

The Mission of The United Church in Walpole  
is to Worship, Teach, and Serve  
in the traditions of our Congregational heritage,  
according to the teachings of Jesus Christ,  
for the benefit of all humankind.

**A Vision for The United Church in Walpole:**

The United Church in Walpole will expand its role as a vibrant force in the community. As a church that reaches out to all, our “community” extends beyond the town limits of Walpole to our neighboring towns, state, nation, and around the globe -- wherever we have the ability to make a difference. We can fulfill this vision in the ways we worship, teach, and serve.

**Worship**

*Broad Appeal:* The worship service is the central experience providing spiritual nourishment to all who attend. Our worship service appeals to a broad spectrum of religious and cultural backgrounds, ages, family and socioeconomic situations, enabling us to attract new members. Through a variety of music, sermons, and children’s stories, as well as special services involving our children, youth and adults, we strive to offer a meaningful worship experience for all.

We envision providing a broader range of worship experiences to those within and outside our church family. Many who are seeking spiritual nourishment have not found it in “traditional” worship services. For those seeking non-traditional worship services, and for those whose work demands or community and youth activities conflict with Sunday morning worship, as well as for our own Sunday School teachers, we should explore the following worship alternatives:

- Times and days other than Sunday mornings
- A variety of music
- Lay leadership
- Creative worship formats

*Heritage and Traditions:* We believe efforts to broaden the worship experience can be undertaken while continuing to enjoy our present forms of worship. We will maintain our Congregational roots and traditions, continually striving to be innovative and challenging.

**Teach**

*Build on Our Strengths:* Our strong educational programs for our children and youth have come from the tireless efforts of many people. Our programs invite families to investigate our church, and are often a key factor in their decision to attend and join our

church family. We must continue enthusiastically to support and enhance the following programs: Church School, Rite13/Journey to Adulthood, Confirmation, Journeys, and Youth in Pursuit.

*Enhance Youth Programs:* Our youth are our future. Our church should consistently provide programs and opportunities which both educate and challenge our youth to serve God through:

- A youth visitation and “helper” program for our homebound members, in cooperation with the pastors and deacons;
- Participation in all aspects of church life;
- Community service projects for grades 5-12;
- Annual mission trips for high school youth, within and outside the U.S.

*Youth Minister:* Recognizing the need for additional staffing to implement these programs and opportunities, we envision a day when our resources will be sufficient to call a minister who will focus on the pastoral, educational and other needs of our young people.

*Create Adult Education Opportunities:* Our pastors and lay leaders have offered a variety of programs for adults. To meet the congregation’s expressed desire for more adult education opportunities, we need to find new approaches, new ideas, and new ways of inspiring people to be leaders of adult education. We should explore the broad range of resources available from other churches and organizations. We envision a variety of programs throughout the year, led by the pastors, the Christian Education committee, and volunteers from the congregation. These could include but would not be limited to:

- Adult Bible study
- Contemporary issues
- Global concerns
- Congregational traditions
- Parenting topics
- Coping with loss and divorce

*Teaching Parish:* We should strive to resume our role as a teaching parish, sponsoring and supporting student ministers, as we have done in the past. Recognizing that the time and effort required to sponsor a student minister is considerable, our goal must include having the staff/lay personnel necessary for the supervision of this type of ministry.

## **Serve**

Our vision is to serve God through personal service to our community, nation and world, by means of local outreach, visitations and mission trips. We also serve by offering our many talents and financial resources to all God’s people in the following ways:

*Hospitality and Fellowship:* We must serve God as a welcoming church, extending hospitality to all and fostering fellowship among the community of faith.

*Local Outreach:* We should investigate community needs that might be served by our congregation, including:

- Offering our fellowship hall and kitchen for activities such as a soup kitchen, coffee house, youth programs and community events.
- Participating in food drives, food distribution and meal serving opportunities throughout the greater Boston area.
- Supporting our Outreach Committee in its efforts to offer hands-on help to those in need of food, clothing, shelter and other necessities.

*Visitations:* Not only our pastors, but everyone in our church community should visit our homebound members as frequently as possible.

*Mission Trips:* We must seek out new levels of involvement with churches, orphanages, and relief agencies throughout the world. As a congregation, we should initiate mission trip opportunities for adults and families, as well as for our youth.

*Stewardship:* In order to fully realize our vision, we must have greater and growing financial support. This will require increased levels of personal pledging as well as continued growth in membership. Our vision includes a congregation inspired to be “cheerful givers.”

*Participation:* We believe all Christians are called to serve. In our Congregational tradition, committees are the lifeblood of the church. We must all accept responsibility for active participation in the work of our committees, matching our individual gifts with the needs of the church.

### **Worship, Teach, Serve**

These three words are the essential elements of our church vision. They are “action words,” reminding us that we are not passive spectators in God’s world. In our vision, they mutually enhance each other, enliven each other and, year upon year, build upon each other as we strive to fulfill God’s plans for us, as individuals and as a church.

Vision is where tomorrow begins, for it expresses what we and others who share the vision will be working hard to create. Now is the time for all of us to come together to create the benevolent and spiritual United Church of tomorrow.

*Respectfully submitted on February 9, 2003 by the Strategic Planning Committee:*

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