

**Name of Church**

West Avon Congregational UCC

**Address**

280 Country Club Rd  
Avon, CT 06001

**Conference:**

Southern New England

**Association:**

Farmington Valley

**Title**

Pastor

**Start Date**

Nov 7, 2024

**Description**

West Avon CC P Search

## Church Contact Information

No contact information has been added to this profile.

## Listing Information

### Web Presences

<http://www.westavonchurch.org/>

Type: Professional

<https://www.facebook.com/WestAvonChurch>

Type: Other

### Additional Formal Ecumenical Affiliations

None

### UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person

**Name:**

Reverend Isaac Lawson

**Title:**

Area Conference Minister, South Central Region

**Phone:**

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## Summary Ministry Description

With a nearly 275 year history, West Avon Congregational Church (WACC) has gone through many ups and downs. The meetinghouse has been renovated, closed and reopened, moved and expanded. It has seen 33 called and settled ministers, a number who ministered in temporary capacities and has "Raised Up" 10 ministers. Generations of church members have evolved with the changing times. But the meetinghouse still stands as evidence of our Christian commitment. Today, as with so many other mainline churches, we are fewer in number but we have a desire to continue our ministry and we are exploring new ideas and structure.

Our vision includes being a lighthouse in the community for those who struggle with basic needs, for youth in crisis, and for those affected by the problems of mental health and substance abuse. We are seeking a Pastor who will collaborate with our members and leadership to energetically move our church toward its goals, fostering growth in both faith and community. The ideal candidate will be passionate about creating spiritually rich Sunday services, delivering engaging and relatable sermons that inspire and connect with people. We are also looking for someone outgoing, who is enthusiastic about growing and diversifying our congregation, as well as delivering compassionate pastoral care, especially for our long-time members who may need extra support.

## Church pictures



## What we value about living in our area.

Our membership has strong roots in the community, and values having family and friends nearby. The Farmington Valley offers a combination of natural beauty, small-town charm, and proximity to urban amenities.

Avon provides natural beauty and offers residents access to numerous parks, trails, and outdoor activities. The Farmington River, provides opportunities for canoeing and fishing, while the town's parks and green spaces are perfect for hiking or cycling and nearby Talcott Mountain State Park offers panoramic views from Heublein Tower. Avon is known for its highly regarded public school system, making it an attractive location for families with children. The schools consistently rank well in the state, with a focus on both academic excellence and extracurricular activities. The community is welcoming, enlightened and engaged. The town's small size and close-knit atmosphere foster connections among neighbors, with a variety of peaceful and attractive housing options. Local businesses and a variety of dining options enhance the town's social fabric. Avon has excellent transportation links and is a short drive from Hartford, which is home to a wide range of professional, educational opportunities, and cultural amenities such as museums, theaters, and art galleries.

These qualities make Avon, CT, a desirable place to live, offering a balanced lifestyle that combines natural beauty, excellent schools, and a high quality of life.

<https://www.avonct.gov/about-avon>

## Current size of membership

300

## Average in person attendance

60

## Does your church hold virtual worship services?

Yes

## Choose platform type(s) and number for virtual worship.

**Video Hosting Platform**

On average, how many views are received per service?

8

**Languages used in ministry**

English

**Position Title**

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 believe that a **welcoming and charismatic** minister can create an environment where all members, new and old, feel valued, accepted, and supported. A warm and inviting presence will foster a sense of belonging, encouraging deeper connections and a more inclusive community, and advance our efforts to reinvigorate our church and its activities. The charismatic aspect is equally important, as it enables the minister to inspire, energize, and connect with the congregation on a personal level. A charismatic leader brings enthusiasm, passion, and authenticity to their preaching, ministry, and interactions, helping to engage the congregation and strengthen their faith. This dynamic approach will nurture relationships, spark spiritual growth, and motivate active participation in church life. Together, these qualities will lay the groundwork for a minister who not only leads with love and integrity but also builds a thriving, united community centered in Christ.

**Second:**

We are seeking a Pastor who is **outgoing and compassionate**, with a heart that connects with pastoral care. The ideal candidate will have an easy way with people and will build strong relationships within the congregation and the greater community. We are looking for an ambassador of God's love who will represent the church at local and community events. It will be important for the new candidate to partner with our lay leaders to help attract new families, reach out to prospective members and those that have disengaged from the church, and bring commitment, inspiration, and passion into the spiritual lives of our congregation.

**Third:**

The members of the Church are looking for a Pastor that is **honest and trustworthy** while being thoughtful and pastoral. If the pastor is to be available in the Church for agreed upon office hours, they should be in the office available to the members of the congregation or individuals who enter the office. In addition, the new settled pastor will keep all conversations of a sensitive nature confidential. This will allow the congregants to feel comfortable with sharing their thoughts and feelings. This is a way to establish a connection with the members of the congregation. Members of the congregation as a whole want to have opportunity to meet with the pastor in a comfortable manner. This would include all ages of the congregation, and not just certain groups.

## 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)	75000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing Allowance	25000	<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: 100000			
Pension/Annuity	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Security and Medicare Offset	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical/Dental Insurance	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life Insurance	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability Insurance	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worker's Compensation	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If needed, please comment further on your church's salary and benefits for the minister.

Our compensation package is in the range of \$100,000 to \$130,000 inclusive of salary, housing allowance and all benefits (e.g. UCC annuity, medical insurance, life/disability insurance, self-employment tax offset, etc.). The compensation package is negotiable, based on education, experience and other intangibles, in accordance with Southern New England Conference, UCC, Guidelines.

Additional benefits include nine federal holidays, five of which are designated: New Years Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day and Thanksgiving. the other four can be selected from the standard federal holidays, but may not include Good Friday, Christmas Eve or Christmas.

In addition, up to 20 days of paid time off will be available. This includes vacation, personal days and sick days. The PTO can include no more than four Sundays. Our church will also provide you with a sabbatical leave of three months after five years of full-time ministry with our church.

The expected living situation for our next minister.

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.)

No

Our church does not have a parsonage.

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

The Settled Pastor position is intended to be full-time.

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

Conference and/or Association meeting registrations  
Other meeting registrations (or educational requirement registrations).  
Criminal background checks.

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

We are fortunate to be a part of a warm and supportive religious community. Pastors in the Farmington Valley Association typically meet monthly to network, share resources, offer peer support, and provide encouragement.

The Southern New England Conference offers a comprehensive array of programs, resources, conferences, and retreats to provide spiritual renewal and support local church ministers in their vocational growth. The Center for Transformational Leadership is especially valuable for their ongoing development: [www.sneucc.org/transform](http://www.sneucc.org/transform).

### Who Is God Calling to Minister with Us?

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

WACC's settled pastor will have a major opportunity to move the church on many fronts, working in tandem with a church council and other members of the congregation pastor will help refine define and bring to life specific goals and plans for growth and development. Through the feedback from recent extensive survey of members of the WACC congregation, we have chosen three priority ministry goals for what we wish to achieve in partnership with our next settled minister.

1. **Creating spiritually rich Sunday services:** WACC is a community anchored in a Sunday service rich with spiritual inspiration, uplifting music, and community connections. In our survey, a significant portion of our members expressed a desire for a preaching style and sermons that are engaging and relatable to their lives, drawing upon narratives, relevant Bible stories. Therefore, our next settled minister should enjoy crafting and delivering uplifting, inspiring sermons to create a joyful Sunday morning experience.
2. **Growing and diversifying membership and participation of the congregation.** We envision that our pastor will be outgoing, people-person who enthusiastically embraces and works at increasing membership.
3. **Delivering pastoral care:** We are fortunate to have a number of long-time members. As some are in advanced years, they may require a modest portion of the minister's time due to periodic health concerns.

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

We seek a Pastor that will embrace and extend WACC's commitment to spiritual and moral leadership in the broader community, focusing on four pillars:

1. **Mental Health/Substance Abuse:** Create a safe, non-judgmental space, especially for teens, where individuals can seek help. A recent tragedy, the suicide of a local youth underscores the urgent need for additional resources. We envision educational initiatives, support groups, and partnerships with mental health professionals to reduce stigma and encourage healing. This will make the church a place of refuge and restoration for those affected. Some members are exploring the WISE program, currently used in UCC churches, to address these issues.
2. **Food/Basic Needs:** The church actively partners with organizations to address food insecurity and provide essential items. We support Gifts of Love, Veterans Base Camp, Avon Social Services, and others, as well as creating hygiene kits for hurricane victims and host clothing drives. We will strengthen these initiatives and explore new outreach opportunities, ensuring the church remains a beacon of hope, demonstrating Christ's love through tangible acts of service.
3. **Youth:** We aim to invest in the future by prioritizing youth engagement. Through mentorship, programs, and outreach, the pastor will create an environment where young people can grow in faith, build relationships, and develop leadership skills. By providing opportunities to serve and engage in mission projects, the pastor will inspire youth to actively participate in church life and become compassionate, responsible leaders.
4. **Worship:** We will passionately pursue an open and welcoming worship service that nurtures spiritual enhancement, reflection, and open communication in our calling to follow Jesus's teachings as we grow, connect, and serve together.

By focusing on these pillars, the Pastor will empower the congregation to extend its mission beyond the church, fostering lasting change and a tangible impact on those in need.

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

The minister should be able to connect with people of various ages, understanding how generational differences impact faith practices and relationships within the church. This strengthens the church's calling to serve the community, foster multi-generational discipleship, and growth. The leader should be aware of socio-economic realities and challenges faced by different groups in the community, and the congregation's role in the broader society. Understanding local challenges helps the leader craft relevant sermons, outreach programs, and support services that speak to the congregation's context.

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.

## CARING FOR ALL CREATION

- o Nurturing care and compassion for God's creation.
- o Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness.
- o Practicing self-care and life balance.
- o Providing hope and healing to a hurting world.
- o Attending to one's own spiritual and pastoral care, including engagement in supervision as appropriate.
- o Stewarding the resources of the Church.

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE AND MERCY

- o Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression.
- o Practicing the radical hospitality of God.
- o Identifying and working to overcome explicit and implicit bias in the life of the Church.
- o Understanding community context and navigating change with a community.
- o Engaging in mission and outreach. o Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence.

## STRENGTHENING INTER- AND INTRA- PERSONAL ASSETS

- o Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and life experiences.
- o Living in relationships of covenantal accountability and commitment with God and the Church.
- o Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity.
- o Respecting the dignity of all God's people.
- o Understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the life span.
- o Demonstrating excellent communication skills.

## BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- o Empowering the Church to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.
- o Strategically creating the future of God's Church. o Witnessing in the public square to God's redeeming power.
- o Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks.
- o Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity. o Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning.

## 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.

During the time since our last settled pastor left for a new calling, the congregation has worked as a cohesive group to reimagine a new vision for West Avon Congregational Church. Earlier in 2024 the members met after service monthly for "Church Chats" for five months. During these chats, in a collaborative setting, we dug in deep on the topics related to the Church and the wider community. After we gathered information from the Chats, we developed a survey for the congregation to determine what was seen to be the most pressing issues relating to our community. Based on the input from the members it was determined that three areas would be the immediate goals as a congregation. The three issues that were determined to be needed the most consideration was (1) to reconnect with the youth of our community, (2) to address the issues facing individuals related to food insecurities and difficulty finding affordable housing, and (3) to support those in our community who are struggling with Mental Health and/or addiction issues. The product of all of these exercises was a new vision statement, as follows: "We will be a beacon in the community where all who are struggling will have a safe space and the support to meet their basic needs, with dignity and a sense of belonging to God's loving family". In addition, The Pastoral Search Committee took a more detailed survey of the Church's members. It was clear from the results of the survey there is a strong interest in the growth of members of all ages. Within that growth, there is a desire to attract younger families and youth. Those demographics could round out our congregation with long standing members. It was suggested that including the youth in outreach could increase the numbers. The youth seem to find satisfaction in making a difference. Our Outreach Board has come up with creative ways to make volunteering and giving to people in need, satisfying.

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

God is calling our congregation be the beacon in the community where all who are struggling will have a safe space and the support to meet their basic needs with dignity and a sense of belonging to God's loving family. We will be the lighthouse! This vision will focus on the issues of mental health, food insecurity/basic needs, and supporting youth. we are called to respond with love and care, while ensuring we maintain a balance of providing support without overwhelming those we seek to help with overt evangelism.

As mental health and substance abuse struggles rise, we are called to create safe, supportive spaces where individuals can find healing and hope, offering resources and fostering open conversations to reduce stigma. In response to food insecurity and basic needs, God invites us to be a source of tangible support, ensuring that no one in our community faces hunger or hardship alone. Through partnerships and outreach, we aim to meet immediate needs while demonstrating Christ's love through service. God is also calling us to invest in the next generation, providing mentorship and opportunities for youth to grow in faith and leadership.

In recent years, filling positions on our boards and committees has been challenging. During this transitional period we have engaged a consultant to create a simpler organizational model. This new approach will involve more members with shorter time commitments, and we hope to have it approved at the Annual Meeting in June 2025.

Working to grow our membership we host two large annual community events to promote our church. Our Pride Community Block Party, co-sponsored with the Avon Public Library features booths, children activities, food, drag performers, and giveaways, creating an inclusive and fun atmosphere. The Fall Festival features 60 craft vendor, a bounce house, and raffles to raise funds for missions. This event showcases our welcoming community, with support from the local fire department and a focus on children.

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## Congregation Reflections

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### We would describe our congregation's life of faith as...

When new members join WACC, they vow to affirm their baptism, to be Christ's disciples, and to grow in the Christian faith, all "with the help of God." The congregation in turn pledges support, help and prayers that "together we may increase our love of God and neighbor in Jesus Christ through caring, sharing, outreach and worship".

In worship liturgy, God is described as a Triune God who loves all of creation and recognizes that every living person is unique, accepted, and valuable. We support more inclusive language in our worship service so that God isn't describe solely in masculine terms.

We share each other's sorrows and troubles, looking to our loving God for guidance and support. We rejoice with one another when good things happen, thanking God for each blessing. We look beyond our walls to help the least among us with our outreach efforts and many individuals in our church community perform quiet, unheralded acts of caring.

### Strengths or positive qualities of our congregation.

People are the greatest strength of our congregation. We have a deep sense of community, compassion, and commitment to service. We are rooted in faith, dedicated to living out our values of love, peace, and caring for creation. Our members are welcoming and inclusive, fostering a safe and supportive environment for all. We have a strong sense of service among our Congregants and value collaboration. Our outreach committee is established in the local community and works together to support one another and partner with local organizations. Some of our Outreach efforts involve Avon Social Services, as well as Healing Meals, and Gifts of Love, who both provide for the basic needs of the people of the Farmington Valley. We also provide support for children who are part of the CT Department of Children and Families. Each holiday, the children of DCF receive gifts selected from our Giving Tree. Our people are resilient, weathering the pandemic and the tribulations of this transition period with a positive attitude and with faith in the future of the church. We are passionate about social justice, regularly engaging in outreach and advocacy efforts to address local and global issues.

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

A congregation's growing edge can be seen as an invitation for renewal and transformation. During this transitional period our church has seen a decline in membership. There is a strong desire to attract and engage young families, increase youth participation, and grow the overall membership to foster a healthy, thriving ministry.

Our church struggles with outreach to new or younger generations. There may be a need to strengthen the church's approach to evangelism, reaching out to people outside the congregation, or building connections with the wider community.

We face the challenge of maintaining strong connections across generations. The older generation may feel disconnected from younger members, and youth or young adults may feel isolated from the larger church community. Youth and family ministries need revitalization to engage young families and retain younger members as they grow older.

As financial needs change and the landscape of church attendance and giving evolves, our congregation faces challenges with sustainability, especially in maintaining or expanding church programs, staff, and facilities.

### What worship is like when our congregation gathers.

Worship service starts at 10am on Sunday mornings. The congregants enter to a beautiful sanctuary with large windows and light shining in from the east, a heavy wooden timber cross adorns the sanctuary. We start the service with a welcoming of "No matter who you are or where you are in life's journey, you are welcome here". There is a sense of comfort in this expression by the congregation. This message is given just after the prelude from our very talented organist. Following the welcoming, the pastor encourages us to Rise and Greet each other. This can take some time due to the feeling of connection between congregation members. This is followed by a responsive Call to Worship; beautiful music is performed by our gifted choir and the congregation. We then have a prayer of invocation followed by The Lord's Prayer. The pastor gives a sermon, referring to the daily readings. The congregation enjoys a sermon that is relational, engaging and a narrative of personal stories. After the sermon, we join the choir with another rendition of a spiritual and joyful call to offering, followed by the doxology. We then share prayers for the people followed by the benediction and Postlude.

### The educational program/faith formation vision of our church.

We follow a core curriculum from Growing Faith Resources for children based on the church calendar. We have a weekly Sunday service, a bi-weekly Lighthouse lunch for youth and also a summer bible camp. For first communion, children in third grade are invited to attend a class for a basic understanding of the Eucharist so they may participate during communion Sundays. Middle school youth are offered confirmation class instruction. Once a year, the older youth of the congregation participate in Youth Sunday leading worship for the pastor and deacons and providing music. For adults, we have bible study, religious literature study group, a prayer shawl group and Sunday strolls. On a rotating basis, we offer interfaith worship on Thanksgiving and every year a celebration of Seder on Maundy Thursday, as well as various other seasonal workshops. Our vision is to grow our membership and attract more young families to expand our church school, youth groups, and offer more faith formation activities to our entire congregation.

### How our congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

The ultimate decision-making body is the congregation. We have two mandated congregational meetings each year. These meetings are run by the moderator with an agenda created by the council. The day-to-day work of the church is updated yearly and approved by the congregation. The boards consist of: Christian Education, Membership and Community, Trustees, Outreach, and Deacons.



Decisions which are beyond the scope of the boards, including budget and spending decisions, long range planning, revisions to the constitution and emergency measures are made by council, which is comprised of the board chairs, two members at large, the treasurer, the clerk, and the moderator. Council meeting are also attended by ex officio members, the pastor, or in our case the director of Christian Education. All of the large decisions flow through the Council and as needed to the congregation.

On a monthly basis, the boards report their activities and decisions, as well as issues that have come up to the council. Council minutes are made available in a newsletter.

When it comes to decision-making, 15 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...

Recently, an inactive church member with mental health problems, disrupted worship to air his grievances. The congregation was alarmed by his actions and many people were frightened. After the Pastor and Council members consulted with our Association, our Conference, the local Police Department and mental health professionals, the individual was given an opportunity to attend a meeting of our Church Council, which he also disrupted. Steps were taken to ensure the safety of the building and the individuals in it; on the recommendation of the police a "no trespass order" was instituted. A letter was sent to the church members, updating them on the measures being taken to protect their safety and to prevent further incidents.

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

[WACC Proposed Structure Design.jpg](#)

[June 2024 West Avon Congregational Church Annual Meeting Report.pdf](#)

[West Avon Congregational Church Annual Planning Report January 2025.pdf](#)

## 11-Year Report

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

[Download 11-Year Report](#)

## Congregation Demographics

Describe those who participate in your church.

DEMOGRAPHIC	NUMBER
NUMBER OF ACTIVE MEMBERS:	131
NUMBER OF ACTIVE NON-MEMBERS:	8
TOTAL OF CHURCH PARTICIPANTS (SUM OF THE NUMBERS ABOVE):	139

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

No

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

TIME	PERCENTAGE
MORE THAN 10 YEARS:	69%
LESS THAN 10, MORE THAN 5 YEARS:	13%
LESS THAN 5 YEARS:	18%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

**Number of total participants by age:**

AGE	NUMBER
0-11	5
12-17	1
18-24	4
25-34	1
35-44	2
45-54	6
55-64	13
65-74	18
75+	22

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

**Percentage of adults in various household types:**

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	PERCENTAGE
SINGLE ADULTS UNDER 35:	4%
HOUSEHOLDS WITH MINORS:	12%
SINGLE ADULTS AGE 35-65:	4%
JOINT HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO MINORS:	58%
SINGLE ADULTS OVER 65:	22%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

**Education level of adult participants by percentage:**

EDUCATION LEVEL	PERCENTAGE
HIGH SCHOOL:	6%
COLLEGE:	77%
GRADUATE SCHOOL:	7%
SPECIALTY TRAINING:	6%
OTHER EDUCATION LEVEL: Doctorate	4%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

**Percentage of adults in various employment types:**

EMPLOYMENT TYPE	PERCENTAGE
ADULTS WHO ARE EMPLOYED:	26%
ADULTS WHO ARE RETIRED:	52%
ADULTS WHO ARE NOT FULLY EMPLOYED:	22%

**ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?**

Yes

**The range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:**

The wide range of occupations in our congregation reflects the diversity of skills, talents, and experiences that our members bring to their community. The majority are professional or technical (teachers, engineers, healthcare providers, etc.). Other occupations include administrative positions, insurance agents, or sales. A small percentage work in service or trade fields. These varied professional backgrounds enrich the church's life and mission in numerous ways—from leading ministries and supporting the physical infrastructure to contributing to community outreach, worship, and spiritual growth.

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

The ethnic mix and racial make-up of our congregation reflect the diversity of our area. The majority is of white ethnic backgrounds with a small percentage of Indian and Asian ethnicities. Their presence adds an international dimension to the community and can help foster cross-cultural understanding and exchange.

As an open and affirming community we actively welcome individuals and families from all walks of life, regardless of ethnicity, race, or background. It's a place where people of all identities feel accepted, supported, and encouraged to engage in worship and service together.

**What diversity means in our context?**

Since becoming open and affirming in 2008, we have strived to reflect the diversity of our community. Most of our members come from United Church of Christ backgrounds, while others have roots in Catholic, Baptist, and Presbyterian traditions. In our context, diversity goes beyond racial or ethnic differences—it includes varied socioeconomic status, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, spiritual journeys, and theological beliefs. We aim to foster an inclusive environment where all are valued, ensuring diverse voices are heard and respected.

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

Yes

**Comment after the exercise:**

Welcoming diversity is an ongoing theme in our services and our fellowship conversations. There is no specific date for this, but it is continuous and ongoing.

**Participation and Staffing**

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## Participation and Planning of Gatherings

WAYS OF CHURCH GATHERING	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ATTENDANCE	WHO PLANS EACH OF THE LISTED GATHERINGS
Adult Groups or Classes (in person or online)	15	Staff/volunteers
Baptisms (number last year)	6	Pastor/Deacons
Children's Groups or Classes	5	Staff/volunteers
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	200	Pastor/deacons/CE
Church-wide Meals	65	Staff/Volunteers
Choirs and Music Groups	12	Music Staff
Church-based Bible Study	5	Staff/Volunteers
Communion (served how often?)	55	Pastor/Deacons
Community Meals	0	N/A
Confirmation (number confirmed last year)	6	Pastor/Deacons
Drama or Dance Program	0	N/A
Funerals (number last year)	5	Pastor/Deacons
Outdoor Worship	40	Pastor/Deacons
Prayer or Meditation Groups	5	Volunteers
Public Advocacy Work	100	Staff/Volunteers
Retreats	0	N/A
Weddings (number last year)	0	N/A
Worship (digital / online / livestream)	65	Volunteers/Deacons
Young Adult Groups or Classes	0	N/A
Youth Groups or Classes	0	N/A
Other	0	N/A

## Worship Times


WORSHIP (TIME SLOT):	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ATTENDANCE	WHO PLANS EACH OF THE LISTED GATHERINGS
10AM	65	Pastor/Deacons

## Additional comments:

Our weekly worship is Sunday at 10am.

Many informal church gatherings (such as Sunday Strolls, Spring Brunch, Chili Cook-off Competition, Fall Festival, music concerts, etc.) are handled by volunteers with the support from the Deacons, Council, Youth Director, and Music Director. Pastoral support is utilized for such special events like Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday "Meal in the Upper Room" (Last Supper remembrance involving a home cooked lamb dinner), Easter Sunday, Christmas Eve (early evening Nativity pageant and a late night candlelight service), and special blessings/remembrances.

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.

NAME	THREE-WAY OR FOUR-WAY COVENANT	MINISTRY SETTING	TYPE OF MINISTRY ROLE	RETIRED
William Barnes	none	Methodist	N/A	
Albert Newman	none	Presbyterian	N/A	

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

The retired ministers listed above are valued members of our faith community. They are not church members, so as not to lose their standing in their ordination denomination, but they regularly attend our worship and other community functions. They play supportive roles, offering wisdom, guidance, and mentorship to current clergy and congregants. Rev. Barnes supports our congregation by leading worship services to enable our Pastor to occasionally take time off on a Sunday. We appreciate their presence and involvement.

List of all current staff:

STAFF POSITION	HEAD OF STAFF	COMPENSATION	SUPERVISED BY	LENGTH OF TENURE FOR CURRENT PERSON IN THIS POSITION
Music Director	N/A	part	Pastor	4 months
Director of Religious Activities & Education	N/A	full	Pastor	5 years
Organist	N/A	part	Music Director	10 years
Administrative Assistant	N/A	part	Pastor	new hire

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

Our congregation's demographics and activities showcase a vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive ministry dedicated to spiritual growth, community engagement, and service. The makeup of the congregation reflects our community's openness to various backgrounds. The variety of activities suggests a strong commitment to discipleship, fellowship, and outreach, with a focus on nurturing both individual faith and collective impact to meet the needs of the community we serve. Our talented staff reflects a desire for quality worship and programming, with an emphasis on the role of music during worship.

## Church Finances

### Current Annual Income

SOURCE	AMOUNT
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	301717
Endowment Proceeds (as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return)	128506
Endowment Draw (beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal")	-75000
Fundraising Events	4658
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	68673
Rentals of Church Building	28775
Total	457329

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

417022

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?

23

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)

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered?

Funds for charitable efforts are gathered through regular financial contributions from our generous congregation, typically during Sunday services or through online giving platforms. These funds are designated to support the broader mission of the denomination, including ministries, programs, and outreach efforts at the conference, national, and global levels, ensuring that our church's work extends beyond the local community. Every month our members bring in groceries to distribute to neighborhood food pantries.

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

0

Total amount of loan debt:

No response

Reason for debt:

N/A

Are capital and other payments current?

Yes

## Capital Campaigns

Description of any building programs projected or underway.

We do our best to ensure our 200-year-old historic church is kept in good order and do not foresee any major repairs or improvements in the near future. We are in process of replacing the shutters on the exterior of the meetinghouse. The project has been funded through generous donations. A vendor is preparing to perform measurements and begin fabrication. The project is expected to be completed in Spring/Sommer of 2025.

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.

Not applicable

Does your church have an endowment?

Yes

What is the market value of the assets?

1122740

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

Drawn as needed

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

Last year's rate of draw was 4.3% compared to 6.6% five years ago.

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

Draw has averaged \$97,892 over last five years and has been used for operating expenses.

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

Approximately 15 years - assuming a 5% market return and withdrawals exceed this by average of 4%.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

With the hiring of a new pastor, controlled expenditures, and growth of our church family, we expect our withdrawal rate will decrease.

#### Other Assets

Checking Account and Property

#### Reserves (savings):

*No response*

#### Investments (other than endowment):

*No response*

#### Does the church have a parsonage?

No

#### Description of all buildings owned by the church:

Our historic 200-year-old church meetinghouse is the heart of our facility, with light streaming through large windows and a heavy cross adorns the sanctuary, made of timbers salvaged from when the church was moved and expanded. Below is storage, a Youth Room, and Victorian Room which is used for weddings and funerals. It's decorated with older furniture and décor special to the church. The meetinghouse connects to the 1959 Parish House, expanded in 1984, housing Fellowship Hall, classrooms, offices, and the Fireside Room. Our facilities host a local nursery school, Scouts, yoga, AA, and more.

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

N/A

#### Accessibility features of our building(s):

Exterior access such as ramps for wheelchair users or people requiring other mobility assistance  
Accessible parking spaces  
Interior access to different floors for wheelchair users or others with mobility aids (elevator, chair lift, ramps)  
Access to child care spaces for wheelchair users and people with other mobility aids  
Listening devices in the sanctuary, or wireless technology to connect to hearing aids  
Large print bulletins  
Closed-captioning on sanctuary screen and/or livestream  
Wheelchair access in bathrooms

Handrails on all stairs  
Sound system in sanctuary and other meeting places (fellowship hall, large meeting rooms, etc.)  
Curb cuts

**Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs:**

The meeting house is accessible via elevator, however the choir loft and basement are not.

**Policies regarding financial practices of the church:**

The primary financial function execution is performed by the Treasurer with planning and budgeting handled by the Church Council. The Treasurer takes care of all disbursements and our Financial Secretaries receive and record any incoming funds. Payroll is handled by the Treasurer. The Church Council puts together a budget each year and tracks the overall income/expenses. The endowment is handled by a committee of people experienced in investments.

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

The church's current financial situation has been marked by a decline in membership and challenging economy. Our congregation remains resilient and dedicated, continuing its' ministry and serving the community, even when faced with financial pressures. Tapping into the endowment shows a willingness to invest in sustaining vital programs and services, while recognizing the need for future growth and sustainability. This situation highlights the congregation's determination to weather difficult times while seeking new ways to engage members and strengthen its financial foundation.

**Historical Information**

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

At the 1924 Annual Meeting cash-on-hand was just \$29.29. The minister had resigned and, hoping to re-open soon, a motion was passed that "the church be closed for the present". It took five years but West Avon was again opened in 1929. For the next 12 years the pulpit was supplied by seminarians from the Hartford Seminary.

In 1965 the 1818 meetinghouse was condemned. A study of the options was undertaken and members voted to move the building to a nearby lot the church owned. When banks hesitated to provide funding, 6 couples put their homes up as collateral. A renewed/expanded meetinghouse was dedicated in October 1969.

As with so many churches, we took a hit during the pandemic. Members made life decisions that removed them from our fellowship, choosing to retire, move closer to family, etc. Others adopted Sunday morning practices which broke the habit of attending worship. WACC felt the affects of reduced attendance and diminished contributions of talent and funds.

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

During the COVID-19 Pandemic our services were live-streamed. A significant amount of time was spent adjusting to the new form of worship and making it engaging to keep our congregation connected. When we were able to worship in person again, we held services outside through October of 2020, and moved the start time of the service to 11am to take advantage of warmer temperatures. In November of that year, in-person worship resumed in the meeting house; masking and registration were required. Various measures were taken to prevent the spread of germs and a few women in the congregation made masks to give out to people in the congregation.

**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.**

Our congregation values open communication, respect, and reconciliation when it comes to conflict. We acknowledge that disagreements are a natural part of community life, and we approach them with a spirit of understanding and grace. Our practices include fostering a culture where all voices are heard, ensuring that individuals can express concerns in a safe and respectful environment. We prioritize active listening, empathy, and collaboration in resolving conflicts, seeking common ground rather than division. When conflicts arise, we work toward solutions that honor the dignity of each person involved, and we turn to prayer and spiritual guidance as a foundation for healing. Our goal is always reconciliation, maintaining unity within the congregation while respecting differing perspectives. Through these practices, we strive to create a community where conflicts are opportunities for growth, mutual respect, and deeper relationships.

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

During this transitional period our Interim pastor offered an innovative approach to Sunday services, provided guidance in creating our vision statement, and shared a new approach to church government. While we appreciated their efforts, Church leadership made the very difficult decision to part ways with our interim pastor.

Fortunately, we have very strong leadership in the church that continues to guide us through this challenging transition period. We hope to learn from this experience and help us better define our expectations as we search for a Settled Pastor. We strive to find someone with passion and a strong work ethic that will be committed to the needs of our congregation and build trust and stability.

## Ministerial History:

Name: Rev. Dr. Donald Ketcham

Years of service: 32

UCC Standing

Name: Rev. Marshall Linden

Years of service: 2

UCC Standing

Name: Rev. Dr. Brian C. Hardee

Years of service: 17

UCC Standing

Name: Rev. Nada Sellers

Years of service: 1

UCC Standing

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

Our church has learned the importance of fostering strong, collaborative relationships with its ministerial leaders. We've recognized that effective leadership requires good time management and organizational skills, mutual trust, open communication, and shared vision. The church has grown in its understanding of the diverse needs of its congregation, and our leaders have learned to adapt to those needs while guiding the community. We've also seen how crucial support for our leaders is in ensuring long-term success, both in spiritual growth and in maintaining a healthy, thriving congregation.

## 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?

No

## 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.

WACC has always been a community church. From days when the meetinghouse was the site of town meetings to now when we share our building with an independent pre-school and (until COVID) an adult day center, we have welcomed scouts, 12-step programs, dance classes, etc. For 45 years, members have provided worship services for a local convalescent home. When an apartment house fire caused residents to lose their belongings, we stepped up as a collection/sorting point for donated clothing. We have always been an integral part of our community.

In 2024 we received a grant to expand our Pride Fair. The new Pride Community Block Party was colorful & inviting. It included booths from 20 diverse groups from the greater community (Avon Fund for Equity, Brain Injury Alliance of CT, Q+ Hartford, Avon HS Gay/Straight Alliance, NAMI, etc.). There were activities for children, food, drag performers, & lots of giveaways. Those who attended were enthusiastic & had a good time.

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

Our congregation is actively engaged in meetings and activities that connect us to the broader United Church of Christ (UCC). As schedules permit, our delegates attend the Farmington Valley Association meetings and the UCC Annual Conference. Local pastors gather monthly, and our ministers are involved at both the regional and national levels, participating in conferences, mission projects, and advocacy efforts that promote unity and shared ministry. We work alongside UCC partners on social justice initiatives, support interchurch collaborations, and contribute to UCC's national programs. This engagement deepens our faith, enhances community outreach, and furthers the UCC's mission of inclusion, justice, peace, and service. Through these efforts, we contribute to a more connected, compassionate, and equitable church and world.

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

Our church strives to engage with community organizing movements by partnering with local organizations, such as the Avon Free Public Library, Avon Social Services, and CT Department of Children and Families, focused on social justice, racial equity, and environmental sustainability. We stay connected with the community through social media, including Avon Patch and the Avon Neighbor Connect Facebook page. We participate in collaborative efforts to address issues such as affordable housing, immigration rights, and poverty alleviation. Our members regularly join community rallies (such as a protest of Moms for Liberty), advocacy campaigns, and interfaith dialogues, strengthening partnerships with grassroots movements. Through these efforts, we amplify marginalized voices, work toward systemic change, and embody our commitment to justice, compassion, and collective action, fostering a more inclusive and equitable community.

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.

Open and Affirming (ONA).

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.

In May of 2008, our church voted to extend an extravagant welcome to all persons regardless of differences such as race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, physical abilities or age, becoming an Open and Affirming congregation. Since then we've remained a supportive church, a place of care and compassion, offering emotional, spiritual, and practical support to individuals in times of need.

Our congregation is now interested in working toward becoming a Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged (WISE) Congregation for Mental Health. We feel this would have a positive impact on the community and is one of our three core ministries of our new Vision statement. We would aspire to be welcoming and non-judgmental of those living with mental health challenges, to expand our inclusion of those who are living with mental health challenges, to be supportive of all who are affected by mental health conditions, and to engage in ways to live our commitment to be WISE about mental health.

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

On a rotating basis, our church participates in an Interfaith Thanksgiving Service with other churches in the community. Some members of our congregation have participated in the Martin Luther King Day food packing event at the Farmington Valley Muslim Center. We have reached out to the Hindu community in the past to try and make stronger connections. Our facility has been used as a school for the Indian community in our area to teach cultural and language skills to their youth and as facility for Hindu ceremonies.

In the past, the church has provided sponsorship for refugees to resettle in the U.S.. WACC supplied clothing, housing, food, transportation, and employment opportunities to help them rebuild their lives. This type of endeavor supports our Christian responsibility of helping those in need and fostering empathy and understanding to those whose cultures and religious beliefs are different from our own.

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

As members of WACC our mission is to accept guidance holy spirit; learn and teach, joyfully, the word of God; love, in Christ spirit, one another; give spiritual leadership; provide an open, devotional worship; and commit resources to make the world a more just place. At WACC we join together each Sunday to seek spiritual growth and renewal. God has provided a sanctuary that feels like home. The people of the congregation are like family. We have experienced many sermons that are thought provoking and give rise to spiritual growth. It is an open, spiritual, compassionate and nurturing place of worship. Our Sunday service provides an opportunity to experience great fellowship. Outside of the Sunday service, our members are aware there are others that can't participate in our service in the sanctuary. There is a live stream of the service available to them. Also, members of the church and the Pastor will reach out to those who are dealing with difficult situations.

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.

The congregation's expectations regarding community ministry and their ministry in and on behalf of the wider church are acknowledged as important but not the top priority. These expectations are balanced with the pastor's primary role of providing spiritual leadership, preaching, and pastoral care. The congregation understands that, at first, the new pastor may need time to transition and prioritize internal ministry while gradually becoming more involved in community and wider church activities as relationships and capacities grow. Time will be allocated to support local ministry efforts, such as volunteering or partnership with local organizations, while also participating in regional or denominational activities. The primary focus for our new Settled Pastor is first on fostering relationships within the congregation, understanding its culture, and connecting with members.

## The ARDA or MissionInsite Reflection

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ARDA/MI File

[Download ARDA/MI File](#)

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

In Avon, CT, the affluent, highly educated population presents opportunities for luxury goods, real estate, and professional services. The aging population creates demand for healthcare, senior living, and senior-focused products. With a family-friendly environment, there are opportunities for youth-oriented activities, education services, and recreational businesses. The growing diversity offers potential for multicultural retail and services. Additionally, sustainability trends open doors for eco-friendly businesses and green technologies.

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.

Our congregation's demographics closely align with the adjacent neighborhoods, reflecting similar characteristics in terms of ethnicity, age, income, and family-oriented values. The community shares a focus on education, professional achievement, and family activities. This similarity allows the church to serve the local population effectively, providing ministries that cater to family needs, youth programs, and senior care. Our efforts are naturally attuned to the priorities and open-hearted lifestyle of the surrounding neighborhood.

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

Avon is an affluent, educated, and family-focused community whose demographics shape ministry by emphasizing services that support families, seniors, and youth. Churches may focus on youth programs, educational support, and senior care, reflecting community needs. The growing diversity could lead ministries to foster inclusivity, offering multicultural outreach. The aging population may prompt ministries to enhance caregiving, elder support, and health services. Additionally, environmentally-conscious residents may inspire faith-based initiatives on sustainability and community service.

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

Gifts of Love, who serve families that are experiencing temporary financial crisis, tells us that we are committed to community outreach, both with financial support and our commitment to helping our neighbors in need. They recognize our role in the community through our support of Scouting, blood drives, Alcoholics Anonymous, and others.

Our state representative says that every year she makes sure to attend our Pride Day event in June and our Fall Festival. Our rainbow flag, which proudly hangs on the exterior of our building is known in the area as a symbol of our commitment to inclusivity.

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

New people often say they were drawn to the church because of its welcoming, friendly atmosphere and the sense of belonging it provides. Many mention the church's inclusive nature, emphasizing how it makes them feel accepted. Others are attracted by the church's teachings, relevant messages, and strong community outreach programs. Some newcomers also appreciate the church's focus on service, social justice, or family support. Additionally, word of mouth from friends or a specific church event may inspire their involvement.

## References

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■ Michael Olivieri

Contacted: Monday, Jan 27, 2025

#### Reference Response

*No response*



■ John Carmon

Contacted: Tuesday, Jan 28, 2025

Business: 860-673-8610

#### Reference Response

*Reference Attached*



■ Susan Alexe

Contacted: Friday, Jan 31, 2025

#### Reference Response

*No response*

## Closing Prayer

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We Gather Together, sung at a recent service helped unite our congregation during this transitional period. As we face change and challenges, this familiar hymn brought comfort in our shared faith and collective strength. The lyrics reminded us of our unity in Christ, calling us together, regardless of the different paths we may be on. The hymn resonated deeply, reinforcing the values of community, gratitude, and hope. It helped us feel grounded in our mission and encouraged a spirit of togetherness, allowing us to embrace our journey forward as we prepare to welcome our new spiritual leader.

## Statement of Consent

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### 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 WACC Pastoral Selection Committee was assigned the task of generating this updated Profile. The WACC fellowship assisted us by responding to a detailed questionnaire. The questionnaire was prepared with the guidance of one of our members who is a college student and her college professor advisor. Relevant information was provided by our Financial Committee, the Board of Deacons, the Church Council, and our acting Interim Minister. We received guidance and encouragement from prior Pastoral Selection Committee members who completed this duty in the previous ministerial search.

Moderator

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**2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:**

The Pastoral Selection Panel is comprised of church members of different backgrounds and ages to reflect the current church fellowship and to provide a variety of perspectives and insight. It is a good group of people and we are hoping to leverage our strengths to build a better, stronger church for the future.



## Gifts of Love

November 7, 2024

RE: **West Avon Congregational Church**

To Whom it May Concern ~

Over the last twenty years, West Avon Congregational Church has been an integral part of supporting the ongoing work of *Gifts of Love* in Avon, CT. Since our inception thirty-five years ago, *Gifts of Love* has been serving families in the Greater Hartford area who are experiencing a temporary financial crisis. We provide food, clothing, houseware items, and energy assistance as a means to getting them back to solvency.

The West Avon congregation, as part of their commitment to community outreach, generously supports many of our programs throughout the year. During the Holiday season they provide gifts to our clients who might otherwise not have the means to purchase any gifts for their families. The third Sunday of each month is "Food Sunday" where members are asked to bring in a bag of food in support of *Gifts of Love's* mission to feed our neighbors in need. In addition, as part of their Christian Education program, students assist us with assembling food for the Thanksgiving holiday along with our school bags for the start of the new school year.

*Gifts of Love* is blessed to have such a committed congregation which values not only our work, but the work of many organizations within our community. Many local organizations are able to utilize the church facility for Boys and Girls Scout meetings, Yoga classes and blood drives. They are an integral part of our community and open their doors to those in need, exemplifying their open and affirming mission.

It is with immense pleasure that I recommend this welcoming congregation, as they pursue securing a new settled pastor to serve them. West Avon Congregational Church is a



## Gifts of Love

community of committed, thoughtful and energized families and individuals, with a true purpose. Please feel free to contact me, should need any further information.

Sincerely,

Michael Olivieri

Gifts of Love Food Manager

Search Committee WACC

November 12, 2024

280 Country Club Road

Avon, CT 06001

### Search Committee:

I am honored to be asked to help you with an overview of the West Avon Congregational Church from my perspective as a funeral director who has worked closely with the previous three pastors, many of the staff, and also many of the volunteers like Deacons and Woman's fellowship who are involved with funeral and memorial services. I would also say I have many very dear friends who are and have been active members of the West Avon Congregational Church and would always feel completely comfortable attending church events where I have been a speaker a few times and or worship services as it is a warm and welcoming congregation.

My family and I are also strong Christians with deep roots in Methodist, Congregational, Evangelical Baptist, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Churches. As funeral directors, our family is privileged to serve a very diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural population base with nine funeral homes in Hartford and Tolland County so we work closely with churches and clergy from many faith traditions, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, West Indian, Byzantine Catholic, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches of every shape and size. I just thought this background might be helpful.

The church has always enjoyed a wonderful reputation as a "member of the Avon community." They have been hosts in past years of the annual townwide Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service. The church has one of the most active Nursey School Programs I believe in the area and have always attracted quality staff and leadership. I believe their Adult Day Care program has been extremely beneficial to giving family caregivers a needed break.

They sponsor a Boy Scout Troop that is extremely active and has produced a record number of Eagle Scouts over the years. I know there are other groups that meet there and have seen them make their fellowship hall available for appropriate outside groups. Their location across the street from a very active public Library sees them sharing parking for different events that each may sponsor.



# CARMON

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### Administrative Offices

#### Carmon Windsor

P.O. Box 6  
807 Bloomfield Avenue  
Windsor, CT 06095  
860-688-2200

#### Ladd - Turkington & Carmon

P.O. Box 843  
551 Talcottville Road, Rte 83  
Vernon, CT 06066  
860-875-3536

#### Carmon of Avon

301 Country Club Road  
Avon, CT 06001  
860-673-8610

#### Samsel & Carmon

419 Buckland Road  
South Windsor, CT 06074  
860-644-2940

#### Carmon Poquonock

1816 Poquonock Avenue  
Poquonock, CT 06064

#### Hayes - Huling & Carmon

364 Salmon Brook Street  
Granby, CT 06035

#### Nicholson & Carmon

443 East Street  
Suffield, CT 06078

#### Ladd Homestead

19 Ellington Avenue  
Rockville, CT 06066

#### Mt. Laurel Crematory

807 Bloomfield Avenue  
Windsor, CT 06095  
860-688-2200



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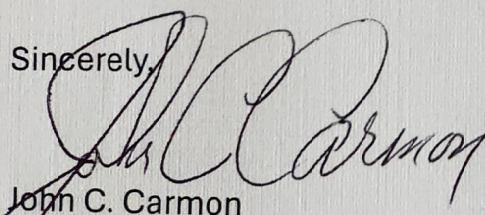
The volunteer leadership, i.e., Deacons, are active participants with us serving families for funerals and memorials and couldn't be more helpful and supportive. The Woman's Fellowship had an active group that helped with receptions after services, but I know it can be a struggle for all churches now as the volunteer ladies who do not work and are available is very limited. The past few years with all we have gone through dealing with COVID has changed a lot of traditions. The dynamic of Zoom and Web streaming has allowed a lot of people to stay home and watch on-line. Maybe creating some viewers who can reconnect after moving away is a plus, but the relationships built by personal touch, eye contact, and a good old-fashioned hug needs to come back especially in our church family relationships.

The church has also done an excellent job in maintaining their facilities. Rest rooms, kitchen facilities, and all the common areas are always immaculate and freshly painted or upgraded as was recently done with the fellowship hall and turning the outdoor space into a welcoming area for coffee and conversation during the warmer weather. I also believe the church is well situated on Country Club Road, easy to locate with plenty of parking, and space for activities. The summer outdoor services on the front lawn or fairs and bazaars.

Lastly, the church has only had two senior Pastors in the past forty or fifty years. I would believe it is because the clergy felt cared for and supported. I know how much the church community rallied and supported Rev. Hardee when his wife died, and he was left to raise four teenage daughters.

I hope my overview and my experience with the church staff, lay leadership, and volunteers gives you a snapshot into a wonderful Christian fellowship that supports its members and the community at large.

Sincerely,



John C. Carmon

Contact information would best be through my office at the Carmon Funeral Home & Family Center, Avon. 860-673-8610.

### Administrative Offices

#### Carmon Windsor

P.O. Box 6  
807 Bloomfield Avenue  
Windsor, CT 06095  
860-688-2200

#### Ladd - Turkington & Carmon

P.O. Box 843  
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Rockville, CT 06066

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807 Bloomfield Avenue  
Windsor, CT 06095  
860-688-2200



SELECTED  
Independent

**The Rev. William S. Barnes**  
**81 Peachtree Village**  
**Avon, CT 06001**

**[bill.barnes824@frontier.com](mailto:bill.barnes824@frontier.com)**  
**(860) 673-0375**

Nov. 12, 2024

Letter of Reference for Local Church Profile  
To Pastoral Search Committee of West Avon Congregational Church

Dear Friends at West Avon Congregational Church,

As many of you know, when I retired from fulltime ministry in the United Methodist Church, I quickly found my way back to the fellowship of the West Avon Congregational Church.

I was given the title of Pastor Emeritus upon my retirement in 2002 after 11 years as pastor of Prospect United Methodist Church, Bristol. Earlier, I had served as pastor of United Methodist Churches in North Canton, New Haven and Easton, Connecticut. Since retirement I have served as an interim pastor in Lakeville, Wethersfield and West Hartford as well as accepting occasional guest preaching assignments.

For a decade, from 1977 through 1986, I took a leave of absence from pastoral ministry to work fulltime in newspaper publishing at the Bristol Press, where my family had been the owner-publishers since the early 1900s. It was during this time that my family and I first became active at the West Avon Church, my late wife, Pat, serving as a deacon for several years.

I was blessed with the development of deep friendships both with Pastor Don Ketcham during those years in newspaper work and with Pastor Brian Hardee during my post-retirement years. Both of their times of pastoral leadership, Don for some 30 years and Brian for nearly 20 years, were marked with meaningful growth and depth in Christian discipleship at West Avon. I was pleased to assist from time to time by filling the pulpit when the pastor needed to be away.

As a longtime friend of the West Avon Church, I am honored to be invited to share some reflections with the Search Committee about the church's ministry and needs in the process of discerning a candidate to become the new pastor:

- The worship life of this congregation is vibrant and meaningful, enriched by the simple beauty and brightness of its historic meeting house and enhanced by its strong commitment to excellence in music, both traditional and contemporary.
- Its commitment to education is also a great strength, from the youngest children through high school age to the various adult education opportunities offered both on Sunday mornings and at various times during the week.
- The strength of these programs in education and music are strongly supported in the church's commitment to professional leadership in its Director of Religious Activities and Education, Music Director and Organist.
- The commitment of the congregation's volunteer leadership is strongly reflected in its many mission and outreach programs, both in the local community and worldwide. The West Avon Church's quickness to react to emergencies like the recent floods and fires is an outstanding reflection of its outreach leadership.
- The church is blessed with strong lay leadership given by the many church members who serve on the various boards and administrative positions that keep it all happening. The number of volunteer hours given each week to make the church's programs so vital and meaningful is incalculable.
- The biggest challenge for the immediate future is quite obviously the one faced by many local congregations in this time of aging membership, the need for growth in younger families, especially those with young children, teenagers and young adults.
- The new pastor for West Avon should understand this need as a priority. Therefore, he or she would need to be a good "people" person, outgoing and comfortable with people of all generations.

- It would be very helpful for the new pastor to be a willing participant in the community at large, perhaps finding his or her way into involvement with a local nonprofit or service organization beyond the church.
- A new pastor with this kind of openness to new experiences in the community would greatly enhance recognition of the good things people already know about WACC and would help to grow the congregation in the long term.
- At the center of the new pastor's rhythm of life, of course, would be the leadership of Sunday worship. In today's world, in which attention spans have shrunk and demands on people's time has increased greatly, even on the Lord's Day, leaders of worship must plan and execute the experience of worship with great care for pace and detail.
- Sermons must seek a fine balance between relevance to the real-life experiences of today and firm, clearly articulated Biblical teachings. And they must be compact. The old standard of the 20-minute sermon is way too long for today's world.
- A pastor who conducts worship with focus, and who pronounces the Benediction less than an hour after the Call to Worship, which should not be delayed by lengthy verbal announcements, will have a grateful congregation indeed, and one that happily invites friends and neighbors to come to church with them.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to offer these modest reflections. May God bless your important work.

Blessings and peace

*Bill*