

Annual Report 2020
From the Visioning Team

In early 2020 the Trustees started talking about the need to plan the use of the anticipated funds from the sale of the parsonage. These discussions led to the realization that we, as a congregation, need to engage in a deeper visioning process to help us define how we live our lives as Christians in the Burlington of today. Out of these discussions emerged the Visioning Team. This past summer the Trustees asked Jennifer Jorgenson, Mandy Grace, Kipene Tabu, Charlies Smith, Tony Hall, and Rob Backus, to be the team members working with Pastor Elissa. Elissa announced this team's organization to the Congregation in August.

In November we were formally given our charge before the Congregation. Pastor Elissa told us we had "been entrusted with the responsibility of leading this church in a communal conversation and assessment of congregational priorities, and translating the results of those conversations into a set of actionable goals and Strategic Plan for First Church over the next decade." We agreed to take on this responsibility and to faithfully fulfill our commitment to our Congregation and the body of Christ.

We first met in October and since then have met regularly. Our early discussions allowed us to realize that we need the help of an experienced professional who works with churches. There are not a lot of people who do this work. We solicited proposals from two professionals and settled upon the Reverend Dr. Claire Bamberg. Dr. Bamberg came highly recommended. We have found her to be intelligent, congenial, and to possess an understanding of our needs. She is highly trained for this work and has deep connections to Vermont.

In 1978 Rev. Bamberg received her undergraduate degree in Religion from Connecticut College. In 1982 she earned her Master of Divinity degree from Harvard University. She then moved to Vermont to become the pastor of the United Church of Bethel. She remained there for six years. She moved to Indiana where she earned a doctorate in Pastoral Care and Counseling at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. She founded Mt Gilead Counseling Center in Bloomington, Indiana and ran it for 12 years. In 2002 she returned to Bethel to work with that congregation for a second time. She had obviously created, and maintained, meaningful relationships with members of that church. She is also a licensed mental health professional and a certified mediator. She brings a unique set of skills and training to her work. Along with this education Dr. Bamberg brings 35 years of relevant experience to her work with us. This includes work with churches, ministers, lay leadership, and the private sector. In 2020 Dr. Bamberg made a permanent move back to Vermont. For more information you should check out her Linked-In page. The amount, and variety, of work she has done is stunning. All of it will help her help us. She is a critical part of what we hope to accomplish.

We are still in the early stages of our call but have already had deep discussions about the nature of our task and the goals we need to accomplish on the way to fulfilling our charge. We are beginning to develop concrete goals and actions. Our charge from the Trustees requires us to complete our work in 18 months and to keep the Congregation informed of our progress, the work we have done and our unfolding goals and processes. The success of this deeper visioning

process will ultimately rest upon the work that we, as a Congregation, do together. The active involvement of the members, and friends, of our Congregation will be the critical element leading to an outcome that supports our lives together and in the world.