well received part of any service.

Most sermons include lessons, examples and scripture as well as literary quotes. A good sermon is a "good lesson" or a "joyful message", a "call to action" or a new perspective or interpretation of traditional teachings. One recent example was the story of the "fishes and loaves" miracle, but from the perspective of the "little boy who brought his lunch of a few sardines and some brown bread".

The educational program/faith formation vision of our church.

We have in the past included young people in many facets of our church, including youth groups, missions, committee members and Sunday School assistants. Our confirmation programs and youth group missions, outings and pizza parties had been highlights for both the youth and the leaders who organized these programs. Our inter-generational ministry and fellowship has been strong in the past, and we wish for more youth with whom we can connect.

We have a regularly scheduled meeting of Bible study. They use literary as well as biblical books to continue to grow their faith. They have become a close-knit group and welcome new members anytime.

Our confirmation class last year and this year will be based on "Confirm not Conform" We support our youth to seek their own answers and ask questions of themselves, the leader and their peers and mentors. This is another wonderful opportunity for inter-generational community and fellowship that we all feel blessed to have.

How our congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

According to our By Laws the various committees meet in the prescribed manor to take action on their assigned tasks. When decisions are made the chair of each committee reports these to the Church Council during their monthly meetings. Many of these decisions are entered into the weekly newsletter that is sent out via email. Additionally, key decisions are also communicated during the weekly Sunday service when the time for announcements occurs.

Good communication is key to the success of any organization. We use Sunday announcements, weekly newsletters and constant contact e-blasts to keep our members and community well informed of worship and business of the church.

Regarding the struggle for vision, this is an activity that most churches are struggling with, as do we.

FCCP's vision is to engage many families of all ages in attendance on Sundays, as well as Sunday School, youth programs and confirmation classes. We enjoy the fun of community and fellowship have even been a bit rambunctious at times.

When it comes to decision-making, 20 hours are spent in meetings per month.

Is the pastor expected to attend all church meetings?

No

In times when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. These were the key leaders in taking this action and this was accomplished by...

Covid: We worked with our pastor and staff to protect everyone. We supported each other to ensure everyone had access to Sunday worship, love, and any form of fellowship people would tolerate, including meeting, masked, outside on our town common. The self-governing church council and committee members made these decisions with input from our congregation. We communicated through regular newsletters to ensure continuity when people could not be in the sanctuary.

A copy of an organization structure, by laws and/or annual report to further explain the patterns of the church's activity and governance

[FCCPBYLAWS-Revised_4-2024.docx](#)

[2023 Annual Report .pdf](#)

11-Year Report

Download a copy of the 11-Year Report developed with the help of our conference staff and UCC Data Hub.

No response

Congregation Demographics

Describe those who participate in your church.

| DEMOGRAPHIC | NUMBER |
|--|--------|
| NUMBER OF ACTIVE MEMBERS: | 207 |
| NUMBER OF ACTIVE NON-MEMBERS: | 10 |
| TOTAL OF CHURCH PARTICIPANTS (SUM OF THE NUMBERS ABOVE): | 217 |

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

| TIME | PERCENTAGE |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| MORE THAN 10 YEARS: | 65% |
| LESS THAN 10, MORE THAN 5 YEARS: | 25% |
| LESS THAN 5 YEARS: | 10% |

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Number of total participants by age:

| AGE | NUMBER |
|-------|--------|
| 0-11 | 10 |
| 12-17 | 10 |
| 18-24 | 10 |
| 25-34 | 10 |
| 35-44 | 0 |
| 45-54 | 20 |
| 55-64 | 85 |
| 65-74 | 50 |
| 75+ | 40 |

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

| HOUSEHOLD TYPE | PERCENTAGE |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| SINGLE ADULTS UNDER 35: | 5% |
| HOUSEHOLDS WITH MINORS: | 15% |
| SINGLE ADULTS AGE 35-65: | 30% |
| JOINT HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO MINORS: | 40% |
| SINGLE ADULTS OVER 65: | 10% |

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

| EDUCATION LEVEL | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------------|------------|
| HIGH SCHOOL: | 15% |
| COLLEGE: | 65% |
| GRADUATE SCHOOL: | 15% |
| SPECIALTY TRAINING: | 5% |
| OTHER EDUCATION LEVEL: | 0% |

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

| EMPLOYMENT TYPE | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| ADULTS WHO ARE EMPLOYED: | 55% |
| ADULTS WHO ARE RETIRED: | 40% |
| ADULTS WHO ARE NOT FULLY EMPLOYED: | 5% |

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

The range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:

Our members hold a wide range of occupations. We have doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, farmers and musicians. We have local business owners and corporate executives. We have financial managers, librarians and students. FCCP has a very wide and diverse range of occupations.

The mix of ethnic heritages in our congregation, and the overall racial make-up.

Our present congregation is approximately 90-95% white.

What diversity means in our context?

In addition to our primarily protestant base, we do have a significant number of former Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Swedish Covenant, Lutherans, etc.

Has our congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do we plan to hold one on the near future

No

Participation and Staffing



Participation and Planning of Gatherings

| WAYS OF CHURCH GATHERING | ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ATTENDANCE | WHO PLANS EACH OF THE LISTED GATHERINGS |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Baptisms (number last year) | 4 | Pastor & Deacons |
| Children's Groups or Classes | 4 | Pastor |
| Christmas Eve and Easter Worship | 100 | Pastor & Deacons |
| Church-wide Meals | 0 | Various Groups |
| Choirs and Music Groups | 12 | Music Dir & Organist |
| Church-based Bible Study | 10 | Lay led |
| Communion (served how often?) | 14 | Pastor & Deacons |
| Drama or Dance Program | 4 | Pastor & Volunteers |
| Funerals (number last year) | 3 | Pastor & Deacons |
| Weddings (number last year) | 1 | Pastor & Deacons |

Worship Times

No Response

Additional comments:

Summer services attendance is 30-40 persons.

Special Services held at different times include - Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday & Easter Sunrise service.

List of all members or regular participants in our congregation who are ordained or commissioned ministers, or who hold Lay Ministerial Standing. Additionally the names of Members in Discernment in our congregation.

No Response

Previous pastors or retired ministers who currently hold membership in the church and their role(s) in the life of the congregation:

N/A

List of all current staff:

No Response

Reflection: What this information reflect about our congregation's overall ministry:

Covid had an impact on our membership and participation. Since Covid, like everyone else, we have had to adjust. We have been able to offer weekly services in person. We support and encourage the faith journey of our congregants and the local community. Our outreach to the community has included a 24/7 food pantry and provision of full backpacks for the local elementary school. We have been able to meet our budgetary commitments and are looking forward to growing our membership and involvement in Paxton and the wider community.

Church Finances

Current Annual Income

| SOURCE | AMOUNT |
|--|--------|
| Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving | 154586 |
| Endowment Proceeds (as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return) | 51000 |
| Fundraising Events | 4000 |
| Rentals of Church Building | 41100 |
| Rentals of Church Parsonage | 33600 |
| Support from Related Organizations (e.g. Women's Group) | 2500 |
| Total | 286786 |

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year):

299603

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

[Download church budget](#)

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

37

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 Church's Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered?

OCWM is paid by the Treasurer from a specific line item in the annual budget.

Budget for UCC membership is \$9000. Regarding OGHS & Christmas Fund (previously Vets of the Cross) - When taken previously, special offering envelopes have been distributed and placed in weekly collection plates.

If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, this is the percentage?

No response

Total amount of loan debt:

117558

Reason for debt:

Capital Improvements

Are capital and other payments current?

Yes

Capital Campaigns

Description of any building programs projected or underway.

Not at this time.

Pictures

Description of any capital campaigns in the last ten years:

| YEAR(S) | PURPOSE | GOAL | RESULT | IMPACT |
|---------|---------|------|--------|--------|
| 0 | | 0 | 0 | |
| 0 | | 0 | 0 | |

Description of any capital campaigns underway or anticipated:

| YEAR(S) | PURPOSE | GOAL | RESULT | IMPACT |
|---------|---------|------|--------|--------|
| 0 | | 0 | 0 | |
| 0 | | 0 | 0 | |

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

No response

Does your church have an endowment?

Yes

What is the market value of the assets?

1035853

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

Quarterly when needed.

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

2024 Budget = 17%, 2019 Budget = 6%

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

Increased from \$19,000 (2019 Budget) to \$51,000 (2024 Budget)

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

In perpetuity.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

The rate of draw is ~5% of the investment. Assuming 5% annual return on investment, the draw is ~ the amount of interest earned.

Other Assets*No response***Reserves (savings):**

44000

Investments (other than endowment):*No response***Does the church have a parsonage?**

Yes

Fair market rental value of the parsonage:

3490

How is the parsonage used?

Primary purpose is for the pastor and family. If not, then it will be rented out.

Street

232 Grove St

City

Paxton

State

MA

Zip

1612

Finished square footage:

2027

Number of Bedrooms:

4

Number of Bathrooms:

2

Assessed real estate value:

470300

Available for minister residence?

Yes

Expected minister residence?

No

Condition of structure, systems and appliances

Good

Entity in the church responsible for review and needed repairs

The Building and Grounds Committee who is answerable to the Church Council.

Parsonage pictures



Description of all buildings owned by the church:

The Church on 1 Church St and the aforementioned parsonage.

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

Parking lot across the street.

Accessibility features of our building(s):

Accessible parking spaces
Interior access to different floors for wheelchair users or others with mobility aids (elevator, chair lift, ramps)
Access to worship spaces, including chancel and pulpit, for wheelchair users and people with other mobility aids
Access to child care spaces for wheelchair users and people with other mobility aids
Wheelchair access in bathrooms
Handrails on all stairs
Sound system in sanctuary and other meeting places (fellowship hall, large meeting rooms, etc.)
Curb cuts
Accessible bathroom on each floor
Wheelchair areas in sanctuary (other than "front or back")

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs:

See above

Policies regarding financial practices of the church:

Following the approval of the budget at the annual meeting, expenses are paid by communication between the Financial Secretary (Administrative Secretary) and the Treasurer. We have a Finance Committee who monitors spending and develops and recommends a yearly budget. We also have an Investment Committee who monitors and makes recommendations for our investments.

Reflection: After reviewing the church's finances and assets described above, what this information reflects about our congregation's mission and ministry:

We are fiscally responsible and set budgets that we are able to meet each year. Budget process: accrue data from committees, propose budget by the Finance Committee, review and approve by the Church Council, and present to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting in January.

Historical Information**Significant happenings in the history of our church that have shaped the identity of our congregation.**

In 2013 our husband-and-wife ministerial team retired after 41 years of service. FCC Paxton flourished during their leadership. Our membership numbers increased significantly, and FCC Paxton became known as "the" church to attend for families with children.

Following their departure, we underwent a process of redefining our identity. This occurred under the ministerial service of a three-year Interim Minister who helped us reorganize into a fully independent, church council led congregation. Our first female settled pastor then agreed to a five-year ministry and fulfilled that commitment, finding a new calling in 2022.

Our Bridge Pastor (2022-2023) genuinely helped us rediscover ourselves. She was truly a blessing sent from God.

Upon her departure we called a Designated Term Minister. After a brief period and many discussion and prayer, it was mutually agreed upon that we part ways. Our moderator and Council met with him several times reaching an agreement after 3 months of service.

A specific change our church has managed in the recent past.

The departure of our recent Designated Term Minister. Discussed later in this section.

Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. "Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement....". These are our congregation's values and practices when it comes to conflict.

FCCP has excellent communication with our congregation, committees, pastor and staff. We are a fellowship committed to serving each other and the community, and we do this joyfully, honestly and openly. We trust our committees and leadership with decisions using input from the congregation as needed.



The most recent major conflict through which our church has navigated.

Historically, there has been relatively little conflict at FCCP. Our church leadership works well together and the level of communication with the congregation is both consistent and transparent. We are a congregation with a wide range of perspectives and comfort levels with how our faith interacts with our public and civic lives. In the recent past there were a few issues that did create some conflicts. The issues were: Covid-19 restrictions and the differences in foundational beliefs between our congregation members and those of our Designated Term Minister. We were able to navigate these differences with the assistance of our transitional ministerial committee, our ACM and open communication with the pastor and congregation.

Ministerial History:

No response

What our church has learned about itself and its relationship with people who provided ministerial leadership.

Spiritual growth is primarily restricted to houses of worship. We are in a time where we need to focus on what joins us together. Using terms that refer to political groups or movements can cause people to draw lines, and these lines can progress from unease to disengagement. We work hard to address differences openly and faithfully.

Our congregation needs to be willing to accept change and welcoming to all individuals. We should follow Christ's example when he said, "Come to me all that labor and are heavy laden ..." By not naming specific groups or causes he declared everyone as equals.

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

Yes

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?

Yes

Has a previous minister been a contributor to conflict following their tenure as pastor?

No

Community Vision

How the relationships and activities of our congregation extend outward in service and advocacy.

We do support a good number of local groups and activities, i.e. Boy Scouts, AA, Dismas House, our 24/7 food pantry, and local elementary school. Because we have experienced multiple changes in ministerial leadership over the past years our present primary focus is on rejuvenating and rebuilding our congregation.

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

Our moderators, lay leaders and pastors have actively participated in UCC meetings and conferences.

How our church engages with the community organizing movements in our community.

Our church supports improvements and engagement in Paxton, which is a small town that rarely "organizes movements".

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, through Just World Covenants or affiliations with other groups. Check any of the following partnerships which your congregation has formally adopted, or movements which otherwise apply to your congregation.

None.

What the above statement(s) mean(s) to our community. How our congregation plans to work toward the above statements of witness in the future.

Because we have experienced multiple changes in ministerial leadership over the past years our present primary focus is on rejuvenating and rebuilding our congregation.

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

We do invite other congregations in the area to our special services held during the week and some members also respond to similar invitations. Also, a fair number of our members attend other churches when on vacation or visiting out of the area.

How our mission statement compares to the actual time spent engaging in different activities.

As printed in our By Laws:

The Statement of Faith framed by the General Synod of the United Church of Christ in 1959 is adopted as expressing the faith and the purpose of this Church. It is our Church Covenant:

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, and to his deeds we testify:

He calls the worlds into being, creates man in his own image and sets before him the ways of life and death.

He seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

He judges men and nations by his righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, he has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to himself.

He bestows upon us his Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

He calls us into his church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,

Amen.

The scope of work assigned to our pastor(s). How 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 view community ministry and ministry to the wider church as being very important in the long-term prosperity of our local church and denomination. But considering the present significant challenges that we are now facing, in the short-term we need to build back a strong viable base for ourselves here in Paxton. It's simply a "grass roots" situation, once we are able to return to a previous strong footing then we will be better equipped to focus on wider church matters.

The ARDA or MissionInsite Reflection

ARDA/MI File

No response

From looking at our congregation's The ARDA or MissionInsite report, these trends and opportunities are what stood out to us.

Have not addressed this matter.

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

Paxton is often referred to as a "bedroom community" of Worcester, as are several of our other neighboring towns. We have very few commercial properties, only an auxiliary post office in a small grocery store and a single school with grades K-8.

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

The community generally appears congenial but minimally involved.

What we hear when we talk to community leaders and ask them what our church is known for.

To a large extent, that depends on who is being asked and additionally, it's hard to know how much our community leaders actually know what we do. Our present community outreach includes working with the Lions Club on the town wide yard sale, sponsoring AA groups and a Boy Scout troop, filling backpacks for those children in need at our local school, maintaining a 24-hour food pantry, as well as providing significant space for an independent day care operation.

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

Actual quotes:

It's definitely the people. There's a sincerity in the love that I feel and a true sense of community that you don't get everywhere. I have belonged to a lot of churches as music was my profession. I've been on councils, on staff as Dir. of Music, and swore I would never join a church again. Until I met the folks at FCCP.

My first impression was that I was in a very friendly congregation. When I was invited to join the choir and found such a wonderful group, I knew I had found a new spiritual home.

Involvement with this church, to me, is a necessity for nurturing my soul.

References

None contacted yet

Closing Prayer

The hymn - *Blest Be The Tie That Binds* .

Statement of Consent

1. Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile?

For example, church council or consistory, transition team, etc.

The six (6) members of the Search Committee and the Church Council, with some contributions from several long term and insightful members.

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

References:

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