

# **First Parish United Church of Christ Congregational**



P.O. Box 228 176 West High St.  
Somersworth, NH 03878  
Phone Number 603-692-2057

**LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE**  
**HALF TIME PASTOR**  
**New Hampshire Conference UCC**  
**Carroll Strafford Association**  
**December 2021**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

LISTING INFORMATION.....	4
SUMMARY OF OUR MINISTRY.....	5
SCOPE OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.....	7
COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT.....	8
WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?.....	9

## WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?

CURRENT AND PAST INITIATIVES.....	12
NEW INITIATIVES.....	14

## WHO ARE WE NOW?

CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS	
Mission Statement.....	15
Opening & Affirming Statement.....	16
CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS.....	27
PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING.....	30
CHURCH FINANCES.....	33
HISTORICAL INFORMATION.....	35

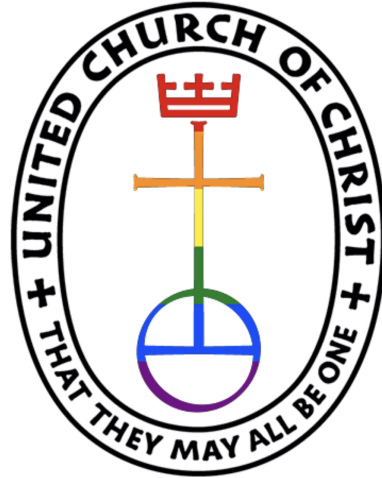
## WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?.....37

## REFERENCES

REFERENCE 1.....	42
REFERENCE 2.....	44
REFERENCE 3.....	45
Letter.....	47

## STATEMENT OF CONSENT.....51

## VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION.....53



December 23, 2021

Dear Friend,

We want to thank you in advance for taking the time to read our Profile. Our Profile has been put together by a group of dedicated people who truly believe God has been watching over us as we move forward and find a minister who will guide our congregation into the future. Our church family has an amazing amount of love that we want to share with the person who comes to us as our next pastor

We hope you will share your questions and thoughts with us as you consider where your faith journey will take you.

Blessings to you,

The Pastoral Transition Team

Katherine Latchaw

Debbie Hall

Sharon Sirois

Cynthia Jutrus

Julie Hurley





***“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)***

## **POSTING POSITION**

### **LISTING INFORMATION**

Church name: **FIRST PARISH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Street address: **176 West High Street P.O. Box 228 Somersworth, NH 03878**

Supplemental web links: [www.somersworthfirstparish.org](http://www.somersworthfirstparish.org)

**Facebook: First Parish United Church of Christ Somersworth**

**YouTube: First Parish Church Somersworth NH**

Additional ecumenical affiliations:

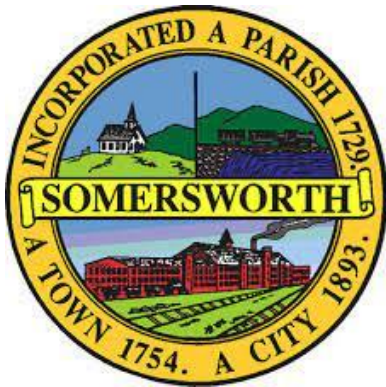
- 1. The UKAMA Partnership between UCC in Zimbabwe and NHUCC**
- 2. Berwick Methodist Church, Berwick, ME**
- 3. St Ignatius of Loyola, Somersworth, NH**
- 4. Our Lady of the Angels Catholic Church, South Berwick, ME**

Conference: **New Hampshire Conference United Church of Christ**

Association: **Carroll Strafford Association**

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person:

**Rev. Gordon Rankin, Conference Minister** [grankin@nhcucc.org](mailto:grankin@nhcucc.org)  
**603-715-9527**



**There is only one Somersworth in the world!** It is one of the fastest growing cities in New Hampshire. It is proud of its ethnic diversity and welcoming culture. This small village, along the Salmon Falls River, was settled in 1729 and was originally called Great Falls. In 1893, it was officially named Somersworth.

Nestled between the ocean and the mountains, it has easy access to the metropolitan areas of Boston, MA and Portland, ME. It is a 20 minute drive to historic Portsmouth, NH, which is considered the creative capital of the New Hampshire seacoast. The beautiful seashore is a short 30 minutes away; Lake Winnepesaukee and The White Mountains are less than an hour drive.

Somersworth is a great place for young families and young professionals. There are a wide range of businesses, medical facilities, manufacturers, and higher educational institutions including the nearby University of New Hampshire. Our city's motto "Proud Past, Bright Future", says much about the citizens of Somersworth and the character of the community.

### ***Summary of our Ministry***

*Current size of membership:* **98**

*Languages used in ministry (other than English):* **none**

*Position Title:* **Pastor**

*Position Duration:* **Settled**

**A called position intended for longer-term ministry in which the minister moves church membership to the congregation and moves standing to related association**

*Compensation Level:* **½ Time - with the goal of becoming Full Time**

### **Community Presence**

First Parish Church of Somersworth is not just a building. As a congregation, we are devoted and caring. We are seeking a pastor who is willing to work with us to reach out to local families and the community. We hope for a strong spiritual leader who will help us to grow as individuals in our faith and guide our vision for our church to grow into a dynamic presence in our community.

### **Open to All**

Our parishioners strongly believe we should become more progressive in our understanding and engagement of social justice, reach out to ethnically diverse members of the church and community, and those who have substantial economic needs in our community. Another priority of First Parish is to find ways to involve youth and make the church experience more relevant to them as well as the older folks who attend church.

### **Personality Traits**

Our church would greatly benefit from someone who is compassionate and caring with listening skills. We envision a pastor who can build consensus by guiding thoughtful discussion in decision-making. And, added to that list is, a person who is honest and trustworthy with a good sense of humor!

### **Technology Needs**

We have survived and continued to worship throughout the pandemic. We are learning that technology, such as Zoom and YouTube, is important to help our church reach out to the community and share the Good News. We see our church going beyond its walls by using a variety of methods to reach out to people and make them feel welcome and included.

## SCOPE OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

We are looking for a pastor to fill the following responsibilities and duties:

### ***Theologian***

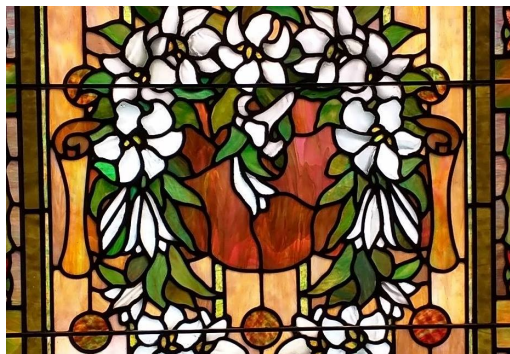
-One who is guided by the word of God in life and ministry. We want someone who is biblically literate to translate the word of God into meaningful forms of worship to people of all ages, socioeconomic status, lifestyle choice, gender identity, level of education, etc. A welcoming pastor who will attract people to become involved with our church's missions.

### ***Strategic Foresight and Follow-through***

-One who leads the ministries of the church to achieve stated objectives. We have a desire to become financially strong in order to carry out our mission work but could use someone experienced in that type of strategic planning and execution. We need assistance in community outreach that welcomes participation from non-members and potential members. We would benefit from improving and expanding technology to engage members, old and new.

### ***Spiritual Care***

-One who provides pastoral care through worship, teaching and personal witness; including care given through the holy sacraments to those in need, as well as those who are unable to attend church.



## **COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT**

*Salary Basis:* The salary will be in line with the NH Conference recommendation    **\$21,110 + \$6,740 housing allowance = \$27,850**

*Benefits:*                    **Salary plus Benefits**  
                                 **Annuity 14% = \$3640   Disability   Term Life 1.5%   \$390**

*What is the expected living situation for your next minister?*  
                                 **Housing allowance**

*Residential/commuting expectations as part of the overall compensation package:*  
                                 **To be discussed in the interview phase**

*State any incentives:*  
                                 **To be determined based on applicant**

*Peer and Professional supports available for ministers in your association/conference:*  
                                 **Pastor will become a member of the**  
                                 **Strafford-Carroll Association UCC Ministries.**

*Supporting ½ time pastor's bi-vocational employment*  
                                 **To be determined based on applicant**

## **WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?**

**Our next minister will collaborate with our congregation in the following KEY Pastoral Activities:**

### **1. Faith Formation and Vitality**

Through Bible Study, service to community, and prayer, help us to identify resources and opportunities of which young and old may take advantage.

### **2. Leadership Development**

Work with members to identify ministry needs and assist us to create programs to fill those needs, to increase church membership, and participate at the state conference level.

### **3. Community Engagement**

Work with members as a team to be ambassadors of God's Word. Encourage various community members and groups to participate in activities, to co-create, execute, and rejoice together, and to be attracted to join the church.

### **4. Strategic Planning for current and new directions in ministry**

Increase membership and participation in church and church projects. We know there are subcultures of people who want to share their time, talent, and/or treasure but may not necessarily desire to become full members or even attend formal church services. (We can only plant the seed.)

### **5. Faithful Financial Development and Stewardship**

Essential to the health of the church and carrying out our ministry. We need help with creative ways of giving.

### **6. Preparation and Leadership of Sunday Worship**

Including scripture study, crafting of liturgy and bulletin, sermon preparation, guiding lay liturgists, planning of music in coordination with musical staff and volunteers, preaching, visiting and giving communion to shut-ins.

**Our next minister will work together with the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls.**

The extent of our vision is to be determined in discussions with Pastoral Candidates and what is possible to fit into the 2.5 day week. We hope to put emphasis on the following areas:

Participate and Guide our church in community outreach near and far. We hope our next minister will help us find effective ways to connect with families and young people who are already a part of our church, but also work alongside us to find ways to welcome new people and families in the community to our church.

We support the NH conference and would want our pastor to continue to be involved with conferences, meetings and, if time allows, outside programs like the Horton Center.

We hope that community outreach is a significant part of our pastor's week with the understanding that congregational priorities are attended to first. For example, Sunday service, weddings, funerals, calling/visiting shut-ins, NHUCC obligations.

## **Utilizing Areas of Excellence from the Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry**

Our transition team developed a questionnaire and sent it to parishioners to have them complete. The team then looked at the results and incorporated the responses into the following:

### **Work Together for Justice and Mercy**

We hope our next minister will continue to guide our congregation in its commitment of being an inclusive community and in furthering justice and peace.

### **Exhibit a Spiritual Foundation and Outgoing Spiritual Practice**

It is our hope that our next pastor will walk with us in living a life of discipleship and gain a greater understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the elements of Christian worship and continue discernment of one's call in the community.

### **Possess Strong Inter- and Intra-Personal Assets**

Our next pastor will need to have the communication skills and interpersonal skills to work with our congregation collaboratively and make connections to all church members so they feel included and valued. We expect this person to have strong moral character and personal integrity.

### **Build Transformational Leadership Skills**

We would want our new pastor to perform necessary administrative tasks by encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning.

For example: training in mediation, conflict resolution, and team building skills.



## 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)

God is calling us to deepen our journey as Christians. God is calling us to broaden our commitment to our local community in meaningful ways that expresses our faith and gratitude for our abundant life in grace. God is calling us to expand our church community of Christians. We want to reach out and provide an environment where all people feel safe, included, and respected. We want to use our belief in loving others as we love ourselves as the springboard for standing up for human rights. We want to be Christians living the gospel as we care for one another.

### 1. Food Pantry

First Parish UCC established the Community Food Pantry which serves several cities and towns in the area. We host them in our church and it is one of the largest food pantries in New Hampshire. Our church provided land for the Food Pantry on which to build a storage unit. Volunteers from our church assist with the pantry on a regular basis.

### 2. Vitality Team

We established a “Vitality Team” whose responsibility was to explore ways to connect with the community.

a. Youth Baseball T-Ball Team Sponsor - The Vitality Team “adopted” a youth baseball T-ball team and their game shirts have our church name on their shirts. We attended games to cheer the children on and connect with the parents.

b. Gender Identity Support - Another successful endeavor was meeting weekly with high school LGBTQT students, or any student who needed a safe place to ask questions or get information about their gender identity. Our Pastor, a transgender member of our church, and the school’s guidance counselors made themselves available to listen to their concerns, spent time letting the students find ways to express themselves in an environment that was accepting and would help guide conversation.

It was in the initial stages and was more of a “drop-in’ for any student that was interested. There wasn’t a set curriculum.

c. Somersworth International Children’s Festival - We host a First Parish UCC Booth at the annual International Children’s Festival with activities for children such as face painting and crafts as well as information about our church for parents.

d. Other Community Engagement Projects - Our Vitality Team organized special events that would involve the community including: variety shows, talent shows, public spaghetti or ham and bean church suppers, silent auctions, the Holly Daze Fair before Christmas, and the Spring Fling Fair at Easter. We also sponsored events outside the church such as bowling, miniature golf, barbecues, and trips to the local theater.

### **3. Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook**

Due to COVID we utilized ZOOM to stay in communication with members and to hold meetings. We have recorded Sunday worship services, a daily noontime prayer, and a weekly Children’s short devotion lesson that follows a weekly scripture reading. These were posted on our Facebook page and YouTube. This will continue to be a form of outreach.

### **4. Serve the Less Fortunate**

We are called to continue our work caring for the needy in local communities through the Food Pantry and local Table of Plenty soup kitchen. We will continue to provide financial, housing, and spiritual assistance to families in need. We have many projects that support both local and distant communities where we love to contribute and will continue to do so.

For instance, we donate empty Medicine Bottles to be recycled for use by folks in Malawi, Africa, chip in for the Mile of Pennies for Veterans, fill Backpacks for the Start of School, purchase and wrap White Gifts for teens at Christmas, load Shoe Boxes of toiletries, fill the Hats and Mitten tree at Christmas. We write cards and valentines to shut-ins and local prisoners.

~~~~~

**Our church has not had a formal multi-year strategic plan. As part of the self-evaluation process to create this profile associated with looking at who we are and who we would like to become, we have identified the following target areas:**

**1. Growth**

Our congregation has an amazing amount of love that we are so willing to share, but we continue to dwindle in numbers. We have so much we want to accomplish, but we just don't have the bodies to get it all done. Growing our congregation will bring more diversity, more families, more ideas, more energy, and more income which will all serve to rejuvenate our church and empower our mission.

**2. Innovative Options for Worship and Service**

We want to rethink church membership and worship with regard to the current culture of social media, sports on Sunday, over-booked families, and the recent pandemic. Social media-use could continue to be offered, to supplement in-person gatherings and Sunday Worship and, also, expanded to include Adult Bible Study and youth group mission projects. Engaging the community to support a single church mission project allows people who would rather not become full-fledged members to contribute to what they believe is a worthy cause.

**3. Partnering with Diversity**

There is a large Indonesian Community in our city. Finding ways to connect and welcome our Indonesian neighbors will make friends out of strangers. We would like to address local social injustice towards the LGBTQIA community. We say we are Open and Affirming, but we need to continue our understanding of LGBTQIA folks and find ways to support, encourage, and welcome them as a group as well as individuals. Shared community projects allow our new friends (Indonesian or LGBTQIA) to integrate more deeply into the community, help us to better understand them, and give us all a sense of shared commitment to a common mission.

## **WHO ARE WE NOW?**

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

### **FIRST PARISH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (CONGREGATIONAL) OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

The avowed purpose of this church shall be to worship God, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the Church Universal, to render loving service toward the human family, and to strive for righteousness, justice and peace.

We desire in this partnership effort to:

- reach a fuller understanding of what it means to be sisters and brothers in Christ;
- share our cultures and establish a relationship based on Christian love;
- be in direct communication with each other, as evidence of this Christian relationship, through shared correspondence and prayer.

We believe these to be only beginning points in what this unfolding relationship will bring into our mutual lives of worship, outreach and nurture.

"And this we do always depending upon the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

## FIRST PARISH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (CONGREGATIONAL) OPEN AND AFFIRMING STATEMENT

*We, the members of the First Parish United Church of Christ (Congregational), joyfully welcome all who seek to know God in Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

*In declaring ourselves as an Open and Affirming Church, we celebrate the sacredness of every person as a child of God.*

*We welcome all following Jesus' example, 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 of baptism and communion, and rites of marriage and funerals. Through the responsibilities and blessings of being in church community together, we pledge to oppose discrimination and work for justice and inclusion of all persons as we journey in faith.*



## **Our Congregation's Life of Faith**

God is the creator, our rest, and our redeemer. Through sermons, discussion and reading scripture, God is revealed to us in many ways. God is Lord, Father, Mother, Son, Christ, Holy Spirit, the Trinity, Love, Light, and The Way. Jesus is the holy shepherd who leads his sheep to bring us to the light and love of God.

We seek to love unconditionally with an open heart. We are grateful to reach out to the needy. We are a family. We pray together, we share our joys and sorrows, we care for one another. We take care of one another in times of sickness, sadness and need. We come together and that community broadens our faith.

We look forward to worship on Sunday mornings, not only because it brings us together as a community, but also because it is through worship we receive spiritual strength and insight for living life. Two things need to happen in worship and it is our minister, most of all, who can lead us: people come wanting God to be a living reality in their lives and they need a different reality than the world presents to them every day. Through Christian examples and acts, by witness and by works, we can realize the presence of God in our lives and we joyfully return to church again and again. We need to hear the words of forgiveness for our mistakes, words of comfort for our pain and grief, and words that reveal how God is always there for us if we are simply willing. It is the church, through The Word revealed, that instills in us the values of a true Christian, these values give us the strength, wisdom, and compassion to be true to those values.

### **What is our purpose?**

To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength  
and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

### **What is our vision?**

United in Christ's love, a just world for all.

### **What is our mission?**

United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace,  
we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.

## **Strengths and Positive Qualities of our Congregation**

As people enter our church they feel warmly welcomed to our spirit-filled Sunday service. The passing of the peace encourages us to reach out and interact with our pew neighbors through handshakes, elbow bumps, waves, hugs, smiles, and warm greetings. We celebrate Communion on the first Sunday of each month and truly love that everyone is invited to the table. In these ways we demonstrate we are Open and Affirming Open to all people of any background who are seeking spiritual growth, acceptance, and friendship.

We all love our beautiful services; special services even more so!

<http://www.somersworthfirstparish.org/christmas.pdf>

Our sanctuary holds 150-200 people. We have a Chapel, a Fellowship Hall, Library, 2 Offices, a Copy Room, 4 classrooms, a large kitchen, storage areas, a Food pantry room, accessible bathrooms on the 1st and 2nd floors. The entire church is wheelchair accessible. The church has great spaces for worship, education, celebrations, community outreach, and ministry which have been well-maintained.

We offer something for everyone:

- Active Faith Formation; children participate in worship.
- Women's Fellowship meets weekly to create crafts for our Holly Daze Fair and Spring Fling Fair.
- Women's Fellowship also provides monthly programs, such as an outing at our local theater. We host yard sales, meals and talent shows, sometimes as fundraisers and sometimes just for fun.



***When there is a need in the community or a mission we can be involved with,*** our congregation is very willing to participate. We “step up” and do our best to provide the items needed. Some examples of ways we have helped are putting together backpacks and warm winter mittens and hats for local schools. Church members bring in food to help the local food pantry. They make sure needy children and the elderly have gifts at Christmas. We send pill bottles to the “World Medical Mission” to be used in countries like Zimbabwe to put medications in. Many members fill shoe boxes full of “treasures” for children and then the boxes are sent to various places in the world so children can enjoy them. We have collected material to be sent to Zimbabwe so clothes could be made. For many years, our Faith Formation sponsored the Heifer International Fair where the children sold “shares” of farm animals. Our congregation gives to our community and the wider church in many ways and we are proud to be able to do these things.

### **Sunday Worship**

Sunday worship at First Parish is often a traditional time for prayer, meditation, reflection and celebration. It most often takes place in the sanctuary. It is a time to become close to God and learn more about the word of God through scriptures, music, and the pastor’s message. Most Sundays have a particular focus related to the liturgy. Church members sign up to greet people as they arrive and other members sign up to share the Scripture readings. We have a lovely organ on which our organist plays a prelude, the hymns, and a postlude. We also have a piano and chimes. Our organist is also the music director for our volunteer choir that usually provides special music weekly. We share our worship services on Facebook and YouTube. Almost every worship service is followed by a Fellowship Hour with refreshments provided by rotating Groups or Committees.



## Youth Worship

The youth of the church are welcome at worship in the sanctuary from the “Welcome” through the “Children’s Message” part of the service. After the Children’s Message, the students retreat to Sunday School for the remainder of the service for faith formation activities. Very often the Children’s Message brings lots of smiles to everyone as it is participatory. Questions are answered by the children and there is usually something hands-on for the young people to explore that aids in their attentiveness to and understanding of the message.

## Special Church Services

Some of our most beloved worship services are *Christmas Eve*, *Maundy Thursday*, *Easter*, and *Children’s Sunday*. We have also presented cantatas at Easter and Christmas. Church members are invited to share a plant in memory or honor of family members and a stunning floral display is arranged in front of the altar for Easter (Easter Lilies) and Christmas (Poinsettias).

- Each week during Advent, different families light the candles of the Advent Wreath and a song is shared.
- The Christmas Eve service is a candlelight service of scripture and song.
- The Maundy Thursday service, “Office of Tenebrae” is very moving as Scripture is read, the congregation responds in song, candles are extinguished, and we depart from the sanctuary in silence.
- Ecumenical Sunrise Easter service occurs at dawn on Easter Sunday and is followed by a traditional service with special music.
- Much of the Children’s Sunday service is conducted by the children. It is a special honor for graduating seniors to provide their own message as part of this service.

<http://www.somersworthfirstparish.org/children.pdf>



**Easter**



**Children collecting White Gifts to present in worship**

### **Shared Services**

Our Easter Sunrise Services have been held in Somersworth at the American Legion Post #69 parking lot followed by coffee and refreshments inside the Legion. This service has been shared with other churches and has been open to the community.

We worship together with the Berwick United Methodist Church for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday services. Each year one service is held at the Methodist church and the other service is held at our church. We are also involved with the high school and offer a Baccalaureate service for graduating seniors in June each year. Our minister organizes the service with other local ministers/priests and deacons provided refreshments for after the service.



## **Educational Program/Faith Formation Vision of Our Church**

*“Faith nourishes our heart and soul. It is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we can’t see.”*

### **Adult Bible Study** - held in church and out in local restaurants

In an effort to be a visual presence in the community, our Adult Bible Study participants have met in local restaurants. Not only did we share a delicious meal, we shared the study of scripture and many a jovial discussion, as we sought to collectively grasp a better understanding of God through his Word. People would interact with us out of curiosity and seemed pleasantly surprised to see that we were a Bible Study Group. Another study group met at the Church during the mornings, following the same agenda as the evening group. Topics included:

- Books of the Bible : The Psalms, Romans and the Book of Jeremiah
- The Shack by Wm. Paul Young and Brad Robison
- White Privilege, Let’s Talk - a resource for Transformational Dialogue from the United Church of Christ,

### **Youth Group**

Our Youth Faith Formation Coordinator has been in this position for 10 years. When she started there were about 20-25 children in the Sunday school. Prior to the pandemic, an average of seven young people attended regularly.

We used the lectionary-based Whole People of God curriculum for several years. In 2018, the Faith Formation Committee opted to use information found online as the basis for the lessons that parallel the weekly sermons. Continuing throughout the pandemic, these lessons can be found on our Facebook page.

The Church Youth Group sponsors a Cookie Swap to fund Horton Center summer camp for students. They hold a fund drive to support Heifer Project International as their mission outreach. The youth periodically sing, light candles, read scripture, and perform plays to contribute to worship.

There has been a Mentoring Program for Confirmation, Acolyte program, Children's Choir, and Youth Chime Choir. The Church Youth also participate in a variety of church endeavors, helping wherever needed; be it at church fairs, outside clean up days, collecting donations for the food pantry, and other outreach activities.

Our hope for the future is a larger youth presence, with parents who are supportive of our church programs. As our church grows so will our opportunity to encourage youth to be active participants in all aspects of church life.

### **Nursery**

Our nursery is right off the Narthex. It is wired so that adults can listen to the worship while sitting with their children. Volunteers from the church community are willing to stay with the children if the parents want to attend the church service. It has adorable decorations on the walls. There are plenty of age-appropriate books and toys to keep little ones happy. The room has an attached bathroom, a changing table, rocking chairs and tables and chairs for the little ones.

***“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”. Philippians 4:6-7 NIV***

## **TIMES WHEN ACTION**

### **Bill's Day of Grace**

It was Sunday. The Men's Fellowship was conducting the service because our interim pastor was on vacation. One of our beloved, older choir members was going to sing a solo during the service. He was slightly late arriving at church and the church members were already seated. When he arrived he rushed to the front of the church and as he reached our third step to the altar, he collapsed and fell back. He was unresponsive. People immediately rushed to him. A call went into 911 and we were in the process of using the defibrillator when the police and ambulance arrived and took over. The deacons asked the parishioners to leave the sanctuary so the emergency services could do their job. As no one wanted to leave the church, everyone gathered together in the Fellowship Hall. There were tears and all were emotional. We took each other's hands and were led in prayer by our moderator while we waited for some word from the EMT's. When word was finally received, we learned that our dear friend had passed. There was a sense of peace that he died in a place where he was close to God and surrounded by the people he loved and who loved him. His family was contacted and given the sad news. Members of the church stayed with the family while they waited for the medical examiner and the funeral director to come. The clear-headed responses and outpouring of love filled a truly sad day with grace.

### **Forgiveness**

One night, a neighbor's son had a fight with his girlfriend, was inebriated or on drugs, and broke into our church by breaking a window next to the front door. He proceeded to throw things around, toss treasured artifacts out a window, and severely damaged our stained glass windows. He moved our copy machine into the library and was trying to throw it out of the window. In doing so, he damaged a lot of the woodwork. When the Police found him in the sanctuary, he almost

jumped out of a second story window. He was arrested and brought to court where our minister and several members of the church were in attendance.

The judge ordered him to get therapy, reimburse the church for damages, and apologize to the congregation in person during a service (which he did after completing his therapy). Our beautiful windows were repaired along with all the other damages. Our congregation welcomed the young man with forgiveness in their hearts.

### **Our Church's Strong Foundation**

Each committee spends at least 2 hours a month. There are 6 committees that meet at this time:

- i. Trustees (Stewardship & Finance sub-committee & Building & Grounds sub-committee)
- ii. Diaconate
- iii. Faith Formation
- iv. Missions
- v. PPRC/ Transition Team
- vi. Church Council: made up of all committees

## See Annual Report and Bylaws

<http://www.somersworthfirstparish.org/annual2021.pdf>

<http://www.somersworthfirstparish.org/bylaws.pdf>

We are in the process of updating our bylaws at this time to reflect who we want to become.

### UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST ELEVEN YEAR CHURCH PROFILE BASED ON DATA REPORTED IN UCC YEARBOOKS



Church#: 441560

Assoc: 484

Schedule: 0

First Parish UCC

Somersworth

NH

03878

| YEAR | MEMBERS | AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE | CHR ED/ FAITH FORM | CONFIRMATION | CONFESSION | TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM | DEATHS OR TRANS OUT | OTHER LOSSES | NET MEMBS ADDS-REMOVED |
|------|---------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------|------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| 2010 | 185     | 70                    | 28                 | 0            | 2          | 0                    | 3                   | 0            | -1                     |
| 2011 | 185     | 70                    | 28                 | 0            | 0          | 0                    | 0                   | 0            | 0                      |
| 2012 | 185     | 70                    | 28                 | 0            | 0          | 0                    | 0                   | 0            | 0                      |
| 2013 | 163     | 67                    | 29                 | 2            | 0          | 0                    | 4                   | 20           | -22                    |
| 2014 | 168     | 63                    | 28                 | 0            | 0          | 9                    | 4                   | 0            | 5                      |
| 2015 | 167     | 61                    | 19                 | 0            | 5          | 0                    | 6                   | 0            | -1                     |
| 2016 | 170     | 59                    | 13                 | 0            | 0          | 7                    | 4                   | 0            | 3                      |
| 2017 | 153     | 52                    | 10                 | 1            | 0          | 0                    | 1                   | 17           | -17                    |
| 2018 | 149     | 48                    | 7                  | 0            | 1          | 1                    | 6                   | 0            | -4                     |
| 2019 | 143     | 38                    | 6                  | 0            | 4          | 0                    | 7                   | 3            | -6                     |
| 2020 | 115     | 38                    | 6                  | 0            | 0          | 0                    | 8                   | 20           | -28                    |

| YEAR | CURRENT EXPENSES | CAPITAL PAYMENTS | BASIC SUPPORT | TOT OTHER UCC GIVING | TOTAL OCWM | OTHER GIFTS | WIDER MISSION | BASIC SUPP% CURR LOCAL | TOTAL EXPEND | PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS |
|------|------------------|------------------|---------------|----------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 2010 | \$148,092        | \$14,562         | \$8,192       | \$2,476              | \$10,668   | \$0         | \$10,668      | 5.53                   | \$173,322    | \$117,674             |
| 2011 | \$148,092        | \$0              | \$6,356       | \$2,300              | \$8,656    | \$0         | \$8,656       | 4.29                   | \$156,748    | \$0                   |
| 2012 | \$148,092        | \$0              | \$4,356       | \$1,533              | \$5,889    | \$0         | \$5,889       | 2.94                   | \$153,981    | \$0                   |
| 2013 | \$60,315         | \$9,027          | \$4,891       | \$2,616              | \$7,507    | \$0         | \$7,507       | 8.11                   | \$76,849     | \$117,468             |
| 2014 | \$144,483        | \$0              | \$5,406       | \$1,227              | \$6,633    | \$0         | \$6,633       | 3.74                   | \$151,116    | \$110,630             |
| 2015 | \$144,214        | \$9,027          | \$5,356       | \$559                | \$5,915    | \$0         | \$5,915       | 3.71                   | \$159,156    | \$109,490             |
| 2016 | \$145,170        | \$9,027          | \$5,638       | \$807                | \$6,445    | \$0         | \$6,445       | 3.88                   | \$160,642    | \$97,577              |
| 2017 | \$136,736        | \$36,678         | \$5,468       | \$341                | \$5,809    | \$0         | \$5,809       | 4.00                   | \$142,545    | \$98,783              |
| 2018 | \$136,348        | \$6,044          | \$5,356       | \$520                | \$5,876    | \$0         | \$5,876       | 3.93                   | \$142,224    | \$96,459              |
| 2019 | \$396,185        | \$5,961          | \$5,356       | \$309                | \$5,665    | \$0         | \$5,665       | 1.35                   | \$401,850    | \$94,207              |
| 2020 | \$137,602        | \$1,565          | \$0           | \$0                  | \$0        | \$0         | \$0           | 0.00                   | \$137,602    | \$58,727              |

| % CHANGE  | MEMBERS | AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE | CHR ED/ FAITH FORM | TOTAL ADDITIONS | TOTAL REMOVALS | CURR LOCAL EXPENSES | TOTAL OCWM | TOTAL EXPENDITURE |
|-----------|---------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 2015-2020 | -31.14  | -37.70                | -68.42             | -100.00         | 366.67         | -4.58               | -100.00    | -13.54            |
| 2010-2020 | -37.84  | -45.71                | -78.57             | -100.00         | 833.33         | -7.08               | -100.00    | -20.61            |

Please note: Zero values ("0" or "\$0") may reflect missing information in some years. Christian Education/Faith Formation refers to Church School Enrollment for all figures before 2007.

## CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

**Total church membership is 98.**

We define participation as those who attend church  
or contribute time, treasure, and/or talents.

|                                                          |              | <i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Number of active members:                                | <b>50/98</b> |                                                   |
| Number of active non-members:                            | <b>7</b>     |                                                   |
| Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above): | <b>57</b>    |                                                   |

*Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:*

|                                  |           | <i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i> |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| More than 10 years:              | <b>46</b> |                                                   |
| Less than 10, more than 5 years: | <b>8</b>  |                                                   |
| Less than 5 years:               | <b>3</b>  |                                                   |

*Number of total participants by age:*

| 0-11     | 12-17    | 18-24    | 25-34    | 35-44    | 45-54    | 55-64     | 65-74     | 75+       | <i>Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)</i> |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>X</b>                                             |

*Number of adults in various household types:*

|                                 |           | <i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i> |
|---------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Single adults under 35:         | <b>0</b>  | <b>X</b>                                          |
| Joint household with minors:    | <b>5</b>  |                                                   |
| Single adults age 35-65:        | <b>7</b>  |                                                   |
| Joint household with no minors: | <b>30</b> |                                                   |
| Single adults over 65:          | <b>65</b> |                                                   |



*Education level of adult participants by percentage:*

|                                |           | <i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i> |
|--------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| High school:                   | <b>21</b> | <b>X</b>                                          |
| College:                       | <b>20</b> | <b>X</b>                                          |
| Graduate School:               | <b>8</b>  | <b>X</b>                                          |
| Specialty Training: (Military) | <b>2</b>  | <b>X</b>                                          |
| Other (please specify):        |           |                                                   |

*Percentage of adults in various employment types:*

|                                    |           | <i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i> |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Adults who are employed:           | <b>20</b> | <b>X</b>                                          |
| Adults who are retired:            | <b>30</b> | <b>X</b>                                          |
| Adults who are not fully employed: | <b>1</b>  | <b>X</b>                                          |

**Occupations of working adults in the congregation:**

Customer service, insurance agent, cooks, accountants, administrative assistants, emergency dispatcher, chaplain, computer programmer, teachers, veterinarian, business owners.

**Ethnic Heritage**

Our congregation is mostly white of European descent. We have a small Indonesian population. We have more people over the age of 50, more women than men, and we have political diversity. We are predominantly the middle class, socioeconomically. We have had a transgender person as a member.

We went through the Open & Affirming process which took several years for the congregation to vote in favor of O&A. In July 2021, members of the PPRC took the Welcoming Diversity Inventory and found that the results showed the majority of the answers fell into the “sometimes true” category. It revealed that we believe we are welcoming to all, as expressed in our Open and Affirming Statement, but that we have not plumbed the depth of these subjects with the scrutiny that is essential.

The Lord’s Prayer has been said in Spanish during services posted on our Facebook page and YouTube because we understand there are non-English speaking people in our local communities and thought this might be a nice way to try to reach out.

We are aware that members of the Indonesian community in our area are opening a cultural center. It may be an opportunity for us to, perhaps, provide refreshments at the opening or an event.

We think further discussion of O&A as it pertains to groups beyond the LGBTQTIA community would be beneficial.

## PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

**Based on 2019**

| 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                          | <b>20-25</b>                                      | <b>Pastor, Parishioners</b>                                                                                                                       |
| Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>               | <b>1</b>                                          | <b>Pastor, Deacons</b>                                                                                                                            |
| Children's Groups or Classes                     | <b>5-10</b>                                       | <b>Faith Formation, Organist, Choir Director</b>                                                                                                  |
| Christmas Eve and Easter Worship                 | <b>75</b>                                         | <b>Deacons, Pastor, Organist, Vocalists, Musicians</b>                                                                                            |
| Church-wide Meals                                | <b>45-50</b>                                      | <b>Parishioners</b>                                                                                                                               |
| Choirs and Music Groups                          | <b>10</b>                                         | <b>Organist, Choir Director</b>                                                                                                                   |
| Church-based Bible Study                         | <b>10-15</b>                                      | <b>Pastor</b>                                                                                                                                     |
| Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>             | <b>45-50; Monthly</b>                             | <b>Pastor, Deacons, Organist</b>                                                                                                                  |
| Community Meals                                  | <b>90-120</b>                                     | <b>Parishioners, Members of the Community</b>                                                                                                     |
| Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i> | <b>0</b>                                          |                                                                                                                                                   |
| Drama or Dance Program                           | <b>0</b>                                          |                                                                                                                                                   |
| Funerals <i>(number last year)</i>               | <b>9</b>                                          | <b>Pastor, Deacons, Organist</b>                                                                                                                  |

|                                             |              |                                  |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Intergenerational Groups                    | <b>35-40</b> | <b>Parishioners</b>              |
| Outdoor Worship                             | <b>10-20</b> | <b>Pastor, Deacons</b>           |
| Prayer or Meditation Groups                 | <b>20-30</b> | <b>Parishioners</b>              |
| Public Advocacy Work                        | <b>50-70</b> | <b>Pastor, Parishioners</b>      |
| Retreats                                    | <b>2</b>     | <b>Youth</b>                     |
| Theology or Bible Programs in the Community | <b>25-30</b> | <b>Pastor, Parishioners</b>      |
| Weddings ( <i>number last year</i> )        | <b>0</b>     | <b>Pastor, Deacons, Organist</b> |
| Worship (time slot: <u>10 am</u> )          | <b>37</b>    | <b>Pastor, Deacons, Organist</b> |
| Worship (Holidays)                          | <b>80</b>    | <b>Pastor, Deacons, Organist</b> |
| Young Adult Groups or Classes               | <b>0</b>     |                                  |
| Youth Groups or Classes                     | <b>0</b>     |                                  |
| Other                                       | <b>0</b>     |                                  |

Additional comments:

#### Ordained, licensed, ministers in our church

| Name                | Three- or Four-Way Covenant?<br>(3 or 4 or No) | Ministry Setting | Type of Ministry Role | Retired?<br>(Y or N) |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Susan Walker</b> | <b>Licensed Bridge Minister</b>                | <b>Hospital</b>  | <b>Chaplain</b>       | <b>N</b>             |
|                     |                                                |                  |                       |                      |
|                     |                                                |                  |                       |                      |

### Current staff

| Staff Position                 | Head of Staff? | Compensation<br>(full time, part<br>time, volunteer) | Supervised<br>by | Length of Tenure for<br>current person in<br>this position |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bridge Minister                |                | <b>\$19,200</b>                                      | <b>PPRC</b>      | <b>6 months</b>                                            |
| Organist/Choir<br>Director     |                | <b>\$8,803</b>                                       | <b>Trustees</b>  | <b>5 years</b>                                             |
| Treasurer                      |                | <b>\$3,720</b>                                       | <b>Trustees</b>  | <b>18 months</b>                                           |
| Faith Formation<br>Coordinator |                | <b>\$2,134</b>                                       | <b>Trustees</b>  | <b>8 years</b>                                             |
| Janitorial Service             |                | <b>\$1,700</b>                                       | <b>Trustees</b>  | <b>1 year</b>                                              |

### REFLECTION

We have a clear understanding of our strengths and needs. We faithfully reach out to our community to provide for the needy. Our mission work is at the heart of our church. We would like to repeat our successes of the past and bring new ideas to broaden our community outreach. We would like to do more to bring young families into the fold, welcome all, and integrate Christian values more into the community.

As Covid restrictions decrease, we would like to create more ways to interact with the community to share Christ's teachings, attract new members, and be an anchor in the community. We have enjoyed singing and putting on plays with the church youth in the past and would like to bring that ministry back to life and share that with the local schools, seniors, assisted living/long term care facilities, and youth venues.

There is always more we can do.

## CHURCH FINANCES

### Current annual income (dollars used during most recent fiscal year)

| Source                                                                                                                 | Amount                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving                                                                                    | \$ 58,727               |
| Investment Proceeds ( <i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i> ) | \$ withdrawal as needed |
| Investment Draw ( <i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, “drawing down the principal”</i> )                   | \$ withdrawal as needed |
| Fundraising Events                                                                                                     | \$ 1300.00              |
| Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose                                                                                | \$ n/a                  |
| Grants                                                                                                                 | \$ n/a                  |
| Rentals of Church Building                                                                                             | \$ n/a                  |
| Rentals of Church Parsonage                                                                                            | \$ n/a                  |

|                                                                  |                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Transfers from Special Accounts (Consolidated Trust Funds)       | \$ 30,000              |
| Support from Related Organizations ( <i>e.g. Women’s Group</i> ) | \$ included in pledges |
| Other (specify): Willet Trust                                    | \$ 6,000               |
| Other (specify): Food Pantry                                     | \$ 5,100               |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                     | <b>\$ 99,827</b>       |

**Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): \$ 80,022**

**Ministerial Support is 18.75%**

**The church has always fulfilled our financial obligations**

**Our Church Contributes to:**

- ✓ Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)
- ✓ One Great Hour of Sharing
- ✓ Strengthen the Church
- ✓ Neighbors in Need
- ✓ Christmas Fund

**OCWM (Basic Support)      \$2500**

**Total amount of loan debt: (31 Oct. 21)      \$28,661**

Construction loan for church expansion in 2000

**Our capital and other payments are current.**

Our church has investments managed by the missionary Society of Connecticut through Apex Fund LLC- there are currently 12 funds set up and invested in the Total Return Fund and the Eden Fund with a 70% to 30% investment strategy mix.

***The market value of the assets (as of 30 Apr 2021)      \$ 289,905***

The funds are drawn based on needs with the approval of the Trustees.

**The percentage rate of draw (last year, compared to 5 years ago)**

Last year 12% - 5 years ago 5%

It is difficult to calculate how long the funds will last due to the changing environment within our church - we have found a bridge minister that is saving us over \$60,000 per year -we understand this is an exception and is temporary as we look for a ½ or ¾ time pastor.

**Other Assets** - the Adelaide Willet Fund - a trust fund managed by BNY Wealth Management in Boston, MA generates an annual income between \$6,000 and \$7,500 per year - balance as of 31 Mar 2021 was \$ 168,000

**Checking and Savings Account:    balance available (30 Apr 2021) \$ 25,579**

**Memorial Fund balance:    (30 Apr 2021)    \$ 18,157**

**Our church does not have a parsonage.**

### **Our Church Buildings**

1. The Church building is comprised of a narthex, sanctuary, 2 offices, copy room, Deacon's prep room, library, nursery, Rideout Chapel on the upper level, Fellowship Hall, kitchen, 4 classrooms, support areas and a garage on the lower level with a large parking lot.
2. Food Pantry storage building

First Parish has a ramp to the front entrance of the church which allows easy access to the upper level from any vehicle. An elevator gives ADA access to upper and lower levels of the church. All areas of the church are accessible including the narthex, sanctuary, Rideout Chapel, fellowship hall, offices and other facilities. The only steps in the building are the two steps that lead to the altar/pulpit/organist/choir area which share a common space at the front of the sanctuary.

### **Budget Process**

A major recent budget change was the decision to sell the parsonage.

Parishioners donate goods and time to "finance" missions.

We have not had a budget change to finance a particular ministry in a while.

Trustees create a budget based on submissions provided by each committee. The budget is sent out to members by mail in the annual report. The budget is then presented to the congregation at the annual meeting and then voted on by the members.

## **HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

### **The following are the significant happenings in our church:**

- A new church building was built and moved into in November, 1983
- Then an addition was to the existing building in 2000
- O & A was adopted by our church members on November 8, 2015.
- Rev. Mark Rideout retired in 2018 after 33 years as minister of our church
- The parsonage was sold in 2019.

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



| Staff member's name             | Years of service | UCC Standing (Y/N) |
|---------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Reverend Doctor Thomas Hourihan | 7 mos            | N                  |
| Reverend Norma Bretell          | 2 years 9 mos    | Y                  |
| Reverend Mark Rideout           | 33 years         | Y                  |
| Reverend Alex Dreese            | 3 years          | Y                  |
| Reverend John Nelson            | 25 years         | Y                  |

#### **A change we managed recently:**

Surviving the transition between a long-term settled Pastor to Bridge Pastors through the COVID pandemic, while at the same time, learning to use the tools of the virtual world to continue providing worship services and daily prayers through Facebook and YOUTUBE. This, in addition to staying in touch with members of the congregation via phone calls, letters, monthly newsletters, e-mails and ZOOM.

#### **Our church has learned about itself and its relationship with persons who provided ministerial leadership:**

There are positive ways to motivate church members to try new ideas and people are more willing to attempt change when they feel valued and have input in the situation.

#### **Resolving Conflict**

We try to resolve conflict through discussion and collaboration, and when necessary, we request mediation through committee chairs, group facilitators, or our minister.

A recent conflict in the church was the decision to cut back on our interim's full time position. We were unable to financially support a full time position. We learned that we need more clear policies, protocols, or structures in place for managing conflict in the future.

Last September 2020, we had an all-church meeting and voted to terminate our Interim Minister due to our church's financial status. After Rev. Rideout retired, we lost several members of our church for various reasons: death, moving, minister leaving, opposition to O & A. Our income dropped, leaving us no longer able to afford our Interim Minister, the Rev. Dr. Norma Brettell. We were unable to come to a mutual agreement regarding compensation, and she determined it was not feasible to become a part-time minister. We parted ways and provided her with a generous severance package.

**Our church has never been involved in a Situational Support Consultation.  
Our past pastor has not been the subject of a Fitness Review while at our church.**

## **WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?**

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

### **COMMUNITY VISION**

- Our church hosts the Community Food Pantry which serves families and individuals in Somersworth and Rollinsford, NH, and Berwick and Lebanon, ME. Many of our members are volunteers and serve on the board of directors. We also help supply goods that are needed for the pantry.
- Our mission committee supports the local school by filling backpacks for students in need and contributing mittens, hats and warm clothing for anybody's need.
- Each year we participate in a “White Gifts” program, sometimes called “Our Giving Tree”, to provide local children with gifts for Christmas.
- We also fill “Shoe Boxes” with toys, toiletries, and school supplies to be sent to children throughout the world.
- Several members of our church are “Pen Pals” with residents of a local rest home throughout the year and, at Christmas, we send gifts to them and other residents.
- We also prepare “Ditty Bags” for the Seafarer's Friend, which is a mission to help crews on ships on their long voyages.
- We participate in “Socks for Veterans”, a charity that provides socks and toiletries to homeless veterans.

Church members have regularly participated in NH UCC Conference events such as the Annual Meeting and the Prepared to Serve workshops and then reported back to the congregation. This is something that once we have a minister to guide us, our members want to be a part of again.

## Our UCC Faith Community

☐ Accessible to All (A2A)  
☐ Creation Justice  
☐ Economic Justice  
☐ Faithful and Welcoming  
☐ God Is Still Speaking (GISS)  
☐ Border and Immigrant Justice  
☐ Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I'M)

☐ Just Peace  
☐ Global Mission Church  
☒ Open and Affirming (ONA)  
☐ WISE Congregation for Mental Health  
☐ Other UCC designations:  
☐ Designations from other denominations  
☐ No

While we currently do not have a formal UCC designation as an A2A congregation, we are interested in pursuing this designation as we meet many of the criteria, such as: one of our members is an Exact Sign Language Interpreter and periodically provides that service, a special needs educator is available, large print bulletins and large print hymnals are available, accessible parking is reserved by signs showing the accessible symbol, our building is ground level accessible to all with accessible restrooms, and most importantly, as a congregation, we strive to maintain an inclusive attitude, hoping to share the Good News with our neighbors and our community.

## **Our congregation's participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities**

Ecumenical Prayer Service with all area denominations before the Thanksgiving holiday to quiet minds, reflecting and preparing our hearts for the celebration of the Nativity during Advent.

- Ecumenical Lenten Services: Each church in the Berwick-Somersworth area takes turns hosting an evening Ash Wednesday Lenten Service.
- Easter Sunrise Service is held downtown at the local American Legion with the Berwick United Methodist Church, Tri-City Baptist Church, St. Martin's Catholic Church, and St. Ignatius of Loyola Church (Catholic).
- Somersworth High School's Baccalaureate program was led by our church and included ministers from all of Somersworth's churches.
- Vacation Bible School has been an ecumenical event for one week each year with 3 other churches: Berwick United Methodist Church, St. Ignatius of Loyola Church (Catholic), and St. Martin's Catholic Church.

## **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

The avowed purpose of this church shall be to worship God, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the Church Universal, to render loving service toward the human family, and to strive for righteousness, justice and peace.

We desire in this partnership effort to:

- reach a fuller understanding of what it means to be sisters and brothers in Christ;
- share our cultures and establish a relationship based on Christian love;
- be in direct communication with each other, as evidence of this Christian relationship, through shared correspondence and prayer.

We believe these to be only beginning points in what this unfolding relationship will bring into our mutual lives of worship, outreach and nurture.

"And this we do always depending upon the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

## MISSION InSite

Our church community is made up of mostly elderly members. Our hope is that, as we move forward, we will find ways to attract young families, the youth, as well as mature people and anyone searching for a spiritual home.

Our church is mostly white, and many are retired people of various backgrounds. This is similar to other churches nearby and also in surrounding communities. The majority of our members have higher degrees of education and are married or widowed. Newly developed neighborhoods in the area tend to have more families with children and younger couples.

Families and young people don't see how traditional church services will meet their needs or they have become so busy in their daily lives they feel they do not have the time. We need to blend our worship traditions with technology and other means to find ways to connect with the "new generation" to help us shape our church's future.

First Parish is known for helping those in need, through the food pantry (housed in our church), Table of Plenty (local soup kitchen), and local and world-wide mission outreach. We are also known for our monthly Spaghetti Suppers that are attended by many community members. They continue to ask us when we will be able to start to have those again.

Frequently, new people who have come to our church say they are impressed with how welcoming, inclusive and friendly we are. They also comment on how much they enjoy helping with our activities from suppers, to fairs, the Table of Plenty, weekly Sunday fellowship and a variety of other activities in which we participate.

## **REFERENCES**

### **REFERENCE 1**

Jenne Holmes / Local History Buff; Journalist, Foster's Daily Democrat

Telephone / Email / Relationship to congregation: Friend, Curator of Summersworth Historical Society

### **REFERENCE 2**

Dana Hilliard / Mayor of Somersworth

Telephone / Email / Relationship to congregation: Friend

### **REFERENCE 3**

Pat Vachon / Director, Community Food Pantry

Telephone / Email / Relationship to congregation: Our church hosts the Food Pantry

**LETTER** from Rev. Wesley Palmer

# The Community Food Pantry, Inc.

176 West High Street

P.O. Box 228 Somersworth, NH 03878-0228

Tel: (603) 692-2907

To Whom It may Concern,

My name is Patricia Vachon, and I am the Executive Director of the Community Food Pantry, Inc. I have been the director of the food pantry, which is housed on the church property since October of 2011. The food pantry is not a part of the church but is an independent 501(C) 3 non-profit agency.

The food pantry was originally started in 1991 through the efforts of Mark Rideout, who was the Pastor of the First Parish Church at that time. He invited the area churches to a meeting to discuss the concept of a single food pantry for the area that would support the towns of Somersworth and Rollinsford, New Hampshire and Berwick, Maine. At the time there were several small pantries. The thought was to have one pantry to support the area to which all the churches would provide support. Although the food pantry is an independent agency, the area churches have continued to support the pantry since its inception.

The First Parish church has been very supportive of the pantry over the years. The church has furnished volunteers to work at the pantry, to be board members and to pick up food at area grocery stores. In addition, church members continually donate food to be distributed by the pantry.

Five years ago, the pantry asked the church for permission to construct a small building on their property to be used as a warehouse to store food. Pantry food was being stored at Queensbury Mills, a senior housing building about a half a mile from the pantry. Several chests and upright freezers were being used to store frozen food along with two rooms storing nonperishable foods. Each week a crew from the pantry had to move food from Queensbury to the food pantry rooms. The new building would contain a walk-in freezer and shelving to allow for onsite storage of all pantry inventory. The congregation was extremely supportive of this request and allowed the pantry to construct the building without any delay.

Over the years the church has supported the pantry in all its efforts, including allowing the use of its hall for an annual appreciation dinner for all volunteers and their families. The church allowed the pantry to use the kitchen for the preparation of the meal and the table chairs, china and cutlery to serve the meal. This was an important effort on the part of the church as the dinner was a thank you to the volunteers for all their efforts in working for the pantry.

When the pandemic began in March of 2020, the First Parish Church had to close in accordance with the lock downs that affected all businesses in New Hampshire and Maine. I approached the church about the food pantry since we are housed in the hall. I was given permission to continue running the food pantry, even though the church was closed for all other activities. This support from the church was essential in helping feed families in need, many of whom were out of work due to the virus restrictions. Church members continued to donate to the

food pantry even though they were not attending church services.

In closing as pantry director I am extremely grateful to the First Parish United Church of Christ for all their support to the community Food Pantry, Inc. in helping with all our efforts to feed the hungry. The pantry would be hard pressed to find a more supportive group of people that the members of the First Parish Church.

If you have questions or need any further information, I can be reached by email at [communityfoodpantry@comcast.net](mailto:communityfoodpantry@comcast.net) or by phone at 207-475-4518.

Sincerely,

Pat Vachon

Patricia Vachon  
Executive Director

The Community Food Pantry, Inc. is registered with the Internal Revenue Service as an approved 501(c)(3) non-profit organization (EIN 02-0476902).



Jenne Holmes,  
291 Main Street,  
Somersworth,  
NH 03878  
March 16, 2021

To whom it may concern,  
I am writing with regards to the First Parish Church on West High Street in Somersworth. While I am a Parishioner of St Ignatius of Loyola Parish in Somersworth I am familiar with First Parish Church through both my civic and community works.

Having lived within the Greater Somersworth area for the past 20 years I can say that First Parish church is an important and valuable member of this community. From allowing the Community Food Pantry to use the church hall for as many years as I have been here to the spiritual service they provide to their own parishioners. I was more familiar with the church when Pastor Rideout was Pastor and of course before Covid-19 that curtailed so many important activities.

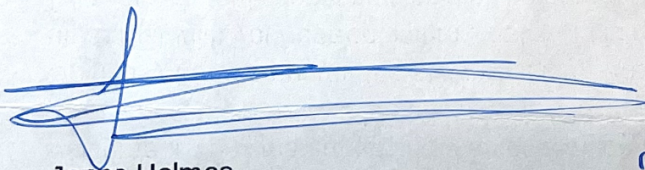
Anytime, I have entered the church and whatever the occasion, I have always been made to feel welcome. Even when attending a funeral which I have unfortunately had to do on several occasions I have always left the church feeling better than I did at the start of the service. Obviously this was under the stewardship of Pastor Rideout and that might differ now as I am unfamiliar with your current interim Pastor. I did not have any dealings with the Pastor who followed Pastor Rideout as Covid hit before that could occur.

That said in all honesty, Pastor Rideout was such an integral part of this community for so many years he is a hard act for anyone to follow.

I do like the fact that you are an inclusive church and welcome all. Over the years I have attended many of the Holiday Daze fairs that feature some amazing crafts and a really tasty lunch. Also the yard ale which much of my home was made up of for many years. I think that for the past 200 years Somersworth has been in existence the First Parish Congregational church has been an integral part of this community. My hope is that it will remain so once Covid is under control and things go back to some kind of normality.

Should you require any clarification of anything I have written here please feel free to contact me,

Kind regards,



Jenne Holmes

Mayor's Office  
1 Government Way  
Somersworth, NH 03878  
(603) 692-9501

December 17, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I have had the pleasure of working with many of the parishioners from First Parish Church over the years. I also served on various committees with the prior pastor of the church. I also enjoyed the many spaghetti suppers put on by the church.

The First Parish Church of Christ has been an active member of the Somersworth community. Whether it be hosting Christmas fairs, providing a choir for our Christmas tree lighting downtown or serving those in need through various outreach ministries. A vital part of our community is the food pantry, housed in the church which stands as a testament to the church's commitment to the "Hilltopper" spirit of neighbor helping neighbor.

Historically speaking, First Parish Church of Christ as one of the oldest houses of worship in the city has always been very active within Somersworth and guiding its citizens to hold the values of what identifies us as New Hampshire's "Welcoming City". I look forward to your success as you continue with your search for a new minister and the re-engagement of the First Parish Church of Christ.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana S. Hilliard  
Mayor City of Somersworth, NH

Rev. Dr. Wesley Palmer

Executive Director of the Preachers' Aid Society of New England

207-337-8215

[wpalmer@preachersaid.org](mailto:wpalmer@preachersaid.org)

I have provided pulpit supply for First Parish on 8 different Sundays since the beginning of July 2021.

I am an Elder in the United Methodist Church and for 30 years I pastored UM Churches in Maine and New Hampshire. In March of 2015, I became the Executive Director of the Preachers' Aid Society. Early in the summer of 2021, I was out yard saleing and happened to visit a sale at the home of a member of First Parish. In conversation, I mentioned I was a Pastor, but didn't currently serve a church. She inquired if I ever did pulpit supply and I said that I might be able to especially during Covid. I left my card with her and a few weeks later I received my first request to preach at First Parish.

First Parish is led by an incredibly committed group of lay persons who have been able to sustain the ministry of the church over these many months and now years since their long time pastor retired. That has even been true when clergy who tried to help had to step aside because of health concerns or in one case differing opinions of what they had agreed to. In a time when many churches led by clergy are struggling because of Covid concerns, First Parish has been able to continue to share in ministry that they have shared in for many years. Sunday morning attendance especially during the month of November when I most recently filled in has run about 20 persons. I suspect that many more would come if Covid was not still a factor and if they had a new pastor who would bring consistency to Sunday Morning Worship.

I have been very impressed with how well the church does at caring for one another. They know when someone has a need and they are sure to lift those needs in prayer, but beyond that they look for ways to support them in real ways. Many of the folk have been part of the church for multiple generations and that has created a true family feel, but not one that keeps visitors from being welcomed. On the first Sunday of November, I was waiting for church to begin and a woman who had

visited for the first time the week before came in and was sharing with the Deacons that she was so appreciative that she had been able to participate in 2 of the mission gatherings the church was participating in after her very first visit. She was still worshipping with them on the last Sunday of November and I believe will continue to be part of First Parish.

The presence of the Community Food Pantry within the First Parish building is a wonderful way for the church to touch the greater community. I know that church members do volunteer with the Food Pantry, but it is a separate organization from the church. The building itself is remarkable and could be put to use in many different ways to support the greater community.

The number of men who regularly come for worship has been minimal. It isn't that different from other small churches I have served in New England, but it is clear that there are men who don't regularly attend who still support the church through their giving or through physical labor like cleaning up the leaves around the church. I believe this is an area where consistent pastoral leadership could lead to more men attending regularly.

I am a singer and for part of the time I have filled in at First Parish, they were singing while **masked**. The organist is a fine player and they have the ability to sing when they have someone leading. I would hope again that with consistent pastoral leadership that a music ministry could be built up again.

There are some young people attached to the church. They were only able to attend one Sunday when I was there. I understood at one point one of the families had all come down with Covid and could not come to church until they all had negative tests. There are persons who take the young people out for Sunday school lessons when they are present. I have been to many churches in New England where there are no young people so I see that as a sign of hope.

This time of wilderness following the retirement of the long term pastor has led the church to be flexible in meeting their needs. One example was the creative way they combined their usual church fair with another nearby UCC church. It was a success and they hope a third church will join them next year.

The church makes limited use of technology. During Covid, there were points where a member would record at least the sermon to share on Facebook during the week. This is an area where bringing some expertise and resources could give



the church a greater presence online. The church Facebook page does have regular posts for the children especially during Covid. There are also efforts to mark special Sundays like the First Sunday of Advent with special posts.

I have committed to supply preaching for First Parish from the second Sunday of 2022 until Easter or until they have a new pastor. I wanted to give them a period of consistency to get their feet under them. I am only able to offer my time on Sunday morning and I know how important it is to have not only consistent preaching and worship leadership, but also the pastoral care for the rest of life. I have no hesitation to recommend First Parish as a place to be in ministry. There will be challenges, but that is true in any church in 2021.

I hope this brief sharing will give you some idea of how I have experienced First Parish in my limited time with them. Please feel free to reach out by phone or email if you have other questions or concerns. I will have even more stories to share after I rejoin them in 2022.

Rev. Dr. Wesley Palmer

Executive Director of the Preachers' Aid Society of New England

207-337-8215

[wpalmer@preachersaid.org](mailto:wpalmer@preachersaid.org)

## CLOSING PRAYER

### **The Servant Song**

*Richard Gilliard, music and lyrics*

Sister, let me be your servant.  
Brother, let me walk with you;  
Pray that I might have the grace  
To let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey.  
Fellow travelers on the road.  
We are here to help each other  
Walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you  
In the night time of your fear.  
I will hold my hand out to you;  
Speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping.  
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you.  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
Till we've seen this journey thro'.

When we sing to God in heaven,  
We shall find such harmony  
Born of all we've known together  
Of great love and agony.

Brother, let me be your servant.  
Sister, let me walk with you;  
Pray that I might have the grace  
To let you be my servant, too.

## 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.*

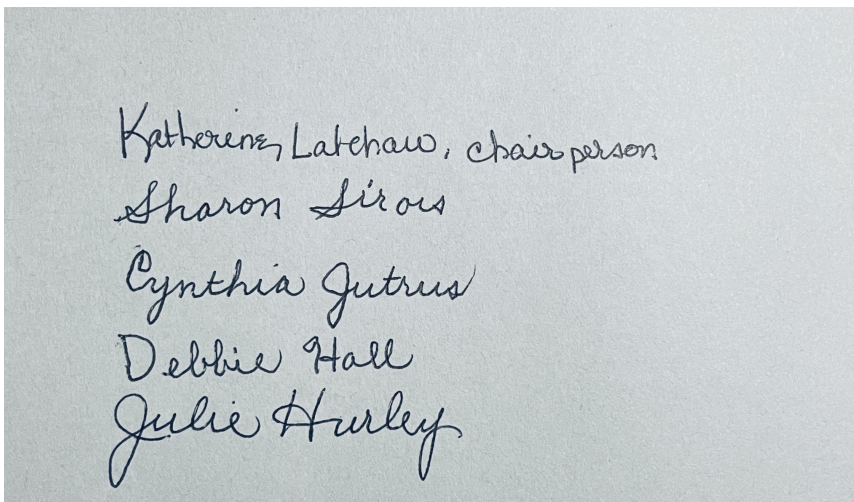
*As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending suitable new minister for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates. We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about 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.*

Creating this Church Profile has been a group effort. The transition team did most of the writing of this document with input from the congregation via a survey and contributions by the Trustees, Faith Formation Director, and Treasurer. NHCUCC provided guidance and review of the document as well.

This has been a "work of love" by the people who have taken the many hours creating this document and reflecting on the many positive attributes and the needs of our church and our church family.

Signed:

Name / Title / Date:



Katherine Latehaw, chairperson  
Sharon Sirous  
Cynthia Jutrus  
Debbie Hall  
Julie Hurley

Signed December 16, 2021





## 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.

Signature:

Name /

Title:

Email:

Phone:

Date:

**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**



This document is created through support to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and is only possible through the covenantal relationships of all settings of the United Church of Christ.

*"Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God"*