Anticipating Our Future

Our search for a senior pastor
To Our Candidates for Senior Pastor,

First Church seeks a spiritual leader. A leader who not only inspires us with insight and intellect from the pulpit, but who acts daily on personal Christian faith and challenges us to do the same. We seek a compassionate counselor and eager teacher who can spark the interest of adult learners. A person who is comfortable with diverse points of view, enjoys working with people of all ages, and is energized by the varied responsibilities of a senior pastor to a large congregation.

The successful candidate will be a consensus builder who encourages lay participation and leadership. He or she will be a dynamic innovator with a flair for new ideas on how First Church can serve and expand our church community. Due to the fact that First Church is also a large organization — 1250 members, a $1.6 million budget, a multi-clergy and large program staff, and a thriving Preschool — the senior pastor needs the experience, skills, and discipline necessary to run such an organization. Our senior pastor must be an excellent communicator with strong interpersonal skills.

Our long history and deep roots in the community give us confidence as we search. So too does the energy and commitment of our current lay leaders and members, who along with clergy and staff, are involved in our First Church Alive! initiative to reconnect with our members and the wider community and help expand the presence of our church in people’s lives.

Yet, we recognize that First Church faces several hurdles. Most immediately, we need to regain momentum following the resignation of our Senior Pastor. We need a broader and deeper commitment to stewardship. Would that we raise funds for our institutional needs as well as we do for outreach! Membership, too, is an issue as we constantly seek to revitalize our rolls to keep us fresh and moving forward.

First Church offers an extraordinary opportunity to lead a well-recognized, vibrant church and to inspire us to clarify our mission and develop our vision for growth and outreach in the future. We invite you to consider joining us.

Yours in Christ,

The Senior Pastor Search Committee

on behalf of The First Congregational Church of Greenwich
Letter to Our Candidates for Senior Pastor

Introduction ................................................................................................................. 7
The Church ................................................................................................................... 8
Parish History and Background ............................................................................... 9
A Profile of the Community ................................................................................... 10
Church Membership ................................................................................................11
Our Aspirations ......................................................................................................... 12
Theology ..................................................................................................................... 14
Worship ....................................................................................................................... 15
Making Music ........................................................................................................... 17
Parish Life ................................................................................................................... 18
Children's Ministries ................................................................................................. 19
Youth Ministries ........................................................................................................ 20
Adult Ministries ......................................................................................................... 22
Stewardship ............................................................................................................... 23
Outreach ..................................................................................................................... 24
Lay and Pastoral Leadership .................................................................................... 26
Our Commitment to the Senior Pastor ................................................................. 27
Contact Information ................................................................................................. 27
Ministers ..................................................................................................................... 28
Thank you for your interest in The First Congregational Church of Greenwich. This overview offers a glimpse into the life of our church community. We hope it conveys our vitality and excitement as we work to discern God’s will for us in seeking a Senior Pastor to be our spiritual leader.

As we approach our 350th Anniversary, we want to build on our traditions but not live in the past. We are united in our commitment to sustain the vibrant life of our church and spur its growth. Most importantly, we seek to strengthen and energize our faith as we set a course of service to God, each other, and the greater world.

During our interim period, we have had the opportunity to carefully examine who we are as a church body. We have come through this process with a renewed awakening of our leadership role as Christians within our community.

Our First Church Alive! initiative is one response of the congregation, together with clergy and staff, to revitalize and grow our church. This group is seeking to hear what God is telling our church to do in this time and in this place; to clarify our mission and to realign our governance and programs to help us connect with our members and our community.

We are seeking a dynamic, Christ-inspired pastor to lead our hopeful and expectant congregation. Together, we look forward to the journey ahead.
The Church

First Congregational Church of Greenwich, familiarly known as First Church, is a large and lively UCC congregation of about 1250 members. We are considered a “lead” church in our denomination, with a history dating back to colonial times. Our music and youth programs are widely admired, as are our special events, festival services and outreach projects.

We are a progressive church with a strong sense of tradition and belief in the right of private judgment. Thoughtful and responsive, our congregation has a longstanding commitment to mission and service that we act out locally, regionally and internationally. We are an open and affirming church, recognizing and ministering to the diverse communities we serve. Located in an affluent suburban shoreline town, First Church is blessed with committed laity and with excellent and well-used facilities.

Parish History and Background

First Church was founded in 1665 when church and town government were one and the same. Records from the colonial years illuminate disputes over church doctrine and discipline, as well as who would pay the pastor. But by 1694, a meetinghouse was built, and the church and town have grown steadily ever since.

The present gothic Revival meetinghouse was built in 1896. Steady membership growth in the latter half of the 20th century required a major remodeling as well as the addition of 10 classrooms, an auditorium with stage, a formal lounge, two kitchens, a large multipurpose room, and various offices. A capital campaign in 2000-2001 made possible extensive renovations and repairs to these facilities, as well as updates to the phone and computer systems. In 2008, the stained glass windows in the meetinghouse were restored with funds raised specifically for this purpose.
A Profile of the Community

First Church is located in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. Easternmost of six communities that make up the larger town of Greenwich, Old Greenwich stretches out into the waters of Long Island Sound and borders the larger metropolis of Stamford. It is convenient to New York City and southern New England via nearby Interstate 95 and the Metro North commuter rail service, which has a stop just blocks from the church.

With the advantage of long settlement and gradual development, Greenwich is an attractive, largely residential town marked by a tradition of civic activism. With New York City just 35 miles away, the town’s fine public and private schools, extensive library system, cultural offerings, and natural coastal and woodland beauty draw people from around the world. Many residents work in New York City and even more seek out the city’s unique cultural and entertainment opportunities.

Greenwich residents are by and large well educated, ambitious, and community-minded. A high volunteer spirit extends to every corner of town—from the representative government and its volunteer boards, to the hospital and schools, crisis centers and food banks, gardening clubs and service groups, and churches and synagogues. Greenwich enjoys more diversity than its media reputation suggests, with its international influence, wide range of income levels, growing populations of young and old, and attendant health and human service needs including affordable housing and support for families.

Old Greenwich is a neighbor to Stamford, a city with a large corporate presence, a branch of the state university, theaters and an arts center. Stamford residents are diverse in ethnicity, income and education and the city faces all the problems and challenges of any contemporary urban center. Our congregation draws primarily from both these communities, as well as from other towns in the area.

Church Membership

We span the ages from newborns to 90’s and relish our intergenerational activities. Many of us come from different faith backgrounds, united by our belief in God and in the right of private judgment as well as our democratic structure. Our educational level is high, with 92% of us college graduates and 56% with postgraduate degrees. Our adult members are mostly business executives and professionals with about 25% retired and 10% not employed outside the home.

Single adults make up about 20% of the membership; almost 35% are couples with children at home and 40% are empty nesters. Some members have been raised in our church, providing us with multiple generations of members. Many of our children and youth are actively integrated into the life of the church and encouraged to express a voice in its affairs. We are blessed with a large group of active seniors, many of whom have been members for over 50 years. By and large, we are neighbors who live within five miles from church, with many driving from farther suburbs.
Our Aspirations

In a secular world, we wish to be a beacon in the community—an example to all of how to live a full life, with God at its center, in service to members and non-members alike. To fulfill that mission, we welcome all who desire to walk with us on our journey of faith and wish, particularly, to reach out to families with young children.

The congregation has adopted the following statements of Vision and Mission:

Vision Statement

First Church shall be a growing and vital community of faith following the example of Jesus Christ and dedicated to the precepts and spirit of the United Church of Christ, a united and uniting church, which embraces an inclusive theology. We will continue to be committed to anticipating and serving the needs of our own church community and in outreach to the local, national and global communities in which we live.

Mission Statement

Acknowledging our dependence on God’s grace, our mission is to seek to know and make known God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit through:

- Common Worship
- Celebration of the Sacraments
- Outreach
- Christian Education
- Parish Care
- Stewardship of God’s Creation
- Proclamation of the Gospel by Word and Deed
- Fellowship in a Vital Community of Faith

In this mission we respect the right of private judgment and pray for God’s continued revelation. We seek with love to provoke, inspire and challenge each other in our faith as it manifests itself in our daily lives.

Ever aware of our needs, we acknowledge as our Biblical mandate the call to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, receive the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit the prisoner. (Matthew 25:35)

We shall celebrate the awe, mystery, and wonder of life and faith, rejoicing and giving thanks.
Our Theology

First Church tends to have moderate to liberal theological views. Traditionally, we have welcomed people of all ages, theological perspectives and stages of faith development. We do not require agreement on any specific ideology but are united in our purpose to increase the love of God and neighbor. The following is the Covenant of First Church:

We believe in the freedom and responsibility of the individual soul and the right of private judgment. We join in fellowship with other congregations of the United Church of Christ in declaring our steadfast allegiance to the faith which our forebears confessed, which from age to age has found its expression in the historic creeds of the Church Universal and of our Communion, and in affirming our loyalty to the basic principles of our representative democracy. We hereby set forth the things we most surely believe.

We believe in God, infinite in wisdom and love, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, who renews, comforts and inspires us. We are united in seeking to know the will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures and to walk in the ways of Christ. As Jesus accepted, welcomed and embraced all people without exception, so do we accept all who join with us in our journey to be a people of faith. We accept the mission of this church to proclaim the gospel, to worship God and to work for the dream of a compassionate world. Trusting in God’s Spirit, we promise to support each other in love, that through our faith, the world might be made new.

Worship

Worship takes many forms at First Church. On Sundays, we hold a traditional service at 10:00 a.m. in the meetinghouse. Communion is on the first Sunday of the month. This service is broadcast on a local radio station and online. From June through Labor Day, an 8:00 a.m. informal service with communion is held at the beach. A contemporary service on Sunday evenings was recently suspended for restructuring with plans to re-launch it in the future. In an effort to include children in worship, they attend the first part of the service, which includes a Children’s Message, each Sunday. In addition, we hold seasonal services for our church school throughout the year.

Weekly worship services at First Church are led by the Senior Pastor in collaboration with the Associate Pastors and Director of Music. On Laity Sunday each year, worship is led entirely by lay members of the church.

Our deacons organize the serving of communion. We also have volunteers regularly participating as Scripture readers, greeters, ushers and hosts for the coffee hour after the worship service.

Special services include our September Homecoming Sunday and All-Church Picnic that launch the program year; Harvest Sunday for Thanksgiving food donations, Youth Sunday, Advent and Christmas services, as well as worship activities for Holy Week and Easter. The month of May, too, is filled with celebration—from Children’s Sunday, honoring our Church School students and teachers; to Confirmation Sunday and its joyful reception of confirmands into membership; to Music & Friendship Sunday praising God in voice and instrument; to Heritage Sunday, recognizing with appreciation our longtime members of 50 years or more.

First Church maintains close ties with other churches and religious bodies in the community. We participate in interfaith services throughout the year. Guest clergy speak at First Church and our clergy preach at other churches.
Making Music

Music plays a significant role in the life of First Church and is a major form of outreach into the community. From the exuberant voices of our Cherub Choir on Music Sunday to the somber tones of the Chancel Choir on Good Friday, music offers a heartfelt dimension that enriches our worship experience.

Our musical traditions range from classical to contemporary. For special occasions we are privileged to be able to draw on superb professional talent both locally and from the greater New York City area.

Congregational hymn singing is derived from both the Pilgrim Hymnal and New Century Hymnal, with organ, piano, handbells, brass instruments and drums enhancing our song. We have five choirs — Cherub, Children’s, Youth, Chancel, and Palmer Handbells — providing opportunities for all ages and talents.

Music making carries over into special events throughout the year. Performances of Handel’s *Messiah* at Christmas draw singers from within the congregation and from the wider community, too. Music & Friendship Sunday in May devotes the entire service to worship through voice, instrument, dance and song. Periodically, we unpack the ark and animal costumes for Benjamin Britten’s *Noye’s Fludde*. This all-church extravaganza is a prime opportunity for singers and non-singers alike to be part of a reusing and unique musical festival. Our teenagers are also active in presenting musical productions showcasing their various talents in special ways.

*First Music and Arts* is an outreach ministry that brings exceptional programs and performances for all ages and interests, including cabaret singers, organ concerts, vocal recitals, as well as small and large scale choral programs. Past Festival Chorus concerts have included performances of Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* and Brahms’ *Requiem*. Winter afternoons are warmed by tea, cocoa, and our *Sunday Afternoons Live* series of informal concerts, offering a variety of entertainment from jazz ensembles to chamber quartets.
Throughout the program year, all of the members and friends of First Church are invited to gather for fun and fellowship. Traditionally, these intergenerational events include a picnic after the worship service on Homecoming Sunday in September, special activities during Advent and Lent and a series of Wonderful Wednesdays featuring a delicious meal, activities and prayer. An All-Church Retreat at the Audubon Center in Greenwich is theme-based with related worship and recreational activities for spiritual and physical renewal.

Our Parish Nurse provides services such as health consultations, blood pressure screenings, and referrals to community resources. She’s always willing to lend a compassionate ear. With help from the Wellness Committee, she arranges health promotion events and flu vaccine clinics. She also coordinates volunteers who can assist other parishioners with transportation or other needs.

For moms with a baby, toddler or two year old, First Church offers an opportunity to meet and relax with other moms and their young children twice a month.

At First Church we teach our children that they are precious in the sight of God—that they are never forgotten, never deserted, always forgiven, and forever loved by their Creator.

Three year olds through eighth graders experience worship along with instruction each week. In 2013, Church School enrollment was 172. Classes are taught by church members, with all generations of our congregation encouraged to be actively involved in the Christian education of our children. Hands-on mission opportunities for children and their families are organized throughout the year.

The Church School uses the biblically based “Rock Bottom” curriculum, which follows the common lectionary and enables children to study the same scriptural material that the adults are considering in the meetinghouse.

First Church Preschool offers a non-denominational, active preschool experience for children ages three to five years in a warm and loving atmosphere. Extended Day and Before Care Programs are also offered, as well as a Pre-K Program. Enrollment is typically about 100. The school uses six classrooms in the undercroft, an outdoor playground and an auditorium/gym. Its full-time director supervises a teaching staff of 12. The preschool’s board of directors is made up of church members and parent volunteers who are responsible for church/school relations and setting overall school policy. The Senior Pastor sits on this board and has had responsibility for supervising the Preschool Director.
Youth Ministries

Youth ministries provide opportunities for growth and challenge as our young people search for identity and understanding in a Christian setting. Young people at First Church are encouraged to participate fully in the life of the church through worship, mission and service, Christian education and just plain fun.

The Pastor’s Class is a Sunday morning discussion group for middle school students. Junior Pilgrim Fellowship (JPF) is an activity, service and fellowship group for these sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. Weekly meetings for games and activities enable friendship and make First Church a friendly and sought-after place.

Twenty-seven ninth graders went through the process of education, personal discovery, and group discussion that led to confirmation in 2013. Under the guidance of pastors and adult mentors, the Confirmation Class meets from October through May for study and fellowship and takes two weekend retreats at Silver Lake in Sharon, CT for reflection and fun. Their study culminates in individually written statements of faith which they share portions of with the congregation on Confirmation Sunday.

High school students have the opportunity to join the Senior Pilgrim Fellowship (SPF), an active social and service group. SPF meets weekly for talks and social events. In the past, they have produced shows to raise funds for community outreach. Hands-on mission is a core value of this group. In addition to supporting local organizations, they play key roles in First Church’s international mission projects. Active, too, in formal worship, the SPF traditionally leads the Easter morning sunrise service at the local beach.

Even though college students are away from home, they are not forgotten by First Church. The College Pilgrim Fellowship meets on vacations and receives seasonal mailings from the pastors and members of the SPF.
**Adult Ministries**

The spiritual education of adults is a priority at First Church. We regularly offer Bible study and Second Hour presentations following the 10:00 a.m. service. Our Hats Off book discussion group invites women of all ages and stages to take off the “hats” that identify their life roles, and come together as friends for fellowship and reflection.

First Church has a long and deep commitment to the Stephen Ministry Program. Since 1991, 85 members have been trained in this ministry. Currently, eight members of the congregation provide distinctly Christian one-to-one care as Stephen Ministers. These private and confidential relationships serve church members experiencing all kinds of life needs and circumstances. We also offer the support of a Prayer Chain, whose members accept private requests for prayerful consideration of individual members in times of need. Our Prayer Shawl Ministry is a vibrant, active, caring ministry to our congregation and community at large. Our shawls, hand-knitted with prayers for healing and hope, are given to members or friends who are facing challenges. Currently, 30 knitters are engaged in this ministry.

The Women’s Fellowship unites women through community service projects, educational programs and social contacts. Made up of all the women of the church, this important group offers opportunities for intergenerational worship, study and friendship. The Women’s Fellowship manages a highly successful thrift shop in Old Greenwich, with sales proceeds donated to outreach projects. In 2014, The Rummage Room celebrates its 50th Anniversary, a period over which $3.8 million has been raised.

While our men do not have a similarly structured group, they do organize a weekend Men’s Retreat held locally each year, to which all male parishioners are invited.

**Stewardship**

Each fall our Board of Trustees develops a draft budget for the coming year. The budget is designed to provide the staffing and other resources necessary to support the programs and activities that are the lifeblood of First Church. Using the draft budget as a target, the Stewardship Committee solicits pledges from the congregation. Letters, phone calls and other reminders underscore the importance of sharing our personal resources to build on past successes and expand the grace of God through the work of the church.

Stewardship pledges go toward:

- Maintaining a talented, caring and inspirational group of pastors and staff;
- Meaningful youth programs;
- Adult education programs to strengthen our spiritual and physical well-being;
- Special events to build a deeper sense of community;
- Music programs that broaden our worship experience and enhance the message from the pulpit;
- Outreach programs to benefit the hungry, sick, homeless and troubled;
- Maintenance of our church buildings, grounds and cemetery.

When the stewardship campaign ends, the trustees prepare a church budget based on signed pledge cards. They present the budget to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting in January.

In recent years, and particularly during this transition stage between Senior Pastors, our church has seen a decline in pledging units. This year, however, we have seen a significant increase in the average amounts pledged. Our budget has been prayerfully and carefully developed to maintain full staffing and programming. First Church remains fiscally secure with a substantial endowment and real estate holdings. The church is free of debt.
**Outreach**

Christian outreach reveals itself through substantial financial support as well as education and hands-on involvement. First Church allocates a portion of its budget yearly to organizations that address local, regional, national, and international needs. Funds come from individual pledges, Harvest Sunday, Christmas Eve and from our annual Christmas Tree sale. Our Outreach Committee, made up of 15 nominated members of the congregation, including youth, determines distributions.

In addition, the Women’s Fellowship consistently provides funding to support local, national, and worldwide organizations. These contributions, exceeding $170,000 annually, are generated by sales of donated items through a thrift shop run by church members and community volunteers.

The Lenten Offering is another major component of our outreach. Last year, $42,475 was raised and shared between Neighbor to Neighbor and our international outreach effort with NicaHOPE, an organization that works with the populations living around the garbage dumps in Managua, Nicaragua. Our SPF group returned to Nicaragua to work with NicaHOPE this past February to build on the relationship formed by that group in 2013.

Hands-on outreach tends to focus on basic needs such as food and shelter. Once each month, church volunteers prepare and serve a substantial and nutritious lunch to 100-150 people at the New Covenant House of Hospitality in Stamford. Members support Pilgrim Towers, a low-income senior housing facility in Stamford and Neighbor to Neighbor, a food and clothing bank in Greenwich. First Church provides opportunities for our children, youth and adult members to participate in service.

In addition to these formal organized activities within the church, individual church members sit on boards and volunteer at community agencies such as Meals on Wheels, Call-A-Ride, Inspirica, Literacy Volunteers, Hill House, the Boys and Girls Club, to name just a few. Outreach and mission truly are vital parts of our church community.
Lay and Pastoral Leadership

First Church is blessed with a committed and talented pool of laity that has served admirably and effectively for many years. The lay leadership structure is traditionally made up of:

- A Church Committee that is responsible for guiding the spiritually oriented activities;
- A Board of Trustees that oversees the financial health of the congregation and the care and custody of the property of the church;
- A Pastors Advisory Committee of current and immediate past senior leaders and the Senior Pastor;
- The Women’s Fellowship who support activities and benevolences on behalf of women, children and families, and run The Rummage Room;
- A Nominating Committee that identifies church officers and members of standing committees, at-large members of the Preschool Board, and delegates to the Fairfield West Association and Connecticut Conference.

- Standing committees that carry out the mission of the congregation, including Stewardship, Music, Outreach, Membership, Parish Life, Christian Faith Formation, Preschool Board, Chancel, Church School Task Force, Wellness, Historical and others.
- Task forces that address specific issues or projects, such as the Governance Task Force or the Mission Team Task Force.

Each committee has a clergy staff member assigned as a non-voting participant. Through these groups, lay leadership and pastors provide inspiration and guidance to each other. This relationship allows the strengths of the laity and clergy to complement each other and results in consensus-driven decision-making and broad support for accepted ideas and initiatives.

Our Commitment to the Senior Pastor

We know that attracting and retaining an excellent Senior Pastor requires a strong commitment to this individual in both spirit and compensation. First Church members are passionate about our church. Facilitating a smooth transition for our Senior Pastor is a priority. Our compensation package exceeds UCC guidelines, provides for generous benefits and ensures that our Senior Pastor will be comfortably housed in our community.

Contact Us

For additional information about our Senior Pastor position, please contact us at search@fccog.org.

Qualified candidates interested in the position may submit his or her Ministerial Profile to Sioux Wilusz at the CT Conference at siouxw@ctucc.org.
Ministers: The Members of the First Congregational Church of Greenwich
Interim Senior Pastor: Rev. John W. Collins
Associate Pastor for Youth Ministry: Rev. Mark D. Montgomery
Associate Pastor for Communication/Adult Education: Rev. Daniel B. England
Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care: Rev. Avery C. Manchester
Director of Music: Dr. Craig Scott Symons
Director of Family Ministries: Rosemary Lamie
Director of Membership: Ginny Breismeister
Director of Communications: Barbara Wilkov
Parish Nurse: Susan Asselin, RN

Pastors Emeriti: Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Stiers and Rev. Sally Colegrove
Director of Music Emeritus: Dr. John Stansell