



PATHS

For Our Future in a
Fast-Changing World

The Final Report of the
Task Force on Our Church's Future
June 2007

The Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Middlebury, Vermont

MISSION

PREAMBLE

The Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, was the first church in Middlebury and is now in its third century. We are a community that seeks to live by the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth that we love God with our whole heart and mind and that we love our neighbor as ourselves. In this spirit, we affirm universal and unconditional equality and acceptance of all. We affirm but one orthodoxy: a love of truth that is a sincere desire to understand how the world is and our place in it. With our whole heart, we desire to promote, among ourselves and in the world, compassion, justice, and peace, for such is the Kingdom of God.

STATEMENT

Our Mission is to live as Jesus taught, loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

VISION

Therefore, looking to the future with hope, our church community will be defined by all of these characteristics:

The life of Jesus of Nazareth will be the standard for all that we do individually and collectively.

We will reflect continuing growth in our understanding of our place in the world and our responsibility in it.

Children and Youth will be central to the life of our church and will be unconditionally accepted in it.

Our search for truth and a sustaining faith in God will be evident.

Communal worship in many forms will be vital to church life as will our support and encouragement for each other in our individual spiritual journeys.

Education in the ways of Jesus of Nazareth will be an essential and exciting part of our programs for children, youth, and adults.

We will be active and responsible stewards of Earth.

We will be practicing radical hospitality and welcoming all with unconditional equality and acceptance.

We will be caring with compassion for our church family and neighbors near and far.

We will be working for justice and peace among all people.

We will be committing our time, our treasure and our talents to fulfill this vision for our church.

Adopted unanimously at a Special Congregational meeting, October 29, 2006



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OF
MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT

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June 30, 2007

Dear Council,

This has been a very rewarding although challenging and certainly time-consuming experience for us all. We have been rewarded by the exciting work of this congregation and the involvement of so many in looking to our Church's future. As a congregation, we have evolved considerably since Tinus came to lead us. The long-range planning process has been truly going on since the search began for him.

Since the Pastoral Search Committee met in May, 2003 we have been through many transitions and each one seems to have made us stronger as members stepped up, accepted responsibilities, and undertook new projects on faith.

As Tinus said in the May 2005 *Church Matters*: "The church has to exist in an increasingly fast-changing world with an increase in the level of complexity adding to the degree of difficulty of being church with integrity." This report is proof that a caring community of faith can and does think about the bigger picture, does care about its neighbors near and far and wants to act accordingly—and with integrity. Tinus challenged us early on to be "a people" in relationship with God as opposed to being "individuals" in relationship with God. This report is surely an indication of giant steps forward toward this goal.

The congregational experience of developing and adopting the Mission and Vision statement was the most important work coordinated by the Task Force on Our Church's Future. The dialogue begun amongst us has continued and is proving an important part of being church in the 21st century. The Action Plan Team small group discussions with wide-ranging brainstorming have opened us to new opportunities to be church and to put that mission into action. Now, we need to build on these foundations as we carry on the legacy of those who have preceded us for over 200 years. It is all very exciting what we have done and what we are called to do in the coming years!

Sincerely,

Margaret Carothers, Russell Carpenter, Mark Gleason, Robert Regan, Paige Russell, William Warren, Janet Winkler and Rebecca Wright

PATHS for Our Future in a Fast-Changing World

The Final Report of the Task Force on Our Church's Future

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I. INTRODUCTION

Origin of Task Force. In the first year of the ministry of The Reverend Marthinus J. Riekert, and inspired by his leadership, the Church Council acknowledged the need for the congregation to actively consider its future. To that end, a “Task Force on Our Church’s Future” was appointed by the Council and convened by the chair, Janet Winkler, on October 4, 2005. The other members were Margaret Carothers, Russell Carpenter, Mark Gleason, Robert Regan, replacing Wesley John, Paige Russell, William Warren and Rebecca Wright.

Charge. In the words of the Council, “The Task Force is established to lead and engage the congregation in examining our identity—who we are, our strengths, liabilities, and spiritual needs, in defining what God calls us to do, in agreeing on core values that would be reflected in our vision of the future, in arriving at a statement of mission within our particular context, and in designing alternative strategies for action to advance that mission.”

Process. From the outset, while addressing the complexity of its charge, the Task Force sought to involve the congregation to the fullest extent possible, to solicit their views, engage them in discussion, and seek their judgment at key points in the process, in order to approach a consensus on the outcomes. Through questionnaires, discussions with potluck suppers and after church, brainstorming, wish-lists and “dream boards,” the Task Force sought views on church strengths and liabilities, things we do well and those we could do in addition or better, core values, and dreams and wishes for the future. A working list of core values and a catalog of members’ dreams for our church future are in the Appendices. These all contributed to the formulation of a statement of Mission and a Vision of the future – how this church would be described if it were achieving its mission. After feedback from the congregation, the Preamble, Mission and Vision (see inside front cover) were unanimously adopted at a special congregational meeting on Sunday, October 29, 2006.

How, then, to fulfill that Vision? At the congregational meeting, community members were invited to join one of six Action Plan Teams (APT) that focused on Caring and Community, Communal Worship, Education, Justice and Peace, Radical Hospitality and Acceptance, and Stewardship of Earth. More than 15% of the congregation volunteered to dedicate five months to the work of one of these teams. Each team was asked to address one or more specified statements from the Vision by developing a range of actions that would serve to achieve that part of the Vision and by providing estimates of related costs, demands on staff and volunteers, space and equipment requirements, and effects. (Appendix D). The Action Plan Teams’ reports were received in early April and appear, in their entirety, in the body of this Report. The remainder of this report addresses the implications of the Action Teams’ reports.

Rationale for this Report. We believe that preparing and securing the congregational adoption of the Preamble, Mission and Vision, which occupied the first year of Task Force activity, has fulfilled all but the final phase of the charge. These statements stand as our guide. Therefore, this report addresses strategies designed to fulfill our church’s mission.

Introduction

We have also been influenced by the concept that our church is moving from being a **Pastoral Church** (50-150 active members) to a **Program Church** (150-350 active members) with the operational changes that brings. In a **Pastoral Church**, members feel they all know each other and that their spiritual needs are met through a personal relationship with the pastor; leadership resides in a small cadre with the pastor at the center and one is directly involved with all church activities. As active membership reaches 150, administration becomes increasingly burdensome and the transition to a **Program Church** model offers a solution. A **Program Church** emerges from the need for a high-quality spiritual relationship with the pastor to be supplemented by other avenues of spiritual nourishment. Programs begin to fulfill that role and many cells of activity with lay leaders emerge; often the leader performs some pastoral functions (e.g., opening prayer, inquiries and follow-up with missing members, etc.) The emphasis of the pastor's role changes to becoming a resource for the lay leadership – recruiting, training, supervision, support, evaluation, planning, etc., and to redefining the one-on-one pastoral relationship with individuals to times of personal crisis and illness. In this report we have tried to anticipate our transition from a **Pastoral** church to a **Program** church.

From the outset, the Task Force has intended **not** to provide a fixed plan for the future but to offer the congregation a range of options that would lead to our achieving the Vision we have adopted. There is no single route to that Vision. Further, the church's experience of the past two years has demonstrated that growth in programs and activities arises primarily from the initial commitment of a small group to an idea, e.g., transitional housing, community suppers. This report offers ideas that we found inspiring, that we believe challenge our dedication as a Christian community and are worthy of pursuit. At the same time, we believe there are certain functions, education and communal worship among them that are integral to a Christian community and to which we must give our concerted best efforts. Because these reports come from you, the congregation, our expectation is that most of the ideas in them will move one or more of you to action and through your own initiative or the concerns of Boards and Committees, positive change will occur. We do not presume to select priorities among them. But for such change to happen we cannot wait for someone else to act. Each of us has both opportunity and responsibility and, as a community, we rely on that impetus.

We also believe that there are institutional initiatives that would promote and support our movement to fulfill our Vision, so you will find a few select recommendations in the next section that address the needs defined by the Action Plan Team Reports, which follow in Section III.

II. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications for this congregation of the Action Plan Team Reports are far-reaching and we urge the Council to become familiar with all the Reports. One notable theme recurs: **Education**. It is an essential component in Stewardship of Earth, Peace and Justice, Caring and Community, Radical Acceptance and Hospitality, Communal Worship, and, of course, in the proposals affecting children and youth, who are the future of our church. Education as an enrichment of Christian life and as preparation for action rests at the core of many of the programs outlined and is critical to an effective future for our church.

Therefore, we urge the Council for the next three to five years to focus on **education** with primary emphasis on education of our children and youth. This would not be to the exclusion of action but, rather, to ensure that we act knowledgeably and to equip ourselves to be as effective as possible in those actions we elect to undertake.

Task Force Recommendation: That the educational recommendations of the Action Plan Team Reports, particularly those with reference to children and youth, be given top priority in staffing and financing for the next three years.

We also believe that the vital future we seek as a faith community will be ensured only through continuing oversight by the Church Council. In the Mission and Vision already adopted we, as a congregation, have set out our intentions; the APT Reports describe some means to fulfill them. What remains to be undertaken, once they are accepted, is an annual assessment of our progress. We believe that is an appropriate leadership role for the Council.

Task Force Recommendation: That the Council establish a process for its annual oversight of progress toward the congregation's adopted Mission and Vision.

There are also implications for staffing, governance, financing, and facilities that are discussed below.

For Professional Staffing

It is inescapable that if our congregation is to welcome its young people as fully active members of our church family, educate the next generation for the meaningful living of Jesus' teachings, and have a vital continuing congregation, resources **must** be put toward the position of Director of Children's Ministries.

Every long-range report in the last 25 years as well as the two church profiles in that time have noted a need for a stronger, invigorated program for children and youth. The Action Plan Team on Education has produced an exciting, thoughtful, and thorough report with specific steps for new directions, but to succeed it will need the full support of not only the congregation, but a dedicated, talented, creative, and energetic director devoted solely to this task.

Task Force Recommendation: That the position of Director of Children's Ministries become full-time.

Implications and Recommendations

While we do not recommend at this time the hiring of other staff, the Council will need to be mindful of the increasing demands on the Pastor as we grow ever more solidly into a program-size church. In the meantime, lay leadership should be offered opportunities to develop skills necessary to assume more of this load. It is entirely possible that increased administrative assistant hours could also address some of this burden and provide additional support for some of the programs, activities, and practices envisioned by the Action Plan Team reports.

For Governance

The Action Plan Team Reports that constitute the substance of this Final Report offer substantial implications for the structure of church governance, in addition to the Bylaw changes implicit in the adopted Mission and Vision. We have one caution for the Bylaws: Avoid locking in any given set of programs and activities; enable the normal turnover of programs to occur, for activities to appear and disappear, without the necessity of rewriting the Bylaws. The reports propose a range of new, expanded or redirected activities which may well challenge the capacity of the existing, fully-engaged Boards and Committees. We believe it is critical that any changes in governance reinforce a culture that enhances and supports action that can respond quickly to emerging local and global need. Programs and activities that express our beliefs as a Christian community must not be constrained by governance.

Existing Boards and Committees are usually totally involved with the immediate and ongoing demands of their tasks, without time or energy to explore the kind of new or alternative program directions proposed here. At the same time, several recently launched activities have emerged and now exist successfully outside of the extant governance structure, utilizing energy from within the congregation apart from the usual channels. This has injected new life into our congregation. Is this the best avenue for continuing program growth? Should we rely on individual and small-group initiatives to move us toward our Vision? What do we do when such initiatives expire or fail to appear? Are term limits on Boards desirable? Do they deprive a Board of informed experience? Do they inhibit continuity? Or do they fully ensure the refreshing nature of turnover? Should we separate ongoing program management from program planning and development? In the governance structure, should we differentiate between those tasks that must be done (e.g., deacons, pastoral care, support of missions, budget, etc.) and those tasks we elect to undertake (e.g., social concerns, eco-justice, peace and justice, etc.) that may wax and wane over time? Are Boards optimally designed for the tasks with which they are charged? For example, in the case of the Board of Mission and Social Concerns, can a single Board effectively address the broader issue of social justice while alleviating the symptoms of injustice? The movement from a “pastoral” church to a “program” church means more delegation, less involvement by everyone in everything. For that kind of church, what kind of governance structure ensures the existing successful activities while reaching toward the Vision we have espoused?

As noted, there are two sets of functions to be performed within each program arena, (e.g., education, mission and social concerns, pastoral care, etc.): an executive, management, oversight function and an evaluation, planning, development function. Optimally, these would be performed by the same group, drawing on its management and oversight experience to guide

Implications and Recommendations

its planning and development. In the present 21st century over-worked culture in which volunteers have limited time and availability, however, planning suffers from the overweight management demands. Meetings get consumed with administrative decisions and details. There simply is insufficient time, energy and impetus to get to the long-term functions.

One solution might be to establish for each arena of activity two groups – one for management and oversight, another for evaluation, planning and development. For example, in Christian Education, the Board would function as it now does in overseeing the existing education programs. A second group would take the Action Plan Team proposal, digest it and bring it to fruition, working with the Board to achieve a smooth transition. The sticky wickets are obvious but it ensures attention, now and in the future, to evaluation and development

Another solution would seek to identify and separate out from each Board's work a set of executive/management functions that are not, of necessity, Board matters and place them in an executive position. One-quarter to one-third of our membership is retired. As a cohort, they have experience – much of it in management – and time. By creating for each Board the volunteer position of “Executive Vice Chairman,” to carry the administrative/managerial functions, the Board would be freed to address issues of policy, oversight, and planning. For some of the Boards, this would be a dramatic shift involving greater delegation but it is consistent with the “program” church model. Clearly, the position would be defined slightly differently for each Board. For example, with a professional staff person in Children’s Ministries, the Board of Christian Education volunteer executive would not be directly engaged there except as needed but in other educational activities. The volunteer executive would not be elected, but selected by each Board from among candidates and expected to serve a three-year minimum term. We believe this model offers a viable transition to permit Boards to address the future.

The latter model might also be relevant to the Church Council through appointment of a volunteer executive to handle many of the administrative details delegated to that executive by the Moderator and the Council, and perhaps, to monitor the continual oversight of progress toward the Congregation’s adopted Mission and Vision.

Task Force Recommendation: That the Church Council undertake a full-scale review of Governance and the Bylaws to conform with the adopted Mission and Vision and to facilitate their fulfillment.

For Finances

Few of the recommendations of the Action Plan Teams (the Director of Children’s Ministries being a major exception) require large outlays of money. The sale of Charter House, the building of an addition, and possible alterations to our present space will, of course, require a capital campaign and ultimately have a considerable impact on church finances. But we believe the impact is manageable with the increasing commitment and growth in conjunction with enhanced programming.

Implications and Recommendations

For Facilities

While most of the ideas developed by the Action Plan Teams are not dependent on new facilities, there are wonderful possibilities opened up with the sale of Charter House. This sale, combined with the thoughtful directions Action Plan Teams have presented, offers our church an unprecedented opportunity to design a flexible, program-based facility that meets specific needs for our vision. See Appendix E.

Task Force Recommendation: That the Building Preservation and Development Committee consider carefully the suggestions brainstormed by the congregation at the start of this visioning process as well as the recommendations of each of the Action Plan Teams and that they undertake a broad discussion with the congregation.

III. ACTION PLAN TEAM REPORTS

Caring and Community Action Plan Team

Executive Summary

The Caring and Community Action Plan Team recommends improving communication and information-sharing as well as broadening opportunities for serious discussions, leadership, intergenerational connections, comprehensive care giving, and ecumenical partnerships. It urges increased involvement of children and youth in exchange programs and other service efforts both within and outside the church and suggests a need for a professional assistant to the Pastor.

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The Caring and Community Action Plan Team developed ideas and suggestions in three areas: Assistance to Families, the Elderly and Homebound, Local Outreach, and Pastor/Outreach Beyond. We understand that a true action plan requires development of specific steps, assignment of responsibilities to people, and a timeline.

Many of our suggestions rely on volunteers. As we are planning we need to consider office space and equipment dedicated to volunteer efforts and ideally a staff person who could oversee the many different projects.

##### **ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES, THE ELDERLY AND HOMEBOUND**

1. Create an Information book for all members detailing all activities of the church. Publicize the many things the church does so more people would take advantage of them. Membership and Communication could undertake this.
2. Create system to make connections in church: those who live alone with someone else; the elderly with someone younger; young families with other young families; long standing members with new members, mentor/companions for young, the old and anyone who needs one at any given time. A sub-committee, under either The Board of Pastoral Care or Membership and Communications Committee, or even a stand-alone committee to undertake these initiatives. Might require oversight by staff member.

##### **LOCAL OUTREACH**

1. Opportunities for all to have serious discussions (not just within our church) to learn about different religions-- with caring and charismatic leadership. An Associate Pastor, and/or a Board of Adult Education or its equivalent could be established to create and carry out these types of programs.
2. Interfaith partnerships on projects, ideas, and discussions. Two possible projects are responding to homelessness and working with United Way on the 211 book, including having a real live person people could contact to explain what some of these services really are. A church member could do this at little or no expense. These activities might be carried out under a Board of Adult Education and/or led by an Associate Pastor.

## Caring and Community APT

3. To develop fair trade type programs. A sub-committee could be developed under the Board of Mission and Social Concerns to research and consider our involvement in fair trade type programs. The cost could be great so careful research needs to be done.
4. Support for holistic approach to comprehensive care giving. Another program to be led by a Pastoral Assistant or Associate Pastor, who could oversee its planning and implementation.

### **PASTOR/OUTREACH BEYOND**

1. Exchange programs to broaden our view. Missions for young people and others to share with the congregation. An area of leadership for our Director of Children's Ministries.
2. Assistant to the Pastor - to increase his ability to respond to the community. Tinus is already working on this. When he has identified a candidate, the normal process is to bring the request to Council. Council then identifies where the funding for salary will come from.
3. A group to respond to disasters and crises on the world and local scene. Construct a group and structure to enable our response. The Board of Mission and Social Concerns has played a significant role in focusing and directing our response. Maybe a special sub-committee should be developed within Mission and Social Concerns to officially respond to crisis and disasters as they develop.
4. Heifer Project The children and youth of the church are already involved with the Heifer Project. Our new Director of Children's Ministries needs to be part of the development of new initiatives.
5. Broaden church lay leadership and Vermont Association of Spiritual Training (VAST) involvement. In our meeting with Margaret Carothers, VAST was presented as a potential source for lay leadership participation in our Sunday services. Since the Deacons have the responsibility for our Sunday worship service, it is recommended that this suggestion be forwarded for their consideration.

# Communal Worship Action Plan Team

## Executive Summary

While the Action Plan Team recognizes that the congregation is generally pleased with our worship, it suggests that we are not closed to new opportunities. We should especially develop worship with greater meaning for families, children and youth, involving young people in significant ways in the service, and developing joint programs for youth with other local churches. At the same time, the Team also recommends being mindful of the statewide graying of the population and undertaking programs and projects to make it easier for older worshipers to get to church and use the facilities.

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1. Our team is by far the smallest of the ones convened following the approval of the Mission Statement in October, and we seem also to have taken the longest to get off the mark. This probably reflects a general attitude among the congregation that our worship together is one aspect of our church life that is generally working well. That is not to say that we should be afraid to try new things. We also think that the Deacons have done a good job in suggesting and implementing new worship patterns, like the early, family-oriented service on Christmas Eve, the Texas Falls hymn-sing, Sunday service at Breadloaf, etc. (Note that all of us have recently served as Deacons!)

2. We all recognized from the beginning that "communal worship" means many things beyond simply what takes place in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings. For example, the Women's, and now Men's Fellowships, Reading Groups, Friday-night community suppers, etc. are all opportunities for members and friends of the church to join together in fellowship, and as such should all be viewed as forms of worship together.

3. We discussed the possibility of multiple services as a way to reach a wider group. Ruth Stewart (with longer institutional memory than the rest of us) recalled that during the time when Walker Hawley was minister there were two Sunday morning services: one at 8:30 "for the skiers," and the fuller service at 10:00. At that time this was not a very satisfactory arrangement, for it simply split the congregation rather than augmented it. It might be worth trying other experiments, e.g., a Saturday late-afternoon service (it seems to work well for the Catholics!) or a Sunday evening vespers. But none of us felt that such experiments should have a high priority at this time.

4. What we agreed is *most* important is to make our worship more meaningful and appropriate to young people: children, youth, young families. We all agree that the arrival of Julina Rundberg is infusing new life here, and we need to build on that. Some ideas:

- A family-focused service occasionally, perhaps once a month, where the children might stay through the entire service rather than heading off to church school.
- More "special" events during our worship service where the children can play a meaningful role. We already have some such opportunities: the Christmas pageant,

Communal Worship APT

passing out palms on Palm Sunday, children leading or participating in an anthem ... There may well be others, e.g. a Sunday “blessing of the animals” where children bring their pets to the Sunday service, as is often done in the Anglican tradition (including at St. Stephen’s).

- Identify ways in which children can participate in ways that are fun for them, from an early age. For instance, lighting candles—a task that has never drawn enthusiasm from teenagers, but might be quite fun for an 11-year-old.
- For young people in and approaching high school, having a critical mass is important, and we’d suggest exploring joining forces among youth groups from other churches, perhaps the Unitarian Universalists, Methodists, St. Stephen’s. There are plenty of issues that can grab their attention: climate change, exploring sexuality, ...

5. At the opposite end of the age spectrum, there are ever more retirees moving to Middlebury, and this will only increase with the overall graying of the population and with new developments like the condominium complex in Marble Works, the Lodge at Otter Creek retirement community under construction south of town, and perhaps eventually with EastView on South Street. We should make it easy for older people to attend worship services—providing transportation for starters. Perhaps we could make arrangements with ACTR to have their bus pick up people before church and return them afterward. This is clearly an opportunity to cooperate with other churches.

6. Extending the idea of worship to fund-raising activities, we discussed possibilities like an apple-crisp booth at Field Days. The key to making these things work is for them to be fun for those involved, raise a meaningful amount of money, and not weigh down people who may already have their time over-committed.

Education Action Plan Team

April 6, 2007

Executive Summary

The Task Force has stated that a focus on Education, specifically for our children and youth, is one of our highest priorities for the future. The Education Action Plan (EAP) Team shares that view and the following report is grounded in it. The EAP Team finds that our Church needs change and a fresh approach in this most important area, just as mainstream Christianity needs to rethink what it means to be faithful in a complex world community. The EAP Team report that follows provides specific recommendations that, when enacted, will enable our church to deliver on the commitment expressed in the Vision. The findings and recommendations of the EAP Team are organized into six categories:

- To provide clear and concise core Christian Education goals for educating children, youth, and adults;
- To create a deliberate and meaningful curriculum that directly addresses the core values that our Church has adopted within its Mission;
- To create teacher and parent partnerships with mutually shared goals and responsibilities for education of children and youth;
- To encourage the emergent Adult education programs to continue to nurture and strengthen our faith community and to support our adult members on their individual faith journeys;
- To encourage multigenerational participation in all aspects of the church, including worship services;
- To seize on the opportunity to construct a new building, housing the Church School and Offices in space that is contiguous to our church, thereby creating a psychological as well as physical feeling that we are all part of one faith community.

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**Members:** Sara Marshall and Elizabeth Robinson, Co-chairs, Steve Abbott, Amy Emerson, John Emerson, Cheryl Faraone, Mark Gleason

**Advisors ex officio:** Tinus Riekert (Minister), Katie Robinson (advisor on youth), Julina Rundberg (Director of Christian Ministries)

**Introduction:** The members of our Church have said clearly that a focus on our children and youth is one of our highest priorities for the future. This action team shares that view, and our work is grounded in it. We know that many in our Church have long been, and are, working hard to carry out and support programs for children and youth, and we gratefully acknowledge many successes over the years and the encouraging developments in the past two or three years. But we also believe that our Church needs change and a fresh approach in this most important area, just as mainstream Christianity needs to rethink what it means to be faithful in a complex world community. Our Church should identify its goals, and determine more clearly what we hope our young people will gain

from a Christian education – what values, attitudes, and habits we hope to nurture. We believe that it matters greatly what we teach our children and youth over the years until they leave the nest and head for employment or college. We know that the context and the physical setting in which we carry out this important work also matters.

We present our findings in six main sections:

**I. Guiding Values for Educating Children, Youth, and Adults**

**II. Curriculum**

**III. Teachers With Parents as Partners**

**IV. Christian Education for Adults**

**V. Integration and Community**

**VI. Facilities**

**I. Guiding Values for Educating Children, Youth, and Adults**

Our inspiration has come from the Statement of Vision and Mission which our Church adopted unanimously in October 2006. Flowing from that vision, we suggest seven goals for Christian Education.

1. Our children should hear and learn the wonderful stories in the Bible. These stories are a core part of our Christian culture and heritage. Whether or not we accept them as literally true, they contain important Truths. By the time they are in high school our youth should gain experience in thinking about and exploring these Truths and how they relate to living their lives.
2. Our children should become well acquainted with Jesus of Nazareth and his life, his teachings, and his central place in the Christian community for 2000 years. They should gain a deep appreciation of his core messages of compassion, justice, peace, and love. They should understand that, for Christians, Jesus is an important mediator between members of our faith community and God.
3. Our children should learn about other religious traditions and the ways in which their counterparts around the world see and understand God. As they get older our children and youth should have opportunities to think about religious differences and the meaning of religious tolerance. They should know God as a loving God for all people of all religious traditions.
4. Our children and youth should gradually mature in their understandings so that they appreciate that we do not have all the answers, and that they will continue to learn, to grow spiritually, and to travel on a “faith journey” throughout their lives. Our

adult members should have access to learning opportunities that will help them to model these same values.

5. We should strive to be honest with children and youth about our own understandings and about differences in these understandings. We should refrain from teaching them things that we adults do not believe. We should avoid teaching them things that they will later reject or need to “unlearn.” Children, especially teenage youth, will sense it when we are “pretending.” And they will appreciate, and benefit from, our candor about our own spiritual journeys. As we embrace this goal, our Church will also grow in its understandings about our faith and our relationship with God.
6. Our children, youth, and adults should enjoy their time in church, experience excitement and stimulation, and develop positive associations with our Church community that last a lifetime. Education should often be fun. Fellowship and healthy human interaction should be an integral part of our programs for children, youth and adults.
7. We should invite all members of our Church, including Church School teachers, members of our Board of Christian Development, and the professional staff to reflect deeply on these ideas, and on other potential goals that may be good alternatives. These goals can serve as a foundation for exploring common ground, and healthy differences, in our Church community.

## **II. Curriculum**

In its meetings and interviews with parents, teachers, students, and the minister, and in conversations among the members of the task force, this group has found that any curriculum adopted (or designed) for the Middlebury Congregational Church School should be value-centric: Children and youth should have a curriculum that is designed for, and directly addresses, the core values that our Church has adopted within its mission. Of course these values may be articulated differently in the curriculum – in age-appropriate ways that are easy for children to understand. We should seek consistency in these values for all members of the church, including our children. This grounding in values will support a curriculum that is deliberate and meaningful. It will nurture a sense of intergenerational identity by offering all members an understanding of what unites us.

We paraphrase several of the core values from our recently-adopted mission and vision statement:

- We affirm universal and unconditional equality and acceptance of all.
- We seek to live by the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.
- We love truth, and we seek it.
- We love God with our whole hearts and minds.
- We love our neighbors and ourselves.

## Education APT

- We promote compassion in our daily lives.
- We work to promote peace and justice.
- We will be active and responsible stewards of the Earth.

The language of this list should be considered carefully, and should be adapted to each age group as appropriate.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The Church School Curriculum must fulfill the part of the Vision that states:
  - Education in the ways of Jesus of Nazareth will be an essential and exciting part of our program for children, youth and adults.
  - We will reflect continuing growth in our understanding of our place in the world and our responsibility in it.
  - Our search for truth and sustaining faith in God will be evident.
2. Core values should be central in the Church School curriculum for all ages. The depth of their meaning in theory and practice should evolve as students mature.
3. We suggest that the current “Seasons of the Spirit” curriculum be kept through the end of the 2006-2007 school year. We might also keep it for the 2007-2008 school year, but by the fall of 2008, we should begin teaching a curriculum that better addresses the mission of the church. The revised curriculum should be developed around our core values.
4. We suggest a Church School curriculum that:
  - is accepting to all
  - emphasizes interaction and encourages dialogue
  - teaches Bible stories that illustrate our core values
  - includes rituals that children find meaningful (e.g., candle-lighting, singing)
  - provides experiential and service programs
  - includes field trips for youth
  - is rigorous and challenging
  - teaches our children to be critical thinkers
  - reflects contemporary understandings of Christianity
  - encourages children to engage important questions
  - equips our children and youth with the tools to make good choices
5. The curriculum should meet the needs of children in their different stages of development
  - Preschool – Teach core values as class rules; create a classroom environment that is a model for how we should be in the world; teach through stories; cultivate self-esteem, loving others, loving differences; use a class alphabet;

cultivate a sense of awe and respect for nature through experiencing it; and gain an understanding of our interconnectedness with others.

- Elementary – Students at this level should continue to learn through parables and the teachings of Jesus. They should be encouraged to ask the big questions: What is God? What is the Bible? What is religion? What is prophesy? What is Christianity? They should grapple with these questions in a serious way. In the later years, we should begin to expose students to other faiths and traditions.
  - Junior High– Students should learn about the life of Jesus and apply it through service to others. Instruction should be action-based. We might consider projects even more ambitious than the Heifer Project; an example might be Habitat for Humanity in another country during the February school break.
  - Youth – Address the present day challenges that confront young people (e.g., relationships, substances). Explore the history of Christianity. Offer regular Confirmation classes. Provide opportunities for service and participation in our Sunday worship services.
6. Our youth and children should have a music program that is an integral part of the Christian education curriculum. We recommend that music be incorporated every Sunday in the “Big Meeting Time” before church school classes in order for children to have opportunities to create music together. We recommend that children and youth have an expanded musical role as part of our worship services. They could participate in several areas: joining the adult choir, participating in the hand-bell choir, contributing to an inter-generational church band, and forming a youth choir. We hope to see the children’s musical program flourish as the Church grows.

### **III. Teachers With Parents As Partners**

Along with the curriculum, one of the most important elements of a strong church school program is the teachers. The Board of Christian Development has faced a formidable challenge to recruit the teachers we need each year. We hope to attract more of our members to this role by better supporting those who teach church school. We suggest that the top priority for attracting and sustaining strong teachers should be the support and training of these teachers.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. An assumption that new teachers will work in a classroom with an experienced teacher before taking over a class themselves.
2. A retreat every summer for incoming teachers. This would include training in the curriculum; discussion of the mission of the church school program and how to

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apply the core values of the church to the church school program; an exchange of ideas about how to manage a group of children; and theological discussions about what teachers believe in conjunction with what they will be teaching the children.

3. A model of rotation (to be determined) so that teachers can also enjoy the service as well as teaching.
4. Classroom assistance in each class, with a list of church members who are willing to make a presentation in a church school class.
5. An expectation that parents will participate in the church school program either by assisting in a class or by helping with some special church school function.
6. Support for the teachers for discipline issues and special needs issues, including a code of conduct for the children and clear policies concerning the legal issues of teachers alone in the classroom with children. There would be an expectation that parents be directly involved with any discipline or special needs issues concerning their children.
7. Regular teachers' meetings to exchange ideas and work through problems.
8. An available library of teaching resources that includes books about teaching, management issues, and special needs, as well as a file of old curricula with ideas of previous teachers, and folders with failsafe ideas for last-minute lesson plans or changes.
9. A good supply closet, easily accessible, and neatly organized.
10. Regular communication with parents about the church school program and schedule in hopes of reducing the inconsistent attendance of children. For example, a periodic newsletter or a dedicated page in the Sunday bulletin would keep families apprised of their children's schedules at church. The Director of Children's Ministries would be responsible for this communication as well as for follow-up with parents to keep them involved in their children's schooling.
11. Communication by the Director with the teachers about their students' needs so that the teachers can better adapt their teaching to the students.
12. We acknowledge that the recommendations in Section III and in this section have implications for the job description and responsibilities of the Director of Christian Ministries. We recommend that, as the Action Team reports move forward, the Church Council review the DCM position and determine whether a revised and expanded job description will be needed. Our Action Team strongly supports such an expansion of responsibilities.

#### IV. Christian Education for Adults

In the past few years, the phrases “faith community” and “faith journey” have been used frequently, and Church members have seemed to embrace the concepts to which they refer. When describing ourselves as a faith community, we imply that our members embrace a variety of Christian identities and that the rich diversity of Christian understanding and interpretation probably rests on a foundation of shared purpose and values. When we refer to our “faith journeys” we suggest that our understandings, interpretations, and values are not static but rather that they evolve and grow and, sometimes, get replaced by new perspectives. We believe that our adult education program should help to nurture and strengthen our faith community and to support our members individually and collectively on their faith journeys.

We envision five types of adult education groups that could meet different needs and interests of our members:

*i. Groups in which participants actively engage each other* as they explore their values and understandings about aspects of what it means to be a Christian in today’s complex world. The conversation can be around chapters of a book, a video or movie, or a presentation by a speaker or a panel. With this model for adult education, people gradually learn about each others’ insights, and gain an understanding both of shared values and of differences in perspectives. This model can help build a faith community and it can support people on their faith journeys. The model has been used to good effect in our A Reading Circle (ARC) groups over the past three years.

*ii. Groups that function primarily as support groups* for members who face common challenges in life. The conversations would focus on sharing information and mutual support in order to assist people in the roles that are thrust upon them. One group might examine the challenges of parenting infants and pre-school children. It could examine many practical issues – like health, diet, nursery school, discipline – and it could also explore how parents can aid in the development of positive values and attitudes in their children that are compatible with the goals of our Christian community.

*iii. Groups that focus on learning* and on broadening one’s intellectual horizons. These gatherings might depend on the leadership of an “expert” in a particular field. The goal would be to learn new things and to deepen one’s knowledge. For example, a group might learn about the historical and cultural findings of the research team called *The Jesus Seminar*. Another group could offer a comparative treatment of the foundations and teachings of the Islamic faith with those of Christianity. Another group might focus on present environmental challenges as they relate to our spirituality. A fourth group could examine a portion of the Bible and how it was put together – Who, When, Where, and Why?

*iv. Gatherings that involve a single meeting* designed to appeal to a broad range of the Church community including families, seniors, and youth. Not everyone can commit to participate in a reading group or study group that has multiple sessions. Some topics lend themselves to a single session that begins with a talk or a short video presentation and

then moves to reaction and discussion. Some events using this model might be structured around a potluck meal. These events could especially encourage participation by all members of a family. We would especially encourage cross-generational interaction.

*v. Summer workshops for Church School teachers* that could also serve others who are interested in developing educational programs for our children and youth. We have addressed this important area of adult education in Section III of this report.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Our church should offer at least three relatively short adult education programs each year. Typically, each group might have between four and six sessions of about 1 ½ hours each. In addition we recommend having several one-night programs.
2. Some group's meetings might be scheduled on a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday in early evening. We recommend that other meeting times also be tried – for example, at 11:15 following the Sunday church services, or at 4:00 P.M. on Sundays.
3. We should expand the interest base for adult education. One way to do this involves finding volunteers from different segments of our membership to propose and lead an adult education group. The ARC group on environmental issues led by Diane and Jeff Munroe in winter 2006 serves as one successful example.
4. We suggest that the Board of Christian Development routinely have one or two members who would assume responsibility for coordinating an adult education program. Their role would be to serve as contacts for volunteers and to help identify those who would carry out a particular program; they would not themselves necessarily lead the programs.

### **V. Integration and Community**

Our church community is committed to involving our young people in the life of the Church. Our new vision statement says that “children and youth will be central to the life of our church and will be unconditionally accepted in it.” One goal of the integration of children into the larger church community is for cross-generational interaction of children and adults. The Education Action Plan Team offers recommendations for encouraging our children to be more active and involved in the Church and for promoting more cross-generational and community experiences.

**Recommendations:**

1. Children and youth should be given greater responsibilities and leadership opportunities as participants in the Sunday service. We suggest that they be involved in readings, bell ringing, the offering, candle-lighting, and perhaps a young deacon program. We strongly support the current youth Advent participation, Christmas Pageant, and church-wide participation in the Heifer Project. We believe that brief, focused, relevant, and fun children's messages are excellent ways of bringing the Congregation together; they serve more than just our young people. We recommend that the older youth (7<sup>th</sup> graders and older) be encouraged to attend the entire church service periodically.
2. Communication between the Church and the parents of our children and youth should be a priority. Parents need to be aware of schedules of classes and special events, and they should be familiar with what is being taught to their children in Sunday school. While increasing this communication, parents will also be asked and encouraged to be more involved in teaching, or otherwise assisting with, Sunday school. We recommend the distribution of a monthly parent newsletter.
3. The music program should expand to include children and youth participation in the choir and the hand-bell choir. We support the concept, already introduced on Christmas Eve, of an intergenerational band that welcomes youth and other members of all ages.
4. We should provide more opportunities for children and youth to interact outside of the Sunday morning worship service and Sunday school. We should offer more family events and potluck suppers that would provide meaningful family interaction. We should encourage multi-generational activities such as experiential, field trips for all ages and educational topics discussed with older adults. Children might adopt an older member of the Church Community as a mentor and friend.
5. Some youth have asked for more opportunities to do community service and to involve non-Church members in activities at or with the Church. We should respond to these interests. Some suggestions from our youth have been for working with the humane society, Crop Walk, nursing care facilities, Green Up day, and doing yard work at church or working at the homes of older church members who would appreciate some assistance. Our youth would like to interact with other local youth groups; we recommend that we support this interest.

**VI. Facilities**

Our Church has approved the sale of Charter House and, assuming the sale is completed, we will need to relocate our Church School and youth programs, meeting rooms, and church offices by 2010. The concerns of Church School teachers, parents, and the Board of Christian Development for the safety of our children when crossing North Pleasant

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Street are widely understood. Considerations about our sense of community also point to advantages from moving the Church School and offices to space that is contiguous to our church building, probably newly constructed space.

Church members strongly value community, and they want children and youth to be a part of that community. The sale of Charter House and the possibility of our creating new space for our Church School and youth and for staff offices provide an unparalleled opportunity for our Church to achieve a longstanding dream of many members.

Members of the Education Action Plan Team see many advantages for an addition connected to the church building that would house our Church School classes, meeting rooms, and Church offices. Children could move between the sanctuary and Church School facilities without being carefully guarded by their teachers or other adult members of the community. Our teachers would not feel as isolated from the Sunday morning worship. On occasion, some teachers or assistants to teachers might be able to slip in and out of the sanctuary, for example, to hear a sermon or to participate in a musical event. Youth might be able to join at the end of a service, for example, to extinguish the candles on the offering table. We believe, however, that the psychological feeling of being a part of one faith community may be the strongest reason for our finding a solution that allows our support facilities to be attached to the church building.

### **Recommendations:**

We envision an addition to the church building behind the church and on Seymour Street that would include the following:

1. Up to 7 classrooms for Church School classes (nursery, preschool and kindergarten, grades 1 & 2, grades 3 & 4, grades 5 & 6, junior high, and senior high.) The senior high classroom would be a flexible space that would serve multiple needs of our older youth; for example it should have media equipment, computers, and games for recreation. Rooms should generally accommodate 12-15 students per class, so that they are useful for other purposes and so that we have room to continue our growth. Each classroom should have some storage space. We should make it possible for children to be noisy without it interfering with a service in the sanctuary.
2. Consider the possibility of expanding the existing Fellowship Hall. The Fellowship Hall might grow into the current nursery and classroom areas to accommodate both the expanding needs at coffee hour and our Community Suppers program.
3. A space suited for modest-size drama, theater, and musical performances. It would house the piano and accommodate evening choir rehearsals without needing to heat a major portion of the facilities in winter months. This space could also serve as rehearsal space for children and youth, typically on Sunday. It could be a multi-purpose space that would function as a small contemporary “chapel.”

4. A combination library and music storage area with provision for up to a dozen users. It might serve as space for a small adult reading group on a weekday evening.
5. Space for storage of such things as costumes and special events supplies.
6. Provisions for viewing TV, video, and other media productions, and for the related discussions.
7. The spaces in the addition should be warm, inviting, and age-appropriate. Some space should serve as a “living room” with soft, comfortable seating.
8. Spaces should be flexible enough to be adaptable to new programs, for example, an after-school program for kids, weekday gatherings of parents with infants and toddlers, or a modest church-run daycare.
9. We would especially like to see some unique spaces for such things as a small “kids’ kitchen” and a room with a ping pong table.
10. Church offices and meeting space as determined by others.
11. An entrance from Seymour Street that would provide convenient and handicapped access both to the addition and to the church sanctuary.
12. An elevator that makes the lower level and main level of both the addition and our church building accessible to all.
13. Rest rooms.
14. An outdoor area with a children’s garden and space for kids to play. This space should ideally be in view of Fellowship Hall so that parents can keep an eye on young children playing outside.
15. Retention of some parking in the current parking lot as well as use of the parking area adjacent to Charter House on Sundays

We recognize that available space does not permit an addition with a large footprint, and so we envision a two-story addition. We also know that available resources are likely to be limited, and so several spaces identified above may need to serve multiple needs.

We are convinced that our Church has already entered a new and exciting phase of its unfolding history. It will be a great challenge to undertake a building project, but we believe that members have a renewed vision for our church in its third century and that we will meet the challenges that face us.

## **Peace and Justice Action Plan Team** **Being a Just Peace Church**

### **Executive Summary**

The Peace and Justice Action Plan Team report recommends that the Middlebury Congregational Church become a “Just Peace” Church. To accomplish this three Tracks are suggested. A Path to Understanding will involve discussion series, College events, books in the library and regular presentations. Doing Justice requires church support for justice focused organizations and supporting justice missions, as well as supporting individual members’ involvement in justice ministries. Imbuing Values for the Next Generation will bring the congregation into closer contact with college students who are involved with justice issues. There will need to be an additional church committee to see that these goals are met.

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Justice was one of the key thrusts to Jesus’ ministry and should be ours as well. Middlebury UCC should pursue “justice as a prerequisite for real peace” by *taking action*. We recommend that the church develop the processes and resources necessary to understand justice and act as a church and as individuals in our various communities: local, state, national and global.

We recommend that Middlebury UCC become a “Just Peace” Church. Justice should be one of our core values, woven through all that we do and that we are.

Track 1: Path to Understanding

Goal: Create ongoing dialogue about what it means to pursue justice as a church and as individuals

Existing Programs:

Support integration of Justice as an important theme into the following programs to complement their existing missions:

- Mission & Social Concerns
- Adult Education
- Youth
- Women’s fellowship
- Worship Service beyond the sermon: music, prayer, children’s etc.

New Programs:

- Discussion Series: We want to create a series that engages in discussion and debate and provides a forum for tolerant, civil disagreement on a topic that has been central to human development for thousands of years but seems particularly plagued by polarization in today’s era of political correctness.
- College Events: We want to utilize existing events at the College with the goal of engaging the college community in our church’s outreach programs as well as engaging members of the church community in

college programs. We hope to raise awareness of college events through:

- Weekly church bulletins, monthly church newsletters, inserts in programs and a link on the MiddUCC website
- Initial liaison with college resources through Will Nash.
- Church Library: We will contribute books on peace and justice and use the library as a resource to expand information on peace and justice subjects
- Peace and Justice Programs: We feel that programs should occur every month or at 6 week intervals, except during summer and Christmas holidays.

Examples: Possible presenters

- Musicians: David Lamont (peace & justice singer)
- Fellowship of Reconciliation
- Peace activists from the UCC church
- UCC Just Peace Church representatives
- Addison County Peace Coalition
- Addison County Farm Coalition
- Prison programs
- Other faith-based programs

Track 2: Doing Justice

Goal: Do peace and justice, not just talk about them to create a more peaceful world and to directly, personally experience the challenges of others – to walk a mile in other moccasins

- Challenge to the Congregation - Every Church Member get involved with one new Justice oriented project in each year.

Programs

- Justice-Oriented Organizations: The church should make it easy for members to take action on justice issues that resonate with them personally and collectively as a church. To do so, the church can adopt specific justice-oriented organizations to support.
- Church Support for Missions: Following the example of the Women's Fellowship, the church should expand the focus of the Board of Mission and Social Concerns to focus on actions with our human resources as well as on providing financial support.
- Unified Approach to Mission Outreach: Expanded coordination between existing mission projects of the church will allow better utilization of financial, human and spiritual resources.

Individual Action

The church should create resources for collecting and disseminating opportunities for action in the areas of justice and peace so that individuals can select from among the opportunities.

- Weekly UCC ACTION Alerts
- Annual Survey of the congregation to identify those members who have participated in Justice oriented programs to build a “support network” to share experience and encourage other members.
- Monthly highlight during service
- Building a blog component on our church website to collect and discuss various justice issues.
- An open Just Peace meeting every quarter to discuss and evaluate our activities and expand opportunities

Collective Action as a Church

Making use of the flow of ideas, the church via the standing Peace & Justice committee will choose to support one or two justice oriented organizations in the local and/or state community annually.

- A committee will evaluate the various submissions from church members in a two meeting cycle to coincide with other church cycles
- Shifting annually will allow a broader exposure for church members who can then choose to continue to support specific enterprises

Track 3 : Imbuing Values for the Next Generation

Goal

Keep peace and justice projects central to church youth, other local young people, and the college community as a bridge to the next generation.

Special Opportunity with Middlebury College

Goal: Take advantage of bringing “the world” to the town of Middlebury

- Returning college seniors to share experience
- Act as Vacation Hosts for international Students
- Attend and encourage attendance at Middlebury College volunteer fair
- Liaise with Alliance for Civic Engagement and Innovation Initiative

Summary of Recommendations

Being a Just Peace Church – requires a committee to

- Review suggestions for collective action
- Continue to build resources – library, bulletins etc
- Manage Discussion Series
- Manage College interaction
- Manage “Just Act” Support network of Church Members

Options for creating the committee

- A) Stand Alone Committee
- B) Establish Justice Committee then combine with Board of Mission and Social Concerns to avoid overlap and reinvigorate members with focused drive (may require shifting some Mission and Social Concerns programs).

New Building Requirements

Just Peace may be about action, but it requires easy dissemination of information. The new building needs a lot of thought for bulletin board space to drive utilization and action for Justice as well as other missions.

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**Appendix A – Definition of Our Just Peace Church**

**A Just Peace Church:**

- Trains itself in the skills and spiritual disciplines of non-violence, and in knowledge about issues related to justice and peace.
- Conveys a spiritual depth in which justice is not "Just-Us" and thereby experiences the full breadth of God's Creation.
- Enables everyone to journey inward toward spiritual growth and to journey outward through opportunities to work for peace in the world.
- Weaves the Just Peace Principles into all the aspects of its life; worship, education, fellowship, stewardship, choice of priorities, and relationships to the world.
- Embarks on a journey of mutual and extra-ordinary respect and commitment to change.

**Appendix B – Sample Bulletin Insert**

**50 years of Volunteering**

(part of our continuing 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration)

Have you been to prison recently? We mean as a volunteer, not as an inmate! The Prison Justice Group of the Vermont Conference Department of Mission would like to encourage you to give it some thought. There are many opportunities to be involved, both "on the inside" and "on the outside," as well.

In prisons, there are opportunities to conduct worship or Bible studies, or teach a decision-making program called Thresholds that gives inmates new skills in coping with violence, or tutor folks for GED's. Some programs require a specific time commitment, while others might be just occasional, such as implementing a craft project. Our purpose in encouraging folks to give some time in a Correctional Facility is twofold. It often gives inmates new skills and/or an attitude change that benefits him or her and the community into which he or she is released; and it gives the volunteer an overview of life in such a facility and an insight into what might be important in influencing change that will decrease recidivism. And we all know that concern for those in prison is part of the discipleship to which we, as Christians, are called.

There are, as well, wonderful opportunities "outside." Helping in some way with Camp Agape (for children with an incarcerated parent), volunteering in one of the several Justice Centers around the state that provide support for people, once they are released, serving on Reparative Boards or Court Diversion Boards, or as a Guardian ad Litem.

1. If this is volunteer work you are already doing, you know how important and rewarding it is. We are trying to compile a list of UCC volunteers who work in prisons or in any related areas, and we would appreciate it if you would be in touch with Rev. Lynda Hadley, pastor of the Dummerston Church, with this information. [pastorlynda@svcable.net](mailto:pastorlynda@svcable.net) or 802-257-0544.

2. If you are not involved in prison-related volunteer work, but think you might like to become involved, we hope you will keep an eye out for information regarding workshops we hope to offer within the next few months, to allow people to learn what the opportunities are and just what is involved. To find out more, contact Betty Edson at [betty.edson@gmail.com](mailto:betty.edson@gmail.com) or 802-728-4057.

3. If it sounds interesting, but a little overwhelming, we hope you will find the following remarks of a long-term UCC prison volunteer helpful. They have been shared with us by Betty Adams of the Perkinsville Church.

"Many people think of justice in terms of seeing that criminals do time for their actions, and this is important. The Prison Justice Group of the Department of Mission of the Vermont Conference, UCC is concerned as well, though, with justice BEHIND the bars and with justice for those who are serving out their sentences in the community or who have completed their sentences and have been released into the community. We believe that one of the best ways to reduce recidivism and to protect our communities is to spend time volunteering in a Correctional Facility, or at one of the state's two Dismas Houses, or in one of the Community Justice Centers around the state.

"Having been involved as a volunteer in both Vermont and New Hampshire Correctional Facilities and having also spent a few years as a Volunteer Coordinator at the Windsor Correctional Center, I have seen the tremendous difference volunteer programs make in the lives of the offenders and in the safety of our communities. Nothing pleases me more than meeting a previous offender, not recognizing him, but having him introduce himself to me, and finding that he is a contributing member of the community. In more than ten years of working and volunteering in Correctional Facilities, I have never had what you would call a bad experience. I was treated very politely, and when it became known that I did not appreciate obscene language, inmates often apologized, if they started to err in my presence. I can assure you that it was one of the most fulfilling and satisfying of any of my many volunteer positions. It is a positive way to make a real difference in the world."

Betty Adams is one of many, who over the 50 years of our history as the UCC, have continued to respond to Christ's call for concern of those on the margin, including those among us who are imprisoned.

## **Radical Hospitality and Acceptance Action Plan Team**

### **Executive Summary**

We established four main emphasis areas around enhancing the welcoming and accepting atmosphere in the church. These include Fellowship Hall space alterations, a focus on newcomers and visitors in special ways, youth involvement in welcoming visitors and transportation options to and from church that provide greater accessibility. Some of these will take some time and resources to put into action and some will be quicker and easier to implement.

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Radical hospitality was seen by the group as the number one priority and very closely linked to the philosophy of our church. Ways in which we thought this philosophy could be put into action were:

- Fellowship Hall space alterations
- Newcomers welcome
- Youth involvement
- Transportation accessibility.

1. Fellowship Hall space alterations:

The physical accessibility and comfort in the church for newcomers and members is important as well as the warm reception. The two complement each other in welcoming people into this building for the first time or upon repeated visits.

We recommend a wheelchair/handicap ramp be installed outside the North door of the sanctuary. The target date for the installation should be by October 2007, in time for the handicap visitors arriving for the Borg weekend. We have been informed that this recommendation is being considered. If and when the ramp is installed, we would request permission from the town of Middlebury for Pleasant Street parking, in the immediate vicinity of the North door, to be restricted for handicap only during Sunday morning services.

Inside, the Task Force recommends that at least four pews be shortened (or indented) to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers (very similar to changes made in Mead Chapel). This indentation for these implements would give the feeling of inclusion into the main body of the congregation and not impede the movement of people within the aisles, especially during an emergency exit. Again, the target date of Oct. 1, 2007 is recommended.

First time visitors enter the sanctuary unfamiliar with the layout or general seating habits. With this in mind, we would suggest that a pew be reserved for visitors or church members could let ushers know that they would like to have visitors seated with them. In this way, visitors could be immediately welcomed.

During the upcoming renovation and new facility construction, it would be worthwhile for the narthex floor to be reconfigured to promote better safety and easier movement of people in and out of the sanctuary. This change could be attached to the proposal to the architect and builder, reducing cost if it were done separately.

There is definite need for the new addition to be handicap accessible wherever it attaches to the present sanctuary.

2. Newcomers welcome:

Newcomers are of particular importance to the growth of church. Many of the facets we thought of were also discussed by the Membership board as was apparent in discussions with Membership. An atmosphere of welcome should greet the newcomer to the Congregational Church. Upon entering the church, greeters can make the initial welcome, followed by the youth (or with a parent for younger child) who would be welcoming newcomers as they enter church, escort them to a seat, and hand them a brochure about the church. Setting up a program for this will be up to the Membership Committee in combination with the Board of Christian Development. The sooner this is started, the better.

An information brochure on the Congregational Church is being updated. There will be a historical black and white brochure as well as a full color leaflet being printed free of charge by Olan Mills. Both should be completed in 2 months. The color brochure will be updated as needed by the Membership board. Information in these brochures will be incorporated into the church web site.

Other suggestions for newcomers to the church include: Possibly adding a short, catchy phrase to the notice board in front of the church to emphasize the identity of the church (a competition in the fall of 2007 to find the phrase is a possible way to encourage people to partake). Questionnaires should be sent out to new members to add suggestions on their experiences (Membership is working on something similar). Handicap accessibility is currently being addressed.

We recommend that Membership consider allocating certain seating areas to church members to welcome newcomers, show them around, answer questions and escort them to the Fellowship Hall. A follow-up visit and phone call by the Pastor or Membership as before is essential.

3. Youth involvement:

We feel that youth play a very important part in the future of our church life and they need to feel welcome with involvement. In coming up with ways they could become involved, we thought they could help with the greeting before church, perhaps along with an adult if they feel uneasy about it. They could help with ushering, either once a month or maybe they could usher along with a couple of the deacons once or twice a month. They could help with making a new family in the church feel welcome and help with finding a seat for them, especially if there are children in that family. It is always a warmer feeling to a child to be welcomed by another peer. The ringing of the bell is another function that they could take on. Participating with the adult choir on occasion would be very nice.

We feel that a room designated for just the youth, with some comfortable furniture and games that they can call their area, would be very beneficial. They could go and have a good time while the adults socialize in the Fellowship Hall.

We strongly feel that a “table for all” should be the way it is done at fellowship after church and other functions. This will make them feel they are an equal part of the fellowship. This would eliminate the two separate tables that are used now.

A more structured Youth Fellowship was thought to be an option. Perhaps they could elect officers and form committees. This would be good training for them, as well as a feeling of belonging.

Thinking it over, we feel that starting involvement at an earlier age would help to make it a regular and welcomed part of their life.

4. Transportation accessibility:

The task force recognizes that transportation is a natural partner to welcoming, as it promotes inclusiveness. At this time the only public transportation for Addison County is provided by Addison County Transit (ACTR). Its only Sunday route is from the Marriott Hotel to town, to Middlebury College, back to the town green, and then on to East Middlebury, Ripton and the Snow Bowl. The Marriott provides large funding to ACTR, while Middlebury College gives 10% of ACTR’s budget.

There is no dispatching on weekends and on several holidays, which means that carefully thought-out transit is necessary. The committee predicts that such service to church-goers could be effective by the fall of 2007. We believe that ACTR and the churches would mutually benefit. Significantly, churches now are concerned with global attempts to reduce energy use; thus, a Sunday bus route could put into practice our concern for the environment. Other potential users would be Middlebury Summer School teachers who may not have a car. Most important is accessibility for elder citizens, including parishioners from Helen Porter, the Commons, Weybridge Apartments, Middlebury East

Radical Hospitality and Acceptance APT

and apartments at 428 Court Street. Those with disabilities, in wheel chairs, blind, et al., would be welcome even as clergy preaches inclusiveness.

It would be helpful to have a representative of the church attend a meeting of the Middlebury Clergy to present the following idea and then report back to the either the Membership committee or perhaps the Board of Pastoral Care: A regular bus route to churches in the Middlebury area could operate on Sunday mornings. In theory, a shuttle bus could take people first to the Unitarian Church service at 9:30, then other services at 10:00 AND 10:40 and then take them home at some time between 11:00 and 12:00 – assuming that some people would like to participate in coffee social hours.

From an extensive telephone meeting with transit executive Jim Moulton, we learned that the hourly cost of running a bus is approximately \$53.00 (at current gas prices). If church committees and clergy meetings could agree on such a plan and share the cost, it is possible that we could serve more members of the community in an efficient way. Users of transportation would not be beholden to others for rides; children and young adults who would like to go to church on their own would be able to do so.

The action plan team for Radical Hospitality and Acceptance respectfully submits these suggestions for your consideration.

Thank you.

Stewardship of Earth Action Plan Team

Executive Summary

On the premise that the twin crises of human-induced climate change/global warming and of “peak oil,” when oil consumption passes 50% of known reserves, are supported by scientific evidence, the Action Plan Team proposes both institutional and individual intervention. Their goals are to educate, change institutional and personal behavior, and collaborate with like-minded groups to address these crises. In the near-term, they propose conservation and alternatives in heating, electricity, and gasoline and using local food sources and recycling in addition to aggressive educational outreach. In the longer term, they propose modifications to conserve water, more elaborate approaches to local food usage, structural changes, alliances, and political action. They emphasize continuation of present measures and low-cost solutions and alternatives.

I. Introduction

Earth Stewardship actions are being taken by faith communities across the globe, and never has the time been more critical for our faith community to engage in these actions. Below we share a global, national, and local context for our call to action, and then our specific recommendations for the Congregational Church of Middlebury, VT.

A. Global Environmental Concerns—Climate Change and Peak Oil

The members of the Congregational Church of Middlebury, Vermont, are aware of the growing threat to our planet Earth caused by climate change and global warming. We have seen overwhelming evidence that proves that the major cause of this catastrophe is the man-made buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. We know after studying the evidence that increased combustion of fossil fuels such as oil, coal, and natural gas emits ever-greater quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere so that carbon dioxide levels are at historic highs. Irrefutable evidence of warming trends convinces us that climate change is well underway and it threatens the entire global environment, the magnificently rich plant and animal treasures, and humankind’s very ability to survive. As God’s children we cannot ignore the causes of climate change and allow it to run its course

Ironically, one of the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions, oil, has reached, or will soon reach, a point known as “Peak Oil”, defined as a point in time when oil consumption passes the halfway point of the world’s available reserves. The fact that the world is so close to peak oil is especially urgent now because humans (especially those in developing countries) are increasing their oil use at rapidly accelerating rates. Even as new oil reserves are discovered they will produce only insignificant changes on global supplies. The law of supply and demand dictates that oil will become a scarcer and much more expensive resource in the near future.

B. National Faith-Based Initiatives

Working prominently on the national level to help people of faith recognize and fulfill their responsibility for the stewardship of creation, The Regeneration Project is a broad-reaching and important initiative. The mission of the Regeneration Project is to deepen the connection between ecology and faith. Their Interfaith Power and Light campaign is mobilizing a religious

response to global warming in congregations through the promotion of renewable energy, energy efficiency, and conservation. There are numerous similar efforts across the country, and a list of links for these groups engaging a diversity of faith communities can be found at:

<http://www.theregenerationproject.org/Links.htm>

More specifically for our congregation, the national United Church of Christ has given us guidance on how we as a faith community should be engaging in environmental issues, and in fact they issue a call to action and advocacy:

“These are challenging times for our nation, as debate rages over fundamental decisions regarding our national priorities, values and commitments, and how they will be expressed in public policy. Events of recent times remind us that we cannot ignore economic, social, and ecological realities that have led to greater abundance for some and scarcity for many others. None of us remains untouched. In the challenges before us today, we, as people of faith, can hear the echoes of prophets and believers who throughout history lifted up a vision of right relationship within human community and with God. God’s vision of the wholeness of creation has always challenged the human limits of our thoughts, imaginations, and hopes.”

–Biblical Call to Advocacy, 2005-2006 UCC Public Policy Briefing Book,
<http://www.ucc.org/justice/brief05.pdf>

Further, at the 25th General Synod of the UCC several pertinent resolutions were brought forth:¹

- *UCC Resolution on Supporting Congregations and Providing Guidance for Stewardship of God’s Creation During the Coming Period of Declining Fossil Fuels* “This resolution is offered to initiate exploration by the United Church of Christ of the role of the Church in meeting economic, ecological, and consequent spiritual challenges associated with predicted declines in future oil and natural gas supplies. The UCC is asked to begin a long term program to support faith based actions to create conditions that will foster a movement to sustainable conditions at the individual church, conference, UCC, and broader societal levels.”
- *UCC Call for Environmental Education and Action* “This Resolution calls on all expressions of the United Church of Christ to implement programs for education and action to address issues of environmental protection, environmental justice and sustainable development. It establishes an Environmental Steering Committee to implement this Resolution in close coordination with Justice and Witness Ministries.”

¹ Full text of the resolutions can be viewed at the following:
UCC Resolution: "Call for Environmental Education and Action"
<http://www.ucc.org/synod/resolutions/g25-1a.pdf>

UCC Resolution: "Resolution on Supporting Congregations and Providing Guidance for Stewardship of God's Creation During the Coming Period of Declining Fossil Fuels"
<http://www.ucc.org/synod/resolutions/g25-3a.pdf>

Lastly, a quick perusal of the UCC web site under their “justice” section <http://www.ucc.org/justice/index.html> highlights topic areas including environmental justice, global warming, and integrity of creation. We believe, therefore, that our involvement in critical environmental issues is not only appropriate, but it is mandated.

C. State of Vermont / Town of Middlebury context

Working at the state level, we have Vermont Interfaith Power and Light (VTIPL) which seeks to “raise awareness among faith communities and individuals about the threat that global warming presents to Creation and Earth, and to engage communities of faith in promoting energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy as a solution. The goal of VTIPL is to move Vermont’s faith communities toward sustainable energy use and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, while living out our covenant with the Creator.” From the latest VTIPL newsletter, we see examples of other faith communities in action—St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Bennington launching an Interfaith Food and Fuel Fund, Charlotte Congregational Church screening a film called “Marching to Climate Action”, and several congregations leading Vermont Earth Institute’s newest reading discussion group entitled, “Global Warming: Changing CO₂urse.”

Further, in Middlebury, we have a rich array of groups we can interact with and draw support from. These include a supportive and active Middlebury Area Clergy / Addison County Clergy, Middlebury College, the Town of Middlebury, the Middlebury Area Global Warming Action Coalition, the Vermont Biofuels Association, and the Addison County Relocalization Network (ACoRN).

Lastly, within our congregation, we have a core group of people that comprise our Earth Justice Ministry—while the current group can address some of our goals, we hope to expand our membership and participation to accomplish great things.

D. Goals and Hopes for our Middlebury UCC Community

The Middlebury Congregational Church recognizes that the challenges of climate change and peak oil are real and imminent, and they demand our intervention. Complicating our plans to join the struggle to reverse these powerful threats are poor national and corporate leadership and humankind’s temptation to selfishly use up resources and remain comfortable while conveniently ignoring our grandchildren’s generation. But if our congregation can begin by successfully facing the hard choices implied by living with less oil, we will directly address both problems and serve as leaders in the battle to reverse our destructive trend.

We ask ourselves, “What resources has God provided to us to achieve our goals?” Our answers are that God has given to mankind:

- The capacity to clearly understand and instruct others about the sheer size of the problems
- The ingenuity to discover solutions that combine energy conservation and alternative energy sources

Stewardship of Earth APT

- A store of natural renewable energy resources available for exploiting (e.g., sun, wind, waves, tides, flowing water, geothermal heat, biomass, etc.)
- The intelligence to develop practical means to commercialize the renewable resources
- The patience and resolve needed to make the transition away from fossil fuels, and
- The love and community spirit needed to cease our wasteful behavior and share dwindling resources with all inhabitants of Earth and its future generations.

With God providing all these tools we have faith that we will succeed, and so we pledge to fulfill our vision of being active and responsible stewards of Earth. Initially our primary targets include reducing energy consumption in church buildings and raising awareness within our congregation about better energy behavior and solutions in our daily lives.

As articulated by a group of congregation members who have been working as an “Earth Justice Ministry Group” on raising environmental awareness in our congregation, below are some goals for our community and a mission statement for our work that can guide the implementation of the recommendations that we put forth in the following matrix.

Our goals for our community are that we:

- Are AWARE of the importance and urgency of climate change
- Are EDUCATED on the potential steps that we can take, and how that will make a difference
- TEACH some of what they have learned to others
- Are changing their PERSONAL BEHAVIOR that will fight climate change and reliance on oil
- Have JOINED with other community members to promote eco-friendly projects
- Have INVESTED in companies that produce tools for the post-carbon era
- Support LOCAL ENERGY supply with their purchasing power
- Support LOCAL FOOD products
- VOTE for politicians who understand what must be done
- Rely on DIVINE INSPIRATION to guide our steps.

Living sustainably requires awareness of eco-injustices, understanding of paths to resist the twin tides of climate change and peak oil, and building faith in humankind’s God-given capacity to change.

II. Opportunities Matrix

In the following matrix, (an Excel-based spreadsheet) we have identified a series of steps that will reduce oil consumption of the church and its activities, our members’ homes and vehicles, and that of our community. Further, we share opportunities related to a variety of sustainable practices—e.g. supporting local foods, aspects of sustainable buildings, and recycling and composting—and provide ideas for education, outreach, and fellowship around these important issues.

We recognize that we have developed an ambitious list with activities not only at the local level, but also at the state, national, and global levels to help us move towards sustainable practices. The table has been divided into near-term opportunities and future-term potential opportunities.

For each of the recommendations, members of our Action Plan Team can provide additional details and expertise. An example of this type of detail for fuel consumption reduction is provided below. Our committee decided not to provide this level of detail for this report, as we recognized the value of brevity.

1. Make significant fuel-use reductions in church buildings:

- Shift to biofuel to heat the church building.
- Reduce heat loss by completing measures that block air intrusion and heat radiation. (Refer to audit performed by Vermont Interfaith Power and Light.)
- Adhere to appropriate standards and codes to assure that the new building (that replaces Charter House) will be energy efficient.
- Reduce heat use by changing wasteful behaviors (e.g., thermostat settings, coordinating meeting schedules, closing drapes, etc.)

The good news is that many of the activities that fulfill the above recommendations can be done without cost – even at a negative cost in some instances.

Biofuel blends may cost around five-percent above conventional oil, but we expect that fuel savings that result from conservation steps called for in the audit will more than offset that increase. There is an issue in finding indoor space for an oil tank, but that problem exists with or without a switch to a biofuel blend. There is also a volunteer “cost” of making building improvements that keep out air intrusion, but this program is already underway.

Some of the building modifications have an associated cost, but in most cases the payback periods will be modest, especially as we expect oil prices to increase, so over the long run the church saves money. A reduction in wasteful behavior normally has a negative cost, but we must be patient with members who find the changes burdensome.

With reference to energy efficient designs for the new building, we are aware that “green” buildings often cost more than conventional construction. In most cases, however, the options that save fuel will end up costing less in the long run. We expect that with proper attention to the design phase we can achieve dramatic cost reductions as compared with our Charter House experience.

GUIDE TO EARTH APT REPORT APPENDIX: OPPORTUNITY MATRIX

The Opportunity Matrix should be read as a companion to the Earth APT Report Text. The text sets out general themes and goals, while this matrix adds some details of actual projects and tasks that have been suggested by the Stewardship of Earth APT. We have divided the Matrix into two sections:

- 1 Topics that have near-term potential - two pages
- 2 Topics that have future potential - one page

Glossary of abbreviations

EJM	=	Earth Justice Ministry
vols	=	volunteers
tbd	=	to be determined
facil mgr	=	Facilities Manager

Column Headings

Sugg. Action	=	identifies church or personal activity
Cost	=	includes both capital and operating costs
Staff	=	identifies additional time required by one or more paid church staff
Space	=	identifies permanent or temporary need for space for activity
Equipment	=	identifies additional equipment required by activity
Volunteers	=	identifies demands on church volunteers for activity
Desired Effects & Comments	=	sets out a general goal; expresses a comment

Appendix 1 - Opportunity Matrix for Earth Action Plan Team Report - Page 1

	<i>Suggested Action</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Space</i>	<i>Equipment</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>Desired Effect/Comments</i>
Topics that have near-term potential							
Heat Conservation + Alternatives							
	Setback thermostats	long run savings	facil mgr				fuel savings, reduced greenhouse gas emissions
	Geothermal heat pump	tbd					possible option for new building?
	Follow-through on energy audit (conserve heat)	long run savings	facil mgr			vols enhance bldg	fuel savings, reduced greenhouse gas emissions
	Alt. Fuels Phase 1: especially bio-diesel and solar	varies	facil mgr	yes	yes		minimize use of oil with existing boiler
	Use "green building" criteria for new building	tbd	design comm		tbd		excellent opportunity to practice earth justice
Electricity Conservation + Alternatives							
	Motion sensitive lighting fixtures	long run savings	facil mgr		fixtures	vols help install	
	LED lighting	long run savings	facil mgr		bulbs	vols help install	
	Florescent light bulbs	long run savings	facil mgr		CFL - done	vols help install	
	Old style service, periodically, no audio or electrical	small savings	facil mgr				
	Follow-through on energy audit (conserve electricity)	long run savings	facil mgr			vols	
	Alt. Electric sources: wind, hydro, PV	higher cost	facil mgr		tbd		possible option for new building?
	Purchase cow power	higher cost	facil mgr				church participation makes important statement
	Watt meters	small	facil mgr		meters	vols read meters	could be an effective tool
Gasoline Conservation + Alternatives							
	Pledge not to idle your car for over 10 seconds					vols educate re. Idling truths-myths, use avail. resources, develop pledge cards	Education, potential support of state anti-idling legislation, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, fuel savings.
	Walk					volunteer writes a column encouraging / organizing a "walk to church" day	While this won't be possible for everyone, a "walk to church" day could be a fun community building event, raise awareness of our over-dependence on automobiles, and encourage folks to leave their cars behind for other short errands or trips
	Encourage bicycle use by providing racks and changing facilities	Purchase and install bike rack; consider shower / changing space in new facilities	Facil mgr installs, maintains rack, janitor cleans shower	Rack space; space in new facility			At least one bike rack would encourage riding bikes to church services, events, and meetings. Rack will make statement about commitment to alternative forms of transportation. Other benefits: health benefits and decreased fuel use and emissions.
	Carpooling (ride board or ride-share space on web site)		web manager (if any organizing done through web)			Membership and Communication Comm's create maps; vols plan carpools and drive	Community building, reduced pressure on parking spaces, reduced fuel use, reduced greenhouse gas emissions
	Switch to ethanol or bio-diesel (personal vehicle)					EJM topic	increased awareness will create markets
	Less meetings - substitute web-based communication					vols facilitate	may only work for web-savvy members
Local Foods vs Imported							
	Eat local: e.g., "Eat local" community supper	same				vols purchase	Raise awareness of available local sources.
	Join commity effort to build food storage & greenhouse	tbd					Wait for localvore groups to organize
	Cultivate a community food garden	land, water			tools	vols & youth group	Youth project, fellowship for families & seniors; use produce for church events or donate

Stewardship of Earth Action Plan Team

	<i>Suggested Action</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Space</i>	<i>Equipment</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>Desired Effect/Comments</i>
Communicate, Teach, Organize, etc.							
	Letter writing campaigns: State – Local – Global					vols teach issues of interest to them and provide letter writing tools for interested parties	Encourages congregation to be more civically engaged in local, state, and national politics related to environmental issues.
	Interfaith call-to-action		Minister / Church Board			EJM	Adopting Interfaith Call to Action on Environmental issues is largely symbolic, but it formalizes commitment to environmental stewardship and can be used for publicity and educational purposes.
	Educational and Awareness programs for adult members. This could include guest speakers, video screenings, reading discussion groups, or encouraging folks to attend community events or lectures.	program / speaker fees may be incurred, e.g., Vermont Earth Inst course, \$15/ea	facil mgr / janitor set up space and clean-up for church event	meeting space	video projection when needed	EJM vols plan and facilitate events	Community building, developing a shared body of knowledge about critical environmental issues, providing tools and resources that motivate people to make personal lifestyle changes to be better stewards of the earth.
	Educational programs for Sunday School & Youth Groups (could be a educational unit for Sunday School classes, part of Children's message, or special events)	program / speaker fees may be incurred	Children's and Youth leaders, janitor set up and clean-up for church events	meeting space	video projection when needed	vols provide refreshments for youth! Plus can help staff plan and facilitate events	Community building, developing a shared body of knowledge about critical environmental issues, providing tools and resources that motivate people to make personal lifestyle changes to be better stewards of the earth.
	Connect our youth with youth in a sister congregation in another country being impacted by climate change or other environmental issue		Director of Children's Ministries		computer for communication and/or letter writing supplies	vols assist with program development	Raise awareness of how peoples are already being impacted by global climate change; method of learning about complex environmental issues.
	Education through church web site and e-mail. Accomplish in an Earth Stewardship section of the church website that has links to resource websites, calendar of upcoming community events, and e-mails with reminder of events and opportunities for action					Web and e-mail managers	Convenient access to resources where people can do their own research and self-education and find out about educational events; once informed, people are more inclined to act.
	Education through church newsletter. This can include ecotip of the month, announcement of upcoming events, and profiling initiatives that congregation members are involved in.					Newsletter editor, guest columnists	Keeps monthly focus on environmental topics, education and awareness
	Environmentally themed sermons (Earth Day and other)		Minister				High profile; shows congregation and guests our commitment to environmental stewardship. Submit as Op-Ed in paper.
	Connect congregation with community events and resources Accomplished through newsletter, website, and e-mail - see above details					Newsletter editor, Web and e-mail managers	Strengthens both community and church programs synergistically.
	Books for Library	Covered by Women's F'ship		one book-shelf		volunteer librarian	There are many excellent books available. Good way to educate members.
Other							
	Enviro-friendly cleaning products	slightly higher				vols research	Positive health effect, e.g., janitor.
	Compost/recycle: church events				signs & bins	vols	Monthly vol position of recycling/compost czar
	Recycled paper for church use	slightly higher	Joyce, at first			vols research	Goal at least 30%. Buy cooperatively.

Appendix 1 - Opportunity Matrix for Earth Action Plan Team Report - Page 2						
<i>Suggested Action</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Space</i>	<i>Equipment</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>Desired Effect/Comments</i>
Options that have future potential; no near-term plans						
Water Conservation						
Rainwater capture	tbd					Potential option for new building
Using rainwater for gray water	tbd					Potential option for new building
Water conservation: e.g., Low-flow & waterless fixtures	tbd					Potential option for new building
Local Foods vs Imported						
Removing barriers to efficient food distribution						
Set up a discount system for using local growers						
Sustainable food production: traditional & nontrad.						
Organic growing						
Communicate, Teach, Organize, etc.						
Movement for tax-favored treatment						
Encourage markets for carbon trading and renewable energy credits						
Support legislation to break legislative barriers						
Form a purchasing alliance (?) for solar, etc.						Possibly coordinate with other organizations
Web conferencing						
Carbon neutral, e.g., Midd. College						
Energy						
Alt. Fuels Phase 2: wood, wood pellet, bio-diesel, solar, etc.	long run savings					Consider options when designing new heating system. Goal to minimize use of fuel oil.
Eco-friendly, drought-resistant landscaping that requires no chemical fertilizers.	long run savings				vols research types of plants	Landscaping option for new building: plants that need less water and no fuel-based fertilizers
Pick a project that other churches could emulate	tbd					
Sustainable products for church upgrades & new building						Potential option for new building
Paperless church operations, eventually						
Carbon sequestration, e.g., tree planting, save forests						

APPENDIX A

Congregational Potluck Dinner

Fellowship Hall

Sunday, January 22, 2006

Seated at 7 round tables of 9 people each, over 60 people participated in the meal. A member of the Task Force on Our Church's Future sat at each table. After the children went upstairs to the sanctuary for activities led by college students, their parents and others gathered around one of 8 tables to talk about and answer the following questions:

1. What is most important to you about our church right now? List the three most important.
2. What could we as a church be doing or doing better?
3. What is your dream for our church?

Answers to the final question were written on post-it notes and stuck to the north wall of Fellowship Hall, where they remained until the end of January for all to share. See Appendix B for that list.

APPENDIX B

DREAM LIST – MARCH 2006 CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT

On Sunday January 22, 2006, the Dream Wall was created at the Potluck Supper and Discussion hosted by the Task Force on Our Church's Future. Those attending wrote down their dream for our church and posted it on this wall. Over the course of the next several weeks, additional "Dreams" were posted. The post-its were recently removed, recorded, and categorized collectively. All are listed below.

Thank you to all who participated from The Task Force on Our Church's Future.

ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS / CHURCH COMMUNITY

- A city on a hill – that exemplifies openness, peace and justice
- To continue our current momentum the church direction, openness and accepting each other's differences AND accent the leap of faith and can do attitude
- A church where each member feels equally welcome and where ALL are working together for the Kingdom
- People who come to this Church will feel a strong sense of community and welcoming in a warm and easy environment
- That our radical equality and unconditional acceptance will reach out to the whole world
- Continuation of welcome to all and sermons that reach our hearts
- That all people be accepted no matter who they are...
- An open, accepting, vibrant, Church which is a leader in the Middlebury area

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

- My dream is that the wonderful energy and enthusiasm that continues to build in this church will mean that Church becomes a place that my children can't wait to be and where they will feel a sense of community with all
- I'm dreaming of a Church that is secure in its future because we cherish youth
- Education and fellowship to bring older youths into active participation
- Programs and music that will attract more young people
- To have an adult, youth, and children's choir. And an adult, youth, and children's hand bell choir!
- My dream for this Church is for a wonderful, enriching, warm, caring, safe, and fun children's education program
- A church school that exceeds all expectations!! An off-shoot of such a dream would force us to provide better facilities (an addition) for them as well as the entire congregation
- Continued growth in spiritual understanding
- Adults all "adopt" a child

COMMUNITY / OUTREACH / MISSION

- That this Church continues to be a warm, welcoming viable community of open, faithful people who care about each other and the larger community
- A large, active group of Christians helping each other to live good, selfless lives
- That every member of our Church community is proud of its work and happy to support and participate in that work
- A living, thriving church, the center of many people's lives, with strong outreach locally and far beyond
- That this Church will be a strong center for spirituality, community, and mission
- That our Church will shine as a beacon living and spreading the loving, radical message of Christ
- To be a force for positive change in the community, state, and world
- That the Church would continue doing sessions like this where ideas and thoughts come out and hopefully will inspire creative but not unnecessary change. It's healthy to keep thinking and analyzing
- I dream of people ALL wearing their nametags at Church functions. It would certainly help implement a goal of integrating older and newer members.

FACILITY

- An addition on the Church Building and sell Charter House
- A larger generous congregation building and education facility and church office space that is contiguous to our church
- One cohesive building that is well maintained, both inside and outside
- To consolidate our activities on Sunday mornings on one Side of Route 7
- A new addition that allows for the Church to be all in one building, open many hours, constantly in action, with parties, gatherings, open to everyone
- Build onto the Church for more Sunday School rooms, larger kitchen and office space
- Better facility on this side of Route 7 for Church offices and Church School
- A facility where we can continue to carry out our mission on all levels
- An attached addition
- A well maintained Church building with a modern addition containing the Church offices and a nice new kitchen
- An expanded contiguous facility for worship, education, meetings, outreach
- New Church building in our parking lot for Church School and Church office (then sell Charter House)
- To consolidate all facilities within this area – by putting an addition in the parking lot area adjacent to the church – this would have a Sunday School room, new kitchen, office and thereby enlarge the fellowship hall. A Really Big Dream!
- Purchase, not build, a building for safe child education on this side of Route 7
- Try again to acquire the “Cobblestone Inn”
- Don't sell the Charter House (youth now has a room)
- A new facility added that would include Sunday School, social/dining space, kitchen and offices. Then we could sell Charter House
- Sell Charter House

- New addition with elevator to serve that structure and the sanctuary. A “green building” that is highly insulated, taking advantage of sunlight for solar heat assistance. A financial plan must be in place to support this project.
- Somehow add more parking near the Church
- Garbage cans during coffee hour that are easy to get to

FINANCES

- Financial security
- Financial stability to enable the Church to maintain/enlarge the facilities and improve the local outreach programs
- The financial security to enable us to implement all of our goals in terms of Facilities, Community Service, and Youth Education
- Big enough income to fund hiring all we need, give to missions, build new buildings and keep it up (maintain)
- Enlarge our endowment to be able to keep up the Church buildings as needed
- Establish a preservation fund for building upkeep
- A financially stable church that has the amount of staff needed to support our expanded ministries (both within the church and beyond the church)
- Expanded invested funds that can provide for all maintenance of buildings and facilities. This would let us focus our efforts each year on human needs/God’s work

MEMBERSHIP

- 800-member church
- More members – young families especially, continued outreach
-

MINISTRY

- My dream came true when Tinus came
- I hope that Tinus and his family find satisfying lives in this community and will want to stay
- If nothing changes we still have a beautiful Church, committed members, many solid mission projects, and Tinus to lead us on our journey of faith
- To continue to have a strong and growing community of faith with a strong intelligent compassionate Minister as we now have
- An Associate Minister

PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER CHURCHES

- More ecumenical programs with other local churches. High school groups are an obvious starter. Why not try to combine forces with other faith communities?
- Exchange programs with other Churches overseas or in this country. For a youth group, or for a family, or a group of adults.



APPENDIX C

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OF
MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT

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Marthinus J. Riekert, Minister

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May 12, 2006

Dear Friends:

Since our meeting with the congregation in late January, the Task Force on Our Church's Future has been working to identify and describe accurately the fundamental values that drive how we as a church community live and use our resources of time, energy and money. There are many things about our church community that we believe are important or hold in high regard. But we have been seeking the "core values" – those "basic principles or essential qualities that are desirable and determine characteristic behavior." The critical element in a core value is whether it consistently affects the behavior of our community. Our challenge has been to identify the shortest realistic list of values that meet that criterion. We have sought to avoid familiar generalities and to be as specific as possible.

We are writing to you now to share with you a working list of "Core Values" for our church and to invite your comments, suggestions and revisions. The Core Values that emerge from this process will guide us in drafting for your approval our church's Statement of Mission and the subsequent Vision Statement, as well as the more detailed planning for the future that will follow. So this is critical to defining the future of our church.

We ask you to consider these questions: Are these really the Core Values that determine how we, as a church community, live and use our resources? Are there other core values that should be added? Have we listed values that do not have any impact on the behavior of our community?

We would welcome your response using the enclosed list/rating scale and/or by joining in at least one after-church discussion. These are scheduled for

Sunday, May 21, 11:20 a.m. until noon in the small classroom off Fellowship Hall

Sunday, June 11, 11:20 a.m. until noon same place. Bring your coffee.

You may also feel free to speak with any of us at any other time.

We deeply appreciate the support you have already shown for our work and hope you will use these ways to let your voice be heard about our core values.

Sincerely,

Margaret Carothers, Russ Carpenter, Mark Gleason, Bob Regan, Paige Russell, Bill Warren, Janet Winkler,
Rebecca Wright

**A Core Value is a basic principle or essential quality
that is desirable and determines characteristic behavior.**

For each of the following statements, do you agree that it describes a core value of this congregation?

Note: The order in which the values are listed is not significant.

We value:

A. Stewardship of all Earth’s resources

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
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B. The well-being of our church family

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
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C. The welfare of our local and global communities

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
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D. Peace within and among all people

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
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E. Justice for all persons

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
-------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

F. Unconditional acceptance of all individuals

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
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G. Freedom of religious thought and belief

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
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H. The integrity of each individual’s spiritual journey

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
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I. Communal worship

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
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J. A faith that enables living through uncertainty with hope

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
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K. The example of Jesus of Nazareth

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
-------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

L. Educating children, youth and adults to live by the teachings of Jesus

Strongly agree _____	Somewhat agree _____	No strong feelings _____	Somewhat disagree _____	Strongly disagree _____
-------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

Other Core Values, Suggestions, and Comments: Add here or on separate piece of paper.

Name: (optional) _____

Please put this in one of the baskets at the back of the sanctuary, bring it with you to one of the discussions on Sunday, May 21 or Sunday, June 11 or mail it to the church office. Thank you. We look forward to hearing from you.

APPENDIX D

INSTRUCTIONS TO ACTION PLAN TEAM

EDUCATION

[This is the Instruction Sheet for the Education APT presented here as a sample of those given to each APT.]

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the Action Plan Team on Education. Creating a design for our church's future is exciting: it gives life to the dreams and aspirations of our congregation and makes you an active co-owner of what we become. Now that the congregation has approved the 2006 Mission and Vision, we are looking to you to show us how our church can live the Kingdom of God and become the Vision we have adopted.

What are you being asked to do?

The Vision is a word picture of what our church will look like a few years down the road if we are fulfilling our Mission. Each statement in the Vision describes one facet of church life at that time. Your task is to transform the broad objectives stated in the Vision into reality, to design a range of options (specific programs, activities, events, strategies, training, etc.), called an "Action Plan," that would enable our church to deliver on the commitment expressed in the Vision.

Your Team is asked to design options that would fulfill this part of the Vision:

*Education in the ways of Jesus of Nazareth will be an essential and exciting part of our program for children, youth and adults.
We will reflect continuing growth in our understanding of our place in the world and our responsibility in it.
Our search for truth and a sustaining faith in God will be evident.*

All parts of the Vision are interdependent. To provide context for the statement you are working on and to suggest criteria for choosing options, please give special attention to these other statements from the Vision:

*The life of Jesus of Nazareth will be the standard for all that we do individually and collectively.
Children and Youth will be central to the life of our church and will be unconditionally accepted in it.
We will be committing our time, our treasure, and our talents to fulfill this vision for our Church.*

You are asked to submit to the Task Force on Our Church's Future, by March 1, 2007, an "Action Plan," a set of written recommendations for specific things our congregation might do to fulfill this portion of the Vision. That is, exactly how would we be demonstrably educating our children, youth and adults in the ways of Jesus of Nazareth, reflecting growth in our understanding of our place and responsibility in the world, and searching for truth and a sustaining faith in God. The final report from the Task Force will incorporate the Action Plans from all the Teams to set out the choices for the church in its journey forward.

The congregation has to be able to evaluate the full effect of your Action Plan. Therefore, for each of the options you design, in addition to offering a rationale, you are asked to provide your best estimate of these impacts:

- Cost – the impact on church budget or the possible sources and the amount of alternative funding
- Staff – the amount and kind of time required of professional/paid church staff
- Space – the amount and kind of space that would be required
- Equipment – any special equipment needed, with estimated cost
- Volunteers – the amount and kind of time needed from volunteers
- Effect – how important is this option (you may want to group or rank them)?
Estimate how it will affect the church

How will you do this?

First, unfetter your imagination, let inspiration flower, and dream about what we could be doing to fulfill this part of the Vision in our church community. At the first meeting of your Team, a “brainstorming” session, to get as many ideas as possible on the table, will be conducted by a member of the Task Force.

Your Team will select its own chairperson, work on its own schedule and have a member of the Task Force on Our Church’s Future serving as a consultant and as liaison to the Task Force. You are asked to focus only on your own charge; if some of your options would involve other Teams (who are addressing other statements in the Vision), discuss it with your Task Force liaison. You are not to be constrained by the existing governance (Council, Boards, Committees, etc.); the current Bylaws; the present facilities; or the current budget. **Your challenge is to break new ground.**

You will need to decide just what the statements from the Vision mean; what do they encompass? The Mission and Vision incorporate the **Objectives** for our church: what we commit ourselves to do and to be in our future and the broad areas in which our congregation will work. Your Team should refine the objectives by being more specific in describing future congregational activity. These questions may help your discussion:

- Why do we educate? What would be our goal for education?
- What does “education” mean? What would it include?
- Would it be different for children, youth, adults? How?
- What outcomes would be sought for each group?
- What does “exciting” mean? “Essential?”
- How would these characteristics be reflected in our church life?
- What non-standard educational methods could we consider?

Goals state how the church will accomplish its objectives – *Who* will do *what* by *when* at *what cost*? These are “Action Plans.” Goals or Action Plans have specific characteristics – they are Measurable, Attainable, Specific, Time-limited (think MAST.) Action Plans include programs, events, activities, strategies, training, etc designed to accomplish the objectives.

Getting There. Once you feel comfortable with your definition of the objective(s), one way you might approach your task is to focus on the difference (the gap) between *what is* and *what you hope for*. For example,

- (a) Where are we now? What are we already doing that meets your definition of “Education?” Inventory present programs, activities, budgeted expenditures, etc., for education.
- (b) In broad terms, what would “education in the ways of Jesus of Nazareth” look like in the future? Look at your refined objectives and consider what we as a church want or feel called to be in the years ahead?
- (c) Use your imagination and the results of your brainstorming to fill the gap with your dreams and inspirations: What are the options? What do we have to learn or do to get where we want to be?
- (d) ***Explore and develop the full range of possibilities before you start to turn any of them into Action Plans.*** Your best approach is to develop your full list of options before you explore the attendant impacts. It is a kind of problem-solving: how might we fill the gap? Only then look at the practicalities. And finally, make your recommendations with all the information you have gathered.

Of course, you cannot now envision all of the possibilities; as time passes, other opportunities and suggestions will emerge. So your Action Plan, rather than being a total package of interdependent parts, is to be a set of independent recommendations to which later options could be added without disrupting your Action Plan.

These suggestions make the process sound linear. **It is not.** It is more like a spiral, in which you circle around, revisiting goals, descriptions and all the options, getting closer to the target until you have the best mix you can imagine, one with which you are satisfied. It is likely to be repetitive, frustrating, boring and unbelievably exhilarating when you get to home. The Task Force will be interested in periodic reports and, through your consultant, is ready to help in any way that we can. So you are free to call on us as you feel the need.

--Margaret Carothers, Russ Carpenter, Mark Gleason, Bob Regan, Paige Russell, Bill Warren, Janet Winkler, Rebecca Wright

ACTION PLAN TEAMS

Each “Action Plan Team” was asked to address one or more of the statements in the Vision, as noted below. All Teams were asked to consider these three statements to define the context for their work:

The life of Jesus of Nazareth will be the standard for all that we do individually and collectively.
Children and youth will be central to the life of our church and will be unconditionally accepted in it.
We will be committing our time, our treasure and our talents to fulfill this vision for our church.

Education

Education in the ways of Jesus of Nazareth will be an essential and exciting part of our program for children, youth and adults.
We will reflect continuing growth in our understanding of our place in the world and our responsibility in it.
Our search for truth and a sustaining faith in God will be evident.

Caring and Community

We will be caring with compassion for our church family and neighbors near and far.
We will reflect continuing growth in our understanding of our place in the world and our responsibility in it.

Communal worship

Communal worship in many forms will be central to church life as will our support and encouragement for each other in our individual spiritual journeys.
Our search for truth and a sustaining faith in God will be evident.

Justice and Peace

We will be working for justice and peace among all people.
We will reflect continuing growth in our understanding of our place in the world and our responsibility in it.

Radical hospitality and Acceptance

We will be practicing radical hospitality and welcoming all with unconditional equality and acceptance.

Stewardship of Earth

We will be active and responsible stewards of Earth.
We will reflect continuing growth in our understanding of our place in the world and our responsibility in it.

APPENDIX E

New Facility Brainstorming Lists

The practice brainstorming session for the first meeting of every Action Plan Team considered the following question: If you were designing an addition to the church with no limitations on space or cost, what would you include/put in it? These are the unedited responses.

Caring & Community

Church school on same side as church
Community room
Real choir rehearsal space
Storage
Bigger kitchen
New elevator for addition and church
Small chapel
Big dining space
Space for teenagers to hang out
Office for minister and employees
Bigger. Better nursery
Meeting rooms

Bathrooms
Performance space for choir in front of sanctuary
Performance space in front of sanctuary in general
Performance space downstairs
Sophisticated sound system
Huge parking lot adjacent to church, covered
Comfy space for outsiders to hang out in (like living room)

Education

Classrooms for Sunday school and Adult Education
Elevator of the quality of Public Buildings with access to the balcony
Yard / Play area
Bathrooms
Christian Education Offices
All Church Offices
Library Space
Large Windows
Stage and Seating
Architecturally Appropriate
Physically Attached to the Church
Comfortable Rooms (comfort not defined)
Soft furniture in meeting rooms
Media Area – Audiovisual, computer, etc

Exercise Room
Hot Tub
Ping Pong Tables (2)
Pool Table
Activity Table for little kids – sand table
Space to store music – file cabinets
Storage Space (for...)
Fire Place
Dark wood
Café Tables
View of Playground
Kitchen that is Kid Friendly
Better / Bigger Nursery
Place to house Church Day Care during working hours
Computers/ Computer Access

Peace & Justice

Connected to church
 Offices
 Small chapel (in the woods) (for 2nd service with children's choir)
 Atrium
 Large meeting/feeding space
 Esthetically compatible
 Pastor's study
 Sunshine/Glass/Green/Geothermal

Sunday school rooms
 Library/Media Center
 Computers for kids and adults to connect to the world
 Teen friendly center
 Plantings
 Easy maintenance
 Kitchen/big
 Paintings/Art/Stained glass

Radical Hospitality and Acceptance

Meditation garden
 Chapel area—meditation room
 Artistic elements
 Large windows
 Big doors
 Easy access
 Height—"reaching up"
 Spacious
 Square
 "comfort zones" comfortable chairs
 storage
 shelving
 expandable rooms (Partitions)
 child friendly
 handicap accessible
 bright & cheery
 easy clean floors

adequate bathrooms
 low maintenance
 audio-visual equipment
 radiant heating in floors
 dual wood/other furnace
 ventilation (cross vents)
 complements current building
 separate kitchen or workspace (additional)
 soundproof
 adequate office space
 stimulating environment for staff
 library space
 media center
 privacy entrance for minister
 separate generator (for power outages)
 redesign the narthex during renovations

Stewardship of Earth

Sunday School rooms
 Solar panels
 Small conference rooms
 Exercise facilities
 Individual source of water
 Covered walkway
 Underground parking
 Library—study area
 Renewable heating source & distribution
 Parking
 Greenhouse—to grow our own food

Art studio
 Facilities for human needs (food, water, bath facilities)
 Classrooms
 Recycling bins
 Bike racks
 Bus stop
 Storage
 Energy efficient
 Big bulletin board
 Addition made with recycled materials

Task Force on Our Church's Future

Local building supplies	Storage space
Room with comfortable furniture	Library
Good youth room	Garden
Labyrinth	Elevator
Bulletin boards in rooms	Chapel
Fully accessible	Big parking lot
Good acoustics	Sufficient size classrooms
Spaces with round tables	Architecture compatible
Natural light better restrooms	Ergonomically correct office space
Composting toilets	Flexible use
Energy efficient	Green building
Small kitchen	Underground parking
Big kitchen	

APPENDIX F

Action Plan Team Members

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following members of the Action Plan Teams.

Education

1. Sara Marshall
2. Liz Robinson
3. Amy Emerson
4. John Emerson
5. Cheryl Faraone
6. Steve Abbott
7. Kate Robinson
8. Tinus Riekert
9. Julina Rundberg

Caring and Community

1. Diana Cotter
2. Louise Wright
3. Gale Burns
4. George Dorsey
5. Adrienne DeLaney
6. Susan Jones
7. Cynthia Marshall
8. Marthena Smith
9. Nancy Foster
10. Edward Williams
11. Mary Williams
12. Ralph Elliott, Jr.
13. Doug Sinclair
14. Ginny Sinclair
15. Judy Bradley
16. Dottie Neuberger

Communal Worship

1. Peggy Rush
2. Ruth Stewart
3. Frank Winkler
4. Ron Cline

Justice and Peace

1. Mona Rogers
2. Geoffrey Jones
3. Jim Robinson
4. Mary Smith
5. Patricia Zeliff
6. Josephine Cole
7. Will Nash

Radical Hospitality and Acceptance

1. Christa Riekert
2. Abigail Wood Delfausse
3. Donna Carpenter
4. Maureen Williams
5. Bob Gleason
6. Betsy Gleason

Stewardship of Earth

1. John McLeod
2. Bob Campbell
3. Penny Campbell
4. Peter Carothers
5. Jeff Ellison
6. Michael Morera
7. Robert Foster
8. Barbara Wells
9. Joan Weed
10. Richard Weed
11. Alice Wright
12. Jackie Flickinger
13. John Flickinger
14. Diane Munroe

Time Line for Task Force on Our Church's Future

July 2005	Council nominates Task Force members
October 4, 2005	First Meeting
January 22, 2006	Congregational Potluck Dinner
March 12, 2006	Sunday Commissioning Service for Task Force
March 25, 2006	Saturday Retreat for Task Force at the home of Richard Crampton in Monkton
May 11, 2006	Congregational Letter and Working List of Core Values
May 21, 2006 & June 11, 2006	After Church Discussions of Core Values Working List
September 12, 2006	Congregational Letter with Draft Mission/Vision Statement
September 24, 25, 27 & October 1, 2006	Mission/Vision Statement small group discussions
October 29, 2006	Approval of Mission/Vision Statements and sign up for Action Plan Teams following Sunday service.
April 1, 2007	Action Plan Team Final Reports submitted
June 30, 2007	Final Report of Task Force on Our Church's Future submitted to Council.