



Our 2016 Vision and Strategic Plan

We dream that in 2016 the Unitarian Universalist Area Church at First Parish in Sherborn is an agent of transformation in the lives of those inside and outside our walls. Inspired by our faith to build communities of love and strength, we envision a congregation that invites us to share our gifts, deepens our learning over our personal lifespans, and creates spaces for us to nourish our spirits. Inspired by our faith to help heal the world, we envision a congregation that reaches across its borders to welcome the stranger, to practice hospitality, and to announce our liberal religious message.

Four areas of mission focus our vision and planning over the next five years. They are:

Sharing Our Gifts

We are a congregation whose members are actively involved within the congregation and in our larger community, sharing our gifts and listening to our inspiration for action. All of our volunteer opportunities have ease of entry, ensuring that members and friends can feel that they are both making an impact and fulfilled in their actions, whether they are interested in participating in discrete tasks or at a higher level of involvement. We are spiritually enriched through the connections we make.

Expanding Our Ministry

We are a congregation that covenants to transform the world through love. We are expanding our understanding of “ministry” within our community and our lives. We have an expanded network to care for each other and the greater community and the capacity to reach into our theology for resources to help carry us through times of both joy and pain. We are a religious community that meets people where they are in all seasons of life, and we encourage ourselves and others to engage “the stranger” at every opportunity.

Extending Our Reach

We are a congregation that is known in the larger community as a spiritually vibrant, welcoming, and transformative congregation. With open minds and curiosity, we actively seek boundary-crossing moments in order to expand our understanding of those different from ourselves. We do not need to think alike to love alike. We are communicating our message of hope and love (our “good news”) to welcome those we have yet to meet.

Nurturing Our Home

We are a congregation whose physical setting calls people here to nourish their spirits. By creating spaces for both introspection and fellowship, we offer a place that invites us to know and be known, to love and be loved. Our spaces speak of our Unitarian Universalist traditions and values, which includes maintaining a sustainable environment. Just as our facilities nourish us, we care for and nourish our facilities.

Background

In the fall of 2009, members and friends of UUAC at First Parish in Sherborn embarked on a two-year strategic planning process to discern our mission over the next five years. With the guidance of our Alban Institute consultant Rev. Dr. Larry Peers and the leadership of our Board-appointed Steering Committee, we developed our plan over three distinct phases.

First, we used a tool called Appreciative Inquiry to **discover our gifts as a congregation**. Next, we gathered in imagination groups to **dream the congregation we hope to be in 2016**. Last, we gathered in focus groups to **design our plans to make our dreams real**.

The following three sections detail our discoveries, our dreams, and our designs. It is important to note that this plan does not attempt to capture every activity we currently engage in nor every program we will run over the next five years. Rather, it is hoped that it will provide direction and inspiration. Read on!

Your Steering Committee,

Jeff Barton, Darryl Bryans, Alice
Clattenburg, Sandra Goodin, Maureen
Gormley, Pat Manley, and the Rev.
Nathan Detering

Discover Our Gifts

Using Appreciate Inquiry, we identified the strengths and gifts that make our congregation unique. We discovered that UUAC is at its best when we:

- create sacred time in worship,
- are cared for by others in community as we serve the common good,
- create opportunities for our members to live and act on our shared values,
- welcome and embrace one another and one another's differences,
- reach across generations in all that we do,
- get along without conformity of thought, with differing beliefs, gathered in love, and in covenanted community,
- broaden our children's minds and hearts through religious education, imparting Unitarian Universalism values and ideas to the next generation,
- provide ongoing religious learning, growing across our entire lives,
- foster personal spiritual growth through our shared faith,
- cultivate appreciation, gratitude, and respect for others,
- create opportunities for intimacy and deep connection where ministry happens,
- stay open and curious as we broaden our perspective.

Dream the Congregation We Want to Be in 2016

Having grown in strength and numbers by 2016, we are a congregation of youth and adults who can clearly articulate who and what we value, with a strong vision for the future of our beloved community. We dream that in 2016 UUAC is a congregation that:

- is well-known as a community hub, a vibrant center for innovative thought and social action. We extend beyond our congregation through strong personal outreach and public relations programs. We are recognized as a center of spiritual openness and depth, offering workshops, forums, adult programs, a consignment shop (GANS), and worship that draw in and serve the larger community.
- has a physical plant that encourages personal spiritual growth in an atmosphere of comfortable space for meditation, music, and children's worship. Always mindful of the fragile nature of our planet, gardens, artwork, and inviting gathering spaces encourage community in our "green" environment.
- encourages youth involvement, participation, and leadership.
- has a global social action perspective, advocating locally, nationally, and internationally for issues and causes that support our values.
- is an education community for all ages and all people, offering an adult Our Whole Lives curriculum and many other life-long learning and enrichment programs.
- is a place where people come to worship in a spiritually diverse community, seeking connection and renewal.
- has a vibrant music program that lifts the spirit both within worship and beyond.
- has an abundance of resources, people, space, and funds. Using technology to share our message, we have developed relationships with sister or partner congregations, creating more opportunities for worship beyond Sunday mornings.

Designing Our Plan

In the fall of 2010 and spring of 2011, members and friends of UUAC gathered again in smaller focus groups to design action steps that will help us realize some of these dreams. The Steering Committee then organized these action steps into four areas of mission across the next five years. These areas of mission, with their respective action steps, follow. Note that most Action Steps apply to more than a single mission, as they impact multiple aspects of our vision.

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Action Steps

- Tell the UUAC story through the effective use of wall space.
- Develop a systematic method for selecting recipients of donation offerings.
- Expand the Power of the Quilt Project
- Improve communication of church activities and events.
- Evaluate the Rotation Workshop Model for the Religious Education program.
- Investigate youth voting rights and responsibilities.
- Partner with the UUAC Women's Alliance to establish a micro-lending program.
- Implement a Director of Congregational Life.
- Effectively utilize social networking.
- Collaborate with social justice partners on mission trips.
- Become a UU Partner Church.
- Partner with secular organizations for service opportunities in the local communities.
- Establish a Sister Congregation

Expanding Our Ministry

We are a congregation that covenants to transform the world through love. We are expanding our understanding of “ministry” within our community and our lives. We have an expanded network to care for each other and the greater community and the capacity to reach into our theology for resources to help carry us through times of both joy and pain. We are a religious community that meets people where they are in all seasons of life, and we encourage ourselves and others to engage “the stranger” at every opportunity.

Action Steps

- Tell the UUAC story through the effective use of wall space.
- Develop a systematic method for selecting recipients of donation offerings.
- Expand the Power of the Quilt Project
- Improve the physical experience of the Sunday worship service.
- Implement Nourish Nights.
- Implement Prayer Circles.
- Promote environmental awareness in our everyday lives.
- Evaluate the Rotation Workshop Model for the Religious Education program.
- Re-Implement Welcoming 101 Classes
- Investigate youth voting rights and responsibilities.
- Partner with the UUAC Women’s Alliance to establish a micro-lending program.
- Implement a Youth Coordinator.
- Become well known in the community as a welcome place for GLBT youth.
- Implement a Director of Congregational Life.
- Effectively utilize social networking.
- Integrated multi-generational programs.
- Collaborate with social justice partners on mission trips.
- Youth Worship Engagement and Reflections.
- Become a UU Partner Church.
- Become a Green Sanctuary.
- Partner with secular organizations for service opportunities in the local communities.
- Establish a Sister Congregation.

Extending our Reach

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Action Steps

- Tell the UUAC story through the effective use of wall space.
- Create a plan for outside spaces.
- Develop a systematic method for selecting recipients of donation offerings.
- Enhance Communications to the Outside Community
- Expand Power of the Quilt Project
- Improve communication of church activities and events.
- Improve the physical experience of the Sunday worship services.
- Implement Nourish Nights.
- Implement Prayer Circles.
- Install an audio/visual system in Unity Hall.
- Re-Implement Welcoming 101 Classes.
- Become More Effective at Lobbying.
- Partner with the UUAC Women’s Alliance to establish a Micro-Lending program.
- Implement a Youth Coordinator.
- Become well known in the community as a welcome place for GLBT youth.
- Implement a Director of Congregational Life.
- Effectively utilize social networking
- Integrated multi-generational programs.
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- Create a plan for outside spaces.
- Improve the physical experience of the Sunday worship services.
- Promote environmental awareness in our everyday lives.
- Install an audio/visual system in Unity Hall.
- Become a Green Sanctuary.

Action Steps

Tell the UUAC story through the effective use of wall space. With the building addition, we have gained highly visible wall space in the parlor, Unity Hall, and hallways. This wall space will be used to clearly communicate UUAC's (and the broader UU) values and mission. It is also important to use the space to communicate events, activities and volunteer opportunities that are happening at the church.

- Spring 2011: A Task Force is established that will determine what will be communicated, and how, for all wall space. Included in the plan will be a process for updating the wall space over time and where appropriate. The Task Force will present its recommendations to the Board of Directors.
- Summer/Fall 2011: Plan for the wall space will be implemented.

Create a plan for outside spaces. This is a cohesive plan that examines UUAC's outdoor space and how to best use it to nourish our spirit.

- Fall 2011: Task Force is established to examine UUAC's physical space assets and develop possibilities for their use. These could include patio space off Unity Hall, development of North Park, the space surrounding the north side parking lot, and a labyrinth.
- Spring 2012: Begin construction of work that has been approved and funded.

Develop a systematic method for selecting recipients of donation offerings. We currently (Spring 2011) are donating one plate collection a month to a charity. We want this to continue and perhaps even increase in frequency. However, there needs to be a more careful approach to identifying the charities and incorporating the donation with service programs. A small task force, to include the Chair of the Social Action Committee, will be established in Fall 2011 to establish guidelines and recommend the charities to receive donations for the church year. The Board of Directors will authorize these donations.

Enhance communications to the outside community.

- Fall 2011: Develop consistent brand awareness campaign.
 - Use UUAC chalice icon on all forms of communications.
 - Actively solicit free advertising via press coverage.
- Fall 2011: Implement a plan for keeping the UUAC website "fresh."
- Spring 2012: Develop a plan for paid targeted advertising.

Expand the Power of the Quilt Project: Invite UUs from nearby congregations to fully participate in this program which transforms quilt makers into comfort providers. Expand our quilt giving to members and friends in nearby UU congregations. Graciously receive fabric donations.

- Fall 2011: Initial expansion to nearby UU congregations
- Spring 2013: Host a Power of the Quilt show

Improve communications of church activities and events.

- Fall 2011: Identify and implement optimal method for communicating to members by use of kiosk, bulletin boards, website, and to the general public.

Improve the physical experience of Sunday worship service.

- Fall 2011: A Task Force is established to identify needs and potential solutions for improving the sanctuary's sound system, including an improved solution for the hearing-impaired, as well as a system for recording music and other special programs.
- Fall 2011: Listening Room. Set up a clear audio feed in the Membership/Communications Room. Ensure it is a comfortable environment for families.
- Spring 2012: Sanctuary sound system, including solution for the hearing-impaired, is installed if approved and funded.
- Fall 2013: Purchase new cushions for the sanctuary pews.

Implement Nourish Nights. These are intergenerational, family-friendly worship services that incorporate a potluck dinner after the service. This service will fall on a day other than Sunday.

- Fall 2011: Begin planning.
- Spring 2012: Hold first Nourish Night, and hold a Nourish Night each season (fall, winter, spring).
- Summer 2013: Hold first Nourish Night during the Summer

Implement Prayer Circles. These are small gatherings for individuals who wish to pray together for those who have asked.

- Fall 2011: A basket or book will be provided in the church for individuals to request prayers. Those participating in the prayer circle will gather together.
- Fall 2012: The reach of the prayer circles are extended so that individuals can request prayers through the UUAC web site and individuals can participate in the prayer circles remotely.

Promote environmental awareness in our everyday lives.

- Fall 2011: Place recycling bins in every room, and insure that all users know what to recycle.
- Fall 2011: Add “Ask Claire” column in Crossroads, so that we have a place to learn about recycling, zero-waste, energy conservation, etc.
- Fall 2011: Establish a task force to determine ways we can reduce our waste, develop plan for doing so, and present to the Board of Directors for approval

Evaluate the Rotation Workshop Model for the Religious Education program. The

Workshop Rotation model is a method of instruction that builds on kids’ and teachers’ various intelligences. It’s called “Rotation” because the teachers stay in the workshops that they know and enjoy and the kids rotate to new rooms on consecutive Sundays, learning about one or two big ideas from our curriculum in six different ways.

- Fall 2011: Visit Concord church to see this model in action and determine its application at UUAC.
- Winter 2011/12: If appropriate, begin implementing Rotation Workshop in a limited trial application.

Install an audio/visual system in Unity Hall. Extend the value of Unity Hall through the implementation of video display(s) and sound system(s).

- Fall 2011: Task force is established to identify needs and potential solutions
- Spring 2012: Sound system is installed if approved and funded

Re-implement Welcoming 101 Classes. Reprise and adapt the current course material to promote a welcoming consciousness every Sunday and throughout the week.

- Fall 2011: hold the first class and repeat at least once a year with varying areas of focus.

Investigate youth voting rights and responsibilities. An established age at which youth (those younger than 18) can vote at congregational meetings.

- Fall 2011: Research voting youth designations at other congregations and initiate dialogue about applicability and parameters at UUAC.
- Spring 2012: Present and vote at Annual Meeting, if applicable.

Become more effective at lobbying.

- Spring 2012: Identify goals consistent with UUAC values and mission and establish methods for UUAC members and friends to successfully get our message out to those empowered to make a difference.

Partner with the UUAC Women’s Alliance to establish a micro-lending program.

- Spring 2012: Set up task force to understand what is involved in establishing a micro-lending program and the objectives of a UUAC/Women’s Alliance program.
- Fall 2012: Present findings and recommendations to the Women’s Alliance and Board of Directors and decide a course of action.

Implement a Youth Coordinator. This would be a paid staff position that identifies opportunities to involve the youth of UUAC in church activities, including worship, education, social action, and social gatherings.

- Spring 2012: Determine congregational need and financial commitment and identify examples employed by other UU churches.
- Spring 2013: If need is identified, present at Annual Meeting for approval and funding.
- Fall 2014: Implement if approved at Annual Meeting.

Become well known in the community as a welcome place for GLBT youth.

- Fall 2012: Establish a vibrant Gay-Straight Alliance that meets regularly.

Implement a Director of Congregational Life. Investigate the purview of this position as a means to efficiently incorporate volunteer coordination and other responsibilities into a current staff position.

- Fall 2012: Discern congregational need and financial commitment. Identify examples employed by other UU churches.
- Spring 2013: If need is identified, present at Annual Meeting for approval and funding.
- Fall 2014: Implemented if approved at Annual Meeting

Effectively utilize social networking: maximize the benefits of using Facebook and Twitter and other social networking tools from which current and younger generations get their information.

- Fall 2012: Develop and implement plan.

Integrated multi-generational programs. These programs would be one-time or long term opportunities where people of many ages participate and interact with each other, deepening and broadening their understanding and appreciation of each other and of the joy of being together. Some examples are adults on youth trips and the upcoming “Art in Bloom.”

- Fall 2012: Form task force to determine common areas of interest among various groups and committees (e.g., Music Committee, Religious Education, Women’s Alliance).
- Fall 2013: Initiate programs.

Collaborate with social justice partners on mission trips.

- Fall 2012: Identify partners and plans for future mission trips locally, regionally, nationally, and even internationally.

Youth Worship Engagement and Reflections: Involve the youth more directly in the worship services as well as provide an adult-led opportunity for the youth to meet after service and reflect how the sermon applies to their lives.

- Fall 2012: Develop plan with purpose and goals.
- Spring 2013: Host first session.
- Fall 2013: Host one session per season (Fall, Winter, Spring).

Become a UU Partner Church. In an effort to reach across boundaries of class and culture while supporting our UU faith internationally, we will initiate a relationship with a “Partner Church.”

- Spring 2013: With assistance from the UU Partner Church Council, delineate methods of partnership and identify potential partner churches. Decide about moving forward.
- Fall 2013: Begin program, if decision is to move forward.

Become a Green Sanctuary. Investigate the UUA’s current requirements for “Green Sanctuary” designation and, if approved, initiate the process for pursuing this designation.

- Fall 2013: Create Task Force according to the guidelines in the UUA Green Sanctuary manual.
- Spring 2014: Present task force findings and vote on Green Sanctuary initiative.
- Fall/Spring 2014/15: If approved, implement appropriate actions to become a Green Sanctuary.

Partner with secular organizations for service opportunities in the local communities.

- Fall 2013: Identify secular organizations whose mission is consistent with UUAC values and approach them to discover how we can work together.
- Spring 2014: Begin service projects jointly executed with secular organizations.

Establish a Sister Congregation. The sister congregation would be a denomination other than UU. From this relationship, we would learn from our differences, engaging theology and class with a spirit of curiosity.

- Fall 2014: Initiate task force to explicitly determine objectives and potential churches to partner with, possibly including working together in social action to begin our relationship.
- Spring 2015: Decide if we want to proceed with the Sister Congregation concept and approach identified church(s).

UUAC at First Parish in Sherborn
5 Year Strategic Plan
Summary of Action Steps

	Spring 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Fall 2013	Spring 2014	Fall 2014	Spring 2015
Tell the UUAC story through the effective use of wall space	Task Force Established	Implement							
Create a plan for outside spaces		B&G reports to Board	Implement as Approved						
Develop a systematic method for selecting recipients of donation offerings		Create Guidelines and implement							
Enhance communications to the outside community		Brand Awareness Campaign; Website Plan	Plan for Targeted Advertising						
Expand the Power of the Quilt Project		Include other congregations			Host PQP Show				
Improve communication of church activities and events		Identify optimal methods and implement							
Improve the physical experience of Sunday worship service		Task Force Established; Listening Room Set	Sanctuary Sound System Installed, if approved			New Pew Cushions			
Implement Nourish Nights		Design and Develop	Hold First Nourish Night	1 per season		1 per season including summer			
Implement Prayer Circles		Initial Implementation		Extended Implementation					

	Spring 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Fall 2013	Spring 2014	Fall 2014	Spring 2015
Promote environmental awareness in our everyday lives		Recycle Bins in Every Room; Ask Claire Column; Other Reduce Waste Efforts							
Evaluate the Rotation Workshop Model for the Religious Education program		Observe model in Concord	Begin to implement for some age groups						
Install an audio/visual system in Unity Hall		Task Force Established to Identify Needs	Installed, if Approved						
Re-implement Welcoming 101 Classes		Hold First Class							
Investigate youth voting rights and responsibilities		Research voting youth designations at other congregations and initiate dialogue	Present and vote, if applicable.						
Become more effective at lobbying			Identify goals						
Partner with the UUAC Women's Alliance to establish a micro-lending program			Establish Task Force	Present Findings					

	Spring 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Fall 2013	Spring 2014	Fall 2014	Spring 2015
Implement a Youth Coordinator			Research Role and determine UUAC needs		Vote on role at Annual Meeting	Implement, if approved			
Become well known in the community as a welcome place for GLBT youth				Establish Gay-Straight Alliance					
Effectively utilize social networking				Develop Plan and Implement					
Integrated multi-generational programs				Form Task Force to determine common themes among RE and Adult Programs	Initiate Programs				
Collaborate with social justice partners on mission trips				Identified Partners					
Youth Worship Engagement and Reflections				Develop plan: purpose and goal	Host first one	one per season			
Become a UU Partner Church					Delineate Requirements	Begin Program			
Become a Green Sanctuary						Task Force	Present and Vote	Implement, if Approved	Implement

	Spring 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Fall 2013	Spring 2014	Fall 2014	Spring 2015
Partner with secular organizations for service opportunities in the local communities						Identify potential partners	Begin Joint Service Projects		
Establish a Sister Congregation								Initiate task force	Go/No Go Decision