

STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE REPORT

OCTOBER, 2016

The Congregational Church of Hollis, UCC
3 Monument Square
Hollis, New Hampshire 03049



*"...I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your elders shall dream dreams, and your young ones shall see visions."*

(Joel 2:28)

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE

PROLOGUE

This report represents the culmination of nearly eleven months of hard work by a team of thirteen members affirmed by Church Council. We represent a broad spectrum of the congregation in age, personal and professional profile, participation level on various committees and boards, and number of years as a member of this church.

Our formational meeting was an “away-day” type event, held on Saturday, December 12, 2015, at the Congregational Church of Amherst. There, we learned about each other and ourselves; began to talk about our approach to the task of discerning and articulating a vision for our church; and agreed to meet twice monthly, starting in January, 2016. Our semi-monthly meetings were generally held on the first and third Thursday evenings of the month, and were each at least two hours long.

We held two “congregational conversations” after worship on April 10 and 17, where we presented critical questions for broad discussion regarding aspects of our worship, education, welcome, outreach, vision, and mission. In late May, we circulated a questionnaire to the entire congregation, which we requested be returned by early July. We received just over 80 responses, and while we opted against including herein the statistical analysis that was produced of those results, many of the questions did provide clear snapshots of congregational sentiment. From the congregational discussions and questionnaires, we gleaned a great deal of valuable information that is reflected throughout this report.

In July, one of our team members undertook the onerous task of creating our first draft report. For the following several months, various sub-groups of the Task Force continued to revise, refine, and edit the report. We continued to meet semi-monthly (sometimes more often for some of us) in order to complete what you now have before you. We submit it with humility, gratitude, hope, and prayers that it will resonate with the congregation and we will all discover that it represents our best understanding of God’s vision for our future together.

Members of the Strategic Planning Task Force:

Holly Babcock, Kristen Berry, David Gilmour, Rick Guay, Kimber Harmon, Matt Kopser,
Natalie Lewis, Jeff Moffit, Tanya Stormo Rasmussen, Tanya Tenkarian, Tracy Weaver,
Paul Widner, Ed Wigfield.

“Therefore, do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ . . . But strive first for the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

(Matthew 6:31, 33)

STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE REPORT

The Congregational Church of Hollis, established over 275 years ago, has a rich history and embedded sense of purpose. The original church building was erected in 1741 with the establishment of the town, and enlarged in 1746, and again in 1804. On Oct.16, 1923, the building was lost to a fire but rebuilt on the site making up the sanctuary of our current structure. This community of worship and prayer has endured during periods of war, depression, and hardship, and brings its long history of resilience as part of its culture.

The church also has been blessed with multiple gifts, which play an important role in its success. Being located on the town green along with the historic town library and restored town hall provides a prominent spot to aid in its recognition as a community fixture. The church is centered in a town that prides itself on maintaining a rural feel, high education standards, and a sense of community. Our facility, the quintessential white-spired New England church with its simple but elegant interior, provides an ideal sanctuary for reflection. All of these benefits have played a role in attracting members and maintaining overall stability.

Even with all these benefits, the church faces identifiable challenges in today’s changing cultural norms. Some of these were articulated in the church and community profile that was developed to support the search for a new minister. Some challenges we identified represent issues we’ve been wrestling with for more than 25 years.¹ Commissioned by the congregation to review our present status and explore avenues of continued spiritual and physical growth, the Strategic Planning Task Force (SPTF) feels it is important to remain mindful of these challenges as we journey forward in faith.

¹ ‘Report to the Church Council Congregational Church of Hollis (UCC)’, Prepared by the Diaconate, Summer 1991—a description of the congregation and strategic plan proposed by the leadership at that time.

“But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed...”

(2 Corinthians 8:7-10)

The Challenges Before Us

Numbers:

Census projections show relatively flat growth for the Hollis/Brookline area for the next ten years.² The overall age of our community and congregation is rising, leading to unfavorable demographics for long-term stability. High home prices, rising taxes, and the community’s interest in maintaining its rural character through development restrictions and land purchases further limit the potential influx of younger families. As a society, we are also experiencing changing attitudes toward the relevancy of religion. The elimination of most blue laws (which limited commerce on Sunday) and increased scheduling of Sunday events has led to increased competition for people’s time. National research has demonstrated declining participation in organized religion, decade on decade. All of these factors suggest our ability to maintain our congregational size could be in jeopardy without intentional efforts to draw in new members.

Participation:

Membership size also impacts participation needs. We have recognized tremendous pressure calling on a declining number of lay volunteers, more of whom are required if we wish to maintain our current congregational activities and outreach support. Our membership rolls suggest we have 537 members, but we probably have closer to 330 active adult participants.³ Our Nominating Committee struggles each year to fill the 122 board and committee positions created by the requirements of our current Church Bylaws. Many of these positions are occupied by the same individuals—leading to burnout for some, and a failure to engage every single member’s gifts, talents, and potential contributions. Achieving optimal congregational vitality will require empowering the laity. This will entail changes to the structure of boards and committees of the church.

Finances:

We have been fortunate over past years to be able to cover our annual operating expenses using the gains realized from our endowment to supplement congregational giving. But, to stay on budget across the years, many important facility projects have been repeatedly postponed. In

² *MissionInsite*, Church Demographic Specialists; an online resource provided by the NH Conference of the U.C.C.

³ Our Deacons have defined an “active member” to be one who has attended church or contributed financially at least once in the past two years.

addition, our local church's running costs continue to rise while the charitable needs within our community, our denomination, and worldwide are increasing. Salary growth has been stagnant for many members of the congregation, and numerous families faced job interruptions during the recent economic downturn, further exacerbating financial stewardship challenges. Even in our relatively affluent community, one can sense an anxious mentality of scarcity, despite our Christian theology of abundance. The challenge before us is to maintain a faithful commitment to generosity.

Social Pressures:

Exacerbating our church's challenges are societal strains that impact our community, our nation, and the world. The SPTF has heard the congregation express the importance of paying attention to our role in the community and in the world around us. As we consider and propose our strategic plan, we believe we are called to reach out with Christ's hope and healing to troubled and broken places. The issues that face the worldwide church community include the expanding drug epidemic, the increase in violence, the decline of civil dialogue, increasing income inequality, loss of public trust in leadership and government, the global refugee crisis, and the rise of terrorism. As members of Christ's universal Body, we are not immune to any of these issues. They can bring uncertainty and fear, and negatively impact our feeling of stability and safety as a society. The challenge before us is to engage these issues without fear or reticence—in our church, in our community, and in the world beyond.

Toward Meeting the Challenges Before Us

“I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ... [T]his one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”

(Philippians 3:12-14)

The SPTF proposes a plan to meet our church’s future needs that does not shrink from the challenges before us, and communicates a message of hope, love, joy, spiritual growth, and transformation.

Through extensive discussion and internal reflection, individual discussions with members, completion of formal breakout sessions, and interpretation of submitted surveys, the SPTF has discerned a vision being revealed and expressed through common and recurring themes.

We believe our church’s vision expresses a desire to create a vibrant and dynamic community that nurtures spiritual growth, reaches out to the vulnerable, is welcoming to all, and displays the life and teaching of Jesus Christ through word and deed. Realizing this vision will require dedicated efforts by the entire church community to engage the participation of each individual, young and old alike, as we grow and mature together in faith.

We believe our church will grow as we provide better ongoing learning opportunities, where all members are encouraged to engage and interpret the teachings of Christ through introspection, prayer, worship, dialogue, and service.

We believe our church will grow as we promote servanthood as a Christian calling and responsibility for everyone; as we encourage and support each individual in finding an area of charitable service that animates them, as each one discovers ways to share their time, talents, and treasure to accomplish God’s work in Hollis, our surrounding communities, and around the world.

We believe our church will grow as we consider new opportunities to support the homeless, feed the hungry, heal the sick, reach out to the marginalized, and care for our neighbors.

We believe our church will grow as we get better at extending a friendly, gracious reception to visitors and members and as we strive to become an increasingly welcoming congregation of all individuals, providing a safe haven from bigotry and discrimination.

In order to delineate a pathway to this growth, we have endeavored to verbalize a church-wide Vision Statement, Mission Statement, and a Strategic Plan.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish...”

(Proverbs 29:18)

OUR VISION STATEMENT

...describes what we believe God wants us to look like and do as we continue to live and grow in Christian faith and community. It is based on the recurring themes we heard in our congregational conversations and questionnaires. The statement summarizes our best discernment of how we view ourselves and what we aspire, in faith, to be. This is a forward-reaching statement that our community can use to describe our church based on our worship and actions.

Our committee deliberated for many hours over a multitude of variations seeking a brief, insightful, Vision Statement that reflects how we wish to be seen as a church—as a congregation of individuals, and as a member-body of the community—both now and in the future.

The committee is suggesting the following statement as our best expression of the recurring themes and concerns that resonated with the congregation.

***“The Congregational Church of Hollis:
A Christ-centered community church where all are welcome,
and faith flourishes
as our words and deeds
reflect God’s infinite love, hope and joy.”***

We believe the statement above will serve us well into the future. It expresses our aspirations, without being so specific that it would routinely require revision. The SPTF also believes that the statement is consistent with our stated mission, touching on foundation, church family, journey, and works. The committee hopes that this statement will resonate with individuals and provide a touchstone for our church’s boards and committees to frame discussions and action in support of our stated goals.

Jesus said, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."

(Mark 16:15)

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

... is the guiding affirmation from which our church's growth and future is to be directed. "Our Church's Common Commission" is a statement we have recited at the end of every worship service for years, and captures the essence of our God-given mission: we are called to be in ministry to the world. We believe it represents the perfect Mission Statement for our church:

*"Let us now go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage,
holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil,
strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted,
honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord,
and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit."*

(1 Thessalonians 5:13-22) ~ Our Common Commission

The special joy and challenge of our congregation is to help everyone understand that the ambition of the Christian life is to be an effective minister to the world at all times, in all places. When an individual understands their unique giftedness, and when they are able to discern where the Holy Spirit is calling them to invest those gifts in the world, that is when ministry begins. The way we organize our work as a congregation will help to underscore this fundamental understanding of mission and purpose.

We think the work of our mission can be organized beneath four headline words: **Worship, Welcome, Learn, and Serve.**

WORSHIP

Our Christian convictions and faith are regularly expressed in the context of worship as we read Scripture, and proclaim the Gospel through preaching, hymns, prayers, and fellowship. The examination of how and how often worship service is available is a topic of considerable interest within the congregation, and should continue to be explored. With the arrival of our new Lead Pastor, we have experienced positive changes in the order and components of our Sunday service. We feel that ongoing experimentation with variations in the style, format, and venue of our services (e.g., outdoor services, candle-light or music-only services, etc.) is to be encouraged in an effort to enhance the dissemination of Christ's message. There is no intention to abandon our traditional service, but rather to explore whether exposure to alternative formats might enrich the worship experience for the broader community.

We also believe that the current pattern of uneven participation at the two Sunday morning

services may become an obstruction to church growth. Church statistics suggest that attendance frequently suffers when attendance at a service reaches 80% of seating capacity.⁴ When individuals are concerned about finding a seat, or finding a place to park, the energy necessary to continue to attend service often outweighs the projected benefit. We regularly hit that 80%+ threshold at the 10:30 service, so this is a real concern.

The examination of potential scheduling times and possible modifications to the early service to make it more attractive to a greater number of our congregation should be investigated, along with a formal study to seriously consider how we maximize the use of our structures, spaces, and property, including our parsonage. Although addition of yet another service (e.g., on a Saturday evening) was discussed, it will be difficult to add extra services with our current staffing.

WELCOME

We strive to be welcoming and inviting to all, across generations, genders and race. We bond through worship and fellowship, respecting, accepting and embracing one another independent of where we are on life's journey, so all may know they belong to the body of Christ. We also believe that for the congregation to be most effective, all members need to feel encouraged to participate and contribute in an atmosphere that welcomes new ideas, is open to learning from differing points of view, and encourages each one to share their personal gifts and experience. This requires intentional work and attention paid to how we communicate and interact with each other.

It is every member's responsibility to reach out, extending a gracious welcome to those we do or do not know or recognize, widening our circle of friendship. Many members recall their initial interaction with a church member or the friendly atmosphere they experienced as the primary reason they returned and eventually joined the church. As we face a national trend of decreasing church participation, it is important to optimize every opportunity to invite and involve friends and neighbors so that our entire community might be strengthened by our service and fellowship opportunities; new friends become new members, and new members both feed, and are fed by, our mutual ministries.

Our Congregational heritage and premier location are to our advantage; we should leverage these assets as we continue to make efforts to enhance our identity as an engaging church community, open to all. To encourage community involvement and exposure, expanded efforts could include special non-denominational services for community functions, candlelight vigils, educational

⁴ Alice Mann, *Raising the Roof: The Pastoral-to-Program Size Transition* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2001), 20. A new study, published in 2013, suggests "resistance to growth occurs at about 57 percent of the comfortable seating capacity." The seating capacity often is correlated to availability of parking, etc., which contributes to the barrier. <https://alban.org/archive/the-80-percent-rule-fact-or-fiction/>.

offerings, invited speakers, etc. We should consider providing time for our Pastor to expand her involvement in community-centered activities as the face of our church and as a representative of the church we wish to become. There may also be opportunities through choir performances and pastoral exchanges to increase the visibility of our active congregation. This expanded visibility and engagement with the community, displaying our commitment to being a welcoming haven rooted in Christian practice, should aid in the recruitment of new members.

We believe our expanded recruitment efforts also need to encompass our existing members. We believe our church will grow as we support opportunities that encourage the interaction of members from both 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services to minimize the sense of separate congregations. Our Hospitality Committee's recent efforts have provided initial opportunities for members to interact in a non-worship forum. We encourage the creation of a broader spectrum of family-friendly events to involve a greater number of family members. We need to find ways to retain the participation of post-Confirmation youth in our worship and community, and to continue to nurture this age group as they begin to face important life choices and deal with significant peer pressure.

We propose further exploration of becoming an Open and Affirming Church, which would make our conviction explicit that God loves and welcomes all people—including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals, and the families who love them.

LEARN

Education is the cornerstone in the understanding and appreciation of Christ's teachings, and we all will grow as we continue to nurture the spiritual growth of new and existing members. We have a long-standing commitment to investing time and money to support children's education, and there is a clear congregational desire to expand our youth programs. But Christian education should not cease following teen-aged Confirmation; ongoing learning about how our faith is relevant to our daily living is crucial to a deepened awareness of how we best live out our Mission Statement.

Our journey in Christian discipleship involves both a personal responsibility to interpret the teachings of Christ through reflection, prayer, and worship, as well as the need to disseminate these teachings through action so that the message of God can be seen and understood by others. One component of these teachings is to accept and cherish all individuals irrespective of where they are on life's journey. We seek to learn, understand, and follow God's guidance through worship, study, and education; and we commit to our personal and collective growth, recognizing our failures as we attempt to live according to the teachings of Christ, asking for forgiveness, and striving to improve.

We recommend providing expanded learning opportunities for adults, starting with programs addressing family issues, balancing active lifestyle pressures, other important social issues, as well as more traditional Bible studies. Follow-up surveys should be used to determine overall interest and participation rates. We believe the expansion of adult education opportunities will allow individuals to gain comfort in talking about their convictions and faith in daily life.

Finally, our current staffing is inadequate to meet the educational and program needs our congregation has indicated we desire. Therefore, our church must explore opportunities to better prepare our volunteers for teaching, or revisit the need to provide financially for increased staff support in this fundamental area.

SERVE

Service is the outward manifestation of our inward commitment to God's teachings and the active demonstration of our Common Commission. We believe our church will be strengthened as we consider new opportunities to support the homeless, feed the hungry, heal the sick and care for our neighbors. We promote service as a Christian calling and responsibility for everyone and provide encouragement and support to each individual to discover an area of service that animates them. We believe that we are all called upon to contribute graciously and humbly of our time, talent, and treasure for the success of our church.

Time: We believe the church will grow as more individuals get involved in supporting the ministries of the church with their time and active participation. We would like for all individuals not presently engaged in church life to find a role that fosters their church interaction beyond Sunday morning worship. We want to extend opportunities for individuals not presently in lay leadership positions to experience small group participation and be involved in church decisions.

Talent: All members possess special talents or experience that can be used to further our church's mission, aid our outreach, or apply to our daily operations. We believe our church will grow as respect is shown for each individual to select the area of service they are attracted to. We reiterate the recognized need for greater participation by all church members in supportive community, and hope they will bring those opportunities to the church to permit even greater community involvement by additional members of the congregation.

Treasure: A core Christian value is that of generosity. We believe our church will grow as we collectively learn and talk more openly about our experience of how generously sharing our financial treasure helps us to clarify our role, and feel more deeply invested in God's work and community. It is important for the fiscal stability of our church that each family unit seriously evaluate their ability to contribute a greater share of the gifts they enjoy.

*“Hear what the LORD says:
... He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?”*

(Micah 6:1, 8)

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

... is a roadmap to help us live out our Common Commission, toward realization of our Vision. It suggests goals and potential benchmarks or progress indicators, which we hope will provide a roadmap to guide each Board, Committee, or Ministry Team in the work they feel called to do.

Our goals and benchmarks will undoubtedly require adjustment over time, reflecting changing priorities from ongoing discernment and amended congregational wishes; however, we begin this effort using the best understanding we have of our collective vision today.

SEVEN GOALS, with Proposed Benchmarks:

➤ **GOAL 1:**

Create a Ministry Team⁵ model of church leadership that fully empowers the laity to engage their time, talent, and treasure in ways that fulfill our Vision and Mission, and grows the ministries of this church.

Benchmarks:

* Boards and committees review their makeup and number of participants to determine the most effective way to accomplish their ministry.

* Revise our current Bylaws so that the current Board and Committee structure is eased to transition into a Ministry Team model. Board and Committee sizes become more flexible and fluid, based on members' discerned gifts, call, and desire to serve rather than trying to recruit to fill Bylaws-mandated quotas. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** this does not suggest the abandonment of all Boards and Committees; just a loosening of the structure!

* Assemble a Gifts & Call Discernment Ministry Team: a team of members who have

⁵ **Ministry Teams** are small groups of people who feel called to a particular ministry, and who work together to faithfully accomplish their goals, which are clearly connected to our church's Vision and Mission. The formation of a new Ministry Team can occur when a group of individuals with a commonly-discerned call creates a Ministry Team Statement of Purpose including articulated goals, and Church Council recognizes and supports its ministry.

skills and passion for identifying the gifts of others, and who begin helping members identify where they are best suited to serving in and through the church.

* Create other Ministry Teams, like (merely suggestions):

- > Adult Education
- > Annual Church Mission Trip
- > Building and Grounds
- > Communications
- > Home Ministries
- > Hospitality
- > Outreach and Service
- > Property & Land Use
- > Welcomers
- > Worship Arts
- > Youth Ministries

➤ **GOAL 2:**

Convert the understanding and expectation of our Common Commission from a passive prayer to an action-oriented commitment to service within our community and the world.

Benchmarks:

- * Promote action to service through weekly updates on new service opportunities during worship services and through all broadcast church communications.
- * Investigate local service building and repair opportunities for youth and adults to participate in by summer 2017.
- * Bless and pray over those who will engage in specific acts of service.
- * Recognize and celebrate mission and service experiences in ways that highlight the joy and rewards that accompany such service.
- * Offer presentations during the worship service to educate the congregation about the various organizations our church supports. Possibly host an after-worship event in Hardy Hall that highlights all of the different charities we support, with photos of Mission Trips and other volunteer efforts members of our community have participated in.

➤ **GOAL 3:**

Promote the Gospel model in our: appreciation of diversity; efforts to eradicate bigotry; outreach to the marginalized; and rejection of social injustice, all in keeping with Christ's teachings through discussion, sermons, and workshops.

Benchmarks:

- * Participate in at least two interdenominational services per year.
- * Host and advertise at least two invited speakers annually who will address relevant topics to help us understand and deepen our Christian faith in relation to our wider world.
- * Explore becoming an Open and Affirming church.

➤ **GOAL 4:**

Create a welcoming environment where everyone feels embraced, included, cared for, and safe to express their thoughts, concerns, joys and questions in ways that communicate mutual respect and Christ-like concern.

Benchmarks:

- * Create a Welcomers Ministry Team whose identified ministry is to reach out to unfamiliar faces before and after the worship service to make them feel specially welcomed; also, could send a welcoming postcard to all new Hollis residents, etc.
- * Improve signage in the church, and notification about nursery facilities, etc.
- * Expand use of electronic communication technology to recruit new members and keep existing members updated. For example, audio- and/or videotape our worship services and upload to our newly-improved webpage. Expand use of social media to maintain contact with youth and to attract a younger demographic.
- * Advertise special services with all available means of communication (print, website, email, social media).
- * Designate one or two parking spaces specifically for first- or second-time visitors.

➤ **GOAL 5:**

Nurture spiritual growth across all age groups through opportunities to worship in a variety of ways and contexts; actively serve others in community; and learn more about what it means to be a Christian through worship, education, fellowship, and service.

Benchmarks:

* Explore the possibility of providing Christian Education classes for all ages between the two Sunday morning worship services, allowing adults with children and senior youth to participate in educational opportunities in ways they currently cannot.

* Develop a comprehensive Adult Christian Education program that includes such offerings as Gifts & Talent Exploration; understanding how our faith meets contemporary social concerns; developing healthy balance in a life full of competing demands; as well as traditional Bible study—these offerings to be provided at various times across the week.

* Continue the development of engaging Junior and Senior Youth group programs; and consider after-school programming for youth in our community.

* Continue to nurture our existing children’s Christian Education program, with the possible exploration of a more experiential curriculum (e.g., Rotation Model⁶).

➤ **GOAL 6:**

Leverage our property and land assets in ways that enhance our visibility and outreach in the community, and help us to live out our Mission and Vision statements.

Benchmarks:

* Assemble a Properties and Land Use Ministry Team that would help the congregation to explore the best use of our property assets through surveys, focus groups, and congregational discussion.

* Investigate use of parsonage by a registered not-for-profit group to extend our action-

⁶ Rotation Model curriculum offers a highly interactive, experiential educational experience as Biblically-based lessons are taught using such media as cooking, drama, story-telling, science, computers, etc. Teachers teach the same lesson for several weeks as age levels rotate through the different settings, allowing the teachers deeper familiarity with the lesson and an opportunity to interact with more of the church’s young people. Continuity of relationship is provided by a “shepherd” who accompanies each class for the duration of a church school term.

oriented commitment to service. (For example, the property could be rented to refugees, or to vulnerable women and families in transition, etc.) Or, it could be redeveloped to provide space for a youth center.

* Explore the development of our 8-9 acre land assets in ways that can engage and nurture the spirit of the wider community (e.g., creating a meditation garden with a labyrinth, and/or an outdoor fellowship area that could also accommodate worship, etc.).

* Develop a sensible plan for our church facilities that addresses increasingly urgent repair and maintenance needs, some of them legally required.

➤ **GOAL 7:**

Achieve a balanced annual budget through pledged giving alone, where every member of the church feels good about making as generous a pledged financial gift as they are able.

Benchmarks:

* Because of increased education and encouragement, every member of our congregation will recognize the importance of pledging their financial treasure as a means of achieving personal spiritual growth, and supporting our church's greater vision and mission.

* Offer presentations during the worship service to educate the congregation about the various organizations our church supports. Possibly host an after-worship event in Hardy Hall that highlights all of the different charities we support, with photos of Mission Trips and other volunteer efforts in which members of our community have participated.

* Create a document that clearly articulates the purpose and vision for our church endowment.

* Assemble a Capital Campaign Task Force, and launch a carefully planned capital campaign that includes visionary recommendations from the Land Use Ministry Team, as well as covering the costs of physical plant improvements and repairs that have been neglected over time due to fiscal constraints.

“Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.”

(Proverbs 16:3)

REPORT SUMMARY

We believe our church will grow if we provide an environment that embodies our church’s Vision supported by Christ’s teachings in a spirit of love and mutual respect. To achieve this, the committee believes our congregation needs to grow in spiritual commitment, membership, and the involvement of our faith in our daily lives—all of which will happen if we actively engage and embody our Mission.

The suggestions and beliefs presented in this Strategic Plan offer the SPTF’s best efforts at interpreting the wants of our congregation, the committee members, and our Lead Pastor. Final decisions on these proposals and the action to implement the accepted ideas will be the responsibility of the respective boards, committees, and Church Council. Many of these ideas can be instituted without additional funding and involve only a shift in focus or perception. The committee is well aware that this plan is incredibly ambitious and getting individuals to explore opportunities outside of their area of comfort normally requires both time and energy. We believe (and sincerely hope!) this congregation is up for the challenge, and has the necessary gifts and resources to respond to the God-given invitation in front of us.

It is important that we monitor the demands on our staff during the roll-out and implementation of many of these initiatives to insure that additional work is not transferred to their workload. It will also be important to carefully monitor the workload of our new Minister for Christian Nurture, assessing whether a half-time post is adequate to accomplish the workload that meets the needs of our community. In the absence of significant volunteer support, we will not be able to sustain the work associated with rebuilding and strengthening our programs.

Christ himself frequently commented on how challenging it is to follow his teachings and embrace a Christian life. But just because growth in all forms is difficult, doesn’t mean we should limit ourselves to the status quo or propose easier solutions. We must recognize that acceptance and implementation of many of these suggestions will be a multiyear endeavor, and that as a congregation we need to be open to numerous modifications and changes to the ideas proposed in this document as efforts are attempted, successes embraced, and efforts with limited success are refined.

The Strategic Planning Task Force would like to thank all members of the congregation who provided input through the completion of surveys, participation in focus groups, and during informal discussions with committee members. May God richly bless all our efforts, and may our efforts bless our community and world in Christ’s name.