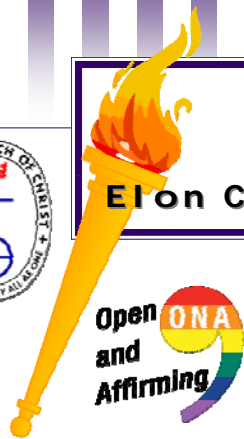


THE TORCH

Elon Community Church United Church of Christ



Special Edition
Vision 2021



Dear Chris...

("Chris" is short for Christian)

When a local church in a community intentionally states that we want to **BE THE CHURCH**, that is a moment to shout and be glad! Creating a vision and goals for our church means we are working toward something. What is it that we are working toward?

Glad you asked:

- We want to be a church community that sees that God is leading us somewhere as we respond to our place, our time, and the needs that exist around us.
- We want to be **ACTIVELY FAITHFUL** instead of assuming that just because we are at a church, everything we do is church related. In fact, being intentional and engaged is the essential nature of this growing church!
- Finally, in recognizing ways to be the church, we want at the end of our vision and goals to actually reflect all the qualities we hope to be.

So, like we have done in the past, we gathered to work on actual goals that respond to the discerned needs we have uncovered. Our Retreat at the end of February allowed a little over 40 of our congregation to help establish 7 goals that we hope to reach by 2021. These goals involve different people and areas of the church that help us be engaged in growth, responding to our community and neighbors, and the way we are church through ministry priorities and the worship experience.

Being the church means a lot about how we all play a part and how we build this community of faith to reflect our shared Christian values. Whether responding to the growth of the town of Elon or creating more spiritually centered opportunities to grow, we will find that we are practicing faith. We will be naming what we do through the language of **CHRISTIAN PRACTICES** so we can see the spiritual nature of all we do. Being the church is found in prayer and actions, loving and working, teaching and witnessing.

Finally, I just want to say that I believe these goals will keep us busy for the next 5 years! They are comprehensive and will result in us feeling more engaged in our church and faith life. As always, it will be challenging and thought provoking. I pray that we will arrive at 2021 thankful for the journey we are taking now! May God be with us as we work and live together in the power of Spirit and love!

Love,
Randy

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This edition is an at-a-glance guide for all our goals and a constant resource to check into when you need to know who is in charge of what goal and where to turn for more information. There is something for literally everyone in this plan! The Christian practices are something all of us will find as a guide for building and practicing our faith. I hope we will see that some of it is individual, communal, and even missional. This is guide to keep you informed on what we are doing. This is something you will want to come back and visit from time to time.



BE THE CHURCH

Protect the environment.
Care for the poor.
Forgive often.
Reject racism.
Fight for the powerless.
Share earthly and spiritual resources.
Embrace diversity.
Love God.
Enjoy this life.

God is still speaking.
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



3 IMPORTANT RESOURCES FOR THE GOALS

While we created new goals for this 5 year period, our vision statement stays the same:

As a growing church,

We will interact with the wider communities in we are a part — Elon University, greater Burlington, and faith partners in inclusive, creative, and enabling ways, always striving to be faithful to our calling as witnesses of the Gospel. We will reach out with ministries of serving & caring, teaching & learning, the arts, and worship.

The BE THE CHURCH banner is one of the resources we are using to understand our goals and direction for the next several years.



There is a website that contains a wonderfully comprehensive list of Christian practices that we hope you visit from time to time. We are also going to make it a link on our website:

<http://spiritualpractice.ca/what/what-2/the-common-christian-practices/>

GOAL 1: Using our gifts to nurture our youth in faith, leadership and responsibility we plan to:

1. Develop an intentional growth plan
2. Create a safe place in developing values in our youth
3. Provide parent education

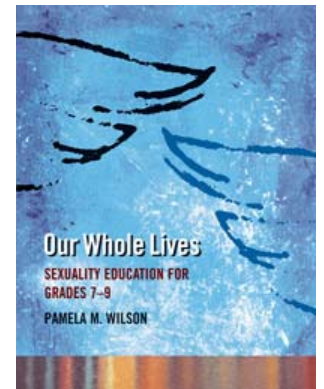


1. Intentional Growth Plan from Youth Summit

- Four year rotation and plan of summer activities and curriculum
- Cohesive Scheduling/Meetings
- Marketing and Branding Plan

2. Safe “Place” in developing values in our youth

- Working with parents/Parental buy in for studies done with our youth
- Create studies such as an Interfaith Study that looks at inclusivity
- Create application plan for Our Whole Lives study with our youth
- Creating a safe place from an open and affirming aspect



3. Parent Education

- Working with parents on buy in for studies such as “Our Whole Lives” which deals with sex education for our youth from a faith perspective.
- Develop informational seminars such as “how to deal with social media” or Bible Study groups for parents.
- Create parental “support” group to meet and discuss parenting issues with teens.

GOAL 2: THE ECC UCC WILL IMPROVE COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF OUR EXCEPTIONALLY WELCOMING CHURCH BY: CREATING A PHYSICAL PRESENCE THAT IS ENTICING, WELCOMING, USER-FRIENDLY, AND REPRESENTS WHO WE ARE.



- Enhancing the visitor experience
- Using technology

Resulting in an annual growth of 30 new members. This goal will be prioritized and benchmarks set by October 1, 2017.

Goal 3: Within the next 12 months Council will establish a Constitution Review group studying the overall governance of the church. Investigate the possibility of creating a Justice and Witness Board or Committee.

- In addition to committee development, begin a Social Justice Fellowship that will meet regularly to study relevant issues and create action plans.



GOAL 4: By June 2018, the Deacons, Music Committee, and Worship Committee will work together to create a Worship, Music, and Sanctuary review utilizing: Input and consulting for acoustic needs addressing sound management in the sanctuary. Creation of Worship and Music Review Task Group using congregational survey, staff and member input to improve and set a course for needed changes to shape worship and music to meet the needs over the next 5 years of our worshipping community.

- ACOUSTIC CONCERNS
- SOUND SYSTEM RESEARCH AND UPDATE
- WORSHIP NEEDS FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS



All results and recommendations to be shared with Council and congregation for action.

GOAL 5: The Church establishes a Parking Lot Task Force to utilize the best use of the 103 spaces we presently allow Elon University to use for Faculty/Staff and community parking. This group will:



- Investigate best use of the lot
- Negotiate with town of Elon, private sources, and the university.

The Trustees will monitor and see where the development is going and the impact on the church and its property reporting to the Council and congregation for action.

Goal 6: The University Relations Committee will be tasked to build off their incredible impact on church life and relationship with students, staff, and faculty of Elon University covering:

- Study/ spirituality Opportunities
- Interpersonal Relationships (Hook-up Project)
- Monthly meal for students after worship
- Continuing and building off the hospitality and networking established over the last 5 years



GOAL 7: Over the next 5 years we will utilize the historic recovery of Christian practices as the framework for the ministry we provide.

- To increase spiritual awareness of our actions as a church
- As an emphasis for evangelistic practice discerning an emphasis on the "Spiritual"
- Recovery of Christian Identity in the many dimensions of our lives.

