

## Education-Conversation- Community Hub

*Blessed be our ability to build community -*

*Briana Saussy, founder of Sacred Arts Academy Training*

### Original Charge/Scope:

**Focus:** Facilitate community education/conversations with topics such as justice, environment, spirituality, homelessness, local interests; support covenant/target groups (elderly, teens) w/meals, hospitality, conversation, speakers, community involvement. Upgrade security system; renovate building spaces for flexible use, streaming and projection capabilities, and art/artwork. Connecting/creating conversation partners from a wide swath of the community; bridge building programs, refugees and immigrants supported; music education/performances; cancer support groups, pre-teen coffee house, Vacation Bible School, speakers of interest to college students, non-profit incubator, co-working space. Consider researching FCCB History for a deeper look at social justice issues and FCCB involvement.

Initial Proposals	
Church History	Community Conversation Hub
Exploring Covenant Groups	Lunches for Smaller Groups/Community Non-Profits
Economic Security for All	Place for Cancer Support Groups to Meet
Music Education Idea	Engaging Youth and Families
Church Sponsored Space for Music	United Nations of Burlington
Praying with Our Feet	First Church Hub

## **Research and Findings:**

We researched and discussed as a group reviewing initial proposals bundled in the Education-Conversation-Community Hub packet. We also consulted Partnering with Current Programs / Expansion regarding similar proposals and determined where proposals best fit to make the strongest. We also attended a larger conversation with all members of proposal groups to discuss collaboration and how to proceed with intentionality.

Through the work of the Educational HUB (ED HUB) group, we realized that much of what we are proposing can be done if we put intentionality into our building both in its physical structure, accessibility, and in physical space inside the building. Educational HUB met with the Building Projects & Renovation and spoke regarding the needed Media that ties in closely with Contemporary Worship & Media.

Additionally, ED HUB met with both Cyndy and Tony Hall, members of the Partnering with Current Programs / Expansion vision proposal group, to discuss similar focuses and proposals.

In addition to meeting with the Building Projects & Renovation group, we met with the Rev. Elissa Johnk and Lucy Samara early on to review the present church structure. We followed up with a tour of the church building to understand what usable space existed.

Creating a HUB will require additional configuration. We contacted Michael Samara for advice on creating/holding intentional spaces and supervision of faith based group facilitators. Michael Knauer, treasurer, and Heather Pipino (Bookkeeper) guided financial resources needed regarding staffing. We have also explored the costs of upgrading our existing technology and media. Doug Viehmann and Caroline Catlin helped provide information around additional expenses on the needed tech that would live into our church's goal of offering hybrid options recognizing that hybrid furthers accessibility.

As we look toward the future of the First Church, knowing where we have been in the past and how we exist in the present is very important. The ED HUB team recognized that we only know what we know. Both Rob Backus and Lou Rochford reached out locally to potential community partners that could provide additional information as we continue exploring our church identity and history.

## **The First Church as a HUB**

*We are physically in the central part of Burlington; let's be Present.*

First Church HUB would become a central space to hold space for various proposed projects, community, and future projects. First Church HUB would include community conversation spaces, youth and family engagement, and music/art. The First Church HUB goals are:

- Nurture spirit in service, music, meditation, and life milestones

- Support families where there are gaps: child-care and tween-teen community engagement.
- Serve community organizations centered in justice-seeking spaces to commune and engage
- Host intergenerational spaces for community meals, performances, and lectures that highlight spirituality, justice, and environment.
- Homeless people who need a facility where they can quickly clean/freshen up and access community services<sup>1</sup>

Primary areas that the First Church HUB would serve is:

- Community Gathering and Conversation
- Families, Youth, and Young Adult
- Music and Art Conservation

To be known in the Burlington community is committing to knowing ourselves. One of the proposals that ED HUB was asked to consider was taking a deeper look at our **Church History**. The ED HUB working group acknowledged that a book was written by Rev. John Nutting that was an accumulation of information available through a point of view inside the First Congregational Church of Burlington, Vermont.

To continue recognizing our church's role in the local community history, we propose researching the history of the land that our Church exists on today. We have identified this as its project, not falling within the categories of the First Church HUB or an affinity group. However, this is an essential part of our work and will help us be aware while we become a community hub. The desired outcome of this project would include continuing education for members and friends of First Church and the community. We, as a community, need to recognize the role that we have played in the past with local history, politics, and contentious issues that are now considered decisive moments. This project will educate our church community and inform the local community about where we have been in the past, where we are now in the present, and where we will be in the future by examining our identity in this process.

## **Community Gathering & Conversation**

**Our Community Gathering & Conversation** space will be home for affinity groups and Adult Educational Programming that meets on the First Church of Burlington, VT, Church campus. This will serve as a center for First Church of Burlington's Hospitality "with the" goal of fostering an extravagant and radical welcome to current church members and community members.

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<sup>1</sup> The parts of the the proposal that talk about homelessness is " serving disenfranchised homeless communities", "facility where they can quickly clean/freshen up and grab a quick bite to eat", "Poss-shop customers can easily sign up for a community dinner", "Homeless person stops by on a cold day for a quick shower and takeaway snack", CVEOE Resource Table will have space

This community space will hold space for **Covenant/Affinity Groups** connected to First Church. Many proposals we reviewed included smaller, more intimate groups for community and connecting with others who share life experiences. Examples of these affinity groups include the Fellowship Breakfast (formally known as the Men's Breakfast), the Women's Book Group, and regular small groups during sermon series. Different affinity groups may consist of Cancer Support Groups for Survivors and Caretakers, Grief groups, activity groups, i.e., hiking, hobby groups, and affinity groups related to age, sexual identity, gender identity, etc.

The Community Gathering space would be able to host lunches/food gatherings among various affinity, special focus groups, and community non-profits. It would be up to each group to determine how to have lunch or organize lunch. Church staff would not be responsible for providing lunch but could help make coffee, order out if needed, etc. First Church would be willing to provide kitchen space or the downstairs kitchenette to aid in hosting these lunches.

The space can also provide a list of suggested speakers from other affinity groups and hub connections that are part of First Church. Affinity groups/Community leaders will be asked if they are willing to share knowledge/wisdom as part of sharing space. We strongly encourage a stipend/payment for the speaker's time, recognizing the inherent value in someone's time and experience.

We will create space, structure, and support for **Community Dinners** in the space. Community dinners will include holding space for various constituents. Dinner will be provided, focusing on specific groups, community concerns, or focuses. Hosting dinners, as well as conversations or presentations during these dinners, offer more than one benefit. These gatherings help members of the church and community members who may not be part of the church to get to know each other and even encourage community members to become Sunday visitors. Being Christ-like, Jesus broke bread with everyone and was a critical part of his ministry. We will be better able to educate ourselves about services, programs, and justice work in our areas. Partners in this goal will include New Alpha Congregation, New Americans, Abenaki Brothers and Sisters, Vermont Interfaith Action, and community partners working with individuals experiencing homelessness and mental health (COTS, Pathways Vermont).

## **Engaging Youth and Families – HUB**

The Second Primary focus of the First Church HUB will be supporting/bringing in families with younger (teenage) adults. Our existing engagement through First Church offers religious education to elementary school children, middle school and high school youth ministry shared with College Street UCC, and confirmation class. We also co-sponsor a very successful yearly Multi-Generational Vacation Bible School called Peace Camp in the summer. One of the successes of our outreach during the Pandemic was that families were supported through zoom meetings designed for them by prioritizing engaging with Families, Youth, and Young Adults and creating a community that supports these demographics.

An example of an event sponsored by the Family, Youth, and Young Adult part of the First Church Hub would be a monthly/bi-monthly "Parents Night Out." Parents Night Out would include free child-care from age 0 up through Elementary School aged children, consisting of a craft, a meal, and a video. It would be held on a Friday or Saturday night, giving parents a night of the week that works for their schedules to have a date night. This event would run between 5:30-8:30 PM or 5:00-8:00 PM.

Additionally, a mentoring program would be put in place. Active Members with children would be encouraged/assigned to mentor/befriend new families with kids. The member-mentoring program would intentionally connect people. It gives a new family somebody to get to know and slowly branch out, giving the new family an "in" and an easier time getting involved.

To support our younger (teenage) adults and expand our offerings, creating a functional youth drop-in site would give a permanent space for groups catering to teenagers and a safe drop-in space for teenagers. This will be an expansion to our already existing youth ministry. To reach this dream, we will need to check out the physical space that presently houses the youth space or find an alternative space, which would allow updating the space to respond to specific concerns around accessibility and air filtration. Invest in some additional items for the youth space, including (potentially) their own Keurig, mini fridge/snacks & drinks.

### **Music & Art Conservatory,**

The third primary focus of First Church HUB Space is developing space for Music & Art Conservatory.

Two similar proposals for Educational HUB were Music Education Idea & Church sponsored space for Music. These proposals will encourage and support musicians, children, and youth in a world where music education gets cut from the programming when budgets are tight in traditional school settings. Music is integral to the church and tradition. This will remove barriers for children who cannot pick up an instrument otherwise. The spaces will be available for other groups and organizations interested in utilizing the space for partnership. One example of a success is the TRAD Vermont group and Very Merry Theater Summer programming being held at First Church this Summer. By moving the Religious Education classrooms into their wing on the third floor, we could repurpose space near the Music Director's existing office, creating a central space for music in the church. This central space will include potentially soundproof practice areas. The Chapel, Sanctuary, or other ample community space can be used for rehearsals and concerts.

This space will be accessible to professionals, beginners, and children. Space can be provided to those offering lessons with a discount/minimal cost to church and community members with limited income and means.

### **Extension of our First Church HUB Hospitality:**

In addition, to expand our Hospitality, we would be remiss not to acknowledge the work that First Church has done in the past few years regarding hospitality.

Our past few years have included exploring new ways to extend hospitality outside the physical church building. This includes our special summer programming, including sunset boat rides, potluck meals, music and entertainment, and last year's Beer & The Bible. First Church members who play a crucial role in our Sunday Hospitality have attended The Art of Hospitality training held by the United Methodist Church annually.

**On Sundays**, Our connections team, welcomers, ushers, and hospitality team have worked on a renewed effort to form connections with church members, new members, and visitors. This includes creating a team of welcomers that welcome individuals outside of the building and a connections team that focuses on maintaining and establishing connections both in person and through the drop-off of materials to those who primarily connect with the church digitally. In the past few years, we have created a pathway for visitors to become new members with the help of Hannah Sachs, former Creative Ministries Director, and this effort has continued since her departure. We encourage the following steps to extend our hospitality efforts further:

- Create and maintain an updated Church Directory that is easily accessible by members but still protects the safety and privacy of members First Church itself can hold the draft copy of the directory, update it with regularity, etc <sup>2</sup>.
- Encourage having temporary name tags available. Someone should be able to choose to wear it on their own conscience. A person should not feel forced or pressured to wear a name tag unless necessary for safe church and staff employment.

### **Submitted proposal aspects explored but not included**

The Educational HUB group was very enthusiastic about all the proposals for our vision team. While spending time envisioning what our church would look like as a HUB, we found that three proposals that would fall into what was defined as what we have defined as an "Affinity Group" have a lot more potential and are concerning areas. After meeting with the Partnering with Current Programs / Expansion, we determined that there were similar focuses and that some proposals similarly align. Both visioning groups agreed that the proposals **United Nations of Burlington, Economic Security for All**, and **Praying With Our Feet** are potential areas for expanding our current programming and justice work through the Current Program/Expansion

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<sup>2</sup> This is part of why people have the option of hiding information on Church Realm and we want to make sure that we are aware of the safety concerns as well as the pros here. (following Safe Church Policies & being responsive of Domestic Violence survivors)

vision group. In the future, these areas of justice may also be affinity groups or serve as important educational programs for First Church.

## **Staffing Needs**

ED HUB recognizes that our current staff will not be sufficient for our proposal. This is not due to a lack of skills or experience, it is due to recognizing that our pre-existing staff team is already asked to do a lot, and it's a justice issue to respect our staff's energy and time. The following staff positions will be in addition to the position the church is searching to fill: the Director of Creative Ministries position.

Re-envisioning some positions: We may consider looking at existing positions' present expectations/work tasks. Providing other opportunities to present staff members to move into roles, have more hours, etc.

The additional staffing will be needed for this proposal to succeed:

### **Education Hub Coordinator – Paid Part-Time Staff Member (to Start)**

ED Hub Coordinator needs to be able to establish, market, coordinate, partner with outside community groups and internal church/congregational groups etc. The facilitators will need to be able to connect with a staff person. This staff person will potentially supervise the facilitators of the covenant/affinity groups. We feel that we intentionally do not want to have this be an “add” on to current staffing hours. It is important that we create the space, hours and ability to focus on this work for it to be successful. At the same time, this is a true justice issue as we need to not take advantage of staff with increased asks and lack of compensation. This would allow us to support sustainability in staffing and not contribute towards burnout

### **Costs:**

\$30-35 an hour for 5-10 hours (could need more than 10 hours weekly in the future depending on success) for a total of \$8400-\$19,700 annually

### **Additional Security Staffing**

Costs: Unsure of hourly rate for security, anticipated a range of additional security that would build over implementation of the ED Hub with approximately 5 hours extra week initially through 20 hours later on.

### **Expand Childcare Staffing:**

Approximately 5 hours weekly

\*Costs per hour unknown

### **Staff/Volunteer Needs:**

- For additional hospitality & set up.
- If newly developed programming involves youth or children it could increase asks of children ministries and youth leader time.

### **Skilled Volunteer Facilitators for Affinity Groups**

- Awareness and Trained around Safe Church and Boundaries
- A strong understanding of "Do No Harm"
- Possess Confidence and feeling at ease
- Possess Active Listening Skills
- Having a welcoming but appropriate sense of humor

### Have the Ability to

- Communicate clearly
- Inspire
- Delegate
- Make genuine connections with participants easily
- Acknowledge group dynamics
- Create a sense of "team" and feeling of togetherness.
- Be prepared and organized
- Balance friendly, fair, and firm (when necessary)

\*Potentially able to offer a Stipend to the facilitators or a supervision of facilitators

### **Staff For Church History Project Proposal**

Core congregation members needed to begin the work and then consider partnering with already existing historical society (Chittenden County Historical Society) and/or contracting with a history student (preferably Graduate Student) who would be interested in working on a church history project, for a stipend. Someone who can find/connect with community partners who can provide information.

\*Cost for student stipend and printing unknown.

### **Goals for physical space**

This section overlaps with the Building and Renovations proposal/group as well as the desired contemporary worship vision of staff and congregation members. These groups have additional detailed information about possible costs for these upgrades/changes needed. Imperative to the success of an Education Hub, numerous updates are needed to space including the following:

## **Accessibility**

Elevator is needed for accessible use of the third floor rooms and space. Second floor space (between choir space and children's church currently) needs accessibility updating as well. Other possible areas of interest and use that need updating is where the existing youth room/Hilah's office is)

\*costs unknown

## **Updating lighting, technology and possible furnishings for multipurpose space use.**

- The chapel and the dining room need updates for acoustics, tech/AV use and furnishings/lighting to be able to be used as a performing space, for community gatherings, and contemporary worship.
- Areas needed to store tables/chairs etc., in a way that they are out of the way for other events, easily accessible, etc.
- Monitors, speakers, microphones are needed in regularly used meeting spaces to allow (costs detailed below)

## **Intentional cleaning out of storage space**

- Organized and intentionally led process needed assessing current items stored throughout church
- Discernment needed about what items need to be in the church with future vision planning in mind and what things do not need to be in the church and could better serve outside groups
- Need to have an entire church agreement regarding this process and around management of items coming in to church space moving forward
- Creation of a team of individuals who can move this process forward needed

## **Associated costs:**

\$2500-5000 for new wired in hub/router to allow for increased WIFI use

\$1-2000 per room for monitor, zoom, camera, speaker and microphone

Additional wifi boosters for several spaces in the church

AV upgrades and sound upgrades for chapel and dining room costs unknown

T-Coil for hearing accessibility in our sanctuary, chapel, dining hall etc.. (worship and gathering spaces)

**Additional detailed costs needed- Here is an example of AV/Tech expenses from a similar church making similar upgrades:** *Hybrid worship on Zoom 2-way communication between house and zoom where people both in the house and on zoom lead portions of the service. Video Zoom Feed: video feed to zoom that is mixed from our two PTZ cameras and 2 wireless MEVOs. Congregational music is set line by line and is shown on the lower third of the video. Other spoken words of the congregation are shown on screen. Possible Monitor in the House Usually a gallery view of zoom participants- Zoom speakers are pinned so they can be seen full-screen Monitor switches to a piece of art during the sermon Monitor on the back wall Always a gallery view of zoom participants*

- 2 PTZ Optics NDI 20X cameras - \$1800/each
- 2 MEVO Start cameras - \$400/each
- 1 PTZ Optics 4th Gen IP joystick camera controller - \$650 8 input network switch
- \$75 iMac 24" - \$1300 Dell 24" external monitor (as second screen for iMac)
- \$250 Plugable Display docking station with datalink HDMI splitter
- \$170 (to mirror the second screen on the big screen at the front) 75" LED monitor for congregation mounted on rolling stand – appr. \$1000
- 60" LED monitor mounted on back wall for presiders to see zoom – appr. \$600
- Lenova Idea Pad Chromebook to drive monitor on back wall - \$250
- Audio Runs three separate mixes: House audio does not include piano or congregational overhead mics does include audio from zoom speakers Zoom mix Monitor mix for the pianist Allen & Heath QU-16C 16 rack mounted mixer
- \$2000 Focusrite Scarlett 2i2 digital audio interface - \$190
- 4 Shure QLX wireless mic systems w/ 2 handheld mics and 4 body packs – appr. \$1000/ea
- 4 Acacia headworn mics for Shure body packs (2 black and 2 tan) - \$100/each Shure MX418D/C Podium mic - \$270
- 2 Rode M5 mics - \$100/each Mackie srm
- 150 powered speaker for spot monitor at the piano \$250 Gator Locking audio rack - \$900

### **Timeframe:**

We are looking at getting some new things going with a gradual beginning that will grow and expand both for the church and the larger community. With that said, the updating of AV/Tech, updating of sound, accessibility updates would all happen over time and gradually as we build need/use of space. Similarly the hours of child care, security staffing and Ed Hub coordinator would be minimal at the beginning and gradually grow along with the Ed Hub programming.

Someone mentioned yesterday at the Friday meeting of slowly building affinity rooms, opening spaces up, etc. instead of going at it all at once.

**Vision Goals this project meets: This proposal responds to the following expressed vision feedback from the congregational small group listening sessions held:** more community involvement, open forums, create dynamic opportunities for young children and

families to be more plugged in, help and be a more active part of our community, update spaces to be accessible in order to be utilized, continue hybrid worship and engagement, continue to be relevant, create small group opportunities, reach out to the greater community, use sanctuary and other meeting space to hold community events, more public exposure, modernize gathering spaces, embrace radical hospitality, support new ideas and increase outreach.

**Measure of Success:**

Greater presence in and connectedness within our community. Minimal empty space during business hours. Robust participation in congregational and community programming. Increase in families, children and youth attending small groups/programming. Greater amount of groups offered/facilitated meeting greater needs of specific groups of people. Contemporary worship opportunities increased due to updates and upgrades. Ease of hybrid offerings within committees, worship, small groups due to AV/Tech upgrades. First Church seen as a leader in convening community conversations and offering educational opportunities. Expanded use of the facility for all of these purposes. Increase in church attendance and membership as a result of the broader community reach through various programming.

**Total Costs:**

If fully funded:

- One time costs:
  - \$10,000 AV/TECH upgrades
  - Lighting/furnishings/sound updates/upgrades unknown,
  - Accessibility upgrades/updates costs unknown
- Ongoing annual costs:
  - Child care staffing and security staffing unknown
  - Stipend for facilitators and grad student unknown
  - \$8400-19700 for Ed Hub Coordinator