



First Church of Christ
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

www.firstchurchsandwich.org

Long Range Plan
2009

We are excited about your interest in reading the Long Range Plan. You may view or download this document from the church website. If you are unable to do that, please request a copy from the office.

Read. Rejoice. React. Respond!





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Introduction and Summary

First Church of Christ in Sandwich has enjoyed a rich tradition of growth in Christian faith from the earliest days of colonial New England to the present. This history is marked by spiritual integrity, social awareness and outreach, and a flexibility to adjust to the changing social, cultural and demographic needs of our congregation and to our community.

The past 10 years have been particularly dynamic as we have expanded our membership, developed a second Sunday service, expanded our music program to include two adult choirs and two bell choirs, and added for the first time a full-time Associate Pastor.

Today, as we plan for the next five years of our Christian journey, we look forward with enthusiasm to the needs and challenges which are before us. We do this united in spirit and with a commitment to grow. We will become more accessible to all people, broaden our spiritual education to young and old, and increase our influence in serving the needs of our community. We know our journey will be demanding on the many talents and resources of our congregation but are confident of the willingness of our people to work hard with open minds and warm fellowship.

In preparing this plan, the Planning Committee determined that it would be useful to know whether the church has been growing in membership and/or attendance and what the projection for the next five years is likely to be. This was deemed important since it would influence the income that the church is likely to acquire as well as influence the services that might be required in the future.

The data on membership and attendance was reasonably complete, but not perfect. The data that was reviewed shows that the membership and attendance appears to have been relatively flat or at most a very modest growth for the last five years. During the same period, the town of Sandwich has been growing at about one percent per year. Additionally, from discussions with town officials, it is not expected that this trend in the town will change much in the next five years. Thus, it is expected that the membership and attendance will continue to be more or less flat or with a slight increase during this period unless there is a stimulus that will cause it to change.

A major reason to review and report on this issue is the concomitant relationship to church revenue. Church expenses tend to increase each year due to normal rises in costs for labor and services due to the general rise in costs. To compensate, it is necessary that contributors, assuming a fairly stable population, also have to increase their contributions. Since some are on fixed income, some have growing families and expenses, and with a faltering national (and international) economy, it is difficult to expect that they can go beyond the general increase year after year. The conclusion of all of this is that funding new programs and/or physical facility improvements will be a challenge, and there will be a real need to limit them to the most essential and/or most important to the congregation.

The conclusion of the Planning Committee is that the church should encourage programs that could provide a positive stimulus for the church to grow at a modest rate. The programs themselves should be rewarding, and an increase of a few percent a year could provide much needed revenue.

What follows are recommendations which have come from a thorough examination of our church-wide survey, from our church focus/workshop held in March 2008, from personal interviews with individuals and staff, and from the accumulation of data and information gleaned from the church planning records going back to 1993. These efforts have supported the creation of this long-term plan with a focus on Four Pillars of our First Church life.

The Four Pillars are:

- I. **Social Action:** Encourage members to focus on the relationship of the Christian faith to contemporary social, economic and community issues.
- II. **Spiritual Development:** Provide spiritual development opportunities to help members discover their own gifts for ministry and service.
- III. **Fellowship:** Expand opportunities for personal interaction and group discussion.
- IV. **Youth:** Emphasize youth education and programs, helping youth clarify their values and beliefs.

Each of the four sections contains a number of goals and aspirations with specific responsibilities and milestones for accomplishment.

Pursuing these Pillars requires attention to certain Foundations of the church. A separate section, titled Foundations, covers the Planning Committee's recommendations with regard to the following:

- A. Internal communications
- B. External communications
- C. Facilities
- D. By-laws and committee structure
- E. Financing
- F. Personnel

In addition to the discussion regarding growth in the congregation discussed above, there is one other issue that warrants mentioning in this Introduction and Summary. This is the need to thoroughly review the Church by-laws and the church organizational structure.

The Planning Committee highly recommends the establishment of an Ad-hoc By-Laws committee to address the following:

- Committee structure
- Personnel reporting
- Congregational reporting

This report includes some potential ways to address the above, but the Planning Committee recommends a thorough and focused review, with a recommendation(s) to be made at the next annual meeting in January, 2010.

We are excited about the opportunities encompassed in the plan that follows. With God's help, we look forward to partnering with our fellow church members in bringing them to fruition. We highly recommend adoption of this plan by the congregation and agreement on its implementation schedule.

Pillar I: Social Action

It is clear that our church has a high expectation for social action and outreach. Time and again this has been emphasized from the data we have collected to date. We are committed to taking a firm stand on social issues, conducting our business with sensitivity to its impact on the environment, expanding our outreach into the community, and developing a comprehensive manner of communicating all of these activities to our members and to the community at large. We recommend the following for the next five years:

A. Consider Becoming an Open and Affirming Church

The Open and Affirming (ONA) Program of the United Church of Christ (UCC) allows congregations make explicit their welcoming approach to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Further, the misinformation, stereotypes and prejudices which fuel heterosexism, racism, ageism, sexism, etc. are evident and interrelated in our society.

During the 2008-2009 program year, First Church of Christ, using materials available from the United Church of Christ, other organizations and personal testimony, began a time of study, prayer and conversation which eventually will lead to deciding if First Church is ready to consider adopting an ONA statement. This process normally takes two years to complete..

The Planning Committee, echoing the results of our church seminar in March 2008, supports this effort by the Board of Deacons and encourages an ongoing program of education and enlightenment on the subject. The goal is to provide the congregation an opportunity to decide if “Open and Affirming” is a policy we are ready to officially consider.

The Board of Deacons is requested to provide an update of their Open and Affirming program at the next annual meeting in 2009, and an interim “reality check” to Church Council by April, 2010.

B. Become a “Green” Church

- The definition of a “green” church is one that is environmentally-friendly including being energy conscious for environmental and economic reasons. We recommend creation and adoption of a Green Action Plan to conform our church to environmentally-friendly practices.
- Educate the congregation on Christian stewardship and social justice issues concerning global warming and environmental degradation and the importance of a Green Church and green practices at home.

It is recommended that the Green Team (already established) report to the Board of Trustees and together provide a preliminary plan and update to Church Council in September, 2009 and a formal plan at a church meeting in January, 2010.

If you are interested in being part of this ministry, please contact the church office.

C. Adopt an Outreach Mission Team Approach

Missions Teams (individual and group ministries) are encouraged by the Planning Committee to be sponsored and monitored by the Outreach Committee. These Mission Teams may be the result of spontaneous programs, long- or short-term, focused on a specific project or effort reflecting needs not currently met by the church or community.

It is recommended that the Outreach Committee encourage the formation of mission teams, provide an interim “reality check” to Church Council in May 2009 and a full report of the program at a church meeting in June, 2010.

If you are interested in forming a mission team, please contact the Outreach Committee.

D. Develop a Public Relations Program

In order to grow and to keep the congregation and the community at large aware of what we are doing at First Church, it is essential that we develop a more sophisticated Public Relations program. To accomplish this, we need to encourage an individual or group to step forward and make this function his/her/their personal ministry to the church. This is considered to be important in view of the planning committee’s evaluation of the need for the church to develop a strategy to grow the membership of the church. This individual or group should consider:

- Developing a vigorous ministry and commitment to the dissemination of information about the various activities (including social action activities) of First Church to the wider community as well as to the congregation.
- Outlets could include radio (local and National Public Radio), newspapers (Cape Cod Times, Broadsider, Sandwich Enterprise), mailings, church web site, email, etc.

It is recommended that the Public Relations person(s) report to the Planning Committee and together prepare a preliminary organized plan of operation to be presented to Church Council in June, 2009 with a formal Plan to be presented at a church meeting in January, 2010.

If you are interested in being part of this ministry, please contact the Outreach Committee.

Pillar II: Spiritual Development

Our survey and subsequent open church meeting showed a strong interest in creating an environment in which everyone can explore and develop their faith regardless of where they are on their spiritual journey. One of the great challenges of First Church is to help all of us reach deeper levels of spiritual development. Even John (2:12-14) reminds us that spirituality takes place over time. To that end, we need to broaden our educational and developmental offerings and ensure that successful existing programs are continued. Clarification (or even redefinition) of the role(s) of our personnel may be necessary as we consider implementation of new activities.

If we make First Church our first resource to learn more about who we are and what we believe in, we will know what we are called to do in the church and in the world. This will help strengthen our current congregation from generation to generation, grow our membership and develop our outreach to the community and beyond. Following are the requests and desires of our membership for the spiritual development component of our five year plan.

A. Support Small Group Ministries

It is recommended that the church support the establishment of new Small Group Ministries in response to expressed interest and need within the congregation. These programs should be sponsored and monitored by the Board of Deacons through the following:

- Promote Small Group Ministries, both of short and long-term duration, by outlining a process by which individuals and groups can establish these programs.
- Develop and conduct a spiritual gifts assessment to identify and match talents and interests of congregants to existing and future ministries.
- Maintain a list of existing Small Group Ministries available to the congregation through the Spire and church website, including a description and contact information.
- Provide opportunities for Small Group Ministries to describe their current activities and future objectives (Spire, Sunday bulletin, bulletin board postings, weekly announcements in church).

It is recommended that the Deacons provide a list of existing Small Group Ministries to Church Council by September, 2009, complete and compile the spiritual gifts assessment by November, 2009, and provide an update on Small Group Ministries at a church meeting in January, 2010.

If you are interested in starting a small group ministry, please contact the Deacons.

B. Enhance Christian Education

Reflecting the results of the church survey, there is an apparent wish for an increased emphasis on both adult and youth education. The hire of a new Christian Education Director is recommended to provide separate oversight of adult education and youth education.

- Conduct programs for post-confirmation youth
- Provide Youth Bible Study
- Provide parallel activities to bible study so families can attend at same time
- Explain the order of service format and foundations for it

It is recommended that a review of Church School and Bible Study offerings be conducted by the Christian Education Director and Clergy. Resulting classes might be conducted by staff or specially trained Lay Leaders. New programs might be implemented for the 2009-2010 academic year (September 2009).

It is recommended that the Christian Education Director create and oversee an effort to review opportunities for correlation of youth and adult bible study, and spiritual craft, study or activity for our youth. It is further recommended that a review of other opportunities should be completed and presented during a church meeting in 2009, with implementation to take place according to topic opportunity (i.e., Advent), and begin to be in place by September, 2009.

C. Consider Changes to Worship Offerings

Reflecting the congregation's wish, it is recommended that the Clergy, Deacons and Worship Committee consider changes or enhancements to current worship offerings, including exploration of worship styles, times, length of services, or an additional day, such as Friday or Saturday evening services, and report to Church Council by September, 2009 with a plan for possible implementation by a church meeting in January, 2010.

D. Formalize a Training/Mentoring Program for Lay Leadership

One of the most important things our church can do to strengthen membership and contribute to its growth and vitality is to continue our spiritual development on an ongoing basis. We must commit to providing further training for current and future teachers and lay leaders. To support that, we recommend that the Christian Education Committee, in conjunction with the Director of Christian Education and the Clergy, evaluate our existing lay leadership training, including the resources available to support this training.

The Christian Education Committee and Clergy are requested to continue their review and development of potential training programs for lay leaders, with a full plan of action made available to Church Council by September, 2009, with a formal report presented at a church meeting in January, 2010.

If you are interested or want more information about lay leadership, please speak to our Pastors.

Pillar III: Fellowship

Church members are looking for expanded opportunities for social interaction and growing relationships through fellowship, within and outside our church family: a fellowship where lives, gifts, and talents are shared both spiritually and naturally. In order for this to be implemented, the Planning Committee recommends that a Fellowship Committee be formed with individuals who feel a passion for this ministry. The needs of this ministry fall into two categories.

A. Welcome and Hospitality

Welcome and Hospitality embodies a fellowship ministry whose main mission is to provide a welcoming and inclusive feeling to members and non-members within the church. Possible actions which were identified to carry this out include the following:

- Front door welcome (where newcomers are most likely to access the church) by a pastor who is best able to identify new faces. Attending Deacons should be alerted to new people's presence.
- A greeter at Gates room door.
- Deacons assigned to a service to recognize new people and bring them to the Gates room, with introductions to the pastors and other members of the church.
- Wearing of name tags including pastors should be encouraged.
- Social hour every Sunday including "holiday" Sundays.
- "Welcoming" table in Gates room: Spire, photos, directory, brochures, souvenirs.
- "Invite a Friend" Sundays should be regularly promoted.

It is recommended that the Deacons coordinate a greet and pass-off program with the Clergy for the purpose of identifying and welcoming visitors to the church with an operational plan in place by September, 2009.

If you are interested in bring a part of this ministry, please contact the Deacons.

B. Fellowship Activities

- The Fellowship Committee would organize and/or promote activities to bring together the differing members of the congregation.

The Planning Committee recommends the formation of a Fellowship Committee, reporting to the Board of Deacons, which would develop a social activities plan for the church by the next all church meeting in 2009 (Two volunteers already have come forward to head this committee as co-chairs). A formal plan should be presented at the January, 2010 church meeting.

If you are interested in bring a part of this ministry, please contact the Deacons.

Pillar IV: Youth

First Church already offers very strong programs for our youth. However, even good programs can be improved. Religious education of First Church youth is clearly a priority. Assisting our youth to connect their spiritual lives to their everyday life choices helps to develop well-rounded adults who contribute to their community, as well as sustain the church as it forges into the future, creating the world that God hopes for us. With this in mind, we need to continue developing this important element of our church programs.

A. Education Development and Expansion

Critical to ongoing development of youth education programs is the establishment of one clear message or mission for the youth that is linked to the overall church mission and vision. With that mission defined, the church can consider the following opportunities:

- Ongoing teacher training
- Creation of a Book Club (history, music, literature)
- Identify speakers for youth groups
- Childcare
- Establish occasional activities with youth groups from area churches
- Consider new music programs for youth
- Identify opportunities for additional involvement by parents

It is recommended that the Board of Christian Education and the Christian Education Director continue to carefully consider the above suggestions with a preliminary plan presented to Church Council by September, 2009, and a formal plan presented during a church meeting in January, 2010. . (In late spring, 2009, the Planning Committee will begin the process of creating a Mission Statement along with the input from staff and church members, and report to Council September, 2009.)

B. Intergenerational issues

- Recognizing that children, youth, and adults comprise the church today and also the future of the church, First Church can develop educational opportunities that link the generations, as well as provide age-appropriate programs that develop individual and communal Christian life. Programs that encourage faith discussion, modeling, instruction, and exploration on an intergenerational basis will provide not only the youth, but the entire congregation another opportunity to participate in spiritual development.

It is recommended that the Clergy, along with the Board of Christian Education and Christian Education Director, establish an inter-generational action plan to be presented at a church meeting in January, 2010.

If you are interested in participating in this ministry, please contact our Pastors, Director of Christian Education, or Board of Christian Education.

Foundations

As stated in the Introduction and Summary section of this report, these Foundations are necessary to support the four Pillars discussed above.

A. Internal Communications

Through the activities undertaken to complete this plan, it was clear that communication within the church and congregation needs to improve. We need to ensure that the congregation is aware of opportunities to participate in all spiritual development programs and fellowship activities. We also need to ensure that our Small Group Ministries and Mission Teams are inviting and welcoming to new attendees.

The Planning Committee highly recommends that Church Council take responsibility to compile descriptions of each operating committee of the church, keeping in mind the proposed revisions/suggestions found in part D (below) by September, 2009: By-Laws/Committee Structure

B. External Communications

It is essential that First Church be represented to the public in a polished and professional way that showcases who we are, what we do and how we do it (and have been doing it for over 300 years). Print materials of a higher quality than currently available should be developed and produced on quality paper and card stock, and possibly including:

- Brochure for Open Church (history)
- Post cards /note cards for sale
- Pew Brochure (for visitors)
- Stewardship Pew Cards (various ways to financially support our church)

It is recommended that the Board of Deacons undertake a review of the above items, prepare estimates for their completion and submit a plan and budget to Church Council by June, 2009, and begin to implement the program beginning in September, 2009.

If you are interested in this ministry, please contact the Deacons.

C. Facilities and Related Items

- Parking: The issue of parking for church services and activities has been in our planning reports for over 15 years. Planning Committee members have volunteered to look into the parking situation, evaluate what we have, what we need, what the town of Sandwich will allow us to do, and determine what physical and financial options we have.

The Planning Committee has been investigating this issue in depth and will produce a defined implementation plan or a document outlining the options and costs (with a recommendation to adopt or reject) for Church Council by January, 2010.

- Sanctuary Fans and/or Air Conditioning: At a minimum, the Sanctuary needs to improve air circulation for the comfort of our congregants and the preservation of our physical plant. Strategically located, quiet ceiling fans would move hot air up towards the ceiling in summer and, reversed, send the hotter air down into the congregation during colder months. We further recommend a feasibility study be initiated to establish the practicality of air conditioning for the sanctuary to make us more attractive during the warmer months for weddings, concerts and other programs.

It is recommended that the Board of Trustees, through its subsidiary Green Team committee, consider ceiling fans in the sanctuary, develop a cost estimate, and if thought to be a viable improvement, prepare a plan for Church Council to consider in November, 2009.

- The Pipe Organ: Because of its age and the time since its last renovation/rehabilitation in 1975, our 1847 Hook G-Compass pipe organ is rapidly facing the need for major attention, with costs estimated at \$50,000 or more. When it was originally purchased, the organ was too small for the size of the Sanctuary and the size of the congregation.

A study committee already has been established including representatives from the Music and Planning Committees with a view towards making a recommendation to Church Council and the congregation by January, 2010.

- Summer Garden Service: Clearly the summer Garden Service has been very successful and now should be recognized as a permanent part of our worship offerings.

It is recommended that the summer garden service receive the same time and attention of our church staff as our 9:30 summer service, and should be done in cooperation with the summer service ministry which currently sponsors that service.

- Sanctuary Modifications: The largest piece of our physical plant and probably the least used.

It is recommended that the Trustees, in cooperation with the Planning Committee and church staff develop a proposed plan and cost benefit to Church Council by January, 2010 for consideration by the congregation.

D. By-Laws Revision

In recommending the Four Pillars above, we recognize the need to ensure that the organizational structure of the church supports these activities appropriately. We are also aware through conversations with all of the boards and committees, staff, and members of the congregation, that the current structure may not be as effective as possible. While maintaining an approach representative of the UCC, we believe change to our structure is desirable.

We highly recommend the establishment of an ad-hoc Bylaws Committee to consider suspension of the existing bylaws while this review is in process. Items that might be considered during that process are:

Committee structure

Consideration of Primary committees and Secondary committees
Evaluation of appropriate number of members for each committee
Charters outlining responsibilities of each committee and Council
Evaluation of officer and personnel responsibilities
Evaluation of existing committees for redirection
Use of Temporary Short-Term Task Action Groups (TAGs)

Personnel reporting structure

Congregational information reporting

Annual report requirements

Creating a consistent rolling four year comparison of financial data

Annual meeting timing

Financial reporting

The Planning Committee urges the By-Laws Committee to have a draft of their revised By-Laws for review by Council by January, 2010.

E. Financing Needs

- **Increase Membership**

This issue is covered in Pillars I (Social Action) and III (Fellowship) but is a critical component to our ability to implement these plans. Therefore, we are emphasizing the following details:

- Be a welcoming church.
- Identify newcomers and extend an invitation to join us for worship.
- Increase visibility of the church in the community.

- **Increase Membership Revenues**

- Increase pledge percentages
- Increase endowments and long-range giving – Create a Legacy Committee reporting to Finance for this purpose. *(Form in June, 2009 and begin in September, 2009)*

- **Increase Fundraising Income**

- Identify and explore new fundraising opportunities.

- **Increase Facility Income**

- Expand use of facilities by organizations outside of the church and re-evaluate rental rates to outside groups.

- **Reduce Expenses**

(Report to Council, on-going efforts to manage challenging times. June, 2009)

F. Personnel

Our current staff and the hours they work each week, as of April 2009, are as follows:

Title	FT/PT	Hours
Pastor	FT	
Associate Pastor	FT	
Director of Christian Education	PT	Aug. To mid-June 25 hrs.
Director of Music and Organist	PT	Sep-Jun 20hrs; Jul-Aug 10hrs
School Superintendent	PT	Sep-Jun 10hrs
Administrative Assistant	PT	Sep-Jun 30hrs; Jul-Aug 15hrs
Sexton	PT	20hrs
Youth Music Instructors (2)	PT	Sep-Jun; approx. 35 rehearsals each

Based on the needs identified through the planning process, and through conversations with a wide sampling of congregants and committees, the Planning Committee recommends that the Personnel Committee continue its careful review of personnel, their responsibilities and their reporting structure, and, working with the By-Laws Committee, be prepared to present the results of their reviews by the June, 2009 church meeting.