

The Torch Newsletter

Elon Community Church



United Church of Christ



Dear Chris... (*"Chris" is short for Christian*)

Welcome to our simple guide to our vision, goals, and objectives that we will use as our guiding force through 2026. We came together during the pandemic on zoom with only

one in-person meeting to share the ideas and dreams that led to this vision. It is indicative of the place we find ourselves as we continue to emerge from what most of us realize is something none of us thought we would experience.

The ideas contained in this VISION 2026 resulted from the most shared information of the members of this church from the last two 5-year plans we created. The number one idea that emerged is the idea that we have unique values and faith expression that is worth sharing! In the Alamance County area, we stand out as a Christian witness that is Open & Affirming, Creation Justice, Community based, with Hospitality as a sign of working in our local setting toward a just world for all. God's presence and the faith we receive and carry draws us to this openness. Our expression of Christian Love is open to all faiths as we see our faith as a door that opens to all instead of wall that protects us within. That is not 100% unique

from other churches, but in total it carries a special message that has drawn people here and we believe it is something that needs to be lived out and shared for those who arrive in the future.

Of course, many of our objectives are very practical and help us to live out our vision of being a growing church. In truth there is always work to be done there as the Gospel calls us to share who we are and create a loving community of Christ's followers in all we do. From a church van to possibly knocking down a few walls to make our building more adaptable to future needs, this is what we believed we can work toward and accomplish over this 5-year part of our history.

So, use this as a guide, a reference, and a challenge. We are the Church of Jesus Christ, we also know we are the Body of Christ, the hands and feet, a place to receive and grow, our community to serve involving all who take part! No pandemic or surprises in the future can hold us from being the Church! We will walk, work, and worship together, travelling shoulder to shoulder, into God's promised new day! I know I have loved travelling with you and pray this will help us in many ways.

Love,
Randy

HOW IT WORKS



This edition is a dedicated at-a-glance guide for all our goals that can be used as a constant resource to check into when you need to see where we are going. Our boards and even some committees are working on these goals and the listed objectives. I hope we will see that we can all play a part through support, enthusiasm, and even direct work of some of these items. This guide to keep you informed on what we are doing. This is something you will want to come back and visit from again and again.

Vision 2026 Goals for Elon Community Church UCC



AS A GROWING CHURCH, We will interact as a congregation with the wider communities in which 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.”

GOAL 1

ECC will continue to build its presence as a progressive church in the greater Elon area; especially lifting up our unique Christian identity, values, and culture.

1. Provide at least four annual opportunities for the congregation to grow and learn about the topics of diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, anti-racism within the congregation, and how they are tied to our theological foundations.
2. Develop a shared project in collaboration with First Baptist Church of Elon, focused on DEI, social justice, and/or anti-racism.
3. Continue to partner with St. Matthews AME to build inter-congregational relationships, shared worship services, and collaborative outreach.
4. Create a partnership with the Burlington Masjid to provide opportunities for inter-faith events and relationships.
5. Participate in the UCC “Open and Affirming” consortium, with a focus on implementing practices that support and uplift the LGBTQIA community



GOAL 2



Complete a new strategic plan for continuing to build our children, youth, and family programs, strongly considering staffing and resource allocations.

Appoint a task-force to complete research, listening sessions (e.g. “visioning summit” with youth), conduct a needs assessment, and present recommendations by Spring 2023.

GOAL 3

Developing more opportunities for relationship-building within the church, including transitioning members into the church.

1. Introduce at least one more class. Consider short-term and more informal options.
2. Develop and offer annual retreats for women and for men. Explore other cohorts/groups that may wish to develop stronger relationships via annual retreat or travel opportunities.
3. Evaluate our new member orientation program and develop steps to strengthen the process of involvement with the church.
4. Continue to offer and strengthen virtual options for worship and ministries of the church.



GOAL 4



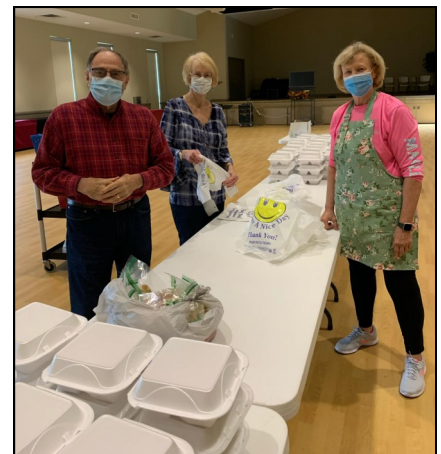
Perform an overall assessment of our facility, equipment, and utilization. Further work to create feasibility of reworking, possible construction, and the addition or refurbishment of spaces for optimal ministry and hospitality into the next 20 years.

1. Purchase a 15-passenger van to support church programming for children, youth, adults, and seniors.
2. Invest in enhanced audio-visual technology in the sanctuary and up to two classroom spaces (to support hybrid classes and other smaller programs).
3. Conduct a space usage and needs analysis; including spaces for small, medium, and larger-size groups. Present report and recommendations by Fall 2023.

GOAL 5

Enhancing our focus on missional life and outreach.

1. Increasing percentage of budget to Missional life through 2026 to 10% of annual budget.
2. Partner with local churches and faith centers to develop collaborative missional projects (see Goal 1).
3. Assess opportunities for missional outreach in local, high-need neighborhoods, including Elon Crossing and Westwood Forest.
4. Sponsor a refugee family/group for resettlement in the local area.



GOAL 6

Further develop and commit to our presence in the greater Elon Community especially lifting up our unique presence of identity, values, and culture.

Requires working with other goals. Then these areas will find focus and development.

1. Develop a superior Website and social media presence as part of a directed study to determine maximum communication sharing who we are and reaching clear constituencies who may desire the kind of church we are.



2. Utilize Instagram, TikTok, Electronic signage, and up to date media platforms beyond Facebook.
3. Commit to Building and sharing a clear identity as a progressive Christian presence.
4. Commit to the importance of anti-racism practices as Theologically required in all we do.
5. Continue to work diligently to be a unique presence as a progressive church (open and affirming, green church, etc.)

6. Research Staffing by considering hiring a new staff member dedicated to improving website and social media presence, working with it continually, and possibly other church growth work.
7. Put a portfolio/decide on best format or formats – set ways to share that (Pamphlets - Hardcopy – Snapshot)
8. Add opportunities for History & Polity education of the UCC and greater denominational ministries



9. Using virtual options to grow the church as well.
10. Research Possible better ways to communicate with community (e.g. Marquee?)
11. Research and expand Arts and Culture Presence as part of our community identity.



Elon Community Church UCC Staff



Rev. Randy Orwig
Senior Pastor



Rev. Sharon Wheeler
Associate Pastor



Monica F. Nicholson
Office Manager



Lori Watson
Finance Manager
CLC Coordinator



Dr. Stephen Futrell
Choir Director



Joy Rust
Organist



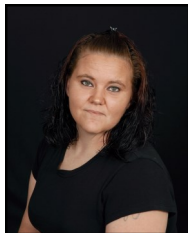
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Bell Choirs Director



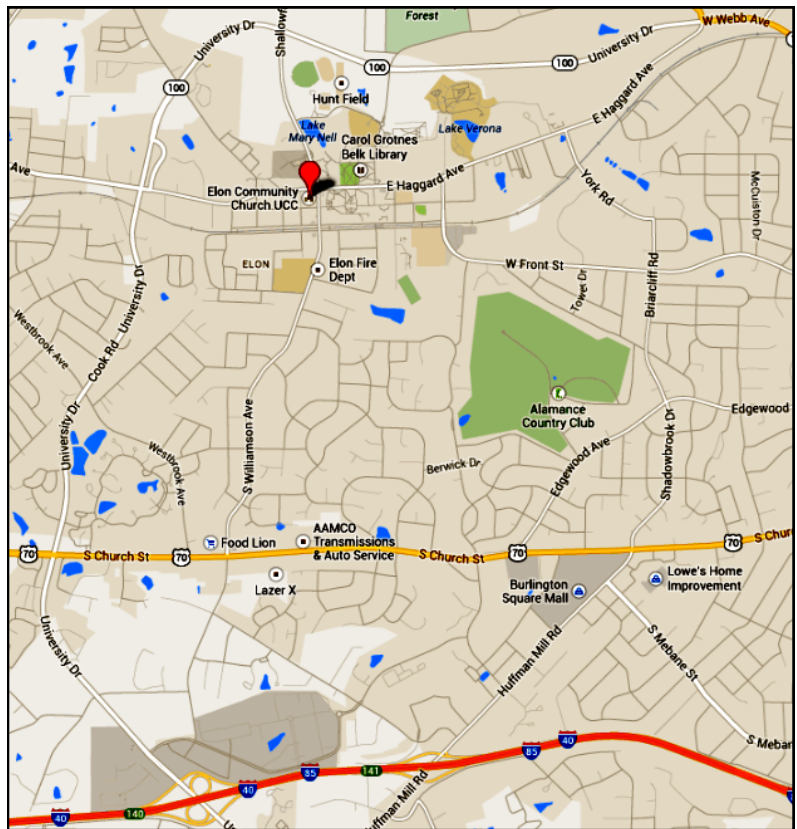
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OPEN AND AFFIRMING
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Torch Articles

Please note that all submissions are due by the 19th for the upcoming month. Because of limited space, articles may be edited, saved for future issues, or omitted.

Thank you for your contributions!