

Congregational Church of Brookfield

Three-Year All Church Plan

April 2024 - March 2027

Introduction from the Long Range Planning Committee

The Congregational Church of Brookfield (CCB) is an amazing faith community which has served residents of our area since before Brookfield was an actual town. With the dedication of our church and ordination of The Rev. Thomas Brooks in 1757, CCB members have served as stewards of this great place of ministry, enjoying our work together in Christian discipleship and service here as an integral part of our lives for more than 266 years.

Throughout this long history, we have adjusted course as circumstances changed – as Brookfield grew from a small farming crossroads into a thriving suburban town. Now, as the world continues to change, we believe it is time to prepare proactively for the opportunities and challenges ahead. This document is intended to put into words our deepest values, recognizing who we are today, and to lay out a plan to help us look ahead. We lay out a framework of working together to build the church we hope to become.

One key objective for LRPC is to create and maintain a strategic plan for the future. Over the last two years, LRPC committee members have been discerning the importance of an all church plan, the relationships that will be important for CCB in the future, and ways LRPC will support the congregation during implementation.

Today, we present our All-Church Plan – identifying the impactful actions we do already, suggesting broad goals to carry us forward, inspiring us to create together and take action steps to get us there.

As we work together as a church – on our various ministry teams, in committees, and as a congregation, we hope this plan can help us align our goals and achieve our mission – to faithfully serve God, each other and our community.

Respectfully submitted,

Long Range Planning Committee: Alan Peck (chair), Susan Dodd, Megan Duggan, Sarah Dykes, Laurie Matson, Michael Matson, Larry Ruschmeyer

April 28, 2024

Objective of the Plan:

In the coming years, we want our church to be even more vibrant and thriving.

Thriving in our ability to include everyone.

Thriving in the willingness of all members to contribute time, talent, and treasure.

Thriving in our ability to financially support our campus, staff, leadership, and outreach programs.

Thriving as a faith center for our wider community – where everyone from long-term leaders and members to first-time visitors and recent newcomers can each feel welcomed and included, celebrated in times of joy, and comforted in times of hardship.

We hope this All-Church Plan will guide our Congregation to work together toward mutual goals ensuring CCB's vibrancy and sustainability into the future.

Where did we begin?

Following the completion of numerous and more immediate needs of the church, LRPC members began to re-examine our church's mission and vision statements to ensure that they represented both who we are today, and who we strive to be in the future. At the spring 2022 annual meeting, our proposed rewritten mission statement was approved, and a small revision was made to the 2009 church vision statement. These two statements helped to focus this plan.

CCB Mission Statement (revised 2022)

*United in Christ's love, we welcome all – to find purpose, peace, hope and joy
as a faithful community serving God, one another, and the world.*

CCB Vision Statement (adopted 2009, revised 2022)

Live Your Faith: Pray, Share, Welcome

Three elements of the 2024 All Church Plan:

In working through our discernment process, we first asked ourselves, ***“What would it take for us to achieve the plan’s objective of becoming a more vibrant and thriving congregation and develop such meaningful connections, one to another, that we attract others to participate in our faith-filled life at CCB?”*** We discussed the different priorities at CCB and grouped them into three key components, which became the foundation for the All-Church Plan. These key pillars align with the three CCB vision priorities.

PRAY: Faith Formation and Expression

SHARE: Service and Outreach

WELCOME: Engagement and Fellowship

These three elements of Christian discipleship are already interwoven throughout the fabric of our church life. They do not fall under the purview of a single leader or committee. We believe that supporting every member’s faith growth, and uniting around this plan, will help us achieve the goals of the All-Church Plan and make CCB stronger, more vibrant and sustainable for years to come.

The Invitation to You:

Please read and study this document. Ask probing questions and seek resources to help our church community – and especially your various groups, teams or committees – focus on working together creatively to strengthen these 3 pillars. LRPC will work closely with church leaders, because we believe ministry coordination and active communication that reaches people of all generations in an inspiring, meaningful way will be key to our success. As we implement this plan, imagine how wonderful it will be in 2027 to see:

- Our church well-known to all as a place to **pray**, receive spiritual nurture, and grow in faith
 - With classrooms and campus full of adults, children and youth
 - With higher in-person and virtual attendance in our worship services
 - With a thriving music ministry that attracts spiritual seekers with gifts to share
- Our church well-known to all as a place to **share** our gifts and do hands-on service work

- With classrooms and campus full of volunteers connecting and making a difference with ministries like the Giving Garden, Refugee Resettlement, Thrift Shop & Yankee Fair
- With a church budget fully funded by cheerful donors who embrace generosity as a spiritual gift to be developed in everyone, no matter their age or income level
- With leaders engaged in meaningful service work, with the aim of understanding and addressing systemic social problems, while still helping those who bear the brunt of injustice or oppression
- Our church well-known to all as a place of God's extravagant **welcome**
 - With a beautiful, upgraded Fellowship Hall, fully accessible to all
 - With an even larger, more inclusive and diverse congregation and leadership team
 - With classrooms and campus full of community groups, using our space to do their work

Using this plan as our guide, let us continue to encourage one another to seek more visible opportunities to come together to demonstrate our faith, our traditions, and extend our warm welcome to all. Working together, we know we can continue to strengthen our church as a vibrant Christian community filled with joy and love.

A Message from the Pastors

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower...

5I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.... ”

~ Jesus (John 15:1, 5)

In John’s Gospel, Jesus called himself a living vine, connecting himself and others to God – our Creator/Holy Vintner who gives all life and growth. So Jesus never set out to build a church, but to create community – a living organism to bear fruit to nourish and sustain the world. Jesus called human beings like us to come together as his disciples – to follow him, to be part of building the kin-dom of love that is God’s dream for all the world’s beloved peoples.

And so it is today. We are not called to build an institution of stone to look upon with pride, but instead to grow together in this powerful movement – serving God and others in Christ’s name. As we do, we join hands with generations of disciples who have come before us. Like them, we know that Christ is the one who connects us and nourishes us, and we can trust that God is in charge. Like any good vine grower, we know God is planning for our growth and productivity.

As your pastors, we are so grateful that our Long Range Planning Committee has worked toward putting words to our CCB Vision– to list some actionable goals, potential strategies and seed ideas, and to share the plan with the rest of us. We believe that, using the plan and relying on God's guidance and grace, we can grow and change in ways that align with our mission and vision, and with the building up of God's kingdom on earth. We have faith that, with God’s help, our church will bear much fruit for our local community and beyond for years to come. May this plan help us grow in the ways God hopes for us, as a church and as a wider community.

Blessings,

Pastors Bryn and Jennifer

A Message from the Moderators

We share our deep thanks and gratitude to the Long-Range Planning Committee for their tireless work on this Strategic Plan. It is clearly evident that the committee spent much time in discernment and discussions to bring this plan to life. We have gotten regular updates from the committee as to their process and progress and are very proud of them and our involved church community for this effort.

As we step forward to embrace and live this plan, we know that it will provide more clarity in our purpose-driven spiritual life both as individuals and a community.

Our wish for the church is for this plan to take on a life of its own as a living, breathing, and evolving guide. May it grow organically in and among us all.

In service,

Amy D'Alessandro, Moderator
Rodger Wutzl, Vice Moderator

PRAY: FAITH FORMATION & EXPRESSION

“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”

~ Jesus (John 8:31)

“God is spirit, and we who worship must worship in spirit and in truth.”

~ Jesus (John 4:24)

“It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High.”

~ Psalm 92:1

Faith Formation is the process of developing disciples through study, worship and relationships built on trust, so that a strong spiritual foundation supports everything we offer in service to God. This growth process should help our members become more “united in Christ’s love,” and better equipped to share that love with each other, as well as with the wider community.

GOALS

- **Involve more adults & young people in faith formation opportunities.**
- **Teach the Good News of the inclusive love of Christ across all generations.**
- **Encourage disciples of all ages to live out and express their faith.**

STRATEGY 1. Center ourselves on the inclusive message and mission of Jesus.

Seed Ideas:

- *Find service projects that include all ages, as well as a faith component*
- *Communicate and share weekly themes to better connect CE, music and worship*
- *Encourage church family members of all ages to participate in more activities beyond Sunday morning (i.e. Great Pumpkin challenge, UCC summer camps, small group studies, etc.)*
- *Develop and lead a new, more inclusive Vacation Bible School for our community*

- *Organize Silver Lake retreats (i.e. a family or Youth Group weekend)*

STRATEGY 2. Include multi-generational and multi-cultural themes in worship and educational opportunities.

Seed Ideas:

- *Bring in guest speakers regularly, for both adults and young people*
 - *At church school registration ask families if there are specific topics they are interested in or programs they could offer (such as cultural traditions)*
 - *Encourage Men's and Women's Fellowship to bring in speakers on topics that interest their groups*
 - *Communicate this strategy more widely (i.e. in e-blast ask, "Do you have an idea for a speaker? Is there a topic you'd like to discuss? Do you have a contact from whom you think the congregation would like to hear?")*
- *Develop weekly themes for worship & CE that strengthen our connections with how we might "live our faith" more effectively out in the world*
 - *In e-blasts share "What the children are learning this week..."*
 - *Offer questions to help continue faith discussions at home, school or work*
 - *Develop seasonal themes and offer ways to communicate them through the website, social media posts, signs, ads or flyers*
- *Ask everyone to attend and invite a newcomer to an activity beyond Sunday morning (i.e. Great Pumpkin Challenge, summer activity, Advent Workshop, etc.)*

STRATEGY 3. Increase awareness of CCB programs through social media.

Seed Ideas:

- *Expand our social media team, to include a mix of youth and adults, to increase awareness of faith formation programs*
- *Social Media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) should be public and coordinated with other CCB communications through the Church Office*
- *Plan for weekly posts regarding the theme of the week*
 - *Could include questions similar to the engagement bullets in the Sunday worship e-blast (could even be the same questions copied forward)*

- *Plan for one to two monthly posts about church activities or opportunities to serve (beyond Church School and Sunday worship)*
- *Plan for multiple posts to inspire participation in events, and encourage everyone to share them widely*
- *Consider cross promotion with other platforms like Brookfield Cares, Fairfield East Association (UCC churches in our eastern half of Fairfield County) and Newtown Moms (which also covers the entire northern Fairfield County)*

STRATEGY 4. Foster a vibrant music program to praise, express joy, and open up creative arts to everyone as another avenue for faith expression.

Seed Ideas:

- *Offer other musicians (both from the congregation and community) the opportunity to share their time and talents through song at one or both services*
- *Invite church musicians, as well as newcomers or community members, to events like Yankee Fair, Barn Dances or Talent Show, perhaps adding an open mic option for newcomers or community members*
- *Organize faith-based music and worship events at our Labyrinth, Campfire Circle and Outdoor Chapel*

SHARE: SERVICE & OUTREACH

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?”

~Micah 6:8

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

~ Paul’s Letter to the Philippians 2:3-4

“...and He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

~Luke 9:2

Service and outreach are part of our call as disciples to bear witness to God’s love by making space to learn about and from others, to humbly serve, and to make a difference in the world, locally and/or globally, whether in hands-on acts of service, or support of charity.

GOALS

- **Discern and connect all our service and outreach work to our CCB vision to “*Live Our Faith*” as a congregation of active disciples.**
- **Share examples of how service and outreach to others is biblically based.**
- **Share how a life of active discipleship, in works of service and outreach, helps to grow the faith of others and supports our own spiritual growth.**
- **Increase participation in a wide variety of hands-on service opportunities through improved church-wide communication and personal invitation.**
- **Advocate for greater financial support for local, national and global ministries. Strive for our membership to be financially committed to our church.**

STRATEGY 5. Use sermons, in-betweens, small group discussions, handouts, e-blasts to increase our awareness of the connection between faith and service and outreach, as well as the various service opportunities afforded us and in which we participate.

Seed Ideas:

- *Pastors work with various committees on a sermon series:*
 - *To connect biblical topics to current service and outreach themes, classes and projects*
 - *To share the message of Jesus in connecting charitable giving to active service including ministries addressing social issues*
 - *Offer guidance on how to incorporate our CCB mission and vision into our daily lives*
- *Identify and share relevant books, workbooks, videos, devotionals*
- *Offer an “all church read” on currently relevant issues*
- *Plan and execute short-term small group discussions on social themes that call us to learn, understand and adjust to our ever changing world*
- *Offer monthly devotional e-blasts that make connections between worship themes and the hands-on service work we do*
- *Equip ourselves with skills for making meaningful outreach connections*

STRATEGY 6. Discover and encourage the callings of individuals with gifts to serve others.

Seed Ideas:

- *Invite - When in fellowship, inside or outside of CCB, personally invite others to participate in an event or service activity*
- *Share meaningful stories of serving others in a monthly “Service and Outreach Moment” during Sunday services*
- *Encourage committees to collaborate on service opportunities that can involve more people, both from within the church and from the wider community*
 - *Publish “Help Wanted” notices for specific service projects and outreach projects*
 - *Increase use of Social Media in spreading word of such events*

STRATEGY 7. Use social media and our website to share how we as a church community “Live Our Faith” in the world.

Seed Ideas:

- *Create and maintain a vibrant and engaging service web page*
 - *Publish and share invitations to hands-on service and outreach opportunities*
 - *Celebrate service activities/events with photos and comments*
 - *Highlight stories of our CCB service contributions and their impact*
- *Identify, invite, support and maintain an active relationship with a specific on-going service, mission or outreach project locally or globally*

WELCOME: ENGAGEMENT & FELLOWSHIP

***“Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me,
and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”***
~ Matthew 10:40

“The Holy Spirit is present whenever believers gather together.”
~ Matthew 18:20

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.”
~ Ephesians 4:3

Fellowship is the gathering of Christians to enjoy God’s gift of shared relationships, where we work together faithfully to welcome and actively engage all participants – building a community of mutual love and respect to do God’s work.

GOALS

- **Build a faithful culture of caring and respect through formal and informal groups and events.**
- **Encourage current members to try new things and be more active, and invite newcomers to get more involved sooner.**
- **Increase awareness of who we are and what we do at CCB inside our Church and externally in our community...and beyond.**
- **Provide resources and offer opportunities to understand and use faith language and share faith stories (i.e. in small groups or in Faith Moments/ Calls to Share in worship).**
- **Ensure everyone has a voice in decision making, fostering active engagement and inclusion.**

STRATEGY 8. Equip people to initiate and lead new visionary ministries.

Seed Ideas:

- *Current leaders invite and mentor young adults to encourage new ideas*
- *Committees look for ways to engage CCB in fun, off-campus events*
- *Encourage the formation of new small groups, as needed*

- *Recruit and assign new members a mentor to guide them to further involvement*
- *Survey members (new and existing) on most important projects/causes and invite them to become more involved*
- *LRPC, with the guidance of our church leadership, assist our church community to continue casting a vision of who we hope to become*
- *Stay current with church best practices through denominational resources*

STRATEGY 9. Reinforce the joy of Fellowship by creating and facilitating events where we can support and encourage one another and build community bonds.

Seed Ideas:

- *Meet, eat and worship together more frequently, and celebrate those experiences*
- *Lift up “unseen ministries” of those doing routine or mundane activities (i.e. recognize the work of volunteers in Church School, Morrison’s Gang, Thrift Shop, etc. and other behind-the-scenes time & talent offerings to support our church)*
- *Encourage and arrange for Fellowship opportunities inside/outside of church*

STRATEGY 10. Improve our communications to better connect ministries and people.

Seed Ideas:

- *Learn how people of varying ages prefer to engage and communicate, and share new methods (such as developing social media tools and literacy, encouraging online respect)*
- *Identify a point person or group with gifts for multi-source communication*
- *Better promote and encourage participation in leadership training - to educate membership on where things are, how to use platforms and how to share*

STRATEGY 11. Enhance or create relationships within our wider community.

Seed Ideas:

- *Each committee sponsors one internal or external fellowship activity per year*
- *Collaborate with neighboring churches for events and programs*
- *Create a working calendar of shared events, service and worship opportunities*
- *Intentionally welcome newcomers with some form of immediate response (i.e., Sunday afternoon email, banana bread visitation or other meaningful contact)*
- *Invite our local community to CCB programs and events*

ORGANIZATIONAL FOUNDATION

*“But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” ~ 1 Corinthians
14:40*

We can organize ourselves together as a church with an eye toward our vision and accomplishing our mission matters. To accomplish our faith, service and engagement goals, it is vital to understand our present organizational state, and ensure that our facilities, financials, clergy, staff support, technology, and foundational groundwork are optimized for the future. We hope this section will be a guide for church leaders to begin to strategize for how to best evaluate, gain insights, organize, develop and socialize any recommendations to better serve our organizational needs. With God’s help, we will be able to build together on this foundation, moving forward with sustained enthusiasm and energy.

GOALS

- **Educate and engage all CCB leaders (and congregation) in understanding existing church structures, guidelines, and needs for ongoing operation.**
- **Evaluate the existing organization of CCB for functional effectiveness and develop recommendations for future-looking ministry needs.**

STRATEGY 1. Form an Organizational Effectiveness task force to execute on above goals (including LRPC & Council reps, church staff, Nominating, Stewardship or Financial team, and Personnel members) to collect and share educational materials and evaluate all our CCB operating practices, policies and structure for Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats.

Seed Ideas:

- *Create & execute a survey to gain feedback on the effectiveness of various processes, organizational and physical structures, and the systems utilized to maintain them.*
- *Follow up on survey by engaging all church leaders in discussion and brainstorming for the future*
- *Create leadership training opportunities with topics like:*

- *How prayer in meetings can build community and help us seek God’s vision for our work together*
- *How to foster respectful and effective communications, especially in times of stress or conflict*
- *How to set committee objectives and brainstorm creatively for new ideas*
- *How to build and follow an agenda, take and share meeting minutes, focus and encourage productive discussion, follow up on action items, etc.*
- *Teach others on use of technology tools including video conferencing, support for hybrid meetings and effective collaboration for documents and retention of data*

STRATEGY 2. Increase Financial Awareness from members of our congregation about CCB Endowment assets, endowment history, Legacy Giving, fund restrictions. Elaborate on how CCB’s financial assets make an impact for our congregation and the wider community.

Seed Ideas:

- *Expand and update the CCB “Show Me The Money” document to focus on General Endowment history, the unique delegation of Restricted and Unrestricted Assets, the purpose of ‘Total Spending Rule’ methodology for supporting the annual withdrawal from endowment assets that support both the ongoing operational needs and mission/outreach needs of the church*
- *Tell the stories of the saints that helped create the sturdy financial foundation we enjoy today in writing, worship, committee meetings, etc.*
- *Coordinate semi-annually with other local church finance leaders to share ideas and develop ‘best practices’ surrounding sustainable endowments, legacy giving, bookkeeping, financial accounting, technology, etc.*

STRATEGY 3. Assess current and long-term staffing needs.

Seed Ideas:

- *Align the deliverables of the All-Church Plan and annual church priorities with pastor and staff goals*
 - *Initiate thoughtful dialogue with clergy and staff to discern where they want to be in three years and how church leadership might help them get there*

- *Better communicate the structure regarding what body (bodies) in the church has responsibility for developing and supervising the daily/weekly/ annual priorities of clergy and staff, as well as receiving and providing feedback*
- *Re-evaluate staff job descriptions, priorities and boundaries*
 - *Work with church leadership and staff to help set clear boundaries*
 - *Clearly define and communicate CCB's "hours of operation"*
- *Become more of a "teaching church" with pastors and/or other staff embracing mentorship opportunities*

STRATEGY 4. Assess and define CCB's financial needs to improve sustainability.

Seed Ideas:

- *Assess how we can improve the revenue stream needed to cover our three major expenses: staff salaries, facilities/campus maintenance, and outreach*
- *Consider increase in annual financial support from existing members, expand the number of members, identify 'contributing' community users for our facilities*
- *Determine how broadly or narrowly we define 'self-sustaining' - striving to care for our CCB needs while living our faith and following our call to reach beyond our walls*
- *Create document summarizing revenue sources going back 10+ years and consider where these revenue sources stand today*
- *Create a separate listing of ideas for potential future revenue sources. This can support development of a blueprint for a sustainable annual revenue stream to fully support all the ministries of CCB.*

STRATEGY 5. Evaluate use and stewardship of the physical assets of our church campus. Develop a plan for clear oversight, maintenance and care of our campus facilities with a lens towards more fully utilizing the properties we have inherited for ministry.

Seed Ideas:

- *Keep current our church maintenance plan and review annually for projected capital expenditures and identify the financial plan/resources that will be required to support the maintenance plan expenditures*

- *Ask the Facilities Use Committee to identify types of outside users we want to attract (and why) and invite them to consider using our campus*
- *Develop and use technology tools that improve connectivity for the overall church campus and inspire more creative facilities use for our ministries and beyond*
- *As a welcoming congregation, we can improve our ‘welcome’ in all ways - improve our signage to make it clear how to access our campus, navigate our parking lots, walkways/sidewalks, main church entrance, stairwells, hallways, church entry, church school wing entry. The look of our church campus is a visitor's first impression of our congregation.*

A Final Word

Thank you for the time you took to read over and prayerfully reflect on our proposed All Church Plan. LRPC members have spent countless hours trying to find the words that live in all of our hearts about what we find so special here to help foster a vision of the future.

Our committee members come from different generations of this church. We are all at different stages in our own faith journeys. One common theme we do share are the feelings of **HOME** and **LOVE** that we have found within CCB's walls. It is such feelings that bind us together to imagine and boldly bring us into the coming years as a church.

As we share this new All Church Plan, we are excited about looking ahead together. We believe this All-Church plan is a document that captures so much of what we have ALWAYS done beautifully at CCB – practicing kindness, welcoming, teaching, supporting, challenging, growing, and keeping our 266-year-old church a living, breathing entity.

Sometimes just putting words to goals helps people unite. That is our hope with creating and embracing this All Church Plan. We hope you will be inspired to join us in recommitting to our shared CCB mission and vision by taking time to work together - making plans and taking action steps that will make it possible to achieve our goals. We hope that through this document and the actions we all take over the next 3 years, we can keep building this incredible community of faith and ensure the next generation will know the extravagant welcome of Christ's love that makes it possible for us to find purpose, peace hope and joy and to joyfully serve God, one another and the world.

Note: *If you have thoughts, feedback or suggestions to share with our committee, please call the church office or share an email to office@uccb.org to ensure you are best connected.*