

First Congregational Church of Hamilton Church Profile

Updated 5/28/18

The First Congregational Church of Hamilton, Massachusetts has maintained a presence on the north shore of Boston for over 300 years. We are a community of Christians who desire to serve Christ, each other, our broader community, and the world. We are multi-generational and come from many different Christian traditions, but we are firmly rooted in Scripture and congregational practice. This profile is designed to provide a picture of our unique character as a church as we honor God's calling to what we believe is a timely and strategic mission: to exalt His glory (worship and discipleship), enjoy His fellowship (community life), and proclaim His name (outreach).



Covenant

The covenant by which this Church exists as a distinct body, and which every member accepts, is as follows:

Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, and recognizing the privilege and duty of uniting ourselves for Christian fellowship, the enjoyment of Christian ordinances, the worship of God, and the advancement of His kingdom in the world, we do now in the sight of God and invoking His blessing, solemnly covenant and agree with each other to associate ourselves to be a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as warranted by the Word of God.

We agree to maintain the institutions of the gospel, to submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of the Church, and to walk together in Christian love. And this we do, depending upon the aid of our heavenly Father, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for our salvation, and of Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us with His blood, and of the Holy Spirit, our comforter and guide.

Mission

The mission of the First Congregational Church of Hamilton is to be a community of God's people who covenant, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to glorify God by acknowledging Him as sovereign and serving Him in Hamilton and beyond.

This mission is accomplished by making our worship of God central to the life of the Church, believing and receiving His authoritative Word, and teaching it to all ages. We further covenant to pursue Christian maturity, to fellowship with one another, to reach out to those in physical and spiritual need and to live faithfully in the world as disciples of Christ.

Capturing this in a single phrase that easily conveys our ministry commitments, we affirm that we are a people who are... Exalting His Glory, Enjoying His Fellowship, Proclaiming His Name. We are people who intentionally have an upward focus (exalting His glory), an inward focus (enjoying His fellowship) and an outward focus (proclaiming His name).

We embrace the following unchanging core commitments that shape the contours of our ministry. We are...

- A congregation delighting in Christ-centered worship
- A congregation living by God's authoritative Word
- A congregation developing opportunities for community
- A congregation cultivating a life of prayer
- A congregation communicating the gospel in word and confirming it in deed
- A congregation loving God and one another



Statement of Faith

The historic Christian faith forms the mission and vision of the First Congregational Church of Hamilton. Doctrine matters in every area of our lives – preaching, teaching and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with our broken world. Proclaiming redemption’s hope requires understanding the nature of redemption’s scope.

Therefore...

I. We believe

That God who is one in being exists eternally in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ¹, each holy and loving. God created everything that exists ², upholds it by His power, and rules sovereignly over it ³. In relation to the creation, God’s knowledge is exhaustive (omniscience) ⁴, His power unlimited (omnipotence) ⁵, and He is present everywhere (omnipresence) ⁶.

¹ II Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; I Pet. 1:2.

² Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16-7.

³ Ps. 50:10; Prov. 21:1; Dan. 4:3a; Is. 40:6-31; Acts 2:23, 4:27-8; II Thess. 2:11; Heb. 1:3.

⁴ Ps. 139:1-6, 15-18; Heb. 4:13.

⁵ Job 42:1-2; Ps. 115:3; Matt. 19:26.

⁶ Ps. 139:7-10; Jer. 23:23-4.

II. We believe

That Christ was the incarnate second person of the Godhead, conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, fully human ⁷ and fully divine ⁸ in one person. He died, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven ⁹, from whence He will return bodily and in glory ¹⁰.

⁷ Matt. 1:18-21; Gal. 4:4; Rom. 1:3-4.

⁸ Jn. 1:1-2; Phil. 2:6-11; Tit. 2:13 Heb. 1:8-9;

⁹ Acts 2:33-6; Eph. 1:20-22; Heb. 1:3.

¹⁰ Matt.24:30-31; Acts 1:11; Phil. 3:20-1; I Thess. 3:13, 4:15-6.

III. We believe

That all human life has worth and dignity because all people are made in God’s image ¹¹. As such, they have been created to know and serve Him, but this image is now marred by sin. In our fallen condition, we are in rebellion against God, His truth, and His law ¹². We are alienated from Him and under His judgment ¹³.

¹¹ Gen. 1:26-7; Jas. 3:9.

¹² Rom. 1:18, 3:10-20, 8:7.

¹³ Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:5-8; Heb. 9:27.

IV. We believe

That God the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible, giving us truth that is entirely free of error in its original autographs. It is an authoritative disclosure of God's character, will, and ways. It is by this Word that He instructs, corrects, guides, and nourishes the Church ¹⁴.

¹⁴ Ps. 119:89, 160; Jn. 17:17; II Tim. 3:1; I Pet. 1:19-21.

V. We believe

That in His death, Jesus justified us when He was judged for our sin and we were credited with His righteousness ¹⁵. In this way He effected our reconciliation with the Father ¹⁶. His death is the only means of salvation ¹⁷, provided solely by God's grace ¹⁸, and its benefits are received by faith alone ¹⁹.

¹⁵ Rom. 3:25; II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:1b.

¹⁶ II Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5:8-10.

¹⁷ Matt. 10:32-33; Jn. 5:24; Acts 4:12,17:30-31.

¹⁸ Rom. 3:24, 4:1-5, 11:6; Eph. 2:8-10.

¹⁹ Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8; Heb. 11:6.

VI. We believe

That the Holy Spirit imparts to us a saving understanding of Christ's death ²⁰ and regenerates us, giving spiritual life in place of spiritual death ²¹. This initiates the life of obedience and spiritual growth God intends for His people. This growth shows itself in a love of the biblical Word, a hunger for righteousness, a desire to serve others, and a commitment to see God glorified as the gospel is taken to the nations ²².

²⁰ Jn. 15:26, 16:7-11.

²¹ Jn. 3:3-8; Jas. 1:18; I Pet. 1:3, 23.

²² Ps. 119:11, 18, 24, 27-28, 31-32; Matt. 5:6, 20-26; 28:18-20; Rom. 13:8; Gal. 5: 13, 16-23.

VII. We believe

That those who belong to Christ should assemble regularly for worship, fellowship, prayer, and teaching ²³. They are to seek the Church's purity, preserve its unity, and respect its government ²⁴.

²³ Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19-20; Heb. 10:25.

²⁴ Eph. 4:1-6; Heb. 12:14; I Pet. 2:9-10.

VIII. We believe

That the Lord's Supper is a celebration of Christ's finished work on the cross which symbolizes and confirms to His people the benefits of His death²⁵. We make provision for both infant dedication and infant baptism. Children being baptized enter into the covenant under which at least one parent stands²⁶ but each child needs to come into a saving relationship with Christ for him or herself in due course. For believers, baptism declares publicly an existing identification with Christ in His burial and resurrection.²⁷

²⁵ I Cor. 11:23-6; Heb. 7:27.

²⁶ Acts 16:15; I Cor. 7:13-4; Col. 2:11-12.

²⁷ Acts 8:36-8; Rom. 6:4-5.

IX. We believe

That the kingdom of God inaugurated at Christ's first coming will be consummated at His second coming²⁸ when the dead will be raised. At the final judgment, believers and unbelievers will be separated forever. At that time, evil will be eradicated and Satan will be punished²⁹. Unbelievers will enter into an eternal, conscious separation from God, and the people of God will serve joyfully in His presence forever in the new heavens and earth³⁰.

²⁸ Rev. 19:20-1, 20:10, 14-15, 21:4.

²⁹ Matt. 25:34-40; Rom. 14:12; Jude 6.

³⁰ Rev. 22:1-5.

X. We believe

That the Church is called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves³¹. To this end we will act compassionately toward the poor and needy, pursuing justice for the afflicted.³²

³¹ Mark 12:29-31.

³² Deut. 15:11; Ps. 82:3-4; Is. 1:17; 58:6-7; Micah 6:8; James 1:27.

The Distinctive Character of First Congregational Church of Hamilton, MA

Most churches exhibit their own distinctive character. This character comes about as a consequence of the theology which is believed, the church's particular location, its history, the giftedness of its people, the teaching, and particular focus which its pastors have provided. First Congregational Church of Hamilton is no exception.

An Old but Renewed Parish Church



The church was founded in 1713, when Hamilton was "The Hamlet," a parish of Ipswich. Our second pastor, Manassah Cutler, was an extraordinary man in many ways, not the least that he was central to the writing of the Northwest Ordinance that opened the thirteen original colonies to Ohio and the entire West. Cutler was instrumental in the establishment of Hamilton as an independent town. Town and church decisions were made at the same parish meetings until the separation of church and state in 1829, and it was not until 1927 that citizenship in the town and membership in the church were clearly distinguished from one another. This distinction has, of course, been preserved. Nevertheless, the church still has a strong though unstated relationship to the town, even as it draws many from beyond the town's borders. The vibrancy of the church has varied at times throughout the church's history. A significant moment in the life of the church occurred in the mid-1960s, when the leaders of the church considered closing the doors permanently. Instead, the congregation renewed its commitment to serving God in Hamilton and the church has since experienced a season of significant growth and spiritual vitality. In 2013-2014 the church celebrated its 300th anniversary with a year-long celebration of its legacy and vision for the future.

The Ministry of the Word

Faithful, expository preaching and teaching of Scripture is central to the life of the church. Preaching is rooted in traditional biblical understanding and seeks to lead the congregation in spiritual formation and deeper Christian faith and practice. Programs for children and youth are designed to help students grow in the understanding of God's Word and come to saving faith in Christ. A variety of Adult Sunday School classes are offered throughout the academic year including biblical and theological studies and topical studies. Both men's and women's ministries offer Bible studies throughout the year, and these are attended by both congregants and community members.



Worship

First Congregational is firmly rooted in that tradition of the Church whose worship is theocentric in focus, participatory in implementation, non-performance-oriented in leadership, and “predictable” in the best sense of the word: orderly, thoughtful, and reflecting the larger historical worship traditions of the Church. We are committed fundamentally to the following:

- the serious proclamation of the Word of God as the central focus of worship;
- a liturgically structured form of worship that is orderly and coherent and includes the historic prayers of liturgical worship;
- the weekly public reading of Scripture;
- the use of the large instruments—organ and piano—as the primary organizing instrumentation of music in worship;
- expanded contemporary instrumentation to complement the musical offerings of worship;
- continued use of the hymnal—both musically and physically—blended with more contemporary chorus offerings;
- a traditional, regularly performing church choir;
- worship that includes use of the musical talents of the congregation on a weekly basis;
- the pursuit of genuine Christ-centered worship.



Missions

In 2018, our congregation provides specifically designated financial support for 22 foreign and domestic missionaries (couples and individuals) and 19 ministry organizations in the U.S. and around the world. The Missions Committee oversees distribution of missions funding and maintains personal contact with all missionaries and ministries. Adults and youth from First Congregational regularly make short-term missions trips, domestically and overseas. The missions budget is distinct from the church operating budget in both funding and administration. The church also seeks to actively reach out to the broader local community through regular ministry programs and special events.

Demographic Profile

Although the church is old and historic, the congregation is multi-generational, spanning four generations. Located near to Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, the congregation includes many faculty and staff, as well as college and seminary



students. For many years, two of our most longstanding members were also the oldest living male (age 100) and female (age 99) residents of Hamilton, and there are a number of adults for whom First Congregational has been their lifelong home. Our youth ministry and children’s ministry programs are vibrant and thriving as they serve our young people and families. Our commitment as a church is to serve individuals and families, from the very young to the elderly.

Governance

Throughout its long history, ours has always been a congregational church. In 1992, however, it moved to having a Board of Elders. The Board of Elders is a standing committee of the church, nominated and elected by the congregation. Church business is conducted at the Annual Meeting in November, and as needed through special congregational meetings. The church is currently a member of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC).

Baptism

First Congregational has deliberately decided that the mode of baptism is subordinate to the importance of maintaining unity in Christ. The church therefore practices infant dedication and believer's baptism (by immersion if requested) as well as infant baptism by pouring or sprinkling. The church does not have a baptismal font for baptism by immersion, so candidates are baptized either in a nearby pond or at a local Baptist church.



Women in Leadership

Men and women share positions of leadership at First Congregational Church. The church does not consider gender to be a distinguishing factor in discharging leadership responsibilities. Women serve as elders, deacons, Sunday School teachers, ministry directors, and pastoral staff.

Charismatic Gifts

First Congregational Church is not a charismatic church in its public worship, though some members of the congregation are from charismatic traditions. The church does not demean the gifts of the Holy Spirit in any way. Rather, it believes that God has given pastor-teachers to the church, and that the most valuable things the church can do are to pray with understanding, and to attend with care to the preaching of God's Word. We believe in the active and ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all believers.



Congregational Demographics

Member & Attender Information

Number of active members: 306

Number of active non-members: 157

Total of church participants (sum of the numbers above): 463

Percentage of total members who have been in the church:

More than 10 years: 55%

Less than 10, more than 5 years: 12%

Less than 5 years: 33%

Number of total participants by age:

0-11	296
12-17	109
18-24	74
25-34	47
35-44	52
45-54	79
55-64	57
65-74	57
75+	23

Programs & Participation

Children's Ministry	<i>#Children</i>	<i>#Adult Volunteers</i>
Nursery (0-36 mos)	25	61
Little People's Church (3 yrs-PreK)	36	8
God's House (K- Gr 3)	42	6
Sunday School (Nursery-Gr 5)	147	26
Vacation Bible School (3 yrs-Gr 5)	200	100
Special Programs		
Bethlehem Experience	200	50
Kidz Easter	15	12
Basketball & Bible	40	7
Egg Decorating	120	15
Youth Ministry	<i>#Youth</i>	<i>#Adult Volunteers</i>
Weekly youth group – Jr High	56	8
Weekly youth group – Sr High	27	3
Sunday School	50	14
Camp Berea Deep Freeze	51	10
Summer Missions Trips	22	3
Adult Ministry	<i>#Attenders</i>	
Sunday School	120-150	

Men's Bible Study	36
Women's Bible Study	91
Home Mission Groups	10-15
Sunday Dinners	40-50
Small Groups	60-80
Community Outreach	
Front Porch Stories (fellowship)	50-80
Art Group	30
Beach Night	50
Family Promise (homeless)	60
LifeBridge Mission, Salem	40
Bridge of Hope (prison)	6
Stephen Ministry (visitation)	7
Music Ministry	
Choir	24
Worship	8
Special Music	8
Missions	
Foreign missionaries	18
Home missionaries	9
Home ministries	14
Mission trips and Scholarships	7
Church Life (past year)	
Weddings	1
Funerals	1
Baptisms	5
Infant dedications/baptisms	5
New Members	28

Personnel

Pastoral Staff

<i>Name and Title</i>	<i>Tenure</i>
David Horn, Interim Pastor	4 months
Kevin Baird, Pastor of Congregational Life	16 years
Chelsea Erickson, Youth Pastor	3 years

Ministry Leaders

<i>Name and Title</i>	<i>Tenure</i>
Christine Hendrickson, Early Childhood Director	14 years
Kathy Lindsay, Elementary Children's Director	3 years
Margot Rox, Women's Ministry Director	13 years
Greg Lowther, Worship Ministries Director	5 years

Staff

<i>Name and Title</i>	<i>Tenure</i>
Cece Gough, Business Administrator	10 years
Carolyn Vendt, Administrative Assistant	1 month
Jonathan Vander Woude, Choir Director	22 years
Vicki Best, Treasurer	22 years
Linda Coonrod, Financial Secretary	10 Years
Phil Best, Sexton	11 years

Standing Committees	<i>#Members</i>	<i>2018 Chair</i>
Board of Elders	6	Sharon Carlson
Board of Deacons	12	Alden Drake
Stewardship Committee	7	Jim Beville
Missions Committee	9	John Tobey, Kimi Kester
Nominating Committee	6	David Wescott
Trustees of Permanent Funds	3	Richard Carlson
Moderator	1	Eldon Goodhue
Officers		
Clerk	1	Fred Blum
Financial Secretary	1	Linda Coonrod
Treasurer	1	Vicki Best
Assistant Treasurer	1	Janice Swetland

Financial Information

Annual offerings and pledged giving:	\$1,069,291
Annual operating budget	\$861,400
Annual missions budget	\$157,450

Buildings and Grounds

Church building
Wigglesworth-Cutler House
Ministry Center
The Barn
Mission House
Parking Lot



Ministry Center, The Barn, Wigglesworth-Cutler House