

Fall 2023

The Board of Trustees

The Vision Team

with input from the Strategic Implementation Team

FCCB STRATEGIC VISION

WITH IMPLEMENTATION GOALS



The First Congregational Church of Burlington has developed this Strategic Vision as a people of faith, seeking to discern the will of God. In the context of our mission and considering the abundance of resources that have come to us, through three years of work, study, and prayer, we have identified this Strategic Vision as an articulation of the discipleship path to which God is calling us.

This Strategic Plan is offered to the Trustees, informed by the following assumptions:

- 1) That the Trustees and Implementation Team will have available to them all proposals and supporting documentation.
- 2) That the Trustees and Implementation Team will consult those documents and familiarize themselves with the research, partnerships, and necessary steps for implementation each plan proposes.
- 3) That the Trustees and Implementation Team will sequence initiatives, based on both the information included in this Strategic Plan and information to which the Vision Team and the congregation may not have had access.
- 4) That throughout this process the Trustees, Implementation Team and work groups will keep the congregation informed, engaged, and excited about all that is happening in our sacred spaces.

The Vision Team understands that the voting results provide valuable information about the congregation's values and level of commitment to the various projects. These values provide guidance but cannot mandate sequencing. The Team tried to make this clear during the discernment process and wants to clearly state now: like dominoes, the completion of certain projects with fewer votes must be done before other projects, with more votes, can get off the ground.

Leadership Structure

The Trustees' first task will be selecting an Implementation Team. The implementation Team will oversee all the projects and ensure that each project unfolds in an orderly fashion; that projects are aligned on tasks of common interest; that redundant work is avoided, and that budget authority and permission is sought and received from the trustees (and congregation as the case may be) before commitments are made or contracts are executed.

A further, early-stage task of the Trustees and the Implementation Team will be to recruit "working groups" for each of the individual projects. Under the supervision of the Implementation Team, each working group will define its work plan for the orderly and efficient execution of its project. The working groups may or may not be comprised of the same congregation members who developed the proposal. What is

abundantly clear is that the congregation's involvement in the implementation and completion of this vision is imperative.

Sequencing of Projects

The Vision Team proposes two frames for sequencing the multitude of projects.

- 1) Sequencing based on the discernment results and
- 2) Sequencing based on which projects, regardless of the discernment tally, can be moved forward independent of critical preliminary steps such as the environmental and structural assessments and any remediation indicated by those assessments.

Many of the projects depend upon two preliminary steps: a structural assessment and an environmental assessment. These can commence immediately upon the naming of the Implementation team pending congregational approval for spending funds already set aside. In addition, the Vision Team strongly suggests that a professional assessment be performed on issues that are of common interest among many of the projects including but not limited to: accessibility needs, technology upgrades, safety/security systems and maintenance requirements that would be the FCCB's responsibility.

While these assessments and possible remediations are being done, other "independent" projects can be moving forward.

Parallel Process

Alongside the assessments, or immediately after, we suggest that the Trustees and/or the Implementation Team engage in a preliminary conversation with Partners for Sacred Places (PSP) which might prove to be a valuable resource. The Trustees and/or Implementation Team can then determine if it would like to solicit a scope of work statement and/or a detailed proposal. Conceptually, PSP might support in various ways including but not limited to: 1) conducting a feasibility study internally, within the congregation, and externally, in Burlington; including how to best utilize the funds from the sale of the parsonage; 2) identifying state and national funding sources; 3) providing a template agreement for the sharing of space with multiple possible uses, and, 4) providing a comprehensive and in-depth report of all findings, commitments, promises and agreements.

The Work Begins

In the following section we have identified projects that are “dependent projects.” These projects will not be able to begin their work until assessments are done, renovations made, etc. These projects are dependent, then, on that preliminary work being done. Based on the priorities identified in the congregational discernment process, the Vision Team proposes the following steps be taken, project by project:

Child Care:

- 1) Identify the space in which the center will be located/relative budget considerations
- 2) Issuing an RFP (request for proposal) to inform the selection of a partner provider
- 3) Assess cost of necessary renovations/program design
- 4) Apply for grants to support the establishment and resourcing of childcare centers
- 5) Issue an RFP (request for proposal) for renovation/construction
- 6) Select firm for construction
- 7) If the Implementation Team/Trustees determine that Child Care be under the pulpit, the teen program and the Faith Formation Director’s office may need to be relocated.

Measure of success at the completion of this section of the work: By the end of 2026 there will be a childcare center for infants housed in the church that will serve the needs of 16 (downstairs) – 20 (upstairs) infants/children, in partnership with a recognized, state-approved childcare provider group. The program will comply with all accessibility, regulatory and statutory requirements, including but not limited to bathrooms, wheelchair ramps and accommodation for square footage in all areas. Disadvantaged, vulnerable, marginalized family units and children will be prioritized for open spaces in the program. Equity of services will be a primary commitment by the partner provider.

Education Hub

- 1) Upon space allocation, deep clean-out (purge)
- 2) Re-purposing space/renovating
- 3) Upgrades, expanded within the rest of the church
 - a. Technology
 - b. Sound – proofing
 - c. Multi – purpose (comfortable) furniture
 - i. Note: some of these spaces are also considered for Contemporary Worship and Partners
 - d. Accessibility ~ upgrades made

- 4) Exploring staffing & other resources needed
 - a. Marketing
 - b. Air traffic control (space allocation & security)
- 5) Identify lay leaders/coordinators/program selection/Board members

Measure of success at the completion of this section of the work: First Church EDHUB would be a recognized, central space in which various community conversation spaces, covenant/affinity groups, adult education programming, youth and family engagement, and music/art would meet. The First Church ED HUB would nurture spirit in service, music, meditation. It would support the successful negotiation of life milestones, resourcing families where there are gaps: child-care and tween-teen community engagement, to name two. It would serve community organizations centered in justice, providing space to commune and engage, host intergenerational spaces for community meals, performances, and host lectures that highlight spirituality, justice, and environment. It would also hold space for unhoused individuals who need a facility where they can quickly clean/freshen up and access community services.

Worship Life

- 1) Changes in the sanctuary defined
 - a. Pews removed at front of sanctuary to make space around the pulpit larger
- 2) Technology upgrades, expanded within the rest of the church, including hearing technology
- 3) Repurposing other space
 - a. Contemporary Worship (dining room and chapel?)
 - b. Sound – proofing, hearing
 - c. Multi – purpose (comfortable) furniture
 - i. Note: these two spaces are also considered for Ed Hub and Partners

Measure of success at the completion of this section of the work: The space at the front of the sanctuary will be more accessible to larger groups, enabling more and easier movement both during worship and for other purposes.

Independent Projects:

In this section, we identify projects that stand on their own. These projects are not dependent on either preliminary assessments or significant structural alterations. These are also listed in order of discernment, though separated into the “independent

project" category:

1) Expansion of Current Partnerships and Adding New

- a. Vermont Interfaith Action is a main vehicle for several of these initiatives. Currently VIA has groups that are addressing public safety and economic opportunities in the context of racial justice, along with affordable housing/homelessness, correction reforms and immigration.
- b. JUMP
- c. Street Ministry
- d. Immigrant Support Program
- e. Abenaki
- f. Mental Health & Wellness (longest runway)
- g. Hope Fund (UCC)

Measurement of success at the completion of this section of the work: A greater engagement from within the congregation and the wider community, towards the transformation of people's lives through partnership (and ministry) with these specific groups.

2) Capital Plan:

- a) development and management of a multi-year capital improvement and planned maintenance schedule.
- b) development of a funding proposal including seed funding from RMH proceeds, annual budget appropriations and periodic special funding campaigns.

Measure of success: Funds are set aside towards future projects: routine maintenance, and property maintenance, planning for needs 5-10 years into the future. A permanent planning tool is in place to accommodate provisions for all future church building needs.

3) Housing

- a. Selection of partner provider
- b. Assess costs of necessary renovations to support program design
- c. Issue an RFP for construction/solicit bids
- d. Select firm for construction

Measure of success at the completion of this section of the work: 24 housing units are

built and maintained for the benefit of low- and moderate-income residents of Burlington (people who have economic needs), including but not limited to refugee and immigrant populations. The proposal (please refer to it) indicates that this be built between the Ronald McDonald House and the portion of the church building currently identified as the chapel, over the back parking lot. This will be done in partnership with a qualified, non-profit housing developer.


- 4) Front doors
 - a. Design (Historic assessment with the State)
 - b. Issue RFP / solicit bids
 - c. Select firm

Measure of success at the completion of this section of the work: A design for the doors that meets required standards for a historic building is implemented, allowing for more light, more visibility, security, and energy efficiency.

- 5) Music Program Home Base:
The intent of this project proposal is that music, robes, instruments, etc., are stored close to where they will be used.
 - a. Space assessment - Rehearsal Space & Storage Space
 - b. Storage of instruments, robes, and music (climate controlled)
- 6) Community Music Space Tie-In with Ed Hub and Partners
 - a. Practice, Performance and Lesson Space

These items were not prioritized in the discernment process, but may bear some consideration over time:

Consider how to assess, manage & coordinate rental income

What new space will now be available? (co-working space, for instance) 

Consider Public Bathrooms (if they can happen, given other space constraints)

Conclusion

Please note: The Vision Team encourages an annual review and assessment of progress and needs with each initiative. This assessment would articulate successes, challenges, thoughts, and any adjustments made. They would be shared with the congregation. Forums for congregational feedback are encouraged.

The Vision Team strongly suggests that information be available to the congregation on a regular basis so that interest and momentum continue to be high. We suggest timing regular releases of information to be available in the service, or on the website, and/or in the newsletter. The celebration of success, no matter their size, boosts energy, spirit, and the sense of efficacy in God's name.

Throughout this process the faithful people of the First Congregational Church of Burlington have sought to discern God's will for them. Our journey forward demands that we seek to understand the ongoing will of God for us. Continuing in a spirit of gratitude for the abundance God has provided, we trust that all that has been identified throughout this process (and more) will be accomplished, according to God's blessing. We deeply appreciate the commitment the congregation has shown to all phases of this undertaking. We know we have been supported by prayer throughout this time. We praise God from whom all blessings flow(!), and we encourage our family of faith to continue to see God's love evidenced in all that we will now seek to bring to life.

FROM THE STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION TEAM:

Having carefully and prayerfully studied the Strategic Vision and its accompanying materials, the Strategic Implementation Team, with the approval of the Board of Trustees, has chosen to follow the second sequencing (see SV, page 2) option, with careful attention paid to the discernment tallies of this spring. To this end, we have engaged Partners for Sacred Places (PSP), to help facilitate several of our early goals. (See page 2, bottom paragraph)

Given the project's overwhelming congregational support, we propose re-engaging our Childcare Team to begin work, according to the steps outlined on page 2 of the plan. This work will begin with a focus on the downstairs, under-Sanctuary space, with other spaces to be examined later, if congregationally desired.

At the same time, with the guidance of PSP, we will begin the work suggested by the "Ed Hub" goals outlined on page 3. Because much of this work will necessarily overlap with aspects of the "Worship Life" projects (page 3), and Music Life (page 6), we envision this work happening concurrently, utilizing the expertise of PSP to understand how to maximize our efforts. Similarly, we imagine that there might be some limited portions of the "Partnering" proposal (page 5) that can be equally well served by pairing with PSP to understand which partnerships might be best suited to long-term, mission-oriented success.

Like the Vision Team, we consider the Environmental work foundational to all the other projects listed above (see page 2). Each step of the process will consider carefully the environmental needs and repercussions going forward, and what steps might be taken to create a more eco-friendly building and community.

Finally, we propose that a date be set in the Spring of 2024 to have a series of congregational conversations surrounding the creation of a Capital Fund, and the amount of RMH funds to be allotted to it, and/or other projects. Combined with a feasibility study done by PSP, this timing will allow us to have a fuller sense of the costs associated with each project.

Once we have significant movement on the above, we then recommend examining and undertaking the remaining projects identified in the Strategic Vision.