

First Congregational Church of Manchester, Vermont -

A compilation of contributions from congregants on what our church is like, what our community is like, and what we are looking for in a pastor and a statement of what compensation we can offer a new pastor - January, 2020.

What our church is like? - FCC's newsletter is entitled "The Tall Spire." Our steeple presents a striking presence in the community, the simple viewing of which can bring thoughts of opportunity for God's strong and lasting presence in our lives. Our building is in a beautiful location and elegant yet in need of attention. Our rich history dates back to FCC's founding in 1784 and we are proud our history includes the welcoming of the first black pastor in Vermont in 1818. FCC has a historic organ and exceptional music ministry.

Currently we are like a small family struggling to hold fast to what its members would like it to be - a community of people with a strong love for Christian values and positive presence in our community. It is uplifting to see family on Sunday. Our church has healed from injuries it has suffered in the past, but still suffers some of the effects of those injuries. Like a broken bone that has healed, but still hurts when it rains.

We strive toward STAIR (Stewardship, Trust, Accountability, Integrity, Respect). We strive to steward our endowment wisely to help as many as possible and continue our uninterrupted operation going forward. We like to learn and we realize how having many different types of teachers along the way benefits our ongoing education and spiritual growth. We love a strong music ministry.

Many feel disheartened by what the church has lost in recent years - declines in membership, attendance, fellowship-building activities, and income. The large and active youth group of a decade ago is no more. Members have left to go to other churches in the area and we ask ourselves why. Are we a "difficult" church? The choir and bell choir are a mainstay in holding on to some attendance. There are differing views as to how caring and welcoming we are. Some of us state that we are like a big family that cares for each other, both those we know and those we have just met, and behind the scenes a lot goes on that helps others in a true practice of Christian beliefs. Others of us perceive ourselves as not friendly or caring and lacking of warmth, friendliness, and outreach to new people. Some feel the community perceives us as being the snooty rich church. Our caring can lead some of us to speak our minds which can be perceived as non-supportive.

FCC is weathered. In a good way. It stands faithful and unwavering. There are things that could be tweaked but its foundation is strong.

What is our community like?

Manchester is a beautiful small town, yet thriving and diverse. Many are attracted to live in this area because of our strong schools, recreational opportunities (good access to both downhill and cross-country skiing, hiking, hockey rink, golf, fly fishing), good restaurants, amazing bookstore and library, lots of continuing education opportunities, places of historic interest, art museum, music and the list goes on. It's a friendly active community. Many who live here are well-educated and cultured and value and generously support a strong sense of community. Some see Manchester as a class driven community. Many enjoy volunteering and helping with community needs. There is connection with people from all faiths. Some say our community is fragmented, others say it is like a Hallmark Christmas movie - magical, caring, compassionate, and loving.

What are we looking for in an interim pastor?

The pastor is a central and supportive cornerstone for our church family. We need a pastor who inspires us and is part of us as we move outside these doors, a listener, a teacher, and a forward thinking guide and leader as well as one who shares in the health and well-being of our church family.

Personal qualities -

Some of the descriptive words and phrases our congregants have used in describing what we are looking for in a pastor are: honesty, integrity, dedication, interpersonal skills, clear communicator, religious, faithful, honorable, moral, ethical, conscientious, kind, generous, responsible, fulfills duties of position, ability to engage with people, passion, compassion, emotionally accessible and empathetic, someone who will dig in for activities and get their hands dirty, someone who is eager to learn and adapt and is working on his/her own personal growth.

Sunday services -

We appreciate a good vibrant preacher who can provide a thought-provoking, intelligent, and understandable sermon and show us a different perspective on a familiar theme or strongly connect spiritual guidance with everyday occurrences. Having our intellect and theological knowledge challenged while maintaining an informal and accessible atmosphere is valued.

Many of us seek a sermon that gives us something to "grab on to" to carry forward into the week ahead, enriching our lives and leading us to be better Christians and providing the opportunity to feel renewed.

There is interest in looking toward the future while keeping past rituals of our church intact.

We'd like our pastor to invite and recognize new attendees each Sunday.

Pastoral presence -

We need a pastor who can relate and reach out to the parishioners on a personal level and be helpful with their Christian journeys, someone who would like to truly know and care about his/her "flock."

We would like a pastor who has the desire and will take the time to be available for private conversations and mentoring as well as call and visit the sick, bereaved, or in need of assistance, knows how to comfort those who need comforting and will organize a group to assist with this work.

Outreach -

We look for a pastor who is welcoming - reaches out to others and helps them feel included, sees the need to build membership, and works with the congregation to attract new members.

We would like someone who can invigorate the church, would be willing to offer classes, and be involved with Interfaith Council, the greater community, Southwest Association UCC, and Vermont UCC

We look for someone happy to know the children of all age groups and interested in starting a youth fellowship for teenagers.

What compensation can we offer an interim pastor? 80% position at up to \$69,955/year. This amount may be split up in whatever way seems advantageous to our interim pastor. The salary/benefits offered includes wage, housing allowance, health and dental insurance, as well as retirement. We only expect three days a week serving our church, and then Sundays for a total of four days. We recognize that no one interim can do everything that we have listed here in this document in the time we have allotted, but we decided to lay out all of our needs, and look forward to a conversation about the best use of our interim's time and gifts.

Note: All interested candidates must contact Jesse Davis at the Vermont Conference, UCC office to have their ministerial profile sent to the First Congregational Church of Manchester's search committee. Contact Jesse at: ministriescoordinator@vtucc.org or vtconmincoor@gmail.com.