



**Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Office of Congregational Stewardship Services**

ASSESSMENT VISIT REPORT

Name of Congregation: Emerson Unitarian Universalist Chapel
73 Strecker Road
Ellisville, MO 63011-1944
636.256.7393
www.emersonuuchapel.org

Minister: The Reverend Krista Taves
417.343.8657
minister@emersonuuchapel.org

President: Lisa Parnell
314.607.6011
orleanscat@yahoo.com

Contact Persons: Shawna and Jim Lyonfields
636.751.6100 (cell)
636.484.2603 (office)
Shawna.lyonfields@consulttad.com
Lisa Parnell
314.607.6011
orleanscat@yahoo.com

Number of Members: 118	Number of Pledges: 83 (includes teens)
Annual Pledge Income: \$159,595	Annual Budget: \$175,643
Average Pledge: \$1,920	Median Pledge: \$1,200
Fair Share Congregation: No	

Mortgage: \$296,824. 20-year amortization; interest rate (5%), reset every five years. Refinanced in 2010.

Operating Reserves: \$43,216

Nature of Annual Stewardship Campaign: Kickoff Sunday with individual stewardship conversations.

Date and Purpose of Last Capital Campaign: The last Capital Campaign raised \$350,000 in 2000 to build a new sanctuary.

Status of Vision and Mission Statement and Strategic Plan: Mission and Vision Statement adopted in 2009

Actions to Increase Inclusivity: Established Love First to increase social action efforts. Beginning in November 2010, gives all undesignated funds in weekly collection to social justice causes.

UUA Consultants in Last Three Years:

Dori Davenport, Central Midwest District Program Consultant, for DRE startup, Fall 2010.
Ian Evison, Central Midwest District Executive, for transition of minister to full-time from part-time, Fall 2010.

Proposed Project and Estimated Cost: Emerson Chapel needs to increase its program space but is undecided whether to build on current site or relocate. Undetermined at this time.

Steps Taken to Prepare for This Project: Completed an initial strategic plan and identified options to accommodate growth of congregation from 87 members and 35 children youth in January 2009 to 118 members and 65 children and youth in January 2011.

Summary of the Assessment Visit: The Board President of Emerson Chapel contacted the UUA Congregational Stewardship Services to request an assessment visit. UUA Consultants Dave Rickard and Bill Clontz conducted the assessment visit. Prior to the on-site visit, Dave and Bill received and reviewed a substantial amount of material on finances, membership, bylaws, programs, staffing, church history, and several years of Annual Reports. Dave also had telephone conversations in advance of the visit with:

- Rev. Krista Taves, Parish Minister
- Shawna and Jim Lyonfields, Assessment Visit Planning Points of Contact
- Lisa Parnell, Board President

Objective of the Assessment Visit: The Assessment Visit focused on the questions raised by the church leadership: Is Emerson Chapel in a position to conduct a successful capital campaign to relieve the crowded conditions created by strong growth in recent years and projected to continue? What are the options for meeting these space needs? What is the best process to use to arrive at a sound and timely decision? See Annex A for the Assessment Visit Agenda and Annex B for congregational meeting attendees (an impressive turnout).

Overall, we found a strong and vibrant community with some challenges and many opportunities before it.

A. Commendations and Strengths

- **A strong sense of church community:** We met with the professional staff, almost all of the lay leadership, and close to one-half of the congregation in meetings on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We were impressed with the sense of community, shared sense of purpose and willingness to work together over challenging issues. This will serve you well in the months ahead.



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- **An exceptional youth focus:** The leadership and the Congregation have wisely invested their time and energy in engaging and developing youth as full members of the congregation, and your young people have responded. A multi-year commitment in this direction has paid, and will continue to pay, dividends as evidenced by the high percentage of youth that are contributing members. We were disappointed that no youth members attended the open congregational meeting on Saturday, even though the date had been chosen to accommodate other youth activities. We hope young members will take the opportunity to engage in follow on activities.
- **Spacious land at your current location:** The property appears to have ample land for expansion, should the congregation choose that option at some point. However, we do not know what effect local zoning laws and regulations might have on that option. The single access point driveway is a matter of concern in terms of traffic flow and safety that will take thoughtful management.
- **An attractive sanctuary with some room to grow:** Your sanctuary is an exceptionally pleasant and welcoming space. It is beginning to feel full, but it is the least stressed of your principal spaces and does have some reserve capacity. The congregation is to be commended for the construction and atmosphere of this excellent worship space.
- **Your buildings have some strengths:** You have a facility that has benefited from good maintenance and utilities upgrades and an existing plan for expansion.
- **A growing congregation, reflecting your unique role as a liberal beacon:** This congregation is growing, with a very substantial increase in membership, attendance, and RE enrollment in recent years. Several members expressed to us their pride in Emerson Chapel's role as a liberal voice in the wider community, and a desire to be an even larger and more effective presence representing UU principles.
- **A healthy cash reserve:** You have approximately three months of cash reserves on hand at your current operations level. This is healthier than many congregations and if maintained, will be helpful when talking to outside finance sources.
- **A favorable rate on your current loan:** Your refinance rate on your current loan is exceptionally good, again putting you in a better position as you talk with the financial community.
- **A vigorous and growing religious education program:** This is clearly a success story in every sense of the term, and a core reason for your exceptional growth in recent years. The rapid turnover in DREs does not appear to have had the negative impact it might have had. The fact that a well-qualified DRE was recruited so quickly this summer bodes well for the future. This program area appears to be the most pressing of need for additional space and facilities.

- **Much good planning and analysis already done on facilities:** The strategic plan and initial analysis by the Space Task Force have been completed. Our recommendations build on these two important initiatives.
- **A strong and varied music program:** The music program reflects the collective personality of Emerson Chapel. It is lively, varied, and inclusive and draws on exceptional in-house talent. It is an important part of the life of the congregation. This is a toe tappin' congregation and better for it.
- **Dedicated, hard working leaders and staff:** Emerson Chapel has all the talent required for success in its endeavors. The professional and support staff are well qualified and motivated; the elected leadership works together well and understands what is important. A particular strength we observed was the breadth and depth of informal leaders – those not in elected positions, but passionate about the institution and the community and willing to go the extra mile to be of service. This combination of talent and dedication across the board will prove invaluable in the months ahead as you deal with big issues as the congregation looks to leaders they trust to do the right thing and do it well.

B. Observations and Challenges

- **Pressing program area facility and parking requirements:** As noted earlier, the Sanctuary has some room to grow, but not much. The office and administrative area is functional, but with no room for growth or adaptation to change and little privacy. The Commons area is quite full on Sundays and noisy – not the best environment to welcome visitors. RE and similar spaces are bursting at the seams, the most pressing of your needs. Traffic flow within the building can be problematic, either disrupting classes/meetings or requiring people to go in indirect patterns to enter or exit. The parking lot is near capacity and has a single, narrow point of entry and exit.
- **Strategic Plan.** The strategic plan represents a very good start on where the congregation needs to be, and it benefits from solid methodology. It needs to be completed and expanded as noted in the recommendations section of this report.
- **Current Debt:** You have a current debt that would likely consume much of the proceeds from selling the current property and while held, would likely preclude additional borrowing at any appreciable level.
- **Giving Patterns:** Analysis of giving data (See Annex C) indicates a high vulnerability with a very few donors accounting for a significant portion of giving, too many members in the lower two quartiles of giving, and a significant number of members who do not pledge at all.
- **Budget Drive:** The last annual budget drive fell short, not an unusual circumstance in these economic times, and you dealt with it effectively. Nevertheless, a capital campaign should begin in an environment wherein the membership is comfortable



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that regular operations are fully supported and the debt service manageable.

C. Recommendations

1. **Annual Budget Drive (ABD):** Lay the ground work for an excellent Annual Budget Drive next year, including the best possible Visiting Steward training, broader use of the UUA Suggested Fair Share Guide, progress on more balanced giving distribution and fewer non pledging members. The goals are financial success, a good time by all who participate, an extended healthy congregational conversation about stewardship, and a foundation for a possible capital campaign.

2. **Strategic Plan:** Complete your strategic plan in the following areas:
 - A. Fill out the congregation's mission and vision by describing in as much detail as can be realistically established what the congregation will look like in 5 years. This should include size and demographics of the congregation, numbers of programs, Sunday services attendance, and RE enrollment and attendance. The completed plan will provide the basis for making the Building Needs Assessment (see below).

A note of caution: projections of any kind should not be based on a short period of two or three years. When possible, draw on at least 5-10 years of data to establish realistic baselines that are not skewed by unusual but short-term trends. Being optimistic but conservative will provide your best foundation.

 - B. Prioritize your goals and desires. We recommend that rather than expending excessive energy enumerating every priority, simply group them into three bands of Most Important and/or Urgent, Pressing and Highly Desirable, and Desirable/Likely Deferred (but NOT ignored).

 - C. Develop and implement a Membership Development plan. We have provided you some sample guidelines in this area. Such a plan provides the guidelines and measurable goals that everyone can support with specific actions and will provide the best opportunity to ensure your projections match your results, and therefore your facility plans and investments are of the right scope.

3. **Needs Assessment:** Complete a more detailed needs assessment, by space and function. Base this assessment on the strategic plan you will have completed. This assessment will shape your conversations with architects, realtors, zoning officials, and yourselves. It is the first step toward making your goals and dreams into something measurable, and something on which to base cost estimates.

4. **Market Value:** To evaluate the options available, it is well to have a realistic estimate of the value of the current property. Appraisals of property of this kind do not always provide the best guidance because the property is unique. Usually, the

best way to find its value is to list it for sale with a real estate broker and see what interest and offers (if any) emerge. Just because the property is listed, you are not obligated to sell it.

5. **Other Properties:** Work with local realtors to review on a recurring basis possible properties, including churches and other structures. This will help you be ready to make a decision should an option develop, and will help gauge the prospects for selling your current property, should you choose to do so.
6. **Architect:** Contract with a local architect who has worked with churches to evaluate your current site in view of your needs assessment, estimated resources available, and zoning requirements. You may have far more or far fewer options on the current site than expected, but you will not know until you obtain professional advice. The right architect will also provide advice in dealing with local authorities and, in due course, general contractors. We recommend issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to solicit architects for this step. We also urge you to review “Your Architect and You,” a publication of the American Institute of Architects. It can be found at www.aia-mn.org/_assets/pdf/youandyourarchitect.pdf.
7. **Building Fund:** Establish and publicize a building fund. Advise the congregation of special option for this year for persons 70½ years of age to make transfers from their IRAs without tax consequences. We also recommend that you establish Memorial and Honoraria Program to benefit the Building Fund. We have provided Emerson Chapel leaders with information on these options. If necessary, member notes may also be considered for start up funds (but should not be considered for the general building phase); we have provided additional information on this option as well.
8. **Prepare for a Capital Campaign:** Next spring begin now to organize a capital campaign team, as this can be a time consuming process and involves a significant number of people for a congregation of Emerson’s size. We have provided some recommended structures at Annex D.

Proposed Time Lines Consulting Needs for Implementing Recommendations:

The steps listed below are essential and generally should be carried out in the sequence indicated. How quickly they occur is up to the leadership to decide – the dates below are notional to the extent that the congregation may move faster or slower, as is best for the institution.

Our recommendations follow a three-step process of preparatory work setting the stage for success, followed by due diligence and filling in the blanks, followed by decisions and completion of the process. At some point the process will vary, depending on whether the decision is to build on the current site, in which case rather precise timelines can be established and carried out; if a relocation is the option chosen, the timelines are necessarily more variable and indeterminate, as process depends on your ability to sell your current property at a time and price that is acceptable and locate a suitable new location at an acceptable price.



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- Immediately- Share this report with the congregation and conduct Town Meetings to discuss the way forward.
- SEP- If these recommendations are accepted, establish and publish a calendar of events and deliverables so everyone knows the benchmarks, timelines, and goals along the way.
- SEP – NOV
 - Complete the Strategic Plan
 - Establish and publicize the Building Fund
 - Complete detailed Needs Assessment
- NOV – Review progress with Consultant, begin planning consultations for ABD
- DEC-JAN 2012
 - Contract with an architect and review options. Initial meeting with zoning and other appropriate authorities.
 - Begin regular consultations with a realtor for possible purchase options
- FEB – Recruit ABD Visiting Stewards and plan for Visiting Stewards training. Planning consultation with Consultant
- MAR
 - Visiting Steward training, ABD plans and publications completed
 - Minister returns from sabbatical
- APR – Conduct and celebrate a successful ABD
- APR-MAY – Conclude Facilities Options review and financial analysis
- JUN – Congregational meeting and two part vote
 - Accept the mission to deliberately expand and serve a growing congregation
 - Accept leadership recommendation for the direction of the capital program

NOTE: There is no problem with delaying this vote, perhaps calling a special congregational meeting in the fall or doing this in JAN 2012. Given the absence of the Minister for several months early in the year, you may wish to consider this extended timeline. Do what makes sense for the congregation as you progress
- SEP and Beyond – Move forward with building or relocation effort, as the analysis and vote determine
- TBD – Conduct a detailed Financial Feasibility Study once a decision is made to move or stay in place. The study is not useful until members know specifically what they are being asked to support.

Consulting Options

Task	Prospective Schedule	Consulting Time and Costs
Assessment Visit Recommendations Progress Review	NOV- DEC 2011	Telephone Conference + prep/follow up - 2 hrs \$330 if Fair Share, \$396 if not Fair Share
2012 Annual Budget Drive Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine plans, general consulting Train visiting stewards 	Winter 2011 to plan, organize, recruit, communicate w/ congregation; FEB – MAR leadership recruits Visiting Stewards; March 2012 for ABD and training for visiting stewards	Total of 2 days, including one visit, phone and email support + maximum of 6 hrs round trip travel \$2,640 + \$990 = \$2310 if fair share, \$3,168 + \$1,188=\$4356 if not FS
Support for Annual/ Special Congregational Meeting	If desired, to address issues with the Congregation: Special Meeting fall 2011, or annual meeting JAN or MAY 2012 – when congregation is ready to make decisions	1 day visit, preceded by telephone consultations and email support + maximum of 6 hrs round trip travel \$1,320 + \$990 = \$2310 if fair share, \$1,584 + \$1188=\$2772 if not FS
Capital Campaign Financial Feasibility Study & Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop list of Study participants Conduct study Prepare analysis & report 	To Be Determined, based on option chosen to (A) improve the current location, or (B) move to new site. If A, following the decision by the congregational to do so, likely beginning as early as Fall of 2011 If B, preparatory planning should begin as soon as practicable (see structure on Annex D of this report) following congregational decision to do so and go into standby mode until a property is available	1 day for Study preparation, initial data analysis, selection of households & questionnaire, email, and phone consultations \$1,320 if fair share, \$1,584 if not FS 3 days for 24 (20% of members) 1e- hour interviews on-site* and data collation + maximum of 6 hrs round trip travel \$3,960 + \$990 = \$4950 Fair Share, \$4752 + 1188 = \$5940 if not FS 2 days for data analysis, report prep \$2,640 if Fair Share, \$3,168 if not FS
Capital Campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop plans Assist campaign □ prep and materials Train visiting stewards for capital campaign OR for combined campaign 	Depending on Options chosen to improve or move: Winter 2011 for planning, organizing, recruiting, communicating with congregation; March 2012 for ABD/Capital Campaign execution and to conduct orientation (training) sessions for visiting stewards (Could slip a year +, depending on option chosen and market factors)	3 days including 1 day on site visit and conferences, email support + maximum of 6 hrs round trip travel \$3,960 + \$990 = \$4950 Fair Share, \$4752 + \$1188 = \$5940 if not FS
End of Process Review, Follow Up Actions	Evaluation and close out, date TBD	½ day on site plus 6 hours travel \$660 + \$990 = \$1,650 if Fair Share, \$792 + \$1,188 = \$1,980 if not FS
Total Consultations:	12.5 days +Travel	\$20,460 Fair Share, \$26,136 not FS



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Conclusion

It was our pleasure working with Emerson UU Chapel, its leadership, staff, and members on this initial assessment. You have challenges before you, but they are mostly the kind other congregations would like to have, resulting largely from your growth in numbers and programs.

A solid planning process and an appropriate sense of moving with all due haste will bring you to the best decisions to serve the mission and the congregation for years to come.

David L. Rickard
UUA Congregational Stewardship Consultant
September 3, 2011

William R. Clontz
William R. Clontz
UUA Congregational Stewardship Consultant
September 3, 2011

Annex A - Assessment Visit Schedule

Friday, August 26, 2011

- 4 to 5 PM Consultants met with Reverend Taves and toured facility – and grounds. Made introductions, reviewed goals for the weekend, and shared insights into congregation
- 5 to 6:30 PM Consultants had supper with Lisa Parnell, Reverend Taves, and several other leaders – introductions, goals for the weekend, background
- 7 to 9:15 PM Board and staff met with consultants– goals for weekend, hopes and concerns for the congregation

Saturday, August 27, 2011

- 8:30 to 9 AM In-gathering with light breakfast
- 9:00 AM to Noon Workshop open to all members and friends of Emerson Chapel – gain understanding of the challenges and opportunities as seen by the members and friends, Discussed steps taken to get the congregation to this point, discussed options to meet the need for additional space, reviewed how a capital campaign could work for either a relocation or an onsite improvement option.
- 1:30 to 3 PM Select leaders met with consultants to determine next steps, set a tentative schedule, and discuss consulting needs

Sunday, August 28, 2011

- 9:00 to 9:50 AM Consultants provided briefing on findings and recommendations
- 10 to 11 AM Sunday worship
- 11:15 AM to noon Consultants met with members to discuss findings and recommendations and answer questions
- 12:15 PM to 1:15 PM Closing meeting with the leadership

September 9, 2011 – Target date set for sending this Assessment Report with Recommendations and Tentative Schedule to Emerson Chapel.



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**Annex B
Attendees at August 26 - 28 Meetings**

<u>ATTENDEES</u>	Saturday 9-12	Sunday 9-9:45	Sunday 11:30-12:15
Baker, Pat	X	X	
Baumoel, Debbie	X	X	X
Behrer, Carole			X
Belt, Nancy	X		X
Boehmer, Maury			X
Brown, Barb	X		
Colwell, Peggy			
Colwell, Terry			
Davidson, Laura	X		
Ehret, Paula			X
Elmore, Bill			X
Everett, Pat			X
Fish, Mark	X		
Fish, Nancy	X	X	
Gamlin, Chris		X	
Gidday, Jeff	X		
Gidday, Linda	X		
Grizzle, Melissa	X		X
Harvey, Steve		X	
Herman, Camille	X		X
Herman, Stan	X		
Howard, Karyl		X	
Hungerford, Greg		X	
Hungerford, Joy			X
Jones, Steve			X
Kehler, Ann		X	X
Kehler, Larry		X	X
Landauer, Charles	X		
Linda McAffrey	X	X	
Lyerla, Lauren	X	X	
Lyonfields, Jim			X
Lyonfields, Shawna	X		X
Maag, Betty	X	X	X
Maag, Ken	X	X	X
MacLaren, Phyllis	X		X
Marion, Cynthia		X	
Myers, Jo		X	
Nelson, Scott			X
Newell, Dorothy	X		X
O'Hara, Lana			X
Ortinau, Marilyn	X		X
Parnell, Lisa	X	X	X
Reece, Morrie	X		

Reece, Sue	X		
Russell, Nancy			X
Saphian, Marcy	X		X
Saphian, Russ	X		X
Schwab, Allen			
Schwab, Phyllis			
Seyer, Jan	X		
Seyer, Vince	X		X
Susan Stafford	X		X
Taves, Krista	X		
Wheeler, Kirsten	X	X	
TOTALS	31	17	28



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**Annex C
Emerson Chapel
Quartile Analysis of Giving**

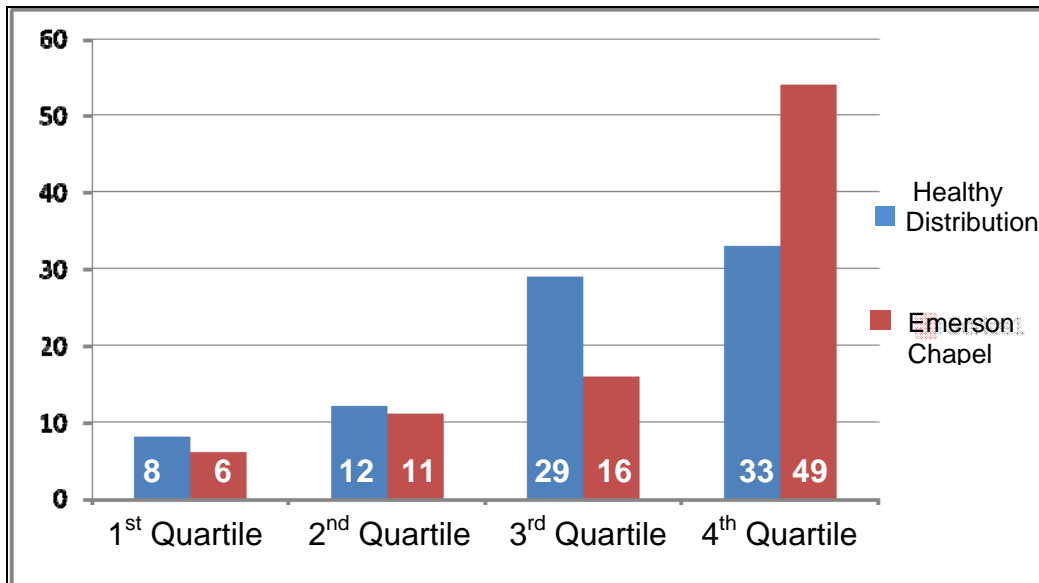
Quartile	Number of donors	Healthy Distribution of donors, based on 82 donors	% of Total Donors	Healthy % of Total Donors	Amount Committed	Quartile Average Commitment
1 st Quartile	6	8	7%	10%	\$47,399	\$7,900
2 nd Quartile	11	12	13%	15%	\$41,147	\$3,741
3 rd Quartile	16	29	20%	35%	\$37,823	\$2,364
4 th Quartile	49	33	60%	40%	\$33,226	\$678

Total Number of Households Committing: 82*

Total Amounts Committed: \$159,595

***82 households distribution does not reflect that 19 households, or 19% of the Congregation, make no commitment**

Distribution of Commitment Units



Annex D

Potential Capital Campaign Team

Committees for the Capital Campaign Process

This is a general list that shows the various committees that are normally used in the Capital Campaign process, their recommended size and tenure, and their responsibilities. The dates and times are obviously can change as the congregation requires; they are included here as representative of the time and structure that the process normally requires.

In the early stages, several committees are working at the same time. If all the steps were carried out linearly, this would add months to the process. Be clear about what steps are sequentially dependent variables and which are independent.

Strategic Planning Committee (SPC)

Membership: 3 Tenure: Three months

- Complete the strategic plan as noted above.
- Assess the program needs for the next five years.
- Ensure you have developed databases on membership, worship attendance, religious education enrollment and attendance, pledge units, and other data as noted in the strategic plan recommendations, above.
- Prepare a membership development plan for the recruitment and integration of new members and the retention of existing members.
- Prepare draft forecasts of expenses and revenues for five-year period.
- Coordinate draft plan with the committees and the staff.
- Circulate draft among the congregation for their review and comment.
- Present strategic operating plan to the Board for approval.
- Maintain the strategic plan by annual updates.

Building Needs Assessment Committee (BNAC)

Membership: 3 Tenure: Three months

- Using data developed in the Strategic Plan, develop a statement of the space needs to support the mission and vision of the congregation.
- Survey the congregation on the relative importance of the various elements of the space needs.
- Develop a draft Program Statement to guide the architect in evaluating the current site.
- Circulate the draft Program Statement to the congregation for review and comment.



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- Present a Program Statement to the Board of Trustees for its approval prior to congregational action.

Architect Selection Committee (ASC)

Membership: 3 Tenure: Three months

- Develop list of candidate firms and individuals.
- Prepare preliminary information about the project to send to candidates.
- Request each interested party to submit a Statement of Qualifications and estimated cost for evaluating the possibility of meeting needs at the Fellowship. May do this through a published Request for Quotes.
- Evaluate responses and select three to five firms/individuals for interviews.
- Recommend firm/individual to the Board.

Building Design Committee (BDC) (if needed)

Membership: 3 Tenure: Six months

- Work with architect to evaluate the ability of current facility to meet the needs identified in the Program Statement.
- If feasible, develop preliminary drawings and cost estimates for meeting the needs on the current site.
- Involve the congregation in reviewing the information developed by the architect.
- Recommend to the Board of Trustees whether the current site will meet the needs. If so, present the preferred design alternative prior to congregation for acceptance.

Capital Campaign Steering Committee (CCSC) [If the capital campaign is done in conjunction with the annual Stewardship Canvass, then the CCSC assumes responsibility for both.]

Membership: 5 Tenure: 12 months, may be extended an additional six months

- Develop publicity and education plan.
- Select persons to be interviewed for the feasibility study.
- Develop brochures for campaign.
- Plan canvass including Kickoff Event.
- Organize face-to-face canvass.
- Establish record keeping and billing system for capital campaign pledges.

Construction Committee (CC) (if needed)

Membership: 5 Tenure: Indeterminate until decision on location

- Evaluate and recommend contractor(s) to the Board of Trustees.
- Work with architect on necessary permits and governmental approvals.
- Develop phasing for the building project, if necessary.
- Oversee the construction.

NOTES:

1. For purposes of continuity, at least one member of the Architect Selection Committee and one from the Building Design Committee should serve on the Construction Committee.
2. Members should be selected with several factors in mind:
 - Representation from major groups in the congregation.
 - Persons recognized as leaders in the congregation with the ability to work with others.
 - Special skills needed on the committees.
 - To the extent possible, a balance on males and females, long term and newer members, and similar factors. Avoid anyone with a single mission focus, who cares only about their pet issue.