

Ten Year Plan (Visioning) Committee Report, February 1, 2007

Introduction

This ten-year “vision” for Central Congregational Church was prepared to help us make sound decisions as we build on the progress that has made our church such a significant spiritual force in the lives of our vibrant and growing congregation. It is the product of almost three score of our members, who looked at the challenges facing us across the spectrum of our activities: mission, membership, plant and property and finance. Most of the issues and many of the preliminary conclusions that we presented in the interim report last June stood the test of re-examination , and we have attempted to answer the questions raised in the initial report. Some of the ideas we present are large, some not so large; but we deem every one worthy of your consideration as you think about our future.

We originally described our task as a difficult but happy assignment. Happy because we are a succeeding church; more that 50 adults and children have joined the Central family since we began our work in January 2006. Another measure of our success is that the members already have demonstrated their confidence in the church by approving a recommendation in our interim report to consider adding a third minister to our staff. The difficult part is to find ways to address our many real needs without disrupting what is contributing to the truly special characteristics that make Central Church so important to us and a growing force for good in the larger community.

As you review this report, please remember that it does not bind the church to any of its recommendations. It has been put together to provide guidance as we move through the next decade along a path which could well lead to a membership approaching one thousand persons. Decisions will be made as always by the standing committees, the governing bodies, and the votes of the congregation. Some of the highlights of our recommendations follow:

- Expand programs of outreach and advocacy to allow members to fully participate in addressing basic needs in the community such as hunger, health, shelter, education, poverty, and the environment
- Plan for membership growth of 5% per year, reaching up to 900-1,000 members
- Provide the necessary resources to support the rapidly expanding youth education programs, which are so vital to the life of the church and now serve more than 130 children and teens
- Recognize the increasing importance of websites and electronic communications for both internal and external purposes, providing professional support to bring us to and maintain a state-of-the-art commitment to this area

- Recognize our church buildings as integral to our overall mission, needing equal consideration along with every other activity of our church
- Consider architectural restoration of the church to its original beauty, with particular emphasis on restoring the bell towers, possibly with bells, and on opening the rows of arches now bricked in
- Consider the future role of Hamilton House, one of the church's most valuable assets, in respect to both its needs and the needs of the church
- Consider a benchmark of at least 2% of annual income as an appropriate guideline for annual giving
- Consider carrying out a major capital fund campaign, following the preparation of a comprehensive, professionally costed plan to deal with deferred repairs to the building and with future needs
- Include up to \$1.5 million from the church's general fund as a part of the campaign
- Permit use of the endowment and general funds within prudent, generally accepted guidelines (up to 4.5% of the total) to increase support of the annual budget.

Peter von Stein, Chair

Mission and Action – Outreach Subgroup

Vision: In 2017 Central Congregational Church will be a conference/denominational/community leader in mission activities.

To achieve this vision, we commit ourselves to building loving relationships across all boundaries within and beyond the church. We commit ourselves to involvement in a diverse range of projects – international, national, local, and within the church – in human services, child welfare, health care, education, and spiritual support.

Vision Components:

- In 2017 Central Congregational Church will have active programs of outreach, advocacy, and political action in each of the following needs categories: hunger, health, shelter, education, poverty, employment, the environment, and human companionship. These programs will be supported by needs assessment reviews, including questionnaires of the congregation, and will be evaluated by levels of participation and outcomes.
- The church will have a full-time staff member to coordinate mission efforts.

- The church will make full use of available technological tools by supporting the website's ongoing calendar project, making more active the list of Mission/Action projects; creating links to other organizations' websites and identifying contact persons, dates of meetings, etc.; adding a Mission/Action blog where members can share stories of mission/action experiences; developing Mission/Action documentaries; sharing concerts, cultural events, lectures, and sermons with the community, and linking to the national United Church of Christ website.
- The church will have at least a part time staff member trained in electronic communications and website management.
- The church will have links to United Church of Christ churches and other non-UCC churches, schools, and social agencies in the region.
- The church will have an up to date brochure that showcases our activities in photographs and text, including organizations served by our Mission and Action program.

Underlying Assumptions:

- Central Congregational Church will have a membership of 900-1,000 persons, including more younger members and their children and more older persons.
- Members will generally be well educated and have average or above average means.
- Members will be genuinely concerned about and willing to organize and participate in mission activities.
- Church mission activities will be directed to diverse racial, ethnic, and economically challenged groups.
- Immigrants living in Providence will increase, as well as their needs. Homelessness and the demand for affordable housing will increase.
- Government programs will fall far short of needs in many areas.
- Social isolation will increase with changes in family structures and social organizations.
- With the increasing competition for funds by social agencies, churches and other donor agencies will find opportunities for cooperation and joint efforts.
- As social agencies find new ways of generating income, more financial resources will become available.

Membership – Inreach Subgroup

Vision: Central Congregational Church will grow to 900-1000 members by 2017. “Outreach,” being evangelical in our message to the community, will be balanced by “Inreach,” strengthening our community of fellowship and commitment to the teachings of Jesus. A strong, vibrant community of faith will generate a dynamic presence in the broader community. At the same time our numerical growth will be directly dependent upon the strength of our bonds with each other and with God. We will grow in our caring for and serving one another.

To achieve this vision, we commit ourselves to:

- welcoming visitors from all walks of life in a way that is friendly and informative, while respecting some newcomers’ need to be private and anonymous
- inviting visitors to participate in the informal life of the church and to take steps toward becoming church members
- remembering the covenantal foundation of our church, reminding ourselves through sermons, lectures, study groups, the website, and publications, that we are in community *together*, that we diverse believers are united in this church and in the United Church of Christ
- engaging new members immediately in contributing to the vitality of the church, strengthening the bonds of fellowship among us, fostering a sense of belonging in the church, and supporting their and our spiritual growth
- strengthening and fostering the spiritual offerings inspired by Sunday worship, including music, groups for study and reflection, and opportunities for building fellowship through mission involvement
- recognizing the critical role of the Sunday School, junior high, high school, and college youth activities, adult religious education; supporting their expanding enrollment with appropriate facilities, curricula, and staff, both volunteer and paid
- supporting both traditional and innovative fellowship events to meet the needs of our members to connect with each other and with the church
- remembering and caring about those absent from us for whatever reason; connecting with the ill and the homebound
- supporting and assisting religious staff in training the congregation to be more effective in bringing newcomers into the life of the church, caring for one another, and building and managing group activities

Plant and Properties Subgroup

Vision: By 2017 Central Congregational Church will have buildings that:

- are structurally sound, maintained, and equipped to preserve building integrity
- are fundamentally safe, hazard free, and handicapped accessible
- make best use of rooms, facilities, and equipment to meet the needs of the day and for the foreseeable future
- are environmentally sound and embody maximum energy efficiency in the buildings themselves, the heating and cooling systems, and all appliances and equipment
- are restored to and retain their historically significant architectural design, while accepting minor alterations necessary for its physical preservation and appropriate use
- are neat, clean, and orderly throughout, inviting and welcoming and reflecting a vibrant congregation

To achieve this vision, we commit ourselves to:

- completing already authorized projects in the summer of 2007 (See appendix to this section)
- bringing projects where initial planning, including the receipt of cost proposals, is complete to the annual meeting of the congregation in 2007 (See appendix)
- bringing proposals where initial planning is complete but requiring alternative cost proposals to the annual meeting of the congregation in 2008 (See appendix)
- seriously considering each of the proposals listed in the appendix by employing professionals to conduct preliminary architectural/engineering investigations, prepare preliminary schemes and drawings, and develop preliminary cost estimates for review by the church leadership and congregation and by providing this information to the congregation
- developing a plan for the completion of the projects agreed to by the congregation
- conducting annual inspections of the building to ascertain the soundness of the building, overall safety, our use of the building, energy efficiency, and exterior and interior design

Appendix: List of Projects According to Category	Cost/Estimate
Already authorized and underway	
Reconstruction of Angell Street front between towers, plus pediments above east and west doors, plus refinishing of all three doors	\$ 375,000
Rehabilitation of parsonage, including wiring	75,000
Initial planning – proposals, including costs, received	600,000-
Rehabilitation of Arthur H. Bradford Organ	1,200,000
Preliminary thinking – proposals, including costs, needed	
Replacement of sanctuary carpet	100,000
Requiring professional investigation, preliminary drawings, and cost estimates	
Repair/replacement of exterior brick as needed throughout	
Repair/replacement of roof slates – Chapel Hall and school wing	
Installation of storm windows/replacement windows in sanctuary dome, Chapel Hall, school wing, Fireplace Room, kitchen, offices	
Reconstruction of sanctuary doors and construction of cold weather lobbies directly inside them	
Analysis of heating system and heating zones throughout	
Installation of hot air mixing systems – sanctuary, Chapel Hall	
Repair/replacement of sanctuary vault tiles	
Fire alarm and emergency lighting system – new Fire Prevention Code	
Installation of panic hardware on sanctuary doors; replacement of other doors with those having panic hardware – Chapel Hall, Makepeace Room, and entire school wing	
Provision for emergency egress at back wall of east transept	
Provision of emergency egress and handicapped access to entire school wing	
Rehabilitation/remodeling of school wing for appropriate usage	
Rehabilitation and redesign of Makepeace Room for appropriate usage	
Redesign/remodeling of Chapel Hall; provision of separations from adjacent spaces and corridors; replacement of chairs and tables	
Creation of suitable meeting rooms for small groups, perhaps by remodeling existing spaces, perhaps by using first floor rooms at Hamilton House, including an enclosed passageway to the church	
Creation of appropriate storage for the sanctuary, Fireplace Room, Chapel Hall, school wing, offices, kitchen, and Makepeace Room	
Reconstruction of twin towers on Angell Street in accordance with original design; installation of bell(s)	
Restoration of exterior barrel vaults over sanctuary and presently enclosed rows of arches	
Myriad smaller projects, including upgrading of bathrooms, recovering of kitchen floor, and division of the plant into several secure zones	
Develop a parking facility, possibly purchasing 154 Waterman Street or possibly at Angell and Hope Streets in co-operation with The Wheeler School	

Finance Subgroup

Vision: In 2017 Central Congregational Church will have a financially viable program that fully supports our worship and educational activities, our vigorous mission and outreach, and the appropriate stewardship of our wonderful church building.

To achieve this vision, we commit ourselves to:

- making best strategic use of the traditional means by which our church is funded: annual stewardship giving, miscellaneous income, income received from the use of our facilities, planned giving, and capital campaigns
- raising at least one-half of the annual operating budget from annual stewardship giving
- inviting and expecting responsible annual giving by all church members, while understanding that personal or family circumstances may from time to time prevent some members from participating to the extent that they would like
- suggesting that members consider at least 2% of their annual income as a benchmark of responsible annual giving
- conforming to the “spending rule” of the Rhode Island Foundation by taking out not more than 4.5% of our invested funds annually to finance the annual operating budget
- being responsible stewards of our extraordinary church building and understanding its place as a significant architectural feature of the East Side of Providence
- minimizing the need for future capital campaigns in the long term by devoting sufficient funds for the periodic remodeling, repair, and rehabilitation of our building needed to keep it in an excellent state, appropriately designed and equipped to meet the needs of the day and the foreseeable future
- considering a benchmark of 1% of the building value (now estimated at \$8 million) as an annual budget expense to create a viable, periodic remodeling, repair, and rehabilitation reserve fund to finance needed projects
- placing receipts from the pending Verizon cell tower agreement into a plant and properties fund for the major repair, renovation, or rehabilitation of our buildings
- preparing and keeping updated a long term plan for the future use and condition of all church facilities
- dealing directly with accumulated, deferred periodic remodeling, repair, and rehabilitation projects by devoting up to \$1.5 million from the church’s General Fund as part of a total, near term capital fundraising effort