

**Growing in Faith, Growing in Love:
Discerning God's Call to the First Congregational Church of Lebanon**

February 13, 2011

Growing Younger

Attracting, involving, and serving Young Families and Youth

"People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them." Mark 13-16

Our vision for our church:

We are a multi-generational church family that is especially welcoming for the young families, children, teens and young adults who are our future.

Our worship, fellowship, Christian education and mission opportunities offer spiritual nurture, learning, leadership opportunities and support for all, with an emphasis on engaging families, children, teens and young adults.

Elements of our worship services and sanctuary, as well as other spaces used for fellowship, education and meetings are expressly designed to appeal to and to serve these high priority groups within our congregation and the broader community.

We must invest to preserve and maintain our church building's historic integrity, while also adapting interior spaces to improve service to our congregation and community. Similarly, we must learn how to offer more vibrant and diverse worship opportunities while maintaining traditional formats and music valued by many.

Our role in the community, our outreach and our mission programs and activities all need to reflect the same welcoming vision and values and offer opportunities for young families, teens and youth.

Things we will need to do to make our vision a reality:

Offer a worship environment, church school program, and fellowship activities that excite and engage families and children

Speak to and engage with young people in ways that resonate with them, recognizing that young people often communicate, associate, and affiliate differently than older people

Commit to, and follow through on, the notion that young families and people are not just our future; they must be our present

Growing Deeper

Welcoming, engaging, transforming both long-termers and newcomers into our community

“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and at their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those were being saved.” Acts 2:46-47

Our vision for our church:

Our members and visitors alike feel welcome and excited to be a part of our church family, and eagerly participate in worship, Christian education and mission/service opportunities. This is where we belong.

People in the community know our members, our historic building, and our active presence in service to the people of the Upper Valley.

We are known as friendly, unpretentious and welcoming.

People have heard good things, are curious and want to learn more.

We provide an open invitation and many opportunities for newcomers and long-term area residents to know and join with us, through meals, service/mission projects, music, worship and other community activities, both in our church building and beyond.

Visitors and volunteers make connections with church members and each other, know their presence is valued, and are eager to repeat the experience.

Things we will need to do to make our vision a reality:

Review how we organize ourselves to best do mission and ministry

Review how our space can be best used to do mission and ministry

Create a new service that will enable current members to explore alternative ways of worshipping God while engaging new people in our common life

Provide programs for faith formation

Growing Outward

Serving our church family, our Upper Valley community and the wider world

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you visited me ... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Matthew 25:35-36, 40

Our vision for our church:

We provide nurture and support to members of our church family, offering opportunities for spiritual growth and development, and building our capacity as volunteers and leaders in service to each other and to others.

We build personal connections with the people and organizations we serve and support, in our local community and around the world.

We do not limit our mission engagement only to the local or to the familiar.

We actively work with our members, our UCC denomination and others to help us discern the needs to which we will respond.

Our mission programs and activities are grounded in stewardship principles: we utilize our time, our talents, and our financial resources to serve and care for others and to help others realize their own potential.

Where possible we augment our financial support with volunteer engagement. We do this as servants and followers of Jesus Christ, after his example and his instruction.

Things we will need to do make our vision a reality:

Develop a mission program that is focused on transformation of ourselves and those with whom we work through both local service partnerships and an overseas trip

Develop a marketing plan that effectively tells our story to those seeking a faith community

Develop a comprehensive hospitality ministry