CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BATAVIA

**Vision for 2025**

Prepared May 2019

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and future.” — JEREMIAH 29:11*

*We reaffirm our mission statement that “we seek to be a caring church open to everyone. As Christ’s disciples we invite all to join us in bringing the love of Jesus to the world through worship, education, evangelism and service. We join together to open wide the doors of our church to include participation by any and all.”*

*As we start on this 5-year quest, in 2019, we already see ourselves as a congregation that acknowledges the role of regular, theologically sound worship services in personal and corporate growth, that strives to treat people of all ages, genders, religious backgrounds (and any other “group” status) with respect and dignity (indicated by our having chosen “Open and Affirming” status as a congregation), and that values its members, new and longer term, who have been willing to stick with their commitments in a time of change and challenge.*

**VISION2025**: **In 2025, our reality will reflect these key principles:**

 **We are a church that lives out our UCC tagline, “whoever you are and wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here,” in very concrete ways.**

The Congregational Church of Batavia provides a place of refuge, where people feel safe. Members and visitors experience a sense of family, through which they feel our love and care. This encourages members and regular attenders to become fully involved in the life of our congregation, committing their time and talents in service to Christ.

Our internal communications enhance fellowship; our external communications extend a welcome to the community. We invite people in the surrounding communities to interfaith outreach, entertainment, and general-interest educational events. Our church website, social media outlets, special events press releases, and especially our members’ caring and welcoming personal conduct, bear witness to our vibrant community of worship, attracting new members to our diverse faith family.

 **We are a church that values growth in faith through worship and lifelong learning as core parts of our mission.**

In weekly and special services, we experience God’s presence, love, and grace through sermons, scripture readings, prayer, sacraments, music, and other elements of worship. We emerge from worship services feeling assured, fulfilled, energized, and challenged, with a deeper understanding of the Gospel and its meaning, power, and practice in modern-day life. We experiment with additional forms of communing with God and each other outside of the regular Sunday morning worship service.

Building on our strength as a multi-generational church and the strong reputation of the Batavia Nursery School, we have established an active family ministry, one which recognizes that families come in all shapes and sizes. Our innovative children’s and youth ministries attract young families. Opportunities for children to participate in services support our focus on vibrant faith formation. Participation in Wednesday night and Sunday evening programs, youth retreats, mission trips, and service projects equips young people with leadership skills as well. We encourage them to find their own spiritual voices, and we help them to understand and experience the interdependent and relational aspects of our life together in Christ.

Our worship services match the diverse needs and passions of church members in terms of content, style, format, accessibility, and schedules. We specifically offer many opportunities for younger members to get involved and feel valued. Our music program includes a wide variety of music and musicians who celebrate and worship God. We regularly offer an appealing blend of traditional and contemporary approaches to worship, praising God in all ways that deepen our understanding of and gratitude for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

 **We are committed to serving as the hands and feet, and heart, of Christ**.

Because we have received God’s grace, we joyfully share our time, talents, and financial gifts, experiencing on a deeply personal level the abundant blessings of giving. One reflection of this commitment to living out a life guided by Christ’s priorities is our emphasis on building relationships:

 between each of us and our God

 between each other to provide a strong and resilient church fellowship,

 And reaching into the community, to support and defend those in need of our advocacy.

We use whatever positions of privilege we possess in the service of those without those privileges, with a painful awareness of injustice and suffering that keeps us motivated. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., we strive to be “extremists for love.”

Members recognize our ministry teams as a rewarding area of service within the church. We have no shortage of members willing to step up to fill team member vacancies, committing their time and talents to the church and to charitable organizations within our community and beyond. Youth and young-adult mission work, a volunteer area separate from the work of ministry teams, also inspires the entire church membership and provides a model in the Fox Valley for Spirit-led service and living evangelism. Our ministry teams and mission efforts work together on a regular basis. With strong volunteer support, we respond as needed to emotional, physical, and financial needs of our members, and reach out in aid of community needs as well.

We have fully funded our ministry programs, and we can launch new ministries. We contribute to the support of our denomination and have committed to outreach giving at 10% or more of budgeted income. Many church members have adopted tithing as a response to God’s gifts and as one important part of their commitment to honoring God. Through the encouragement of estate-planning workshops, more of our members have included the church in their estate plans. Between planned giving and tithing, we have established an endowment fund to cover renovation and ongoing repair of church facilities without incurring debt. Our general endowment fund thus provides long-term financial stability.

 **We are a church learning that change is inevitable in life.**

We know we must be flexible enough to embrace necessary changes. In a world of change, we listen faithfully for God’s still-speaking voice.