

First Congregational Church of Thetford, United Church of Christ

Thetford, Vermont

Local Church Profile

Mission Statement

The First Congregational Church in Thetford, Vermont, United Church of Christ, is a progressive, Open and Affirming congregation, open to all. We are a diverse people on a journey together following the way of Jesus Christ. We find unity in our shared search for truth rather than in one common creed. Through worship, music, silence, education, discussion, fellowship, and service, we seek spiritual growth and faithful discipleship. We are committed to promoting Christ's way of compassion, justice, peace, and care for creation. Ours is a church of courage and comfort, of thoughtful faith and joyful community, welcoming all who seek a deeper relationship with God and with one another.

Our Community

The First Congregational Church has served the people of Thetford since 1773. Our historic meetinghouse, built in 1787, is the oldest meetinghouse in continuous use in the State of Vermont and remains a visible symbol of faith and community in the Upper Connecticut River Valley. While we treasure our history, we are equally committed to being a vibrant and relevant congregation for today.

Thetford is a rural New England town composed of several villages and surrounded by forests, farms, rivers, and hills. Although rural in character, it lies only minutes from Dartmouth College and Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, giving the community access to exceptional educational, cultural, and medical resources. Our congregation reflects this unique setting, drawing members not only from Thetford but from neighboring Vermont and New Hampshire communities.

Our surrounding community is well educated, environmentally conscious, civically engaged, and committed to public education. At the same time, like many rural communities, we recognize increasing needs related to affordable housing, economic inequality, aging populations, youth engagement, and mental health. We believe the church has an important role in responding faithfully to these challenges.

Our Congregation

With approximately 150 members and an average Sunday worship attendance of nearly sixty people, we are a warm, welcoming congregation that values authentic relationships, thoughtful worship, and meaningful service. We are diverse in our theological backgrounds and spiritual journeys, yet united by mutual respect, intellectual curiosity, and a desire to live out the teachings of Jesus Christ in today's world.

Our worship is rooted in the Christian tradition while encouraging thoughtful exploration of Scripture and its relevance to contemporary life. We appreciate sermons that challenge us intellectually, deepen our faith, and inspire us to become more compassionate and courageous disciples. Music plays a central role in our worship, enriching both our spiritual lives and our sense of community.

We are a congregation that values questions as much as answers. Many members have come from a variety of Christian traditions or other faith backgrounds and have found in this church a place where honest exploration, respectful dialogue, and continuing spiritual growth are encouraged.

Ministry, Mission, and Community Life

Our church seeks to practice faith not only within our sanctuary but throughout the wider community.

One of our most meaningful ministries is the Floyd Dexter Community Outreach Fund, which provides confidential financial assistance to individuals and families experiencing hardship. Through this fund we are able to assist with housing, utilities, transportation, medical needs, food security, and other emergency expenses, while also supporting local schools and community organizations serving vulnerable populations. This ministry embodies our commitment to compassionate service and has become one of the defining expressions of our congregation's mission.

We also offer contemplative gatherings, book discussions, educational programs, and opportunities to explore faith through conversation and reflection. Our congregation actively supports ecumenical relationships, social justice initiatives, environmental stewardship, and fair-trade programs such as Equal Exchange.

Our church building serves as an important community gathering place throughout the week. It hosts childcare programs, support groups, music instruction, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, concerts, lectures, community suppers, weddings, memorial services, and numerous civic and educational events. We view the use of our facilities as an extension of our ministry and an expression of hospitality to our neighbors.

Leadership and Transition

We have been richly blessed by the ministry of our departing pastor, Rev. Robin Junker. She has shaped our identity as a thoughtful, progressive Christian congregation rooted in worship, spiritual formation, environmental stewardship, compassionate outreach, and faithful engagement with the wider world. Under her leadership our congregation has strengthened its commitment to Open and Affirming ministry, expanded opportunities for spiritual growth, refined our governance, and continued to encourage members to live their faith through action.

As Rev. Robin Junker prepares to conclude her ministry among us, we feel a deep gratitude for her faithful leadership and with confidence in the future. While we will miss her pastoral presence, we recognize this transition as an opportunity for reflection, renewal, and discernment as we prepare for the next chapter in the life of our congregation.

Our lay leadership is active, dedicated, and collaborative. Members contribute generously through committee leadership, worship participation, mission work, music, pastoral care, stewardship, and building ministry. We value shared leadership and seek consensus through open and respectful conversation.

Looking Forward

We believe God continues to call the First Congregational Church of Thetford to be a welcoming community where faith is lived through compassion, justice, learning, and service. We seek to deepen our spiritual lives while remaining engaged with the needs of our local community and the wider world.

As we enter this period of transition, we hope an Interim Minister will help us celebrate our history while discerning God's call for our future. We seek someone who listens deeply, values diverse perspectives, provides compassionate pastoral care, and encourages healthy congregational conversations. We hope our Interim Minister will help strengthen lay leadership, nurture our shared ministry, and guide us thoughtfully through the interim process so that we will be well prepared to welcome our next settled pastor.

We are not seeking someone to replicate the ministry of previous pastors. Rather, we look forward to welcoming a minister who will bring unique gifts, fresh perspective, wisdom, humility, curiosity, and a spirit of collaboration. We believe God has faithfully guided this congregation for more than 250 years, and we trust that same Spirit will continue to lead us into the future.

Compensation

Compensation and benefits will be provided in accordance with the current Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ compensation guidelines and will be commensurate with experience and negotiated based upon the scope of the interim ministry.