



**Name of Church**

First Congregational Church of Cheshire, UCC

**Address**

111 Church Dr  
Cheshire, CT 06410

**Conference:**

Southern New England

**Association:**

New Haven

**Title**

FCC Cheshire Associate Minister

**Start Date**

Aug 28, 2024

**Description**

FCC Cheshire Local Church Profile for Associate Pastor search

## Church Contact Information

No contact information has been added to this profile.

## Listing Information

### Web Presences

<https://firstcheshire.org> *Type: Professional*

<https://www.youtube.com/@FirstCheshire> *Type: Professional*

<https://www.facebook.com/FirstCheshire> *Type: Professional*

<https://www.instagram.com/firstcheshire10/> *Type: Professional*

### Additional Formal Ecumenical Affiliations

*No response*

### UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person

**Name:**

Reverend Margret Hofmeister

**Title:**

Area Conference Minister, Southwest Region

**Phone:**

860-761-7198

**Email:**

hofmeisterm@sneucc.org

### Summary Ministry Description

We seek an Associate Minister to join us in our vision to grow our congregation and our impact in the broader community. We are an active, caring, and friendly congregation who approaches our ministries from a welcoming and inclusive lens. A multigenerational congregation, we wish to open our doors wider, bringing in new visitors and members, while sustaining and growing the deep and valued relationships that exist. A part of growth requires that we open our minds and hearts to new ideas for how we live the word of God and deepen our faith in Christ. We want to further grow our connections with our local and regional communities, including other faith groups. We seek to become a hub for the community, offering new opportunities for involvement with our congregation and our ministries as well as increasing use of our indoor and outdoor spaces.

We are excited to welcome an Associate minister to go on this journey with us. We desire an Associate Minister who will work closely with the Senior Minister to preserve the best of our worship experiences and church traditions and also create new ones. We seek someone who values our commitment to being an open and affirming church, helping us to expand our welcome and invitation for others to find their place at First Church. We need an Associate Minister who envisions new approaches to attract and engage young people, recognizing and valuing their ways of communicating, their perspectives on faith and spirituality, and their busy lives. We would like our Associate Minister to be excited to be a representative of First Church in Cheshire and enjoy being active in community events.

We look forward to all the ways our Associate Minister will share our vision of First Church as a welcoming and vibrant congregation seeking to deepen our faith and follow Jesus' example in pursuing justice and caring for each other, the community and God's world.

### Church pictures



### What we value about living in our area.

Cheshire is a quiet, historical town located in Central Connecticut located conveniently between Boston and New York City. Our residents are proud of having a strong community, exceptional schools and healthcare, and local New England charm. We are a safe, family-friendly bedroom community, with easy access to the amenities of nearby larger cities.

Connecticut is a wonderfully small state, making any place in the state a short drive away. Art and cultural experiences abound. Benefitting from wonderful colleges and universities, high quality performing arts venues, and a thriving music scene, one never lacks something to do.

Year-round outdoor activities surround us, both in town and nearby. Connecticut boasts great shoreline and river activities, beautiful fall foliage and fairs, several ski slopes and ice-skating venues, and pick your own flowers and fruits. There is fun to be had in all seasons.

Cheshire is commutable from many nearby cities, including Hartford and New Haven with easy access to local highways. We are also only a short drive

### Current size of membership

788

### Average in person attendance

233

### Does your church hold virtual worship services?

Yes

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

**Multi-stream**

On average, how many viewers are there per service?

54

## Languages used in ministry

English

## Position Title

FCC Cheshire Associate Minister

## Position Duration

Settled

## Compensation Level

Full Time

## Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

Yes

## Link to current Conference guidelines

[Download compensation guidelines](#)

## Scope of Work

Some fields reference [The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ](#).

The United Church of Christ recognizes *The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers* in the formation of ministers, in the practice of active ministry, and throughout life. For the purposes of completing a denominational Profile, ministers are asked to spend some time with the *Marks*.

The Scope of Work developed by our church using the [Call Agreement Workbook](#).[Download scope of Work](#)

## 3 core competencies that we imagine could be foundational in our next minister's relationship with the church.

## First:

Our congregation has expressed a great desire for an Associate Minister who has a demeanor of **warmth and authenticity**. Words such as caring, understanding, sincere, kind, genuine, and compassionate were identified by members as top desired characteristics. One of the hallmarks of our congregation is our sense of connection and community. Our church cares for others: people, animals, and the environment. We hope that our new Associate Minister will want to know us and show great interest and investment in our individual and collective wellbeing.

## Second:

We place great value on our designation as an Open and Affirming congregation. As such, we seek an Associate Minister who leads with an **inclusive** lens. It is important that this Minister is open-minded and nonjudgmental. We welcome someone who can help us to grow as a congregation committed to bringing Christ's love and welcome to all. We have great opportunities to further embrace the diversity within the Cheshire community and surrounding areas. We are excited about how the new Associate Minister will bring this approach to work with children, youth, and families, as well.

## Third:

We seek an Associate Minister who brings **creative energy** to their work. We are not looking for an Associate Minister to pick up where our retired minister left off. We are readying ourselves for a new person to take us to new places. We hope they come curious about what has come before, not to repeat history, but to build upon our strengths. While we can be slow to change, we want someone to help us be innovative, recognizing that church is changing. Youth, young adults, and young families are often seeking connections and spiritual formation in different ways. We need to combine what we know and love with what we can become. Our youth shared with us that they would like our new Associate Minister to be fun!

## Compensation and Support

The salary basis comes from the [Call Agreement Workbook](#), equal to Cash Salary plus Value of Parsonage/ Housing Allowance. The Conference can assist in determining these amounts or provide a worksheet to be used to calculate these values.

SALARY AND BENEFITS OFFERED: SALARY BASIS: ITEM OFFERED	AMOUNT OR PERCENTAGE(IF DETERMINED)	IS THIS NEGOTIABLE	PASTORAL CANDIDATE DETERMINES
Salary (Cash basis determined from Conference/ Association Guidelines)	75000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing Allowance	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Any Experiential Difference (Related to years of experience)	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salary Basis: 75000			
Pension/Annuity	10500	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Security and Medicare Offset	5738	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical/Dental Insurance	31276	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life Insurance	1125	<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.

Salary - Target salary is based upon conference guidelines however is negotiable and will be commensurate with experience.  
Housing Allowance - is included in salary. Candidate will determine the portion of Salary to be allocated as Housing Allowance.  
Pension/Annuity - 14% of Salary and Housing  
Social Security and Medicare Offset - 7.65% of Salary and Housing  
Medical/Dental Insurance - Pension Board Plan B, Family, Including Vision coverage  
Life Insurance - Includes Disability, 1.5% of Salary + Housing  
Disability - Included in Life Insurance  
Workers Compensation - Included

The expected living situation for our next minister.

Living in reasonable proximity to the church and preferably in Cheshire.

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

A parsonage is not provided.

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

The position is full-time.

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

Other meeting registrations (or educational requirement registrations).  
Criminal background checks.  
Community of Practice Participation.

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

The Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ Center for Transformational Leadership offers many opportunities for learning and engagement. One such opportunity is participation in a Community of Practice, also known as a Clergy Excellence Group. These small groups of ministers have a designated leader who convenes the group monthly for discussion, support, and sharing of ideas, etc. Our Senior Minister, Pastor James, participates in a Community of Practice which he finds enjoyable and meaningful. The Associate Minister has up to \$3500 for professional expenses.

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

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

The Associate Minister will work closely with the Senior Minister, church leadership, and the wider congregation to develop and refine the church's vision and strategy for ministry. We recognize that our vision and strategy is only effective if it becomes a foundational part of the work of the Ministry Groups, Action Teams, and church staff. The Ministers' work closely with these leadership groups to embed the vision and goals throughout the life of the church.

The Associate Minister will play a critical role in shaping the future of our church's community and fostering an environment where all members can experience spiritual growth and connection. They will collaborate in the development and oversight of educational programs that cater to all age groups within the church, from children to adults. With a special focus on enhancing the lives of our younger members and their families, the Associate Minister will work with the staff responsible for Christian Education and Youth ministries to engage our children and youth through new and existing programs to excite and energize them toward greater participation.

The Associate Minister will expand our reputation as a warm and welcoming congregation to neighboring communities as well as our own. We are especially interested in growth in our outreach programs that involve youth and families in community service and support initiatives.

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

The Associate Minister we consider, in collaboration with the Senior Minister and the congregation, will effectively communicate the church's vision and mission to the wider community. We desire an Associate Minister who is a strong collaborator and team player. We are known for our partnerships and engagement throughout the community. This Associate Minister has a great opportunity to create new partnerships and identify ways we might share our gifts with the world around us. Through inter-denominational programs within the town of Cheshire and beyond, we can accept the creative challenge to expand current activities and introduce new projects.

Our new Associate Minister will direct the focus of children, youth, and young adults toward greater involvement in our church community and beyond our walls. Outreach programs with national and international focus could be introduced with the goal of drawing in and providing our youth with new service opportunities.

Use of our newly renovated Parish Hall, Church Green and church grounds by community organizations can encourage collaboration and increase town involvement.

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

Our congregation is mainly English speaking but with a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. Our new Associate Minister must appreciate and respect our unique experiences and individuality. In addition, we would expect our church leaders to uphold a sense of equality and respect among race, sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation within our church family and the wider community.

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.

1. Strategically creating the future of God's church

In identifying growth as our primary goal, we seek to understand how to bring others into relationship with God through our ministries and outreach. Collaborating with the Senior Minister, we hope our Associate Minister will bring creativity to thinking about new ways we can reach more residents in the Cheshire and neighboring communities to engage in the life and ministries of our church.

2. Leading faith formation effectively across generations

Faith formation is an area of great opportunity. The Associate Minister will create a nurturing environment where faith can grow and thrive. They will design enriching spiritual exploration opportunities, collaborate to lead innovative youth and family programs, and collaborate in the development and oversight of educational programs that cater to all age groups.

3. Understanding community context and navigating change with a community

We want to be a hub for our community as a place for engagement and connection. We are privileged to be the church on the green and we know that we can more fully utilize our campus to bring the community into the church. We hope our next Associate Minister will offer a fresh lens on ways to connect with different populations within the community and meet their evolving needs for spirituality and wellbeing.

4. Understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the lifespan.

We recognize that times are different, and younger generations are engaging with spirituality in different ways. They may be seeking worship and faith development experiences that are different from our traditional offerings. We seek an Associate Minister who can help provide leadership for integrating emerging needs and opportunities with what we love most about our church. We welcome a Minister who thinks intergenerationally, recognizing unique needs of different ages and stages in life while also providing programming that brings generations together.

## Who Is God Calling Us to Become?

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"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 our Congregation to follow Jesus' example, deepen our faith, and pursue justice through our actions. We seek to welcome all and grow our congregation's care for one another while expanding our impact throughout the greater community and world.

God is calling us to look ahead, plan and meet specific goals by 2030, organized around four major growth goals: membership growth, campus use that supports growth, endowment growth and staffing that supports growth. A Membership Ministry Group, commissioned in 2022, continues to give particular focus to membership growth and new member development.

We continue to say "Yes" to most groups that ask to use our property, cementing our identity as the "Center of Cheshire" and a "Center for the Common Good." The banners on the front of the building continue to garner the interest of our fellow citizens, provoke thought, and promote the church's identity and values.

A Capital Campaign, as part of our 300th Anniversary Celebration, will address some vital upgrades to our campus that will keep it beautiful and welcoming for years to come. Given the waning interest in organized religion in the U.S., we believe endowment growth is essential for our continued financial health and on-going ministry.

In 2023, we completed the Blue-Sky discernment process, begun in 2022, of identifying potential projects for the proposed Capital Campaign, which would most support our ministry and mission as we enter our fourth century. For example, one project that gained interest included designing and building an outdoor pavilion where large group activities could take place, such as summer worship, vespers, and summer programming.

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

After being denied by the Cheshire Town Council to raise a pride flag outside town hall, Cheshire Youth Services reached out to our congregation to host an event to kick off Pride month. A part of our strategic plan is to utilize our property as a "Center for the Common Good." Our involvement in this event served as an opportunity to promote our church's identity and values. In addition to hosting, we raised a banner stating "Love Wins Everytime."

To further promote our church's identity, values and community visibility, we celebrated our church's 300th anniversary. One component of this year-long celebration of Church history that focused on involving the wider community was the "Party on the Green: All Town Concert and Laser Lightshow" in September of 2024. Community members were invited to join us in celebrating the 300th anniversary of the church's founding. The event included family-friendly activities, food trucks, live music, and concluded with a spectacular laser light show. Our 300th anniversary celebration culminated in a Celebration Weekend in December with a family fun night and concert, an Open House with Gala Reception complete with sanctuary tours and the opening of our 1999 time capsule, and a special celebratory worship service that included the premiere of a commissioned hymn by our musical director. The energy surrounding our 300th anniversary is a testament to how our congregation, despite various challenges, is "Rooted and Growing."

## Congregation Reflections

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

Our congregation members are aware of and grateful for the many varied paths we each have traveled to come together to worship at First Congregational Church as the body of Christ. Our faith stories and understandings often vary but we are able to be honest and welcoming of different perspectives which is reflected in our worship. Our services refer to God using masculine, feminine, and gender-neutral language. The baptismal questions for parents ask that they *promise to support their child even if they choose a different path in life*. Our worship is grounded in tradition, yet open to the creativity of the Holy Spirit. We use the NRSV (our pew bible) with typically one scripture reading each Sunday. We welcome drums, strings, and brass though most often we are accompanied by organ, piano, and voice. We believe God is working through us, that we are Christ's hands and feet, that the Holy Spirit connects us to one another and to the Wisdom of God that is being made known even now. Our hope is that our time of worship and life together as a faith community honors God and creates space for God's work among us.

### Strengths or positive qualities of our congregation.



Our strengths and positive qualities are evident through the congregation's compassionate and welcoming spirit, the active outreach programs, and our worship style.

The congregation is friendly and provides an inclusive atmosphere for all to feel welcome. First Congregational Church is an Open and Affirming church that is open to different ideas, views, and opinions. Our church invites all to come and worship regardless of their background or beliefs. There is a strong sense of caring and support that exists within our congregation which allows those around us to share joys and challenges and to find comfort.

We offer many opportunities for the congregation to provide service to others through outreach. We provide a variety of community services locally and globally such as feeding our neighbors, rehabilitating homes, and providing disaster relief funds.

Our Christian education program engages our children and youth on Sunday mornings while our morning worship service is uplifting and promotes spiritual growth. The sermons are vibrant and inspiring with a welcoming and inclusive approach to Christianity.

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

Though we are a congregation that works well together and welcomes all who cross the threshold of our door, we know that we can expand our hospitality. We could more actively seek the engagement of those who do not look like us. We realize that the majority of people in our community are not engaged in church, so we ask ourselves how we can engage them faithfully. We also recognize the need to do more than just 'good deeds' and seek to continually re-center ourselves as a congregation to meet the needs of our community.

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

Our Sunday morning worship services take place in our Sanctuary throughout the year, in our Parish Hall during summer months and online through our live stream platform. On the first Sunday of the month, Communion is offered, and everyone is invited to take part in this sacrament.

A ritual that takes place during morning worship services is the sharing of joys and concerns. People may speak these joys and concerns aloud, quietly to themselves, or write them down for the pastor to read. The congregation can connect with each other to celebrate joyous occasions and to come together in prayer when members are faced with challenges.

When describing our congregation, words such as inviting, warm and comforting are used. Sermons are described as relational, scholarly, rich, uplifting, vibrant and deeply thoughtful.

Infant baptisms are a beautiful sacrament shared with our congregation. The families take an oath of commitment to support their child's faith while the members of the Church also vow to love and support the child. The pastors share a very powerful and moving moment as they end the baptism while carrying the child around the church to introduce them to the congregation.

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

Our faith formation programs engage children, youth, and adults of all ages with a variety of multigenerational programs. We would like to expand the offerings to engage even more church and community members. We have professional nursery care on Sunday mornings for ages 6 months through 3 years, with Sunday school classes for children ages pre-k through 8th grade. We have 3 youth groups (grades 5-6, 7-8, and 9-12) that meet 1-3 times a month on Sunday evenings and each group has been actively involved in a balanced mix of fun programs and community service.

A recent favorite for the middle and high schoolers has been "Top Chef" nights with team cooking challenges! Last summer, the senior youth group traveled to Virginia to glean fields and learn more about food insecurity. Youth are welcome onto action and ministry teams, although we would like to improve engagement in that area.

In the past, we have had multigenerational mission experiences which were suspended during the pandemic. Adult education includes monthly sermon discussions with our senior pastor, educational programs after services or during the week, and a particularly vibrant environmental ministry.

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

In 2020, the congregation voted to pilot a new governance model for our church. The former structure, first codified in the 1950s, required a significant number of volunteers (150+) and we were finding it increasingly difficult to fill all the positions. In addition, we wanted a nimbler system that would allow for more flexibility for our increasingly busy members. The new governance model reduced the number of standing committees (now called Ministry Groups) and introduced shorter-term Action Teams that are project- or initiative-based. It also eliminated the dual reporting structure for the staff and made the Senior Minister the Head of Staff. The Church Council, comprised of the ministers, president, past-president, president-elect and seven elected members who serve as liaisons to the seven MGs, sets the vision and the direction for the church.

Two months after we entered this pilot, COVID hit and our implementation work slowed down considerably. It has taken us a bit of time for the new governance model to become fully operational including new updated by-laws, but we are living into it with great success. We anticipate the approval of this new model in the months ahead.

#### **When it comes to decision-making, 16 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...

The church is fairly nimble in times of crisis or urgency. The Senior Minister is charged with the day-to-day decisions. Depending on the circumstance, the Senior Minister might make decisions and then report his actions to the Presidents and Council. At times, a small action team is formed to address a single major event, bringing together the collaborative wisdom of the ministers, the presidents, and relevant lay leaders from Council and/ Ministry Groups with oversight responsibility related to the specific event. We may also solicit advice and assistance from the Conference, outside attorneys or other subject-matter experts as required.

Additionally, our church has the ability to take charge when people in our congregation are in need. There is no better example of this than our response to COVID. The ways that our church came together in a time of uncertainty and fear was inspiring. While it would take an essay to detail the specifics, we tapped our strengths and resiliency. We figured out how to stream online, we found ways to connect with each other (e.g. a COVID parade, outreach volunteers), and we circled around our faith and community.

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 Annual Report FINAL.pdf](#)

[Church Vision and Goals.docx](#)

[Church Governance Overview.docx](#)

## 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:	788
NUMBER OF ACTIVE NON-MEMBERS:	75
TOTAL OF CHURCH PARTICIPANTS (SUM OF THE NUMBERS ABOVE):	863

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

No

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

TIME	PERCENTAGE
MORE THAN 10 YEARS:	47%
LESS THAN 10, MORE THAN 5 YEARS:	33%
LESS THAN 5 YEARS:	20%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes





Number of total participants by age:

AGE	NUMBER
0-11	45
12-17	62
18-24	79
25-34	89
35-44	118
45-54	125
55-64	140
65-74	135
75+	70

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	PERCENTAGE
SINGLE ADULTS UNDER 35:	5%
HOUSEHOLDS WITH MINORS:	25%
SINGLE ADULTS AGE 35-65:	10%
JOINT HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO MINORS:	40%
SINGLE ADULTS OVER 65:	20%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

EDUCATION LEVEL	PERCENTAGE
HIGH SCHOOL:	5%
COLLEGE:	39%
GRADUATE SCHOOL:	54%
SPECIALTY TRAINING:	1%
OTHER EDUCATION LEVEL:	1%

ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

## Percentage of adults in various employment types:

EMPLOYMENT TYPE	PERCENTAGE
ADULTS WHO ARE EMPLOYED:	57%
ADULTS WHO ARE RETIRED:	33%
ADULTS WHO ARE NOT FULLY EMPLOYED:	10%

## ARE THESE NUMBERS ESTIMATES?

Yes

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

Our congregation reflects a diverse professional landscape. From educators and healthcare workers to small business owners and artists, we find individuals engaged in a wide array of meaningful pursuits. This diversity enriches our community and fosters a vibrant exchange of perspectives and experiences.

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

Our congregation is predominantly Anglo-American and Caucasian. About 2% are "other." These numbers are also reflected in the larger Cheshire community.

## What diversity means in our context?

Most members were born in the US and while a majority grew up in CT, many are from other states and some from other countries. While "diversity" for us tends to reflect more our political and theological diversity, we hope to understand ways of outreach beyond even our own community to broaden our identity and congregational makeup.

## 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)	20	Faith Formation Team
Baptisms (number last year)	4	Senior Minister & Worship Ministry Group
Children's Groups or Classes	16	Director of Christian Education
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	1139	Senior Minister & Worship Ministry Group
Church-wide Meals	40	Faith Formation Team - The Dinner Bell
Choirs and Music Groups	620	Music Director and Senior Minister
Church-based Bible Study	15	Ministers
Communion (served how often?)	24	Senior Minister & Worship Ministry Group
Community Meals	0	Outreach Ministry Group
Confirmation (number confirmed last year)	12	Senior Minister with Youth Director and Mentors
Funerals (number last year)	14	Senior Minister and Music Director
Intergenerational Groups	30	Faith Formation Team
Outdoor Worship	112	Senior Minister & Music Director
Prayer or Meditation Groups	45	Senior Minister (After the Amen) & Lay Leader (Weekly Yoga)
Public Advocacy Work	58	Senior Minister (Annual Pride Events) & Lay Leaders (Eco Action Team)
Retreats	28	Confirmation & Church Council Retreat
Weddings (number last year)	0	Senior Minister & Music Director
Worship (digital / online / livestream)	54	Ministers & Music Director
Young Adult Groups or Classes	0	
Youth Groups or Classes	20	Director of Youth Ministry and Director of Christian Education

### Worship Times

WORSHIP (TIME SLOT):	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ATTENDANCE	WHO PLANS EACH OF THE LISTED GATHERINGS
10-11 am	265	Ministers

### Additional comments:

*No response*

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
James Campbell	3	Church Staff	Senior Pastor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marshall Linden	none	Member	None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dean Warburton	none	Member	None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Shepard Parsons	none	Member	None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jerry Swenson	none	Member	None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Matt McCaffrey	none	Member	None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

Dean Warburton is a retired minister who has served on many action teams over the years. Marshall Linden and Jerry Swenson have occasionally taken on the responsibility of delivering sermons when our ministers were away on extended breaks such as sabbaticals or vacations.

List of all current staff:

STAFF POSITION	HEAD OF STAFF	COMPENSATION	SUPERVISED BY	LENGTH OF TENURE FOR CURRENT PERSON IN THIS POSITION
Director of Christian Education	No	part	Senior Minister	6 years
Senior Minister	Yes	full	Church Council	7 years
Office Administrator	No	full	Senior Minister	11 years
Sexton	No	part	Senior Minister	5 yrs
Nursery Workers -3	No	part	Senior Minister	<1 year
Director of Youth Ministries	No	part	Senior Minister	13 years
Music Director	No	full	Senior Minister	21 years

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

We are a blend of traditional, mainstream congregationalism along with deliberate efforts to seek out new and innovative ways to satisfy the spiritual needs of an increasingly diverse community. We are recognized for being warm and welcoming.

## Church Finances

### Current Annual Income

SOURCE	AMOUNT
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	599000
Endowment Proceeds (as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return)	111500
Fundraising Events	31000
Rentals of Church Building	52000
Rentals of Church Parsonage	36000
misc	4000
Total	833500

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



832791

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?

33

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  
Christmas Fund

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered?

We allocate \$15,000 annually in our annual budget for our contribution to OCWM.

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

0

Total amount of loan debt:

*No response*

Reason for debt:

n/a

Are capital and other payments current?

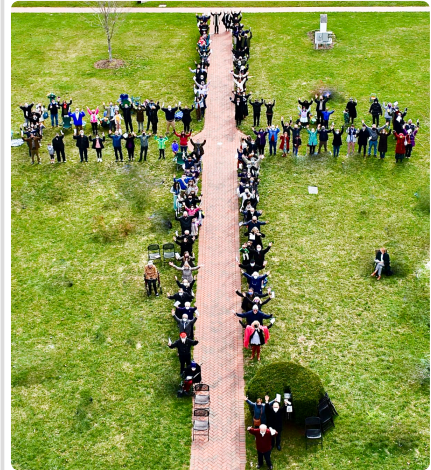
No

## Capital Campaigns

Description of any building programs projected or underway.

Our 300th Anniversary campaign will recognize our investment in the future as we mark this major milestone. It will be centered on key mission components/outreach initiatives, and substantial enhancements to the campus. This dual focus ensures that we commemorate our anniversary by enhancing our facilities in ways that reflect and support our mission and values.

### Pictures



### Description of any capital campaigns in the last ten years:

YEAR(S)	PURPOSE	GOAL	RESULT	IMPACT
0		0	0	
0		0	0	

### Description of any capital campaigns underway or anticipated:

YEAR(S)	PURPOSE	GOAL	RESULT	IMPACT
2025	300th Anniversary	0	0	This campaign is planned for the year ahead. See description in the next section.
0		0	0	

### Description the prominent mission component(s) involved in the most recent (or current) capital campaign.

Our 300th Anniversary campaign will recognize our investment in the future as we mark this major milestone. It will be centered on key mission components: outreach initiatives and a substantial investment in our physical property. This dual focus ensures that we commemorate our anniversary by enhancing our facilities in ways that reflect and support our mission and values.

### Does your church have an endowment?

Yes

What is the market value of the assets?

3355181

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

Regular schedule

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

Same over time; 4% of the average value of the last 3 years.

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

n/a

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

Our endowment withdrawal model is designed to ensure that we will be able to depend on it as a form of funding for the foreseeable future.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

The Endowment Committee, consisting of the church Treasurer and financial professionals within the congregation, collaborates with external advisors and church leadership to manage an endowment strategy aimed at both the growth of the principal investment and the financial sustainability of the church. Through disciplined efforts, this asset continues to achieve both goals.

**Other Assets**

*No response*

**Reserves (savings):**

500000

**Investments (other than endowment):**

175000

**Does the church have a parsonage?**

Yes

**Fair market rental value of the parsonage:**

*No response*

**How is the parsonage used?**

Rental income

**Street**

*No response*

**City**

*No response*

**State**

*No response*

**Zip**

*No response*

**Finished square footage:**

2866

**Number of Bedrooms:**

4

**Number of Bathrooms:**

2

**Assessed real estate value:**

757649

**Available for minister residence?**

No

**Expected minister residence?**

No

**Condition of structure, systems and appliances**



The building is well maintained with updated appliances and mechanicals. Please note that it is part of the main church campus and does not have a standalone assessed value. The value provided is an estimate derived by the search tea, leveraging relevant data for comparable properties in the area.

#### Entity in the church responsible for review and needed repairs

Building and Grounds Ministry Group.

#### Parsonage pictures

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

- Nestled in the heart of Cheshire's Historic District, our 5.5-acre campus includes the Church Green (opposite Cheshire Town Hall).
- Meetinghouse - The historic 3rd meetinghouse (1827), which houses our Sanctuary, Chapel, Parish Hall, Kitchen, offices, meeting spaces, and classrooms, with 1st Church Preschool as a tenant.
  - The Whiting House - (1835) serves as a space for youth groups, adult faith programs, and church meetings. The upper level is a rental property
  - The Parsonage - (1912) currently used as a rental property.
  - The Barn - (1820s) storage.

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

n/a

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

Exterior access such as ramps for wheelchair users or people requiring other mobility assistance  
 Accessible parking spaces  
 Interior access to different floors for wheelchair users or others with mobility aids (elevator, chair lift, ramps)  
 Large print bulletins  
 Closed-captioning on sanctuary screen and/or livestream  
 Wheelchair access in bathrooms  
 Handrails on all stairs  
 Sound system in sanctuary and other meeting places (fellowship hall, large meeting rooms, etc.)  
 Curb cuts

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

#### Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs:

- Meetinghouse: The Sanctuary, Parish Hall, Chapel, Library, Offices, Parlor, and bathrooms are all accessible. However, the lower level, which includes classrooms and daycare facilities, is currently not accessible due to the absence of an elevator or ramps. While a fully accessible campus is still a goal, the church has consistently adapted its programming locations to maximize inclusivity.
- Whiting House: The common areas, office area, and bathroom are accessible.
- Livestream: Facebook and YouTube streams are able to be viewed with closed captions.

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

Our governance is focused on a set of accountabilities and checks and balances to ensure sound stewardship of our finances with transparency and oversight ultimately from the congregation. This includes a Church Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Associate Treasurer, Auditor, and Financial Secretaries as well as an Endowment Committee. These roles have accountability to the Finance and Administration Ministry Group and Church Council. Restricted funds and spending outside of the approved annual budget requires congregational approval.

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

We maximize our impact by leveraging and managing physical and financial resources to support the mission and ministry of First Church and to secure our place in the future. 15+ years ago, as we anticipated our 300th anniversary and a desire to see our congregation thrive long beyond this milestone, we

reformed fiscal policies. This included a campaign to eliminate all debt, regular reserving, and structured fiscal policy. This approach has grown assets, funded maintenance, and enabled ministries. Our transparent oversight practices have helped secure our future and support our ministry.

## Historical Information

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

In January of 2020, we began piloting a new governance system utilizing Ministry Groups to execute the vision of the church. The Ministry Groups presently are: Caring, Facilities and Grounds, Faith Formation, Finance and Administration, Membership, Outreach, and Worship. Two months later, our Church, along with places of worship around the world, were struck with the overwhelming task of staying connected during a pandemic. Many times throughout 2020, our church became a hub for church and community members to gather, masked and socially-distanced. We kept kids and families connected with various community service projects and drives such as the "Can You Spare a Square" toilet paper and hand sanitizer drive and events like Beach Blanket Bingo on the Green. Furthermore, we embraced technology to get our message out when we could not gather in person, and we have continued to use technology after the pandemic so homebound members can continue to stay connected.

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

On June 23, 2019, First Church declared an open and affirming covenant to welcome all who seek to follow Jesus, including persons of every age, gender, race, national origin, faith background, marital status and family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental and physical ability, economic and social status, and educational background, to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings and joys of our church family.

The ONA process was initiated during the ministry of Jeff Braun, who left in 2015. Our current Senior Minister, James Campbell, guided church members to bring the effort to a conclusion. Our Church Council continues to review the document and consider ways for us to live into it. We are proud to share this designation, as it is proclaimed at the beginning of every service and often visually represented on one of the many banners we hang above our church steps for the town to see.

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.

We pride ourselves on our congregation's diverse backgrounds and, as a result, differing opinions. One of our core values is making room for every voice to be heard and respected, even if some opinions might not be in alignment with our core values (e.g., our commitment to a very broad inclusivity). We always strive toward finding a middle ground that can include all opinions and not cause anyone to feel left out. However, there can be occasions when a congregant's opinion would be at complete odds with our core values and there is little to no middle ground. In that case, other conversations (with the pastor or a trusted lay leader) would happen privately. This allows for a fuller conversation and does not embarrass the person who is at odds with the congregation.

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

Recently the Eco Action Team in our congregation proposed a binding "Green Covenant" to accompany our designation as a Level 1 Green Congregation of the UCC. This designation was not made by a vote of the church giving approval but rather by meeting certain requirements. The Action Team wanted more buy-in and so a Congregational meeting was proposed for the purpose of adopting the Green Covenant. Open forums were held, the covenant was widely distributed, but in the end, it did not pass. One reason being that congregants understood the seriousness and binding nature of a "covenant" in the Congregational tradition. During the discussion before the vote, tempers flared, and feelings were hurt. It was a difficult moment, but it also showed our congregation's maturity and commitment. No one left the congregation over this, and we have stayed committed to doing everything we can in advocating environmental responsibility for ourselves and our greater community.

### Ministerial History:

<i>Name:</i> David Buchan (interim)	<i>Years of service:</i> 1	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> Rick Dacey	<i>Years of service:</i> 5	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> Alison McCaffrey	<i>Years of service:</i> 23	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> David Colton (interim)	<i>Years of service:</i> 1	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> Caroline Murphy (interim)	<i>Years of service:</i> 1	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> Rick Dacey	<i>Years of service:</i> 5	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> Mark Montgomery (interim)	<i>Years of service:</i> 2	
<i>Name:</i> Jeffrey Braun	<i>Years of service:</i> 6	
<i>Name:</i> Wayne Sandau	<i>Years of service:</i> 34	
<i>Name:</i> Barbara Libby (interim)	<i>Years of service:</i> 2	UCC Standing
<i>Name:</i> Lillian Daniel	<i>Years of service:</i> 4	UCC Standing

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

As a congregation we have come to welcome and embrace our new Senior Minister that joined us 7 years ago. At the same time, we are now coming to terms with the exit of a beloved Associate Minister. Pastor James's (Senior Minister) arrival has taught us to appreciate a new spiritual leader and what they can offer to help our congregation thrive. James's guidance has led our congregation through a world changing pandemic. We have learned to embrace that while a new Minister will not be the same as our exiting one, their ideas and worldview will help us to grow our church.

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

Yes

### Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

No

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

Yes

### 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.

Our church's governance structure and its various Ministry Teams provide many opportunities to impact our community both locally and globally. Last year, CCA (Christian Community Action) received \$3,000 to help support their programs that provide emergency services including food and shelter. CCA also received 200+ turkeys, which included contributions from the congregation and 112 "birds" purchased by Outreach for

Thanksgiving. Youth members of our church participate annually in CCA's "Basket Brigade" to organize donated items to provide complete Thanksgiving meals for the greater New Haven community.

Internationally, our congregation supported various Kiva loan requests in Africa. Kiva partners with small home-based businesses and organizations to make a greater impact on communities around the world one loan at a time. The \$1300 in loan funds First Church had available went to 3 individuals with farming needs, livestock, and education.

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

Working with the New Haven Association, our eight church delegates participate in Ecclesiastical Councils where candidates are examined to determine their fitness for ministry and attend their ordinations after they are approved. The Spring program and Fall annual meeting of the Association, installations of new ministers, and the Southern New England Conference Annual Meeting are also attended by the allotted number of delegates.

Church members serve on the Association's Committee on Ministry and as Registrar. Other members serve on the Conference Unified Fitness Review Committee and on the Committee on Ministry Steering Team. Additionally, both children, teens, and adults participate in the programs offered at our Silver Lake Conference Center. Proudly, for over 80 years our church has been a teaching church welcoming over sixty-five student interns from Yale Divinity School and Andover Newton Theological Seminary.

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

The Outreach Ministry Group (OMG) endeavors to deepen and expand the experience and knowledge they have gained with their outreach partners to the entire congregation. To communicate their various projects with the church community, partners have been welcomed to speak briefly during the service. The OMG bulletin board displays thank you notes from the various recipients of donations. Pictures of events are also displayed to create opportunities for better appreciation and understanding of OMG's and congregation's involvement.

One such example is our support for Kiva loans. To help engage the church community in outreach opportunities, a world "map" showing where Kiva loans were needed, information about Kiva, and a way to participate or vote on who should receive the loans with the monies available was created. Additionally, this past Christmas, the Christian Community Action "Adopt-a-Family" bulletin board gave members a chance to choose an individual or adult for gift buying.

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).

Green Church Level 1

Other UCC designations:

**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.**

As a congregation, we are focused on actively living the currently designated witnesses. Our church embraces the Still Speaking campaign through our welcome, our preaching, and the way we live as a church community. The phrase "Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here" appears in our weekly worship program, on our website, and the signage on the Green.

Our Open and Affirming Designation is reflected in our participation in this year's Pride event and financial support of the LGBT Asylum Task Force in Worcester, MA.

The Eco Action Team (EAT) held an Earth Day rally on our green, organized youth to create Turtle Crossing signs, and continued to maintain the church's Pollinator Garden. Furthermore, EAT promoted the use of reusable rather than disposable dishes and flatware for various church events. The most recent energy audit resulted in the replacement of all incandescent lighting. The old bulbs were donated to a turtle rescue.

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

The local Clergy Association is interfaith and convened by the Director of the YMCA. They seek to collaborate on activities that benefit the community (i.e., food drives, holiday collections, vigils, etc.) We also enjoy a good relationship with the local synagogue and have periodic opportunities for joint worship and fellowship. Additionally, First Congregational Church is a founding member of Cheshire Creation Care, an interfaith eco-justice-oriented group of Episcopal, UMC, Jewish, and UCC participants.

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

Our Mission Statement is as follows:

*First Church is a welcoming and vibrant congregation seeking to deepen our faith and follow Jesus' example, pursuing justice and caring for each other, the community, and our world.*

This statement permeates through all facets of our church community. It drives strategic planning, motivates and inspires the various Ministry Teams, guides the use of our campus, and is embodied in our celebration of First Church's 300th anniversary.

**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 trust our ministers to manage their commitments within and outside the church in ways that allow them to be healthy and responsive to their own needs as well as the needs of the congregation.

The Associate Minister will play a critical role in shaping the future of our church's community through collaboration in the development and oversight of educational programs that impact all members of our church. In addition, the Associate Minister will expand our reputation as a warm and welcoming congregation to neighboring communities by helping us grow in our outreach programs that involve youth and families in community service and support initiatives.

### The ARDA or MissionInsite Reflection

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ARDA/MI File

[Download ARDA/MI File](#)

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

The area that our church is located in shows a promising outlook. Within a two-mile radius of the church lives a community with higher than the national average for household incomes over \$150,000, individuals who have completed higher education, people who have achieved single-family home ownership, and families with children. Over the 5 years between 2015 and 2022 we can also see positive indicators for the future with unemployment lowering by 5.8%, a 19.3% increase in people ages 21-29 moving to the area, and a rise in the ethnic diversity of the population.

How our congregation's internal demographics compare or contrast to a) the neighborhoods adjacent to our church, and b) other neighborhoods with which our church connects.

Our church demographics are mostly similar to the neighborhoods adjacent to our church. Given this, our local charitable outreach is focused on serving the closest and more diverse cities of New Haven and Waterbury to help communities with a greater need.

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

We are constantly seeking new opportunities to minister to the changing needs of our community. Currently, we are developing plans to attract families with children, including making ministry to families an important component of this new Associate Minister position. We also seek to minister to a more hidden demographic in Cheshire: the LGBTQ+ community in our area. We are an Open and Affirming congregation that try to live up to the name. We have hosted the Town's Pride Day Event for the last two years and are seeking other opportunities to do more.

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

Located across from the town hall on the main street in Cheshire, our church has significant visibility in the community. Our church and its grounds are a welcome gathering place for all, giving us a reputation as being open and inviting. We host events like the Strawberry Festival, outdoor worship, and food drives throughout the year. The church also opens its doors for drive-through Ash Wednesday (Ashes on the Way), pet blessings, and meetings with Scouting groups and AA. A popular preschool program is housed at our church, reaching the youngest members of our community and their families.

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

When we surveyed our congregation, our members placed high value on the ministers in addition to our music offerings, as well as our youth and faith formation programs. Our style of worship, welcoming nature, and the fellowship that we find with each other have encouraged many to become more involved in our church life. Not matter if they are extroverts or introverts, members are able to find a ministry group or way to get involved that fits their personality. All these factors contribute to a wide desire and drive to contribute with our church's activities.

### References

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☒ Janie Davidson

Completed: Wednesday, Feb 5, 2025

Rev Jack Perkins Davidson, Senior Pastor of nearby UCC congregation Spring Glen Church in Hamden, CT.

Personal Cell: (203) 962-2533

Mobile Phone: 203-962-2533

#### Reference Response

First Congregational Church of Cheshire is a pillar congregation in our Association. Cheshire provides an excellent model for what healthy, vital, & vibrant community ministry can look like. They know how to "Be The Church" on the town green. I greatly admire FCCC's blend of spiritual nourishment & public witness, liturgical creativity & traditional depth, pastoral presence & institutional health. So I have gladly encouraged multiple households to transfer their membership to FCCC when they move and driving down Whitney Ave to Spring Glen no longer makes sense. I know I can trust that these families are in good hands at a thriving Open & Affirming congregation when they join First Congregational. Similarly, I have found Rev James Campbell to be an excellent & thoughtful ministry partner. He is a supportive counterpart for any Associate.

I am eager to see what God has in store for FCCC!

☒ Kerrie Dunne

Contacted: Monday, Jan 27, 2025

Personal Cell: 2039079899

**Reference Response**

*No response*



■ Michelle Piccerillo

Contacted: Wednesday, Jan 29, 2025

**Reference Response**

*No response*

## Closing Prayer

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*Dear Lord,*

*We thank you for all of the blessings that you have bestowed upon our church and for the opportunity to reflect and share our church's history and vision. We ask for your guidance as we continue on this faithful journey to seek out a new Associate Minister who reflects your love, compassion, humility, and grace. May we go forth in peace and continue to grow through your infinite wisdom and mercy. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

## Statement of Consent

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**1. Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile?**

*For example, church council or consistory, transition team, etc.*

As the role of our new Associate Minister is part of a bigger visioning for our church, many members of the congregation have engaged in processes that informed the Church Profile. The Church Council charged the committee and provided a new job description. The committee solicited input from the entire congregation through a survey and listening sessions (including one specifically offered to youth). The Senior Minister was consulted throughout the process and also provided input on the final draft of the Church Profile.

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

This profile offers a strong overview of First Congregational Church, Cheshire and the Associate Minister position. There are many additional aspects of our ministries, congregation and community that space did not allow us to share. We look forward to engaging with interested candidates and sharing even more why we believe this is a wonderful opportunity for ministry.



**TOWN OF CHESHIRE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

19 WALLINGFORD ROAD, CHESHIRE, CONNECTICUT 06410  
Telephone (203) 271-6690 FAX (203) 271-6626

January 28, 2025

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Michelle Piccerillo, and I am the Human Services Director for the Town of Cheshire where I oversee Youth, Social, Senior, and Crisis Intervention Services for the community. I am thrilled to provide a letter of reference for First Congregational Church as they are a very important partner and resource for my department and our efforts to promote the physical and emotional well-being of Cheshire residents across their lifespan.

We have partnered with First Congregational Church on programs addressing food insecurity, programs supporting marginalized populations, and programs to help our community heal following tragedies that have impacted our residents. The church is centrally located, and the "Town Green" is essentially their front lawn, which makes the church an obvious choice for community events, and they are always willing to accommodate those requests. In fact, for the past 2 years we have held our Pride Flag Raising Celebration at the church. It is an event that the church assists me in coordinating and that has grown increasingly popular each year. They have a banner made that they fly in recognition of Pride Month each year at the front of the church, which is seen by anyone driving through the center of town. To have a congregation demonstrate this level of support for our LGBTQ community is truly inspiring.

First Congregational Church is by far the most welcoming congregation I have ever experienced. I have had the privilege of attending services there more than once. Services are filled with beautiful music, impactful messages, and always a warm, welcoming, supportive environment. They make a concerted effort to engage everyone present. Their church leaders are kind and compassionate and approachable.

I consider First Congregational Church a critical resource and a key community partner. I am truly grateful for their presence in this community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michelle Piccerillo", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Michelle Piccerillo, Director  
Cheshire Human Services



Kerrie Dunne  
(203) 907-9899 (Cell)  
Former Member

January 28, 2025

Dear Madam/ Sir:

I was a member of the First Congregational Church in Cheshire, Connecticut ("First Church"), for approximately thirty (30) years until we moved out of state. Our son was active in the Sunday school programs and then in youth groups. My mom was a member for about ten (10) years before she passed away. First Church was an important part of my life – and our family's life - which I would like to share with you.

One of the strengths of First Church is that the congregation puts their faith into action. Whether raking leaves for the elderly in Cheshire, growing vegetables in the church garden for the food pantry, or making KIVA loans to Third World businesses, the church was always open to new ideas to help others. I was a member of our Outreach Committee and the energy of the committee members, which included youth representatives, was infectious! One example of an outreach mission which involved our youth group was Midnight Run, where the youth group had fun putting together bagged dinners for the homeless and adults delivered the food and used clothing to the shelter.

Another strength of the First Church is that the congregation is caring and supportive of one another. When I first started attending, I went for several weeks without a single person greeting me, but I continued going to First Church because the sermon was thought provoking, and the music was amazing. At some point, the church recognized that it might not be the friendliest place to worship, and the congregation worked on making the church more welcoming (e.g. greeters, ushers and hosts at each service). There was a lot of discussion and ideas about how to make the church more caring and supportive and it worked! By the time I left, the congregation was taking care of folks in need of a friend during the service and afterwards.

There are many significant experiences that I have had because of the church's ministry but two stand out. First, my husband and I were set to travel to Vietnam to adopt our son when Vietnam closed all adoptions. We were devastated but did not give up. During this time, bouquets of wildflowers in decorated cans appeared on our doorstep weekly with prayers from the church. I cannot tell you how much these messages meant to us during this difficult time. Five (5) months later, we traveled to Vietnam and adopted our son.... the congregation warmly welcomed him to our church family! Second, my elderly mom lived in an independent apartment and then during COVID, moved to assisted living. During this difficult time, church members wrote monthly letters/cards to mom and before COVID, delivered flowers and visited mom. Rev Alison McCaffrey organized an automobile "parade" during COVID, and mom sat outside her building and waved to everyone – a happy moment which mom talked about for a long time! This continued contact with her church was very important to mom and I will always be grateful.

There are so many strengths in the First Church's ministry that I cannot possibly address them all – but two (2) should be highlighted. The church school program and youth groups were energetic, fun and a wonderful way to learn about Jesus's teachings. Our son attended Sunday School (I was an assistant teacher), youth group, and a summer youth mission trip. Also, First Church is blessed with an amazing music program, which keeps traditional music while exploring contemporary music.

Thank you for your kind consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. My contact information is: [kerrie.dunne@gmail.com](mailto:kerrie.dunne@gmail.com) or (203) 907-9899.

With best regards,

*Kerrie Christina Dunne*

kcd