

2021

Church feels like coming home. There is a vitality where everyone who comes through the doors is warmly greeted and those who are new are helped to find their way and place. There is joy as we gather: reconnecting; sharing the ups and down; checking in on each other's well-being; and anticipating worship with great expectancy and classes with eagerness. The effect is a comforting awareness of how God has blessed this ministry.

What follows is our vision for First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor for the year 2021. It is the work of the Leadership Council, church staff, program directors, clergy, and numerous volunteers. It has been reviewed, revised, rewritten, and improved multiple times to make it what it is today. It paints a picture of the church that God is creating through us. This is FUMC in the year 2021. We will all help to make it a reality.

At FUMC, our mission is to “grow a community that welcomes and engages all persons to be Christ followers.” As a congregation, we are committed to journey together to “know God, love others, and serve the world.” Our guiding principles are:

- Radical Hospitality
- Passionate Worship
- Intentional Faith Development
- Risk-Taking Mission and Service
- Extravagant Generosity

We are a vital church because we commit ourselves to four areas where we choose to become more purposeful and focused:

1. Intentional Worship: Vibrant and Alive
2. Strategic Mission: Risk-Taking Mission and Service
3. A Place for Everyone: You Belong Here
4. Built to Last: Our faith. Our finances. Our buildings.

We are thankful for the way God's Spirit is leading this congregation and our ministry. We are known as a church with a prophetic voice, embracing the call of Jesus by working in tangible ways for justice, peace, and inclusion of all people. Our faith moves us to be in service. These opportunities to serve have become another avenue to move outside of the church walls and, for many, have become an entrance into our church fellowship.

Intentional Worship: *Vibrant and Alive*

Make a joyful noise to the Lord. (Psalm 98:4)

Worship at First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor is vibrant and alive. The entire church community is engaged in leading and planning worship along with our ordained clergy. The worship experience regularly involves a wide range of people and talents. People are happy to share their talents in worship. There is joy, energy, and enthusiasm for the opportunity to worship at this time and in this place. We feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of our faith community.

Worship continually reminds us of our relationship with God, challenges us to follow God's calling more fully, and helps us discern God's calling in our lives. At times it comforts us. At times it strengthens us. At times it pushes us and develops the realization of our need for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our day-to-day living.

As a congregation we try new things. We also choose to embrace our rich history while finding a balance between tradition and change.

Sermons celebrate the Methodist tradition of a strong pulpit: offering guidance for spiritual growth and faith development, biblical education, and practical ways for the congregant to engage his or her faith in the world around them. We are willing to hear and entertain ideas representing diverse views that may or may not be in agreement with our own.

We recognize that worship occurs beyond the walls of our sanctuaries. Worship continues throughout the week in the form of small groups, classes, activities, mission opportunities, and loving actions. We support, nurture, and care for each other's needs as fellow members of our faith community.

Worship routinely reminds us that we are God's, and that no one can make the journey alone. It calls us and challenges us to live and grow that truth every day that God gives us.

Strategic Mission: *Risk-Taking Mission and Service*

Growing in Christ as we offer ourselves in purposeful service to others in need.

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)

Mission is an intentional means to connect people within our church to the local community and to the greater world. It is living our faith daily to create a better world as we show the example of Jesus Christ through our actions.

Our outreach efforts are an investment in hope -- to live out our journey together as we "know God, love others, and serve the world." We provide a wealth of opportunities at every age and stage of faith development. Our service opportunities are accessible and meaningful to every person regardless of resources or circumstance.

We are inventing and rediscovering ways to serve. Our missions evolve as people's passions develop and opportunities arise; they are an avenue for new members to join our community. Through service, people find faith. Through faith, people find service. Both are true at Ann Arbor FUMC.

We are mindful to include those we serve. We aren't serving because we "know better." All are equally valued children of God. Our service opportunities are not merely religious tokens. We are working with others humbly and with gratitude. We are committed to connecting and building sustainable relationships with our neighbors wherever they are across the globe. With the spirit of generosity and through our actions, we discover "being Christian" isn't just a label. Our missions are our answer to what Christ asks of us. We thrive on sharing our love, our faith, and our service lavishly. We strive for peace and justice out of gratitude for all that has been shared with us. We do this to embody the hope of Jesus Christ.

Our commitment to serving others is inspiring and finds its way into everything we do. We make it happen in small but meaningful ways. Our Outreach Council works to find ways for those at FUMC at every level to gain from the wide variety of mission experiences. Opportunities abound and we take advantage of them. Families, singles, and individuals of all ages take advantage of small mini-missions as well as larger more formal mission opportunities: building houses for Habitat for Humanity and dropping in to make Love Thy Neighbor

sandwiches; working on an orphanage in Costa Rica and visiting shut-ins in Chelsea; supporting a primary school feeding program in Meru, Kenya, and helping out around the church or serving at a Joy Luncheon.

Our Outreach Council has generated a culture of service by challenging us to clearly define our priorities and make service opportunities sustainable. Together we are careful stewards of our resources and we work to stay true to our annual plans to be strong in specific local, domestic, and international projects.

A Place for Everyone: *You Belong Here*

We believe every single person is a child of God. By definition you belong.

Join hands, disciples of the faith, whate'er your race may be.

All children of the living God are surely kin to me. (from "In Christ There is No East or West")

The First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor is thriving because there is a way for everyone to be involved in their journey to "know God, love others, and serve the world." Participation by all who seek to follow the teachings of Christ keeps us vital and growing. There is evidence of diverse involvement in every facet of church life. People find a home here. God's house, our church home, is more than our buildings. It is the community of people who walk through these doors each day. This extends to the relationships we build with each other – we belong together.

We respect and recognize everyone is in a different place in their faith journey. We are guided by our history and our faith. As United Methodists we welcome the stranger and help them connect. Through that we each find home. We nurture multiple ways for people to fit in to "know God, love others, and serve the world."

In worship, whether it is Saturday evening, Sunday morning, or a weekday, the worship space is lovingly prepared. Newcomers are warmly welcomed and everyone feels connected regardless of the size of the service. No one worships alone.

People of all ages are involved in offering music, reading scripture, and sharing their gifts. All have the opportunity to be included as they are comfortable and able. Volunteers connect with anyone who has a general or specific question or need.

Most are involved in serving the world in some way. Locally, we are tending to the needs of the poor and homeless. While our bigger projects like our partnership with our friends in Kenya are still growing, we have also developed a variety of new projects, many of which are inter-generational and flexible, allowing people to contribute as their schedules allow. We have also developed a pathway for families to grow together as they serve the world together.

Many are deeply involved in the administration of the church. Some provide leadership and direction, working with the clergy to help make strategic decisions that support our goals and objectives related to our guiding principles. We have opportunities to build our leadership and project management skills at church through work on service teams and administrative committees. We are strengthened, prepared, and equipped for all kinds of service at church and in the world.

Newcomers quickly see that growing in faith at this church can be more than just attending weekly worship. Our orientation classes reinforce the expectation that everyone is welcome to get involved. When they are ready to get involved, our welcome staff works with them to connect their passions and find where they would like to serve. Our education programs and small groups offer opportunities for spiritual growth and development for all ages. People participate as both students and leaders. Spiritual retreats are available, and Bible and book studies abound.

All of this is overseen by one of our ministry councils, which coordinates efforts to follow up with visitors, engage newcomers, and nurture the faith development of the community. In addition, it tracks participation and reports our progress in these areas to the Leadership Council.

Built to Last: *Our Faith, Our Finances, and Our Buildings*

Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can. (John Wesley)

Our congregation is generous. They realize their resources and gifts are not their own – they are a gift from God. Through stewardship we manage our resources and our lives – and this is reflected in our buildings and what we do in the world.

We choose to be generous. Giving is an act of gratitude for all that we have. We earn and save, so that we can give.

Our buildings and facilities are places to promote fellowship, nurture, educate, and equip us to go into the world to help others. They allow varied kinds of ministries to occur. Both Downtown and Green Wood are vibrant spaces and reflect our ministries. We care for the sanctuaries, chapel, social hall, kitchens, parsonages, classrooms, and offices. Every space contributes to our goals and vision. Caring for these spaces is relevant to our task and how we do our ministry. Our lives are enriched as two or more are gathered in any of our spaces. It's God's house, our home, and that's why we care for our buildings.

Multiyear plans for maintenance and repairs ensure our facilities adapt to serve our growing and evolving ministries. Our facilities serve our congregation and the community--we are committed to optimize the best use of the buildings. We use the talents and skills of our members as we can to minimize the costs of repair and enhance our physical plant.

FUMC's financial resources are available to promote our Church's vision, goals, and objectives. Because of our belief and gratitude, people tithe and contribute generously to our endowment and investments, missions, and opportunities as they arise. Members give freely of talents, time, money, and service. FUMC finances are openly shared so everyone knows how our funds are being used and how they fulfill our priorities.

We understand that through extravagant generosity we connect our passions with our faith. People are inspired to share and give freely. They love this church and its passion, and so they are engaged in the financial health of the church. Recognizing Wesley's call for stewardship and finances, we help people be financially sound themselves so they can be faithful in their lives.

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