



First Church of Christ
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

www.firstchurchsandwich.org

Long Range Plan Synopsis
2009

We are excited about your interest in reading the synopsis of the Long Range Plan. If you are interested in reading the plan in its entirety, you may view or download the document from the church website, or request a copy from the office.

Read. Rejoice. React. Respond!

First Church of Christ

Long Range Plan Synopsis

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 growth. We will become more accessible to all people, broaden our spiritual education to all generations, and increase our service to 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 all of us to work hard with open minds and warm fellowship.

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.

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.

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.

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

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. Become 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. ONA statements recognizing this and expressing commitment to continually work against such oppression are encouraged.

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

A Green Team has already been established at First Church. This Green Team will draft a Green Action Plan in consultation with the Trustees, staff, and congregation.

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.

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.

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.

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 hiring of a new Christian Education Director is recommended to provide separate oversight of adult education and youth education.

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.

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.

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.

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 all generations within our church family.

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. *(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.)*

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. A program that encourages 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.

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

Foundations

These Foundations are necessary to support the four Pillars. (Social Action, Spiritual Development, Fellowship, and Youth)

A. Internal Communications

Through the activities undertaken to complete this plan, it was clear that communication within the church and congregation needed 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.

We are anticipating that members of the Church Council will take on this responsibility.

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).

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.
- Improving air circulation in the Sanctuary during the summer and winter months.
- Investigate whether to refurbish or replace the Pipe organ.
- Recognizing the Summer Garden Service as a permanent part of our worship offering and have it supported by the Pastors and church staff.
- Investigate physical changes to the Chancel area to provide more room.

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 possible.

(As of April 2009, an ad-hoc By-Laws committee will have been formed.)

E. Financing Needs

In order to grow programs, facilities or staff, we must grow income.

- Increase Membership
- Increase Membership Revenues
- Increase Fundraising Income
- Increase Facility Income
- Reduce Expenses

F. Personnel

Our current staff and the hours they work each week, as of March 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

During the next 5 years, The Personnel Committee will need to continue its careful review of church staff, their responsibilities and reporting structure.

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

First date may indicate a beginning time, formation, or reporting. Second date may be an update or implementation.

Deacons:

Continue Open and Affirming Awareness Program – 6/09, 4/10
Support Small Group Ministries(9/09) and spiritual gifts assessment - (11/09),
1/10
Consider changes or enhancements to current worship offerings - 9/09
Coordinate “greet and pass-off” program for visitors - 9/09
Support the establishment of a Fellowship Committee (social events) - 6/09, 1/10
Review promotional materials for the church – plan 6/09, begin 9/09

Trustees:

Support existing Green Team efforts and plan – 9/09, 1/10
With Green Team consider improving circulation of air in Sanctuary – 11/09
Consider physical changes to Chancel - 1/10

Outreach:

Encourage formation of mission teams – 5/09, 6/09

Planning:

Support Public Relations ministry – 6/09, 1/10
Investigate parking opportunities and report to Council – 1/10
Organ refurbishment/replacement with Music Committee – 1/10
With By-Laws Committee - By-Laws Revision – form 5/09, draft 1/10
Mission Statement (with By-Laws Committee) – begin 9/09

Christian Education:

Review opportunities correlating youth and adult bible study – 6/09, 9/09
Continue review of lay leadership training – 9/09, 1/10
Review opportunities for inter-generational activities – 1/10
Educational expansion and development – 9/09, 1/10

Church Council:

Compile descriptions of each operating committee and publish – 9/09

Clergy/Worship:

Support Summer Garden Service – 7/09
Support “greet and pass-off” program of Deacons – 9/09
Consider alternative worship services – 9/09

Finance:

Continue on-going efforts to manage challenging financial times – 6/09
Create Legacy Committee/Planned Giving – form 6/09, begin 9/09

Personnel:

Continue careful review of personnel, responsibilities and reporting – 6/09