

First Unitarian Church of Wilmington  
Strategic Planning Process Report  
Annual Meeting  
May 2016

**Summary of Progress  
Strategic Plan FY2015 – FY2019**

The Strategic Planning Committee is a Standing Committee of the Board that is tasked with monitoring the current Strategic Plan and creating a new plan each fiscal year. The Strategic Planning Committee collects information from the Executive Team, program team, and various lay leaders of the church to evaluate the progress toward the Strategic Plan and reports back to the Board quarterly. The following is a summary of the progress made so far towards strategies included in SP15 – 19. The quarterly monitoring reports have more detailed explanations.

*The Annual Vision of Ministry*

The Board chooses three strategies from the Strategic Plan to be the main priorities each year. This “short list” called the Annual Vision of Ministry (AVM) becomes the specific focus for the Executive Team for that fiscal year. The short list for FY15 – 16 includes:

- *AVM #1: Goal 1 (Growth) – Strategy A: Providing exciting, inspirational, and dynamic worship and religious education experiences.*
- *AVM #2: Goal 2 (Engagement) – Strategy A: Transition to a “Shared Ministry” Model*
- *AVM #3: Goal 2 (Engagement) – Strategy B: Promote a culture of volunteerism and community participation within the church.*

Despite all the changes made with hiring a new minister and not having an assistant minister, the strategies of the AVM have proven to be quite successful and it seems we are moving in the direction of inspiring worship and educational programming, shared ministry, and more volunteer involvement from members.

*Strategies Beyond the Annual Vision of Ministry*

There is a mixed amount of progress towards the strategies not included in the AVM. Although we have improved systems around welcoming and retaining members and we have a strong connection with the larger UU community, growth continues to be a struggle. We have not prioritized financial or volunteer resources towards outreach and marketing, including web-based initiatives. We continue to have some members very engaged in community action and social justice, yet these efforts still seem fragmented rather than unified and we have not developed an initiative for the whole congregation. Most of the capital campaign income has been spent to improve the building, but the condition of the building will continue to be a strain on the annual budget.

## Explanation of Changes to Plan for FY2016 – FY2020

The Strategic Planning Committee decided the Strategic Plan should be more Mission focused due to the new energy and appreciation of our Mission. As such, we have re-imagined the plan so it is more consistent with our Mission. We also re-organized the plan to provide a one-page simplified version of the Goals and the Strategies. This is then followed by a more detailed explanation of each strategy that includes ideas about tactics that could be used to implement the strategies. The congregation gave input into the new plan in February and March. In April, the Board discussed and approved it. In this plan, we continue to focus our attention on spiritual growth, numeric growth, connecting with the larger UU community, and fighting for justice in the community. We added a focus on participation, congregation health, and maintaining and planning for our building.

### Strategic Plan for FY 2016 - 2020

#### Goal 1: Nourish Minds and Spirits

- ❖ *Strategy A:* Provide exciting, inspirational, and dynamic worship for all ages.
- ❖ *Strategy B:* Provide engaging religious education experiences for all ages.

#### Goal 2: Grow and Strengthen the Beloved Community

- ❖ *Strategy C:* Strengthen outreach efforts to attract visitors to Sunday worship and special events.
- ❖ *Strategy D:* Be intentionally welcoming to newcomers in all we do.
- ❖ *Strategy E:* Continue efforts to improve member retention.
- ❖ *Strategy F:* Promote a culture of participation, engagement, and volunteerism.
- ❖ *Strategy G:* Revise and renew our covenant with each other.
- ❖ *Strategy H:* Continue to be a leader in growing the denomination and strengthen our interaction with the larger UU community to enrich our UU identity and share resources.

#### Goal 3: Fight Injustice & Transform the World

- ❖ *Strategy I:* Promote participation and engagement in community action and social justice activities.
- ❖ *Strategy J:* Collaborate with the larger UU Community on community action and social justice activities.

#### GOAL 4: Ensure Sustainable Facilities to Support Our Mission

- ❖ *Strategy K:* Make high priority repairs.
- ❖ *Strategy L:* Fund reserves in the operating budget to continue building maintenance.
- ❖ *Strategy M:* Create a vision for mission-focused facilities and land usage.

Strategic Planning Committee members for FY15-16 include:

Carolyn Bitzer	Donna Curtis	Beck Laster (Co-Chair)	Parry Norling
Suzanne Perry	Paul Pinson	Linda Sanders (Co-Chair)	Debbi Zarek
Ostin Warren (Ex Officio)			

## **Strategic Plan for FY 2016 - 2020**

### **Appendix of Suggested Tactics**

The following tactics are suggestions offered by the Strategic Planning Committee, members, and friends for consideration by the ET and volunteer teams as they work on these strategies.

#### ***Strategy A: Provide exciting, inspirational, and dynamic worship for all ages.***

- Continue to engage more lay leadership in the planning of and participation in worship.
- Hold a variety of types of worship at different times during the week and at different locations. For example, examine the possibility and feasibility of UU congregations jointly holding some services in the city of Wilmington.
- Plan tactics to create more opportunities for all ages to be together.

#### ***Strategy B: Provide engaging religious education experiences for all ages.***

- Re-invigorate adult religious education experiences such as partnering with OSHER, joining with other UU churches for OWL, etc.
- Plan tactics to create more opportunities for all ages to learn together, such as an inter-generational RE class using a Tapestry of Faith curriculum from the UUA.

#### ***Strategy C: Strengthen outreach efforts to attract visitors to Sunday worship and special events.***

- Engage lay leadership in creating a strong outreach team.
- Evaluate outreach tactics and create a plan to improve outreach. For example, encourage members to invite friends and find new ways to leverage social media and the website.
- Plan outreach tactics for both Sunday services and special events (like concerts, social justice initiatives, and community action projects).
- Evaluate and improve printed outreach material (First U brochure, flyers, etc.) and use banners in different places around the property. Consider collaboration with real estate companies building new apartments and other housing in the area. Include materials about us in their “Welcome to Wilmington” packets.
- Create tactics to attract visitors from underrepresented demographic groups. For example, examine different formats of the Sunday morning worship experience and special educational events geared towards specific demographic groups. (For example, the Vegan Pot Luck attracted 20+ visitors.)
- Consider ways to gain information about what programming works for underrepresented demographic groups. For example, hold a group with the few people from that demographic who are members or friends of the church. Talk with other churches with the types of demographics we would like to reach out to and find out what they are doing to attract these types of people.
- Consider evaluating our church brand.

**Strategy D: Be intentionally welcoming to newcomers in all we do.**

- Continue efforts of Membership Team to engage entire congregation in welcoming visitors on Sunday mornings and at special events.
- Count and collect information about visitors and their experiences related to participating in and integrating into our community

**Strategy E: Continue efforts to improve member retention.**

- Continue to evaluate communications with members and friends. Create more effective and efficient communications with them. For example, evaluate the use of the different web-based and print material communications (E-news, E-blasts, Order of Service, flyers) to make sure they are effectively communicating with members. Examine other possible tactics for communication with members and friends, including the use of social media. Develop a church calendar that provides information about all the activities going on at the church.
- Create tactics for getting feedback from and re-engaging members and friends who have left.

**Strategy F: Promote a culture of participation, engagement, and volunteerism.**

- Help every member and friend to find his or her place in the community. Make sure First U is viewed as a place to both give and receive support. For example, connect new members who are interested with a “mentor” as an individual contact. Examine ways to reach out to members or friends who have not been seen in a while. Have more social events, such as new member lunches and potluck dinners.
- Design tactics to appreciate volunteer work.
- Plan more events at the church outside of Sunday morning worship that bring different ages of people together. For example, concerts, coffee houses, movie nights, potluck dinners, dances, social action events, social justice initiatives, political events and events in other venues.
- Create tactics for ways to value participation. The younger generations tend to get involved, but do not necessarily become members. This could include ideas for how to engage and ‘count’ people who connect through social media and other virtual types of involvement.

**Strategy G: Revise and renew our covenant with each other.**

- To minister to each other
- To resolve conflicts respectfully
- To support our church with our time, talents, and finances.

**Strategy H: Continue to be a leader in growing the denomination and strengthen our interaction with the larger UU community to enrich our UU identity and share resources.**

- Participate fully in the Delmarva Cluster.
- Leverage JPD/CERG & UUA resources.
- Publicize broadly upcoming Delmarva Cluster activities.

**Strategy I: Promote member engagement in community action and social justice activities.**

- Continue current efforts and plan more events towards eliminating gun violence, ensuring justice in the criminal system, decreasing climate change, and assisting children aging out of foster care, Black Lives Matter, etc.
- Be intentional about including all ages in community action and social justice activities.

**Strategy J: Collaborate with the larger UU Community on community action and social justice activities.**

- Collaborate with the Delmarva Cluster on social justice and CYRE projects and examine ways to combine forces to expanded justice work and advocate for public policy changes.
- Examine ways to engage with UUs and other religious liberals beyond the walls of the church. (i.e. Retirement communities, The Church of the Living Fellowship, The Church without Walls)
- Continue current efforts to support UUSC, UU-UNO and other UUA sponsored community action activities.

**Strategy K: Make high priority repairs.**

- Complete process of making repairs with Capital Campaign earnings, as approved by the congregation in January 2015.

**Strategy L: Fund reserves in the operating budget to continue building maintenance.**

- Form a Maintenance Reserve Fund Task Force to develop a funding strategy for “campus” maintenance.

**Strategy M: Create a vision for mission-focused facilities and land usage.**

- Form a Strategic Facilities Usage Task Force to identify Mission focused usage of our campus. Create plans to implement.
- Create tactics to use our spaces (both indoor and outdoor) as a Mission focused outreach tool in addition to a revenue tool. Examine ways space can generate cash, but also stay Mission focused. (Ex: Solar panels decrease electricity costs, environmental burden, and is a way to express our values)
- Create tactics to increase flexibility, youthfulness, and friendliness of all our spaces, including updating technology throughout the building to make it more marketable to the wider community.
- Seek out grants (like Chalice Lighters) to help us improve our space, including updating the technology.
- Create tactics to engage Capital Campaign givers in a process to identify priorities for Capital Campaign fund.
- Create tactics to engage current members and friends in capital fundraising, possibly through short-term project-based campaigns (Ex: 150<sup>th</sup> Youth Center gift, Solar panel fund, etc.)