

2020 Vision

CREATE & SUSTAIN HEALTHY, VITAL CONGREGATIONS (strategic priority)

1) Identify/support two or more post-modern, “3.0” communities of faith by the end of 2019

- What’s a 3.0 church? Our GMP John Dorhauer uses this metaphor a lot, including in his book Beyond Resistance: The Institutional Church Meets the Postmodern World. It’s a shift from the model of church nearly all of us in this room know. Typically, a 3.0 church has no building of its own and no full-time pastor. It might take place in a coffee shop or in someone’s living room, or revolve entirely around mission or community engagement, or any number of other somewhat informal settings. A 3.0 community of faith looks less like an institution than it does a dynamic movement.
- Why have we chosen this as a strategic objective? This doesn’t mean that we’re going to abandon the model of church all of us here know and love. Far from it. But we want and need to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in fresh ways, attuned to the ways She ‘shows up’ in unexpected places. This provides a way to reach those who may be longing for a spiritual or religious dimension in their lives but are unlikely to step through the doors of one of our churches. It challenges us to seek new ways of sharing our enduring Christian message with those who won’t be attracted by a traditional church setting.

2) Engage at least 3 congregations in each of 2018 & 2019 in an intentional revitalization/renewal program

- We’ve had a little experience with this over the last two years when 9 congregations have participated in New Beginnings. We’ve seen the value of helping congregations devote intensive time to deliberate discernment about their futures. We know we want

to make this commitment to congregations who are at a sort of “fork-in-the-road moment” in their life span and give them tools to identify how God is calling them now.

INCREASE CAPACITY FOR COMPASSIONATE SERVICE & PROPHETIC WITNESS (Strategic Priority)

Strategic Objective

3) Engage at least 10% of our congregations in use of the UCC’s “White Privilege” curriculum, 2017-2019

- This signals our continuing commitment to our 2014 resolution asking the Conference to strengthen our resolve to dismantle racism
- “White Privilege” curriculum produced by the national UCC in 2016.
- For a predominantly white Conference such as ours, we recognize that our commitment to racial justice must begin with an honest look at ourselves and how we participate in and benefit from structures of racism.

EQUIP CLERGY & LAITY TO LEAD (Strategic Priority 3)

Strategic Objective

4) By year-end 2018, launch a lay leadership development program that grows our capacity across the Conference for strong lay leadership, provides for multiple paths to authorized ministry, and invigorates/equips the Church for the future

- Did you know that fully 50% of our own congregations in the MNC can only afford a part-time pastor? Are you aware that increasing numbers of people who feel called to ministry can’t entertain the traditional seminary education path? A combination of these and other factors is creating a mounting concern about the future leadership capacity of our Church, not just in the MN Conference but across the UCC, and we want to be proactive about addressing it.

- Includes a Young Adult Service Community component
- Rev. Vicki Wunsch hired as Director of Leadership Development in March and work has begun.

5) Beginning in 2017, identify/develop resources to support and train those in governance leadership roles in congregations

- From time to time we hear from those of you who have been elected to serve as Moderators, Presidents, and Treasurers in your congregations that you wish you had a better idea of what is expected of you. This objective is in response to that desire.

FAITH FORMATION ACROSS THE GENERATIONS (strategic priority)
Strategic Objectives

- 6) During 2017-2018 engage up to 5 congregational leadership teams in a 12-month coaching & mentoring process.**
- 7) During 2018, launch a 6-month leadership formation initiative for up to 25 faith formation leaders**

These next two initiatives reflect the enthusiastic commitment of our new Associate Conference Minister for Faith Formation, Kevin Brown, to help congregations go deeper in their faith formation ministries. In the course of this work, congregations will fully embrace lifelong spiritual formation as a central task of their faith communities, and faith formation leaders will benefit from intensive peer support and spiritual renewal.

8) By the end of 2018 recruit and support a network of content creators from across the UCC of theologically progressive faith formation resources and launch an accessible distribution platform for these resources.

This objective arose from comments we received from pastors and from some discussion in Board of Directors meetings. These comments identified the challenge of finding theologically progressive faith formation resources for use in our congregations. Utilizing our amazing Ashley Endowment asset to support this work, our intent is to provide something that will respond to this need and benefit the whole of the Church. We have the capacity to be a leader in the United Church of Christ on a whole host of faith formation issues, and we intend to lead. Stay tuned!