

## Planning Committee Coffee Chat Summary

How do you think our spirituality and our vision for the congregation should be reflected in our physical space? Here's a summary of the background information shared and the thoughts of the 63 participants in our Planning Committee Coffee Chat on October 15<sup>th</sup> 11:30-12:30.

The conversation was facilitated by the Chair of the Planning Committee, Louise Gava, and supported by the other members of the committee: Hal Bigelow, Rev. Joe Cleveland, Pam Collins, Judy Halstead, Jim Mihuta and Nedra Stimpfle (with thanks to committee member Kris Dallas for providing childcare).

At various times in the past, but most especially in the fall of 2016, many in the congregation began to recognize that we are overcrowded and that this puts limits on us as a congregation. Consequently, the Planning Committee was reinstated. The Committee began meeting in January 2017. Members were recruited by the Board and/or volunteered. The Board of Trustees defined the scope and provided the committee with the following charge:

Planning Committee charge: *“investigate multiple avenues for increasing our physical space for services, for Religious exploration, and for related staff and congregational needs.”*

The Committee is gathering information about a wide range of options, most of which fit into four major categories:

1. A modest building expansion at our current location
2. A major building expansion at our current location
3. Move elsewhere to an existing building close to our current location
4. Move elsewhere and build from scratch on land close to our current location

Two very important principles are at the core of our work:

1. The Committee will not make major decisions. We will provide the information needed for the Congregation to make decisions.
2. As the committee asks questions and seeks answers we are constantly sensitive to the present and future financial situation of the Congregation.

Also, the Committee believes that it is essential that we (both the Congregation as a whole and the Committee) think about issues of space in the context of our Congregation's vision for what we hope to be, our spirituality and how we hope our vision and spirituality may impact and guide our own community and the greater community, as well as our physical needs.

Some things the Planning Committee has done include:

1. Examined data about our current situation (membership; RE; giving etc.)
2. Looked into detail of our current site (survey; zoning etc.)
3. Talked with professionals: real estate agents, architects, attorney (at no expense to the congregation)
4. Interviewed other faith organizations about their growth and building expansion challenges
5. Informally looked at other locations (some for sale and some not for sale)

Our plan for the next few months:

1. Listen and understand your thoughts and questions
2. Provide answers to your questions by sharing our work

(over)

Those in attendance at the Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup> 11:30-12:30 Planning Committee Coffee Chat were asked:

1. What is your vision of who we are as a congregation? Perhaps the identity of “a spiritually centered congregation with a civic circumference” that Rev. Joe proposed during the sermon resonates?
2. How do we shape our space to help realize and reflect our values?
3. How is our present space lacking?

**Common themes arose from the conversation:**

1. The current combination of the sanctuary space with our social space negatively impacts our sanctuary space both before and after service (words used include claustrophobic and chaotic): *when asked for a show of hands of agreement of this sentiment it was almost unanimous*
2. RE is a critical element of our congregation and a too small basement space isn't serving us
3. We need our space to visibly express our values to the community so it's not a mystery what we do; we need to be an accessible (physically and ideologically) space that expresses our environmental values
4. Our hopes and dreams must be framed by our financial ability and one way to ensure this may be to expand in a phased/modular fashion (which still requires beginning with the end in mind)

*Specific comments included e.g.:*

- We need a more welcoming space, more welcoming both for current members and possible future members.*
- We need more welcoming RE space, sunny space.*
- We want to not be a mystery to the public; we want to welcome the public.*
- We want coffee hour to feel welcoming. Now it feels too crowded, too noisy.*
- I feel like I want to escape even though I love you all. How do new people feel?*
- I'd like to hang out in a separate sanctuary space when I arrive.*
- RE needs to be able to leave things from each age group in a separate dedicated space, to be able to leave each RE group's creations where they were made.*
- It would be great if we could accommodate overnight guests, maybe have a bedroom and shower.*
- Some of us would like a true choir space.*
- We are environmental stewards; we want our space to be used regularly throughout the week.*
- We want a space accessible via public transportation and preferably by biking or walking.*
- Our North Broadway address is off-putting to some people we would like to attract.*
- Here we feel like we need to stay under the radar. We want a space where we can feel freer.*

The Planning Committee is compiling information we have previously collected that will help answer questions asked during the coffee chat. These questions include:

1. How far from our current location are possible new spaces?
2. What are the zoning restrictions/planning considerations for our current location?
3. Could you provide financial data?
4. What co-habitation opportunities exist?
5. What are the sq. foot additions possible on our site and what do they cost?
6. What is the value of our existing building (discounted for mortgage)?

We are compiling this information and will be sharing it in the next week or so.

If you have additional questions or thoughts please share them with any of the committee members. We will be ready to engage with you after service. You can find us near the chancel. Look for the following committee members: October 22<sup>nd</sup>, Jim and Nedra; October 29<sup>th</sup>, Kris and Louise. This Sunday, Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>, Nedra and Judy will ask the RE and youth what they hope for from a physical space for the congregation.