



9 Cleaveland Street, Brunswick ME

<http://www.firstparish.net/>

1. Describe your community. What makes this community special to you? What distinguishes it from surrounding communities?

We are blessed to live in a vibrant and caring community surrounded by the natural beauty of midcoast Maine. There are a wide variety of local nonprofit organizations, volunteer opportunities, excellent local healthcare facilities, and retirement communities that all contribute to the attraction of the region. We are also fortunate to be a neighbor of Bowdoin College which contributes to the life of Brunswick including their many cultural events and open classroom policy. Their faculty and staff make many and varied contributions to a number of local organizations including First Parish Church.

After the close of Naval Air Station Brunswick in 2011, the community took a significant hit in terms of population and tax base. In the ensuing years, the federal and state governments have spent a great deal of resources reutilizing the base. Today, the base supports a host of various businesses, educational facilities, and recreational options. It still maintains an active airfield, Brunswick Executive Airport, as well.

2. Describe your congregation. Briefly describe the building(s). What is characteristic about the members of the congregation? What do you value most about this faith community? What are your congregation's greatest challenges?

As our welcome message states, we are a community of people who seek to center our lives in God, tuning our spirits to God's Spirit, so that we may empower and support one another's ministries in the world.

Among us you will find people of all generations with various religious backgrounds and some with no previous religious experience. We come from all over the country and hold differing political views. We are committed to practicing ways of sharing our stories – talking and listening to one another with open minds and open hearts – so that we may live out our commitment to be open and affirming with one another,

trusting that the love of Christ knows no bounds. Through worship, humor, music, questioning, life-long learning, and service we imagine a life of loving God, loving neighbor, and loving self.

Our challenges are not unlike most churches, especially those caring for old, historic buildings. We do have budgetary challenges to maintain the revenue to pay for our quality staff and programming, but have the competing needs of a large wooden building that is extremely expensive to maintain and heat. The concern with expenses is coupled with an aging population that is passing away and not being replaced with the same number of younger folks, or ones who give at the same level financially. We do have a vibrant children's education program which has shown some increased interest due to a recent commitment to paid staffing.

Our physical campus consists of a large, historic sanctuary built in 1845 as a unique example of Gothic Revival architecture and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1969. Diagonally across the street sits our Pilgrim House, built in 1955, which houses our staff offices, Sunday school classes, small and large meeting areas, commercial kitchen, and our archives. In 2019, we added an elevator, which provides access to all floors of the building, and an accessible bathroom as well. The Church also owns an adjacent building at 185 Park Row, which is currently rented out for commercial and residential use.

3. Describe the pastoral needs of the congregation and community. What are the top gifts and/or skills you are looking for in a new pastor? What do you hope the new pastor will accomplish?

We are in the middle of transitioning from a beloved senior pastor who has been with us for the last 16 years to a new senior pastor who we hope to find and call through a national search. We are also living through a global pandemic that has forced our worship service online and is leaving many in our congregation feeling disconnected and isolated. Because of Covid-19, we did not hire a full-time interim minister as originally anticipated, but have had to respond creatively to the circumstances. Our senior pastor stayed on in a part-time executive minister role and we hired a part-time interim consultant, who is also a church member, to assist us with moving forward with the search for a new senior pastor. Our former senior pastor will end her role as executive minister at the end of December. We are seeking a part-time transitional minister who can "bridge" the time between our former senior pastor and the arrival of our new senior pastor. The position starts in January and could end as early as July or could be extended to the fall, or even longer, depending on the outcome of the search process.

The top skills and/or gifts we are looking for include:

- Inspiring preaching that can help us feel hopeful and connected during this confusing, frightening, and disconnected time

- **Collaborative team leadership to facilitate staff meetings and the weekly planning of online worship (and, we hope, of physical worship as well during the transition term) and to coordinate other church business decisions in partnership with staff and the Church Council**
- **Comfort with technology and openness to new, creative ways of being a church community**

It is important to note that the overall health of the Church is excellent. We have a strong, supportive, and vibrant congregation led by a very competent and talented paid staff that are assisted by numerous volunteer committees. We hope the transitional minister will help us through this period of change by providing insight and support through sermons and pastoral care, as well as administrative leadership (in consultation with Church Council and the staff).

4. List helpful websites. E.g. Church (if you have one), town, local attractions, schools/universities, major businesses, or other points of interest websites.

<http://www.firstparish.net/>

<https://www.brunswickme.org/>

<https://brunswickdowntown.org/>

<https://mainstreetmaine.org/brunswick-me/>

<https://www.bowdoin.edu/>

5. Provide name of search committee chair and contact information. Also provide the name of the Maine Conference staff member who is assisting your search process, with their contact information.

Laura Lee, Chair of Church Council, lurakimlee@gmail.com, 207-841-4764

Reverend Deborah Jenks, djenks@maineucc.org, 207-458-8463

