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# **Community Church of Durham Strategic Plan**

**April 1, 2010 – March 30, 2015**

**Adopted by the Church Council: March 18, 2010**

# Introduction

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## Pastoral Letter

It has been noted that we humans only make changes out of necessity, when crisis or some immediate threat looms. Often that is the case for church communities as well, responding in the face of financial troubles, a change of pastors, the need for a major capital campaign or building fund. It is usually in responding or reacting to such events that churches take time to think strategically and plan for the upcoming endeavor. The decision for our church to undertake a strategic planning process, however, does not fall in that category. We are not in financial crisis, facing major staff changes or in need of a new building. Thanks be to God! Instead, we are a vibrant, healthy, engaged community of faith living in the midst of changing times. We are an active, intergenerational family sharing meaningful worship and mission opportunities, rich learning and service activities, with an incredibly beautiful and inviting building, a place where members and friends experience deep welcome and support. So, why a strategic planning process now?

Our strategic planning process grew out of several realities. The first reality we face is that we are a community of faith moving into a new millennium, a new period of history, dynamic and changing times that invite us to think proactively and creatively about what it means to be “the church.” It seemed a wonderful time to deepen our thinking and reflecting together in order to articulate our vision for these times. Secondly, as your pastor I have seen incredible growth in the congregation’s desire to respond to the needs of the world and to be an increasingly inviting and welcoming place for all. With such growth and change it can be important, periodically, to stop and reclaim the central purpose that inspires and shapes our work and priorities. With the wonderful energy that I feel within the congregation, this seemed an ideal time to reaffirm our shared vision and to create a common language and understanding as to our foundational priorities and core values as we move into the future. And thirdly, our reason for this process is theological. As those who have inherited a rich tradition we are both the caretakers and stewards of that tradition, but also those who will help shape and inform the traditions that will be passed along as we listen and respond to the still speaking God. To be faithful requires that we always be open to the new and deepening directions toward which the Spirit beckons. This planning process was initiated to help us more intentionally and clearly discern what that Spirit is calling us to be and do.

It has been a wonderful year of questions and reflection, sharing and challenging, reaffirming and renewing. The document in your hands represents not only many hours, but also the creative and loving work of incredibly thoughtful and faithful members of the congregation. With the guidance of our skilled consultant, Peggy Kieschnick, we have created together, a living document that will serve as something of a roadmap as we move into an uncertain, but promising future. I am excited and grateful that we are a people who seek to be **grounded in faith, filled with compassion, inspired and committed to act on behalf of others, and alive and relevant in today’s world.** What a joy to work with you as we seek to fulfill this vision with creativity, openness, humility and love. May the still speaking God be our constant companion on the way.

With deep appreciation and keen anticipation,

Pastor Mary E. Westfall

## Strategic Planning Process

Many people contributed to the creation of the strategic plan. A core group of 25-30 people gathered together on four Saturday mornings between June of 2009 and January of 2010 to share their hopes and dreams for Community Church and to together identify our priorities for the next five years. The group included the chairs of every Board, our staff, and interested members and friends of the congregation. Between meetings each of the Boards discussed the strategic plan and provided additional feedback.

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And one wonderful morning in January over 70 people came together to review the draft vision and goals offer their thoughts and insights. The richness of the plan is a direct result of the participation of so many people in the planning process.

Over the course of our work together we grappled with four central questions:

1. *Who are we as a community of faith?*
2. *What is the difference we want to make in the lives of people within our congregation and in the broader community?*
3. *What are the challenges and opportunities of being a community of faith in these times?*
4. *What is our vision for the future?*

The strategic plan reflects our current thinking on each of these questions and sets a direction for the church for the next five years. The purpose of the plan is to help us to be intentional as we move forward. It is intended as a guide rather than a mandate. We fully recognize that our church will change, the world will change, new challenges and opportunities will arise that we cannot even imagine today. As these things occur, we will adjust our plan so that it remains a fresh and relevant tool as we strive to draw nearer to God, follow in Christ's footsteps and nurture and care for one another and the broader world.

# Vision for the Future

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*We seek to be...*

**Grounded in Faith** – We infuse everything we do with opportunities to explore and experience the Sacred and develop a deeper relationship with God that guides and sustains us in every part of our lives.

**Filled with Compassion** - We provide a friendly, welcoming and inclusive community where people know they are valued and cared for.

**Inspired and Committed to Action in the Broader Community** – Following in Jesus' footsteps, we actively reach out to prevent and ease suffering in the broader community and to heal and sustain the world that God has created.

**Alive and Relevant in a Rapidly Changing World** – We are a healthy, vibrant, sustainable community of faith that is deeply relevant in today's world.

# Overview of Goals and Objectives

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**I Grounded in Faith** – To infuse everything we do with opportunities to explore and experience the Sacred and develop a deeper relationship with God that guides and sustains us in every part of our lives.

Objectives

- 1.1 Expand and enrich the worship experiences we offer both inside and outside of our Sunday morning services. We celebrate the diverse ways in which people connect with God and seek to provide an array of worship opportunities that engage people who treasure traditional hymns and approaches as well as those who find meaning in new forms of music and worship.
- 1.2 Provide educational experiences in a safe environment where people, at very different places in their spiritual journeys, can learn together about the Bible and our UCC traditions; explore their own spirituality; and, consider what Christianity means for how we live today.

**II Filled With Compassion** – To provide a friendly, welcoming and inclusive community where people know they are valued and cared for and where they experience forgiveness and affirmation from God and one another.

Objectives

- 2.1 Ensure that people, who are new to Community Church, feel welcome and “at home.”
- 2.2 Provide a variety of opportunities for people to get to know each other in informal and small group settings.
- 2.3 Strengthen our support and outreach to people who are home-bound.

**III Inspired and Committed to Action in the Broader Community** – Following in Jesus’ footsteps, we will actively reach out to prevent and ease suffering in the broader community and to heal and sustain the world that God has created.

Objectives

- 3.1 Reach out to the broader community.
- 3.2 Provide a wide range of mission and service opportunities that open our eyes and hearts and enable us to make a real difference in our world.
- 3.3 Use our facilities, time, money, and activities to more effectively alleviate suffering in the community.
- 3.4 Use our facilities, time, money, and activities, to eliminate the causes of suffering.

**IV Alive and Relevant in A Rapidly Changing World** – To be a healthy, vibrant, sustainable community of faith that is deeply relevant in today’s world.

Objectives

- 4.1 Learn more about what helps people in today’s world connect with God and engage in a community of faith.
- 4.2 Strengthen our ability to communicate with one another and with the community.
- 4.3 Ensure that our facilities reflect and support our goals and objectives.
- 4.4 Ensure that we have the finances we need to make our vision for the future a reality.
- 4.5 Ensure that we have the people and leadership we need to make our vision for the future a reality.

# Implementation Plan

## 1. Grounded in Faith

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Goal: To infuse everything we do with opportunities to explore and experience the Sacred and develop a deeper relationship with God that guides and sustains us in every part of our lives.

### Objectives

1.1 Expand and enrich the worship experiences we offer both inside and outside of our Sunday morning services. We celebrate the diverse ways in which people connect with God and seek to provide an array of worship opportunities that engage people who treasure traditional hymns and approaches as well as those who find meaning in new forms of music and worship.

#### *Action Steps*

1.1.1 Research what other churches are learning about creating meaningful worship experiences and share this information with the congregation. (We'll do this by reviewing the findings of the Church Council's Work Group on Emerging Trends in Churches [see Goal 4.1.1] and by asking each Deacon to read a book or article on the subject and summarize the information in the Chronicle.)

*Lead:* Chair, Diaconate

*Target Completion Date:* **September 2010**

1.1.2 Determine what the congregation most values about our current worship services; what they would like to see the church do in the future to create even more meaningful experiences; and, what topics they would like to explore through adult ed. discussions.

*Lead:* Chair, Diaconate. (We'll do this in conjunction with the Christian Education Board and the One-On-One process described in 2.2.1)

*Target Completion Date:* **January 2011**

1.1.3 Implement at least two of the worship ideas gleaned from our research in the next year. As we do this we will clearly communicate our intention to include/not exclude. We will regularly elicit the congregation's feedback on new worship experiences and use this to guide our future efforts.

*Lead:* Chair, Diaconate

*Target Completion Date:* **September 2011**

1.2 Provide educational experiences in a safe environment where people, at very different places in their spiritual journeys, can learn together about the Bible and our UCC traditions; explore their own spirituality; and, consider what Christianity means for how we live today. We will do this through traditional "classes" and discussion groups. In addition, we will integrate spiritual exploration/discussion time with some of our mission and fellowship activities.

#### *Action Steps*

1.2.1 Revise and enhance our "Godly Play" curricula.

*Lead:* Director of Christian Education and Chair, CE Board

*Completion Date:*

Complete Revisions: **June 2011**

Implement Revised Curricula: **September 2011**

1.2.2 Provide more intergenerational opportunities that combine worship and educational experiences for children and adults.

*Lead:* Director of Christian Education; Chair, CE Board; and, Chair, Diaconate

*Target Completion Date:* **September 2011**

## 2. Filled With Compassion

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Goal: To provide a friendly, welcoming and inclusive community where people know they are valued and cared for and where they experience forgiveness and affirmation from God and one another.

Objectives:

2.1 Ensure that people, who are new to Community Church, feel welcome and “at home.”

Action Steps

2.1.1 Personally contact people who are new to the church.

*Lead:* Diaconate (with assistance from the Visiting Committee)

*Target Completion Date:*

Complete Plan: **May 2011**

Begin to Implement Plan: **September 2011**

2.2 Provide a variety of opportunities for people to get to know each other in informal and small group settings.

Action Steps

2.2.1 Repeat the “One-On-One” process followed by small group meetings to help us get to know one another and to learn more about what people are seeking in this community of faith. As a part of this process ask people: what they most value about our current worship services; what they would like to see the church do in the future to create even more meaningful experiences; and, what topics they would like to explore through adult ed. discussions.

*Lead:* Chair, Diaconate

*Target Completion Date:* **January 2011**

2.2.2 Launch the “Dine With Nine” initiative. Our goals with Dine With Nine are to provide a small group setting where people can get to know one another and discuss topics that help us think about how we live out our spirituality in our daily lives.

*Lead:* Volunteer Coordinator

*Target Completion Date:* **May 2010**

2.3 Strengthen our support and outreach to people who are home-bound.

Action Steps

2.3.1 Increase the support we provide to people who are home-bound.

*Lead:* Visiting Committee

*Target Completion Date:*

Plan Complete: **May 2011**

Begin Implementation: **September 2012**

### 3. Inspired and Committed to Action in the Broader Community

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Goal: Following in Jesus' footsteps, we will actively reach out to prevent and ease suffering in the broader community and to heal and sustain the world that God has created.

Objectives:

3.1 Reach out to the broader community.

Action Steps

3.1.1 Partner with other churches on mission projects and ecumenical worship services and enrichment events.

*Lead:* Chair, Church Council

*Target Completion Date:* **Annual Board Chair Retreat October 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015**

3.1.2 Be more visibly present in the Durham community (e.g. caroling at Churchill Apartments, having a table at university events, etc.)

*Lead:* Chair, Church Council

*Target Completion Date:* **Annual Board Chair Retreat October 2012, 2013, 2014**

3.1.3 Make our enrichment events (concerts, guest speakers, etc.) more visible and more welcoming for people who are not already a part of Community Church.

*Lead:* Chair, Music and Arts Committee

*Target Completion Date:* **September 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015**

3.2 Provide a wide range of mission and service opportunities that open our eyes and hearts and enable us to make a real difference in our world.

Action Steps

3.2.1 Challenge the congregation to 10,000 hours of service in the 90 day period between Christmas and Lent.

*Lead:* Chair, Mission Board

*Target Completion Date:* **May 2010**

3.2.2 Bring people together in small groups to work on short-term, hands-on mission projects each year.

*Lead:* Chair, Mission Board

*Target Completion Date:* **February 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015**

3.3 Use our facilities, time, money, and activities to more effectively alleviate suffering in the community.

Action Steps

3.3.1 Explore the possibility and value of providing a thrift shop on-site on an on-going basis as a way to: relieve suffering, reach out to the community (including UNH students), provide hands-on opportunities for service, and create a new revenue stream for the work of the church.

*Lead:* Chair, Work Group (Works closely with the Board of Stewards and reports to the Church Council.

*Target Completion Date:* Present Recommendations to Church Council: **April 2010**

- 3.4 Use our facilities, time, money, and activities, to eliminate the causes of suffering.  
Action Steps
- 3.4.1 Explore what it means to heed the Bible's call to "do justice." What does it mean for us, as individual Christians and as a church to work for justice? What role can we play in creating the systemic changes needed to prevent and eliminate particular types of suffering?  
*Lead:* Chair, Diaconate  
*Target Completion Date:* Create a plan that describes the specific steps we will take to educate ourselves about what it means to "do justice."  
 Present Justice Education Plan to Church Council: **April 2011**
- 3.4.2 Launch a multi-year Environmental Initiative that helps us to live out our faith by reducing our individual and collective impact on the world that God has created. The Initiative will: be grounded in faith; seek to raise awareness; provide resources and information on concrete steps individuals can take to care for the environment; and, take advantage of opportunities to work together with other churches and community organizations. Identifying ways to make our facilities more energy efficient (see 4.3.2) will be one piece of the overall Environmental Initiative.  
*Lead:* Chair, Work Group (Reports to the Church Council)  
 Convene Work Group: **May 2011**  
 Present Recommendations to Church Council: **November 2011**  
 Launch Initiative: **June 2012**

## **4. Alive and Relevant in A Rapidly Changing World**

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Goal: To be a healthy, vibrant, sustainable community of faith that is deeply relevant in today's world.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Learn more about what helps people in today's world connect with God and engage in a community of faith.  
Action Steps
- 4.1.1 Review emerging trends among churches that are successfully reaching out to and engaging people in today's world. As a part of this process, we will pay particular attention to: board and committee structures, music and worship, financial support, and communications.  
*Lead:* Chair, Church Council  
*Target Completion Date:*  
 Convene a Work Group on Emerging Trends in churches **April 2010**  
 Review information from Work Group on Emerging Trends in Churches and Identify Next Steps: **September 2010**
- 4.2 Strengthen our ability to communicate with one another and with the community.  
Action Steps
- 4.2.1 Develop a Clear "Brand." Develop a clear "brand" that captures who we are and the key message we want to convey to the community and ensure that our facilities and external communications all reflect this message/brand.  
*Lead:* Chair, Church Council  
*Target Completion Date:*  
 Review Mission Statement: **October 2010 (at fall Board Chair Retreat)**  
 Present New Brand to Congregation: **May 2011**

- 4.2.2 Strengthen Our Website and Use of Other Electronic Communications Tools.  
Create and implement a communications plan that addresses the following needs:
- Improved our website (i.e., include links to information about our mission activities such as opportunities to sign up to work at a soup kitchen, go on a mission trip, etc.
  - Targeted email communications (e.g., members could identify which types of information they want to receive such as emails about upcoming missions events, etc.).
  - Ways to use technology to improve our “institutional memory” (i.e. how we keep track of policies and decisions over time in an easily accessible way.)
  - Exploration of Social Media such as Twitter and Facebook
  - How we will keep our technology content up to date.
  - Policies regarding how to control content on our website, in e-communications, etc.
  - Budget implications
- Lead:* Chair, Work Group (Reports to the Board of Stewards)  
*Target Completion Dates:*  
Convene Work Group: **October 2011**  
Present Initial Recommendations to the Board of Stewards: **February 2012**  
Implement Plan: **September 2013**

- 4.3 Ensure that our facilities reflect and support our goals and objectives.

*Action Steps*

- 4.3.1 Review our major maintenance and capital improvement plan and decide if we need to make any changes/adjustments in order to support the priorities identified in the strategic plan.

*Lead:* Chair, Board of Stewards

*Target Completion Date:* **June 2010**

- 4.3.2 Increase the energy efficiency of our facilities. Create and implement an energy efficiency plan for our facilities that: identifies and prioritizes projects (including the cost of each project), outlines how we will pay for each project, and, lays out an implementation timeline. This plan will be created in conjunction with our overall Environmental Initiative (see 3.4.1).

*Lead:* Chair, Board of Stewards

*Target Completion Date:*

Plan Complete: **September 2011**

Implementation Begun: **September 2012**

- 4.4 Ensure that we have the finances we need to make our vision for the future a reality.

*Action Steps*

- 4.4.1 Regularly engage each of the Boards in identifying and prioritizing their budget needs.

*Lead:* Chair, Board of Stewards

*Target Completion Date:*

Decide on Process: **November 2011**

Implement Process: **January 2012**

- 4.4.2 Find out how the congregation wants to pay for major maintenance and capital improvement projects through an annual line item in the budget or through project-specific appeals.

*Lead:* Chair, Board of Stewards

*Target Completion Date:* Survey complete **October 2011**

- 4.4.3 Educate and engage the congregation in meeting the church's financial needs. To do this we will create and implement a plan that draws on what we have learned from the "One-On-One" process, the Stewards' survey, and the Work Group on Emerging Trends in Churches.  
*Lead:* Chair, Board of Stewards  
*Target Completion Date:* **January 2012**
- 4.5 Ensure that we have the people and leadership we need to make our vision for the future a reality.  
*Action Steps*
- 4.5.1 Strengthen our Board/Committee structure. Create and implement a plan to strengthen our Board/Committee Structure. The plan will address such questions as: How can we make it easier for a broad cross-section of the congregation to participate in a meaningful way in the work of the church? How can we foster greater communication and collaboration between the Boards? What Boards/Committees do we need? What length of commitment should we ask Board members to make? What types of staff support do the Boards need? What is the role of Ad-Hoc committees? How can we strengthen the Music/Arts Committee? How can we structure ourselves so that we can respond more rapidly?  
*Lead:* Work Group that reports to the Council  
*Target Completion Date:*  
 Convene Work Group: **October 2010**  
 Complete Plan: **May 2011**  
 Begin to Make Any Recommended Changes: **March 2012**  
 Complete Implementation of Revised Structure: **September 2015**
- 4.5.2 Identify the staff and staff supports we will need to achieve our strategic goals.  
*Lead:* Chair, Personnel Committee  
*Target Completion Date:*  
 Review Our Current Staffing Structure, the Strategic plan, and the Feedback from the Boards Regarding the Staff Positions We Will Need in the next 3-5 Years: **April 2012**  
 Review the Ways in Which We Currently Encourage, Support and Evaluate Our Staff and Identify Any Changes We Should Make: **April 2012**  
 Make Recommendations to the Church Council Regarding Our Staffing Needs and Priorities: **June 2012**
- 4.5.3 Review and revise the strategic plan. We will review each of the action steps for the year and ask questions such as: Did we do it? If so, how did it go? If not, why not? What have we learned and what implications does that have for what we do next? More importantly, we will review each of our goals and objectives and identify the steps we will take in the coming year to move them forward. Do the objectives and action steps we had planned for the coming year still make sense? Are there new/better opportunities we should pursue instead? We will then update our written plan to reflect what we have learned and what we have chosen for the year ahead.  
*Lead:* Chair, Church Council  
*Target Completion Date:* **October 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 Annual Board Chair Retreat**