

Unitarian Church of Montpelier (UCM)

2020 STRATEGIC PLAN



Our Mission

We welcome all
as we build a loving community
to nurture each person's spiritual journey
serve human need
and protect the earth, our home.

What is a Strategic Plan? Our strategic plan is a comprehensive roadmap for the Board, committees, staff, task forces, members and friends. When implemented it will lead UCM to realize much of its Vision (p. 8) by 2020.

Why is this Plan important? The Plan encourages the people and structures of UCM to commit energy, action, and resources toward reaching our Vision and achieving our Mission.

How did we get here? UCM's Board created the 2020 Vision and Strategic Plan Task Force in April 2015. Its charge was to:

- Develop an achievable vision that grows directly out of the congregation's mission statement
- Deeply involve the congregation in formulating and approving such vision
- Create a five-year strategic plan with specific steps and timelines which, when followed, will lead to the realization of the vision
- Propose benchmarks and an annual process to measure the implementation of the vision

While reviewing UCM's 2005 Long-Range Plan, valuable material from two ministerial searches, and other churches' and nonprofits' visions and plans (including Hunger Mountain Coop), Task Force members announced the endeavor to the congregation, and Rev. Joan Javier-Duval offered sermons focused on imagination.

The heart of the process was sessions with guided imagery, when members and friends were asked to write down their ideas about what we as a congregation could become. We also visited seven RE classes, and interviewed 26 participants at the Community Lunch. In all, 130 people participated; they generated 475 ideas.

A draft 2020 Vision was presented to the Board in January and was approved by UCM's members at a special meeting on February 14, 2016.

UCM Strategic Plan

Approved by the Board on June 7, 2016

Vision Outcome #1

Long-time members and friends stretch their comfort zones and welcome people with a wide range of spiritual, ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds, and with diverse ages, abilities, gender identities, and sexual orientations.

Action Step	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1. The Communications Committee explores live streaming of church services and programs.	X			
2. The Membership Committee ensures that its materials and processes for welcoming new members and friends reflect Vision Outcome #1.	X	X		
3. The Minister, Religious Education Director, Religious Education Committees, Social Responsibility Committee, and Welcoming Congregation Committee review curricula and other materials and make a plan to deliver educational programming that offers opportunities to examine assumptions and biases within the congregation.	X			
4. The Minister, Religious Education Director, Religious Education Committee, Social Responsibility Committee, and Welcoming Congregation Committee deliver educational programming that offers opportunities to examine assumptions and biases within the congregation.		X	X	X
5. The Minister and the Worship and Arts Committee plan and deliver worship services which examine our assumptions and biases and which reflect diverse spiritual perspectives.	X	X	X	X
6. The Minister, Religious Education Director, Religious Education Committees, and Small Group Ministry team offer opportunities for diverse spiritual perspectives and practice beyond Sunday services.	X	X	X	X

Indicator of Success

Members and friends report feeling safe and at home at UCM.

Vision Outcome #2

Spiritual practice and spiritual seeking continue to center our community as we engage in thoughtful conversations about our most deeply held beliefs and passions.

Action Step	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1. The Minister, Acting DRE, and Religious Education Committees lead a process to create a vision for a cohesive faith and spiritual development program.	X			
2. The Minister, (Acting) DRE, and RE Committees offer learning opportunities for spiritual practice and to foster ethical decision-making, Unitarian Universalist (UU) identity, understanding of other religions, faith development, and personal growth.	X	X	X	X
3. The Minister, the Committee on Ministry, Small Group Ministry, and/or the Lay Pastoral Care Team offer learning opportunities to build active listening, compassionate communication, and conflict resolution skills.	X	X	X	X
4. The Minister, Religious Education Committees, and Small Group Ministry team deliver programs which foster reflection on and sharing of our own beliefs and experiences.	X	X	X	X
5. The Committee on Ministry ensures that committee chairs and other leaders are trained to facilitate gatherings that are spiritually grounded and compassionate.	X		X	
6. The Committee on Ministry leads the congregation in a process to adopt a covenant of right relations – e.g., a solemn living agreement about how we treat each other.		X		

Indicators of Success

1. Members and friends report that they have explored and found ways to engage in spiritual practice, ethical decision-making, and that they have grown personally, including in UU identity and faith.
2. Members and friends report that they really listen and feel heard; have meaningful, challenging, and frank conversations; and participate respectfully in activities described in the action steps.
3. Leaders implement what they have learned to help ground meetings spiritually and with compassion.
4. Members and friends report that meetings are spiritually grounded and compassionate.
5. We have a cohesive faith and spiritual development program.
6. The congregation adopts a covenant of right relations.
7. Members and friends report that they use the covenant of right relations.

Vision Outcome #3

We are informed and active participants, creating justice, peace, and environmental sustainability in our community.

Action Step	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1. The Minister, Director of Religious Education, Social Responsibility Committee, and Religious Education Committees lead educational programs to examine the underlying causes of violence, poverty, racism, and the climate crisis.	X	X	X	X
2. The Minister, Social Responsibility Committee, and UCM's Vermont Interfaith Action offer opportunities to learn about advocacy and organizing to enable effective action.	X	X	X	X
3. The Minister, Social Responsibility Committee, and other members and friends effectively collaborate with nearby churches and organizations in actions that address human/environmental needs.	X	X	X	X
4. The Board leads a congregation-wide process to determine the ways we are most called, skilled, and positioned to address the needs of our neighbors and our planet, both systemically and directly.			X	
5. The congregation effectively engages in actions identified in Step 4.				X

Indicators of Success

1. Members and friends report an increased knowledge of the underlying causes of violence, poverty, racism, and the climate crisis.
2. By 2020, at least 50% of members and friends have participated in one or more church-sponsored actions for creating justice, peace and environmental sustainability.
3. By 2020, there is at least one collaborative human need/environmental project being implemented among the churches and organizations in our community.

Vision Outcome #4

Worship offerings expand to accommodate our growing numbers and to maintain a spiritual presence in our community in the summer months.

Action Step	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1. The Minister, Music Director, RE Director, and the Worship and Arts Committee explore options for additional summer worship opportunities and report their recommendation to the board and, if desired, recommend a plan for implementation, including a plan for children’s religious education programming.	X			
2. The Minister, Music Director, RE Director, representatives from the Worship and Arts Committee, the Executive Team, and staff determine if there is a need for a second Sunday service and, if needed, recommend a plan for implementation, including a plan for children’s religious education programming, for board review and approval.		X		
3. The Minister, Music Director, RE Director, and Worship and Arts Committee identify and implement other worship offerings that meet the congregation’s and prospective members’ spiritual desires and needs and that draw upon the congregation’s rich musical foundation and gifts.		X	X	X

Indicators of Success

1. Members and friends report that there is “a space for me” and that they feel spiritually nourished.
2. Members and friends report that music and religious education continue to be essential aspects of our congregational life.
3. There is an increase in the number of people participating in worship services.
4. There are new worship offerings besides the Sunday morning service.

Vision Outcome #5

We create a long-range, comprehensive plan for accessible, sustainable physical space to assist us in fulfilling our mission.

Action Step	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1. The Board examines the growth trajectory of the congregation from the past ten years and makes projections of growth for the next ten years.	X			
2. The Board appoints a task force of up to seven members, including a representative or representatives of the following committees: Property, Accessibility, and Finance. In addition, the task force either includes as members, or consults with, the Minister, Staff, Executive Team, an architect/engineer familiar with congregations, Membership Committee, Religious Education Committee, Small Group Ministry, and Worship and Arts Committee.		X		
3. The task force:				
a. Identifies, examines, and prioritizes the long-range physical space needs of the congregation.		X		
b. The task force creatively investigates and lists a full spectrum of strategies for accessible, sustainable space to assist us in fulfilling our mission, and includes estimated costs for each strategy.		X		
c. The task force reports its findings and recommendations to the Board.		X		
4. The Board adopts a long-range, comprehensive plan for the use of space based on the findings and recommendations of the task force.			X	

Indicators of Success

1. The Board produces a written report on the growth trajectory of the congregation.
2. A long-range, comprehensive plan is adopted.

2020 Vision Statement

Approved by the Board - February 2, 2016

Accepted by the Congregation - February 14, 2016

Upon entering the sanctuary in 2020, we see and feel the results from our five years of learning about and embracing the differences among us. Long-time members and friends have stretched their comfort zones and welcomed people with a wide range of spiritual, ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. We are refugees and seventh generation Vermonters; we have different abilities and different gender identities. We are a safe place for people who have experienced deep trauma, including those who experience addiction, homelessness, and mental illness. We all feel equally at home here.

When we talk with one another, people really listen and feel heard. We engage in thoughtful conversations about our most deeply held beliefs and passions. Together we make meaning of the joys and sorrows of our lives. We can disagree and still move forward together.

Many new members of all ages have brought new verve and creativity to congregational life and leadership.

As a congregation, we have engaged in serious study of the underlying causes of violence, poverty, racism, and the climate crisis, and the most effective ways for us to act for justice, peace, and environmental sustainability. We are learning about these issues all the time. Out of our discernment process, the congregation has chosen the ways we are most called, skilled, and positioned to address the needs of our neighbors and our planet, both systemically and directly. In collaboration with nearby churches and organizations, we have diminished homelessness, hunger and incarceration, though there is much yet to be done. Further, many we meet through these efforts now feel welcome in our congregation.

Spiritual practice and spiritual seeking continue to center our community. Music, dance and art enrich our worship. We offer a space for daily quiet meditation. To accommodate our growing numbers, we supplement our main Sunday service with worship at other times and places (such as a half-hour Sunday morning multi-age service and an all-music service). During the summer, after our regular church year has ended, visiting artists, social activists, spiritual leaders, and members conduct services. Our name communicates the fullness of our Unitarian Universalist identity and the richness of our spiritual backgrounds.

Most of us take part in at least one of the broad array of small group discussions, book groups, and classes on subjects ranging from parenting and aging to Unitarian Universalist history, white privilege, and global water resources. Out of this reflection and study, there is ongoing feedback to the congregation about practical ways for us to live into our Mission.

We have completed a long-range study of our physical space and accessibility needs, that creatively considered the options of new locations, Sunday morning rentals, and reconfiguration of our building. We are starting to implement the conclusions of the study, and we already have enough space for our growing Sunday school.

As the climate crisis continues, we are recognized in Central Vermont as a source of moral and ethical guidance. We support one another to make the difficult and urgent personal changes necessary to live sustainably. We arrive at church on foot, on bikes, or in carpools. As an integral part of Montpelier's transition from oil dependency to community resiliency, we continue to make our building more energy efficient and to reduce our use of fossil fuels. In all of our decisions as a congregation, we consider carefully what resources of the earth we are using. Each of us, at every age, is grappling with how to act out our understanding that we are part of the interdependent web of all existence.

Each Sunday, we leave worship and return to our homes, our neighborhoods, and our work feeling supported and inspired to be peacemakers, justice-seekers, and loving citizens of our world.