



Southern New England Conference
United Church of Christ
Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

Local Church Profile for Churches Seeking an Interim Pastor

Church Information

Full Name: Saugatuck Congregational Church
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Additional Denominational Affiliations: N/A

UCC Conference: Southern New England Association:
Area Conference Minister Name: Margret Hofmeister
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Position Details

In a paragraph or two for each item, please answer the following prompts.

1. Describe the ministry position for which you are seeking a pastor. *(This will be the first impression most candidates have of you. Highlight your gifts and graces as well as your needs so that candidates have the best sense of connection to and curiosity about your position. Include keywords that will help candidates search. It must be **no more than 2,000 characters, including punctuation and spaces, and in a single, unformatted paragraph**).*

Saugatuck Congregational Church is a vibrant, active community of people who gather to worship, learn, work, and play together. Our doors, congregation, and communion table are open to all. Our vision is to be a community of Christ, welcoming all people, learning to love and serve God and neighbor. We believe that God loves everyone unconditionally and is present with and through us. Saugatuck is an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ. We are currently seeking an experienced interim pastor who can help us navigate the challenges and opportunities that come with pastoral transition. As we embark on our search and call journey, we are looking for a compassionate and skilled interim pastor to help us grieve, reflect, and discern who we have been, who we are now, and who God is calling us to be.

Saugatuck is located in the center of Westport, Connecticut, a town of approximately 27,000 in Fairfield County, 52 miles northeast of New York City along Long Island Sound. Our congregation

consists of approximately 180 members, ~40% of whom attend services actively and participate in the life of the church as volunteers or lay leaders. We have begun building back after Covid and welcomed 8 new members in 2023, with more families pending the next Member Sunday. We are known for our inclusive, welcoming environment, our love for our children that extends beyond our congregation to engage youth from the broader Fairfield community, our passion for social and environmental justice, our celebration of music and fine arts, and our active engagement in missions.

We are looking for an interim pastor who can help us navigate the challenges and opportunities that come with pastoral transition. The ideal candidate possesses the following qualities:

- **Spiritual Leadership:** A nurturing spiritual leader who can provide pastoral care, preach inspiring sermons, and guide us in our faith journey during this transitional period
- **Bridge Builder:** A compassionate leader with a deep understanding of congregational dynamics and skilled in conflict resolution who can promote transparency, courage, healing, and reconciliation within our congregation as we seek a new settled pastor
- **Support for Lay Leadership:** Someone who can empower and mentor our lay leaders and volunteers to ensure the smooth continuation of church activities and ministries, including assessing our current governance and recommending opportunities for improvement
- **Commitment to Inclusivity:** A pastor who delights in diversity and seeks ways to help us live out our commitment to open and affirming community in all the myriad ways that can be understood
- **Observer and Advisor:** Someone who can help us see with fresh eyes how we function as a congregation, assess our strengths and weaknesses (which may differ from how we see them), and assist with overcoming those weaknesses

What We Offer:

- A dedicated congregation eager to work alongside our interim pastor in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration
- A well-maintained church facility equipped with modern technology for worship services and events
- Competitive compensation and benefits package commensurate with experience and qualifications
- The opportunity to make a significant impact on a faith community dedicated to growing in grace and love

2. Name 3 core competencies that you feel you will need in your Interim Pastor.

- Insightful, caring, and deep listening to help name and process the ways in which we are grieving to prepare to welcome a new settled pastor with whole hearts

- Managerial and administrative skills; knowledge of best practices in church governance and ability to ensure the church continues to serve its congregation and neighbors during the transition
 - Future-oriented; able to help us envision the next phase for Saugatuck and work with us to strengthen our church foundation and affirm our mission
3. What aspects of the 5 tasks of interim ministry (listed in the instructions sheet) do you anticipate being the focus of your interim time?
- **Heritage:** How do we understand the events of the past and ensure a healthier future and relationship with our new pastor? How can we look back not to cast blame but to look forward?
 - **Mission:** Our congregation, Westport, and the world are all vastly different than when we called our last pastor 11 years ago. At that time, we banded together to rebuild after the fire. The pandemic and social justice reckonings of the recent years have shaken communities in ways that are more likely to separate than connect. Does our Vision Statement still resonate? Do we have a common understanding of what it means for us as individuals, in our church, in relation to our neighbors and beyond? What needs to be made explicit or updated to ensure our mission represents the hearts and hopes of who we are now?
 - **Leadership:** Our ideal candidate will have experience with coaching Church leadership teams to be high-functioning and spirit-driven. Our current by-laws are both out-of-date and inconsistently followed, and we have suffered from concentration of power in a small minority. We struggle with consensus, accountability, and transparency. Can we refresh our governance to empower our next pastor while providing appropriate resources and guidelines from a committed and diverse Council that reflects the congregation and protects members from burn-out and unbalanced responsibility?
4. Position Scope: Fulltime 3/4 time 1/2 time 1/4 time
5. Position Duration: 12 months 18 months other: as needed to call a new settled pastor

Who We Are

1. Church's Mission Statement (*or name that one needs to be developed*):

A Community of Christ
 Welcoming All People and
 Learning to Love and Serve
 God and Neighbor

2. Brief Church History:

Founded in the village of Saugatuck in 1832, three years before the town of Westport was incorporated, Saugatuck Congregational Church has had a long and colorful history. Our commitment to mission service dates back to 1852, when we began collecting offerings specifically for domestic and international missions. By 1950, membership had outgrown the original space. In an extraordinary undertaking, the church was physically moved across the street. The journey took 10 hours and was accomplished by rolling the building on runners supported by 55 logs. In 1961, the congregation voted to join the United Church of Christ. Saugatuck was an early champion of diversity, founding Saugatuck Nursery School in 1968 with a specific goal to foster racial peace. Also in 1968, the church voted to allow women to become Deacons. In 2007 we became an Open and Affirming Church, pledging to welcome all without regard to race, ancestry, age, physical or mental ability, gender, sexual orientation, social and economic status or religious background. In November 2011, a fire broke out in the building that raged for 6 hours and damaged every part of the church. The congregation and community rallied, and under the leadership of our new pastor, Reverend Alison Buttrick Patton, who joined us in January 2012, we became a “church without walls” for the next three years. The church thrived, deepening our commitment to children and families, social justice, and missions. We returned to our sanctuary in 2014. We have continued to invest in our building, and during Covid, we installed a state-of-the-art Audio/Visual system to enable live streaming and hearing-impaired assistance. We also installed a new Klais organ to replace the one that had been destroyed in the fire. Under the leadership of multiple pastors who have challenged us to lead through action, we have opened our doors to more than 50 different 12-Step Groups, the Boy Scouts, the Y’s Men, Abilis, and others. We are an ardent supporter of the Gillespie Center, Pivot Ministries, the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Homes with Hope, Person-to-Person, Open Door Shelter. In 2022 we created an Environmental Justice Committee and are working to become a recognized Green Church.

3. 2-3 Significant Events:

1) **The Fire**

On November 21, 2011, just before Thanksgiving, a devastating fire broke out in our church. No part of the church was left unscathed by some degree of fire, smoke, or water damage. Miraculously, our sanctuary and iconic steeple were able to be saved. We spent the next three years rebuilding with the help of our congregation, committed lay leadership, our new Pastor, and the community. Temple Israel opened their doors for our Sunday services. We moved back into our restored church home in 2014.

2) Open & Affirming

Following three years of intensive study and dialogue, the congregation followed the recommendation of the Inclusiveness Ministry Team by voting at its annual meeting in February 2007 to adopt in its bylaws this statement:

We welcome anyone who seeks God into the fellowship, worship and work of this church without regard to their race, ancestry, age, physical or mental ability, gender, sexual orientation, social and economic status or religious background.

By adopting this statement, Saugatuck became recognized by the United Church of Christ as “Open and Affirming.”

3) Ted Hoskins Era and Ongoing Social, Racial, and Environmental Justice Work Led by Alison Patton

Reverend Ted Hoskins served as Senior Pastor from 1971 to 1993. During his tenure, he transformed the church’s mission within the community. A strong champion of social justice, Reverend Hoskins was instrumental in founding the Interfaith Housing Association, which led to the creation of the Gillespie Center and Homes with Hope. He opened the doors of the church to people with nowhere else to go and established the Thanksgiving Feast, a major town event for many years until Covid. Reverend Hoskins helped build a reputation for Saugatuck as a community serving others as a way of bringing God’s Word to life. Our most recent pastor, Reverend Alison Buttrick Patton, embraced and expanded this work, including active leadership in the Interfaith Clergy Council, partnership with TEAM Westport, visible support for communities of color through our Black Lives Matter banner, engagement with Sustainable Westport, congregational Racial Justice Workshop led by Dr. Donique McIntosh, and the creation of an Environmental Justice Committee, to name just a few examples.

4. Church Strengths:

- Supportive, welcoming, loving, and inclusive community
 - Embrace of children and youth that goes beyond our congregation, e.g., Youth Mission Trip program that draws in up to 45 high school students
 - We open our doors to multiple 12-step groups, creating a literal welcome for our neighbors as well as providing additional income from building usage
 - Lively and delicious fellowship hour
- Willingness to explore new ways to serve, including environmental and social justice
- Excellent music ministry led by Dr. Liang-Fang Chang, who received her Doctorate in Musical Arts from the University of Iowa and is a highly acclaimed solo pianist. Dr. Chang has expanded the music program to engage youth in the congregation and created an ongoing Sunday Concert Series featuring professional musicians and open to the public. We also installed a world class Klais organ in 2019.

- Active adult ministries, e.g.
 - Ongoing education through Voices and Bible Study
 - Tai Chi and Yoga programs
 - Well-attended retreats for All Ages, Women, and reviving the Men’s Retreat
- Commitment to our neighbors expressed through many strong relationships with other clergy and lay leaders throughout Westport and surrounding communities, e.g., Gillespie Center, TEAM Westport, Pivot Ministries, Wakeman Town Farm, etc.
- Strong pledge fulfillment and growth trends from a committed congregation, especially through the pandemic, i.e., both average and median pledges increased every year from 2020-2023, surpassing pre-pandemic amounts
- Physical assets:
 - Beautiful, historic building
 - Large, centrally located property including elements such as a Labyrinth, Outdoor Chapel, Great Lawn, Church Garden
 - Parsonage on property for Pastoral use
 - Ample parking
- Beautiful town setting, with beach and riverfronts, excellent schools, easy access to New York City, access to hiking and other outdoor venues

5. Church Challenges:

- We do not have a successful track record of dealing constructively with conflict, including asking ourselves hard questions and hearing uncomfortable answers
- Governance is inconsistent and not always transparent; we need to review and update our by-laws to improve decision-making process and ensure a more equitable balance of power
- We have a reputation of being “hard on our pastors” that we want to understand so that we can begin to address root causes
- The following challenges are not specific to Saugatuck:
 - Decline in membership over the pandemic puts undue pressure on a smaller number of volunteers & leaders
 - Youth, children, and young families are increasingly overscheduled and overburdened, a challenge certainly not specific to Saugatuck
 - Burn out and continuing recovery from COVID

6. Experience of Conflict:

1. Every church has conflicts, some minor, some larger. On a scale of 1-5, where would you rank your church’s level of conflict? _____ 4. Fight or Flight _____
 (*Based on this work by Speed Leas 1. Problem to solve 2. Disagreement 3. Contest 4. Fight or Flight 5. Intractable*)

2. Please explain why you chose this level.

We have unresolved issues related to the circumstances surrounding the departure of our last pastor. Given the challenges of the last few years, some members and lay leaders are inclined to disengage rather than dig in. Others are blissfully unaware of what “goes on behind closed doors”. We seek an interim who can both help us understand what work we need to do and how to do it in a constructive and healing way so that we are prepared to call our next settled pastor. While we are in the process of finding an interim, we are also seeking a coach or consultant through the Center for Transformational Leadership so that we can begin some of the necessary conversations.

3. Describe your congregation’s values and practices when it comes to conflict.

The congregation aspires to address conflict with love, assuming positive intent, in a way that moves us all forward with accountability and grace. In practice, a lack of trust, scarcity mentality, and fear of forces beyond our control have led to obstruction and manipulation or avoidance and disengagement.

Basic Church Statistics
Yearly average

	Church Membership	Weekly Worship Attendance	Children & Youth Participation	Adult Ed Participation
Pre-pandemic	255	94	12-15 attendance; 35-40 Youth Mission Trip	45-50, participating in Voices, Retreats, Bible Study
Current year	180 (~40% active attendance and volunteering)	56	30-35, 6 confirmands, 12 children, 21 youth	45-50, participating in Voices, Retreats, Bible Study

	Income	Overall Budget	Mission Giving	Reserves & Endowment Principals
Pre-pandemic	\$390,727	-\$100,712	\$20,550	\$2,143,013 endowment
Current year	\$403,400	-\$36,124	\$22,340	\$2,307,688 endowment \$524,000 reserves

Compensation

Total Compensation Package Amount or Range: \$130,000-\$150,000, including parsonage and benefits listed below

Package offered: Total Package, no additional monetary benefits offered
 Total Package includes optional benefits to be negotiated, e.g.:

- Healthcare & dental insurance
- Life/ Disability insurance
- Pension/ Annuity Contribution
- Housing Equity Fund
- 4 weeks' vacation
- Sabbatical every 5 years
- Moving expenses (one time cost)

Housing:

Housing allowance only
 Parsonage only
 Either Parsonage or Housing Allowance Provided

Please explain briefly your process in discerning your compensation.

This compensation package is in line with benefits guidelines from the UCC and amounts budgeted for a settled pastor.

Church body responsible for hiring the Interim Pastor is:

Council as advised by the Search Committee

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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 document 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 a suitable leader for the interim time 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.

Leslie Hand
Signature of Search Committee Chairperson
(typed or Jpeg is sufficient)

October 9, 2023
Date