



Name of Church
United Church of Bernardston

Address
PO Box 503
Bernardston, MA 01337

Conference:
Southern New England

Association:
Franklin (SNEUCC)

Title
Pastor

Start Date
n/a

Description
UC Bernardston P Search

Church Contact Information

No contact information has been added to this profile.

Listing Information

Web Presences

<https://www.facebook.com/ucbernardston> *Type: Other*

<https://www.unitedchurchofbernardston.org/> *Type: Other*

<https://www.facebook.com/BernardstonGasEngineShow> *Type: Other*

<https://www.facebook.com/UCBAnnualGolfTournament> *Type: Other*

Additional Formal Ecumenical Affiliations

United Methodist Church

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

Rev. Terry Yasuko Ogawa

Title:

Area Conference Minister, Northwest Region

Phone:

860-761-7192

Email:

ogawaty@sneucc.org

Summary Ministry Description

The United Church of Bernardston (UCB) traces its founding directly to colonial times. Located in the historic and picturesque Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts, we are a combined United Church of Christ and United Methodist congregation that welcomes anyone of any denomination who seeks to worship with us and grow in the teachings of Jesus Christ. We are an Open and Affirming/Reconciling Ministry church in a close-knit community where people know and care about their neighbors. We are known for our "Rainbow Doors" which are a visible sign that our doors are open and welcoming to all.

Our Fellowship Hall is the meeting place for many church and community activities such as our "Second Saturday Roast Beef Suppers", monthly Kiwanis Chicken Pot Pie Suppers, local Brownie & Girl Scout meetings and various community fund-raising events. Each Memorial Day weekend, we organize and host the "Bernardston Gas Engine Show & Flea Market", an event for collectors and admirers of antique tractors and engines as well as a huge flea market of crafts and collectibles, which attracts thousands of visitors to town and is a major fundraiser for UCB as well as many other businesses.

The pandemic certainly challenged us, but despite some membership losses we coped with technology and we find ourselves post-Covid building back our membership and expanding the use of that technology. We are delighted to have welcomed many new members, including young families with children, which will help rebuild our Sunday School. Our new members have brought fresh ideas and a strong willingness to contribute.

We seek a pastor who is open-minded, committed and an enthusiastic partner in working on community projects and outreach efforts recognizing the enjoyment that can be the result of fellowship and service, who shares our Christian traditions, can partner with us to strengthen our congregation and its worship, and with us discern God's roles for our faith in the world.

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

1. Bernardston is located 5 miles from the Vermont border at the foothills of the Berkshires and right off Interstate 91. The community is beautiful and rural, yet accessible, being two hours from Boston and closer to multiple ski areas, hiking and biking trails, theaters, cultural venues and excellent educational and job opportunities.
2. With plenty of farms and gardens in picturesque landscapes, we offer a balance of rural charm and urban convenience, featuring greenspaces, friendly neighbors, and an LGBTQ+ welcoming atmosphere.

3. As a rural community, our actions significantly affect our neighbors. Events that we sponsor and/or participate in such as the Gas Engine Show, Roast Beef Suppers, The Nest Community Closet, Kiwanis Scarecrow in the Park, Trunk or Treat and our Christmas Bazaar are highly valued as they attract local residents as well as people from surrounding communities and beyond.

Current size of membership

152

Average in person attendance

45

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?

15

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

<https://www.sneucc.org/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:

Our congregation highly values preaching ability and the ability to lead worship.

Second:

With a number of the congregation unable to attend church, there is great value in pastoral visits to the sick and homebound.

Third:

We also highly value the ability to counsel those in crisis or conflict.

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)	52500	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing Allowance	38000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any Experiential Difference (Related to years of experience)	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salary Basis: 90500			
Pension/Annuity	7750	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Security and Medicare Offset	6500	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical/Dental Insurance	9500	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life Insurance	1000	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability Insurance	0	<input 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.

Disability and workers compensation are covered with a blanket policy for employees.

\$3,000 is budgeted for travel and mileage. \$500. for professional expenses, and \$500. for continuing education.

The housing allowance listed is the cash value of the parsonage rental. This could be paid if the parsonage is not used by our minister.

The expected living situation for our next minister.

Parsonage preferred. 1/4 mile away, or at least living nearby with the 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

We have not historically done this.

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

Not applicable.

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

Reimbursement for use of personal vehicle.

Other meeting registrations (or educational requirement registrations).

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

The Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ has several peer and professional supports, such as "Communities of Practice" in place. The Southern New England UCC conference website lists these and others, for example at <https://www.sneucc.org/communities-of-practice>. We are active in the local Franklin Association as well as the Southern New England Conference. The Franklin County Interfaith council is more local group of church leaders providing support to local faith leaders of all denominations.

Who Is God Calling to Minister with Us?

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

We would like our new minister to advise and support our growing Christian Education program for all ages that is inclusive to everyone, regardless of faith backgrounds. We have had several offerings for adults in the past few years, but with the addition of new members with children, we know that this is a particularly important program to offer. We would also invite the new minister to be involved with our non-religious outreach to the community which includes, but is not limited to, a community garden, farmers market, the Bernardston Gas Engine Show and Flea Market, "The Nest" clothing closet for children, and possibly looking into using our space to offer weekday childcare/nursery programs.

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

Our church has numerous ministries to support our neighbors' most basic needs such as food drives, monthly donations to local charities from our Roast Beef Suppers, and "Adopt a Family" to provide Christmas gifts for several families in need within the Bernardston community. These events held throughout the year allow us to support local organizations financially while promoting the feeling of community in our town and are inclusive of all people regardless of belief. We take pride in our collaborations with religious and non-religious community members alike to achieve our shared missions goals.

In expanding the feeling of community and variety of fellowship within the congregation, we also host monthly evening "Pub Talks" and breakfast get togethers at local pub/restaurant venues. We are blessed to have many talented musicians in our congregation who often contribute their gifts during worship. We are searching for a minister who will share our values in continuing to support these local ministries while bringing fresh ideas of their own. Having the minister attend church events as much as possible, as well as interest in the general affairs of the town is very important to us.

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

There are no specific language or cultural specific capacities preferred.

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.

We conclude four areas of excellence of greatest value to us are:
Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice.
Caring for All Creation
Working Together for Justice and Mercy
Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets.

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.

God is calling us to be a Christ-centered, open, and affirming congregation that witnesses to Jesus and His love. We strive to be welcoming, compassionate, and generous, caring for all, young and old. With joy in our faith, we embrace our community's needs, blurring lines between church and local life through inclusive ministry and collaboration.

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

One of God's calls to us we feel is to reach out by addressing educational shortfalls with tutoring and programs and supporting elder care through service connections, rides, and visits.

We foster community through shared meals like our Roast Beef Suppers and serve the underserved through outreach.

Our church has a significant contingent of environmentally minded people. In addition to participation in the UCC's "Green Congregation Challenge" task list, our Green Team initiated our investment in 43 solar panels on the roof of the Fellowship Hall, a pretty diligent composting effort and an organic garden plot beside the parking lot that provides food for pollinators and people and fresh flowers for the sanctuary. Though small efforts, they are visible in the community and we hope they will serve as reminders to all of us about the importance of caring for the earth.

Congregation Reflections

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

UCB embraces a progressive practice of Christianity while retaining a fundamental view of Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, we reach out to one another in faith, welcoming all as an Open & Affirming/Reconciling Ministries church. Rooted in UCC and Methodist faith, we celebrate diversity, inclusivity, and respectful dialogue, striving to serve all who enter.

Strengths or positive qualities of our congregation.

Our congregation is caring, compassionate, and deeply connected as a church family. We support each other and our community, embracing change that benefits all. With diverse members and strong leadership, we work together, foster dialogue, and take action. Our love for music, fellowship, and service makes us a vibrant, connected church family.

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

The addition of new members with young children is exciting after going for several years without that age range. Our challenge now is to rebuild our Sunday School program and our youth group offerings, and to find interested and qualified people to staff leadership positions. Having new people involved in church and our many activities will be beneficial not only to the church as a whole but also provide some relief to the core group of people who have kept the church going through Covid and the loss of our long-time settled pastor. Perhaps like many congregations we have our share of "Doers" and "Thinkers". We acknowledge the need for love and respect between people of these differing gifts. Starting meetings with a prayer and following Robert's Rules with a listening chairperson has helped us in this effort, but we recognize it's always a work in progress.

What worship is like when our congregation gathers.

Walking into our church on a Sunday morning you'll first encounter a couple of volunteer greeters at the foot of the stairs leading to the sanctuary. Bulletins and chatter you'll find at the top of the stairs. Brought to focus by our minister giving the welcome, you'll find a seat in the pews. After the welcome we acknowledge our remote congregation and share announcements. Our order of worship is traditional, merging aspects of UCC and UMC. We use a Methodist hymnal and our traditional choir regularly sings twice during the service. At least once a month you'll hear a hymn sing, giving the congregation a chance to sing their favorites. Alternately you may hear our dedicated "ad hoc choir" who love to deliver contemporary praise music. We appreciate a good sermon that is biblical, Christ-centered and thought provoking; something that will stick with us. Following the offering we offer a communal prayer of thanks and the Lord's prayer. Prayer concerns or celebrations are shared. "Shalom to You" is our traditional parting song. A coffee hour downstairs is as welcoming as we can make it. Church for us feels relaxed, genuine and like home, connecting faith to daily life.

The educational program/faith formation vision of our church.

Our faith formation includes regular adult education led by the pastor and congregation members, with studies on both scripture and topical issues. Young members participate in leadership and fundraising. While Christian education for youth is limited, we are hopeful for growth. Faith is strengthened through study, participation, and community involvement.

How our congregation is organized for ministry and mission.



UCB is led by a Church Council which is chaired by the Moderator and consists of the Clerk who records the minutes of the meeting, the Pastor, and a representative from each of the Standing Committees. The Council meets at least quarterly to report on the work of each committee as well as to vote on any business requiring a specific Council vote. The Pastor is an ex-officio member of each committee.

The Church Council is the executive body of the church and the governing body between regular full church meetings. Church custodial and secretarial staff are supervised by the Property and Finance committee with input from the pastor. The Church Council is responsible for hiring and dismissal of staff.

When it comes to decision-making, 16 hours are spent in meetings per month.

Is the pastor expected to attend all church meetings?

Yes

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...

Chairs of property and finance, deacons, and church moderator, communicating by text or phone.

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

[UCB Constitution and ByLaws okd 8-20, rev 4-17-24 received 11-2024.pdf](#)

[Annual Report compressed.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:	152
NUMBER OF ACTIVE NON-MEMBERS:	20
TOTAL OF CHURCH PARTICIPANTS (SUM OF THE NUMBERS ABOVE):	172

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

No

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

TIME	PERCENTAGE
MORE THAN 10 YEARS:	87%
LESS THAN 10, MORE THAN 5 YEARS:	6%
LESS THAN 5 YEARS:	7%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Number of total participants by age:

AGE	NUMBER
0-11	5
12-17	8
18-24	10
25-34	14
35-44	10
45-54	16
55-64	16
65-74	71
75+	12

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	PERCENTAGE
SINGLE ADULTS UNDER 35:	4%
HOUSEHOLDS WITH MINORS:	3%
SINGLE ADULTS AGE 35-65:	28%
JOINT HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO MINORS:	20%
SINGLE ADULTS OVER 65:	45%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

EDUCATION LEVEL	PERCENTAGE
HIGH SCHOOL:	33%
COLLEGE:	39%
GRADUATE SCHOOL:	19%
SPECIALTY TRAINING:	3%
OTHER EDUCATION LEVEL: Trade Schools	6%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

EMPLOYMENT TYPE	PERCENTAGE
ADULTS WHO ARE EMPLOYED:	44%
ADULTS WHO ARE RETIRED:	49%
ADULTS WHO ARE NOT FULLY EMPLOYED:	7%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

The range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:

Trades, services, professional, academic.

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

98% white western european.

What diversity means in our context?

Since we are overwhelmingly white we count part of our diversity in identification of gender and sexuality. Political viewpoints provide with us diversity as well as diversity of faith backgrounds.

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

No

Participation and Staffing

Participation and Planning of Gatherings

WAYS OF CHURCH GATHERING	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ATTENDANCE	WHO PLANS EACH OF THE LISTED GATHERINGS
Adult Groups or Classes (in person or online)	7	Minister
Baptisms (number last year)	1	Minister
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	75	Minister
Choirs and Music Groups	10	Staff or Volunteers
Church-based Bible Study	7	Minister
Communion (served how often?)	40	Minister (monthly)
Community Meals	185	Volunteers
Funerals (number last year)	10	Minister
Outdoor Worship	40	Minister/Deacons
Worship (digital / online / livestream)	15	Staff

Worship Times

No Response

Additional comments:

Change of season is at Memorial Day and Labor Day.

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
Paul Koons	none	Retired	Retired	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lee-Ellen Strawn	3	Northfield Mt. Hermon	Chaplain	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Paul Koons is a much loved presence at holidays and at our Gas Engine show where he directs parking and serves multiple roles as he has for decades.

List of all current staff:

No Response

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

We serve the demographics.

Church Finances

Current Annual Income

SOURCE	AMOUNT
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	85000
Fundraising Events	63200
Rentals of Church Building	2100
Rentals of Church Parsonage	38000
Support from Related Organizations (e.g. Women's Group)	1500
Total	189800

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

180939

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?

65

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)
Christmas Fund

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered?

Fundraisers and donations.

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

2

Total amount of loan debt:

No response

Reason for debt:

not applicable

Are capital and other payments current?

Yes

Capital Campaigns

Description of any building programs projected or underway.

None at present.

Pictures

Description of any capital campaigns in the last ten years:

YEAR(S)	PURPOSE	GOAL	RESULT	IMPACT
5	basement floors, freezer, furnace, paint and siding	50000	20000	
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.

Only building and facility maintenance.

Does your church have an endowment?

Yes

What is the market value of the assets?

685108

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

under certain circumstances.

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

No draw on principal, interest only.

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

none.

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

Indefinitely.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

The church is financially sound.

Other Assets

Buildings

Reserves (savings):

25405

Investments (other than endowment):

1271440

Does the church have a parsonage?

Yes

Fair market rental value of the parsonage:

38000

How is the parsonage used?

rented at present

Street

3 Depot Street

City

Bernardston

State

MA

Zip

1337

Finished square footage:

2200

Number of Bedrooms:

5

Number of Bathrooms:

1

Assessed real estate value:

350994

Available for minister residence?

Yes

Expected minister residence?

Yes

Condition of structure, systems and appliances

Good, updated in 2023. Two car garage is also in good condition.

Entity in the church responsible for review and needed repairs

Property and Finance committee

Parsonage pictures



Description of all buildings owned by the church:

The church proper now located at 58 Church Street in Bernrdston has the original church as its core. In the '80's a major renovation was carried out expanding the sanctuary and building an addition housing a commercial kitchen, church hall, Sunday school classrooms and a modern heating system. It is valued at \$1,552,600.

The parsonage described above is less than a quarter mile away.

Two structures used as food booths at the Gas Engine Show are valued at 10,000 each.

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

Not applicable.

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
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

Accessible bathroom on each floor
Wheelchair areas in sanctuary (other than "front or back")

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs:

All except chancel.

Policies regarding financial practices of the church:

According to the bylaws,

The Property and Finance Committee shall have charge of the budgeted funds, the real property, and the trust funds of the Church and of such personnel as are required for the function and upkeep of the Church.

The treasurer shall keep accurate account of all receipts and disbursements; make a monthly report to the Council and The Property and Finance Committee.

The Assistant Treasurer shall collect, count and record Sunday and special service collections.

It is therefore the property and finance committee which authorizes payment of bills.

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

The church has potential to maintain its current ministries at least.

Historical Information

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

The church merged to become a joint UCC/Methodist congregation in 1965.

In 1989 a new addition to the original church was built, adding 4 Sunday school classrooms and Fellowship Hall. This was done through community fundraising.

In 2014, our church became an Open & Affirming/Reconciling Ministries congregation.

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

After the retirement of our former Pastor, we were without a settled Pastor for a full year before our Interim Pastor arrived. We were able to maintain regular weekly services thanks to pulpit supply and lay preachers from a variety of faiths including non-Christian faiths. The remainder of the church ministries outside of the sermon (home communion, home & hospital visitation, etc.) were handled by a rotation of church members. We take pride in our resilient and adaptable nature but admit that it was a difficult time managed by a small team of people who were already spent having just emerged from the challenges of the Covid pandemic. We look forward to a settled pastor so that we can all return to a shared task structure that we can live with for a long time.

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 love, inclusiveness, and open dialogue in times of conflict. While not truly an example of "conflict", our retired Pastor suffered from poor health in his last few years with us, so some of his duties outside of preaching were taken on by others. Some of the delegation of tasks was handled by the Pastoral Relations Committee, a sub-committee of the Diaconate. Per our bylaws, "The Pastoral Relations Committee shall be responsible for maintaining a liaison between the Pastor and the parishioners", and we feel they have typically done this well. In keeping with the recommendations of "A Sure Foundation" resource of the UCC, we do keep in mind that the ministry of the church is a shared ministry; we are all in it together. And in the realm of interpersonal disagreements, the value of direct communication, even with committee support, is far superior and Christlike compared to gossip and anonymous complaints. As always, "Lord save us from our worst impulses".

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

Prior to our current interim pastor, we had been fortunate to have not faced any major conflicts. Areas of friction have occurred with committee leadership, requiring a committed effort to hear and respect all voices.

In the past month however a problem has grown to where our interim pastor has resigned somewhat prematurely. As of this writing we have not had a formal exit interview. We understand the departure reasons to include the perception of limited respect for the minister, being unsure of support from church leadership, a lack of openness to accept her suggestions for change, and also importantly a church secretary who was antagonistic.

With time we hope to better understand the respect issue. Despite differences we would like to think of our interactions as being caring and civil, but admittedly with the possible exception of the church secretary. We intend at very least to better define the secretary's role and to monitor its support to the minister in the future.

Ministerial History:

<i>Name:</i> Paul Koons	<i>Years of service:</i> 25	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> Alice O'Donovan	<i>Years of service:</i> 1	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> Raymond Medeiros	<i>Years of service:</i> 10	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> David Neil	<i>Years of service:</i> 12	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> Julie Olmsted	<i>Years of service:</i> 1	UCC Standing

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

We thrive when our minister acts as one of us – a Pastor who guides the flock with grace and humility. We value their being an active part in community and church life.

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.

UCB has a strong tradition of service and advocacy. We donate a portion of our "Second Saturday Roast Beef Dinners" proceeds to local charities and sponsor families in need at Christmas (North County Cares). We actively support the Crop Walk and partner with the Bernardston Kiwanis for community projects including Scarecrow in the Park and Chicken Pot Pie Suppers. Our largest outreach event, the Gas Engine Show, draws thousands. We also host scout troops, a clothing closet, and community meals, ensuring our church remains a hub for service and connection within the community.

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

UCB actively participates in the wider UCC through service projects like Souper Bowl for Caring and Blanket Sunday. We have members serving in the Franklin County UCC Council, the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ (SNEUCC) Committee on Ministry, and the Member in Discernment Working Group. Members of our congregation attend the Annual Conference, Franklin Association meetings, and Super Saturday events, fostering connections with other UCC communities. We are very involved in Association and Conference leadership. Last year, UCB hosted an interfaith lecture on "The Fifth Stream" of the UCC: the Afro-Christian Convention, and recently mentored someone into moving their ministerial standing into the UCC.

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

In the community, UCB is known for our Rainbow Doors, the Gas Engine Show & Flea Market on Memorial Day weekend, Second Saturday Roast Beef Suppers and a historical presence in the community. We are also known as supporters of the local community through our close Kiwanis connection, our support of local businesses by displaying their banners at events and partnering with the Kiwanis and the Bernardston Recreation Department to rebuild the dugouts at Pratt Field. We strive to be good neighbors to all in our 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).

Designations from other denominations.

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.

We are designated a Reconciling Ministry with the United Methodist Church.

UCB is fully committed to being an Open and Affirming congregation and is interested in exploring additional designations such as A2A, Creation Justice, and Immigrant Welcoming. Our accessible building and solar panels reflect our stewardship values. Many in the community see UCB as a welcoming presence, even if they don't attend services. Some members are interested in working toward becoming a WISE congregation, further strengthening our commitment to inclusivity and support for all.

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

UCB actively participates in ecumenical and interfaith activities, hosting Easter Sunrise Services in partnership with Northfield Mount Hermon School, the Bernardston Unitarian Universalist Church, and Trinitarian Congregational Church. We have engaged with the Franklin County Interfaith Council and previously joined county churches for an ecumenical Thanksgiving service. Moving forward, we seek to strengthen and expand our interfaith partnerships in worship and community service.

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

Our present Statement of Purpose reflects our commitment to welcoming all who seek God's love while being receptive to the voice of God. With our worship services and various study groups we strive to be receptive to that voice. Additionally, significant time is involved with our support efforts for the poor as well as the church's outward focused events, i.e. engine show and suppers. Moving forward, we may consider refining our purpose statement to more clearly reflect the balance of time spent in ministry and mission.

The scope of work assigned to our pastor(s). How their community ministry and their ministry in and on behalf of the wider church accounted for in the congregation's expectations on their time.

We value a pastor who is active both within our congregation and in the wider community. While we do not strictly manage a pastor's time, we appreciate a visible presence in local events and UCC activities. Our expectations include a balance of worship leadership, pastoral care, governance, and outreach. Engagement in community events and wider church initiatives is encouraged, recognizing that this strengthens our mission and enhances our connection to the broader faith community.

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.

We ran the ARDA Community Profile for 5 and 7 mile radii from the church. The first area has a larger proportion of rural and suburban occupancy, the second includes more of the nearby city of Greenfield and town area of Turners Falls. Both are served by a large number of churches. With populations of 25,000 and 49,000 respectively, their populations are slowly shrinking with poverty levels below the national average of 12.8%.

Minority populations are significantly below the national average, at 6.5% in the 7 mile area. Elderly are more populous and education levels are higher.

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.

Both in adjacent neighborhoods and in connecting neighborhoods our internal demographics match quite closely in many regards, with a few percent less minority and significantly more elderly and college educated members.

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

This is the first time we have actually examined local demographic data. Our ministries are not consciously shaped by demographic input. We have been making an effort to attract families with children as we have heard in the community a desire for Sunday school.

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

Our church is known for our Rainbow Doors, Gas Engine Show, Kiwanis connection, Church Suppers and a historical presence in the community.

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

The atmosphere is casual and laid back. They felt accepted and included exactly as they are. They felt welcomed but not pressured to be involved. Building and grounds are well taken care of. Church members are quick to make friendships with new comers. They love the music and the freedom of thought/belief.

References



Completed: Sunday, Mar 30, 2025

Fire Chief and Emergency Manager for the Town of Bernardston. Lifelong resident. Married, 4 stepchildren, 8 grandkids, 3 great grand kids.

Primary Email Address: 4c1pshedd@comcast.net

Business: (413) 522-8775

Reference Response

Lloyd Grover Turnersfalls rd Bernardston, Ma. 413-522-3737
Chief Jim Palmeri, Bernardston Police dept. 413-648-9208
Robert Raymond, Turnersfalls rd. Bernardston, ma, 413 648 5920
Ken Bordewieck, Library st, Bernardston ma, 413 834 5735

☒ Donna Giard



Completed: Wednesday, Apr 9, 2025

Local business owner who supports the church through their fundraisers with donations. I believe the church meets a huge need in our community

Primary Email Address: idonls2@comcast.net

Mobile Phone: 4132187693

Reference Response

I am willing to be a reference for the United Church of Bernardston

☒ Jennifer Stennes



Completed: Saturday, Apr 12, 2025

I am Jennifer Stennes
I live here in Bernardston. I am very involved in our community.
My son was baptized at the United Church of Bernardston.

Primary Email Address: jenniferstennes4@gmail.com

Personal Cell: 4135228564

Reference Response

If someone would like to contact me that is fine.

Closing Prayer

Let us end our profile with the song we sing at the end of each worship service, from the United Methodist Hymnal, to the beautiful Spanish tune somos del senior (we belong to the Lord).

Shalom to You

Shalom to you now, shalom my friends.

May God's full mercies bless you my friends.

In all your living and through your loving,

Christ be your shalom, Christ be your shalom.

We place this profile in God's hands.

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 United Church of Bernardston Pastoral Search Committee, consisting of

Bob Allen

Eric Almeida

Jason Burbank, chair

Russ Deane

Gina Froment

Austin Hill

Bill Hill

Barb Morris

Kes Rooks

Interim Pastor Julie Olmsted

Moderator Steve Damon

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

God bless us and our respective profiles.