



*“In response to God’s calling – we welcome everyone into our faith community – we strive to grow in faith and service – we care for and reach out to all in need – all in Jesus’ name.”*

## **A Vision for First Church**

Envisioning Committee 2006-2007  
Final Report

First Church of Christ, Congregational, in Bedford, United Church of Christ  
November 1, 2007



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the Fall of 2006, First Church embarked on an envisioning process to help discern God's vision for First Church. At the heart of this yearlong process were these guiding questions: How can we use this time of change to optimally fulfill our mission as a community of God's people serving each other in the world? With each decision, big and small, what would God have us do? What kind of church is God calling us at First Church to be?

In an effort to answer these questions, the congregation has provided critical guidance to the Envisioning Committee through several all-church meetings and a survey. The first three meetings examined the church's history, the congregation's values, and potential areas of growth. The purpose of the survey was to help identify and prioritize the respective areas and activities for which the church community has the energy and the desire to pursue.

Based on input from the three meetings and the survey, the committee drafted three prospective vision statements, which were presented during a portion of the church's Annual Meeting in June 2007 for feedback. Responses were generally favorable, with support divided fairly evenly between the three statements. The Envisioning Committee continued its work in Summer 2007 to produce the single proposed church vision statement presented below, and to identify what steps the church would be advised to take to pursue such a vision.

Using the survey results and feedback from the all-church meetings, as well as the committee's own reflection and scriptural study, the Envisioning Committee identified four concepts as being essential elements of the final statement: Welcoming/Acceptance, Mission/Outreach, Caring/Community, and God/Faith. While the advantages of a shorter statement were appreciated, it was felt that the statement had to be long enough to include these four ideas. Also, the Committee aimed to create a vision statement that would be aspirational and encourage the church's growth, not a statement that was too generic or merely reflected the status quo.

The premise of the envisioning process was to seek to discern God's calling for First Church as revealed in the collective discernment of the whole congregation. As a culminating step in this process, the Envisioning Committee proposes that the following statement be adopted by First Church as its vision statement: *"In response to God's calling – we welcome everyone into our faith community – we strive to grow in faith and service – we care for and reach out to all in need – all in Jesus' name."*

For a vision statement to be valuable to First Church, it must be kept at the forefront of everyone's thoughts and efforts. It must inform everyday decisions as well as long-term planning. The Envisioning Committee is recommending some "next steps" that would be most effective toward implementing the proposed vision. These steps, detailed in the Recommendations section beginning on page 14, fall in five major areas:

1. Strengthen a church-wide effort to encourage inclusion and increased participation in the life of First Church.
2. Enhance and diversify the worship and music programs, reflecting their central importance to the First Church community.
3. Develop First Church's presence in the community and the world.
4. Examine staffing needs in view of First Church's vision and future goals.
5. Promote and maintain focus on First Church's vision.

The Envisioning Committee feels it is important that its recommendations in these five areas, or alternative proposals with similar goals, be acted on for First Church to move forward.

The proposed vision statement, with its emphasis on faith, welcoming, caring, and outreach, represents a natural next step in the life of First Church. It is consistent with the church's history, values, and past mission statements, while pointing towards directions for future growth. All people associated with First Church should consider what the proposed vision statement means to them, and what their personal contributions could be towards helping First Church to bring this vision to life.

The full text of this report describes the church's envisioning process and the resulting vision and recommendations in greater detail. Unabridged meeting notes and survey results are also included in several appendices. All are encouraged to take the time to read through this material to more fully understand the proposed vision, the recommendations, and the implications for the life of First Church.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE ENVISIONING PROCESS**

Recognizing that the congregation was entering a time of transition and change, First Church decided in 2006 to pursue the establishment of a vision for the church. The Cabinet appointed an Envisioning Committee to lead a church-wide process of discernment, culminating in the creation of a vision statement. These guiding questions were at the heart of the yearlong process: How can we use this time of change to optimally fulfill our mission as a community of God's people serving each other in the world? With each decision, big and small, what would God have us do? What kind of church is God calling us at First Church to be?

To embark on this process, the Envisioning Committee sought the help of Rev. Paul Nickerson, UCC Massachusetts Conference Associate Conference Minister for Evangelism, Vitality and New Church Starts. To gather input from the church community, three all-church luncheon meetings were held after Sunday worship between October 2006 and January 2007, facilitated by Rev. Nickerson and Envisioning Committee members. The meetings were open to all who consider First Church to be their spiritual home, and were well-attended. The three sessions respectively examined the church's history, the congregation's values, and potential areas of growth.

Next, a survey was conducted in March 2007 to identify church participants' views of the relative importance of different possible activities, and their level of energy to organize and participate in activities. Based on input from the three meetings and the survey, as well as the Envisioning Committee's own reflection and scriptural study, the committee drafted three prospective vision statements. These three statements were presented during a portion of the church's Annual Meeting in June 2007 for feedback. Responses were generally favorable, with support divided fairly evenly between the three statements. The Envisioning Committee continued its work in Summer 2007 to produce the single proposed church vision statement presented in this report, and to identify what steps the church would be advised to take to pursue such a vision.

## CONGREGATIONAL INPUT

### First All-Church Meeting: Our Church History

On October 1, 2006, the first in a series of all-church meetings was held immediately following the church service. We had a great lunch and a long discussion about our church history. We constructed a timeline running from the present back to the founding of the church and town. For each time segment, we gathered highlights of that time, what the struggles were, and events in the town and world that had the most impact. A copy of this church timeline is found in Appendix A of this report.

One of the important points noted was that the church and the town have grown up together. Bedford has grown from a farm community into a high-tech center. The church was founded in 1730, and split from what is now First Parish Unitarian-Universalist a century later. The church building was built in 1833 and has been expanded twice.

Through the years, the church has been involved in many social and political issues. One of the earliest struggles was over separation of church and state, still an important principle of our country. Later, many were involved in the anti-slavery movement, including the Underground Railroad. We have also been involved in sending missionaries around the world, in dealing with the changing role of women in society and the church, and in peace and justice issues.

In the past several decades, our staff has been relatively stable. Only very few remember further back than the last 3 pastors. Each served long careers here. We have had very little turnover in other staff over the last 25 years.

After discussing the church's history, each participant was asked to summarize the discussion by completing the sentence, "We are a church who..." The full set of responses is found in Appendix B. Generally the responses revealed that:

- Our church is important to local community and local community is important to church. They have evolved together and continue to do so.
- Our church's activities are as diverse as its people with special emphasis on education and music ministries.
- Our church slowly keeps up with changing times – enough to survive but there is concern that the church is not adapting to modern times fast enough to thrive.
- Our church has a long, varied and proud history.
- Our church makes a difference and wants to continue to make a difference for its attendees, local community and world community.

## Second All-Church Meeting: Core Values

A second after-church meeting on November 19, 2006 continued the envisioning process by discussing the church's shared values. Each participant was given a list of eighty values (single words) and asked to circle his/her top priorities. Then small groups of 7–8 people met for 20–30 minutes to pick their top 5 values as a group, and to define what these values meant to them. Following is a list of the values chosen by each group. The order of the values has been changed to show similarities between the groups.

### *Group 1:*

Mission/Outreach  
Acceptance/Community/Belonging  
Faith/Spirituality  
Family/children/Future  
Financial Stability  
Honesty/Morality

### *Group 2:*

Mission  
Acceptance  
Spirituality  
Family  
Laughter

### *Group 3:*

Expanding Mission  
Inclusive/Welcoming  
Hopeful Faith  
Family  
Nurturing Community

### *Group 4:*

Mission/Outreach  
Love/Inclusion/Acceptance  
Faith/Spirituality  
Family/Children's church  
Love/Caring/Compassion  
Grow/Change/inclusion

### *Group 5:*

Mission/Outreach  
Acceptance  
Faith  
Respect  
Financial Stability

### *Group 6:*

Mission/Purpose/Friendship/Caring/Joy  
Community/Welcoming/Respect/  
Diversity/Inclusion/Tolerance  
Faith/Spirituality/Hope/Peace  
Community/Love/Respect/Diversity  
Truth/Honesty/Morality/trust

### *Group 7:*

Mission/Outreach  
Inclusion/Acceptance/Respect/Welcoming  
Faith/Spirituality  
Community/Family/Church  
Joy/Love/Laughter

The groups then gathered together, and each reported on the values chosen. Several values were found to be recurring across groups:

- Mission/Outreach: expanding an already strong program of hands on, face-to-face projects that help those in need and nurture the volunteers.
- Acceptance/Welcoming: purposefully including people of various backgrounds and ensuring everyone feels they belong.
- Faith: growing our individual and communal spirituality and understanding of Jesus and the trinity.
- Community: valuing our individual families and our church family, strengthening our commitment to each other, being an active force in our town.

A complete transcription of the ideas discussed appears Appendix C. It should be noted that during the worship service preceding this meeting, some members from the Gulf Mission Team had spoken about their experiences the prior week and how that had greatly affected their lives.

### Third All-Church Meeting: Growth Areas

A third after-church meeting was held on January 7, 2007, to look at the church's potential "growth areas." After lunch, each person chose to participate in one of four small group discussions. One group discussed the church's strengths, another group discussed areas of improvement, a third group discussed town demographics, and the last group discussed dreams for First Church.

The *strengths* discussion group answered two questions. First, "What do we do best?" – (Music; valuing our history; being a strong presence in the community; eating together; laughing together; origination, being open to people; having a church family atmosphere; publicizing ourselves on TV, the web and the newsletter; having a strong church school; expressing our faith in a moderate way; willingness to be involved; ministering to prisons). Second, "What do we need to do?" (Staffing; revising/reviving the neighborhood system; continuing out support of our music program; exploring alternate worship services; accepting and adapting to the contemporary family lifestyle; articulating who we are).

The *improvements* workshop developed a list of possible improvements for First Church. This list included: providing ways for people to contribute a modest amount of time to achieve meaningful results, stop squashing new ideas, welcoming new Bedford residents, experimenting with alternate worship format, getting rid of useless activities, having more exciting adult education, welcoming people without obligation, and having more forums to speak plainly.

The *demographics* workshop considered town demographic data and the question of whom First Church could and should be serving. Bedford is a relatively affluent community of mostly highly educated people, with only 27% regularly attending or participating in a religious organization. This group answered two questions. First, "What are the two or three most important questions about possible mission in Bedford that need to be explored?" – (Answers: Are we reaching out to ourselves? How do church membership demographics compare to the Bedford demographics? What has worked in other towns?). Second, "What group does the church most need to reach out to in the next five years?" (Answer: Young growing families.)

The *dreams* workshop developed a list of possible dreams for the future of First Church. Some ideas included: offering a second worship service with a different format; having a strong budget; involving both parents and children in activities; having a more active middle school and high school youth group; having a more hands-on approach to mission; offering a variety of mission service projects; partnering with churches, locally, nationally and internationally; hosting more Bedford-wide interfaith activities.

More complete accounts of each group's discussions are in Appendices D–G.

## Questionnaire: “What do you have energy for?”

To assess the interests of the First Church community in various present and potential future activities, the Envisioning Committee administered a questionnaire titled “What do you have energy for?” The questionnaire was adapted from a format recommended by the Massachusetts Conference, and survey items were developed by the Envisioning Committee after canvassing various church boards and committees for input. The questionnaire form is included in this report as Appendix H.

Questionnaires were completed by most of the adults attending Sunday worship on March 18, 2007, and copies were sent to those on the church’s active mailing list but not present. In all, 129 forms were received: 81 on Sunday morning and 48 by mail. While the survey was designed to reach all adult church participants, about 90% of the returned surveys came from church members. The responses were dominated by long-term participants in the church: about 40% of the surveys came from people who have been coming to First Church for 30 or more years. About 40% of the respondents were aged 65+; about 6% were aged 35 or less. About 42% of respondents had children aged 18 or younger.

The body of the questionnaire contained a long list of current and potential church activities. For each item, respondents were asked to rate the importance (whether “Our church should be doing this”) on a scale from 5=most to 1=least. Each item was also followed by checkboxes asking whether the respondent would be personally interested in leading or participating in the activity.

The following activities received the highest average ratings for importance.

Child care during worship	4.82
Adult choir	4.71
Confirmation class (grade 9)	4.64
High school youth group	4.63
Middle school youth group	4.54
Greeters, welcomers, ushers	4.53
Handbell choir	4.47
Sunday school for K-8, during part of worship	4.47
After-worship coffee hour	4.46
Pray for people on Prayer List	4.45
Children's choirs	4.44
Outreach to sick, homebound	4.44
Annual church fair	4.43
Social gatherings for teens (games, movies, etc.)	4.42
Child care for church activities	4.42
Homecoming Sunday (Sept.)	4.42
Serve in one-time/short-term volunteer roles	4.39
Worship services in traditional style (like current Sun. 10 a.m.)	4.35
Inviting and involving new people at church	4.33
Annual turkey dinner	4.32
Help with jobs at church: repairs, cleaning, yardwork, office, etc.	4.31

The lowest ratings were given to items involving changing the Sunday morning schedule or the frequency of communion, worshipping at times other than Sunday morning, and forming dance and theatre groups.

The following activities had the largest numbers of respondents who said they would participate by attending or participating (or having their children do so, as applicable):

Worship services in traditional style (like current Sun. 10 a.m.)	91 (71%)
Musical instruments during worship: piano, guitar, wind, etc.	72 (56%)
Handbell choir	69 (53%)
More upbeat/energetic music during worship	68 (53%)
Adult choir	67 (52%)
Annual strawberry festival	67 (52%)
Homecoming Sunday (Sept.)	66 (51%)
Annual church fair	65 (50%)
Serve in one-time/short-term volunteer roles	64 (50%)
Worship services in a more modern/contemporary style	64 (50%)
Contemporary band or folk music group during worship	63 (49%)
After-worship coffee hour	58 (45%)
Church suppers/potluck dinners	56 (43%)
Hands-on mission: local projects	51 (40%)
Annual turkey dinner	50 (39%)
Seasonal "Messiah" sing	49 (38%)
Children's musicals/pageants during worship	48 (37%)
Pray for people on Prayer List	47 (36%)
Involvement with food pantries/feeding programs	47 (36%)
Choral concerts	45 (35%)
Annual rummage sale	45 (35%)
Guest preachers or speakers during worship	44 (34%)
Help with jobs at church: repairs, cleaning, yardwork, office, etc.	43 (33%)
Discussion/speakers on social or political issues	43 (33%)
Serve on committees/boards	42 (33%)
Children's teaching moment during worship	42 (33%)
Theatre productions (adult)	42 (33%)
Coffeehouses/Cocoahouses	42 (33%)
After-worship lunches	40 (31%)
Circle dinners (small group dinners at homes)	40 (31%)

The following items had the largest numbers of respondents who said they would organize or make the activity happen:

Greeters, welcomers, ushers	53 (41%)
Annual strawberry festival	27 (21%)
Annual church fair	26 (20%)
Lay participation in worship	22 (17%)
Adult choir	22 (17%)
Child care during worship	22 (17%)
Church suppers/potluck dinners	21 (16%)
Annual rummage sale	21 (16%)
After-worship coffee hour	20 (16%)
Seasonal "Messiah" sing	19 (15%)
Child care for church activities	19 (15%)
Sunday school for K-8, during part of worship	17 (13%)
Flowers and decorations	15 (12%)
Annual turkey dinner	15 (12%)
Coffeehouses/Cocoahouses	15 (12%)
Children's musicals/operettas	14 (11%)
Circle dinners (small group dinners at homes)	14 (11%)
Lay participation in planning worship	13 (10%)

Children's choirs	12 (9%)
Social gatherings for teens (games, movies, etc.)	12 (9%)
Hands-on mission: local projects	12 (9%)
Youth/elder match-ups for acquaintance and/or service	11 (9%)
Worship services in a more modern/contemporary style	10 (8%)
More upbeat/energetic music during worship	10 (8%)
High school youth group	10 (8%)
After-worship lunches	10 (8%)
Homecoming Sunday (Sept.)	10 (8%)

Respondents were also asked to assess the importance of various personnel and facilities needs. Items given the highest priority were renovating the Manse, hiring a full-time children's/youth director, and hiring an associate or assistant pastor. Paying Sunday School teachers and child caregivers were the lowest priorities.

Finally, respondents were asked which of two statements they more closely agreed with:

**(A)** "What our church needs over the next few years is stability and consistency."

**(B)** "What our church needs over the next few years is renewal and growth."

117 respondents chose one of the statements, with 23/117 (20%) choosing statement **(A)**, while 94/117 (80%) chose statement **(B)**. However, despite this expressed interest in change, the importance ratings in the survey generally showed much more support for the church's current set of activities than for potential changes or new activities.

The complete tabulated survey data appears in Appendix I. Some respondents added additional comments to their surveys; the unabridged comments have been compiled in a supplementary document to be furnished to staff and to Cabinet, and available to others on request. Lists of people willing to help with each activity have been compiled and will be kept in the church office. In the future, anyone interested in a particular activity may contact those people who expressed an interest in the activity. The original questionnaire documents will also be kept in the office and similarly available.

## DEVELOPING THE VISION

After the three meetings and the survey, the committee considered all the congregational input it had received, and engaged in several meetings of reflection and discussion. The first product of these discernment efforts was a set of three draft proposals of vision statements. These proposals were brought to First Church's Annual Meeting on June 3, 2007, for consideration and feedback. The three draft statements were:

1. "We pray together, support one another, serve others and welcome all in God's Spirit."
2. Welcoming All, Caring for All, Reaching Out to All.  
*We as a Christian community seek to Welcome All no matter where you are in your personal or spiritual journey, to Care for All through worship prayer and fellowship, and to Reach Out to All giving time, money and talents to others in need whether here in Bedford or beyond.*
3. Praying Together, Welcoming All, Growing Together, Caring for All, Serving Together, Reaching Out to All

Small groups of participants discussed the proposals, then summarized their reactions to the larger group. There appeared to be general acceptance of the themes presented in all three statements. Multiple groups suggested that a reference to God, as in statement 1, was an important component. Varied feedback was received about the ideal length and form of a vision statement, with some preferring a longer statement, some preferring a more concise statement, and some suggesting alternate forms such as a design or logo.

Following the Annual Meeting, the Envisioning Committee continued its efforts with several more meetings in Summer 2007 to develop a final proposal of a vision statement, along with possible steps the church could take to pursue that vision. The Committee identified four concepts as being essential elements of the final statement: Welcoming/Acceptance, Mission/Outreach, Caring/Community, and God/Faith. While the advantages of a shorter statement were appreciated, it was felt that the statement had to be long enough to include these four ideas. Moreover, the Committee aimed to create a vision statement that would be aspirational, forward-looking, and encouraging the church's growth, not a statement that was too generic or merely reflected the status quo. After considering many further drafts, the Committee agreed to recommend the vision statement presented in the following section.

## PROPOSAL: A VISION FOR FIRST CHURCH

The premise of the envisioning process was to seek to discern God's calling for First Church as revealed in the collective discernment of the whole congregation. As a culminating step in this process, the Envisioning Committee proposes that the following statement be adopted by First Church as its vision statement:

*"In response to God's calling – we welcome everyone into our faith community – we strive to grow in faith and service – we care for and reach out to all in need – all in Jesus' name."*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS: NEXT STEPS — FROM VISION TO REALITY**

For a vision statement to be valuable to First Church, it must be kept at the forefront of everyone's thoughts and efforts. It must inform everyday decisions as well as long-term planning. It is important that the church undertake steps that will enable it to fulfill the vision. The Envisioning Committee recommends that the following proactive steps would be most effective toward implementing the proposed vision.

1. Strengthen a church-wide effort to encourage inclusion and increased participation in the life of First Church.
  - Be a church that reflects God's extravagant welcome, with all participants making an intentional effort to be welcoming of newcomers and others.
  - Expand participation in efforts to invite and encourage new participants and new members.
  - Resolve the Open-and-Affirming question and any related issues as soon as possible, making decisions consistent with a vision of being welcoming to all.
  - Develop a new means for participation and volunteerism that identifies people's interests and empowers them to pursue those interests, supplementing the current method of nominating people to fill jobs.
  - Become a church that helps people do anything that they want to do, within the church's vision and purpose.
2. Enhance and diversify the worship and music programs, reflecting their central importance to the First Church community.
  - Refocus the Worship Committee and Music Committee on program planning, decision making, and facilitating congregational participation, not just a program support role.
  - Increase lay participation in worship and worship planning. Include non-deacons in greeting and serving communion.
  - Include in worship services varied musical styles from classical to contemporary, varied instrumentation, and varied soloists.
  - Increase use of inclusive language in worship and in music, including imagery for humanity and for God that is not exclusively masculine.
  - Investigate and experiment with alternate forms of worship.
3. Develop First Church's presence in the community and the world.
  - Expand efforts to involve all in supporting those in our community who are ill or homebound (with visits, food, prayers).
  - Continue and grow communication and mutual caring on a person-to-person level (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail, group dinners, etc.), with easier availability of contact information between church members.
  - Continue our interactions with the Bedford community, and seek out additional opportunities such as the local Habitat for Humanity project.
  - Continue and expand our outreach beyond Bedford, through church partnerships, mission trips, etc.

4. Examine staffing needs in view of First Church's vision and future goals.
  - Reformulate the Personnel Committee to take a more active role in supporting staff members and creating a channel for dialogue between the congregation and the staff.
  - Continue to develop a long-term staffing plan designed to help the church pursue its vision.
  - Reexamine custodial staff and duties.
  
5. Promote and maintain focus on First Church's vision.
  - Develop initial and ongoing publicity efforts to make the vision widely known within and beyond the church community. Communicate the vision within the worship service, in bulletins and newsletters, on the church web site, on outdoor signs or banners, and possibly through advertising in other media.
  - Incorporate the vision into the everyday decision-making of committees, boards, and staff.
  - Regularly evaluate all programs and activities to determine whether and how they advance the church's vision, especially in Annual Reports and at Annual Meeting.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposed vision statement, with its emphasis on faith, welcoming, caring, and outreach, represents a natural next step in the life of First Church. It is consistent with the church's history, values, and past mission statements, while pointing toward directions for future growth.

The recommended next steps, detailed in the previous section, would help move the church towards fulfilling this vision. The Envisioning Committee feels that it is important that its recommendations in these five areas, or alternative proposals with similar goals, be acted on for First Church to move forward. While some of the proposed steps may pertain primarily to a particular board or committee, many of them truly apply to the entire church community. All people associated with First Church should consider what the proposed vision statement means to them, and what their personal contributions could be towards helping First Church to bring this vision to life.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A – From first meeting: church history timeline

Following is a transcription of the Church history timeline generated at the first all-church meeting on October 1, 2006. The discussion happened in reverse chronological order, so they are reported the same way. Some exact duplicates on the original sheets on which this information was recorded have been removed.

#### *Recent (1980–2006):*

Best – 25 year celebration of Jamie Howard  
Brad Watters  
Intern program  
Building addition  
Area Lunches  
Building program struggle  
Ministry of Music – LHK  
Christian Nurture – Sally S.  
Margaret Dalrymple  
Youth Program  
Heifer Project  
Where have we come from?  
Amistad event  
Coffeehouse – Jerry Christen - Jerry's passing  
Talented new members & youth  
Upkeep of grounds  
Not attracting friends & new members  
Youth (new members)  
Currently not an ONA Church – struggle  
Struggle to maintain real estate & physical assets  
Choir needs members  
Nominations – chairing committees  
By-Laws revision was hard - reevaluate?  
Lengthy Safe Church process  
New organ & hymnal  
Strong presence in community - big part of Bedford - lots of use of space by community  
Bell ringers  
Collation Committee  
Original Church historian – Louise K. Brown – kept history of Church  
Three historians followed, but now we can't get anyone to do it  
New hymnals, Bibles  
Outreach – Community Table, Carlton Willard  
+ Women's Retreats  
Population: stable numbers  
Demographics changing  
- We don't' reflect changing diversity  
+ Prison ministry  
+ House of Hope  
Not keeping track with changing demographics  
Houses larger, families smaller

- + Youth mission trips
- Explosion in Technology
- Strawberry Festival
- Sports conflict
- + Television ministry
- Challenging times – world tension – extremists – 9/11
- + Outreach – Gulf Mission Team
- General disillusion with organized religion
- Youth ministry not as strong as before
- Sunday Sports (Pro, child)
- Polarized political messages with religious connections
- Outreach (NOLA)
- Tech: web page, email, newsletter
- + Paschal Meal – we miss it!
- Good start on Bible study – need more
- +/- Inconsistent Bible studies
- Most churches & us – no net growth
- + Rev. Haines did similar work on congregation – find some of that stuff
- Fiscal challenges
- + Fall Fair
- + Knitting ministry - prayer shawls
- + Domestic violence prevention/awareness
- Comprehensive monthly newsletter
- Emergence of liberal UCC identity

#### *1970's:*

- Haines legacy
- Vietnam
- + Strong youth group
- + Rev. Haines set up board structure - emphasize Lay involvement
- + Couples groups
- + Sanctuary packed regularly
- + Sunday school – team approach
- Fewer working moms (outside house)
- Building struggles – maintenance
- ++ Loryne came! (Music minister)
- Operettas, youth music added

#### *1950's–1960's:*

- Struggle – 128 growth – “townies” versus “outsiders”
- Women as worship leaders & Deacons, serving Communion
- Minister asked to leave because he tried to change things too quickly
- Build Fellowship Hall
- Town's character changing – post World War II
- + Fawn Lake – Easter Sunrise service – grew to Ecumenical
- High tech explosion – difficult to assimilate change
- Sanctuary renovation – moved the stained glass windows
- Fellowship – grew beyond Church members
- No care for infants (had to wait until kids were 2)

Other churches formed in town  
Haines & Wyman – Youth groups  
Grace Chapel impacted us (mega-church)  
West Bedford residents went to Concord Congregational  
Baby Boomers, Civil Rights, Korean War, Cuban Missile Crisis  
Sunday school curriculum reflected political awareness (Civil Rights)  
Ball & Chain Club formed  
    Bring focus on young marrieds  
    Founded by 1 couple  
    Brought many families into the Church  
Open invitation to whole town for youth program  
Hanscom families allowed to live off base  
Joined UCC  
8:15 adult discussion group starts  
3 churches (Saint Michael's, First Parish, First Church) -> 8 today

*1900's–1940's:*

United Workers formed  
Sold doughnuts to raise money  
2 World Wars  
Church name changed (Trinitarian Society -> First Church)  
Hanscom Air Force Base opened  
Side note: UCC denomination seen as liberal

*1800s:*

Trinitarian/Unitarian split  
1833 – Our building built  
No wine – prohibition  
History of long pastorates  
Civil War – Massachusetts – anti-slavery movement  
Women – more active volunteers  
Missionaries to Hawaii  
City Mission Society  
Universities/public schools  
Ministers also politicians (public library trustees)  
Fire – Church/meeting house destroyed  
Congregation associated with Underground Railroad  
1870 – Railroad arrives in Bedford  
Industrialization = big tech change

*1730 – 1800:*

Only church in town (no town without church)  
Center of town meetings and communities  
Church versus State  
Bedford began – incorporated, formed  
Battle flag carried at Battle of Concord  
Bedford farm community  
Debates on Church/State separation

## **Appendix B – From first meeting: “We are a church who...”**

At the end of the first all-church meeting on October 1, 2006, attendees were asked to complete the sentence “We are a church who...” Following are all the responses.

- We are a church seeking to revitalize ourselves as a community.
- We are a church rooted in American history, through hard times and good times, has struggled to change with the times.
- We are a church that has been part of Bedford since the town was formed, and should remain as a strong presence in this ecumenical, diversified community.
- We are a church that continually struggles to find our path.
- We are a church who has grown in members, has slowed in this, has not kept up with diversity, but is reaching out to the world more.
- We are a church who is mindful of our past, respectful of our present, and marches forward toward a new world of mission, outreach, and passion.
- We are a church that welcomes people and does all it can to make them welcome.
- We are a church who changes with social changes, but has been basic in our beliefs – God the father, Jesus the Son, Holy Spirit. Thank you Father, we love You back.
- We are a church who really cares for its people and has many ministries.
- We are a church that has had a big effect on our community in many different ways.
- We are a church that has survived serious problems, but has always rebounded to serve others, share concerns for our youth, community and world missions.
- We are a church that, to have survived the conflicts and trials, yet for years must have possessed a strong faith and love for their church.
- We are a church who needs more people.
- We are a church that teaches, prays, supports, consoles, and challenges its people to walk with God, across time and circumstances.
- We are a church that strongly believes in our Congregational protestant religion that stresses LOVE.
- We are a church that changes with the times.
- We are a church that values our heritage, and is strong in music and Christian Education, due to very strong leadership and lay involvement.
- We are a church who has a long history in this community, adapts to the changes in our times, and needs to continue this process now!
- We are a church that has reflected the current times and friends, and has at times struggled to change and keep up.
- We are a church with an incredibly varied history and that has evolved with the changing times.
- We are a church who survives change and attends to the needs of its members.
- We are a church who stays connected to Bedford, and changes with the times, but slowly.
- We are a church congregation who has a history that is entwined with, has impacted, and has been impacted with/by the Town of Bedford. Our history is Bedford’s history.
- We are a church with a rich history of community and caring.
- We are a church that values families, participates in mission, and celebrates the word of God.
- We are a church of people who care about family and community of past, present, and future generations.
- We are a church which was, and is, a central force in the lives of Bedford residents; a place where people found and find spiritual nurture and welcome to God’s work.
- We are a church which has consistently represented the basic Christian ethic for 170 years.

- We are a church who has a rich variety of activity and focus.
- We are a church that changes with the times to widen its circle.
- We are a church with traditional values that has changed with the times.
- We are a church who have been a source of friendship, support, and grace to the town of Bedford from the very beginning of the town.
- We are a church that has had its ups and downs.
- We are a church congregation who has changed along with the world and community while keeping God's Love as our aim in life.
- We are a church that is traditional, community oriented, and independent.
- We are a church that has been too self-focused, and needs to reach out – not only to the Bedford / MA community, but to the global community as well –become pro-active and not just re-active.
- We are a church who has survived through ups and downs despite changes in the world and in our community.
- We are a church who has always included the community.
- We are a church that is very proactive in the community, has a long, stable history, and is made up of a committed congregation.
- We are a church who loves to gather as / make a presence in the community.
- We are a church who Lives, Loves, and Lasts.
- We are a church who cares about our community and the world beyond it.
- We are a church congregation who has a rich and varied history, an unsettling present, and an uncertain future.
- We are a church that has been through many changes, is woven into the community, and pathways of increasing justice. [sic]
- We are a church that helps communities in need.
- We are a church who is grounded in their community.
- We are a church that has a long family history (same family members).
- We are a church which continues to grow in involvement in service, education, and fellowship.
- We are a church that listens actively and acts accordingly while mindful of the interests of all of God's children.
- We are a church that is afraid of change, proud of what it is, but that still wants to grow in spirit and make a positive difference in a changing world.
- We are a church that has always adapted to changing times and will continue to do so.
- We are a church that has adapted to change and has been blessed with the choice to decide continue to adapt.
- We are a church that has always strived for a connection (i.e. spiritual, emotional, mental, physical), a sense of community among ourselves, and with the world.
- We are a church that attempts to focus on all ages and issues – we may need to reduce our scope and do less better.
- We are a church that enjoys tradition and history while embracing and adjusting to contemporary ideas.
- We are a church with a long Christian history in Bedford which still tries to follow Christ's teachings.
- We are a church that is an integral part of our community.
- We are a church of a positive outlook (very few negative comments!)
- We are a church that has primarily been strong in community.

- We are a church who tries to make the best use of each other's gifts.
- We are a church that is known for our Harvest Fair, Turkey Dinner, Strawberry Festival, and Rummage Sale.
- We are a church who reaches out and involves our community.
- We are a church made of wonderful individuals coming together to serve God through outreach, supportive community, nurturing children, and many activities.

## Appendix C – From second meeting: our church values

Toward the end of the second all-church meeting, the groups came back to consolidate their findings about values. Following is a transcription of the notes taken by Rev. Paul Nickerson when he asked us to choose our top five common values, give a few words or phrases to define these values plus give some images of what these values would look like in the future.

### *MISSION/OUTREACH*

#### Definition

- Who we are
- In/out – expanding
- Hands-on mission
- Nurture

#### Images

- Multiple Mission trips- lots of folks-all ages
- Acknowledge personal mission
- Local & abroad
- Community will know what we're like
- Long term commitment (social justice UCC)
- Current mission
- Dedicated resources
- Matching gifts (ability/calling)/mission needs

### *FAITH (faith/outreach/hope)*

#### Definition

- spirituality
- community based in faith
- club vs. church
- “things unseen”
- Jesus/ trinity
- growth

#### Images

- dynamic worship
- Evangelism (no closet Christians)
- Music
- Not creedal
- \$ priority

### *ACCEPTANCE/WELCOMING*

#### Definition

- 2 steps
  - welcome
  - respect
  - belonging
- (purposeful inclusion)
- (gift)
- various backgrounds
- articulate it

#### Images

- folding chairs in the back of Sanctuary on Sundays
- diversity
- participation in worship
- ONA
- Extra worship/format
- Inclusive language

### *COMMUNITY*

#### Definition

- Family/children
- Haven
- Needy
- Belonging
- Person/church/Town (intersection???)
- Welcoming/acceptance
- Commitment to each other
- Shir.... Rock [sic]

## **Appendix D – From third meeting: strengths subgroup**

Following is a transcription of the notes from the “strengths” subgroup at the third all-church meeting. The subgroup was asked to develop lists of “what we do best” and “what do we need to do” here at First Church.

### *What do we do best?*

- Music (Choirs, youth)
- Keep history visible / Town
- Strong presence in the community
- Eat
- Laughter
- Well organized
- Open to people
- Sermons
- Church family atmosphere
- Being on TV
- Website
- Staff
- Newsletter
- Young people / church school
- Express faith in a moderate way
- Willingness to be involved
- Prison ministry
- Strong females
- Community function use of facility

### *What do we need to do?*

- Staffing
- Revise/revive neighborhood systems
- Support music / children / youth programs
- Explore alternative worship possibilities: Other times, other formats
- Accept and adopt the new contemporary family lifestyle
- Articulate “WHO WE ARE”

## Appendix E – From third meeting: improvements subgroup

Following is a transcription of the notes from the “improvements” subgroup at the third all-church meeting.

1. Acceptance of Diversity (ONA) (10)
2. Sermons w/ (3)
  - a. More day-to-day focus
  - b. Deal with the here and now
  - c. Used to be on current events, now more evangelical/theoretical
3. Focus on long range planning, not reacting to problems as they occur (8)
  - a. staffing continuity (not just Sally....)
  - b. Physical maintenance and renovations
4. Faster results for important things (2)
  - a. Church board meetings are useless – endless talk, no results
  - b. New ideas are squashed
  - c. Need to provide ways for people to invest a modest amount of time and achieve meaningful results
  - d. Active pastoral leadership
    - i. Set the direction quickly and decisively
    - ii. Boards and committees should focus on how-to
5. Be welcoming to new Bedford residents (3)
  - a. Especially young families
  - b. Especially young singles
6. Try new things in the services (14)
  - a. Variety – not the same old same old
  - b. More lay participation in the services
  - c. Experimental services
  - d. Rich and diverse liturgy
  - e. Try new programs, activities, songs,
  - f. Every new idea gets squashed – stop doing that!
  - g. Lay participation in greeting, serving communion
  - h. Instrumental music – Professional, lay, and child
  - i. Different vocal presentations
    - i. Different soloists, duets, trios, quartets
    - ii. More new material mixed in with the old standards
7. Growth as a goal – fill the pews
8. Where’s the excitement for members/attendees/extended family? (1)
  - a. Get rid of useless activities so we have time to do the exciting stuff
    - i. Hire a sexton
  - b. Youth should want to be here for their activities
  - c. The very young are excited to be in the pageants and plays
  - d. Need more exciting adult education
  - e. Need adult education focused on current events and modern problems
9. Where’s the excitement to be a church leader? How do we make it exciting for someone to become a leader?
10. Stop losing young families
  - a. Especially to dissimilar alternatives (e.g. UU, conservative evangelical)
11. Need more feeling of extended family / families
12. People should feel welcome without obligation
  - a. Need to provide lots of opportunities for small commitments
  - b. Recognize that raising a family is a big commitment in itself, and support church participation integrated with that commitment
13. More of this kind of forum
  - a. Plainly spoken, uninhibited sharing
  - b. Active listening
  - c. Non-judgmental debate

## **Appendix F – From third meeting: demographics subgroup**

The “demographics” subgroup from the third all-church meeting discussed “who is out there.” This group was given some demographic information about Bedford and the surrounding area. This group was asked three questions:

Question 1) – What are two or three most important questions about possible mission in Bedford that need to be explored?

- Are we reaching out to ourselves?
- Compare demographics of church/town/area
- What worked in other towns?

Question 2) – Who are some key community leaders that should be interviewed to gain further insight into potential mission opportunities for the church?

- Fr. Frank F. at Episcopal Church
- Val Asbedain – selectman

Question 3) – What group does the church most need to reach out to in the next five years?

- Young growing families
- Asian community: fastest growing minority group in town

## **Appendix G – From third meeting: dreams subgroup**

The “dreams” subgroup at the third all-church meeting brainstormed various possible dreams for First Church five years in the future, then collected most of the items into four overlapping areas. It did not prioritize or establish consensus on each item, but there appeared to be broad support for each area.

### *Growth*

- worship “changing with the times” and drawing more attendance
- 2nd worship service with a contrasting format
- more diversity of participants
- assistant minister in charge of Christian education and youth ministry
- financial strength: fully-funded budget, mortgage paid, everyone contributing

### *Families and children*

- involvement beginning with young families and continuing as children grow
- both parents and children fully participating
- more active middle school and high school program

### *Mission and service*

- more hands-on approach to mission
- more people involved, both adults and youth
- variety of mission and service opportunities available
- activities ranging from local service projects to distant mission trips

### *Interchurch and interfaith connections*

- stronger UCC identity and connections to UCC
- partner church(es) such as: local inner-city, Metairie LA, other countries
- more Bedford-wide interfaith activities

**Appendix H – Questionnaire form**

**First Church Envisioning Questionnaire:  
“What do you have energy for?”**

First Church of Christ, Congregational, in Bedford (United Church of Christ)  
25 The Great Road, Bedford, MA 01730 781-275-7951 fchurchb2@verizon.net

March 18, 2007

- This questionnaire is part of a yearlong envisioning process to establish a vision for the future of First Church. Thank you in advance for your valuable input.
- The questionnaire lists current and possible future church activities. For each, you are asked to rate the activity’s importance (5=most, 1=least), then there are one or two checkboxes where you may indicate if you are personally interested in being involved. Put ✓’s only for items that genuinely interest you; having few ✓’s is just fine. It’s also OK to skip any item if you’re unsure or don’t wish to answer.
- This is a personal interest assessment, not an anonymous opinion poll. We are tabulating only signed forms so that you can be contacted about your items of interest in the future.
- If you are completing this survey at home, please return it in the enclosed stamped envelope by Tuesday, March 27, 2007.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Worship</b>	<b>Importance: “Our church should be doing this”</b>					<b>✓ if you would organize / make it happen</b>	<b>✓ if you would participate by attending</b>
	5	4	3	2	1		
Worship services in traditional style (like current Sun. 10 a.m.)	5	4	3	2	1		
Worship services in a more modern/contemporary style	5	4	3	2	1		
Worship services in a meditative/contemplative style	5	4	3	2	1		
Healing services	5	4	3	2	1		
Extra midweek services during Lent/Advent	5	4	3	2	1		
Changing the Sunday morning schedule	5	4	3	2	1		
Worship at times other than Sunday morning	5	4	3	2	1		
Lay participation in worship	5	4	3	2	1		
Lay participation in planning worship	5	4	3	2	1		
Guest preachers or speakers during worship	5	4	3	2	1		
Communion more than once a month	5	4	3	2	1		
Children's teaching moment during worship	5	4	3	2	1		
Children's musicals/pageants during worship	5	4	3	2	1		

<b>Worship</b>	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b>					✓ if you would help with this
	5=most				1=least	
Greeters, welcomers, ushers	5	4	3	2	1	
Flowers and decorations	5	4	3	2	1	
Cable TV/videotape/audiotape	5	4	3	2	1	

<b>Music/arts</b>	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b>					✓ if you would participate by performing	✓ if you would like to listen or watch
	5=most				1=least		
Adult choir	5	4	3	2	1		
Handbell choir	5	4	3	2	1		
Musical instruments during worship: piano, guitar, wind, etc.	5	4	3	2	1		
Contemporary band or folk music group during worship	5	4	3	2	1		
More upbeat/energetic music during worship	5	4	3	2	1		
Choral concerts	5	4	3	2	1		
Seasonal "Messiah" sing	5	4	3	2	1		
Liturgical dance group	5	4	3	2	1		
Theatre productions (adult)	5	4	3	2	1		

<b>Children/youth</b>	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b>					✓ if you would teach, plan, or assist	✓ if your child would do it (over next 5 yrs.)
	5=most				1=least		
Child care during worship	5	4	3	2	1		
Child care for church activities	5	4	3	2	1		
Sunday school for K-8, during part of worship	5	4	3	2	1		
Sunday school for K-8, different time from worship	5	4	3	2	1		
Middle school youth group	5	4	3	2	1		
Confirmation class (grade 9)	5	4	3	2	1		
High school youth group	5	4	3	2	1		

<b>Children/youth</b>	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b> 5=most                      1=least					<b>✓ if you would teach, plan, or assist</b>	<b>✓ if your child would do it (over next 5 yrs.)</b>
Special worship services directed mainly at children	5	4	3	2	1		
Children's choirs	5	4	3	2	1		
Children's musicals/opereettas	5	4	3	2	1		
Social gatherings for teens (games, movies, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1		
Overnight trips/retreats for teens	5	4	3	2	1		
Youth/elder match-ups for acquaintance and/or service	5	4	3	2	1		
Training workshops for Sunday school teachers	5	4	3	2	1		(n/a)

<b>Adult education</b>	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b> 5=most                      1=least					<b>✓ if you would organize or teach</b>	<b>✓ if you would participate by attending</b>
Adult "Sunday school" or religious education classes	5	4	3	2	1		
After-worship discussions	5	4	3	2	1		
Bible study	5	4	3	2	1		
Small groups for religious study and discussion	5	4	3	2	1		
Book discussion groups	5	4	3	2	1		
Discussion/speakers on social or political issues	5	4	3	2	1		
Weeknight series on a specific topic that interests you	5	4	3	2	1		
Joint activities with other UCC churches	5	4	3	2	1		
Forums with other local religious communities	5	4	3	2	1		
Develop/improve church library	5	4	3	2	1		(n/a)

<b>Outreach/mission</b>	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b>					✓ if you would organize	✓ if you would be a participant
	5=most				1=least		
Hands-on mission: local projects	5	4	3	2	1		
Hands-on mission: non-local	5	4	3	2	1		
Involvement with food pantries/feeding programs	5	4	3	2	1		
Outreach to sick, homebound	5	4	3	2	1		
Outreach to prisoners	5	4	3	2	1		
Outreach to urban areas	5	4	3	2	1		
Workshop on UCC and other volunteer opportunities	5	4	3	2	1		
Partnering with an urban church	5	4	3	2	1		
Partnering with churches in other states or countries	5	4	3	2	1		

<b>Fellowship</b>	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b>					✓ if you would organize / make it happen	✓ if you would participate by attending
	5=most				1=least		
Sunday breakfast group	5	4	3	2	1		
Regular-scheduled group for another meal during the week	5	4	3	2	1		
After-worship coffee hour	5	4	3	2	1		
After-worship lunches	5	4	3	2	1		
Church suppers/potluck dinners	5	4	3	2	1		
Circle dinners (small group dinners at homes)	5	4	3	2	1		
Social activities for adults and children together	5	4	3	2	1		
Social activities for adults with child care provided	5	4	3	2	1		
Social activities for singles	5	4	3	2	1		
Social activities for older people	5	4	3	2	1		
Women's or men's fellowship	5	4	3	2	1		
Parenting groups	5	4	3	2	1		
Knitting/sewing/craft groups	5	4	3	2	1		
Small groups based on interests	5	4	3	2	1		
Small groups by neighborhood	5	4	3	2	1		

<b>Events/outings</b>	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b>					<b>✓ if you would organize / make it happen</b>	<b>✓ if you would participate by attending</b>
	5=most				1=least		
Homecoming Sunday (Sept.)	5	4	3	2	1		
Church booth at Bedford Day	5	4	3	2	1		
Annual turkey dinner	5	4	3	2	1		
Annual church fair	5	4	3	2	1		
Annual rummage sale	5	4	3	2	1		
Easter egg hunt	5	4	3	2	1		
Annual strawberry festival	5	4	3	2	1		
Coffeeshouses/Cocoahouses	5	4	3	2	1		
Movie nights	5	4	3	2	1		
Game nights	5	4	3	2	1		
Talent/variety shows	5	4	3	2	1		
Trips to museums, concerts, etc.	5	4	3	2	1		
Recreational/outdoor activities	5	4	3	2	1		
Retreats	5	4	3	2	1		
Conferences, UCC meetings	5	4	3	2	1		

<b>Congregational needs</b>	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b>					<b>✓ if you would help meet this need</b>
	5=most				1=least	
Serve on committees/boards	5	4	3	2	1	
Serve in one-time/short-term volunteer roles	5	4	3	2	1	
Help with jobs at church: repairs, cleaning, yardwork, office, etc.	5	4	3	2	1	
Inviting and involving new people at church	5	4	3	2	1	
Encouraging people to become church members	5	4	3	2	1	
Initiatives to become more inclusive and diverse	5	4	3	2	1	
Help with pledges/enlistment	5	4	3	2	1	
Develop planned giving program	5	4	3	2	1	
Drive people to worship and church activities	5	4	3	2	1	
Visit people from our church who are sick	5	4	3	2	1	
Pray for people on Prayer List	5	4	3	2	1	
Assistance/support at funerals	5	4	3	2	1	

<b>Personnel and facilities</b>	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b>					<b>✓ if you would want part of your church donations spent on this</b>
	5=most				1=least	
Associate or assistant pastor	5	4	3	2	1	
Full-time children/youth director	5	4	3	2	1	
Paid child caregivers	5	4	3	2	1	
Paid Sunday School teachers	5	4	3	2	1	
Building manager	5	4	3	2	1	
Full-time custodian	5	4	3	2	1	
Renovate Manse (pastor's home)	5	4	3	2	1	
"Public" computers, WiFi network	5	4	3	2	1	

<b>Other items</b> Anything we missed? Write in...	<b>Importance: "Our church should be doing this"</b>					<b>✓ if you would organize / make it happen</b>	<b>✓ if you would participate by attending</b>
	5=most				1=least		
	5	4	3	2	1		
	5	4	3	2	1		
	5	4	3	2	1		
	5	4	3	2	1		

**About you** Please circle the responses that apply to you.

Years coming to First Church: 2 or less 3-5 6-10 11-19 20-29 30+

Have you joined First Church as a member? Yes No

Your age group: 0-18 19-34 35-49 50-64 65+

Do you have any children 0-to-18 years old? Yes No

Which of these two statements do you more closely agree with? Circle (A) or (B).

(A) "What our church needs over the next few years is stability and consistency."

(B) "What our church needs over the next few years is renewal and growth."

**Make sure you've signed your name on the front page. Thanks again for completing the survey.**

## Appendix I – Questionnaire results

<u>Worship</u>	<u>avg importance</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>organize</u>	<u>attend</u>
Worship in traditional style (like current Sun. 10a)	4.35	75	23	20	3	2	7	91
Worship services: more modern/contemporary	2.95	12	27	40	17	20	10	64
Worship services: meditative/contemplative	2.63	7	18	38	21	26	5	39
Healing services	2.41	8	12	32	23	35	6	20
Extra midweek services during Lent/Advent	2.38	6	13	32	30	33	4	23
Changing the Sunday morning schedule	1.80	1	7	18	28	57	1	11
Worship at times other than Sunday morning	2.25	5	14	28	25	42	0	19
Lay participation in worship	3.57	32	23	44	11	5	22	38
Lay participation in planning worship	3.17	13	26	49	21	6	13	30
Guest preachers or speakers during worship	3.54	24	42	42	14	4	2	44
Communion more than once a month	1.83	6	6	20	21	71	2	18
Children's teaching moment during worship	4.26	63	41	14	4	3	5	42
Children's musicals/pageants during worship	3.76	43	37	26	13	7	9	48

<u>Worship</u>	<u>avg importance</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>help</u>
Greeters, welcomers, ushers	4.53	86	29	10	1	2	53
Flowers and decorations	4.03	52	38	25	4	5	15
Cable TV/videotape/audiotape	4.17	66	29	16	4	7	4

<u>Music/arts</u>	<u>avg importance</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>perform</u>	<u>attend</u>
Adult choir	4.71	96	22	3	0	2	22	67
Handbell choir	4.47	80	32	16	0	1	8	69
Musical instruments during worship	4.09	48	53	17	4	4	6	72
Cont. band &/or folk music group during worship	3.19	20	23	45	13	14	7	63
More upbeat/energetic music during worship	3.45	33	24	36	16	10	10	68
Choral concerts	3.14	14	26	47	14	12	9	45
Seasonal "Messiah" sing	3.31	31	27	29	17	17	19	49
Liturgical dance group	2.18	3	7	33	33	36	1	39
Theatre productions (adult)	2.26	2	12	34	32	34	8	42

<u>Children/youth</u>	<u>avg importance</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>teach/help</u>	<u>child</u>
Child care during worship	4.82	106	12	2	2	0	22	17
Child care for church activities	4.42	71	30	8	7	0	19	14
Sunday school for K-8, during part of worship	4.47	79	24	8	5	2	17	26
Sunday school for K-8, different time from worship	2.50	15	12	24	16	40	5	10
Middle school youth group	4.54	80	25	12	2	0	7	16
Confirmation class (grade 9)	4.64	88	21	8	2	0	7	15
High school youth group	4.63	84	26	9	0	0	10	14
Special worship services mainly for children	3.54	24	33	41	8	6	8	21
Children's choirs	4.44	69	40	8	1	2	12	23
Children's musicals/operettas	4.13	57	37	15	6	5	14	21
Social gatherings for teens (games, movies, etc.)	4.42	62	46	8	2	0	12	19
Overnight trips/retreats for teens	4.18	49	44	17	4	1	8	18
Youth/elder match-ups	3.58	28	29	34	14	4	11	12
Training workshops for Sunday school teachers	4.02	42	37	23	7	1	7	na

**Adult education**

	<b>avg importance</b>
Adult "Sunday school" or religious ed. classes	3.25
After-worship discussions	3.19
Bible study	3.51
Small groups for religious study and discussion	3.39
Book discussion groups	3.30
Discussion/speakers on social or political issues	3.43
Weeknight series: specific topic that interests you	2.78
Joint activities with other UCC churches	3.08
Forums with other local religious communities	3.21
Develop/improve church library	2.99

	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>help</b>	<b>attend</b>
	20	31	27	21	11	8	23
	14	26	42	19	7	4	33
	21	41	33	13	6	3	28
	19	34	34	19	5	8	27
	14	30	46	20	2	6	25
	21	40	26	21	6	5	43
	5	22	39	28	14	3	30
	16	25	40	22	13	3	29
	16	27	43	17	9	3	28
	9	26	36	25	10	7	na

**Outreach/mission**

	<b>avg importance</b>
Hands-on mission: local projects	4.23
Hands-on mission: non-local	3.68
Involvement with food pantries/feeding programs	4.20
Outreach to sick, homebound	4.44
Outreach to prisoners	3.59
Outreach to urban areas	3.57
Workshop on UCC and other volunteer opportunities	3.20
Partnering with an urban church	3.28
Partnering with churches in other states/countries	3.23

	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>plan</b>	<b>particip.</b>
	55	38	14	6	1	12	51
	32	32	31	17	1	6	25
	55	42	16	6	1	4	47
	70	37	9	4	0	2	28
	29	35	29	19	3	1	8
	25	34	33	17	2	2	15
	17	25	36	20	9	2	18
	22	23	36	19	9	2	23
	24	19	36	22	10	2	15

**Fellowship**

	<b>avg importance</b>
Sunday breakfast group	3.28
Regular-scheduled group for another meal	2.66
After-worship coffee hour	4.46
After-worship lunches	3.19
Church suppers/potluck dinners	4.08
Circle dinners (small group dinners at homes)	3.17
Social activities for adults and children together	3.63
Social activities for adults with child care provided	3.40
Social activities for singles	3.38
Social activities for older people	3.60
Women's or men's fellowship	3.77
Parenting groups	3.45
Knitting/sewing/craft groups	3.39
Small groups based on interests	3.26
Small groups by neighborhood	2.50

	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>help</b>	<b>attend</b>
	20	23	41	18	7	6	11
	4	14	40	21	17	1	11
	76	29	14	3	0	20	58
	16	23	43	17	9	10	40
	41	48	18	7	0	21	56
	13	28	34	17	10	14	40
	25	40	26	12	5	9	36
	20	30	35	12	8	4	17
	18	25	39	15	4	1	6
	20	37	36	10	2	3	15
	27	39	29	8	2	2	28
	16	30	36	14	2	0	6
	18	28	38	14	5	6	17
	14	25	34	22	3	3	22
	3	15	32	30	21	2	15

**Events/outings**

	<b>avg importance</b>
Homecoming Sunday (Sept.)	4.42
Church booth at Bedford Day	4.07
Annual turkey dinner	4.32
Annual church fair	4.43
Annual rummage sale	4.06
Easter egg hunt	2.87
Annual strawberry festival	4.27

	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>chk1</b>	<b>chk2</b>
	71	25	15	1	2	10	66
	51	34	26	4	3	6	39
	58	37	15	2	1	15	50
	77	25	15	2	2	26	65
	55	32	22	4	6	21	45
	10	27	31	19	21	2	16
	52	35	21	1	0	27	67

Coffeehouses/Cocoahouses	3.98
Movie nights	2.99
Game nights	2.99
Talent/variety shows	3.18
Trips to museums, concerts, etc.	2.97
Recreational/outdoor activities	2.90
Retreats	3.75
Conferences, UCC meetings	3.54

44	29	31	6	1	15	42
9	24	43	23	10	3	29
9	18	49	25	6	3	25
14	27	37	24	6	6	28
12	18	42	21	12	0	30
9	23	32	25	13	2	19
28	43	21	11	4	7	36
25	30	31	15	4	6	29

**Congregational needs**

Serve on committees/boards	4.28
Serve in one-time/short-term volunteer roles	4.39
Help with jobs at church: repairs, cleaning, yardwork, office, etc.	4.31
Inviting and involving new people at church	4.33
Encouraging people to become church members	4.12
Initiatives to become more inclusive and diverse	4.04
Help with pledges/enlistment	3.91
Develop planned giving program	3.55
Drive people to worship and church activities	4.15
Visit people from our church who are sick	4.23
Pray for people on Prayer List	4.45
Assistance/support at funerals	4.16

	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>help</b>
60	18	15	7	1		42
61	31	11	4	0		64
53	35	12	3	1		43
61	29	15	2	2		27
48	31	18	7	1		22
50	22	23	7	3		25
39	27	25	7	3		13
26	20	35	13	3		5
44	36	22	3	0		26
53	30	18	4	1		29
74	16	19	1	1		47
53	26	20	5	2		26

**Personnel and facilities**

Associate or assistant pastor	3.90
Full-time children/youth director	4.17
Paid child caregivers	1.89
Paid Sunday School teachers	1.81
Building manager	2.98
Full-time custodian	3.71
Renovate Manse (pastor's home)	4.30
Public computers, WiFi network	2.50

	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$support</b>
45	33	19	5	9		59
54	34	14	3	5		59
2	2	28	26	50		10
2	3	23	25	56		9
9	25	34	19	13		20
45	23	27	14	8		46
58	40	15	1	2		65
14	12	22	16	37		18

**About you**

Years coming to First Church:	<b>0-2</b>	<b>3-5</b>	<b>6-10</b>	<b>10-19</b>	<b>20-29</b>	<b>30+</b>
	7	9	22	19	23	48
Joined as a member:	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>				
	114	13				
Your age group:	<b>0-18</b>	<b>19-34</b>	<b>35-49</b>	<b>50-64</b>	<b>65+</b>	
	2	6	37	32	51	
Children 0-to-18?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>				
	52	73				
Which statement...?	<b>Stmt A</b>	<b>Stmt B</b>				
	23	94				

The following write-in activities were listed by one person each.

- Shorten church service: eliminate extra stuff – 5 – would organize, would attend
- 1 hour should be enough, more time on Bible, fewer anthems – 5 – would organize, would attend
- Celebration dinner of 50 year members (one time event) – 4
- Welcoming noises of children in worship – 5
- The music needs to be more lively and modern – 5
- Do initiative for Global Warming. How can we help with this effort?
- Social justice speakers/discussions would be interesting.
- Become ONA – 5 – would organize
- more informal worship laying on of hands etc – 5
- Improve modernize culturally diversity + upbeat music – 5 – would organize, would attend
- Low key weeknight casual prayer/worship service – 5 – would organize, would attend
- Open and affirming – 5 – would organize, would attend
- Worship services with content relevant to today's choices and challenges – 5 – would attend
- Passion Sunday: no Sunday school, encourage children & teens to attend service. – no responsive readings during music presentation. – 5
- Provide growth and renewal opportunities for Jamie – 5
- Active Music Committee - 5
- Reflect spiritual peace & joy at Christmas time rather than joining in secular busyness... – 5 – would participate.
- More Bible reading, less fluff – 5 – would organize, would attend
- Shorter service, fewer anthems – 5 – would organize, would attend
- Occasionally use hymns in the early part of the service that will appeal to children – easy tunes and be understood by them. [sic] – 5 – will participate
- Church service 1 hours and 10 minutes tops – 5 – would participate
- Try to keep Sunday morning worship service to 1 hour and a few minutes
- Must downscale boards, committees and strengthen small groups – 5 – would organize
- Strong music support committee – 4
- Make Passion Sunday more varied = dance group concert – 5 – would organize
- Women's Book group not on a weekday morning! – 5
- Easter breakfast – 5
- Support ecumenical Easter dawn service – 5
- Annual pulpit exchange on a rotation basis among Bedford ministers – 5
- Assoc. minister of music – 5
- High school fellowship group – 5
- Family mission trips – 4

Other comments written on the questionnaires have been compiled in a supplementary document to be furnished to staff and to Cabinet, and available to others on request.