



Unitarian Society Strategic Plan 2020-2023

Approved by Board of Trustees, April 15, 2019¹

Our Mission

The Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence is an inclusive and welcoming intergenerational congregation of diverse spiritual beliefs and practices.

Our mission is to build a caring community where children and adults can safely learn and grow, where we are supported and challenged on life's journeys, called to service and to our higher selves, and inspired to better our world.

Our Vision

May we be a congregation that:

- *Nurtures the light within each of us*
- *Sustains our hope and resilience*
- *Offers welcome, respite, and renewal*
- *Embraces the work of understanding differences, learning, and committing to greater inclusiveness*
- *Challenges us and fuels our courage to work for justice and the protection of our planet*
- *Is, for all who seek it, a spiritual home*



WORSHIP AND LEARNING

Long-range Goal: Provide worship and all-ages learning that honor our values and vision.

Priority actions

- 1) Sustain inspiring worship services with our vision as a touchstone, experiment with worship services beyond Sunday morning, and embrace musical and other forms of diversity.
- 2) Offer meaningful and engaging all-ages and intergenerational faith development activities, meeting the spiritual needs that reflect our 21st century lives.
- 3) Provide relevant opportunities to grow our understandings and actions with a focus on the Seven UU Principles, inclusive practices, and social justice.



WITNESS AND ACTION

Long-range Goal: Inspired and renewed by our faith, bear witness to our values by acting within our congregation and beyond for social justice and climate action.

Priority actions

- 1) Build renewal and reflection on faith and spirituality into our social justice and climate work through worship and other avenues

¹ Version 16.1, corrected April 18

- 2) Continue to educate, mobilize and encourage individual and collective climate action initiatives, internally and through work with outside organizations and congregations.
- 3) Sustain our sanctuary immigration justice and refugee support initiatives in partnership with community organizations and other faith communities.
- 4) Embrace work on facing white privilege, anti-racism, and multi-cultural competence, weaving the work into our lives as individuals and as a congregation. Offer workshops, book discussions, speakers, and opportunities for action and reflection.
- 5) Make our work visible, be responsive to new challenges and needs as they arise, and participate in acts of witness within the local community.
- 6) Communicate our work broadly and make a difference while strengthening the bonds among our members and our relationships with community organizations and other congregations.
- 7) Strengthen relationships with community and religious organizations through working on social justice and climate action.



COMMUNITY BUILDING

Long-range Goal: Continually work to welcome and integrate all people and become known as a place to find spiritual home.

Priority actions

- 1) Design and introduce new ways to reach out to, welcome, and integrate newcomers, and to deepen connections among us. Review our assumptions and procedures that make it hard for others to join or to feel welcome and learn to actively include marginalized people.
- 2) Engage in new outreach efforts for families.
- 3) Organize social/community building/intergeneration/fun events.
- 4) Continue to offer pastoral care to members in need.
- 5) Offer more frequent small-group opportunities for people to connect.



SUSTAINING RESOURCES

Long-range Goal: Maintain and enhance the effectiveness of our governing, program and operations management, and fiscal stability.

Priority actions

- 1) Prepare ourselves for our next ministerial transition (two to four years away) by reviewing the ways we support and collaborate with our minister and professional staff, and by learning about current best practices for transitions.
- 2) Hire our next music director.
- 3) Re-establish and strengthen our systems and processes for effective internal and external communication.
- 4) Engage in practices that will sustain our financial health and maintain our building.
- 5) Continue to support strong and effective governance and lay participation through ongoing learning, nurturing volunteers, and other good practices.

PLAN DETAILS (See our Strategic Plan Appendix for more staff and committee plans)

WORSHIP AND LEARNING

Our worship program will strive for excellence, warmth, welcome, inspiration and challenge. We will experiment and work to understand expressed yearnings for “more spirituality;” pilot gatherings with an alternative format and time, encourage diversity in the music program and help Trustees plan for the permanent music director search.

Our religious education program will open up additional RE programming to the wider community, offering ‘packaged’ programming to families enrolled in RE, as well as others including eight-week, stand-alone classes for kids, whole families, and adults. We hope to promote a wider community presence at community events and on the front lawn.

Offerings for adults will include the Hawkins-Majumder lectures, concerts, Zen meditation and programs connected to social justice and the work of other teams and committees.

This work will be led by the **Minister, Director of Faith Formation and Community Engagement, RE Council, and Worship Committee.**

WITNESS AND ACTION

The Coordinating Council will focus on working effectively work together and on promoting its role to bring together and support committees, ideas, and efforts as a resource for problem solving. The Council will identify, initiate and encourage participation in social justice initiatives. It will experiment with serving as the congregation’s social justice hub, set specific goals and review progress against them.

The Climate Action Group aims to involve congregants who strongly support climate action and want concrete, doable ways to act. We gain support from each other and a sense of purpose in our climate organizing. The CAG plan features seven priorities: Communication within USNF, the USNF Building, Political Actions, Support and Learning, Collaboration with other MA UU Congregations, RE, and Special Events. For each of these areas we have developed or will develop specific actions, aiming for things that can involve the congregation more broadly. Because the climate situation and its importance in peoples’ lives is changing so quickly, we expect our emphases in the next 3-5 years to adapt as appropriate.

The Sanctuary Team will continue to monitor and support our work in hosting Irida and all that it entails. We will also continue to support broader efforts for immigration justice, in collaboration with our community partners.

The USNF/Village Hill Refugee Circle of Care will continue to assist the Jumapili family as they make their way in this new and very foreign community.

A new group is being formed that is committed to facilitating the congregation's work to face racism and other systems of oppression, and to weave this work into our lives both as individuals and as a congregation.

A proposed 8th UU Principle is "Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions." (see <https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/>)

Over the next several years we plan to offer opportunities for learning, reflection, and action – through workshops, film-showings, book groups, speakers, community projects, worship experiences, and more. Recognizing that there is a diversity of perspectives among us, we will welcome people into this long-term effort at whatever level feels right for them. Our goals are to help our congregation's members

- become more informed about the history of racial and other oppressions, and about the cultures of non-white communities
- reflect deeply on our own biases and privilege
- look at the congregation's ways of doing things (worship, RE, decision-making, social events and social justice work) through an understanding of how they reflect cultural norms that perpetuate white privilege and inequity
- begin to change some of our ways of doing things, both personally and as a congregation
- have a chance to work with one or more community partners that are led by and serving communities of color.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Our efforts will focus on continuing to improve the ways we welcome, orient, and integrate, newer people, and on ways to forge greater connections among us. We will also continue our work to serve one another in times of need, encourage right relations, promote safety, and prevent harm. Specific ideas and plans are being developed in several teams as well as within the Coordinating Council. This work will be ongoing.

The work will be led by **the Newcomer Connections, Pastoral Care, Safe Relations, and Small Group Circles Teams**, in collaboration with the **Coordinating Council**.

The Newcomer Connections Team will continue to take the lead on Sunday morning welcoming, Sunday jobs, membership journey, Newcomer Breakfast, Coffee Corner, and nametags. Consistently remind other teams and groups to help people develop deeper connections, especially with small group activities.

The Pastoral Care Team will continue its work caring for members, and supporting the Minister's pastoral care work. Plans including raising the visibility of the program, celebrating and appreciating volunteers, and offering discussion groups on topics such as caretaking.

The Safe Relations Team continues to work with other leaders to ensure our spiritual, emotional, and physical safety -- encouraging right relations, promoting safety, and preventing harm with a security plan, training, and other preventative measures.

Small Group Circles will continue and hopes to expand the program that connects new and long-term members in facilitated small group discussions.

SUSTAINING RESOURCES Key tasks are to:

Prepare ourselves for our next ministerial transition (two to four years away):

- review the ways we support and collaborate with our minister and professional staff
- learn about current best practices for transitions.

Hire our next music director

- Establish clear job description and expectations
- Recruit committee and conduct search

Re-establish and strengthen our systems and processes for effective internal and external communication:

- Clarify responsibilities, and recruit a communications committee
- Develop a plan and systems for internal and external communications.

Support strong and effective governance and lay participation:

- Champion our vision, periodically monitor and report progress to fulfill this plan, and ensure that it is updated and renewed within five years.
- Engage in ongoing learning for Trustees and other leaders
- Thoughtfully recruit the Board of Trustees and other leaders,
- Commit to an annual process of review and reflection by the Board of Trustees.
- Pursue new ways to nurture volunteers, and to develop and sustain new and current lay leaders

Engage in practices that will sustain our financial health and maintain our building:

- Sustain our membership.
- Continue robust stewardship to connect members and fund our vision.
- Strive to manage a balanced budget with three-year projections, helping to ensure that we fund our work according to our fiscal policies and are responsive to changes.
- Manage and protect our building and property. Plan for contingencies, increased cost of maintenance, and long-term capital improvements.
- Look for ways to supplement our income beyond pledging.
- Solicit Legacy fund contributions and commitments, and consider a capital campaign in connection with our 200th anniversary in 2025
- Support the professional development, accountability, and fair compensation of staff.

This work will be led by the **Board of Trustees**, and the **Nominating, House and Property, Finance, and Personnel Committees**.