

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE



First Congregational Church of Vernon
United Church of Christ
695 Hartford Turnpike
Vernon, CT 06066

**First Congregational Church – United Church of Christ
Vernon, Connecticut**

For an Associate Pastor Position

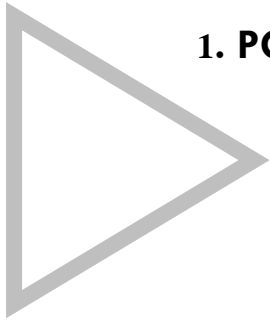
Southern New England Conference, Tolland Association

September 19, 2024

LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE CONTENTS

- Position Posting
- Who Is God Calling Us To Become?
- Who Are We Now?
- Who Is Our Neighbor?
- References
- Consent and Validation

*“God is able to provide you with every blessing, so that having all sufficiency
in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”
(2 Corinthians 9:8)*



1. POSITION POSTING

- a. LISTING INFORMATION
- b. SCOPE OF WORK
- c. COMPENSATION & SUPPORT
- d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

1a. LISTING INFORMATION

Church name: *First Congregational Church of Vernon (FCCV)*

Street address: *695 Hartford Turnpike Vernon, CT 06066*

Supplemental web links: *<https://www.firstcongregationalchurchofvernon.org>*

Additional ecumenical affiliations: *None*

Conference: *Southern New England Conference*

Association: *Tolland*

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person (Name, Title, Phone, Email):

Rev. Isaac Lawson

Area Conference Minister, South Central Region

860-761-7188

lawsoni@sneucc.org

Summary Ministry Description:

FCCV is primed to take on the challenge of being more visible and more active in sharing the good news of the Gospel to our neighbors and beyond. We are taking a fresh look at how and what programs we offer to support the formation of discipleship from our youngest to our oldest members. Our hearts and minds are open and willing to discover how we can live out our calling in our community.

Photographs:



View of sanctuary and front lawn.



Memorial Garden



Fellowship Hall during Coffee Hour



Sanctuary before worship

What we value about living in our area:

New England experiences all four seasons. Beautiful colors in the fall, skiing in the winter, growth in the spring, and warm sun in the summer. We are two hours from Boston and New York City, with the mountains of Vermont and New Hampshire nearby for hiking, and the beaches of Connecticut and Rhode Island within easy reach. We have a diverse population in Vernon which has reflected positively in our children's lives and school experiences.

Current size of congregation: *Over 300 active congregants*

Languages used in ministry (other than English): *Occasional Spanish*

Position Title: *Associate Pastor*

Position Duration: *Settled*

Compensation Level: *Part Time*

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines? *Yes*

1b. SCOPE OF WORK

The associate pastor will work closely with the senior pastor in the preparation, leadership and worship; faith formation and care with a heavy emphasis on one to two targeted areas of programming.

The associate pastor should be an effective communicator/speaker/preacher; successful in developing and implementing programs to engage their targeted populations.

1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

Salary Basis: Per Conference Guidelines. A detailed compensation package will be offered based upon a candidate's ministerial experience.

Benefits: Salary plus Benefits

What is the expected living situation for your next minister: A portion, within the appropriate IRS guidelines, may be allocated towards a housing allowance as desired.

1d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

Outline the ministry goals you hope to pursue together with your next minister, in collaboration with the congregation.

We are looking for an Associate Pastor to continue our growth within our congregation and with our wider community. Our current ministry goals are to:

- *reimagine our faith and fellowship programs.*
- *expand on our community outreach.*
- *diversify our congregation.*
- *reinforce our commitment to justice and inclusivity.*

Describe how your vision of the minister you are now seeking will assist the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls.

We will rely on the Associate Minister to be part of our goal to expand our ministry to the community. One way is to coordinate and participate in faith formation and fellowship programming. We expect the Associate Pastor to be active in forming and implementing new programming ideas with the Senior Pastor and the Advisory Team.

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

English is the primary language currently spoken at FCCV. Occasionally, Spanish is spoken or printed for our Spanish visitors who do not speak English.

Describe four areas of excellence from *The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry* that your next minister will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas.

Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practices

- *Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the Holy Spirit; living a life of discipleship.*
- *Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices.*
- *Being called to ordained ministry by God and the Church.*
- *Continuing discernment of one's call in community.*
- *Understanding the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the elements of Christian worship to nurture faith.*
- *Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship*

Building Transformational Leadership Skills

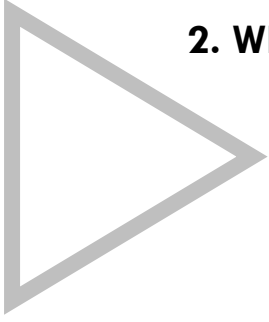
- *Empowering the Church to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.*
- *Strategically creating the future of God's Church.*
- *Witnessing in the public square to God's redeeming power.*
- *Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks.*
- *Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity.*
- *Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning*

Caring for All Creation

- *Nurturing care and compassion for God's creation.*
- *Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness.*
- *Practicing self-care and life balance.*
- *Providing hope and healing to a hurting world.*
- *Attending to one's own spiritual and pastoral care, including engagement in supervision as appropriate.*
- *Stewarding the resources of the Church.*

Working Together for Justice and Mercy

- *Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression.*
- *Practicing the radical hospitality of God.*
- *Identifying and working to overcome explicit and implicit bias in the life of the Church.*
- *Understanding community context and navigating change with a community.*
- *Engaging in mission and outreach.*
- *Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence*



2. WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37 NRSV)

Who is God calling us to become as a congregation?

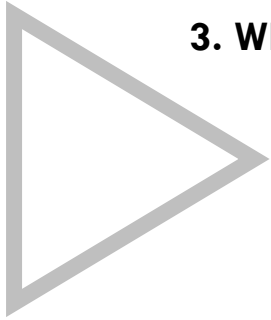
We believe God is calling us to continue to reach out to those in our congregation, to those in our community, and to those in the world to address and fulfill their needs as best we are able. We also believe God calls us to spread the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to live out our call through our actions.

Describe how God is calling us to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation.

Community: Housing and food insecurity continue to be challenges those in our community and neighboring communities face. To assist with these needs, we provide funds, groceries, water, diapers and other necessities to our local non-profits and work with our local social services department to meet community needs. We regularly check in with them to understand and meet current needs.

We also started a Security Deposit Guarantee Program with an initial contribution of \$25,000 with a local housing organization to provide security deposits for individuals whose barrier to housing was in providing a security deposit. This program has since almost doubled in funds by partnering with other congregations and individuals. This year, our church was the recipient of the “Be Homeful Award for Innovative Work to End Family Homelessness” by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. We continue to learn about and respond to housing needs and housing justice in our community.

Congregation: Like most congregations, we have noticed an overall decline in in-person worship attendance while our online viewership has increased. However, we do not see this as our faith community becoming irrelevant, instead, we see it as a transformation. We are a congregation that is eager to listen to the Spirit at work among us and respond. In this spirit, we try new things and connect with the community in ways that meet them where they are and listen to their needs and desires. We have developed new programs that meet folks where they are and encourage a variety of spiritual and theological backgrounds to come together. We continue to discern where we are being led and what faith community looks like for younger generations.



3. WHO ARE WE NOW?

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

- a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS
- b. 11-YEAR REPORT
- c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS
- d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING
- e. CHURCH FINANCES
- f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

3a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

Describe your congregation’s life of faith.

God is most described by God’s love, forgiveness; omnipotence; acceptance; warmth; mercy. The Holy Spirit in our midst is unifying; real and present; we recognize and experience the Holy Spirit in each other – and observe the Holy Spirit working in us and through us.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

Our congregation is known for its friendliness. No matter where a person is on their life journey, we welcome them. We are free to offer opinions on Theology. We provide several ways to worship and discuss world issues as it relates to God’s Word. We enjoy a variety of music and have a great organist. Our leadership team is open to new ideas to expand our ministry. Our congregation is prayerful and filled with humor, faithfulness, and caring.

Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.

At FCCV, we believe worship can happen anywhere at any time. Our worship is not limited to being in a specific place. Our worship happens in the sanctuary, outside on our lawn, in Fellowship Hall, during coffee hour, in Sunday school and vacation Bible school (VBS), with Bible study, and through discussions at Theology on Tap.

Our baptisms are lively, joy-filled, celebratory, supportive, inclusive, and experienced in community. We even have a few gifts for the one being baptized.

Our Senior Pastor teaches us the details and back-stories of scripture and relates them to the issues of the day. The message is always about God's love and grace. It's humorous, relatable, captivating, Biblical, and has teachable moments.

To understand what a Sunday service might look like, please use [this link](#) to view our Live Stream.

Describe the educational program/faith formation vision of your church.

Our vision for our faith formation program begins with engagement, provision of opportunities to participate in worship service, Bible study, Theology on Tap, confirmation, missions-outreach. We desire our Associate Pastor to not only have the ability to form connections with each person in their ministry areas individually, but to foster individual bonds with each person.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

The Advisory Team is the governing Body of our church. They make decisions in the best interest of the church. There are several Ministry Teams (Worship, Care & Support, Administration, Faith Building, Grounds & Facilities) who work the details.

The Advisory Team typically meets once a month, but are always in contact with one another if there is an urgent need.

We can provide more information of our organizational structure, bylaws and annual report.

3b. 11-YEAR REPORT

The United Church of Christ's 11 Year Church Report for FCCV is available.

3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of active members:	276	
Number of active non-members:	89	
Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above):	365	

FCCV 2020 demographic survey results available upon request

Describe the range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:

Our congregation is a mix of blue and white collar workers. Many use their talents in supporting the work of the church.

Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up. Most UCC congregations tend to describe themselves as “diverse.” Yet, the vast majority of UCC congregations are mono-cultural. What does diversity mean in your context?

We are Open & Affirming, which means we welcome all persons of every race, age, gender, family structure, physical or mental ability, economic status, faith back-ground, nationality, sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity into the full life and ministry of this community of faith. It doesn't matter where you come from, where you are on life's journey, or who you love, you are welcome to worship with us and be a part of us. Our door is always open and everyone is always welcome. We are interested in greater diversity within our church walls.

Our church community is predominantly white, but we embrace diversity in many forms, including a congregation that speaks multiple languages and includes individuals with various abilities. We are dedicated to ensuring that everyone feels welcome and valued. We believe that by celebrating our differences, we can create a richer, more inclusive environment for all.

Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one on the near future (perhaps using, for example, the Welcoming Diversity Inventory)?

Our church became Open & Affirming in 2017. . Since 2017, our Church has become known in the community for having adopted ONA into our Church culture and identity. We welcome and affirm all persons of every race, age, gender, family structure, physical or mental ability, economic status, faith back-ground, nationality, sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity into the full life and ministry of this community of faith, including membership and leadership. We welcome and embrace the gifts that each child of God brings to the life our congregation and covenant one with another to worship and work together in a climate of caring, joy and mutual respect.

3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

Complete the following chart. Please leave blank any fields that are not applicable to your congregation.

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings? (<i>list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff</i>)
Adult Groups or Classes	<i>Varies</i>	<i>Minister, faith building lay team</i>
Baptisms (<i>number last year</i>)	<i>4</i>	<i>Minister</i>
Children's Groups or Classes	<i>varies</i>	<i>Minister, faith building lay team</i>
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	<i>150 -165</i>	<i>Minister, staff</i>
Church-wide Meals	<i>100</i>	<i>Advisory Team</i>
Choirs and Music Groups	<i>12-24</i>	<i>Minister of Music and Creative Arts</i>
Church-based Bible Study	<i>varies</i>	<i>Faith building lay leader</i>
Communion (<i>served how often?</i>)	<i>Once a month</i>	<i>Minister, staff, worship team</i>
Community Meals	<i>4</i>	<i>Vernon Town Brunch working group</i>
Confirmation (<i>number confirmed last year</i>)	<i>6; class as needed</i>	<i>Staff</i>
Drama or Dance Program	<i>varies</i>	<i>Minister of Music and Creative Arts</i>
Funerals (<i>number last year</i>)	<i>5</i>	<i>Minister</i>
Intergenerational Groups	<i>Varies</i>	<i>Minister, Faith building, AV team</i>

Summer Worship	65	Minister, staff, summer worship crew
Prayer or Meditation Groups	15	Lay leaders
Public Advocacy Work	40	Lay leaders
Retreats – Women’s Fellowship	Every other year	Lay leaders
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	15	Minister, staff
Weddings (number last year)	2	Minister
Worship (time slot: ____10 AM__)	Varies	Minister, staff
Worship (time slot: _____)		
Young Adult Groups or Classes	6	Minister, Faith building lay leader
Youth Groups or Classes	10	Minister, Faith building lay leaders
Other	50	

List all members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers. Indicate those with current United Church of Christ Three-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a congregation) or Four-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a ministry beyond a congregation).

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)
<i>Rev. Charles Williams</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>FCCV</i>	<i>Hospice Chaplain</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Rev. Joanne Myer</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>FCCV</i>	<i>FCCV Director of Stephen Ministry</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Rev. Carol Mento</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>FCCV</i>	<i>Hospital Chaplain</i>	<i>Yes</i>

All three pastors listed above are used as pulpit supply if needed. Also, Rev. Myer leads our church’s Stephen Ministry program.

List all current staff, including ministers. Exclude the position you are seeking to fill. Indicate which staff person serves as head of staff.

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
<i>Senior Pastor</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Full Time</i>	<i>Advisory Team</i>	<i>2.5 years</i>
<i>Minister of Music and Creative Arts</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Part Time</i>	<i>Senior Pastor</i>	<i>11 Years</i>
<i>Organist</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Part Time</i>	<i>Senior Pastor</i>	<i>17 Years</i>
<i>Admin Assistant</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Part Time</i>	<i>Senior Pastor</i>	<i>2.5 years</i>
<i>Custodian</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Part Time</i>	<i>Senior Pastor</i>	<i>2 years</i>

REFLECTION

Reflection: After reviewing the congregational demographics and activities above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's overall ministry?

We are an active church; we're open to growing; we're open to change; we're willing to do what we need to do to follow our vision of who we are; we're forward thinking and ready to build on our legacy.

3e. CHURCH FINANCES

Current annual income (dollars used during 2024)

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$ 280,000
Endowment Proceeds (<i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i>)	\$ 56,273
Endowment Draw (<i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal"</i>)	\$ 0
Fundraising Events	\$ 7,000
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$ 0
Grants	\$ 0
Rentals of Church Building	\$ 0
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$ 0
Support from Related Organizations (<i>e.g. Women's Group</i>)	\$ 0
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$ 0
Other (specify):	\$ 0
Other (specify):	\$ 0
TOTAL	\$343,273

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): \$ 375,023

Copies of our current church budget is available.

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage? 55%

Has the church ever failed to pay its financial obligations to a minister of the church? *NO*

Is your church 5-for-5, (does it include each of the following during the church year?)

Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)

One Great Hour of Sharing

Strengthen the Church

- Neighbors in Need
- Christmas Fund

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered?

OCWM replaced by Proportional Giving calculated at 4.2% of 2024 actual total income.

What is the church's current indebtedness?

None

If a building program is projected or underway, describe it, including the projected start/end date of the building project and the total project budget.

None

If the church has had capital campaigns in the last ten years, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
2018 - 2021	<i>Church/Parsonage Upgrades & Missions</i>	<i>\$600,000</i>	<i>\$857,290</i>	<i>See below</i>

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact

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

- *New church roof*
- *Heating system upgrade*
- *Renovation of Fellowship Hall and Kitchen*
- *10% of project costs to missions and outreach (~\$60,000)*

Does your church have an endowment? *YES – Restricted Fund*

What is the market value of the assets? *\$732,692*

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

What is the percentage rate of draw (last year, compared to 5 years ago)? *4%*

Describe draw on endowment, if any, to meet operating budget expenses for the most recent year and the past five years: *2024: 4% = \$56,273, prior years: 4%*

At the current rate of draw, how long might the endowment last? *FCCV has formal written Investment Policy aimed at providing a continuous revenue stream to supplement annual income. By policy, withdrawals are not to exceed 5% of the 3-year moving average of the funds.*

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates: *Copy of Investment Policy is available if requested.*

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): *\$ 0 (see investments below)*

Investments (other than endowment): *\$1,020,855 unrestricted & temporarily unrestricted*

Does your church have a parsonage? *YES*

Fair market rental value of the parsonage:

How is the parsonage used? *Occupied by Senior Pastor & family*

Street / City / State / Zip: *679 Hartford Tpke, Vernon, CT 06066*

Finished square footage: *2,488*

Number of Bedrooms, Number of Bathrooms: *4 Bedrooms, 2 1/2 Bathrooms*

Assessed real estate value: *\$183,250*

Available for minister residence: *No*

Expected minister residence: *No*

Condition of structure, systems and appliances: *Good*

Entity in the church responsible for review and needed repairs: *Grounds & Facilities Ministry Team*

Describe all buildings owned by the church: *Church sanctuary, attached admin & Sunday school wings, parsonage with detached garage, misc. sheds.*

Describe non-owned buildings or space used or rented by the church: *None*

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? (*worship space, pulpit, fellowship space, facilities, etc.*) *Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, admin and school wings.*

Reflection: After reviewing the church's finances and assets described above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's mission and ministry?

FCCV makes annual budget changes as needed when our ministry/mission changes. We have become more flexible with this process since our church governing reconfiguration.

FCCV's budgeting process is done annually. Currently our fiscal year begins January 1, and ends December 31. In the fall, we ask each ministry team and groups what budget they anticipate for the upcoming year. Then the information is reviewed by our Finance Team, the proposed budget is presented to the congregation, and voted on at our annual congregational fiscal meeting in January.

We are an "Open and Affirming" congregation. Our Mission projects are varied, we add to them as needs change, and reach many people in our local and Hartford Community. Among the FCCV ministry initiative Mission projects are:

Habitat for Humanity

Be Homeful Greater Hartford Area

Vernon Schools Weekend Backpack Program

Vernon Social Services

Hockanum Community Services

Mercy House security deposit program (part of our recent Capital Campaign)

Cornerstone Soup Kitchen

3f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Name one to three significant happenings in the history of your church that have shaped the identity of your congregation. Add the most important event in the life of your church in the past 10 years.

Seven years ago, we called Rev. Robin Bird to be our Senior Pastor and is the first gay minister at our church. Rev. Bird began to transform our church by instituting new opportunities for worship and changed the way we worship, reminding us of God's grace and our call to help others. As a result, the congregation has an elevated joy and excitement. Also, becoming Open & Affirming in 2017 declared to the world that we welcome all people.

Describe a specific change your church has managed in the recent past.

At the beginning of April 2024, our then, Senior Pastor, Rev. Robin Bird announced that she was resigning from her position. Rev. Bird was very open about her decision and plans. She felt that after 10+ years at FCCV, her ministry was complete, and she was ready to return home to Florida. After this announcement, our then, Associate Pastor, Rev. Alisa Dickhoff shared her call to the position of Senior Pastor. Rev. Bird and Rev. Dickhoff, in conversation with our church leadership, then held a meeting with the church community where each could share and answer questions. This allowed the church to have open conversations and see a clear path forward. The church soon called Rev. Alisa Dickhoff as their next Senior Pastor. Rev. Dickhoff has served as Senior Pastor since June of 2024. Members of the church felt confident about this process and decision and shared that it was the smoothest and most loving transition they had experienced with a Senior Pastor leaving.

Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. “Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement...” Describe your congregation’s values and practices when it comes to conflict.

In general, we handle conflict by staying in the conversation and bringing it into the open and not hiding from it. We have learned to hear both sides and to value all opinions. Becoming Open & Affirming was difficult for some. By using the UCC guidelines, we were successful in providing the necessary literature on the subject and had open and honest congregational meetings.

Ministerial History (include all previous ministerial staff for the past 30 years)

Staff member’s name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
<i>Rev. Alisa Dickhoff- Senior Pastor</i>	<i>June 22, 2024-present</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>Rev. Alisa Dickhoff- Associate Pastor</i>	<i>January 17, 2022- June 21, 2024</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>Rev. Robin Bird – Senior Pastor</i>	<i>May 1, 2016-June 21, 2024</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>Rev. Robin Bird – Associate Pastor</i>	<i>Oct 13, 2013 – April 30, 2016</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>Rev. Margaret Watson – Senior Pastor</i>	<i>Jan 2, 2013 – August 2015</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>Rev. Cindy Carr – Associate Pastor</i>	<i>1991-2012</i>	<i>Y</i>

<i>Rev. Peter Brenner – Senior Pastor</i>	<i>2000-2010</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>Rev. William Sexton – Senior Pastor</i>	<i>1990-1998</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>Rev. John Lacy – Senior Pastor</i>	<i>1963-1989</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>Rev. David Bowling – Associate Pastor</i>	<i>1978-1990</i>	<i>Y</i>

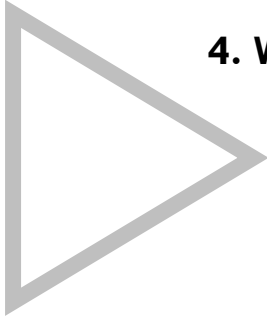
Comment on what your church has learned about itself and its relationship with persons who provided ministerial leadership:

Members have learned that each minister brings their own unique gifts to the pulpit. We have seen various types of ministerial style. Changes that come along with a new minister can be a shock to some of the congregation. We have learned to be more open and resilient to new ways of worship and to serving the congregation. We have also seen the positive effects of having Pastoral Relation Committees and church leadership who assist in maintaining healthy boundaries and respect between the congregation and ministers.

Has any past leader left under pressure or by involuntary termination? *No*

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation? *No*

Has a past pastor been the subject of a Fitness Review while at your church? *No*



4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

- a. COMMUNITY VISION
- b. MISSION InSite

4a. COMMUNITY VISION

How do the relationships and activities of your congregation extend outward in service and advocacy?

Once a month we participate in providing, cooking, and serving Shepherd’s Pie to our local soup kitchen. We donate to three different food pantries in our community. We have created a successful security deposit program to assist with accessible housing. For two years, we have been a learning site for Opportunity Works Connecticut (OWC) where job training skills are provided to adults with intellectual and physical disabilities. OWC staff and participants are on-site Monday-Wednesday learning cooking, administrative and custodial skills. We are also excited to have a quarterly program offered to the community called Vernon Town Brunch. This program provides a free meal and activities to all in the community.

Our Vacation Bible School (VBS) is open to the entire community for children in grades K-5. We’ve recently expanded to a full-day format, running from 9 AM to 5 PM, and we’re excited to offer volunteer opportunities for older youth and adults to get involved. In addition FCCV provides a welcoming space for various community programs, including Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), the Vernon Garden Club, Quilters Group, and Girl Scouts. We’re committed to fostering a supportive environment for all.

Describe your congregation’s participation in meetings, relationships and activities connecting the wider United Church of Christ (association / conference / national setting).

FCCV’s senior minister is on the Tolland Association Committee. FCCV has delegates that attend meetings and conferences in all settings to represent FCCV.

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. Check any statements below that apply to your UCC faith community.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accessible to All (A2A) | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Peace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creation Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Mission Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Justice | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open and Affirming (ONA) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faithful and Welcoming | <input type="checkbox"/> WISE Congregation for Mental Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> God Is Still Speaking (GISS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other UCC designations: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Border and Immigrant Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Designations from other denominations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I'M) | |

Reflect on what the above statement(s) mean(s) to your community. Is your congregation interested in working toward any of the above statements of witness in the near future?

We are in the early stages of making some significant community outreach programs. We are interested in more of the above statements and currently support efforts in multiple areas.

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

It is our desire to provide more opportunities to our congregation to learn more about other faiths in our community and participate in interfaith activities with them. Recently, our Monday Morning Bible Study group had an introductory course on Islam.

If your congregation has a mission statement, how does that mission statement compare to the actual time spent engaging in different activities? Think of the range of activities from time spent gathering, to governance, to time spent going out.

Our Mission: We are united by God's love and inspired by God's compassion. We extend an extravagant welcome to all into our vibrant community of faith to journey with us as we follow Christ to share God's grace.

We are known to be a welcoming and open church. We also live stream our services to reach those who cannot attend in person or those who are looking for a place to grow spiritually.

4b. MissionInsite

Comment on your congregation's MissionInsite report with data for your neighborhood(s) or area. What trends and opportunities are shown?

Data from MissionInsite for Vernon, CT is below. We are in contact with community leaders and non-profit organizations to support mission opportunities.

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

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

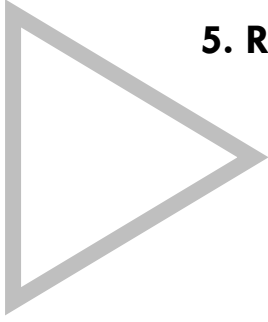
14% of the town population is over 65 years of age and 73% white. Based on the FCCV 2020 survey, over 50% of our congregation is over 65 years of age. This is consistent with the trend of younger people not joining a denominational church. We have seen an increase in young families and adults joining us and hope to continue seeing these age groups increase in our faith community.

What do you hear when you talk to community leaders and ask them what your church is known for?

We are known for being welcoming and Open & Affirming. We are also known for opening our doors to local organizations. For example, AA/NA, Girl Scouts, Quilter's Club, Opportunity Works Connecticut. We hold a quarterly town brunch and support various food pantries and the Cornerstone Soup Kitchen.

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

New people in the church remark on our friendliness. They also love that the church is open to diversity and is Open & Affirming. New people say they want to attend/be involved in a church that reflects real life and a church that welcomes everyone. Comments include that they found FCCV to be fun, spiritual, and different than any other churches visited/attended in the past.



5. REFERENCES

Name up to three people who have agreed to serve as phone and written references. Advise the three references: “The contact information you provide may be shared publicly. Please use contact information that you feel comfortable giving to candidates so they can reach you with their questions.”

Make sure they are not members of your church but are persons who know your church well enough to be helpful to candidates seeking more information. Request a letter from each reference in answer to the four prompts below. Attach the letters (up to three) as desired.

REFERENCE 1

Rev. Dr. Robin Bird – Previous FCCV Senior Minister

Revrobinbird@gmail.com

REFERENCE 2

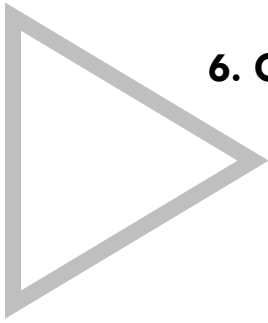
Nancy and Bob Martell

Nbhkaat@aol.com

REFERENCE 3

Chris Donald – Community Partner, Opportunity Works Connecticut

Cdonald@owct.org



6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- a. CLOSING PRAYER
- b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT
- c. CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

6a. CLOSING PRAYER

Include here any prayer or dream for the minister you imagine journeying toward you... a poem, for example, or a Scripture passage or a piece of music that is meaningful to your Search Committee:

From Ephesians 3: 11-21 (The Message)

11-13 All this is proceeding along lines planned all along by God and then executed in Christ Jesus. When we trust in him, we're free to say whatever needs to be said, bold to go wherever we need to go. So don't let my present trouble on your behalf get you down. Be proud!

14-19 My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

20-21 God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Glory to God in the church!
Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus!
Glory down all the generations!
Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!

6b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we

have provided information in this profile that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates.

As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending suitable new minister for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates. We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.

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

Several members of the Advisory Team and members of the Associate Pastor Search Committee

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

Signed:

FCCV Search Committee:

Rev. Alisa Dickhoff

Kathleen Dubuque-Gallo

Kate Fowler - Chairperson

Steve Hilton

Bob O’Gara

Elly Swan

September 19, 2024

6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION _____

The congregation is currently in good standing with the association / conference named.

Staff Comment:

To the best of my knowledge, ministerial history information is complete.

Staff Comment:

To the best of my knowledge, available church financial information is presented thoroughly.

Staff Comment:

My signature below attests to the above three items.

This document is created through support to Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM) and is only possible through the all settings of the United

covenantal relationships of Church of Christ.

“Jesus answered

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



them, ‘Have faith in

God!’” – Mark 11:22