Unitarian Church of Montpelier
130 Main St.
Montpelier VT 05602

Dear UCM Members and Friends,

The UCM Governing Board would like to share with you all the Feasibility Study report from the financial feasibility study consultants, Christine Graham and Shana Trombley of CPG Enterprises, Inc. First, thank you to everyone who agreed to be interviewed as part of the study, without your honest and candid responses we would not have this important information that is so critical to helping us all make decisions for the future of this congregation.

As you will see in the report, the consultants were impressed with the commitment our members have to our congregation and the work we do for each other and for the broader community. They found strong support for the BFF project, noting that "[t]he members of the UCM are a committed, caring group who will support the campaign to the best of their ability." The consultants did conclude that UCM's capacity to raise money is more limited than the plan demands. Ultimately, they projected total capacity for a capital campaign to be $800,000.

The report identifies the following recommendations: addressing the universally supported staffing and compensation increases through the annual budget drives rather than the capital campaign, developing a five-year incremental plan that includes distinct phases of the BFF project, and recommendations to help build successful culture of stewardship and run an ultimately successful capital campaign.

We hope that you will read the Feasibility Study Report and begin thinking about how we can continue to build the culture of stewardship that will allow UCM to implement appropriate staffing levels with the benefits and compensation that our staff deserves and define a vision for the future of our physical space and how we make that vision a reality.

The Board will host a "Chat with the Board" on Sunday, January 19 during each Coffee Hour in the upstairs classroom and plans on further congregational discussion as we determine next steps for this project.

With sincere thanks to all of you, and commitment from all of us,

The UCM Governing Board
January 8, 2020

FEASIBILITY STUDY
Unitarian Church of Montpelier

Study conducted by CPG Enterprises, Inc.
www.cpgfundraising.com

December 30, 2019

This report is confidential and is the property of the Board of Directors of the Unitarian Church of Montpelier, and the Steering Committee of the Building for the Future Campaign (BFF).
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FEASIBILITY STUDY
Unitarian Church of Montpelier
December 30, 2019

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Introduction

We appreciate the very careful consideration given to embarking on this study, by the committees of the Unitarian Church of Montpelier (UCM), and are honored to have been selected to conduct this study for you.

The preparation for such a study is a major part of your preparation for a campaign, and in discussions with your congregation, assembling the detailed understanding of your needs, and selecting the specialists you will work with, you have already made considerable progress that will see you through the process ahead. We appreciate Paul Ohlson's attention to detail, and making certain we were informed of all the updates and discussions.

Your work in selecting and contacting the interviewees was particularly helpful in assuring a thorough study; each of the individuals we met was committed to the process, thoughtful in their responses, welcoming, and a pleasure to meet. Thank you in particular to Brenda Bean and Sue Stukey, who invested the time and effort to make the schedule; for the most part our interviewees were prepared for the meetings, and that is also to Brenda's and Sue's credit.

We hope the Board finds valuable guidance in this report, from the interviewees 'very thoughtful responses and our summaries and recommendations based on their opinions. There are many paths to success: we hope this report illuminates a few of the more viable routes, and provides the information you need.

Christine Graham
Shana Trombley
CPG Enterprises, Inc.
December 30, 2019

Scope of the Study

The Unitarian Church of Montpelier (UCM) is a building as well as a spiritual and social community. Its handsome 1865 wood structure is the oldest standing church in Montpelier, and it houses a growing congregation of socially thoughtful and responsible individuals and families who feel that serving the community, the needy, and the earth, are critical parts of their personal worship and spiritual lives.

The mission of the UCM is to welcome all, and to serve human need and protect the earth. Its programs focus outwardly, in addition to serving its members. The church hosts 125 or more each week for community meals, is the site for the Capital City Concerts, and offers its meeting rooms and classrooms for community use, often at no cost.

The congregation consists of 250 individuals today, having increased in recent years particularly due to the leadership of Joan Javier-Duval who is appreciated for her spiritual guidance as well as her strong activist stands on the world issues that matter most to the members of the Church. Members range from lifelong Unitarians, those joining as adults, families of blended religious backgrounds, those with deep spiritual lives to those with more appreciation for the social, cultural and helping aspects of the community. Whatever their reasons for joining, nearly all members and visitors find a warm, welcoming home at the UCM and often become increasingly involved in its ministry and activism.

As is described in the Case for Support in the Appendix of this report, the Church building needs some updates and safety features, and there are also many improvements the membership would find desirable. Some parts of the building are not accessible; the offices and meeting rooms are scattered, isolated and hard to find; the kitchen is both out of compliance on some issues and difficult to work in during community meals; and with a growing membership as well as considerable community meeting-room usage, there is generally less space than needed. With a strong commitment to the health of our environment and earth, the church members also would like to upgrade to a net-zero energy platform.

At the same time, the growing activity of the church places more demands on staff, and the church members are anxious to compensate their minister and other staff appropriately, including offering health care benefits and competitive salaries. They would like to reduce the administrative burdens of the minister in order to free her for more ministry work and outreach.

The Building For the Future Committee, all volunteers appointed by the Church leadership, has worked for some time to create a plan to tackle all these issues. In addition to researching needs and costs and conducting community meetings on the topic, the committee embarked on a formal fundraising study to determine the viability of a $2.4 million campaign to address all the priorities. People invited to participate in such a study are those who have evidenced, through giving or their own comments, the likely ability to make larger gifts; every major capital campaign is dependent on a serious

percentage of giving from high-capacity donors regardless of strong grassroots enthusiasm and support.

After selecting the fundraising team to conduct the study, the committee worked for nearly a year to hone the Case for Support, identify individuals to invite for participation in interviews, determine the questions to be asked, and schedule appointments. The Case for Support was sent along with a letter of invitation that explained the study process and assured interviewees of confidentiality. 26 meetings were set, with no declinations. This group included 39 individuals. This is a remarkably high yield for a feasibility study.

At the same time, a membership survey was conducted among all church members, to test their priorities for the campaign. As only a small percentage was to be interviewed in person, this survey provides valuable comparison among the general membership and those who likely have higher capacity to give in the campaign.

Each interview lasted about an hour and was conducted by Christine Graham or Shana Trombley, with the same list of questions for each interview (attached in the Appendix of this report). The questions were used as discussion starters, and in many cases led to more detailed information and suggestions, which are reflected in the Summary of Responses. The goal was to learn more about the interviewee's attitudes and commitment to the Church, their feelings about the proposed campaign and construction components, and their assessment of the members 'reactions to the plans. Questions on the interviewees 'potential involvement in the campaign, as donors and as leaders, were critical.

The overarching questions to be answered were:

1. Do individuals support the idea of a major campaign to improve the building spaces, and to upgrade staff support?
2. Is there sufficient financial support to launch and complete the campaign?
3. Do the priorities of the potential higher donors match those of the overall membership, and what, if any, compromises might be needed for success?
4. How do members of the Church and community suggest a campaign be conducted?

A feasibility study is not a scientific test, and cannot yield reliable statistics or measures. It focuses on opinions, and those of a particularly unusual group of individuals. It cannot be interpreted to reflect the opinions of the whole community, but it should reflect the opinions of those individuals who could make the first 60-85% of a capital campaign a success, through their donations, connections, hard work, and attitudes.

Throughout the Summary of Findings, it is likely that numbers of responses will not add up to 26 or 39: not everyone answered every question, with couples there was sometimes 'a single voice 'and sometimes not, and some individuals made two or more pertinent,

valuable comments in response to a single question. This report attempts to reflect the depth of their thinking and attitudes more than a mere numerical response.

Interviewees were assured of the confidentiality of their interviews, and therefore no names are attached to the opinions reflected in this report.

The committee volunteers, who scheduled the interviews, thanked all interviewees and each will expect some communication following Board review and acceptance of this report. A final thank you letter with the Executive Summary, a summary of Board action, or both, would be an appropriate way to complete the study aspect of the relationship with interviewees, but all should be kept closely in touch with progress from here forward.

The consultants will meet with the BFF committee on January 3, 2020, to answer questions and review their findings and recommendations. The next steps fall to the committee to make recommendations on the structure and timing of the campaign.

Summary of Findings

Twenty-six interviews were conducted, with a total of 39 individuals participating in the conversations. The majority of the participants were members of the church and nearly all interviewees were involved with church activities -- serving on a multitude of committees to volunteerism at the community lunch or attendance at a concert. In short, the majority of interviewees had a high degree of understanding of the church's inner workings and value in the larger community.

The following pages describe the responses to interview questions, along with some specific comments offered by the interviewees. Please keep in mind the fact that the percentages refer to a group of 26 interviews including 39 total interviewees, but that sometimes respondents shared multiple answers to a single question.

What activities do you enjoy or appreciate at the Church?

About three-quarters of the respondents say they attend services and 61 percent of interviewees volunteer at UCM. Interviewees who also are members of the church, generally are highly engaged with the church's work. Some of the most frequent responses included serving in the following ways:

- Finance committee
- Ushering each week
- Climate action committee
- Stewardship committee
- Community lunch
- Facilities committee
- Women's auxiliary
- Building committee

Are you aware of these many programs, both for church members and for the community, at the UCM?

Almost every interviewee (92 percent) felt well informed about UCM's work both within and outside of the church. Only one respondent felt that some information was difficult to get, and offered the example of needing more specific details on the budget. A few interviewees, though, said the general membership was not well informed about the potential campaign and building plans.

Do you find the church staff helpful when you need them?

The church staff is enthusiastically respected and admired by the interviewees. Joan, Liza and Sam were mentioned repeatedly and with great admiration. As one person stated, "The staff is wonderful. The leadership of the church sets the tone and a true community spirit has grown from it." In particular, there was tremendous appreciation for Joan and her work in the church. Many give her credit for bringing new vitality to the congregation, and respect her activism in the community as well.

Several people expressed concern that the staff is overworked and could suffer from burnout. Specifically, there is concern that Joan is over-burdened by administrative work and more than one person expressed fear that "Joan, who has spurred growth in the church, will leave."

How would you describe the relationship of the Church with the greater Montpelier community?

The respondents were confident in their belief that the church is well regarded by the community. Respondents take great pride in the community lunch and the church's leadership on social and political issues. The church also is well known because many community groups use the church rooms for meetings and other events.

As one interviewee put it, "The community is well-aware of the church because it is well used. It feels welcoming. People view it as a happy place in the community. And it's a growing church."

A minority of interviewees hesitated on the UCM role in the community, noting that "Members are engaged in the community but we are not sure how much the community is engaged in the church," and further noted that "Since all the churches do meals this is not necessarily a stand-out activity."

Have you spent time in the church building?
If so, what is your impression of the adequacy of the facilities?

The respondents had a high level of 'building awareness' through attending services and/or as volunteers in the church's many outreach activities. It came as no surprise that there is a direct correlation between interviewee's engagement with a program and his/her opinion about what improvements needed to be made. For example, those who volunteer with the community lunch felt strongly that the current kitchen was not meeting the church's needs, while those not involved in it felt that no or minimal adjustments should be made to the kitchen.

The Project

The Church is hoping to conduct a major campaign to update the building, including access, energy efficiency, kitchen revisions, and more adequate space for programs. There are four facilities-based components of this campaign, as well as a component to support staff salary and benefits:

- *Accessibility with elevator(s), ramps and bathrooms [including easier access to Sanctuary for worship and concerts]*
- *Energy Efficiency: with a commitment to Net Zero, ending use of fossil fuels*
- *Increased Program Space: for church and local meetings and classes*
- *A new Kitchen: mostly needed to accommodate the growing community meals program, although this is also used by the church programs and other community groups; this would likely necessitate a north side addition to the church.*

- *Staffing improvements including increased hours, alleviation of administrative work for Joan, and health benefits for staff.*

Ranking these components was difficult for many interviewees: while they very much want to improve the facility itself, they are deeply committed to staff support. Although this was not a suggested option, approximately one-third recommended that staffing improvements should be done outside of the context of a capital campaign.

Among the building priorities, "improved accessibility" was the first, second or third priority for 20 of the 39 respondents, with 35 percent ranking it as number one. Sixteen of the 39 respondents ranked the kitchen as their first, second or third choice. There is almost universal agreement that the kitchen must be improved and code violations addressed but there is no consensus on increasing the footprint of the building by constructing an addition to house the kitchen.

Respondents were most divided on committing to net-zero. For those who prioritize it, the sentiment is best summed up by one interviewee who said, "If we don't address our climate crisis nothing else will matter." And for those who ranked it lower it was often a last choice because they felt the urgency of addressing accessibility issues, staff benefits and the kitchen were so pressing. Several also thought the amount of improvement possible in this old building did not justify the expense.

Are there any aspects of this plan that you feel are overwhelmingly important?

Among the people we spoke with there was no single overwhelming priority in the campaign. About 1/3 ranked accessibility as the top priority, another 1/3 addressing staffing and benefits and another 1/3 offering a mix of responses. There was urgency expressed by people who prioritized accessibility, best summed up by one respondent who stated, "I'm horrified by the fire escape situation. The back staircase is especially dangerous given that it is used by a community that isn't familiar with the church." Some who volunteer for community lunch spoke with urgency about the kitchen as well.

Or should be eliminated?

The most common responses to this question were to eliminate a building addition (north side) and additional classroom space and the commitment to net zero. That said, no one dismissed the long term need for both of these aspects of the campaign, rather people advocated for addressing these goals in phases. One person summed it up, "Nothing should be eliminated but things can be prioritized."

In the context of adding space, people are not convinced that a new addition on the north side is a good solution. "I love the old building. We should not be thinking of adding what I call an 'outhouse' on the side of the building." Many interviewees agreed, "We should preserve the historic structure of the building."

Some interviewees expressed confidence that creative solutions could be pursued to address office space constraints. More than one interviewee noted, “There should be 21st century solutions to our office space issues.”

Finally, while some ranked ‘net-zero’ lower, most expressed discomfort in doing so and felt that energy efficiency should be a priority but not necessarily ‘net-zero.’ However, those who did rank net-zero as a top priority often stated that their giving would be contingent on this. Furthermore, several people commented that committing to ‘net-zero’ is something that could galvanize support from outside of the church membership, as an act of ‘planting a flag’ on this topic and providing leadership that other institutions can follow.

Do you think it is reasonable to include a small amount ($300,000, less than 10% of the goal) in this campaign to add health benefits and hours for staff at the Church?

There is full agreement that health care benefits and additional hours for the staff are critical; most feel this is a moral imperative. However, a majority of respondents are concerned about this goal being included in the context of a capital campaign.

This sentiment was expressed frequently with one respondent summing it up,, “This is a big priority but it should not be in the capital campaign. I've been involved and led other capital campaigns and based on my past experience this should not be in the capital campaign.” Most people we spoke with are not clear on how to meet this goal. The opinions of many were captured by one who said: “We're not doing a great job of supporting our staff but I have serious doubts about our ability to grow the budget.”

Respondents agreed the staff benefits issue should be addressed head on or else the congregation will struggle more in the future when the capital campaign is over and when these budget items are transitioned to the annual budget. One person referred to this approach as “sheltering people from the facts…” and another said “We don’t think the church will be ready to take on all this added expense when the campaign is over, leaving it in an operations funding squeeze.”

Even the few who saw value in the strategy of including staff benefits in the campaign view it as a way to “kick start” this commitment and said, “This might be the only way to do it because it is incremental.”

Are there other needs for the church or for the community, that you think are more important and might force postponement or rethinking of this campaign?

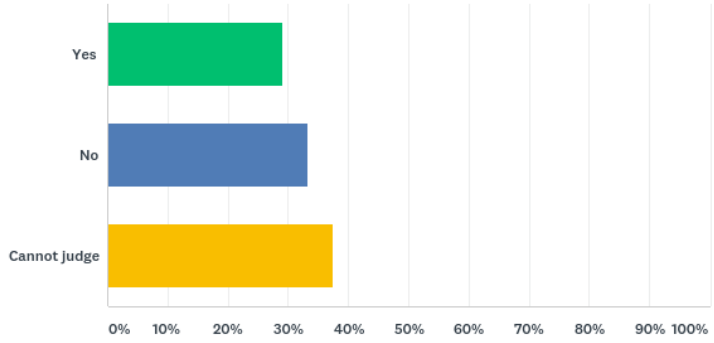
Eighty percent of the interviewees view the proposed campaign as comprehensive. Only 12 percent believed that there were missing components and these included additional parking and addressing flooding as a growing threat. It should be noted that the individuals who are concerned about flooding strongly believe that this must be addressed in the existing campaign.

The Budget

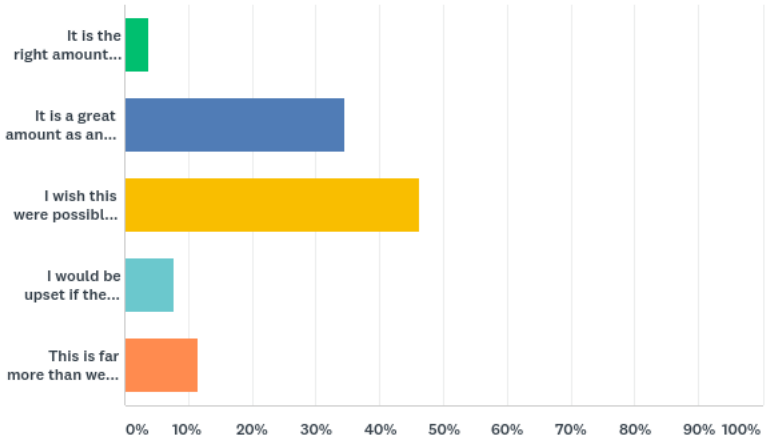
The combination of building, staffing, and fund-raising expenses creates a campaign goal of $2.42 million, to be raised over a three-year period while the work is phased in. Do you feel this is an appropriate expense for the Church?
And do you feel it is a doable goal for the campaign?

The respondents fell into three camps when asked these questions. Just under 1/3 of the respondents felt that $2.42M was a realistic amount to spend on church improvements; slightly more than 1/3 felt it was too much and more than a third felt that they couldn't judge one way or another. Within this group many noted that the budget has been changing and isn't finalized so that they didn't feel confident in what the final number will be.

Q15 Do you feel the goal of $2.42 million is appropriate as an expenditure for the church?



Q16 Do you feel the $2.42 million goal is a reasonable, doable goal for the Church?



The responses to the open-ended question of whether or not they believe the Church could raise $2.42 million fell into one of five categories with the largest group, 46 percent, best summed up by the statement: "I wish this were possible, but do not think it is." The second most common opinion expressed (at 35 percent) was: "It is a great amount as an aspiration, but I am not sure it is attainable." A small minority - just under 8 percent, would be "…upset if the church spent this much, when there are so many other needs in the community."

In short, people believe that the priorities and budget are appropriate: they are supportive in meeting the needs of the Church and its building, and have confidence in the leadership team developing the budget. But unfortunately, they do not believe it is possible to raise this amount of money.

Are there any other fundraising or similar projects underway, or planned, in the area that would interfere with the success of this campaign?

The people we spoke with are very engaged members of the larger community and therefore were aware of, and often donors to, other non-profit campaigns. The ones most often mentioned were the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, the North Branch Nature Center and the Episcopal Church. Interviewees were not concerned that these campaigns might interfere with this one because most are wrapping up.

Giving

In seeking the funding for this work, the Church will approach its members and others in the community who value its work. Looking at the proposed chart of potential gifts, can you suggest individuals, families or businesses that might support the campaign at the highest levels?

Respondents were fairly evenly split as to whether they could suggest individuals or families who could be solicited for the top giving levels.

- At least 1/3 of the respondents expressed disbelief that there are people in the congregation who have the capacity to give at the top levels. As one interviewee put it "I can't think of anyone who can give $400,000. And I don't think there are four people who could give $100,000."
- Most respondents felt that the largest donors within the church were capable of making gifts in the $10,000 to $25,000 giving range and that most members of the congregation would be able to give $5000 or less.
- Many respondents preferred not to suggest potential donors and referred to the hesitation among members to talk about money or philanthropy at all.

A complete list of suggested individuals to approach for lead and/or large gifts is included in the appendix. This list is confidential, and individuals listed do not know their names appear on the list.

Do you think you and your family would make a gift to this campaign a priority?

An overwhelming majority of respondents, 80 percent, reported that the campaign will be a priority for themselves and/or their family. This is a very positive response for any campaign, but even more so given that a handful of the interviewees were not associated with the Church and therefore, might not be considered good 'top priority' prospects.

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Can you suggest the range of your possible gift?

The largest possible gift was $50,000 - with two people indicating that it might be possible. Most interviewees envision making their gifts over three years and some suggested they could make a larger gift if they gave over a five-year period. A sample gift chart might be:

Goal $2.42 million, with gifts over a three year period:

Up to $50,000: 2
45,000: 1
$40,000: 1
30,000: 3
$25,000-$29,999: 1
$15,000 to $24,999: 3
$10,000- $14,999: 3
$5000-$9999: 5
$2500: 3
Not certain now, or no gift: 3
A multiple of the current stewardship gift: 1
Overall maximum gift range: $343,000-$470,000

It should be noted that some estimated gifts are dependent on the prospect's particular priorities being included in the campaign.

After reviewing the interviewees' estimated capacity (as indicated through DonorSearch) it is clear that the individuals interviewed are committed to the campaign and, although the largest hoped-for gifts do not appear to be possible, either in DonorSearch estimates or the interviewees' comments, many would pledge at or above their capacity as determined by DonorSearch.

Do you think it is possible that some gifts might be contributed by community members who do not belong to the church?

Fifty-six percent of the interviewees believe it is possible that community members who do not belong to the church or attend services *might* be interested in supporting aspects of the campaign. Another thirty-six percent weren't sure if non-members would be convinced to financially support the campaign.

Do you have a sense of the aspects of the campaign that would best motivate donors?

When asked how to motivate individuals to give to the campaign a number of ideas were shared. Common suggestions are categorized below with specific comments included:

- Tap into the person's commitment for a specific aspect of the campaign such as improving accessibility, net zero, the kitchen etc.*:*

  "Net-zero can make us a model for the community and motivate others to give."

  "We can share an incredible list of everything we do to help the community."

  "Focus on how these improvements can enhance the concert experience."

- Gratitude to the staff and to Joan and for what the church gives them:

  "Hold the church because the church holds the community."

  "The message that we welcome all."

- Love for the historic building

  "The church is a beautiful building that people want to support. "The building should be preserved forever and ever - with an elevator."

- Financial explanations, including budgets, clearly explained to motivate donors.

  "Offer to talk with people and share the info; so many know very little about this!"

  "Be open and transparent; do not discuss major donors separate from other lower gifts; be entirely egalitarian."

<u>*Volunteering*</u>

The Church is accustomed to a very high level of volunteerism, albeit more often for programs than for fundraising. Can you suggest some individuals you think would be willing to help in this campaign?

Most interviewees expressed great confidence in the committee that has been assembled. A handful of interviewees suggested additional individuals they thought could provide leadership for the campaign, and those suggestions appear in the Appendix.

Do you think you and your family members might be involved?
- *Serving on a campaign committee*
- *Asking for gifts*
- *Hosting information and social gatherings to learn about the campaign*

- *Making suggestions on others who might give*

Just over one-quarter of the interviewees suggested that they'd be willing to volunteer for the campaign and another quarter said 'no.' Another 20 percent were unsure. Many interviewees felt that "so many people are already involved in it," and therefore, there wasn't a need for more people to join the campaign committee.

Activities people are willing to help with include:
- Attending events
- Writing personal notes on appeal letters
- Working on grant applications (especially for net zero and ADA compliance)
- Hosting an event
- Asking for gifts

The Campaign

Can you suggest some ways to organize this campaign that might make it most successful?

This was an open-ended question but patterns in peoples' responses emerged. More than 42 percent offered the advice that the committee should work as hard as possible and 'ask everyone.' Another 38 percent emphasized the importance of ensuring that the members have thorough information about the campaign.

Another common recommendation shared by 35 percent of the respondents was to create phases for the campaign because interviewees believe the campaign is more likely to be successful if it is staged over several years.

Thirty-one percent offered the recommendation of moving the staff component to an increased annual appeal.

Lastly, 23 percent recommended lowering the goal.

Do you have any last advice for the campaign?

Across the board, interviewees highlighted the ways that the church embodies their values, enhances their lives, and makes Montpelier a better place to live. They wanted to see more statistics on how broadly and frequently it is used, and hear more stories about the role it plays in community members' lives.

"Ask yourself what is going to leverage engagement from the donor community and I think it is becoming a Net-Zero church."

"Be cautious about moving forward. I don't think the timing is right. I think they should take another year to make a plan but I don't think the 'steamrollers' want to wait another year."

“Use planned gifts. The age of the congregation is fairly high and some people will leave gifts in their will.”

“The message should be clear and bold — something that makes people want to give to this and say ‘oh hell yeah that's something I want to be a part of!’”

“The UU church in Long Island offers matching grants or borrowing. We are not opposed to borrowing for this campaign.”

“Make the campaign over five years. The timeline is totally unrealistic. It is gong to fail if we don't listen to one another and slow down the timeline."

“I'm not sure we're thinking big enough. We're just catching up with this campaign - not thinking 50 years out.”

“We need to have a discussion about how we as a church are going to support what we believe in. Money isn't dirty. And I don't know a better place to be putting it.”

“Engage the kids in the campaign.” (ex. Ferry Beach in Maine capital campaign, in which the kids were asked to contribute).

“Do tours to show people why specific work needs to be done. Tell the story of the church and its future to members so they can talk to one another about it in very informed ways.”

“Church members are very hung up on the 'haves and have nots' issues, and do not feel comfortable talking about money; they are more modest in their giving than they need to be in many cases.”

“Ask people to give in honor of someone because Unitarians don’t like things.”

“Make it fun both within the congregation and by sharing it publicly in front of the church.”

“*The church is your spiritual home. It is what sustains you so that you can engage in other things that you care about. It is where you get the subsistence each week to carry on”*

Analysis and Recommendations

The members of the Unitarian Church of Montpelier are a distinctly thoughtful, caring and aware community. They seek social companionship at their church along with a range of spiritual commitments, see the Church as a means to expressing their social conscience, and are accepting of the many choices made by other members. They hold strong opinions but are anxious to be collaborative and understanding of each other. They do not choose to put friends 'on the spot 'and will refrain from difficult conversations…. including those about money, even when it pertains to the well-being of the church community.

With these characteristics, it is easy to see how our interviews were deep and thoughtful, but the conversations about philanthropy were often hesitant. Given a general agreement that the Church is not wealthy, participants 'concerns for the building and operational needs were often tempered with caution. For some, there is a sense that a small number of members have been driving the Building for the Future (BFF) discussion and, despite the congregation's meetings and surveys, some people are not convinced of the needs and a few feel uninformed.

Looking at the priorities, both in individuals 'rankings and the free-form discussions around these, we find the standout highest concern is for *fair and appropriate compensation for the Church staff.* While some interviewees would like to see this removed from the capital campaign, nearly everyone wants to offer health benefits and livable, appropriate wages. If we had tested this campaign without the operations component, we would have come to somewhat different conclusions about the building needs and likely gifts.

In sum, the opinions about the operations component were:

- It is morally essential to pay people appropriately, manage their workloads sensibly, and provide them with basic needs such as health benefits.
- Making it possible for Joan Javier-Duval to stay with the Church is among the highest desires of all members, as she provides great leadership.
- The increased cost for staffing will continue to grow, even beyond this campaign.
- Raising the money upfront for the first five years of staffing improvements will not necessarily help transition the membership to covering the costs later; instead it may provide a false sense of security leading to insufficient funds in 2025.
- For many, the operational component of the campaign will override their interest in supporting the building components.

The remaining four items tested, accessibility, kitchen, Net Zero, and added, plus reconfigured, space, fall into two basic categories, one quite fundable, the other less appealing.

1. There is strongest support for accessibility, for reasons much in tune with the mission and beliefs of the UCM. As a welcoming church, members want to abide by accessibility standards and also communicate an open door for all. Like the operations component,

accessibility falls in the category of 'the right thing to do. 'Although some say that enough spaces are accessible, others say that it communicates the wrong message if the church simply agrees to move a meeting for a disabled participant. There is also concern that the aging membership of the church means that the definition of 'accessible 'becomes more fluid. We believe it would be relatively easy to raise funds for accessibility.

2. Work on the kitchen is the next highest priority, and for those who work on community lunch, it feels essential. First, there is concern with code compliance; there is no argument about this. Next, the volunteers find work in the kitchen very difficult and growing worse with the increased number of people served. The kitchen is designed poorly, there is little storage, and the equipment is outdated.

For others, there are concerns. Since the pressure on the kitchen is greatest for community lunch, many think it is unreasonable to spend a large amount for one event, albeit weekly. Some think the local churches should find a way to share one excellent space rather than improve five spaces. Some suggest a reorganization of the existing space would be best, with purchase of a new stove/oven.

The strongest negative around the kitchen is the addition on the north side of the church, which would also provide other space but is critical for the kitchen. There is real opposition to this addition as it is seen as disruptive to the historic beauty of the building. Several interviewees recommended getting more input on reconfiguration of the existing space.

Our sense is that the kitchen work is fundable through donations, but at a reduced scale and within the current building.

3. Energy efficiency is strongly supported, but achieving Net Zero is less appealing to most interviewees. There is a sense that the cost would be too great for the amount of energy savings produced. However, among the individuals who prioritize Net Zero, they believe it is imperative that the church makes these investments both for the sake of the planet and as a moral obligation befitting the mission and beliefs of UCM. For some others, there is a belief that non-members would contribute to this, but this would require a specific strategy to first identify motivated supporters, inform them and convince them to funnel their concerns around climate change into this project - a strategy that feels unlikely to us based on our conversations. The non-member and less-active individuals we talked to admired the commitment to Net Zero but it still seemed like an 'internal project.' The non-member and less-active individuals we talked to were not swayed to the point of financial commitment by the Net Zero approach.

We found less interest in energy efficiency as well, because of the building changes it would require: no enthusiasm for the north side addition and less enthusiasm than we anticipated for solar panels.

This raises a concern as one segment of our interviewees said they would only give to the campaign if Net Zero was included. This presents two difficulties: if their gifts are

restricted, then the work must be done with those dollars whether there is enough funding or not. Also, if less aggressive energy efficiency is done, those Net Zero gifts might be lost. This must affect the way you look at the projected gift chart, as some could be restricted.

Based on our interviews, we are convinced that some energy efficiency improvement is desirable, but we do not think going Net Zero would have the community attraction some believe, at least from a funding point of view.

4. Added space and reconfiguration of space appeals to those who spend the most time in the church building, and less to others. Several people suggested a thoughtful reconfiguration that does not include an addition, and that addresses today's changing workplace behaviors, including the popularity of shared workspaces, remote work, and little need for paper storage. There was a sense that visitors have the most trouble with the current layout, and that could be alleviated with better wayfinding information and modest reconfiguration, as well as accessibility improvements.

While members are proud of the community reliance on UCM for meeting spaces, many also think an affordable fee would be appropriate and understood.

We think it would be possible to raise money for modest improvements in the building but less likely for major changes and additions. This item is lower on the priority list, and could possibly be successful in a later stage campaign, but at this time would not attract the kind of support needed.

Raising funds from the church members is, of course, a key bottom line. We found a strong intention to support the church and its needs, along with a modest capacity, and in some cases a reluctance to give due to fixed incomes. Therefore, we could anticipate nearly 100% giving, but in a constricted range of gifts. Since major campaigns are highly dependent on a small number of large gifts, this means that the campaign goal is too ambitious at this point.

Many interviewees volunteered information about their planned gifts for the church; they understand the value of this for the future of the church but are unable to transition retirement investments to immediate gifts now, as they may need that money for life expenses.

We found, among the interviewees, a *likelihood of total gifts* ranging from $350,000-$470,000. If membership was much larger we might project a doable goal at four-five times that, meaning the $2.42 million would be realistic. However, given the size of the membership, and unless there are hidden sources we did not uncover, we think it is most realistic to anticipate immediate fundraising at about $800,000, and that number could be dramatically impacted by the decisions on structuring the campaign, the staffing and Net Zero components in the campaign.

For volunteer leadership, we found a strong core group of members who will devote themselves to working on this campaign, and they are the same people who most church members will see as natural leaders. These individuals, some already working on the project, are the first to recognize the congregation's reluctance to talk about money; this whole issue needs some straightforward messaging, complete sharing of the budgets and work estimates, and direct solicitation at all levels, as it is impossible to raise major amounts with letters and voice mails. Cracking this protective shell may be the hardest part of running this campaign.

Recommendations

We are convinced that the Unitarian Church of Montpelier has good reasons to embark on a capital effort with a committed membership, and that a campaign can be successful. However, we do not believe a single, $2.42 million campaign with the five proposed components can succeed at this time. To ultimately succeed, we encourage a five year (or longer) phased campaign combined with strategically planned, incremental increases in the annual effort for operational expenses.

The goal is to preserve as much of the $800,000 in potential capital gifts for capital improvements while gradually increasing the annual budget to include the desired staff compensation and benefits.

To achieve this we recommend the following steps:

- First, and starting immediately, we recommend a more assertive and personal annual appeal/stewardship process. We recommend an annually increasing goal that allows the Church to implement improved staff benefits, reorganization of tasks, and some increase in staffing for administrative needs. We actually believe it will sidetrack and disable the capital goals if left in the campaign, in great part because so many donors are willing to make this their first and only focus of giving.
    - There should be a five-year incremental plan that illustrates the changes proposed and the ultimate objectives, both programmatic and financial.
    - Implementation of investments in staff and staff benefits should be staggered over several years so that the annual budget grows gradually and allows the membership to adjust their annual contributions over a realistic time period. Members will be reassured by the articulated intention to reach a high level of benefits.
    - The annual goal increases to provide the desired staffing support should be proposed as across-the-board increases in annual pledges to all members and illustrated by showing paths for reaching this goal. For example, a 10 percent overall increase in annual pledges will provide staff with X benefits and so forth. In this way, all members will be asked annually to support these costs, rather than focus the burden on the individuals who are approached for capital support.

- The UCM needs to return to its efforts to meet with members in person to discuss their stewardship gifts.

- We believe some individuals will make an effort to 'front load 'their increased donations to support staff increments; for some, this could mean their entire donation capacity will be used in the staffing component, and for others there would be a significant time lag before they could begin to donate to the capital projects.
- While we understand that the endowment is earmarked for building needs at 4% draw per year, we suggest that it might help in the incremental annual campaign if an additional .5-1% be allocated to operations for a prescribed number of years. While $8000 would not be sufficient for all needs, it could provide an encouraging launch toward the larger goal.
- In addition to capital gifts from members, we envision UCM reaching its fundraising goal through a combination of these capital gifts, grants (especially for ADA compliance and possibly for energy efficiency projects), planned gifts and serendipity.

Next, we suggest a capital campaign in stages. With major gifts solicited, beginning in mid-2020, the congregation has a chance to embrace the increasing annual goals at the same time the committee is structuring its campaign effort. This preparation work must include revisiting plans for the addition, the kitchen, and the reconfiguration of the offices and meeting rooms, as well as timing for energy efficiency work. Precise plans and cost estimates are essential in conducting the campaign.

Once the campaign components are considered and revised as possible, stages could include:

- Accessibility: As the highest concern of members, accessibility could be a stand-alone phase. If any energy efficiency improvements might become possible within the work, they should be included. Doing this phase first may also serve to engage the community members since so much of the church space is available to the public. (Note the recent experience of raising funds for an elevator at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library and at The Center for Arts and Learning.)
- Kitchen improvements: We hope it will be possible to redesign the kitchen to be more useable, meet code, and offer comfort for volunteers, without an addition to the building, which we do not recommend. This stage, focused on the kitchen, may also offer some appeal to non-members who appreciate the lunch program and might have interest in renting the kitchen for community or family events. Once it meets code, this could be more likely.
- Energy efficiency, and possibly Net Zero, could form the third special project campaign, and again might appeal to the broader community when it is separated from the other more internal needs. As this special campaign might not begin till 2021 or beyond, there would be time for wise planning and for research on specialized funding. We would hope that the 'Net Zero Only 'donors might be supportive in the phases leading up to this, if it is clear that energy efficiency is part of all your work and future plans.
- We are not recommending the North side addition, but do suggest reconfiguration of the existing spaces, in a specialized, smaller, phase after the other priorities are met, when it is clearer what is needed given the earlier stages. We expect that accessibility

and kitchen work would change the current wayfinding to an extent, and this 'space ' campaign could be small and very internal in interest. We agree with the comments made by some interviewees regarding 21st century modes of work and information storage, and suspect those might have a positive, low-cost impact on your plans.

Other recommendations for success:

- While the campaign will be more successful in phases, we suggest a comprehensive but modest brochure that illustrates your plans for the next 3-5 years. We hope the collaborative spirit pervading UCM will encourage people to support each phase.
- For each phase, take a marketing eye to the purposes in order to present each to an external audience. Non-members may respond more generously to project-style focused efforts such as the elevator, the kitchen, or the energy efficiency work, than to a comprehensive church campaign.
- You can be open to longer-term pledges that will apply to all the phases, for those who care to make a longer commitment now. But you can also return to donors as each new phase begins, for a new pledge focused on that stage. This also provides a natural approach for new members over time.
- Your planned giving efforts should continue slightly under-the-radar during the campaign; with the exception of a donor's accelerating a bequest (accruing to the campaign) or meeting with an elderly donor currently dependent on retirement income (leading to a planned gift later), you are better off keeping the conversations separate.
- Promote a significant pledge period. While three years is typical in most campaigns, enough of the UCM donors will be doing this at their annual capacity that five years will allow a higher goal., .
- Prepare a 'ways of giving 'document that will open your members 'eyes to unusual gifts such as cars, boats, land and real estate (including life estate), art and jewelry. It is possible these gifts might be more possible than cash for some of your members.
- Share your financial documents with members frequently; you may feel you do this, but they often overlook them. This includes annual budgets and estimates for components for the campaign.
- Be very clear about the existence and purpose of the Endowment and the percentage annual draw, its purposes and its limitations. If some part of the draw will be used in the campaign, explain that carefully so there is no expectation that the Endowment could fund the campaign.
- Seek members for the campaign committee who represent a broad range of interests, ages, and social groups. This may help in securing meetings and conversation with some of the members of the church who are less well known to the current committee.

Overall, we recommend that you move ahead with a campaign, with the revised structure suggested above: an accelerating annual stewardship program plus a phased three-five year capital campaign.

Executive Summary

The mission of the Unitarian Church of Montpelier is to welcome all, serve human needs and protect the earth. Its programs focus outward, in addition to serving its members. As this congregation considers work on its building, its members have taken a responsible approach to planning to meet programmatic needs, compensate their staff, maximize the service of their historic building, and fit this within their financial capacity.

The members of the UCM are a committed, caring group who will support the campaign to the best of their ability; but their capacity is more limited than the plan demands.

The members of the church have identified five priorities.

- Improved staff benefits and work demands.
- Accessibility including an elevator.
- Kitchen upgrades, particularly to facilitate the community meals program.
- Energy efficiency through a series of actions and committed to net-zero.
- Expanding available space, through an addition, reconfiguration, and improved office and meeting room space.

The staffing component is by far the highest priority for members, and we recommend the it be phased in through deliberate and personalized efforts to increase members ' stewardship donations. While this may be somewhat slower than hoped, it will be sustainable and will grow with the congregation.

For the capital components, we recommend two or three phases, starting with accessibility and based on a careful reassessment of floor plan reconfiguration. The next phase would be the kitchen work, also based on reconfiguration and without the proposed addition. Finally, we suggest the net-zero project and the remaining reconfigurations suggested by the reassessment. We do not find an appetite for the north side addition and realize this means the floor plan reassessment is a critical early component of this plan.

In our interviews with members of the congregation and some community members, we have found that the proposed $2.42 million campaign to implement these priorities is not realistic at this time. We can suggest a total capacity at this time of $800,000 and assume some immediate capacity will be diverted into the stewardship increases. In order to preserve as much of the $800,000 in potential capital gifts for capital improvements we advise a methodical and gradual increase in stewardship giving to achieve the desired staff compensation and benefits. Some donors are committed to only one or two of the capital priorities, so some donations will likely be restricted. With a slower, phased approach, a larger amount could ultimately be raised.

While the recommended fundraising goal may be disappointing, we are convinced that the members and some community friends will do their best in supporting this work. The 'slow and patient 'approach to date is a part of the ultimate achievement of these goals. Persistent, deliberate and heartfelt work is in the nature of the UCM membership, and is the key to success.

Appendix

Gift Pyramid Tested

UNITARIAN CHURCH OF MONTPELIER

GOAL: $2.42 million

size of gift	number of gifts	category total
400,000	1	400000
250,000	2	500000
100,000	4	400000
50,000	6	300000
25,000	15	375000
10,000	15	150000
5,000	20	100000
2,500	25	62500
1,200	40	48000
750	75	56250
300	100	30000
		2421750

Case Statement: Unitarian Church of Montpelier and the Building For the Future Campaign:

The nationally registered historic building *(picture on the attached page)* of the Unitarian Church of Montpelier (UCM) has been a landmark in downtown Montpelier since 1865, the end of the Civil War. It stands on the corner of School and Main Streets a few blocks from Vermont's Statehouse. Both buildings were designed by architect Thomas Silloway to gather and strengthen community; they are symbols of enduring hope for a civil society.

In the 1960s UCM became a member congregation of the Unitarian-Universalist Association (UUA), subscribing to its 7 principles that start with "The inherent worth and dignity of every human being" and end with "Respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part." These principles are uniquely expressed through UCM's own mission statement: "***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."***

UCM strives to carry out this mission with/for its 250 members and other Central Vermont friends and neighbors. On Sunday mornings it offers two worship services and multiple opportunities for all ages to participate in lifespan spiritual exploration. Then and at other times the Sanctuary is used for a wide variety of musical events, like Capital City concerts. During the week the classrooms and other spaces are filled with meetings, many by community organizations and grass-roots networks which the church supports via free or low-cost use of space. Every month one or two of these groups receive Community Pouch donations from our worship services.

Aside from worship, the most intensive activity of UCM is to provide a free weekly Community Lunch to an average of 125 people, many of whom are homeless and/or struggling with mental illness. At least 30 volunteers pitch in to cook, serve, and clean every Monday. Other volunteers host at the church from November to April a weekly evening Warming Shelter for people who are homeless. This intimate witness to food and housing insecurity fuels our ministry – led by Reverend Joan Javier-Duval – of speaking up and advocating for social justice in the community and broader world.

UCM is accredited by the UUA as a Welcoming Congregation – e.g., an informed and safe place for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. It is also accredited as a Green Sanctuary due to its commitment to environmental sustainability through recycling, re-usable materials (no paper plates or towels), intensive weatherization, education about "Living Lighter" and climate change, etc.

There is much more UCM wants to do to live/embody its mission. The congregation adopted a 2020 Vision Statement; the Board supplemented it with a 2020 Strategic Plan, part of which examined our prospects for continued growth *(conclusion: moderate growth likely)* and how well the facility meets our current – as well as projected - needs. This led to the Building For the Future (BFF) Comprehensive Plan to add a small elevator, replace the outdated kitchen, replace

the oil furnace with a wood pellet furnace, add solar panels, add classroom/meeting space, and make other changes as outlined on the attached page.

BFF is estimated to cost $2.42 million ($2.10 million for work on the building and $0.32 million for operations [a $0.30 million resource pool for additional help for ministry for up to 5 years and $0.02 million for the BFF fundraising campaign]). Our congregation has voted to test the feasibility of raising the funds for this major undertaking. In this feasibility study we seek to hear and learn from the many individuals, families and groups that have a vested interest in UCM, the community, and our environment. We hope to learn what aspects of this project resonate and might draw support from us all.

For more information about UCM, go to www.ucmvt.org. For more details about BFF, go to https://sites.google.com/view/ucm-bff-steering-committee/home. Thank you for participating in our study!

Interview Questions

Interviewee: _____date_____

What is your relationship with the Church?

What (other) activities do you enjoy or appreciate at the Church?

The mission of the UCM is to welcome all, and to serve human need and protect the earth. Its programs focus outwardly, in addition to serving its members. The church hosts 125 or more each week for community meals, is the site for the Capital City Concerts, and offers its meeting rooms and classrooms for community use, often at no cost.

Are you aware of these many programs, both for church members and for the community, at the UCM?

Do you find the church staff helpful when you need them?

How would you describe the relationship of the Church with the greater Montpelier community?

Have you spent time in the church building?
If so, what is your impression of the adequacy of the facilities?

The Church is hoping to conduct a major campaign to update the building, including access, energy efficiency and adequate space for their programs. There are four facilities-based components of this campaign:

How would you prioritize this building work:

___ Accessibility with elevator(s), ramps and bathrooms [including easier access to Sanctuary for worship and concerts]

___ Energy Efficiency: with a commitment to Net Zero, ending use of fossil fuels

___ Increased Program Space: for church and local meetings and classes

___A new Kitchen: mostly needed to accommodate the growing community meals program, although this is also used by the church programs and other community groups

Are there any aspects of this plan that you feel are overwhelmingly important?

Or should be eliminated?

Do you think it is reasonable to include a small amount ($300,000, less than 10% of the goal) in this campaign to add health benefits and hours for staff at the Church?

Are there other needs, for the church or for the community, that you think are more important and might force postponement or rethinking of this campaign?

Are there any other fundraising or similar projects underway, or planned, in the area that would interfere with the success of this campaign?

The combination of construction, staffing, and fund-raising expenses creates a campaign goal of $2.42 million, which would be raised over a three year period while the work is phased in.

Do you feel this goal is realistic and appropriate?

In seeking the funding for this work, the Church will approach its members and others in the community who value its work.

Looking at the proposed chart of potential gifts, can you suggest individuals, families or businesses that might support the campaign at the highest levels?

Do you have a sense of the aspects of the campaign that would best motivate donors?

Do you think you and your family would make a gift to this campaign a priority?

Can you suggest the range of your possible gift?

Do you think it is possible that some of these gifts might be contributed by community members who do not belong to the church?

The Church is accustomed to a very high level of volunteerism, albeit more often for programs than for fundraising.

Can you suggest some individuals you think would be willing to help in this campaign?

Do you think you and your family members might be involved?

Serving on a campaign committee
Asking for gifts
Hosting information and social gatherings to learn about the campaign
Making suggestions on others who might give

What do you think will best motivate people to give to this campaign?

How should the church promote the campaign and share information in order to get the message out?

Can you suggest some ways to organize this campaign that might make it most successful?