Senior Minister Position Description
Fountain Street Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Fountain Street Church (https://www.fountainstreet.org) has initiated a search for its ninth senior minister with the goal of beginning settled ministry in the fall of 2020. Known as Fountain Street Baptist Church prior to 1962, the congregation now describes itself as a non-creedal, non-denominational, liberal church.

The church has 374 pledging units\(^1\) and estimates that it serves a congregation of members, stakeholders and friends numbering about one thousand. Its annual operating budget was $1,168,000 in 2018. The corpus of the church’s endowed funds held by the affiliated Fountain Street Church Foundation is approximately $3,680,000.

The Opportunity
Fountain Street Church seeks a senior minister to lead its spiritual and religious life, including worship, preaching, music, pastoral care, education and social justice activities. The Senior Minister is responsible for implementing goals and policies determined by the Governing Board, except for areas or functions delegated to an Associate Minster. The Senior Minister should be proficient in interviewing, hiring, supporting, developing and evaluating all staff involved in the spiritual and religious life of the church.

The ideal candidate will be:
- A builder of community and connections
- A leader who can empower the congregation
- A distinguished preacher
- An excellent communicator, comfortable with audiences both large and small
- Empathetic, humble and personable
- Intellectually stimulating
- Enthusiastic and dynamic
- A good interpersonal listener
- Inclusive, open-minded, collegial and collaborative
- Supportive and accessible

The Church
The church’s mission is to support the creative tension between intellect and spirit, science and faith, individual and community, tradition and change, challenging us to honor our legacy by embracing the future.

\(^1\) A “pledge unit” is a term indicating an individual or group (e.g. family) making a pledge. It is not the same as “member.” There are more members than pledge units.
The church’s **vision** is to strive to be a vibrant church community that challenges individuals to craft their own spiritual journeys, and to engage in creative and responsible action in the world.

The church’s core values are to value the spirit of inquiry which respects the religious, humanist, and spiritual teachings from many wisdom traditions; we value the direct experience of the mystery that moves us to engage in the never-ending search for universal truths that free the mind.

*We value the active practice of love and justice in human relationships which validate the worth and dignity of each human being, inspiring us to deepen our commitment to deeds over creeds, calling us to grow the soul.*

*We value community founded on the purposeful inclusion of all, in the service of others within our church and beyond, connecting and empowering us to change the world.*

A wide range of religious services, educational programs and social action commitments provides important services to the city and the surrounding region. The Senior Minister who leads Fountain Street Church plays a significant role as the steward of these resources for the benefit of the congregation, community stakeholders, the greater Grand Rapids metropolitan area and west Michigan.

**About Fountain Street Church**
Information about Fountain Street Church, its history and the city and region it serves has been compiled in a detailed congregational profile for the use of applicants posted on the church’s web site at [www.fountaintstreet.org/jobs](http://www.fountaintstreet.org/jobs). General information about the church may be found at [www.fountaintstreet.org](http://www.fountaintstreet.org).

**The Senior Minister’s Position**
The Senior Minister of Fountain Street Church is the church’s strategic and religious leader with responsibility for ensuring that the church fulfills its mission. The Senior Minister leads staff, volunteers and congregants in maintaining a commitment to the church’s core values by providing and overseeing religious services and programs. In addition, the Senior Minister is the primary spokesperson, motivator and ambassador for the congregation, articulating its value and contribution to the city and region for congregants, visitors, community leaders, supporters and the public.

The Senior Minister is responsible for the planning and finances of all religious services and programs. They will lead the ministerial staff in executing the church’s strategic plan and will be responsible for managing religious services on a full-time basis.

Qualified candidates will have a clear vision of our potential and how to help us reach it. To paraphrase one of our past senior ministers, the Rev. Dr. David O. Rankin (1982-1997), the Senior Minister will have “a respect for learning … a devotion to freedom … a
passion for diversity … a dislike of sham … a belief in human dignity … a need for communion … a zeal for peace and justice … as well as a naturalistic theology, which feels the pulse of the Divine in every breath of life.”

**Senior Minister Position Summary**

**Key Relationships**

**Reports to:** The Congregation, FSC Governing Board

**Direct reports:** Choir Director, Associate Minister for Spiritual Life and Learning, Minister of Visitation and Pastoral Care

**Other key relationships:** Executive Team, FSC Governing Board, FSC Foundation Board of Directors, Choir Board Chair, Religious Services Committee Chair

**Major Responsibilities**

- In collaboration with the FSC Governing Board, congregation, board committees and staff, **develops, articulates, and implements a vision** for the church’s present and future spiritual life and translates that vision into strategic concepts, tactical directions, and worship services necessary to fulfill the mission. Provides the impetus as a leader who manages change to respond to changing circumstances and opportunities.

- **Builds community** by working with congregants to direct the religious operations of the church and leads staff and lay leaders in worship, preaching, ministerial outreach, music, and spiritual and religious education. Develops a culture of collaboration, teamwork and congregational participation, utilizing formative evaluation to assess needs and summative evaluation and annual personnel assessments to measure effectiveness.

- **Ensures that worship and programs exploring relevant religious and ethical themes and ideas flourish** and that congregational and community use of the church and its resources grows accordingly. Develops innovative solutions to evaluate, diversify, fund, and grow the church’s religious programs.

- Takes the **lead in diversifying and growing membership and increasing church outreach programs**; serve as the primary interface with community leaders; and develop strategies for cultivating and growing membership and community use of the church.

- Serves as **the church’s key spokesperson**, clearly articulating its mission, values and service activities and ensuring that the church’s message is conveyed to a wide audience; fosters and maintains a close working relationship with West Michigan social and other related religious organizations and non-profit institutions seeking social justice.
Works closely with the Governing Board and its committees in communicating openly, providing updates, soliciting feedback, and engaging members and relevant stakeholders in constructive dialogue; participates actively in discussions of board composition, continuity, terms of service, committee structure, and succession planning.

Identifies, recruits, develops, and retains a talented and accomplished staff to meet the evolving needs of the church; leads the staff to feel empowered, motivated, and rewarded for achieving objectives. Maintains a culture of collaboration and innovation that fosters change and creativity in an atmosphere that values congregational engagement and community building. Is a visible, accessible, and knowledgeable leader who is known and respected by congregants, community leaders, other religious leaders, supporters, and employees.

Manages the resources and property of the church responsibly, ethically, effectively and in a timely manner; works with the church’s Governing Board to ensure budgets are developed and managed to reflect church priorities and that sound financial policies and controls are in place; proactively and transparently communicates with the board, congregation and staff regarding financial issues.

With the Governing Board, leads the planning for and successful allocation of earned and investment revenue and project-focused grants, ensuring that staff is in place to meet the commitments made for outcome-based expenditures. Communicates effectively with congregants, donors and other stakeholders to ensure funding is available on an on-going basis and that the church’s success stories and needs are shared with its pledgers and supporters.

**Ideal Experience**

- Success in a leadership position in a complex religious, nonprofit or academic community with multiple and diverse constituencies.
- Experience working with a mission-driven membership-based religious and/or ethical educational organization, where leadership was demonstrated. Ability to articulate mission and make a persuasive case for the public value of religion, spirituality and worship.
- Experience building collaborative partnerships among diverse stakeholders that resulted in successful outcomes. Vision, creativity, and excitement about the possibilities presented by the increasing diversification and growth of the church.
- Demonstrated ability to exercise leadership and manage a talented staff within a religious, nonprofit setting and demonstrated mentorship of high-potential lay leaders. Knowledge of national standards and best practices in liberal religious leadership and thought, oration, church management, and spiritual growth.
- History of reporting to and working closely with a volunteer board and standing committees that resulted in strong partnerships and successful outcomes.
- Experience as an advocate and spokesperson that suggests the candidate will be comfortable as the welcoming public face of Fountain Street Church, especially in utilizing public speaking, writing and leveraging social media to make the church’s religious services and programs highly accessible to the congregation and the community.
• An advanced degree in conjunction with several years of church or related professional experience is minimally required. A doctoral degree in philosophy or theology or a relevant humanities discipline with six years of church or related professional experience meets the preferred qualifications.

Critical Competencies for Success

Strategic Leadership: The Senior Minister must create a compelling, intellectually exciting, and spiritually challenging agenda to address the short- and long-term opportunities and challenges facing the church by:
• Engaging minds and souls of all ages by emphasizing spirituality and preaching strong and substantive sermons with prophetic witness. Demonstrating an appreciation for the church’s potential to further evolve as a valued liberal religious organization and forum for religious thought, spiritual growth, ethical action, learning and civil public discourse.
• Honoring, celebrating and promoting the power of music to heal the soul.
• Inspiring and uplifting congregational confidence and enthusiasm and appropriately balancing consensus building with decisiveness while providing hope for all stakeholders.
• Effectively leading congregants and church staff through growth and change that honors the past and anticipates the future, while always activating, respecting and empowering the church’s many small groups.
• Assessing external dynamics and institutional strengths and weaknesses to develop a roadmap for the future which links financial realities to the church’s mission and strategic plan. Exhibiting a willingness to change in response to external changes and internal priorities.

Vision and an Appreciation for the Significance of Religious Life: In times of constant change, the Senior Minister must be willing and eager to expand viewpoints about liberal religion and thought and envision how the members can and will be motivated to grow spiritually to improve our community and the world both now and in the future.
• The successful candidate for Senior Minister will have demonstrated vision and creativity and a deep commitment to engaging congregants in exploration of the enduring relevance of religious inquiry and spiritual growth.
• Multiple constituents with diverse religious beliefs cherish Fountain Street Church’s past and future. The Senior Minister must be able to discern their interests and make decisions about limited resources that reflect a keen understanding of the changes in attitude toward religious organizations occurring both within the church as well as in society at large.
• The Senior Minister must work with the congregation and staff to ensure that the church’s strategic assets and its rich network of relationships are not only nurtured but shared appropriately through collaboration to leverage and increase access to its rich religious resources and traditions.
• Religion and personal growth are experienced from widely differing perspectives. Fountain Street Church expects its Senior Minister to present, encourage and conduct
worship and offer religious educational programs that reflect the richness of the church’s theological diversity, while being responsive to its congregation’s broad range of ages, backgrounds and levels of income.

**Profile Raising and Resource Development:** In a resource-constrained environment, the Senior Minister must have the ability to engage and connect internal and external audiences with the church’s mission and vision and increase public and private support by:

- Serving as an advocate for the church to ensure the priorities and goals of the organization are well represented, understood, and eventually funded.
- Leading and directing aggressive and effective solicitations and grant writing for individual and other sources of support.
- Articulating, in an inspiring way, the importance of the church’s mission and the value of a direct, personal experience with spiritual growth in the context of an artistic environment.
- Generating excitement and engagement, elevating the church in the minds of its congregants, board members, congregational leaders, supporters and community and leveraging that enthusiasm both verbally and through the written word to expand the base of support.

**Compensation & Benefits**
Salary and benefits are competitive with other churches of similar size in similar geographic areas. A salary range for this position will be established by the Governing Board and exact terms will be established as part of the finalist interview and hiring process, depending on the candidate’s level of experience.

Among the benefits provided to the Senior Minister are health and life insurance; professional expenses; retirement benefits; long-term disability coverage; vacation and personal time. The exact terms of the benefit package will be established as part of the finalist interview and hiring process.

Sabbatical time for the Senior Minister is established by church policy as follows: Sabbatical time shall begin to accrue following the first year of service at the rate of one month for each full year of completed service, but may not be taken prior to the completion of five years of service nor may accrue more than five months.

**Evaluation:** The Senior Minister will be reviewed regularly by a committee of the FSC Governing Board using both qualitative and quantitative measurement based upon annual goals and objectives. A written performance appraisal will be provided, and the Senior Minister will always be given an opportunity to address performance-related issues at a closed session of the board at the time of the annual review if requested.

**Procedure for Applying:** Qualified applicants should send a comprehensive cover letter, resume, samples of both written and oral work relevant to this position, and full contact information for three references to FSCmsmc@gmail.com. Links to examples of oral skill and preaching may be submitted as YouTube links or as PDF files. The cover letter
should be of substance, illustrating writing skills and specifically addressing how the applicant’s skill and experience are applicable to this position description.

Applicants must use the following email address for submitting application materials: FSCmsc@gmail.com. Printed submissions via USPS or other delivery service will not be accepted.

A church profile for the use of applicants can be found at Fountain Street Church’s website: https://www.fountainstreet.org/jobs. The position will remain open until filled.

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