

CONGREGATIONAL VISION MEETINGS
 First Congregational Church of Burlington, UCC
 2021



Question #3
What is your vision for First Church, 3-5 years from now?

Themes:

(listed in accordance to frequency of occurrence)

The most frequent answer to this question was a form of **Reaching Out**, including:

- + Reaching out in Service
- + Reaching out by Engaging the Community
- + Reaching out through Social, Racial and Ecological Justice
- + Being Relevant, Bold, and Visionary
- + Connecting with local Colleges
- + Being God's Hands in the world
- + Being a presence in the community

The next most frequent answer saw an increase in our **Diversity**, including:

- + more diversity generally
- + more musical diversity
- + greater inclusivity
- + more racial diversity
- + greater economic diversity

The next most popular category of answer involved our **Building Use**, including:

- + Wider building use in general
- + Using the building for daycare/child care
- + Using the building for service and outreach
- + Using the building for Arts and Music
- + Using the building

Many of you mentioned ways we could be **welcoming in with our Programming**:

- + Youth programming
- + Family programming
- + Elderly programming
- + Musical programming
- + College programming
- + Intergenerational programming

Many thought our future would involve **Growing what we do well**, including:

- + General continuity
- + Providing others what we have received
- + Worship
- + Music
- + Possibility Shop
- + Service

Others envisioned **Building renovations**, including:

- + renovations for functionality and service
- + renovations to the sanctuary
- + renovations for accessibility

Some envisioned more general **Growth** and/or growth in the number of **families** in the congregation.

The next category of vision entailed deeper spiritual growth, through engagement of current members and small groups.

A few mentioned **Relationships** with local churches and the wider church, and some mentioned **Change** as part of their vision.

The last categories involved our **online presence**, **generosity** and **financial stability**.

Question #3

What is your vision for First Church, 3-5 years from now?

Quotes

- To further develop our church as a vibrant community resource - with more programming reaching many more people all week long.
- Restorative justice practices become part of our traditions....
- We would be a place where people of limited means feel welcome and participate...greater mix of music...small group gatherings....
- Continue to be a place of music...More services and programs with College Street.....
- A new art vestibule! ...The sanctuary is developed and enjoyed...a facility for people to live who have had a rough go of it...Zoom coffee hours...
- I would like to see the building used in a variety of ways, beyond Sunday mornings or for our own purposes. It think it would be great if we could host concerts, or art exhibits, or outside meetings for outside groups that need a convenient meeting space....I'd like to see more intergenerational opportunities....I would like to mingle and get to know other age groups...If you have a diverse membership, then you can have diverse programming. It is hard to know which comes first.
- Elissa is still here.....we have an awesome Music Director ...Bible study...and Community Activist...all balanced by inward looking... more people in church and more people working in church programs....
- We have kept - and expanded - our online presence in ministry to others.
- I would like to see a more holistic vision of the church where we are all grounded on an inward journey of praying spiritual foundation and in order to be involved in that journey to service in the world around us. ... a sensitive grappling with what it means to be a believer in the 21st century.
- I would love to see First Church like a vibrant, joyful place, and be filled with families again, and feel like there are many cups being filled, and that people have the excitement and energy to be with each other and to be God's hands in the wider world.
- I have no idea.
- I think with a young staff, we have a good opportunity to grow...we need to keep our sanctuary as a quiet, meditative place to worship....cross-generational interest groups where older people meet younger people and have some younger people meet middle-aged folks...so that we know the population better.

- I would like to see if we can balance the old with the new, and figure out a way to continue on with some of the traditions, but not be tied to them.
- We want a diverse church and we have talked quite a bit about the inclusive nature of the church - and where we want young families, in my opinion, and we want young people...so I hope we have a fair amount of focus in that area, so when walks into our church, they see that, and they can feel it...
- There is a lot of good in tradition - the tradition of the music - the tradition of the architecture
- ...The Christian message that is here is pretty solid at its core. I am not sure drastic change is what is needed, but I think intellectual change - thoughtful, meaningful change - is good...a more laid back way to the church
- Address outreach more...to provide service to the community - not to duplicate...a need that is not being met in the community...maybe it is child care for working families,...also outreach to young people in a college town.
- I hope the worship service has all the elements it has had - music, sermon and preaching that connects us, providing not only the connection among us, but to the wider world, and the broader community where we are...I would want to see an opportunity to..engage in the community and outreach aspect - to learn from each other....relevant and connecting to experience and have an impact in the world.
- Continue outreach and social programs.My vision is also that we grow the population of the church.
- I hope there can be new parts that either put a new test on something that is traditional and get to stay, or, that more diverse voices and sounds and music and art...get to come into the fold, so that it feels more well-rounded and more full, but not that it is an entirely different church from where it started....my secret hope is that aesthetically I would love to see some beautiful, aesthetic changes to the church that honor tradition-don't just take out all the beautiful old things...What I think of is - more types of people - more people feeling welcome - more people feeling that it's a space that they can come and wrestle through things and be in community with us. Just more types of people and more people called to it...not just "butts in the pews"...I would love to see really interesting programming...I think children's programming, community programming, outwards into the community as well as inviting people to our campus...musically and artistically - I think there can be/could be programming where it's using our space, but someone else is running it.
- The biggest thing is that I would hope to see more families..to me that is the biggest thing: trying to figure out how to get younger people to come...How can we reach out to let University kids know about our programs or how do we build programs that would encourage them to want to come "down" to our church - or somehow get us up on campus?
- Doing what we are doing and making sure it is known in the community - particularly the open and welcoming - would be an important foundational piece.
- Mission, outreach and education are the big themes.
- I think my prayer would be that more come and more continue to see the wonderfulness of what First Burlington UCC does.
- I actually think we need to grow our base, grow our congregation, but it has to be the right growth - it has to be God bringing people in...I would love to see more diversity in the body.
- Look at what unites us and try to build on that...supporting our young families..I think that when we are out serving the community our faith speaks.
- That it is active and helping the community - sharing God's love...I feel that we have to remember as Christians our job is not to have a social club that we have fun together with ourselves, but how can we be used as instruments of God.
- It would be neat to see the church filled with young people to see a singles group that went out bowling, and sailing or whatever fun thing.

- First of all, I would say more members, more community service work and mission work - period. We are here to serve.
- The opportunity to worship with music is important...we are missing an opportunity to embrace the college campuses on the whole and have opportunities for engagement involved in worship participation.
- More time slots in the week for worship, so wider demographics can attend and be involved.
- We have a very big building with lots of room that could be utilized throughout the week...I have the sense we could be more alive. We have a lot of space that is very valuable downtown space from the parking lot itself to the downstairs that is not being used. The bathrooms near the front entry are not functional right now and classrooms could be set up as daycare during the week...Representative artwork and the energy of people here now.
- We are moving in the right direction.
- A larger group, and increase in young people and a focus on what is happening in greater Burlington.
- I want to progress where we have had success.
- Go out and do God's work with each of other - period - on Zoom or in person.
- We have a presence in the community. The shape of our presence is good. I hope we are a physical presence together in the church and community.
- Music...I'd like to see us grow and be responsive to the needs of our community...I think the little piece of land we have next to RM house should go back to the natives... I am not saying that facetiously....
- I would love to work trying to get more children involved with church and coming to church...We have the capability in our facility to do more with local outreach.... A daycare program for some of the members that are here and need assistance...brining youth in.
- In 3-5 years I would like to see a very diverse congregation, .. not just in age but other things, too, like ethnicity and race and sexuality...The future of our world and the church are based on this..we need to be visionary.
- Outreach, diversity,..making it easier for people who have physical challenges to come to church...wherever equity is concerned, I want us to be in touch and speaking up for that.
- Tap daycare. It is hard to find here.
- Younger families and increased youth involvement...service opportunities for adults that go beyond the church...building ups this community with people who come from all walks of life.
- More new families..young people
- Challenging the youth to come up with and design the service, music.
- Opening the congregation up, keeping it fresh with new eyes.
- I'd like to see more branching out into different types of music...something other than voice and organ. Something a different style,...drumming...getting kids into a band...something with more variety.
- Maybe guest musicians from other resources.
- Still doing outreach, advocacy... maybe a shelter in times of political strife....helpful dealing with homelessness and poverty...taking action on things that have become political...if you are really listening to the gospel, there are things the church needs to take action against. Otherwise, the church should not be political.
- I don't know.
- Members serving in the community (people coming out of jail for the first time....) ... bring faith to the community.
- Greater mix of service with tech options...maintaining meaningful connections with this hybrid.

- Have to strip away the old routine and be honest about the need to meet people where they are...We have to go out into the community and attract people.
- Being relevant...we need to go beyond serving the most marginalized...new face/effort/energy....younger people
- Need to stay relevant...Make efforts to involve other denominations...continue to work towards social justice to entice people.
- Relevance is critical... Mission programs....create attractive programs..
- Day care program...integral part of service to the community in Burlington...core programs around social and racial justice...
- I would love to see outreach continue. I want us to take care of ourselves as well as others. We need to look at the building and see what we need to do to the building..Not that I want a windmill on the side of the church, but I think we need to look at the earth and what we have been given to take care of...I want to see growth.
- #1 is to keep doing what we are doing.
- Focus on the local community....realizing that we are going to be the body of Christ as a community of Christ and that means caring for one another, and others.
- We need to pay attention to our youth...All children have really suffered during this pandemic, emotionally.... We need to maintain our stature in Burlington because this city needs this church.
- We need to keep on doing what we are doing because we do a lot of things really well... I have great aspirations for where we can go with Elissa and what she can do as far as our spiritual development and - my money's on her.
- Utilizing the physical resources we have in the community...
- A family-oriented, welcoming church - the way it is going right now....Possibility Shop open more days.
- We are reaching out to ethnic groups, some of them are small - adults and children.
- I want to draw our attention to our "We are the Church" banner out front. ..I think refocusing on what that is about and how that leads us in terms of faith and social interaction...
- I would like to see us get more involve in mission - money and time. I think we have coasted on the Ronald McDonald house all this time and I think we need to be far more active with our giving and our time...diversity, but don't lose our past....
- I see our church getting involved outside itself for different causes so that we are more visible and open ...I think it is important to feed the people, but it is also important to exhibit what we believe outside the church - which opens up the church to more people coming in.
- Maintain our connection to the wider church - to the conference and the national church.
- We need to reach out to the college age kids. Liaison to Champlain, UVM, etc.
- Pay more attention to elderly members...I would like to see some kind of process, when a new project comes up..that would allow members of the congregation to express interest in certain projects because of experiences they may have in that area. More people involved; not just the same people.
- More interaction between the churches in the city - especially College Street and our church. ..I think there is a lot of duplication of effort... We need to do more with BLPOC and refugee people.
- Help with spiritual growth in long term care facilities, life long care facilities, assisted living.
- Continue to grow in inclusion, but not forgetting the older members...the music a 1/2 hour before worship, including children,..diversity of music. Maybe including rock and roll - I love guitars and violin and trumpets when they are used in worship.... study groups,

- I would like to see the church continue with the efforts for inclusivity.
- I would really like to see some of the monies coming from the RMH used to do some construction in the basement, in the narthex of the chapel, to rehab the bathrooms and make them usable. To have showers down there and washing machines, and make it available to the homeless, to street people that hang out on our property...and if necessary to have a sanctuary for illegal immigrants... music program... I would like to see contemporary music while keeping the traditional...
- Bathrooms under the sanctuary and building changes...Changes to the sanctuary to do other kinds of music. Culturally, that is what needs to happen.
- Combining with another small church to meet the needs of our children and youth...I am mostly thinking of the high school aged group, so they would have a bigger group.
- Programming for young adults, not just those with children. Stick with the hybrid model, „working towards being an accessible church..working towards an understanding that evolving and progressing with new ideas is not a scary thing. Be more open to that.
- We would continue to be supportive to the people in our community that need our help - and the Possibility Shop. ..Extremely welcoming community...
- More community outreach. Not necessarily church to church.
- I hope Elissa is still here...I see continuing growth in our church - welcoming more people - more diversity and more people... Continue with the music...Continue to have a thrift shop, provide meals, to have open doors, house AA meetings.
- That we are future growing. Elissa's ministry is more widespread and well known and will continue to draw people... That we will honestly work hard at increasing our diversity...I think that we need to go and reach out further to communities that are not currently in our building.
- Diversity. Learning to love people who are different from us. Being the church is being able to love a wide range of people.
- We need to do some work on the front facade of the church - the front door...I think we could do work on that whole area... Music groups used as outreach in the community.
- As long as I have been in this church I have seen a lot of growth in myself. I would like to see other people grow and change in things as I have grown...outreach, diversity,,Music ministry
- More diversity..I like the idea of reaching out more into the community by providing groups...Be more a part of the Burlington community. Something has got to happen with that front entrance....Find a path to some financial stability....
- Mission work for adults...mission travel
- Install a labyrinth...we've got all this property that faces the main street...have an ongoing opportunity for small groups, where a certain number of people make a commitment for a certain period of time to be fellow travelers on a spiritual journey.
- A meaningful, robust music ministry.
- Through innovations and creativity (creativity of our minister and our creative ministries position) we might have a chance at growing our membership. We need to invest in that and turn that into a long term asset that is being monetized...How might we use the funds to stimulate the creativity of the staff and some of the innovations of the last year or so, to rebuild membership?
- Providing music for the congregation and to the community..the preaching, the mission,- I mean providing mission as a downtown church to the people of Burlington, as well as to Vermont and to the world.... I think we are doing a lot of things right.

- Getting together in smaller groups.
- We have an aging building and a lot of space. It will take a lot to make it safe and accessible to the community at large... the space beneath the narthex. It is below level, so access would be a challenge..but for now it is wasted footage.
- Reach out more through justice ministries.
- More young families...FCCB should be a leader in setting Sunday morning aside..
- Going to one service... outreach - to keep what we are doing in the community going.
- Music being a large part of it, with all the children's voices...An active church reaching out to the community.
- A travel program...open to the community...Mozart Festival had a winter series here, and the public came. First Night used to have shows here. I hope we can keep up our great music program...
- More active youth groups,..I would like to see the physical space of the church reviewed. There is so much wasted space here.
- Time, financial resources, and energy committed to reaching. New communities... diversify our musical repertoire,..
- to find ways to address the deep need in our city and county to bring people together across divides and be a place of dialogue, healing and restorative justice.
- Connect with - and develop deeper relationships with - other faith communities. Do more in the ecumenical/interfaith space, possibly around social and environmental justice advocacy and action.