



GRIFFITH COACHING

CANDOR & GRACE

LEAD PASTOR

First Congregational Church, Stamford, CT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Stamford Area Culture, and Demographics

Stamford is located on Long Island Sound between New York City and New Haven, Connecticut. According to the 2017 Census Statistics, Stamford now encompasses 52 square miles with a population of 131,000+. Stamford ranks as the third largest city among 178 in the state of Connecticut, just behind Bridgeport and New Haven. As the seventh largest city in New England, Stamford is home to four Fortune 400 companies, nine Fortune 1000 companies, and 13 current 100 Companies. It also hosts numerous divisions of large corporations, making it the largest financial district in the New York metropolitan region outside New York City, and one of the largest concentrations of corporations in the United States.

Located in Fairfield County, the Stamford area offers residents a rare combination of urban, suburban, and semi-rural settings. With an average adult age of 37, the downtown area has gone through an urban transformation over the past decade and now offers a variety of trendy restaurants, coffee shops, boutiques, and parks to serve young professionals and families. Nearly forty percent of Stamford's population is single. Stamford's median household income is \$85,000 and most residents (54.5%) own their own homes. The median home value in the area is \$526,000 and median rent is \$1704.

The population of Stamford is among the most highly educated in the nation, with 86.5 percent holding bachelor's degrees or beyond. Politically, residents tend to be liberal and the population is decidedly diverse. According to the 2017 Census data, 44.4 percent of residents are Caucasian, 30.1 percent are Hispanic, and 15.7 percent are Black, and 7.6 are Asian. Nearly half of its residents are foreign born (most coming from Latin America, Europe, and Asia) and a language other than English is spoken at home by over 50 percent of Stamford's population. The most common foreign languages in Stamford are Spanish, French Creole, Hindi, and Greek. Other foreign-born populations with significant numbers in Stamford come from the following countries: Dominican Republic, Guatemala, India, Haiti, Jamaica, Columbia, Peru, Mexico, Ecuador, China, and Honduras.

According to the *NewsTimes*, located in Norwalk, CT, millennials (now the nation's largest segment of workers) are driving the labor market in the Stamford area, and will soon be a major force in the housing market as well. "Young families will drive companies to come out here. It's a war for talent out there," Jim Fagan, Cushman & Wakefield's managing principal for the Connecticut and Westchester markets, said. "As they move, the companies will chase them to allow employees to have better quality of life and be closer to their kids."

The article cited the large recruiting company, *Indeed*, as an example of the coming expansion by millennials.

"Young workers make up a large portion of the workforce at Indeed's East Coast office in Stamford, as well as the job site company's global headquarters in Austin, Texas. Indeed opened its Stamford office in 2011 with 50 people at 177 Broad St. It now has 850 people in Stamford on eight floors, with a ninth being built out. The company has said it wants to expand to 1,200 workers in Stamford... buildings near train lines and other transportation hubs stand to gain the most from the potential uptick in commercial real estate activity. Not only do they make commuters' lives easier, but many millennials are choosing to live near rail lines to keep Manhattan within reach. Young families, Fagan said, want to maintain their work-live-play balance in the suburbs, but do not want to give up New York City altogether. 'Anyplace close to a train stop is an attractive opportunity for tenants because it gives them the best of both worlds,' he said.

First Congregational Church History and Unique Qualities

In the summer of 1641, twenty-eight Puritan families from Wethersfield, Connecticut, laid the foundations of the First Congregational Church of Stamford, effectively settling the town of Stamford itself. The first wooden meetinghouse stood near the present Stamford Town Hall. It was surrounded by fortress walls and further protected by a sentry on guard and four muskets at-the-ready. The call to worship was the roll of a drum from the meetinghouse rooftop. Church attendance was compulsory for all members. Early on, FCC Stamford launched numerous churches which eventually formed neighboring towns.

From these humble beginnings, FCC Stamford carried on a rich history of generative impact to the greater community. Located in the heart of Stamford, FCC has been a lifeline and source of strength through the American Revolution, abolition, women's suffrage, the civil rights movement to gay and immigrant rights. Although not always on the right side of history on some issues at first, it has generally sought to expand the reach of social justice and champion both local and national movements that lift up the marginalized, especially in recent years. FCC Stamford started the first homeless shelter in Stamford by opening its doors to displaced residents on Christmas Eve of 1982. Later, the shelter was taken over by the city. FCC's Sunday bulletin borrows a United Church of Christ statement that describes FCC's approach to following Christ today: *No matter who you are, no matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome in this United Church of Christ congregation.*

Now in its sixth location in Stamford (the current building was erected in 1906), FCC Stamford is still faithful to its history of outward, generative focus. Progressive, open, and affirming, FCC initiated a number of mission outreach programs in the downtown Stamford:

- *The Rainbow Cafe*, a support group for LGBTQ youth
- *Pride and Joy in the Park*, an interfaith worship service during Pride month
- *Downtown EATS*, a free meal and fellowship open to the community one Saturday a month
- *Stamford Interfaith Refugee Settlement (SIRS)* led by several church members. SIRS has relocated two refugee families to Stamford in recent years
- an annual community-wide *Thanksgiving Dinner* since the 1970s

- the *FCC Thrift Shop* that has operated out of the church for several decades

STAMFORD FCC'S RESTART

At a Crossroad

FCC now stands at one of the most significant crossroads in its journey. Like many congregations, the explosion of membership in the 1950s and 1960s dwindled to a trickle 2010s. Now, FCC is home to fewer than 100 active members, with average Sunday attendance around fifty people. Having spent several years studying the financial viability of their current building, the congregation realized that they were unable to keep up with the increasing building and maintenance costs, with declining membership and little possibility of outside rental revenue due to the layout and age of the building.

While dealing with the stresses of declining membership and financial unsustainability, the congregation understandably experienced higher degrees of conflict. After a long-time pastor retired in 2007, the congregation struggled with identify and vision, which for so long had been defined by their relationship with that pastor.

Since that retirement, the church was led by a two-year interim pastor followed by an intended long-term pastor who stayed only two years. Two interims followed that short term pastorate. In 2016, FCC called their current transitional pastor.

While this ongoing stream of interim and short term pastors has been difficult for the congregation, each pastorate uncovered new truths about the congregation. In response to the increase in conflict and disequilibrium, the congregation hired an outside consultant to guide it through intensive conflict transformation work. That work has begun to transform the way the congregation experiences and responds to conflict.

For several years, the members of FCC deliberated between downsizing their building or moving. In late 2018, FCC's members made the decision to sell the entire property to a housing developer. Though this outcome was not what anyone would have desired, it became clear that their next step in faithfulness was to give up the building and proceed to a church restart.

FCC's transitional pastor, Todd Yonkman, has led the congregation through an intentional grieving process which will culminate in a lovingly planned celebratory Legacy service in March of 2019. The sanctuary will then be vacated except for individual prayer. Members will enter a silent period for pause, reflection, scaled-down worship, and small group meetings to connect with each other in homes and other places outside of their familiar sanctuary. The intention is to continue the grieving process both individually and collectively; to experience God's strong presence going with them out into the world; and to reaffirm a congregational identity and purpose that is larger than brick and mortar. As one FCC member put it, "I think God is calling us to become living stones."

While there is still significant grief around giving up their home of over 100 years, the people of FCC Stamford see this as a growth opportunity - an adventure of faith and service that will redefine who they are as a congregation. It is a chance to begin again – a restart. Yet it is also an opportunity for pulling the past through into the present and future; a call to take 384 years of purpose, impact, joys, sacred memories, and influence into the future.

The vision going forward is understandably evolving, and some members of the congregation are waiting to see what happens before committing fully to the restart. FCC will need the steady, expert help of a trained restart pastor who has experience leading an outwardly-focused church: a congregation gathered and serving in the midst of a community, drawing together for support and growth while continually reaching out to widen the FCC circle.

However, some values are quite clear and will be part of FCC's vision as it takes an otherwise uncharted course: a desire to find a new identity as a congregation while still honoring the past; a commitment to living an inclusive Gospel; finding new ways to promote social justice and help those who struggle; healing together and becoming people who bring Christ's healing to others (blessed to be a blessing); wise stewarding of FCC's significant resources; and creating worship experiences that reflect God's transformational presence in Christ, honor the deep mysteries of faith, and celebrate the sheer beauty of life through art, music, ritual, and the Word.

FCC Restart Growth Opportunities: Stage One

Stamford FCC's Restart begins with the Silent Period in March 2019. Attention and strategy around the following dynamics will be key to FCC moving forward positively and building a foundation for a re-imagined future. The congregation and their new restart pastor will work together to create an order and timeline for these efforts, although we anticipate that the "Initial Efforts" and "Continued Efforts" will take approximately five years to complete (Stage One and Stage Two together).

- Conduct a search for FCC's new lead pastor
- Secure transitional worship and gathering space after the silent period
- Host strategic conversations around identity and vision; moving from a brick and mortar congregation to an outwardly-focused church
- Begin to de-silo the FCC structure and move to self-organizing teams that are interconnected with other teams
- Develop ongoing small groups (meeting in homes) to help connect members with each other, post-building. Visitors would also be welcomed in these groups.
- Develop connections groups specifically designed for grief work related to the loss of the long-time church building
- Teach and/or invite outside teachers to conduct classes on best practices in conflict resolution
- Invite more people into active participation in FCC and community projects via home groups and personal relationships
- Create a balance of the vertical in worship (awe, mindfulness, and transcendence) and horizontal (connecting with others)
- Engage children and teens with their faith via the arts (music, photography, painting, digital art, movement, and story-telling,) Invite their contributions into worship.
- Refresh traditional worship elements (creeds, hymns, choral ensembles)
- Innovate multi-sensory worship experiences via story, art, alternative music, and meaningful ritual

FCC Restart Growth Opportunities: Stage Two

- Continue all of the above
- Expand key ministry partnerships in the community
- Develop a re-imagined brand/identity in the community and making that tangible (something the Stamford community can see and relate to)
- Create a new website and social media platforms that reflect the new brand/identity
- Create outreach strategies to engage key population groups: lower income; young professionals (both single and married); internationals, LGBTQ
- Balance in-reach (member care) and outreach (engagement with the community)
- Re-imagine FCC's ministry to children and teens in an outwardly-focused church
- Develop clear pathways of faith formation for adults, youth, and children
- Expand the FCC core: engaging energies, gifts, vision of new people, mindful of lower income, younger, and more diverse people groups)
- Continue to innovate worship that incorporates vertical and horizontal, old and new elements, Word, story, art, and meaningful ritual. Involve local artists.
- Plan for/secure regular gathering and worship space

LEAD PASTOR POSITION REQUIREMENTS AND PREFERRED ATTRIBUTES

Requirements:

- MDiv and/or MA from seminary theologically aligned with FCC
- Ordained
- Minimum six years in full-time ministry
- Minimum four years as full-time lead pastor
- Minimum two years in church plant, start-up, or restart context

Preferred experience/training:

(Note: we will carefully consider all resumes that meet the required qualifications above. Strong candidates will exhibit at least three of the preferred experiences below.)

- Urban ministry
- Ministry in racially diverse context

- Community organization and outreach
- Church financial management (stewarding endowment and other special funds)
- Community partnership
- Applied spiritual development/formation
- Counseling and griefwork

Desired leadership styles and attributes

- Entrepreneurial leadership bent – a starter, initiator
- Demonstrated visionary and innovator
- Comfortable with chaos and ambiguity
- High energy and enthusiasm
- A learner: wants to understand FCC's history and pull the best forward into the future
- Compassionate: committed to serving marginalized peoples and communities
- A doer and activator; inspires excitement for mission and helps strategize practical ways forward
- Outward oriented: makes community partnerships/organization a high priority
- Inclusive: has a passion for engaging people of all racial backgrounds and orientations
- Develops deep connections with congregation and community members
- Understands and embraces UCC congregational polity
- Identifies and releases the potential in others
- Collaborative, confident leadership style
- Leader of leaders: mentors others in best leadership practices, developing tiers of leadership to take FCC ministry beyond her/his capacities
- Works to balance entrepreneurial bent with caregiving
- Well-developed sense of humor
- Relational: a lover of people
- Emotionally intelligent: self-aware, sensitive to the feelings and needs of others, uses well-honed listening skills, and manages conflict well
- Genuine, transparent: no hidden agendas; comfortable in her/his own skin
- Pastoral: demonstrates authentic care, especially for those in transition

- Preaches to inspire, provide vision, engage people in outward ministry, grow spiritually, and heal
- Leads out of a strong personal faith
- Will live in the Stamford community/surround
- Desires to put down roots for a sustainable journey with FCC

LEAD PASTOR JOB DESCRIPTION

Pastoring FCC successfully through its two restart phases into an outwardly-focused, 21st century ministry will require these functions, at minimum:

- Cast a compelling, pioneering vision for a re-imagined, immersive FCC ministry in Stamford. Vision-casting opportunities will be on an ongoing basis and multiple contexts: preaching, teaching, small groups, events, various FCC leadership teams, outreach projects, one-on-one.
- Preach sermons that inspire, particularly those that encourage FCC members to release their potentials and get involved in making the vision a reality.
- Within the first six months, become an active part of at least two key city/community organizations.
- Collaborate with youth and children's ministry staff on a faith formation approach and curriculum that fits FCC's beliefs, values, and emerging identity.
- Craft a faith formation curriculum to be used in adult small groups. This curriculum could also be tied to the major preaching themes for each month, quarter, or year.
- Develop an organic leadership structure at FCC, shifting out of its current siloed committee model to interconnected, self-organizing teams/hubs.
- Develop an experienced financial management team to wisely steward FCC's endowment and significant resources. The financial team will pay close attention to legal and security issues while also simplifying governance and improving financial record keeping and reporting

- Establish a branding team that will help re-envision FCC's internet presence (website and social media). Hire expert web and social media developers who will work alongside this team.
- Develop a collaborative creative arts planning group to re-imagine FCC's worship. Key emphases: an arts-driven, multi-sensory approach that refreshes traditional elements and balances vertical/horizontal with old/new.
- Hire part-time worship curator/coordinator who pull all the musical, artistic, traditional and new elements together and build musical ensembles, whether modern or traditional.
- Establish a connections team to provide continuous hospitality and connection opportunities (ongoing small groups, coffee gatherings, events, celebrations, dinners). Connections are needed in two areas: one, for members of FCC to strengthen their existing relationships; and two, for reaching out into the community.
- Provide consistent, pastoral care to the sick, shut-ins, grieving families, new parents, and those with particular emotional and spiritual needs.
- Train a tier of lay pastoral care providers to offer more expanded care to both the congregation and wider community, with specific attention to grief work and conflict resolution.
- Supervise staff in the following four areas: 1) congruence with FCC vision and values; 2) continuous innovation of fresh approaches, and strategies in each ministry area; 3) providing resources to ensure good results; 4) evaluation and review processes for continuous staff improvement; 5) clear communication of the congregation's expectations

For more information, contact Sally Morgenthaler
 Senior Search Specialist, *Griffith Coaching and Staffing*
 303-870-7680 sj_morgan@comcast.net