

Vision Interpretation September 2021 for Implementation Jan 2022

Summary:

<p><i>Foothills is a vital part of the lives of its people, providing abundant opportunities for relationships across differences that provide joy, care, and belonging for all.</i></p>	<p>Our ministry speaks into the center of people's lives in ways that are nourishing, challenging, and transformative. We invite people in, and we challenge them to grow, serve, and give, believing that people give more if it means more. Relationships are our primary unit of transformation. Through practices of mutual support, trust, and accountability, we tend to and transform personal, social, and intergenerational pain and we heal.</p>
<p><i>We are actively engaged in a process of lifelong spiritual deepening that allows us to live lives of meaning and purpose in a world that needs our Unitarian Universalism.</i></p>	<p>Every person is invited into a clear path of engagement that fosters lifelong spiritual deepening and maturity. Spiritual maturity as a Unitarian Universalist is to be drawn into partnership with courageous love and be faithful to its call. Together we learn to discern not just what we are called to do, but even more, who we are called to be.</p>
<p><i>We understand that being a part of Foothills requires us to give abundantly of our time, and this deepening involvement helps us to identify and grow our individual gifts.</i></p>	<p>While we are often overly-busy or overwhelmed, we are also hungry for meaning and purpose. We long to serve in ways that make an impact and that are connected to our gifts. Every person, at all ages and stages is invited to share their time, energy and skills. We don't volunteer at the church, we <i>are</i> the church. Everything we do together is set in the context of our ministry and mission.</p>
<p><i>We each give generously and gratefully of our financial resources in ways that foster a deep ownership of the impactful work we support.</i></p>	<p>Giving generously of our financial resources, to enhance the well-being of others is an essential part of the path of spiritual deepening. Generosity means different things to different people, and to each of us at different stages. When we give from our deepest values, and our sense of gratefulness, we will have the impact that reflects these values.</p>
<p><i>We recognize and dismantle prejudice and oppression in all their forms, including within ourselves, allowing us to be more effective and trusted partners to marginalized communities in Northern Colorado and beyond.</i></p>	<p>Our work is the aspirational work of building the Beloved Community, dismantling white supremacy, addressing systemic inequality, and healing rather than passing on trauma. It is personal, and internal, and requires a spiritual grounding in the context of community. We do this work through commitments of partnership with organizations led by those most impacted by oppression and inequality. These partners are a primary source of accountability and authority.</p>
<p><i>Foothills is a leader in Northern Colorado in developing sustainable, innovative, intersectional approaches to caring for our earth and its people to ensure a greater flourishing of all life.</i></p>	<p>We are living in the midst of a climate crisis, in the middle of an ongoing global pandemic. We actively seek methods of adaptation, grounded in emergence and collaboration, learning from nature, indigenous wisdom, and we ground ourselves in local relationships. We are willing to lead, and also to step back, and follow. We sustain each other through community, and care, recognizing again that this is long-haul work. We grieve together, and we rage together, and we learn together.</p>
<p><i>We do the work to make Unitarian Universalism accessible to all in Northern Colorado.</i></p>	<p>We meet people in their real lives. We are in reciprocal relationship with the wider culture, the impact of the pandemic, of climate change, and of systemic racism, and by the changing community of Northern Colorado (and beyond). We engage principles of consent, inclusivity and accessibility. We partner in the movement of Unitarian Universalism in our call to serve the emerging future and future generations.</p>

Vision Statement 1:

Foothills is a vital part of the lives of its people, providing abundant opportunities for relationships across differences that provide joy, care, and belonging for all.

1. **Vital Part of the Lives of its People:** Our ministry speaks into the center of people's lives in ways that are nourishing, challenging, and transformative. We also speak to the needs of our particular communities and engage our people in work and relationships that transform our communities and our world towards Unitarian Universalist values.
2. **Providing Abundant Opportunities:** We invite people in, and we challenge them to grow, serve, and give, believing that people give more if it means more. We understand abundance as a matter of helping people go deeper rather than just simply offering more.
3. **Relationships:** We understand relationships as the primary unit of transformation; people join people (not programs). As a covenantal rather than creedal faith, we understand relationships in our community as covenantal, bound in our shared promises rather than shared beliefs. Our practice of covenant creates explicit, formal relationships of mutual support, trust, and accountability. Each individual is held in covenant with the larger congregation, and each group and program of the church is in covenant as a group with the larger whole. Our congregation in turn is in covenant with every other Unitarian Universalist congregation.
4. **Across Differences:** While we affirm all sorts of relationships bound in covenant, we know that transformation is most powerful when we commit to relationships across differences in culture, lifestage, generation, race, theology, class, ability, mental/physical health, etc. We believe we have a special opportunity and calling to facilitate relationships across generations and life stages. We seek to surround our children and youth both with people their own age, and in meaningful and safe relationships with non-parental adults. We facilitate authentic and deep intergenerational relationships where people can companion each other through life's celebrations and challenges.
5. **Joy:** We foster and value joy in all we do, and understand joy as an act of resistance and resilience.
6. **Care:** Our members of all ages care for each other and accompany each other in life's tangled blessings, and they work together in service of our mission. Through spiritual practices, somatic work, deep listening, shared learning and reflection, service, ritual, and other shared practices, we tend to and transform personal, social, and intergenerational pain and we heal.
7. **Belonging for all:** We foster "*belonging beyond your choosing,*" an experience of claiming and being claimed in community. This experience creates a deep sense of identity and ownership in our mission, ministry, and living tradition. At the same time, we do not believe that our community is right for everyone, and sometimes belonging for all is manifested through clarity in our community boundaries.

Vision Statement 2:

We are actively engaged in a process of lifelong spiritual deepening that allows us to live lives of meaning and purpose in a world that needs our Unitarian Universalism.

1. **Actively engaged in a path of lifelong spiritual deepening:**
 - a. Every person who connects with the church is invited into a clear path of engagement that fosters spiritual deepening and maturity.
 - b. Lifelong spiritual deepening in our congregation is explored within the context of Unitarian Universalism, prioritizing and engaging the history, practices and theology of Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist traditions. Spiritual maturity as a Unitarian Universalist is to be drawn into partnership with courageous love and be faithful to its call.

- c. The path of spiritual deepening is integrated into every aspect of our church and our ministries (worship, belonging, service, justice, small groups, etc.), so that to belong at Foothills is to be actively engaged in this path.
 - d. The path is lifelong, with on-ramps at every life stage and stage of development.
 - e. There are opportunities for each person to engage as deeply as they are ready to go.
2. **Lives of meaning and purpose:** We teach our people to recognize and respond to their innate desire for meaning, purpose and connection.
 3. **In a world that needs our Unitarian Universalism:** Unitarian Universalist theology and practices have a unique capacity to speak to the particular challenges of the world and our times. In our community, we learn to discern not just what we are called to do, but even more, who we are called to be.

Vision Statement 3:

We understand that being a part of Foothills requires us to give abundantly of our time, and this deepening involvement helps us to identify and grow our individual gifts.

1. **We understand:** Because many people arrive at Foothills without a prior background in church, or with negative experiences in other faith communities, we believe that learning and re-learning about what it means to be part of a healthy, missional, and covenantal congregation is a part of our work together.
2. **Being a part of Foothills:**
 - a. Every person who explicitly expresses interest to be a part of Foothills, including children and youth who have registered, are invited into sharing their time, energy and skills.
 - b. Serving leads to ownership, engagement, and belonging - when there's the right amount of training, support, and meaningful feedback, and when it's the right time in a person's life.
3. **Give abundantly of our time:** We don't volunteer at the church, we *are* the church. Everything we do together is set in the context of our ministry and mission. With that said, we also believe that at different seasons of life "abundance" looks differently for different people. We believe in the sacredness of "no" just as much as the holy yes.
4. **Deepening involvement helps us to identify and grow our individual gifts:**
 - a. Everyone has gifts and passions to share.
 - b. While we are often overly-busy or overwhelmed, we are also hungry for meaning and purpose. We long to serve in ways that make an impact and that are connected to our gifts.
 - c. A call to serve happens in the context of community. There must be a spark of joy and readiness in a person to offer their gifts; and, the timing must be right, and the community must also see these gifts in the individual.
 - d. As we move along the path of spiritual deepening, we grow in relationship with others in the church, and in a greater sense of mutual trust and support so that we can help each other discern our gifts, and the place and time for these gifts to be offered, nurtured, supported, and grown.
 - e. Learning to discern and offer your gifts and passions, and the places where these overlap with the needs of the community and the world is a central part of the path of spiritual deepening.

Vision Statement 4:

We each give generously and gratefully of our financial resources in ways that foster a deep ownership of the impactful work we support.

1. **Give generously:** Giving generously of our financial resources, motivated by gratitude, to enhance the well-being of others is an essential part of the path of spiritual deepening.

- a. Generosity means different things to different people, and so we encourage percentage giving based on income as well as other life circumstances.
 - b. Giving generously starts by giving easily. As a result, we make giving easy and structured, with steps and processes that align and integrate with the interpretations outlined for Vision Statements 1 and 2.
2. **Give gratefully:** We have all been given the gift of life, and many gifts in life. We give out of a sense of gratefulness for all we have received. We also recognize that in life, we all will have times where we are giving, and other times where we are receiving. Giving from a place of gratitude connects us all in this ongoing reality, and acknowledges our interdependence.
3. **Fostering deep ownership:**
- a. As we give generously, and gratefully, we will feel a sense of ownership in being the church. We recognize that there is no “them.” Only “us.” No outside funders to direct the impact of our work, or ensure it aligns with our deepest values. Only us, and our giving, and our vision.
 - b. Our giving determines our impact. When we give from our deepest values, generosity, and our sense of gratefulness, our church will have the impact that reflects these values.
4. **Impactful:**
- a. Our ministries need to be worthy of people’s giving, so that giving to Foothills represents the best investment to further the reach of progressive values and courageous love in Northern Colorado.
 - b. Our capacity to do effective ministry is directly related to our financial health; our financial health is directly related to the power and impact of our ministries.
5. **Work we support:**
- a. We support our mission through our giving, especially through the alignment of our vision with our annual budget. We also keep an eye on long term needs so that we can sustain our congregation for the long term future.
 - b. We also generously and gratefully financially support our partners in the wider community, prioritizing those organizations who further the work of Vision Statement 5 and 6. Through these partnerships we are able to further our mission in ways greater than we could on our own.

Vision Statement 5:

We recognize and dismantle prejudice and oppression in all their forms, including within ourselves, allowing us to be more effective and trusted partners to marginalized communities in Northern Colorado and beyond.

1. **We recognize and dismantle prejudice and oppression in all their forms, including within ourselves:**
 - a. Our work is the aspirational work of building the Beloved Community.
 - b. It is the work of dismantling rather than perpetuating white supremacy, addressing systemic inequality, and healing rather than passing on pain and trauma in ourselves, and in our culture.
 - c. It is a practice of both humility and courage.
 - d. This work is personal, and internal. We must do our own work first, and continually.
 - e. We will fail, and will need help. Discomfort is a sign of learning, and progress.
 - f. To sustain our long haul work that will last longer than any of our lifetimes, we insist on centering gratitude, joy, celebration, community, rest, laughter, and pleasure in all we do.
2. **More effective and trusted partners:**
 - a. We do this work in partnership, and we check our need for credit. We show up for other organizations, especially those led by the most impacted, in work that furthers our mission.

- b. Relationship is the central unit of change. We have the greatest impact interpersonally, systemically and socially when we do our work in partnership. Partnership requires fostering relationships based in trust and mutual accountability over time.
 - c. Deep, sustained, long term commitments of partnership and relationship are more important than numbers of partners or issues we are working on.
 - d. Our partners will tell us how “effective” we are by their willingness to continue to work with us in increasing depth and commitment. Effectiveness is a matter of continued trust, and authentic relationships.
 - e. We understand our partners as key sources of accountability and authority in our work.
 - f. We recognize that often there is a power imbalance in our relationships and work with our partners, and we seek to name and address issues of power whenever possible.
3. **To marginalized communities:**
- a. We understand this to mean people of color, immigrants, people who live with food insecurity, without stable housing, or with insufficient economic resources; people who are disabled; queer and trans people; and people whose religious practice makes them targets of hate, including Muslim and Jewish people.
 - b. We recognize that Foothills includes many people who identify as a part of these communities, and so sometimes when we speak about “communities” we also mean to include communities from within our congregation.
 - c. We also understand “community” to acknowledge that no one person or even a handful of individuals represents on behalf of a community they identify with. No community is a monolith; we recognize and affirm diversity within communities.
4. **In Northern Colorado:** Working locally is our priority, as this is where we can have our greatest impact, and where we have the greatest relationship accountability and authenticity.
5. **And beyond:** Especially as we have grown our impact during the pandemic, we are actively seeking to understand our partners and relationships beyond Northern Colorado. We are growing our sense of responsibility and relationship with our state, our country, our world, and our relationships with other Unitarian Universalist congregations and individuals across the world.

Vision Statement 6:

Foothills is a leader in Northern Colorado in developing sustainable, innovative, intersectional approaches to caring for our earth and its people to ensure a greater flourishing of all life.

- 1. **Foothills is a leader:** We are willing to take risks to innovate and lead within our community. We are willing to lead when we are needed, and we are willing to step back and follow. We believe that making mistakes is a sign that we are growing, and we actively seek to increase our tolerance for discomfort, as we know that this is where real change becomes possible.
- 2. **In Northern Colorado:** We understand that place matters. We get to know and work to transform local systems of power towards greater justice and equity. For those who are connected to Foothills but outside of the area, we will help them foster similar relationships and impact in their local communities.
- 3. **Sustainable:**
 - a. We make choices that can be sustained over lifetimes. We consider our grandchildren, and their grandchildren in our choices.
 - b. Our internal culture mirrors our external values, leading with innovative and intersectional approaches and invites staff and lay leaders to engage deeply and wholeheartedly.
 - c. We recognize that we are living in the midst of a climate crisis, and in the middle of an ongoing global pandemic. We are actively seeking methods of adaptation, grounded in emergence and collaboration, learning from nature, indigenous wisdom, and other ways of knowing and being.

- d. We sustain each other through relationship, community, and care, recognizing again that this is long-haul work longer than our lifetimes. We grieve together, and we rage together, and we learn together.
- 4. **Innovative:** We act boldly and are willing to take risks and lead in work that is necessary, especially when our resources and privilege can be used on behalf of the marginalized. We are not tied to “the way we’ve always done” things. We need to grow, and learn, and change in order to be for our future.
- 5. **Intersectional:** We believe that all work for justice and human flourishing is inherently intersectional. As a result, we prioritize approaches that invite us into these intersections, and that amplify the impact of Foothills’ ministries for justice rather than having our particular teams compete for resources of time or attention.
- 6. **Caring for our earth:** We cultivate a spiritually grounded stewardship of our local resources, the Cache la Poudre and Big Thompson Watersheds and their related ecosystems, of which we are a part. We connect our ministries to our love for the land, water, animals and plants of northern Colorado - or the location where an individual participant resides. We have a robust ministry of climate justice integrated into all that we do.

Vision Statement 7:

We do the work to make Unitarian Universalism accessible to all in Northern Colorado.

- 1. **Do the work:** This is a vision statement that creates a foundation. We are doing work now so that we can make this true in the future.
- 2. **Make Unitarian Universalism accessible:**
 - a. Foothills’ ministries meet people in their lives as they are living them today. We meet people where they are, in the spaces, manners, and media they are already engaging. We meet them in their real lives in language that they can readily understand, with topics that are relevant, acknowledging and engaging generational differences and different ways of learning and processing.
 - b. We understand ourselves in reciprocal relationship with the wider culture, the lasting impact of the pandemic, of climate change, and of systemic racism, and by the changing and growing community of Northern Colorado (and beyond). We are grounded by our guiding values as we are transformed by, and seeking to transform, the realities of the world we live in.
- 3. **Accessible:**
 - a. Sunday services are accessible and safe both physically and technologically.
 - b. We engage principles of consent, inclusivity and accessibility in all of our ministries, and we ensure there are ample choices available for the many different ways people seek to engage.
 - c. There is enough space for anyone who is seeking to attend/engage in our ministries to fully participate. This particular interpretation is what leads us to understand our expanded building as imperative, and it is also what leads us to our continued investment in digital ministry.
 - d. People experience an extravagant sense of welcome in their initial engagement in the church.
 - e. We consider ourselves always learning about matters of accessibility so that if we realize there is a barrier to access, we will seek to remove that barrier.
- 4. **All in Northern Colorado:**
 - a. We are partners in the movement of Unitarian Universalism *in* Northern Colorado, transforming our community through our committed practices.
 - b. We are partners in the movement of Unitarian Universalism *beyond* Northern Colorado, especially in light of all we have experienced and the new relationships we have grown during the pandemic.
 - c. We are committed to transforming the expression of our faith to speak into the emerging future and to future generations.

- d. We resource and fuel Unitarian Universalism beyond our own congregation, sharing our resources generously and inviting partnership and lateral relationship and collaborations across congregations whenever possible.