

# Contract Minister

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## About First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo

## Contact Methods

**Website:** [ufon.ca](http://ufon.ca)

### Meeting Address

*Same as mailing address*

### Mailing Address

595 Townsite Road, Suite 1  
Nanaimo, BC V9S 1K9

This Congregation is **outside of the United States** and does not require a 501(c)(3) status

## Congregation Life

### Describe your Congregation and its culture:

Our congregation is a welcoming, caring and compassionate community. New friends often comment that the welcome they received when they first attended a service was the reason they kept coming back. When congregants are in a time of need, they are strongly supported by our Fellowship community. During COVID, we established a telephone calling team that reached out to congregants regularly to keep people connected and provide support as needed.

Our congregation lives its social justice values in concrete ways. The biggest one is a homeless shelter run by the Fellowship in our building. With a humble start in 2008 as a winter, extreme weather event only shelter, the Nanaimo Unitarian Shelter now provides 30 beds for those in need and is now open nightly, year-round. The congregation also runs a city-funded shower program for those

experiencing homelessness. In 2020, the congregation sponsored a Syrian refugee who successfully relocated to Nanaimo and now works for the Nanaimo Multicultural Society.

The congregation has always had a strong culture of lay leadership. This has contributed to the Fellowship's longevity and success. And, it continues as we are served with professional ministry. Children's programming has also always been a very important aspect of the Fellowship. The congregation hopes to rebuild our children's programming (Children's Spiritual Exploration, Messy UU Church, Storytime for Littles, youth program, and youth meetups), which has been negatively impacted by COVID.

COVID limited our opportunities for social connection and, so in response to the ministerial survey, congregants time and time again said they were looking forward to re-establishing the strong community environment we have traditionally enjoyed in our congregation. The congregation loves breaking bread whether it's engaging in robust conversation while enjoying the ample potluck snacks during the post-service Sunday coffee hour, Messy UU Church, a picnic, or Spaghetti Night with over the top potluck dishes.

Our congregation has a commitment to sharing ideas and learning from one another, often with lay-led services. Though we take Unitarianism seriously, we do so with a sense of fun.

We have 71 members and 43 friends including 2 children and 4 youth. Demographically, we are primarily Caucasian, mostly older, with more women than men. In 2016 we became a Welcoming Congregation (and have had many same sex weddings within our Fellowship over the years).

For additional information about our congregation, please see summary of 2022 ministerial search survey at

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NXcQccZ4bA0-kMPou6TxP\\_dFtdr7IF5Q?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NXcQccZ4bA0-kMPou6TxP_dFtdr7IF5Q?usp=sharing)

### **Your Congregation's mission:**

At First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo, we create spiritual connection and bring compassion, discovery and social justice to life (link to Our Mission page: [Fellowship mission statement](#)).

### **Describe and provide examples of how your Congregation lives its values:**

Consistent with our mission statement, during the church year, we have weekly Sunday services; we love our Fellowship community and strongly support congregants in need; we enjoy sharing ideas and learning from one another; and we operate a low barrier, year-round 30 bed homeless shelter and shower program.

Music is very important in our congregation. Our choir is open to all and, at times, we have had more singers than those remaining in their seats when the choir performs. We also support local musicians who are regularly invited to perform at our services.

**Link to your Safe Congregation policy:**

[http://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NXcQccZ4bA0-kMPou6TxP\\_dFtdr7IF5Q?usp=sharing](http://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NXcQccZ4bA0-kMPou6TxP_dFtdr7IF5Q?usp=sharing)

**Worship service schedule:**

Weekly at 11am during the church year, September to June. In non-COVID years, lay-led services have also been held weekly at 11am through the summer.

## Personnel

Name	Position	Paid Hours per Week	Year Started
Lise Smith	Office Administrator	11	2014
Patrick Courtin	Music Director	6	2021
Debra Thorne	Minister	27	2019

**Additional personnel notes:**

The Office Administrator's time varies with 22 hours being a minimum number of hours and, typically, the number of hours is more.

## Congregation History

**Provide your Congregation's founding history:**

Our Fellowship was started in the late 50s and received official status from the American Unitarian Association in 1960. For more than 40 years, the Fellowship was lay led, grew and contracted in membership, had lots and few children, and met at various venues ranging from member's homes to rental halls to churches. For most of this time, Sunday services were every other week.

In 2004, the Fellowship acquired a building. Significant donations from members paired with a mortgage loan facilitated purchase of the Fellowship's current building. The building is owned by a separate Society: the Unitarian Foundation of Nanaimo, with all members of the Fellowship also being members of the Foundation. The Foundation is the landlord to a commercial tenant that occupies a portion of the main floor of the building with the Fellowship. In 2006, the Fellowship began professional ministry. With a regular meeting place and the encouragement of our first minister, the Fellowship began weekly Sunday services.

In 2008, the Fellowship began a significant social justice initiative, opening Nanaimo's only low barrier extreme winter weather shelter. Having just completed its 14th year of operation, the shelter has undergone much change from its humble start when it was operated by Fellowship volunteers, and guests slept on the floor of the sanctuary on extreme winter weather nights. The shelter now has a unionized, professional staff and operates in its own space on the ground floor of our building, with a Foodsafe kitchen and onsite laundry facilities, and is open every day, year-round.

**Date founded:** 1/1/1959

**Describe important events in your Congregation's history:**

Fellowship recognized in 1960

Purchased current building in 2004

Started professional ministry in 2006

Opened extreme weather shelter in 2008

Extensive building upgrades in 2015 and 2016

Welcoming Congregation status achieved 2016

Shelter began daily operations during Winter months in 2017

Started homeless shower program in 2018

Shelter expanded to year-round operation in 2019

Sponsored a Syrian refugee to come to Canada 2020

Adjusted to COVID with online services in 2020

Paid off mortgage in 2020

Completed strategic plan in 2021

Commenced hybrid services in the fall of 2021

## Ministerial History

Start	End	Position	Name	Job Title
2019	Now	Other	Debra Throne	Minister
2017	2018	Contract	Meg Roberts	Consulting Minister
2013	2016	Developmental	Samaya Oakley	Developmental Minister
2008	2012	Contract	Karen Fraser Gitlitz	Contract Minister
2006	2008	Other	Marian Stewart	Intern Minister

### Describe any important Lay Leaders:

Our congregation has been blessed with strong lay leadership that has stepped up in numerous ways when the congregation has been without a minister. Many congregants have provided lay leadership. Also, the Board of Directors has always been a strong force in leading the congregation. This includes at times when the congregation has been with a minister.

Two other important areas of lay leadership when the congregation has been without a minister are congregant support when no pastoral care was available and Sunday services. A Care and Concerns Committee has filled the void for pastoral care when the congregation has been without a minister.

Our congregation also has a strong Sunday Services Committee. The committee is involved in organizing all services whether or not we have had a minister. When a minister is not presenting, whether because the congregation had no minister or the minister was on holiday, the Sunday Services Committee arranges for a presenter. The congregation also has a number of talented individuals who have presented many services.

## Demographics

**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as people of color?**

We are unable to provide this.

**What percentage of members do you estimate identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ)?**

We are unable to provide this.

**Please describe the gender makeup of your congregation**

We are unable to provide this.

**What number of staff (including full and part time) identify as people of color?**

We are unable to provide this.

**What number of people of color serve as leaders or chairs of your volunteer committees and program teams?**

We are unable to provide this.

**What number of your Board of Trustees identify as people of color?**

We are unable to provide this.

**What changes have you made in the last 3-5 years, if any, to include the racial and ethnic diversity of your congregational staff and volunteer leadership?**

Demographic diversification is one area for desired change listed by many congregants in response to our ministerial survey. See above response included in above section *Describe Your Congregation and its culture*.

## Accessibility

**Is your Congregation's meeting space wheelchair accessible? Yes**

**Wheelchair accessibility details:**

The front entry to our building is at ground level with no stairs or steps. All restrooms, including an accessible restroom, are located on the same level. Three vehicle parking spaces are designated for people with disabilities.

**Does your Congregation provide assisted listening systems? Yes**

**Assisted listening system details:**

We have a T-Loop system for hearing aids outfitted with this technology.

**Describe other ways your congregation has dealt with accessibility:**

We are a fragrance-free congregation.

## Resources & Programs

**List the resources and programs your Congregation used or participated in during the past year:**

Green Sanctuary certification in process; UUA Women's Group readings; 'Notes From the Far Fringe' website (a resource used by our AV Team); internally created Meaningful Membership project.

**Describe your religious educational programs:**

Pre-COVID, our Fellowship enjoyed a growing children's RE program with compensated staff and increasing attendance. At one point, attendance reached 11 children. COVID has hurt the children's program, which the Fellowship is seeking to rebuild as we restart with in-person gatherings. The move online due to COVID gave us an opportunity as well: it allowed the Fellowship to make children's programming more intergenerational, now regularly including grandparents located in other cities.

For adults, programming has included meditation, "Meaningful Membership", Building Your Own Theology, art workshops, book group, writing group, men's and women's groups, discussion groups on environmental and other social and community issues, the Chatters Group and minister-led (or co-led) workshops.

# Surrounding Community

**Describe the character of the surrounding community, including population and demographics:**

We are located on the east coast of beautiful Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada, a 31,000 km<sup>2</sup> “island” stretching 460 km from B.C.’s capital of Victoria to Cape Scott. The Nanaimo region has a population of approximately 171,000, which is B.C.’s fifth largest region and in the top five for growth nationally. Nanaimo is the island’s second largest city and is served with two ferry routes to Vancouver. A harbour city of 100,000, Nanaimo offers its residents the west coast lifestyle with breathtaking scenery, year-round outdoor recreational activities, a vibrant arts scene, and a burgeoning local food culture. More information about Nanaimo is available from the Chamber of Commerce at <https://nanaimochamber.bc.ca/about-nanaimo/>.

Nanaimo has the island’s second largest performing arts centre, The Port Theatre, and is home to Vancouver Island University. VIU offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees as well as diplomas and certificates in technical, trades and career programs. The University attracts students from all over the world, with more than two thousand of its 12,000 full and part-time students from foreign countries.

Nanaimo is the rare city offering big city attributes, small city feel, great weather, inspirational scenery and abundant outdoor recreation opportunities. Many of our members could have lived elsewhere but chose to relocate to Nanaimo. It’s easy to understand why.

**Describe how your Congregation is known/perceived by the larger community:**

The Fellowship enjoys name recognition and a good reputation in the community, including with the City of Nanaimo. This is because of our operation of the Nanaimo Unitarian Shelter and shower program. These are done in coordination with the city and province. Also, our building is used as a gathering place for a number of community groups and as a venue for concerts and a local story-telling



group. We have hosted an all-candidates' debate and serve as a polling station for many elections. We also regularly invite local musicians to perform at our Sunday services.

**Describe your Congregation's religious, political, and social context from a historical and current perspective.**

Started in the late 1950s by families interested in a liberal religion, our founders joined with like-minded individuals from the Canada Pacific Biological Station to establish a Unitarian presence in our region.

The congregation has always had strong lay leadership, even after the start of professional ministry. For this reason, the minister best suited for our congregation will walk with the congregation as the minister provides ministerial leadership. See job posting for more on this point:

<https://ufon.ca/2022/07/17/ministerial-search-committee-begins-work/>.

The congregation has been and remains socially progressive. The Fellowship has run a homeless shelter in its lower level since 2008 and sponsored a Syrian refugee in 2020. Recently, the congregation has embraced environmental ministry with many initiatives, including asking City council to ban use of natural gas in new construction, which the City did.

The congregation is deeply aware that we are settlers and guests on the traditional lands of the Snuneymuxw Nation. As a congregation, we believe in the importance of reconciliation and look forward to doing more to connect with the local indigenous community. Our ministerial survey identified demographic diversification as an important goal for the congregation.

The congregation is active in civic affairs. In addition to running the Nanaimo Unitarian Shelter and shower program, and serving as a polling station, the Fellowship participates (with a strong congregational turnout) in Pride activities, including the Pride parade. The congregation has also held a get out the vote drive.

From a religious perspective, congregants range from spiritual to humanist to atheist, with all perspectives welcomed. Some congregants are comfortable with traditional religious references, while others would prefer to avoid them. Our ministers have found ways to address this dichotomy in religious preferences amongst congregants, providing multiple interpretations or integrating neutral or earth-based descriptions.

# Position Basics

**Anticipated Start Date:** March 2023

**Term:** three years with option to renew

**Percent Time:** 75% Time

**Minimum Salary + Housing:** \$49,200 | Salary shown is the midpoint for GEO Index 3 for Small congregations and is subject to the experience of the minister. Our congregation has 71 members. Salary is in Canadian dollars. In addition to vacation and holiday pay, and RRSP matching contribution, benefits include an extended health insurance plan that provides coverage over and above provincial health plan, long term disability coverage, employee and dependent life insurance, and more. In addition, our congregation supports the professional development of our ministers with generous funding of and provision of time for professional development.

**Benefits:**

## Questionnaire

### **Description of minister's role in relation to other paid staff**

The minister supervises the Office Administrator with whom the minister works closely and who has an office close to the minister's. The minister also supervises the Coordinator of Children's Spiritual Exploration with the support of the Children's Spiritual Exploration Committee.

### **Primary areas of focus for the minister**

Sunday service sermons (with service elements prepared in collaboration with our Sunday Services Committee), pastoral care, building community within the congregation, adult programming and workshops, and attending Board meetings.

### **Traditional holiday services celebrated outside of Sunday morning**

Prior to COVID, Winter Solstice was celebrated in a lay-led service. The minister has traditionally held a late afternoon or early evening service on Christmas Eve.

### **Status of the congregation as a Welcoming Congregation**

Yes, we are a Welcoming Congregation as of June 2016.

### **Status of the congregation as a Green Sanctuary congregation**

The congregation is working at obtaining Green Sanctuary certification. We are about 2/3 of the way there.

### **Status of the congregation as an Honor Congregation**

Not applicable

### **How the congregation defines good preaching and worship**

In responses to our ministerial survey, a desire for intellectually stimulating services and spirituality came up often, as well as varying the content of services. Music and moving children's stories are significant components of our Sunday services valued by congregants and these are often woven into the sermon. On occasion, we appreciate having fun, including presentation of plays. It should be noted, however, that terms such as these—preaching and worship—are not generally favoured by our congregation.

### **How is technology currently used in your congregation and what are the expectations of the minister around that?**

The congregation upped its game almost overnight with the onset of COVID lockdowns when the congregation began holding Sunday services on Zoom. An AV Team was quickly formed to handle streaming of services, which still continues so that we can provide hybrid services. Most committee meetings continue to take place on Zoom. The minister is expected to be able to conduct Sunday services with both in-person and online audiences and participate in Zoom meetings. There is an expectation that the minister be sufficiently comfortable with technology to learn what may be needed to support their ministry work. The AV Team plans to continue to handle most of the technical aspects of Sunday service streaming and supports others in learning the ins and outs of Zoom and other technology used in the Fellowship.