

First Congregational Church Meredith, N.H. 03253



Church Profile

May 27, 2025

Name of Church
First Congregational UCC
Address
PO Box 533
Meredith, NH 03253
Conference:
New Hampshire
Association:
Granite State Association
Title
3/4 Time Pastor
Start Date
Jul 1, 2025
Description

The First Congregational Church of Meredith is seeking a 3/4 time pastor for our congregation of just under 100 members. Our iconic New England Church is a landmark in our area of lakes and mountains. Our church community is composed of all ages, but mainly we have an older congregation. The members work together well, and there has been a lot of energy exhibited in the last few years mainly due to the church outreaching to our area in many creative ways. A pastor is needed to continue this positive "vibe" of the congregation supporting and encouraging one another, bringing new ideas for outreach programs, leading small groups (Bible Study, Beloved Community and more), bringing new ideas for our youth programs, leading Sunday worship, visiting the sick with the help of church members, and generally offering pastoral care to all. We are attracting new members at this time. We believe that with the right leadership, this attraction can grow, and will result in the church strengthening its positive impact on the community and beyond.

Church Contact Information

(603) 279-6271 (Church Primary Phone)
FCCMeredith@gmail.com (Church Email)

Listing Information

Web Presences

<https://www.fccmeredith.com> Type: Professional
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100069387879307> Type: Professional

Additional Formal Ecumenical Affiliations

None

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person

Name:
Rev. Gordon Rankin
Title:
Conference Minister. New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ
Phone:
(603) 715-9527
Email:
grankin@nhcucc.org

Summary Ministry Description

We are a loving community of worshippers, seeking a pastor who will offer vibrant, relevant sermons and who will connect with members in a personal way. Our congregation enjoys worshipping together in many ways including small groups that meet during the week. In addition, our congregants support one another and enjoy having fun together. We are also looking for a leader to help us continue to grow in numbers and in spiritual depth. We have made important first steps toward these goals, and we hope to call a pastor to guide our next steps. This is a ¾ time position, and we realize that this means we will need to negotiate with the new pastor regarding their work schedule. Our congregation is composed of all ages, but has many retirees with some snowbirds traveling to Florida and other warm places during the winter. We are very community-oriented and participate in many types of outreach to help those in need in our area and beyond. We work with other churches in the area and this connection has been on the increase in the last few years. We believe that God is calling us to increase this outreach and to exhibit "love thy neighbor" in action. We believe that our new pastor will help us in this area. We love living in the Lakes Region and we think you would enjoy living here, too. Is God calling you to join us on our journey?

Church pictures



What we value about living in our area.

The community highly values the natural beauty and cleanliness of the Lakes and Mountains region, with its pristine air and water, and a relaxed, rush-free atmosphere. This area offers numerous opportunities for recreational activities such as boating, swimming, paddle boarding, and kayaking, complemented by a vibrant music scene and a strong emphasis on community involvement and collaboration across diverse socio-economic and political backgrounds. Notable highlights include the region's native wildlife, skiing, and hiking, all of which promote a leisurely lifestyle. Meredith, in particular, is recognized for its friendly residents and convenient access to neighboring states, enhancing opportunities for day trips. The area's growth in restaurants, theaters, and cultural venues over recent years has further enriched the quality of life for its residents, who enjoy a safe and quiet environment bolstered by active participation in churches and cultural events. Additionally, the provision of quality drinking water and efficient municipal weather services contributes positively to life in this region, fostering a sense of awe and pride among its inhabitants.

Current size of membership

97

Average in person attendance

50

Does your church hold virtual worship services?

Yes

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

Video Conferencing

On average, how many devices are logged in per service?

10

Languages used in ministry

English

Position Title

3/4 Time Pastor

Position Duration

Settled

Compensation Level

3/4 Time (approximately 30-32 hours/week)

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*.

Expectations:

Worship Leadership, Preaching, Service Preparation.
Church Administration, Newsletter, Communications, Staff Supervision.
Leadership with Church governing body and committees.
Pastoral care, visitation of hospitalized, homebound, and members in care facilities.
Teaching – Bible Studies, adult education, confirmation, other (please provide a list of any other teaching items).
Mission and service involvements.

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:

Many members of our congregation chose preparation and leadership of Sunday worship services as their top priority for a new minister. Members voiced their hope that the next minister would be able to preach thought-provoking sermons that included references to the Bible while touching upon current-day challenges. Additionally, leading the congregation in a meaningful time of prayer would be valued. Creatively using humor, music and/or skits was also mentioned as ways to engage and connect with the congregation. Inclusion of Church members to read scripture, act in skits, or help in other ways would hopefully be embraced by the minister. Incorporating scripture, choice of hymns, and a sermon into a cohesive message would be great!

Second:

The second priority chosen by members of the congregation is education. Our church looks for a minister who can organize our educational groups and guide us with their theological and biblical expertise. We currently have a weekly Zoom Bible study group and two in-person Beloved Community groups. The members of these groups have been dedicated and faithfully attend. They schedule their week around the classes. In addition to learning more about theology and the Bible, members have also formed strong friendships, which allows for better working church relationships in all areas. Beloved Community groups have created two outreach groups based on their bonds. We have a lay person who is a retired principal who teaches our Sunday School. In addition, we have a collaboration between several Congregational Churches in the Lakes Region that teaches confirmation class. Leading these groups will require a minister who is organized and has a sprinkling of humor.

Third:

The congregation responded to the Scope of Work survey with "Pastoral Care" being the third expectation for a new minister. They stated that they would like someone who was able to reach out to people to provide the care they need. Visitation of the hospitalized, homebound, and members in care facilities was very important. The congregation understands that a 3/4 time pastor may need help from some of the congregants in being able to spend the time needed to reach those in need of pastoral care. The new pastor would work closely with the visitation teams to make ensure that everyone is aware of the needs of those that require visits. The congregation also expressed the need for a minister who could relate well to people of all ages, and who would foster a supportive and nurturing environment within the church, addressing the pastoral needs of the congregants. They desire a minister who provides support and encouragement during difficult times and rejoices with them in good times.

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)	35334	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing Allowance	16134	<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: 51468			
Pension/Annuity	6925	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Security and Medicare Offset	3784	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Medical/Dental Insurance	30000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Life Insurance	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability Insurance	722	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worker's Compensation	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

The church will work closely with perspective candidates on the negotiable areas of the compensation package.
Worker's compensation and Life insurance are covered under First Congregational Church's Insurance with Utica Insurance company.
Flexible spending up to \$1500 is negotiable.
Travel expense per mileage rate by IRS available.
Education expense is available
Advanced degree beyond Master's in Degree in Divinity will be included in the base salary.

The expected living situation for our next minister.

There are several living situations that are possible including living nearby with a housing allowance, commuting from another community, or looking at other possibilities.

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
Not applicable.

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

Our current minister is 3/4 time (and 3/4 time for 7 years). The Church Council and other leaders have worked closely with him to see that his required work schedule remains at no more than 30 hours per week. This pastor has one Sunday off from his duties each month and balances his work week for his part-time commitment. We are willing to negotiate about how this might work for a new minister. The congregation understands that a 3/4 time pastor needs assistance with visitation and other pastoral care duties. We are willing to work with a new minister on this issue.

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

Reimbursement for use of personal vehicle.
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.

Pastoral support of many types is offered by the NHUCC (nhucc.org) including peer and professional groups, leadership development groups and more. Locally, pastors work closely together in Meredith. Our pastor worked with the priests of the local Catholic Church as well as the the pastor of the Episcopal Church. These leaders shared in an ecumenical service at our church last November. Our pastor has participated annually in the Blessing of the Animals event held at St. Charles Catholic Church. The Greater Laconia Interfaith Ministerial Group welcomes all pastors in the area.

Who Is God Calling to Minister with Us?

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

~Our congregation expressed that they would like a pastor who embraces pastoral care for all ages and with people from all walks of life. A ministry goal would be to have more collaboration between the congregation and the minister regarding those who need pastoral care and how this will be achieved.
~A continuation of small group meetings including Bible Study, Book Clubs, and Beloved Community led by the new pastor is very important. The congregants have enjoyed collaborating with the pastor in the past regarding topics of study.
~Attracting young people to the church is certainly a goal for our new pastor and using creative methods and ideas is necessary. Collaborating with our youth to see how they would like to be involved in "church" and service projects is very important.
~The Congregational Church of Meredith is well known for its outreach to the community and the continuation of this very important aspect of the church would be a goal for a new pastor. We would like a pastor who can think "outside the box" in coming up with ideas in conjunction with the congregation for areas of outreach.

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

It is our hope that our new minister will be able to view with "new eyes" the different ways in which our congregation is already involved in community outreach. S/he would then be able to offer new viable ideas while supporting/or asking questions about the missions we have already engaged in.

The minister is often the public face of First Congregational Church in Meredith. We feel it is important for the minister to be aware of the outreach programs which Church members are involved. Some of the areas of outreach include: volunteering at the Heart and Hands Thrift Shop, raising funds for Jake's garage, providing occasional community breakfasts, financially supporting One Great Hour of Sharing and Neighbors in Need. The Church building is also used for AA/Al-Anon meetings, as well as provides space for several other groups to gather. Our Church sponsors the local Scout pack and troop.

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 primary language of our congregation, and thus a minister who has a good command of the English language would be preferred. Someone who felt comfortable speaking and preaching to the congregation within the Church as well as using Zoom to communicate worship services and meetings would be beneficial.

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.

The Areas of Excellence that our next minister should display to further equip the congregation's ministry are as follows:

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation/ Ongoing Spiritual Practice by having a commitment to lifelong spiritual development' faithful personal stewardship, nurturing the congregation's spiritual practices and exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ - continuing testament, extravagant welcome and changing lives.

Building Transformational Leadership Skills by empowering the congregation to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit and the widening of God's mercy.

Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions by bringing life to sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation and witness and leading faith formation effectively across generations thereby providing hope and healing to a hurting world.

Working together for Justice and Mercy by drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression, practicing the radical hospitality of God; identifying and working to overcome explicit and implicit bias in the life of the Church, and engaging in mission and outreach.

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.

We are urged to continue embodying inclusivity, kindness, and care within our community amidst the turmoil of the world. We should seek to learn, grow, and align our hearts with God's will, embracing the essential values of justice, love, and humility. Our congregation is a sanctuary where laughter and love thrive, accepting and celebrating each individual. We are called to expand our outreach, engaging with young families and the community through initiatives like afterschool tutoring and childcare. We strive to sustain and support all who enter our doors while extending our compassion to those beyond them. This is a place of solace during divisive times, where all are welcomed and celebrated. We are encouraged to cultivate a spirit of understanding, kindness, and service, recognizing our collective strength and harnessing our talents for the greater good. Ultimately, we aim to be a family of learners, committed to loving one another, praying together, and acting out our faith in service to others.

Micah 6:8, "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

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

In the fall of 2024 our Church had a retreat led by an outside consultant. Prior to the retreat, every Church member received a questionnaire and from the questionnaire's responses five areas of need/ interest were identified. These themes were: Missions/Outreach, Open and Affirming designation, Capital Campaign, Pastoral Options Exploratory Team, and Increasing Church membership.

Pastor Peter summarized and listed in the 2024 annual report what was resolved during this meeting. These are the resolutions:

* **Missions/Outreach:** Continue to address the needs of others. Collaborate with our partners such as Heart and Hands Thrift Shop and the Meredith Food Pantry. Use social media more to tell our story.

* **Open and Affirming:** Keep educating one another. Take a poll. Schedule a vote. Celebrate inclusion.

* **Capital Campaign :** Investigate the need for a future Capital Campaign.

* **Membership:** Empower Board of Deacons to hold additional meetings to discuss/implement strategies to vitalize worship, encourage greater participation in faith formation, and to reach out and welcome perspective members.

* **Pastoral Options Exploratory Committee:** Met in the fall of 2024 to look at Church finances, met with NH Conference staff and also met with leaders of the Center Harbor Congregational Church to discuss pastor-sharing ideas. In November 2024, this group recommended hiring a 3/4 time minister. This group's work is now done. A Pastoral Search and Call committee was approved at the 2025 Annual meeting in January and this group has been meeting and working on the Church Profile during the spring of 2025.

A vision statement from the retreat: We will strive to be a thriving, joyful, community church inspired by our faith, openness, and music.

Congregation Reflections

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

The core values of the United Church of Christ and our local Church in Meredith are **continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives.**

- **Continuing testament** means that we believe God is still speaking. God has something new and wonderful to say to today's world and to us.
- Jesus welcomed the least likely people. He sought out the least powerful, least "important" people wherever he went. Jesus welcomes the least likely people today. He welcomes us. And we try to extend his welcome to all who enter. **Extravagant welcome** means that you will find a welcome with us, even if you have not felt like you belong somewhere else.
- The Bible tells us that nothing, not even death nor a very busy life, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. We believe that living in the knowledge of this love **changes lives.**
- We learn about God by listening to scripture and sermons given during Sunday worship. Many of the congregation delve deeper by belonging to a Beloved Community group or Bible study.
- We enjoy sharing food and thoughts during fellowship time.
- Many members volunteer their time and talents within the community.

Strengths or positive qualities of our congregation.

Our Church is like a family with members showing love, care, and support to others during the highs and lows of life.

Often before worship services or meetings begin members of our congregation hold lively discussions and catch up with one another. The women and men of FCC are friendly and welcoming. The deacons make a point of greeting new folks and other members will say hello.

Coffee hour in the Fellowship Hall is often well attended. This is where people enjoy snacks and visit with others to become better acquainted.

We also know how to laugh and enjoy music! Most members have a good sense of humor and enjoy either creating or listening to the music at Church.

FCC members know how to work! Being a small congregation many people wear more than one hat and have varied responsibilities. Boards, committees, and individuals work hard to accomplish common goals.

We have a strong Women's Fellowship Group that plans their yearly activities each spring.

During Pastor Peter's ministry, Beloved Community groups have been formed. The groups have fostered a deeper sense of belonging to the Church as well as being valued as individuals. These groups have also discussed topics of faith.

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

The members of the church are aiming to expand the church's current Growing Edge structure, aiming to increase visibility through social media and community outreach. They propose involving more members in committees and allowing them to work alongside current members to develop leadership skills. They also suggest allowing part-time residents to participate in committees and using Zoom for remote interaction. The church aims to make the surrounding community aware of its offerings.

What worship is like when our congregation gathers.

First Congregational Church begins to gather at 9:00 for choir practice/coffee hour set-up. As people enter they are greeted by deacons and given a worship bulletin. Both members and newcomers are given a warm welcome. Members visit with one another prior to the service.

At 10:00 the clock tower bell rings and an organ prelude begins. We are blessed to have a newly renovated pipe organ. Our amazing organist/choir director is Nancy Narducci. The choir sings a variety of music. In the summer months, special music artists are invited to perform each Sunday. Hymns are also sung throughout the service.

We have congregants that often read the scriptural passages. Then the minister will give a sermon based on the Biblical readings and often will make references to current day events. An important part of our worship is prayer time in which the pastor and congregation share their joys and concerns. A person offers his/her personal prayer and then says, "This is my prayer" and the congregation responds, "This is our prayer". We then recite the Lord's Prayer.

After the prayers, an offering is taken followed by singing the Doxology. Sharing of announcements occurs near the end of the service.

The educational program/faith formation vision of our church.

FCC has a history of book & Bible study groups led by the pastor. Our Bible study group meets weekly. The most exciting and most enduring groups are our Beloved Community groups which meet weekly.

- Books include: Brian McLaren's, [Make the Road by Walking: Following the Call: Living the Sermon on the Mount](#); Joseph Donders', [Jesus the Stranger](#).
- The process of meeting weekly, checking in with one another, starting and ending in prayer has helped the group to know one another at a much deeper level.
- New members of the church within the last few years have found their way into fellowship through our Beloved Community groups.
- Each Beloved Community group has taken on an "informal" mission project.
- One group sponsored Jake's Garage, a motorcycle fundraiser, to raise money for individuals to keep their cars on the road.
- The other group has committed to supporting "Community Breakfasts" which are viewed as informal ways this church can welcome neighbors seeking a church community to join. The group endorsed having a "returning citizen" as our chef!
- Sunday School is held 2 times a month (Sept-April). Old and New Testaments passages are shared with the children.

How our congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

We have a three-board Church Council (trustees, deacons, and mission) which meets monthly. The Council includes all members of the boards, plus the moderator and assistant moderator, treasurer and assistant treasurer, clerk and assistant clerk, and pastor. This is a large council, and getting all our work done in one meeting each month is sometimes a challenge, but we find that having all boards meeting together and reporting out to each other each month supports communication in the congregation (and it limits the number of meetings that the pastor needs to attend). The Church Council typically meets for 2 to 2 1/2 hours each month. Sometimes boards have more work than they can accomplish in that time and they hold additional meetings between council meetings.

Decisions are often communicated via "The Caller", the Church's monthly newsletter. Decisions may also be conveyed via email and/or displayed on the Church's website or by reading a copy of the minutes of the Council's monthly meeting.

It has been challenging to have enough people serve on each board and committee. Since fewer people are in each group there are more responsibilities for each member to manage.

When it comes to decision-making, 5 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...

One winter Sunday morning in 2019, the Sanctuary zone valve for our heating system failed to open. Fortunately, the rest of the building was heated. The moderator was shoveling snow and made the quick decision to move worship service into Fellowship Hall. The guest preacher rolled along with the decision. Later in 2019 the entire heating was replaced!

At the beginning of Covid, our transitional minister along with officers and Board chairs, met weekly via Zoom to plan for Sunday worship and make plans as to the best course to follow given guidelines from the NH Conference, State of NH and the country. Zoom was very new to all of us, but we quickly learned how to use this tool for morning worship and meetings. When the weather was seasonable, we had Sunday services outside.

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

[2024 working copy Annual report.pdf](#)

[bylaws_revised_fall_2019.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:	91
NUMBER OF ACTIVE NON-MEMBERS:	6
TOTAL OF CHURCH PARTICIPANTS (SUM OF THE NUMBERS ABOVE):	97

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

No

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

TIME	PERCENTAGE
MORE THAN 10 YEARS:	75%
LESS THAN 10, MORE THAN 5 YEARS:	15%
LESS THAN 5 YEARS:	10%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Number of total participants by age:

AGE	NUMBER
0-11	8
12-17	2
18-24	7
25-34	3
35-44	9
45-54	11
55-64	12
65-74	21
75+	24

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes



Percentage of adults in various household types:

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	PERCENTAGE
SINGLE ADULTS UNDER 35:	6%
HOUSEHOLDS WITH MINORS:	10%
SINGLE ADULTS AGE 35-65:	19%
JOINT HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO MINORS:	35%
SINGLE ADULTS OVER 65:	30%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

EDUCATION LEVEL	PERCENTAGE
HIGH SCHOOL:	8%
COLLEGE:	49%
GRADUATE SCHOOL:	22%
SPECIALTY TRAINING:	18%
OTHER EDUCATION LEVEL:	3%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

EMPLOYMENT TYPE	PERCENTAGE
ADULTS WHO ARE EMPLOYED:	44%
ADULTS WHO ARE RETIRED:	56%
ADULTS WHO ARE NOT FULLY EMPLOYED:	0%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

The range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:

Occupations include: educators in public schools (K-12), college instructor, attorney, pastor, international business person, owner of an animal rescue farm, accountant, construction company owners, professionally owned businesses, custodian, licensed veterinarian tech, Licensed nurse's assistant, graphic designers, internet supporters, US Forest Service employee, event planner, security administrator, physical therapist, speech therapist, parts delivery driver, home assistant for the elderly, doctor, real estate and appraisal professionals, and hospitality industry workers.

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

99% Anglo- Europeans , .05% Asian, 05% African-American

These numbers are a reflection of the community but this is beginning to change with different ethnic groups opening restaurants and other businesses in the area. Many workers from outside the continental United States are brought for work in the summer months.

What diversity means in our context?

The make up of the community represents the make up of the congregation and the majority are white caucasian. Many of our members were raised Catholic and/or attended Protestant churches other than the United Church of Christ. Our ancestors were from Western Europe.

There is socioeconomic diversity in the congregation with a range of income and education. This diversity enriches the function of the church in general. One example is the Community Breakfast Program with the main chef being a former inmate. Everyone who enters the First Congregational Church is welcomed and readily accepted.

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:

Our church website states, "Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!" We welcome people of all ages, races, cultures, economic status and gender identities.

We have embraced some of the recently incarcerated men and women that are part of The Church of Another Chance. When they are struggling, we have given them support through prayers and letters as well as including them in our church. Our community of Meredith is not very diverse but, in the future, we would like to reach out to other diverse groups including employees in the area who are here on a visa.

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
Adult Groups or Classes (in person or online)	14	Lay
Baptisms (number last year)	0	0
Children's Groups or Classes	10	Christian Ed
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	150	Minister, Diaconate, Choir director
Church-wide Meals	1	Lay
Choirs and Music Groups	12	Choir director
Church-based Bible Study	5	Minister, lay
Communion (served how often?)	1	Minister/Deacons - once a month,
Community Meals	2	Lay
Confirmation (number confirmed last year)	0	0
Drama or Dance Program	0	0
Funerals (number last year)	3	Minister, Organist
Intergenerational Groups	0	0
Outdoor Worship	0	0
Prayer or Meditation Groups	12	Minister & Lay
Public Advocacy Work	0	0
Retreats	1	Minister, Lay
Weddings (number last year)	1	Minister
Worship (digital / online / livestream)	52	Minister, Diaconate, Organist
Young Adult Groups or Classes	0	0
Youth Groups or Classes	0	0
Other	2	Ecumenical



Worship Times

WORSHIP (TIME SLOT):	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ATTENDANCE	WHO PLANS EACH OF THE LISTED GATHERINGS
10-11am	50	Minister, Diaconate/organist

Additional comments:

Since Covid, all of our worship services have been available online through zoom which is easily reached through our website. This has been most helpful and rewarding for those friends and members who are unable to attend in person due to illness or location of their residence. We have had many members and friends who are seasonal residents and they can enjoy weekly worship services and continue to be connected to the church while they are away. At times, Bible Study and other small groups rely on the zoom format to be able to join in discussions and to connect with the other group members.

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
Russell Rowland	none	Retired	None	
Judith Gooch	none	Retired	None	

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

Rev. Dr. Russell Rowland, former minister at First Congregational Church, Meredith, is currently a member in good standing at our church. He is a member of the Pastor-Parishioner Relations Committee and the Open and Affirming Exploratory Committee.

Rev. Dr. Judith Gooch is currently a member in good standing at our church. She is a member of the Open and Affirming Exploratory Committee and has led book studies via Zoom on varied topics of interest to the congregation.

List of all current staff

First Congregational Church has four employees, in addition to our minister. These employees' jobs are: office manager/administrative assistant, sexton, organist/choir director and digital ministry person who is the web master for our web site. These employees work part-time with differing hours and days. More information about each of these people may be found on the Church's website: www.fccmeredith.com.

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

Our congregation reflects the overall community in which we live. Our mission commitments include international programs, but our emphasis is on serving our community (food pantry, Heart and Hands Thrift shop, Jake's Garage, backpacks for local school children, etc.).

The information above gives the reader a snapshot of the commitment of our members. To better fulfill and further the Church's outreach would be our hope. A goal would be to get more Church members involved so that together we might make a greater positive impact on our community while building bonds of friendship and love!

Church Finances

Current Annual Income

SOURCE	AMOUNT
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	124477
Endowment Proceeds (as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return)	37000
Rentals of Church Building	500
Total	161977

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

159509

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?

53

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)
One Great Hour of Sharing
Strengthen the Church
Neighbors in Need
Christmas Fund

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered?

A specific amount is given from the overall Church Budget for OCWM.

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

2

Total amount of loan debt:

No response

Reason for debt:

No debt

Are capital and other payments current?

Yes

Capital Campaigns

Description of any building programs projected or underway.

There is no building program projected. There are several projects that are in progress, but they do not require a capital campaign for funding.

Pictures



Description of any capital campaigns in the last ten years:

YEAR(S)	PURPOSE	GOAL	RESULT	IMPACT
7	Funds for church repair	50000	80566	many needed repairs to the Church building were funded
5	Purchase a Rodgers Organ Console	50000	52564	new organ was acquired along with

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.

Both Capital Campaigns involved not only church members and friends, but the greater Meredith Community. Meredith 'sees' our church as an icon in the community due to the clock tower and steeple. Many community members provided items for the Church wide raffle on May 5, 2018.

The replacement of an old organ was, again, warmly received by not only church members, but the community. To 'show-off' the Rodgers organ and the reconditioned pipes several community concerts were held at church in 2022 and 2023.

Does your church have an endowment?

Yes

What is the market value of the assets?

\$21000

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

As needed

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

\$37,000 in 2024; 5 years ago First Congregational Church, Meredith didn't have an endowment that enabled funds to be drawn from

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

\$37,000 was drawn over the course of 2024 for the operating budget

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

It is the intention that the endowment will last many, many years

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

According to the recent market values, our investments are stable.

Other Assets

Church building and surrounding .89 acres of land in Meredith

Reserves (savings):

No response

Investments (other than endowment):

\$21000

Does the church have a parsonage?

No

Description of all buildings owned by the church:

The Church building - Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall and surrounding grounds on .89 acres in Meredith. This historic church was organized in 1815, about 2 miles from its current location. It was moved to Highland Ave in 1842. The education building/fellowship hall/offices were added in 1878. The building is in good condition and has recently had electrical upgrades throughout the church, an upgraded handicap ramp at the rear of the church, new windows in 2015, and wooden floors were installed in the Narthex. The heating system was installed five years ago. The foundation is being refurbished.

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

None

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 worship spaces, including chancel and pulpit, for wheelchair users and people with other mobility aids
Listening devices in the sanctuary, or wireless technology to connect to hearing aids
Wheelchair access in bathrooms
"Quiet room" with worship viewing and listening availability
Handrails on all stairs
Sound system in sanctuary and other meeting places (fellowship hall, large meeting rooms, etc.)
Curb cuts
Wheelchair areas in sanctuary (other than "front or back")

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs:

The first floor of the entire building - Fellowship Hall, a bathroom, kitchen, 2 offices, parlor, and Sanctuary are accessible to wheelchairs and/or participants with mobility issues. No bathroom on the second floor where Sunday School class and child care are available. Listening support is available for participants.

Policies regarding financial practices of the church:

The Trustees, Treas, and Asst. Treas collaborate for financial security. Income is recorded by the Treas; verified by Asst Treas who also reconciles monthly bank statement. Treas authorizes the payment of bills & verified by the Asst. Treas.

The Treas. provides monthly reports to the Trustees & Council. The Trustees & Treas. oversee the endowment. Authorization from the Trustees is needed before the Treasurer can withdraw funds from the endowment.

Payroll for the 3 salaried employees (Minister, Admin. Asst, Sexton) is compiled by accountant as are the Quarterly 941, W2 and 1099 employees.

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

Fortunately, we have invested wisely after the sale of our parsonage. The Trustees in concert with Church Council carefully spend funds for the upkeep of an old, historical building. Our Fall Pledge drive for 2025 increased by \$8,000. A variety of Missions through UCC and within the Meredith Community are supported by either our Budget or the congregation or the community.

An example of the support of the congregation occurred in 2015, when new windows were needed in the Sanctuary. Word went out for this need and in a short time, several individuals paid for the new windows.

Historical Information

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

1. Covid and the shut down of churches affected attendance, how financial support was received (on-line giving and monthly contributions rather than weekly), & the continuation of Zoom for worship and meetings.
2. The Church shortened two pews and installed a ramp to accommodate worshippers with walkers or wheelchairs. One person thought the shortened pews would change the appearance of the Sanctuary. However, this change has allowed for inclusion of these worshippers and their families.
3. There was a Capital Fund in 2017 that raised more funds than expected to update our then parsonage and funds for improvements at the church.

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

The selling of our former parsonage in 2022, was a change that disappointed several members. In the best interest and financial security of the church, it was a most appropriate decision made at a congregational meeting. Since that time, it appears that the majority agree that this was a wise decision.

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 church is loving and has many long-term members. As in any church, we have some strong personalities and can have disagreements. On October 12, 2024, we had a church retreat where we prioritized the path that we want our church to take. More than 30 people attended and broke into groups to discuss Mission/Outreach, Open & Affirming, Capital Campaign and Membership. The groups were able to make commitments to where each of these issues should move. At this retreat we were able to discuss each subject calmly and make positive strides forward. The longstanding friendships have been the biggest reason we have been able to move past most disagreements. We have been able to agree to disagree.

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

In September 2023, we had an initial vote for ONA. We received a majority vote in favor of this designation, but we did not reach the 90% conference requirement.

Due to the political climate there was some worry of our church being targeted. Also, a few members felt that they could be "open" to the LGBTQ+ community but weren't comfortable "affirming" them.

Our Council requested that the ONA team continue to educate our congregation. It has published articles in our monthly "Caller" and invited speakers who have been affected by gender discrimination.

Even with this disagreement among some of us, we have stayed close and worked together. This has been extremely important since we currently have a 3/4 pastor and will continue to in the future. Our congregation has been determined to keep our love for one another despite our differences. We have close-knit friendships that have weathered the ONA disagreement.

Ministerial History:

Name: Peter Lovett	Years of service: 5	UCC Standing
Name: Russell Rowland	Years of service: 15	UCC Standing
Name: John Betourney	Years of service: 10	
Name: Andrew Gilman	Years of service: 2	UCC Standing

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

Reflecting on the life of FCC for the past 30+ years gives an idea of who we have been and are as a congregation. During the time that each of the ministers listed above spent being the spiritual leader of FCC the congregation has changed as the times have changed. Over the years, members have come and gone for various reasons. There remains a core of about twelve people who have been involved in the life of this church for over 40 years. The overlying theme most evident within our church is that the congregation has been able to adapt and welcome new clergy, members, and ways of worshipping.

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

No

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

No

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

No

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 collaborate with Trinity Episcopal & St. Charles Catholic for Ecumenical Services: Blessing of the Animals, musical events and at times, a sharing of Thanksgiving and Christmas services

- ~The 3 churches above give support to the Heart & Hands Thrift Shop and our church has 11 people who volunteer.
- ~Annually, the children at our church raise funds for the Meredith Food Pantry in conjunction with Souper Bowl Sunday in February.
- ~Dresses are made by women in the church for girls in African countries through the Dress A Girl program.
- ~Annually, our church provides backpacks and school supplies for students in the local Inter-Lakes School District.
- ~We participate in the Inter-Lakes Christmas Fund to provide gifts for children and seniors in need.
- ~Jake's Garage, a new mission, helps to provide funds to people in need of car repairs.
- ~We help support Church of Another Chance -- a non-building church supporting formerly incarcerated folks.
- ~The Church supports a student in India.

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

The pastor and a member of the Diaconate have often attended meetings of the Merrimack Association. A member of the Diaconate at this church has been a member of the Merrimack Association's COCM Committee for the past 3 years. It and all other UCC statewide Conferences are now one Association. Through the years many of our youth have attended summer camp at the Horton Center in Gorham, NH. One student was a counselor in training last year. One of our youth will be a camp counselor there this summer. Our current pastor was a counselor there for years, and enjoys taking our youth to this summer camp. Members of our congregation have attended Prepare to Serve for many years, and each year bring back information to share with the congregation.

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

Our Church serves as a vital hub for various community groups and organizations, including AA, Al-anon, Scouts, a Quilters' Group, and WIC, which regularly utilize our facilities for their meetings. The Church gratefully receives a stipend provided by AA to support their weekly gatherings. In addition to these groups, we work with our inter-faith churches to bring together support programs that empower and assist marginalized communities within Belknap County and beyond. We organized attendance and support of Shabbat at our Jewish friend's Temple during a time of anti-Semitic vandalism. We have also raised and designated monies for "Jake's Garage", to provide essential services to those in auto mechanical need. And, most recently, our former Pastor, had been actively working with an AA member to help him find stable housing and employment opportunities.

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.

Our church provides funds for Church of Another Chance, a non-building church that provides support to folks who were once incarcerated. We have welcomed members' of this church into our congregation.

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

We collaborate with Trinity Episcopal and St. Charles Catholic for Ecumenical Services; namely, Blessing of the Animals and Thanksgiving Services. The 3 churches collaborate to operate Heart & Hands Thrift Shop. After paying overhead costs, funds raised from the Store are returned back to the community through grants. Members of our church, 11 at this time, are active volunteers at Heart and Hands and some serve on the Executive Board. Several members have attended the invitation by Temple B'nai Israel, Laconia, NH for their Passover Seder.

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

Perhaps the most time consuming effort, but very rewarding was getting Jake's Garage 'up and running.' Jake's Garage provides funds to community members who need car repairs and can't afford the cost. In 2024, considerable time was spent organizing our first annual Jake's Ride (held September 2024) to raise the funds to support Jake's Garage. Jake's family and friends were a huge help in getting our project off the ground and shared with the community. T-shirts and sweatshirts were sold and local businesses donated items for a raffle that was held at the conclusion of the motorcycle ride. The ride raised over \$4500. We are very excited about continuing this project annually.

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.

It is the expectation that our pastor would develop relationships and communicate with the other pastors or priests in Meredith. Our church looks forward to the Ecumenical services with Trinity and St. Charles. Reaching into Laconia to the Jewish Community for whom we have enjoyed their Seder meal. Additional awareness of Heart & Hands, Jake's Garage, and other non-profits in the community would be great. The congregation expects their pastor to outreach to the community, but understands that the time spent in outreach is within their 30-32 hours of work a week. The pastor would work closely with congregants on community projects with the members taking leadership roles, therefore relieving the pastor of work.

The ARDA or MissionInsite Reflection

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.

The Mission Insite data is a very similar to what we 'see' in our greater community and within our church. Since Covid, more retired adults have moved into our community from southern New England and some are attending our church. We have very few children 0-18 which is in concert with the slight decline of the school age population. Our community continues to be 99% white.

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.

Currently, the demographics of Meredith and the small surrounding towns haven't changed much over the past 10 years even though the population has increased. We are still predominantly Anglo- Europeans with a small percent of Asian and African-American. We are an older community and white. Some of our members were raised Catholic and/or attended Protestant churches other than the United Church of Christ. Our ancestors were from Western Europe. Within a mile of the church, there are lower income areas and our church helps to contribute to school programs that help these families.

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

Even though the population has increased, due in part to this being a popular retirement area, the average age of the population of the church has gone up. There is an increased need for home visits and connecting with people who cannot attend church in person. Participating in the Sunday services using Zoom is popular and a great way for people at home or away to watch the Sunday services. There is a moderate decline in school aged children and that has affected the number of children in our church. It would be our hope to work to expand this population.

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

Physical presence ~ We are known for the church clock and steeple that are seen entering Meredith from several roads. Several years ago the community supported the reconditioning of our church's steeple and clock. The church ~ Used for a variety of activities and events: AA, Al-anon, Scouts, WIC, parking for food distribution by CAP, Meredith Historical Society, a quilting group, & music concerts. Everyone is welcome at our church. Support for needy in town ~ Food, backpacks & Christmas presents donated. Church members volunteer at Heart & Hands Thrift Shop & have raised funds for Jake's Garage.

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

Some new folks reported that the welcoming and friendly atmosphere at FCC was what got them involved, and that the experience was different than their former Catholic upbringing.

Many others got involved at FCC as they were invited to do so from close friends, family, or the FCC pastor. All folks thought it would be a great fit for newcomers no matter their prior religious experiences.

Several commented on the beauty of the FCC Church in Meredith as a draw and that the UCC profile matched closely to that of a church affiliation previously maintained.



References



☒ Ms. Beckingham

Completed: Thursday, Apr 17, 2025

Barb Rayno
Director
Meredith Food Pantry
Meredith, NH

Primary Email Address: beckingham@ATT.net

Business: 6032791115

Reference Response

As the Director for our all volunteer food pantry I interact with many community organizations. We have been so fortunate to have a long term relationship with the First Congregational Church in Meredith. The church leadership has always been receptive to our outreach and the members have generously responded to our requests for support. They regularly contribute food items and make monetary donations. On occasion we have a family with a particular need and they have always made a special effort to help in any way they can. Our mission to reduce food insecurity in the communities we serve depends on this kind of partnership and we are so grateful for their kindness and support. This is the real meaning of "neighbors helping neighbors". Thank you for the opportunity to share with you how much we appreciate their support.

Barb Rayno
Director



☒ Steve Sundius

Completed: Wednesday, Apr 30, 2025

Scoutmaster Troop 55, Meredith
First Congregational Church of Meredith, Troop Charter Organization

Primary Email Address: ssundius@rfsengineering.com

Personal Cell: 6035209805

Reference Response

For many years, the Church has graciously allowed the Troop to use its Fellowship Hall for weekly meetings and has allowed the Troop to store its camping gear and other implements in the shed at the back of the church building (the shed was built by church members for the Troop to use). It is a great service to the Troop that the Church provides a welcoming and free of charge meeting place. Moreover, members of the Church leadership and congregation consistently support (and have supported) Troop 55 with their "time, talents and treasure". I know the relationship between the Church and the Troop is a mutually beneficial one, and our working and sharing with the Church will leave a long lasting impression on the Scouts. The support the Church provides the Troop is invaluable and is greatly appreciated.



☒ Tom Witham

Completed: Thursday, May 1, 2025

I am a longtime Vestry member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Meredith, NH, president of the Heart and Hands Thrift Shop and the Inter-Lakes Got Lunch.

Primary Email Address: tom.witham5@gmail.com

Business: 16037072872

Reference Response

I have had the pleasure of working with members of First Congregational Church on outreach for many years. Nine years ago the only Thrift Shop in Meredith closed. A group of us from the three Churches (First Congregational, Trinity Episcopal and St Charles) got together to see what we could do to fill this void. After many meetings and a leap of Faith together we opened the Heart and Hands Thrift Shop. Our goal was to take donations keeping them out of the Landfill, sell items at very low prices and grant all the profits to nonprofit organizations in the Lakes Region. We agreed in the beginning that no of the proceeds would go back to the Churches. Because of our dedication and wonderful collaboration the Shop has awarded over \$800,000 in grants. The Shop is just one example of the ecumenical collaboration we have together. We work together on the Got Lunch Program and other programs.

Closing Prayer

May today there be peace within. May you trust that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith in yourself and others. May you use those gifts that you have received, And pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be content with yourself just the way you are. Knowing you are a child of God. Let this knowledge settle into your bones And allow your soul the freedom To sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us.

St. Therese of Lisieux

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 Search and Call committee, comprised of five members of the congregation, has compiled this Local Church Profile with the help of the following people:

Our Pastor
The Church Treasurer
Trustees

The congregation: we have incorporated our members' responses to profile questions asked and have listened to congregants' concerns and observations.

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

It is difficult to convey through a profile the real heart of this church.

We invite you to visit and to get to know us... you'll be welcomed by caring, open congregants, some great food, and new friendships.

This profile was written by more than one person of the Search and Call committee, as well as the Church Treasurer, and Pastor.

We look forward to meeting you!