



Proposed Pastoral Leadership Change:

Notes from Listening Sessions

The following comments were compiled during the Listening Sessions on April 5, 6, & 8, 2025, led by Deacon Deb Sorgman, Moderator Anne Malmquist, and Rev. Beth Stotts, regarding the proposal to reduce our Pastor's position to ¾ time from full time.

Concerns:

- Changing Rev. Beth to ¾ time will not solve the budget problem.
- The country is in a financial crisis so it makes sense that the church is too.
- Will we lose our spirit?
- Our building needs so much work.
- Change is difficult and some people might leave.
- Who will advocate for Rev. Beth and her time?
- "If it doesn't fix the problem, it's not the answer."
- We've been paying Rev. Beth below the minimum conference guidelines... she's at a point in her career where she should be making more.
- People are already doing what they can... how can we ask for more?
- Many members are struggling financially.
- People will need to step up in certain areas where Rev. Beth will have to step back.
- Rev. Beth is exceptional at community engagement and we can't reduce her hours in that area.
- Worried people will expect full-time worship for ¾ time pay.

Opportunities:

- More involvement from the congregation will be needed.
- People will be able to grow in their faith by helping to prepare worship, participate in caring for our community, and developing ministries.
- Excited about the involvement of new people.
- Provides opportunities for spiritual growth.
- The Holy Spirit will inspire us to be open to new possibilities.
- Acknowledging that things have to change actually gives us power.
- We can do new things or do things differently and that can be exciting.



Proposed Pastoral Leadership Change:

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are we considering changing Rev. Beth from full-time to part-time?

At last year's budget meeting the congregation passed a deficit budget with no discussion. This really bothered Rev. Beth who felt like open and honest discussion about the budget and the future of the church was needed. She contacted our Associate Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Patty Kogut and our leadership team and requested a meeting. At the meeting last spring Rev. Beth asked for budget discussion. Members of the leadership team said we either need to make cuts or have more fundraisers. Rev. Beth shared that many congregations who are experiencing budget strains are reducing the pastor position from full-time to part-time. While this wouldn't fix our deficit completely, it would help. Rev. Beth then spent the next 9 months interviewing other churches and pastors, doing research, and enlisting the help of a clergy coach and congregational consultant.

Is Rev. Beth okay with going to ¾ time ministry?

Yes and no. Churches in the Southern New England Conference pay a full-time pastor just out of seminary \$70,000 a year plus benefits. While Rev. Beth has been our pastor for 13 years, we have not been giving her the increases in salary that we agreed upon which are outlined in the SNEUCC Clergy Compensation Guidelines. Rev. Beth would prefer to stay at CSCC as our full-time pastor but does not feel the deficit budget is good stewardship. At ¾ time, she will be picking up another job which will change her availability to the CSCC and Bridgewater community. She knows that the second job will not fulfill her salary needs, but she is committed to her call from God and to the shared ministry at CSCC.

Is this going to fix our deficit?

No. This will reduce our deficit by roughly \$20,000.

How dire is our financial situation?

We have been running a \$30,000-40,000 deficit budget for many years. During that time we have been drawing from our investments. Our investments will be gone within 5 years if we continue on this path.

Will worship change?

Yes. There will be several Sundays a year when Rev. Beth will not be leading worship. We will need to rely on members of the community to come forward and lead worship/preach.

What is Rev. Beth's time going to look like?

A pastor's workday is divided into three "units"; morning, afternoon, and evening. $\frac{3}{4}$ time professional work is 7-8 units per week. The pastor is urged to take three full days off per week, not counting holidays, understanding that there will be weeks that demand more time and weeks where additional time off can be taken to maintain a healthy balance. In addition to regular days off, when holidays are required workdays for the clergy or fall on one of the minister's days off, they may be converted to "floating holidays". Rev. Beth will lead worship 40 Sundays/year.

Are there certain things that take up the most of Rev. Beth's time?

Office hours, pastoral care, and worship planning take up roughly 6 units of Rev. Beth's time each week.

How is the conference helping?

The conference is helping us by directing us to other churches who have been in a similar situation. They are also providing resources for study.

When will we vote on this?

On May 18, 2025 we will have a congregational meeting to vote on this change.

Can we change our minds back?

Absolutely.

How will this be re-evaluated next year?

We will hold listening sessions in April of 2026 to assess. We will also need to look at our needs and our budget outlook.

How much savings might we actually see with this change?

Treasurer David Sheibley reports this comparison:

2024-25 approved budget bottom line is a deficit of \$31,276.

If we had a $\frac{3}{4}$ time pastor, the bottom line would instead be a deficit of \$8,538 (\$22,738 savings).

A CONGREGATIONAL MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MAY 18, 2025 AT 11AM ON THIS SUBJECT. ALL CSCC MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO ATTEND.