

Strategic Planning Group: Executive Summary to Parish Board

In May of 2022, Parish Board approved the formation of a Strategic Planning Group ("SPG") to identify priorities for Pilgrim Church's Christian mission for the next three years (2024-2027). It charged the SPG to develop a plan to strengthen the engagement and involvement of Pilgrim Church's congregation and the greater community.

The SPG began work in the summer of 2022, focusing on the Church's five core values (Service, Christian Teaching, Worship, Welcome, and Community), as identified by the *2020 and Beyond* Committee. The SPG interviewed UCC leadership, leaders of other churches, Pilgrim Church's minister, staff, and the congregation's members, visitors, and friends. The SPG also studied Pilgrim Church documents, including its bylaws and staff job descriptions. Additionally, the SPG designed and distributed a survey to better understand the congregation's aspirations for the Church's future and to make recommendations to achieve these goals.

During this extensive investigation, the following areas of concern (caused in part by changing demographics and exacerbated by COVID) are among those that this plan attempts to resolve:

- Less congregational engagement (especially by younger families) in Church activities, volunteerism (including committee participation), and financial support than in the past
- Fewer new participants, perhaps in response to insufficient welcoming and integration of potential new members and outreach to the community by the whole Church, than in the past
- The Pastor and DCM doing administrative tasks that crowd out their regular responsibilities due to staff vacancies and reduced staff hours
- A reduced level of administrative oversight, including annual goal-setting and performance evaluations (contrary to By-laws), by committees and staff.

The SPG's analysis identified three themes: Congregational Engagement, Christian Education, and Community Outreach.

I. Congregational Engagement

A vibrant church is one made up of members working together to embody the mission and values of the Church. A fully engaged congregation has a shared spirit of community. To these ends, the SPG has identified three areas of focus:

- Welcoming - actively engaging visitors
- Church programming - keeping members engaged through new and existing opportunities for community service, social activities, intergenerational gatherings, support groups, adult discussion groups, and Christian education
- Energizing volunteerism - utilizing human resources within the church to serve on committees and in leadership roles

II. Christian Education

Pilgrim Church members benefit from a faith formation program that provides education and enlightenment at all stages of life, from an introduction to Christian principles in early childhood to preparing for and meeting the challenges of different phases of adulthood. A personal journey of faith beginning in preschool and extending to the end of life evolves as each individual develops and builds personal spirituality based on Christian faith, life experience, and congregational traditions. Programming will target the educational needs of:

- Children in preschool/elementary school
- Teens in middle school/high school
- Adults (faith formation and lifelong learning)

III. Community Outreach

The SPG recommends that the Church create new events and reinvigorate previous events to renew the Pilgrim Church community and strengthen relationships between congregants. Feedback from the SPG Survey identified these events as opportunities to engage the greater Sherborn community.

To increase community participation in Pilgrim Church's ministries and missions and enhance the Church's vibrancy, the SPG recommends:

- Inviting the public to events and ministry
- Instituting an outreach program for new residents
- Launching a communications campaign that connects members with local towns' residents.

Conclusions

We believe our Church's strength and vibrancy come from its members' commitment. We are at our best when members step forward and contribute to our mission through their time, talent, and energy to perform the various roles and tasks necessary. In that regard, individuals and committees must be held accountable for our contribution(s) as parishioners, committee members, and chairs, as well as employees.

We recommend that Parish Board ask all committees to annually reexamine their purpose, function, and operations as defined in our By-laws and recommit to fulfilling those goals with new vigor.

As part of that commitment, we also ask members to examine their personal contribution(s) to the collective life of our Church and be as fully engaged as possible.

To meet these goals, we recommend some changes as well as a return to some tried and true practices. We recommend that Pilgrim Church, as summarized in the attached charts:

- Hire a full-time Director of Christian Education and Faith Formation
- Hire a full-time Administrator
- Create two new committees
 - Outreach and Engagement
 - Welcoming
- Make revisions to existing committees
 - Christian Education Committee becomes the Christian Education & Faith Formation Committee
 - Missions Committee increases its oversight of the Church's missions, including social advocacy
 - Streamline the function of the existing Hospitality and Outreach Committee

The attached charts contain more detailed descriptions, rationale, and recommendations for how these changes will benefit our Church. A detailed report is available upon request.

Thank you for evaluating our recommendations. We have engaged in thoughtful and prayerful dialogue to create a vision for the future of our congregation to share the unique gifts we bring to each other and the wider community. We face an exciting time together as we seek to thrive as a Christian community in the twenty-first century. We are grateful to work with you and be part of the process.

Sincerely,

STRATEGIC PLANNING GROUP

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Recommendations for Pilgrim Church Committees

NEW COMMITTEES		EXISTING COMMITTEE MODIFICATIONS
<p><u>OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT</u> Purpose: To provide faith-based opportunities for enhanced social engagement and ministry events outside of worship for the congregation and broader community. 5-7 members, plus outside help as needed.</p> <p>Expectations/Recommendations: Working with the Pastor,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generate Active Engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize/facilitate social and support groups - Coordinate with committees to each provide one event/yr. (E.g., Progressive dinners, Christmas caroling, informational) - Create discussion groups, coordinating with CE&FF) - Organize and publicize fall kick-off - Coordinate and promote holiday-related events ● Create an Outreach Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a marketing approach to programs and ministries that will create interest in and welcome people to investigate the Pilgrim Community - Explore best practices, including hiring a consultant, to communicate PC’s message to the local communities - Provide outreach to new residents - Investigate and update ways to communicate with members of the congregation and the wider community - Create protocols for staff and volunteers to publicize events at Pilgrim Church (consistent messaging and image) 	<p><u>WELCOMING</u> Purpose: To create intentional procedures for welcoming to worship service, identifying visitors and potential new members, and Maintain contact with visitors and new and existing members. 5-7 members, plus outside help as needed.</p> <p>Expectations/Recommendations: Working with the DCM (and coordinating with the DCE and the Deacons),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organize Welcoming Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate greeters - Develop follow-up welcoming procedures for visitors - Set up a mentor program for new arrivals - Utilizing Church Windows, organize with the Administrator post-visit contact/ visits by staff and volunteers - Review the new member brochure and create/update a new member handbook - Develop and share practices to make coffee hour and other gatherings more welcoming, kind, and inclusive. - Work with Property Trustees and Grounds Committee to make physical improvements to the front entry, grounds, and Fellowship Hall to make more welcoming* ● Recruitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with the Church Administrator to update the information in Church Windows - With one member each from the Welcoming and Engagement/ Outreach committees, the DCM, and Moderator, form a group annually to recruit and staff committee and office positions (seasonal Oct-Dec) for Annual Meeting approval 	<p><u>1) CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND FAITH FORMATION (CE&FF)</u> <u>(Currently Christian Ed.)</u> Purpose: To provide opportunities for faith development from preschool to adulthood.</p> <p>Expectations/Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oversee vibrant Sunday school ● Coordinate with other committees to build robust programming outside of Sunday school for families with children ● Develop and oversee youth programs (OWL, Confirmation, MSYG, and SHYG) ● Develop and oversee additional adult education programs ● Provide outreach communications for CE&FF programs ● Maintain Church Windows for CE&FF programs (Share information about new participants with the DCM) <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Additional committee members ● Employ a full-time CE&FF Director <p><u>2) MISSIONS</u> Purpose: To build a balanced ministries program that reflects the Mission Committee's statement of purpose, including the importance of social advocacy and justice</p> <p>Expectations/Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and coordinate with ministry leaders ● Provide support for missions/ministries, including outreach communications <p>Support: Re-evaluate committee structure</p> <p><u>3) HOSPITALITY</u> <u>(currently Hospitality & Outreach)</u> Maintain important hospitality duties, as at present</p>

*In process or already completed.

Recommendations for Pilgrim Church Staff

<p align="center">Director of Christian Education and Faith Formation</p>	<p align="center">Full-Time Administrator*</p>
<p align="center">Summary</p> <p>Report to and coordinate with the Pastor Work with the Faith Formation Committee for coordination and support</p> <p>Manage all levels of Christian Education</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinate preschool care for Sunday Worship 2. Sunday School (Grades K-5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit teachers • Manage curriculum and activities • Coordinate with Pilgrim Church committees to build: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Programming outside of Sunday school for families with children – Outreach programs for the community (one program/month) • Maintain attendance records and contacts in Church Windows for outreach and welcome • Share information about new participants with the DCM 3. Coordinate/lead youth programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate models of middle/high school youth programs • Select and train youth leaders • Organize and lead youth events • Lead OWL program • Assist in planning/promoting the annual baccalaureate event 4. Adult Faith Formation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an ongoing and consistent program of adult education/faith formation • Coordinate with the Pastor and faith leaders for program leadership, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bible study – Book study – Discussion groups – Christian history programs – Support & social groups 	<p align="center">See current job description 8/26/23</p> <p align="center">Additional Duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with committee chairs to promote events • Oversee communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Electronic – Written – Monthly newsletter – Publication of Parish Board minutes • In coordination with the DCM and DCE, update and maintain information in Church Windows

*In process or already completed.

Three-Year Timeline to Implement the Strategic Plan

PROGRAM YEAR	September – January	February – June	Summer
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a part-time CE Director* • Hire a full-time Administrator* • Begin search for a communications firm • Develop a committee and officer staffing plan for 2024 • <u>Immediate Changes</u> • Present the SPG plan • Add four <i>ad hoc</i> members to CE (two youth and two adult ed. reps) • Form <i>ad hoc</i> Welcoming Committee • Form <i>ad hoc</i> Outreach and Engagement Committee • Form an implementation planning group, including drafting revisions to the Church's by-laws • Review bulk mail permit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch new committees and implement changes to current committees • Begin developing a master plan for the front entry, grounds, and Fellowship Hall* • Train the staff and relevant committee members on Church Windows • Begin implementing the communications and outreach plan • Review the 2023 programming year and set goals for the 2024 programming year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish the Church calendar for 2023/2024
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the scope and hours of CE&FF Director • Fully implement the communications and outreach plan • Begin front entry, grounds, and Fellowship Hall renovations* • Re-evaluate Church Windows as the Church's information system • Develop a committee and officer staffing plan for 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the 2024 programming year and set goals for the 2025 programming year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish the Church calendar for 2024/2025
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and evaluate the Strategic Plan's effectiveness and recommend changes • Develop a committee and officer staffing plan for 2026 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin adopting recommendations (may require Congregational votes) • Review the 2025 programming year and set goals for the 2026 programming year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish the Church calendar for 2025/2026

*In process or already completed.