

Charlotte Congregational Church, UCC Charlotte, Vermont

Mission Statement: *Embraced by the healing love of Jesus Christ and inspired by his teachings, we commit ourselves to prayerful, compassionate, and courageous action in the world.*

CHARLOTTE: The Town of Charlotte, Vermont was chartered in 1762 and is situated in the fertile Champlain Valley overlooking Lake Champlain. Though often considered a bedroom community of Burlington, the town supports many productive agricultural enterprises. With 3,500 residents Charlotte hosts a large network of working farms and forests that flourish from the productive Champlain Valley soils. Sugar bushes, orchards, dairies, berry farms, a winery, market gardens, livestock operations, honey houses, grain and community supported agriculture are just some of Charlotte's flourishing endeavors. *(Adapted from the Town website)*

1. Congregation: Our congregation currently ranges in age from 101 to 9 months and from devoutly Christian to eclectic and "out of the box." What unites us is our faith in God, the life and example of Jesus Christ and the respect we have for each other and the varied activities of the church. The congregational way of open dialogue and discussion is foundational to the way in which we function and consider change. An independent streak is also evident among the members of the congregation as seen in various outreach ministries in which people are engaged. Gathering strength and inspiration from our life and worship together, individuals live their faith in the wider community, not so much *as the church* but as people *from* it. We are passionate about our music ministry and have an active choir and a dynamic director of Music Ministries. We enjoy all types of music and particularly enjoy threading it into the service in novel ways and not just in the singing of hymns. An annual event is our Messiah Sing-Along that is accompanied by members of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra.

2. Community: The worshipping community draws from the town of Charlotte where the church is located, but also from the neighboring towns of Shelburne, Ferrisburgh, and Hinesburg. Members, regular attendees and visitors also come from Burlington, South Burlington and beyond. Average worship attendance for 2014 was 112 with 94 adults and 18 children. The average attendance was 99 from January through June and 124 from July through December. Easter attendance for three services totaled about 251. Christmas attendance for two services totaled 538. Attendance increased by 13% over 2013. The church is seen as "Charlotte's church" and many residents who don't attend regularly or at all consider it to be their spiritual home and source of support for marriages, funerals and other important times in their lives. The town of Charlotte is small but it is home for many who work in the education, healthcare and tech industries in and around Burlington. There remain a few farming families. While the reputation of Charlotte and nearby communities is one of wealth and prosperity, there are certainly families in need.

3. Leadership styles: We have been blessed with two pastors who bring different but compatible styles, providing two voices of care and guidance. Our outgoing senior pastor arrived 15 years ago, straight out of seminary, with a fresh and alternative approach to pastoral care and to worship. He embraced new ideas and opportunities with enthusiasm and provided a sense of possibility for church endeavors. Our

half-time associate pastor first stepped into her role during the sabbatical of the senior pastor. She brings experience and inclusiveness from her many years in ministry and also a focus on the practical enrichment of our faith community through such activities as a church vegetable garden and hands-on stewardship for youth. Together, the two made a team that balanced and complemented each other.

4. Clergy and lay leaders: Thanks to a group of veteran church members, there is a strong sense of tradition that helps guide the church's practical day-to-day routines. This can, however, impede the pace of change in, for example, church committee structure. One of the goals for the next year is to review our by-laws and governance structure to make sure that the manner in which we function is reflective of our mission statement and understanding of God's call for us as a church community. Overall, the clergy and lay leaders work well together and with common purpose once consensus is achieved and differences resolved.

5. Christian education: The church currently provides a weekly Sunday School session for all children from 5 to 12. Attendance varies with the season (a lot of folks ski here!) but highlights include our traditional Christmas Pageant and a Children's Sunday musical about "Noah's Ark". Each presentation boasted a roster of more than 40 children. There are also a middle school and high school youth groups that meet less frequently. Over the years, confirmation classes have also been organized as well as youth mission trips to Mexico, Maine and Boston. Many people feel it would be great if these activities became more regular parts of the CE offerings. In addition to youth programs, book discussion groups, centering prayer and an assortment of one-time events and discussion series are offered as well.

6. Mission and fellowship: The church's contributions to local agencies and programs such as the Lund Family Center, the Joint Urban Ministry Project, and the Charlotte Food Shelf attest to the commitment to mission work. The church hosts the Charlotte Food Shelf in the vestry basement and also donates produce from our Stewardship Garden. In the past, there has been a somewhat scattered though well-meaning approach to some efforts, leading to less sustainable projects. This is an area that needs some direction and focus.

7. Social Justice: We have an active group of people committed to social justice issues in our church, the community and the world. In recent years the church's investment portfolio was refocused towards more socially conscious investments. Our church has been at the forefront in the effort to secure rights and dignity for migrant workers in our community. Since 2005 we have been an Open and Affirming congregation. Recently our focus has been on ecological stewardship and to this end we are installing solar panels to serve the needs of our church buildings and the parsonage. What sets our effort apart, however, is that we are intentionally putting in more panels than we need so that we can tithe the extra electricity generated to the population served by JUMP (Joint Urban Ministry Project). As we continue our efforts to be a green church, we are examining how our property, structures and practices impact the Lake Champlain watershed of which we are a part.

7. Gifts and skills to help: We are fortunate to have a beloved and experienced half-time Associate Pastor who provides continuity as we begin our journey to find an interim pastor. The skills we are

looking for in an interim pastor include evaluation expertise, a keen pastoral sensitivity and an ability to see the big picture. The evaluation expertise could help guide us as we work to define and describe our church. This would not only inform our search for a settled pastor, but also help remind us all of what a remarkable and rewarding opportunity it is to be part of this church. Similarly, the "person skills" would help make sure that all voices are listened to and needs recognized as we move forward. And, the big picture capability would help ensure that we do not get lost among the details. Along with these more "corporate" skills, we seek someone who brings compassion, a strong faith and a belief in the tenets of our mission statement as we move forward.

8. Compensation: Base pay at a range of \$45,000 to \$48,000

Use of parsonage preferred.

Alternative is a housing allowance in accordance with UCC guidelines.

Full benefit package to include health and dental

Vacation of 4 weeks per year or prorated based on length of stay

Mileage allowance for various visits and conferences

Professional expenses

EXAMPLE