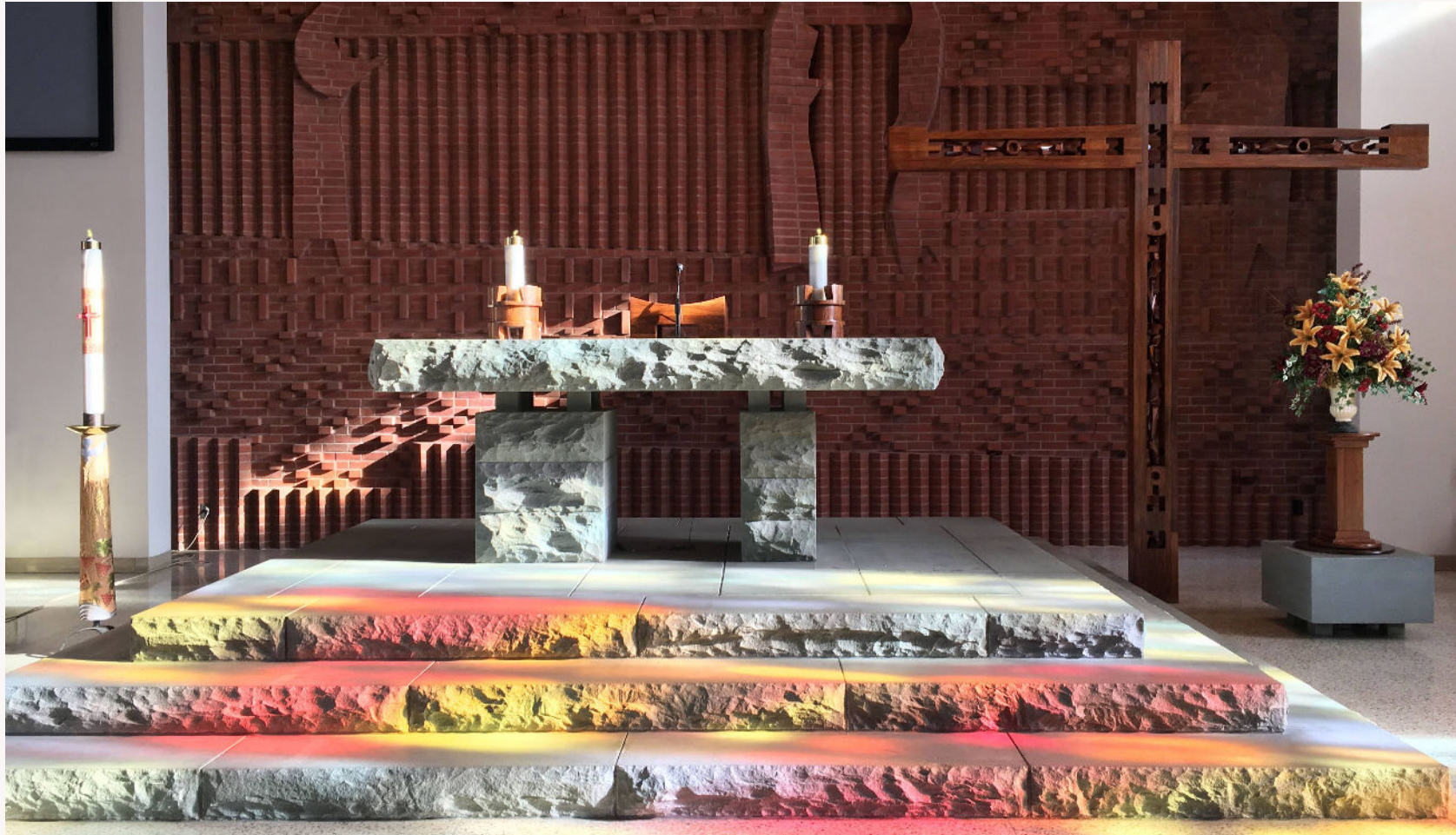


ST. JOHN'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Future Together Strategic Plan



Dear St. John's United Church of Christ Community,

In the spring of 2022, we set upon a visioning journey to identify opportunities for our church to make a difference in the lives of people. Our hope was to expand our ministry, grow in love of God and neighbor, and simply become more present in today's world. To help us with this work, the Consistory of St. John's UCC voted to work with Rev. Cameron Trimble and Convergence as our visioning partner and coach. A task force was formed to guide our congregation through this process, officially beginning our strategic visioning and planning process in August of 2022.

This exploration has been as fulfilling as it was exhausting and as exhilarating as it was overwhelming. Through much prayer, research, and discernment of who God is calling us to be, we can say that we learned a lot about what it means to "be the church" in these ever-changing times.

Our approach has been a "both/and" – engaging in the process of long-term visioning while continuing to say "yes" to opportunities and possibilities that present themselves along the way. Over the last year, we have said "yes" to new ideas, partnerships, and programs.

As our work progressed over the last 14 months, common themes emerged identifying potential needs of both our church and our community. We heard you and our community leaders ask for steps that will open us to loving each other more, deepening our personal commitments, and supporting our community as we seek to be Jesus' hands and feet in the world. In response to those requests, we drafted a plan of action.

We are doing this work because we want to make sure that our church makes a positive difference in the lives of people. We want to grow in love of God and neighbor. We want to love each other and do some good in the community. Having a framework to gauge what we are doing, why we are doing it, and the impact it will have on us and our wider community is helpful.

This strategic document is meant to be a living document. It is not a to-do list per se. Rather, it is a foundation from where our mission can grow. It will adapt as we move forward as a church, providing a framework as we set our goals and priorities for future years.

We know that churches, including ours, need to keep adventuring.

The leg work portion of the visioning process has ended and a new phase of implementation has been put into place under careful watch of our Consistory. Going forward, you will have the opportunity to join in the gratifying work of the church as we connect to each other and do good in the community. We humbly pray that this plan helps us build on our strengths and leads us to fulfillment of God's mission and ministry in ways that feel authentic and aspirational.

Faithfully,
St. John's Future Together Task Force

Rev. Caroline Saxton, Pastor; Peg Bryner; Harold Collier; Lisa Fair; Connie Morrill-Hair; Eileen Shaffer; and Connie Strunk

Vision, Mission & Values

Vision: We are called to love, to learn, to worship, and to witness in Christ as a congregation that welcomes everyone, and seeks service that will advance God's realm on earth

Mission: The mission of St. John's UCC is to grow in love of God and neighbor

Values: Our hope is that you find us to be:
People of God's extravagant welcome
People who belong to Christ
People of the Covenant
A United and Uniting Church
One at Baptism and at the Table
People who thank God by working for a Just and Loving World
People who listen for the Still-Speaking God

We are an Open and Affirming Congregation



Themes

St. John's UCC's Strategic Plan incorporates five themes that are applicable to all our goals. They address foundational elements that are essential to accomplishing our mission and achieving our vision. We are committed to marrying our piety with justice work, as our faith underpins everything that we do as a Christian congregation, being the church.

Spiritual Deepening

Establish conventional and unconventional resources for healing, connection, faith formation, and increased spiritual growth

Energize Participation

Encourage personal involvement in the life, mission, and ministry of the church

Community Engagement

Develop strong partnerships to fulfill our call to serve and support the wider community

Congregational Care

Promote a loving and caring culture to ensure a healthy and supportive congregation

Financial Sustainability

Create opportunities to invest in the future and ministry of the church

Spiritual Deepening

Theme: Spiritual Deepening

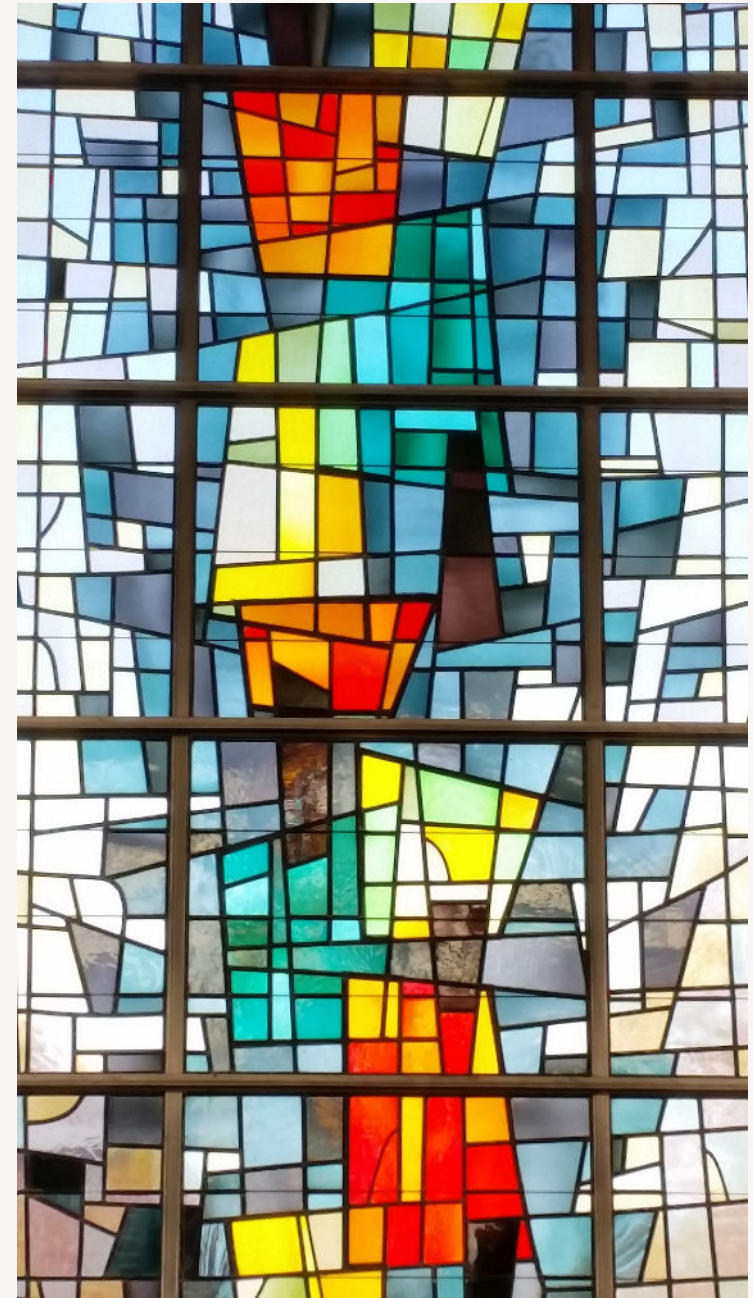
Establish conventional and unconventional resources for healing, connection, faith formation, and increased spiritual growth

Action Plan I:

Center prayer practices as a critical and crucial part of individual and communal life as Christians through:

Creating a variety of opportunities and experiences for people to connect to God and each other while exploring different prayer and meditation practices in our communal life

- By December 2023, implement a plan to utilize existing outdoor space and revise underutilized indoor space to provide a place for movement, meditation, and prayer
- By December 2024, introduce prayer practices to include new opportunities to deepen our spiritual connection



Spiritual Deepening

Action Plan II:

Expand upon our existing worship styles and practices through:

Exploring multiple formats and timing of worship while maintaining our connection with each other

Marrying our past with our future and seeking input from a variety of generational groups

- By December 2024, create and implement guidelines for expanding worship opportunities beyond our current service styles and times
- By December 2024, organize educational opportunities for exploring differing theological backgrounds and make recommendations for opportunities to revisit forgotten traditions
- By December 2026, issue recommendations for adding a second Sunday morning service

Action Plan III:

Provide additional faith formation and spiritual study opportunities, helping members and friends to connect more deeply with the Divine through:

Increasing Bible study and discussion groups, providing forums for people to study and pray together by creating four-to-six-week classes for adults, allowing for long-term learning without long-term commitment

- By December 2023, establish a system for scheduling and hosting educational, inspirational, and creative activities to encourage group discussions and engagement
- By December 2024, schedule classes to explore UCC history and beliefs and alternate faith practices
- By December 2024, schedule theological and practical retreats to be held once per quarter

Energize Participation

Theme: Energize Participation

Encourage personal involvement in the life, mission, and ministry of the church

Action Plan I:

Be a church that joins personal passion with the broader community mission through:

Being a Christian congregation that lives out its call to be the Body of Christ in the world, welcomes the talents and gifts of each person, creates an environment of openness and tactful exchange, and cultivates a sense of belonging to each other and to our shared mission

- By December 2024, engage and experiment with multi-generational groups
- By December 2024, engage in healthy, respectful conversation with each other in pursuit of vision and mission
- By December 2024, consider opportunities to engage those who are still seeking a spiritual home

Action Plan II:

Increase communication across platforms and groups through:

Ensuring our members and friends have access to accurate, timely, open, and easily understood information about activities, events, programs, and opportunities to be involved in the ministries of St. John's UCC

Developing our presence and usage of social media and our website

- By December 2023, consult with a trained professional in website and social media management and continue to explore social media applications
- By December 2024, explore additional options to automate communication

Energize Participation

Action Plan III:

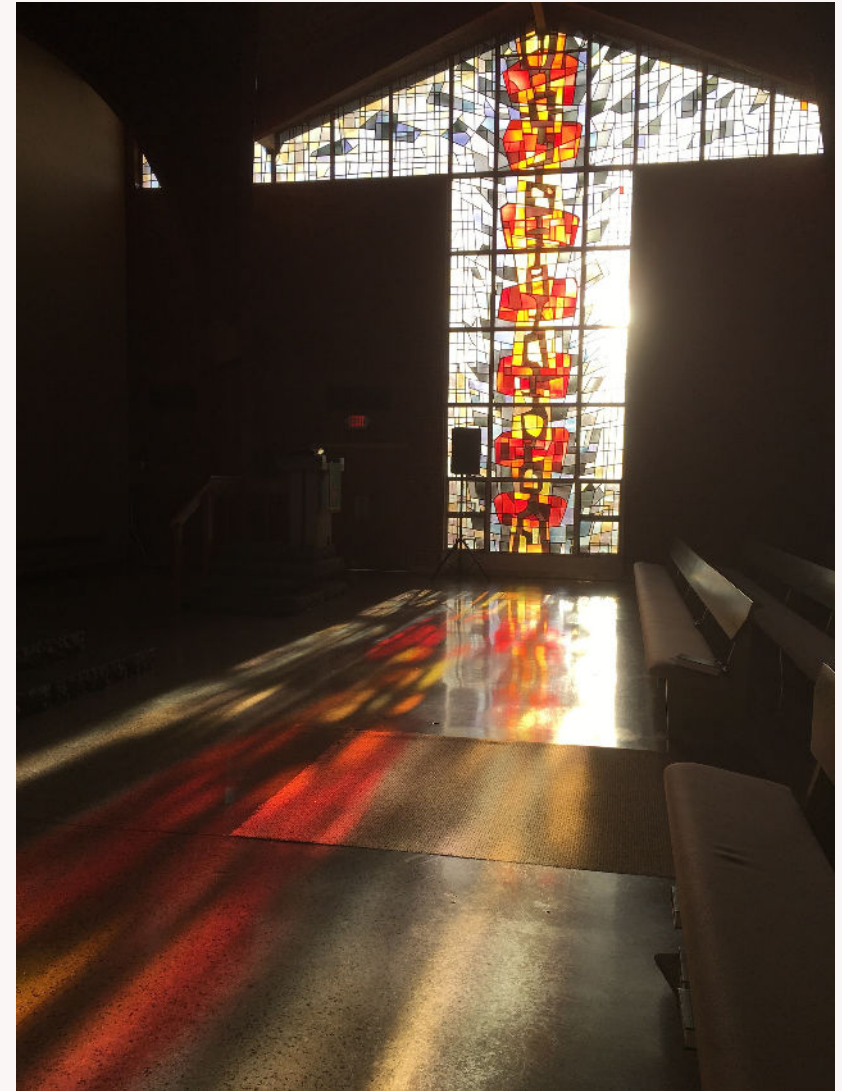
Invest in making sure all participants feel connected to the ministry, mission and members of the church through:

Creating a culture of personal relationships

Providing quality programming for members, friends, and the wider community to be supported and encouraged in life and in faith

Imagining how existing spaces can be reconfigured into multipurpose spaces

- By December 2023, intentionally follow-up with visitors
- By December 2023, hold intergenerational fun events and special activities for kids
- By December 2024, pilot dinner church, possibly in partnership with our Saturday Night Worship team
- By December 2024, increase personal contact with members/friends, especially those who worship virtually
- By December 2024, schedule quarterly major events



Energize Participation

Action Plan IV:

Create a leadership base that is focused on the future and equipped for the current challenges of church life through:

Utilizing the skills, gifts, and knowledge of our members and friends to lead us, knowing that we are called to “equip the saints for ministry”

Surveying and listening for passion that will enable group leadership

Saying “yes” to new ideas and practices, particularly from newer voices

- By December 2023, plan retreats at least twice a year to generate ideas, passion, and energy with childcare and meals provided
- By December 2025, offer Healthy Congregations training on communication and conflict (and perhaps other topics as appropriate) every two years as leadership evolves and changes

Action Plan V:

Review the official ministries and committees of the church to align with the current mission, vision, and values of our strategic plan through:

Reimagining our current structure of Consistory and ministry teams

- By December 2024, revise church leadership documents (Constitution, Bylaws and Policy Manual)



Community Engagement

Theme: Community Engagement

Develop strong partnerships to fulfill our call to serve and support the wider community

Action Plan I:

Be visible and engaged as a church through developing strong community partnerships through:

Partnering and expanding our mission and ministry beyond Sunday morning

Working with other churches and organizations to increase our impact

Offering opportunities to participate in a variety of short-term and long-term projects

- By December 2023, engage in hands-on outreach opportunities with a community partner at least four (4) times per year
- By December 2023, promote ourselves/our uniqueness by sponsoring community events
- By December 2024, collaborate with other churches for additional youth events
- By December 2024, utilize our building for learning and service

Action Plan II:

Optimize St. John's Camp to serve the wider community through:

Exploring the future of St. John's Camp for the short and long term

Updating the camp access and rental processes

- By December 2023, consider additional camp usage (programming) beyond current offerings
- By December 2024, review camp needs and opportunities, including assessing the land/buildings for issues that need to be dealt with, the potential for selling off land, exploring conservation programs that might help with the preservation of the land or use of the camp.

Community Engagement

Action Plan III:

Make St. John's UCC a community hub for learning, service, fun and support through:

Increasing St. John's visibility in the community by utilizing St. John's building and grounds as a community meeting space for a variety of meaningful and educational events and hosting community groups looking for space

- By December 2024, offer classes and events, open to the public on a variety of topics; using facilitators from within the church or a community partner



Action Plan IV:

Continue to live into our Covenant of Welcome and Affirmation as an Open and Affirming Church through:

Partnering with existing community organizations working with marginalized populations incorporating aspects of our covenant in our worship life together; and providing space for marginalized groups needing a safe and secure space to meet

- By December 2023, engage in community events, providing optimal opportunities for interaction and exchange with diversity while expanding our witness as an ONA church within our wider community
- By December 2026, consider offering "Our Whole Lives" (OWL) or similar programs

Congregational Care

Theme: Congregational Care

Promote a loving and caring culture to ensure a healthy and supportive congregation

Action Plan I:

Support and encourage the members and friends of St. John's, centering relationships as crucial for our life together as Christians through:

Continuing and expanding the Called to Care philosophy

Providing a safe and confidential place for people to go for support

Developing relationships with each other

Encouraging small group formation to allow a variety of opportunities

- By December 2023, create a team of people to follow-up with those who shared prayer concerns during worship
- By December 2024, confirm church membership by reaching out to all members on an annual basis
- By December 2024, create a working team on "Behavioral Covenants" with possible review and adoption by June 2025

Action Plan II:

Expand our church-wide culture of caring through:

Working together to ensure all members and friends experience caring and welcome in new and creative ways

Offering personal stories to help us know each other

Practicing acceptance and compassion with all

- By December 2023, hold in-person activities for all ages
- By December 2023, offer childcare as an extension of hospitality and welcome to families
- By December 2023, address the need for additional volunteers to support programs and events

Financial Sustainability

Theme: Financial Sustainability

Create opportunities to invest in the future and ministry of the church

Action Plan I:

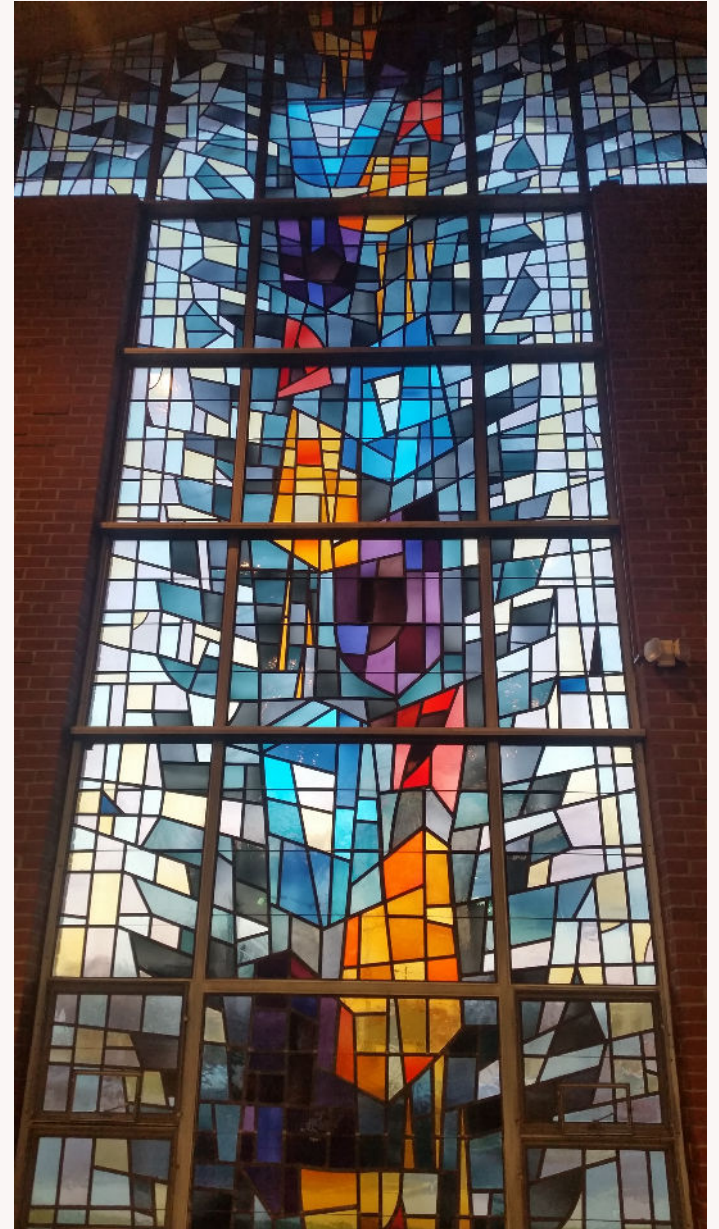
Increase awareness of the financial position of the church and develop multifaceted revenue streams to support the mission and vision through:

Educate members and friends on finance sources and uses of funds

Increase awareness and importance of structured giving programs such as electronic giving

Recognize revenue opportunities through events and sponsorships

- Starting in 2023, develop narrative budgets alongside line-item budgets to tell the story of what our giving makes possible
- By December 2023, have regular Spirit articles and mission moments talking about our finances
- By December 2024, increase the percentage of electronic giving units to help the church have income that is reliable and consistent
- By December 2024, hold special events that fund particular programming and projects, seeking sponsorships for the events



Action Plan II:

Increase rental opportunities and sponsorships with community partners and others for short- and long-term use, generating dependable and sustainable income through:

Increasing our funding base so as to support the financial needs of St. John's, particularly those related to maintenance of the building and grounds

Opening our building for a variety of income-generating partnerships

- By December 2024, increase our network of community sponsors as a source of revenue for events
- By December 2024, explore renting currently unoccupied or under-utilized rooms

Action Plan III:

Encourage estate planning with designated gifts to St. John's through:

Implementing a planned giving campaign to encourage members to make legacy gifts to continue the mission and ministry of St. John's

Ensuring our members and friends are aware of St. John's dreams and goals for the future, with this strategic plan as a guide

- By December 2024, work with the Finance Committee to implement a planned giving process

Action Plan IV:

Identify and make use of grant income to assist in implementing parts of this strategic plan through:

Exploring grants that would be available for churches to utilize

Using our partners in the community that may already have grant funding

- By December 2024, consult/contract with professional grant writers for grant management
- By December 2024, work with current and new partners on grant utilization and incorporates revenues in budget.

Action Plan V:

Explore creative ways to structure and sustain the church through:

Identifying opportunities and options to sustain our financial future into the long term

- By December 2023, form a task force to develop scenarios with creative ways to structure the church's financial position, including but not limited to potential mergers with other congregations, renting space to other congregations and/or organizations, considering alternative uses of our current campus
- By December 2024, this task force shall make recommendations to Consistory regarding viable pathways forward

...What will you do?

We are excited about what the future holds for our church as we walk in faith and deepen our commitment to Jesus and to our siblings in Christ. We hope that you, too, are excited by the Mission, Values, Strategic Goals, and Action Plans here.

The broad and deep involvement of our members and friends is essential for this plan to become a living document that will support and guide our work as a community. We encourage you to get involved with the efforts aligned with each of the goals in this plan.

How can you become more involved?

Contact Pastor Caroline or Consistory President Harold Collier

