



Unitarian Church of Montpelier

Long Range Plan

March 2005

Montpelier, Vermont



**Unitarian Church of Montpelier  
130 Main Street Montpelier, Vermont 05602  
Long Range Planning Committee**

March 8, 2005

Ted Schulteis, Chair  
Executive Committee  
Unitarian Church of Montpelier

Dear Ted,

After nearly two years since the Long Range Planning Committee was created and charged at the May 2003 Annual Meeting, we submit the five-year plan for our church, based on information gathered from our community and changes that we foresee. This document meets the charge to develop and present for approval a five-year plan to address the spiritual needs of the congregation, including the mission and vision of the church, growth in membership, staffing needs, religious education, outreach to the community and stewardship.

Our committee began meeting in August 2003 and has met at least monthly since. Our conversations have always been thoughtful, challenging, and often funny. We've gotten to know and have learned from each other. Each member brought unique strengths and experiences to the committee's work, moving us steadily and thoughtfully toward our goal of creating this plan.

In the first year we gathered information, soliciting input from committees, from small groups at the fall 2003 mission and vision dinners, and from a church-wide (i.e., sent to members and friends) anonymous survey last summer. We then met in small groups to pull together and review what we learned, search for themes and outline the plan.

Finally, we wrote what you see before you. Our plan builds on a three-part foundation of granite strength: Ministry, led by Maggie Rebmann, whose homilies, character, and depth nurture our souls; Music, led by Catherine Orr, that is a stirring voice for our spirits; and Members and friends, whose commitment, hard work and vision guarantee a strong future. Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to undertake this valuable endeavor. To ensure thoughtful implementation and to account for significant changes that are likely

to occur, we believe that the steps taken pursuant to the plan should be monitored regularly and that the entire plan should be reviewed in five years.

Sincerely,

Peg Mangan, Chair

## **Contents**

I.	The Long Range Planning Committee’s Charge .....	4
II.	Unitarian Universalist Principles .....	5
III.	Summary of Findings .....	6
IV.	Recommended Five-Year Plan.....	9
V.	Appendix .....	13
	• Survey Results	
	• Summary of Mission and Vision Dinner Discussions, Fall 2003	
	• History of Church Building	

## **Long Range Planning Committee Members**

Didi Brush

Rob Chickering

Murray Evans

Dick Jenney

Peg Mangan

Paul Ohlson

Leslie Parr

Norma Raymond

Rev. Maggie Rebmann

Peter Thoms

K.C. Whiteley

## I. Charge

From the Church Bylaws – 2003

**Long Range Planning Committee:** The chair of the committee (who may also be the chair of the Executive Committee at his or her discretion) shall be appointed by the chair of the Executive Committee with the consent of the EC. The committee shall consist of at least four additional members, representing a broad cross-section of the membership of the Church, and the minister. The duties of the committee are:

- a. To develop and prepare a five-year plan for presentation to and approval by the Executive Committee;
- b. To update the LRP annually and present the updated plan for approval of the Executive Committee at the March Executive Committee meeting;
- c. To meet at least monthly and to report to the Executive Committee twice yearly.
- d. To address within the LRP the spiritual needs of the congregation, including considering the mission and vision of the Church, growth in membership, staffing needs, religious education goals for children and adults, outreach to the community regarding the church as a spiritual resource, and developing and nurturing a climate of stewardship within the Church;
- e. To conduct its work in consultation with the Executive Committee chair, other standing committee chairs, the minister and other staff, and other friends and members of the congregation. The LRP Committee may also seek advice and consultation from the UUA, the NH-VT UU District and such other sources as may assist in its work; and
- f. To conduct an annual survey addressing the functioning of the church, including whether the congregation's spiritual needs are being met, the functioning of the religious education program, membership issues, the adequacy of the building and its maintenance to meet the Church's needs, and such other issues as may be identified by the LRP Committee.

## **II. Unitarian Universalist Principles**

In the spring of 1999, the congregation re-affirmed these Unitarian Universalist Principles as our guide. They were adopted as Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Association at the denomination's 1984 and 1985 General Assemblies. This re-affirmation, coming at the end of the "Fulfilling the Promise" project, was chosen as an alternative to a proposed church covenant.

As Unitarian Universalists, we covenant, affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

### **III. Summary of Findings**

#### **A. Survey**

In June 2004, 370 surveys were mailed, 200 to members and 170 to non-members listed in the church directory (friends). A total of 188 surveys were returned, 148 (74%) from church members, 40 (24%) from friends. The results between the two groups were not appreciably different. In the following paragraphs, percentages are based on the 148 members who responded. Complete survey results from all who responded are included in the Appendix.

#### **1. Church Community, Participation & Values**

The Unitarian Church of Montpelier (UCM) opens a window to its values, music and preaching during Sunday morning worship. These three offerings are front and center and experienced by even infrequent churchgoers. Members overwhelmingly agree (+96%) that all three are important to them. The survey revealed strong, unambiguous support for: diversity of belief, spiritual quests and spiritual sources; Rev. Maggie Rebmann's sermons; and music during the services. It also revealed strong support for the opportunity to get to know interesting people; and strong support for helping others in the larger community. We found modest support for small group ministries. Coffee hour and small group participation were highly valued, while personally participating in church services was somewhat less valued. Just over half found that serving on a church committee enriches their membership experience.

Of our members, 92% said that an attractive well-maintained building was important to them. Eighty-nine percent indicated that it was important to make the building available for community events, which affirms the UCM's current policy.

Our sense is that, unlike music, preaching or welcoming diversity – which can all be felt and appreciated by attending a single worship service – understanding small group ministry is more difficult unless one actually participates in a small group. Consequently, the fact that only 47% thought small group ministry was important may be more a reflection of their level of understanding of what small group ministry is than a negative view of the concept.

While 64% of the members attend church more than half the time, 81% say that their participation in our church community is enhanced when they personally interact with others at Sunday coffee hour; 75% say that is also true when they participate in small group church activities; 67% when they personally participate

in Sunday service; and 56% when they serve on a church committee. It is clear that involvement in these activities deepens the connection of members to the church and enhances church members' experience.

## **2. Religious Education**

Religious education (RE) is very important to the vast majority of our church community. Ninety percent (90%) of members state that the church's RE program is an important part of our spiritual community, while 32% (at 47 members, a significant number) are willing to teach in church school. Most believe that the program teaches children to respect diversity and appreciate many spiritual sources and experiences. However, more than half are not aware or have no opinion about whether the program meets the needs of our children. More than half are not sure or have no opinion about adult RE.

## **3. Growth**

There are more people in favor of the consequences of growth than against those consequences. They say that because more members could help with committee work, there would be more people to get to know and we could expand the value and benefits of Unitarian Universalism to the Central Vermont community. However, most do not want two Sunday services and do not want to lose the close relationships we enjoy today.

## **4. Fundraising & Resource Development**

The survey results indicated a willingness by members and non-members to become more informed and more committed to the financial future of the church.

A majority of members favor increased annual pledges to cover the operating budget. More fundraising events like the rummage sales, auctions etc. were the least favored, as the investment is labor intensive with limited return.

It is clear that people understand that a strategy is needed to address major building and capital expenses. The majority favor capital campaigns to target specific projects/needs, whether it is a new roof, furnace or major renovation. The second preference was that such expenses be included as line items in the annual budget.

Our review of the survey results indicates a possible lack of clarity or understanding about the significance of the endowment funds, their purpose, current use, and financial value.

Responses to questions about funding suggest that a well-defined strategy must be mapped out and must include additional ways of supporting the church. A

large number of respondents were in favor of a standing Stewardship Committee that can conduct research, educate the congregation, and make recommendations on a wider range of giving opportunities, some of which could fit into overall financial or estate planning.

Additional comments confirm that people would like to give more but are: unable to increase their pledges, uncertain as to how they might increase annual pledges or make major gifts, or what the overall needs of the church are.

## **B. Fall 2003 Mission and Vision Dinner Discussion Results**

Our mission and vision dinner discussions involved seven dinners in private homes and the participation of 62 members and friends. Facilitators at each dinner directed discussion around three questions:

- What do we value about the church?
- What would enhance the church experience in the next five years?
- How do you see our congregation helping the community at large?

Rev. Maggie Rebmann's sermons and Director of Music Catherine Orr's music program are highly valued by all groups. We value religious education, the building in which we worship, intergenerational experiences and a sacred and safe spiritual community. Groups asked that we address the issue of stewardship, reach out to our teens and the larger community and preserve the building. We seek greater visibility in our community. To help the community at large, groups urged us to encourage more involvement from young people and pay our fair share to the UUA.

Please see the Appendix for more details from the dinner discussions.

## **IV. Recommended Five-Year Plan**

### **1. Professional Succession**

Given the congregation's strong affirmation of the high quality of worship services – as evidenced by the contributions of Rev. Maggie Rebmann (sermons, readings, meditations) and Director of Music Catherine Orr – and given that in the next five to ten years, the church may see the retirement of either Maggie or Catherine, we recommend the following:

Plan: That, by May 2006, the Executive Committee (EC) develop criteria and a process for professional succession in anticipation of the eventual need to call those who will follow Maggie and Catherine. Included would be consultation with Maggie and Catherine, with appropriate staff of the UUA and the VT-NH District, and with members of the congregation and members of church committees.

### **2. Wide Community Use of Church**

Given the congregation's clear commitment to making the church available for a broad range of uses by community groups, we recommend the following:

Plan: That the church should continue and broaden its efforts to have a wide variety of organizations and groups use our facilities for meetings, activities, and special events such as weddings and civil unions. The church should have in place – and apply consistently – clear written policies and practices on the use of rental facilities for non-church events. Policies should describe safety requirements, such as opening of front doors when more than 50 people are anticipated, deposits, return of keys and other information. Rental rates should be comparable to rental rates of other churches. An informal survey should be taken of other churches' rental policies and rental rates in the next 12 months.

### **3. Enhancing Participation in Church Activities**

Given that our members overwhelmingly endorsed personal participation as a way of deepening their connection with the church community, we recommend:

Plan: that there should be a Sunday service each fall when all the opportunities for individual participation are presented. The Executive Committee should ensure that church members and friends understand the value of wide participation that is the underpinning for our spiritual community, as well as the many ways members and friends may participate in this life.

## 4. Stewardship

Given that our members care deeply about the church building and the programs and people who make it such a unique place;

Given that members have also indicated that financial stability should be a high priority and that a strategic funding plan must be created to ensure that stability; and

Given that members have indicated a willingness to increase their individual investment in the church, we recommend:

Plan:

- Ensure that a Stewardship Committee develops an annual fundraising plan in conjunction with the budget process and based on past contributions, implements that plan and analyzes and reports on the results annually.
- Ensure that a Stewardship Committee creates a communication plan that will inform our members about the annual financial requirements of the church, as well as the longer-term needs. This plan will include information about annual pledges, estate planning and charitable giving, the endowment and its needs, and opportunities and special campaigns for specific capital building or programmatic needs.
- Clarify the meaning of membership in the church and in the UUA. Ask that the Membership Committee annually keep an accurate tally of the number of active members, and that contributions annually to the UUA and the NH/VT District accurately and fully reflect our commitment to our denomination's regional and national endeavors.
- Develop a Donor Recognition and Stewardship program that regularly acknowledges the generosity of supporters. This program should be an ongoing focus and commitment by all those responsible for the financial health of the church. Successful fundraising programs are built on the relationships that members have with a church.
- Enlist the help of the church leadership for donor recognition and stewardship efforts.
- Recommend the establishment of a fund that will enable the church to meet necessary and unforeseen maintenance and capital costs over time.

- Create opportunities for members to provide feedback about the fundraising program and their future involvement in the church.
  - Seek feedback on a regular basis from the volunteers who meet with members during the Annual Canvass; find special ways of thanking the volunteers.
- 
- Increase the number of personal visits to members by canvassers each year. This effort will add to our knowledge about members and their families, ultimately strengthening their relationship to the church and its programs and principles.
  - Survey successful fundraising efforts and plans from other congregations and organizations.

## **5. Religious Education**

- A. Given our community's strong commitment to the RE program and lack of understanding about the specifics of the program (even among the parents of students), we recommend:

Plan:

- By January 2006, educate first the parents of RE students and then our larger church community about the program. Examples include organizing a Parent Orientation to the Religious Education Program to include a handout of key information with a break-down of age groups, summaries and purposes of curricula by age group, what is expected of parents with children in the program, description of RE Director as a resource to parents, responsibilities of teachers, and time commitments.
- By September 2005, educate congregation about the RE curriculum – emphasizing its quality, ease of use for teaching, “pick and choose” versatility using written materials and spoken words.
- In June 2005 and each June thereafter, seek feedback from current teachers for evaluation of RE Program to include any ideas they may have that might improve it. This could be an on-going evaluation following each teacher rotation.
- Consider an incentive for families to participate in RE, such as recognition for attendance.

- B. Given the ongoing effort to recruit volunteers to teach RE, we recommend:

Plan:

- By fall 2005, provide an orientation to cover expectations of teachers, introduction to curricula, time commitment, etc.
- By fall 2005, consider organizing a roster of potential teachers and set up an ongoing rotation similar to the successful rotation for coffee hour/ushering.

- C. Given our community's commitment to RE, our desire to reach out to our teens and encourage more involvement from young people, we recommend:

Plan:

- By spring 2006, define what it means to be an educated UU youth and ensure that the RE program provides a place for this education.
- Design a program for teens that strengthens their connection to the church community and challenges their spiritual growth. Strategies the RE committee may consider include: surveying successful teen programs at other UU churches, reviewing UUA resources, and surveying teens and parents of teens.

- D. Given concerns about the space and resources used for RE, evaluate the condition of available space by fall of 2005.

Plan :

- Consider cleanliness, furnishings, equipment and age-appropriateness of materials on an ongoing basis so that classrooms are inviting to teachers and to children.
- Review current curricula and teaching aids. Replace old resources and organize curricula for smooth turnover to teachers.

- E. Explore RE Committee's relationships with other church committees to promote social justice.

## **6. Growth in Church Membership**

Given that church members – by a slight margin – see more advantages to growing than disadvantages, and given that results from the survey and dinners do not provide clear direction on this question, we recommend the following:

Plan:

- The Membership Committee should monitor growth in the congregation annually. A standard method for counting members and church attendees should be developed by the Membership Committee by September 15, 2005.
- By December 31, 2005, and annually at the end of December the Membership Committee should deliver an accurate membership count to the Executive Committee.
- Membership count should include the number of members as well as the number of friends who have asked that their names be included in the church directory, but who are not members. In addition, this report should document weekly attendance at worship services for the year just passed.

- Make the UCM pamphlet that describes the committees, RE program, Alliance and other special events, canvass overview, budget and small group ministries available in the pews and at the Membership table.

## **Appendix**

- **Survey Results from All Who Responded**
- **Summary of Mission and Vision Dinner Discussions, Fall 2003**
- **History of the Church Building from Church's Web Site**

**Unitarian Church of Montpelier**  
**Results of Long Range Planning Survey**  
*Summer 2004*

*Check the box that best describes your response to the following statement:*

“What’s really important to <u>me</u> at church is...”	<b>Agree Strongly</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Not Sure or No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Disagree Strongly</b>
1. Attractive, well-maintained church building	84	87	9	8	0
2. Availability of building for community events	92	77	13	5	1
3. Belonging to a community that welcomes diversity of belief, individual spiritual quests and varied spiritual sources.	167	17	2	1	1
4. Candle lighting for joys and sorrows	65	67	23	21	12
5. Meeting and getting to know interesting people	100	74	10	3	1
6. Minister’s sermons	163	22	3	0	0
7. Music during Sunday services	142	40	4	2	0
8. Opportunity to help others in the larger community	70	82	29	6	1
9. Pastoral counseling	48	70	59	10	1
10. Religious education program	84	55	40	8	1
11. Small group ministries	32	55	81	18	2
12. Social Responsibility/Action information	68	81	27	12	0

To meet our church’s growing financial needs we should...	<b>Agree Strongly</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Not Sure or No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Disagree Strongly</b>
13. Encourage people to increase their annual pledges	60	90	29	8	1
14. Have more fundraiser events like the Holiday Fair, Rummage Sale, Auction, Yard Sale, Dinners	40	72	39	32	5
15. Increase rental charges for the use of our building	44	77	46	16	5
16. Support a Standing Stewardship Committee to educate members on bequests, gifts	70	81	34	3	0

“My participation in our church community is enhanced when I ...”	<b>Agree Strongly</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Not Sure or No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Disagree Strongly</b>
17. Attend church-organized social events	63	92	23	6	4
18. Have direct contact with church staff or members	86	76	21	4	1
19. Meet informally with the minister	59	77	48	2	2
20. Participate in small group church activities	69	64	47	7	1
21. Personally interact with others at Sunday coffee hours	64	88	26	8	2
22. Personally participate in Sunday services	60	61	51	12	4
23. Serve on a standing church committee	49	47	78	11	3
24. Can expand my spiritual horizons by learning about the spiritual quests of others in the congregation.	59	67	49	10	3

<i>Check the box that best describes your response to the following statement:</i>	<b>Agree Strongly</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Not Sure or No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Disagree Strongly</b>
26. Our church’s Religious Education Program is an important part of our spiritual community	114	51	20	3	0
27. I am willing to volunteer to teach religious education	26	36	62	33	31
28. Our RE program meets the needs of our children	25	44	108	9	2
29. The current RE space (size and furnishings) is adequate	13	46	97	27	5
30. I would like to attend more Adult RE programs	20	45	79	31	13
<i>Check the box that best describes your response to the following statement:</i>	<b>Agree Strongly</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Not Sure or No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Disagree Strongly</b>
31. I am willing to pledge more money to improve our Church’s Religious Education Program	20	36	82	36	14
32. The RE program teaches our children to respect diversity and appreciate many spiritual sources and experiences	91	50	46	1	0

“On the one hand, I <u>want</u> our church to grow because...	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Not Sure or No Opinion	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
33. More people would help with church committees and provide greater financial support	69	75	33	8	3
34. There would be more people to meet and get to know	46	88	40	9	5
35. We could expand staff roles	26	48	96	12	6
36. We could expand the value and benefits of Unitarianism / Universalism to the Central Vermont community	69	52	45	19	3
37. We could have two Sunday services	10	15	59	56	48
“On the other hand, I <u>do not</u> want our church to grow because...	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Not Sure or No Opinion	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
38. We could lose the close relationships we enjoy today	26	47	53	38	24
39. We could increase the demand for church services and activities thus offsetting any additional income	15	45	78	26	24
40. It might mean the need for a second Sunday service	23	45	72	28	20
41. It could cost more money	14	44	82	29	19

Check the box that best describes your response to the following statement:	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Not Sure or No Opinion	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
42. Expensive repairs such as the roof, furnaces, painting, etc. should be paid for by periodic capital campaigns	48	62	59	13	6
43. Expensive repairs such as the roof, furnaces, exterior painting, etc. should be paid from endowment funds	16	52	69	28	23
44. Expensive repairs such as the roof, furnaces, exterior painting, etc. should be paid for through a line item in the annual church budget	26	60	74	17	11
45. I am willing to pledge more money to maintain the building	19	58	80	26	5

46. I have been a member of this church for. ...	Not a member	Less than 5 yrs	5-14 yrs	15-30 yrs	Over 30 yrs
	40	35	61	37	15
47. My age is....	Under 30	30-44	45 - 59	60-74	75+
	3	38	85	43	19

48. I attend our church more than half of the Sundays when there is a church service	115	73
49. I serve on at least one church committee	67	121
50. I have children under 18 who participate in our Religious Education Program	40	148
51. I have children under 18 who do not participate in our Religious Education Program	30	158
52. I am a female	129	59
53. I have taught RE within the last two years	32	156

Please answer the all the questions below by checking the appropriate box:

YES

NO

## Unitarian Church of Montpelier Long Range Planning Summary of Comments at Dinners

## Fall 2003

This is a summary of comments made by members and friends who attended the dinners, given by them in response to three questions. It is not a tally (i.e., there is no ranking by frequency), nor is it a ranking by order of importance. The intent is to capture the essence of what was recorded from the meetings, covering the primary areas people spoke about.

You will notice in question 2 some overlap between Growth and Planning.

### **1. What do you value most about the church? Do you have any particular experiences that would illustrate what you value?**

#### **(a) Worship & Arts**

- Maggie's sermons – connecting us to larger and deeper concerns
- Music led by Catherine, with choir and special guests
- Candle lighting – people have faith in congregation and are willing to express themselves
- Guest speakers during worship

#### **(b) Congregational Qualities**

- Value the sense of surprise; we don't take ourselves too seriously
- Church is available to the wider community – for example, Stone Soup Kitchen
- This is a primary place for making friends
- Sam's participation in acquiring the Braille hymnal reflects the church's commitment to diversity; important that church is the place to get to know people of different ages and backgrounds, as shown by valuable intergenerational opportunities
- Sustenance and maintenance of liberal religious tradition
- We look both inward and outward to the greater community
- We have dedicated staff who've made important personal commitments to the church
- The church fosters and appreciates the adoption of children from all parts of the world
- The church's active role in the civil union debate offered significant support to members, enabling risk-taking
- The church fosters respect for – and preservation of – its living history, valuing the past and looking ahead to growth and change
- The church is a refuge
- The church fosters awareness of the need to care for the environment
- Comforting to know that uncertainty is acceptable
- We speak of theology and beliefs openly; it's safe to disagree here; there's acceptance of differences and, therefore, of freedom to be oneself

#### **(c) Opportunities/Events**

- Value meeting in small groups like these dinners and small group ministries
- Clarke Lectures
- Women's Alliance members are church stewards – good church historians and keepers of communal memory
- Children's RE programs and the church's support of them
- Social Responsibility Committee's valuable, effective work
- Availability of pastoral counseling is important

#### **(d) Church Building**

- We have an extraordinary church building

## **2. Looking ahead five years, what would enhance or improve your church experience?**

### **(a) Growth**

- Need to focus on and develop a common thread running through all church activities and programs, an overarching unity, a clear vision and philosophy
- Need a plan for growth; there is not enough "if this, then what" thinking by church staff and committees
- Keep strong focus on Sunday services
- Burnout is a problem, resulting in some people leaving
- How do we define a vibrant community – what does that look like? members, resources for programs and staff and adequate compensation; make clear the financial needs and what is expected of each individual
- Membership size is stable; we don't need to grow; bigger is not better
- Growth of membership is important; need to explore how to accommodate growth (e.g., two Sunday services)
- We need moderate, stable growth in membership
- Attract more young adults
- Create a singles program or co-sponsor with other churches
- Re-visit idea for a pre-school during the week
- Consistently make available accommodations for sight and hearing impaired people

### **(b) Planning**

- This strategic planning process should lead to more overall planning, for the budget (i.e., a strategic funding plan), leadership and succession, and long-term building maintenance; future needs should be clearly projected; the congregation should fully participate in setting goals and be aware of steps necessary to reach them; we need more financial stability, so we aren't living so close to the bone each year
- Need a plan for maintaining the building and grounds, with adequate resources to carry out
- Set priorities; we can't afford everything we want

- Through charitable gifts, bequests, and annuities, increase the endowment
- Prepare for staff changes that will come; plan for smooth transitions; look at alternatives, other models that are less dependent on one person/minister

### **(c) Worship and Arts**

- Maintain strong intellectual content of sermons
- Prefer stronger ministerial presence in worship and less lay participation

### **(d) Religious Education**

- Make RE position  $\frac{3}{4}$  time
- Expand high quality RE programs (i.e., number and scope) for all ages
- Develop and maintain a strong teen program

### **(e) Congregational Qualities**

- Continue to be non-creedal, open, liberal
- Maintain rich diversity
- Foster more intergenerational interaction
- Offer consistent rites of passage for younger people
- Cross country skiing or other activities after church – as alternative to coffee hour
- Need wider participation in the work of the church
- Continuity from young kids to becoming young adults; how to keep them from leaving; expectation of accepting challenges in the church as part of growing up
- Resolve the tension between participatory democracy and central leadership (for example in making changes to the service); one person requested a shift toward central leadership, i.e. the minister is in charge; some people want more structure and consistency, want to know what to expect from one Sunday to the next; the dinner group acknowledged the difficulty of pleasing everyone; can we have diversity and flexibility within a consistent structure?
- How can we encourage people to take initiative? to start groups or whatever is needed? how can we be clear that this is OK and expected, so people know they can do things on their own?

### **(f) Building**

- Ensure that the elevator works all the time
- Improve the kitchen
- Improve church school facilities and explore different layout downstairs to minimize disruption of classes
- Make the inside of the front entrance more inviting
- Need more comfortable chairs in the vestry
- Need new windows with energy efficient storm panels

- Improve exterior drainage/water management
- Have church administrator's office closer to side door
- Install air lock space for side door

### **3. How do you see our congregation helping our community at-large?**

- Should pay UUA dues at our fair share annually; they are important due to political clout, subscriptions, services, and curriculum offerings
- Inform the local press about the church
- Actual work in community; building projects etc. for members in Central Vermont
- We already do a lot in the community
- Find out how church is seen by community
- Larger community – good news we should be hearing
- Keep space available to community groups
- Maintain commitment to social concerns: everything from international to local, e.g. Heifer Project, SRC priorities, food bank, Health & Wellness Center
- Keep open opportunities for ceremonies/celebrations for the larger community; for example, concerts
- Keep religious education programs strong to support/grow young peoples' social conscience and future action
- Unifying social project to help children see how non-middle class people live
- Give a percentage of the collection each week to a nonprofit
- Bring social issues to the forefront; increased visibility around social issues
- Continue to offer space to variety of groups (UU sponsored and others)
- We need to find more resources to provide a variety of community services
- Network with other organizations/groups – team up
- Strengthen capacity of “green book” to help people who come in for help; better process for crisis intervention
- Pay money to city in lieu of taxes (fire/police) – Church has done this in the past

## **History of the Church Building (Adapted from the Church's Web Site)**

Originally called the *Church of the Messiah*, The Unitarian Church of Montpelier has been a Unitarian church since it was built in the mid-1800s.

Thomas Silloway, the architect of the present Vermont State House and many Universalist churches in New England, designed the church. Dedicated on January 25, 1866, it is the oldest church in Montpelier and the only one that has its original organ, a Stevens' tracker organ. The building and the organ are used regularly for services and concerts. Many community organizations hold public events and meetings at the church.

The church is an outstanding example of how the Italian Renaissance style was interpreted for a prosperous New England town in the mid-19th century. Over the years, while it has been remodeled several times, the church retains many of its original features. In 1997 the congregation developed a plan for maintenance and restoration of the structure and the organ, as well as funding sources to support these projects.

Around 1900 the west end of the church was extended so that the organ and choir would be at the front of the sanctuary, where both would be more visible and audible. In the early 1980s a new, two-story addition to the west end was built to accommodate classrooms and offices. In 2001, steeple restoration was completed.