



“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 a future.”
Jeremiah 29:11

Executive Summary

The purpose of this Executive Summary is to outline the most significant outcomes from the year-long process that was conducted by the Strategic Vision Team, First United Methodist Church of Richardson. The following are key highlights drawn from this study:

- **Drive Intentional Faith Development:** Development of an integrated intentional faith development system, so that an individual, member or community friend, can see where he or she is on the journey of faith and easily access a whole range of spiritual growth opportunities;
- **Grow Servant Leadership:** Grow servant leaders for FUMCR and the community by matching the best in leadership development programs;
- **Establish a “Best –In-Class” Initiative for Youth and Young Adult Ministry:** Have the best model of and most dynamic youth/young adult ministry in the city!
- **Joyful Giving:** Create a year-round gifts ministry that produces willing, loving, generous, grateful people;
- **Foster Christian Ideals of Inviting and Involving:** Develop a culture of caring for current and prospective disciples: inviting, welcoming, and including;
- **“It’s All About Attendance at Worship”:** Grow average worship attendance by 20% over the next five years through outstanding and model forms of communication, outreach and education. The increased attendance is to come from existing members and new;
- **Identify a Step-Out Satellite Strategy of Expansion Beyond Our Campus:** Explore the creation of at least one satellite location and/or grow one neighborhood or ethnic-directed church;
- **“ Welcoming” Partnerships with Ethnic Ministries within Our Parish:** Establish even more partnerships with ethnic communities like the Zimbabwe Ministry
- **Establish Programmatic Initiatives Reflective of the Demographic Composition of the Parish:** Through targeted programs and endeavors, help our congregation become more reflective of our community (one example: ministry to and with University of Texas at Dallas);

- **Link FUMCR local Initiatives to the global United Methodist Church:** Align ourselves with the UM Church's Four Areas of Global Focus -poverty, health, new places for new people and leadership development
- **Engage Congregation through Volunteerism to Create Local Impact:** Create an active focus on volunteerism with tools for selecting the appropriate volunteer activities based on community needs, individual interests and FUMCR mission (tied into Intentional Faith Development).

The body of this work is explained in the following detailed report which provides critical background on the vision team, mission, strategic and action plans based upon key performance criteria. Also, there is a critical section on key organizational consideration in the implementation of this plan. Appendices also contain items that provide specific details and support to the conclusions as well.

Background

The Mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God's grace and by exemplifying Jesus' command to love God and our neighbor in all that we do. In carrying out this mission, we are seeking the fulfillment of God's reign in us and in the world.

As United Methodists, we believe it is critical not only to believe, but to live out our faith in our personal lives, our communities and the world. In order to bear a faithful Christian witness to Jesus Christ, we believe we must reflect critically on our biblical and theological inheritance, striving to express faithfully the witness we make in our own time.

We are challenged to make a difference, to be faithful for the purposes of Christ in the **practice** of Faith and to be changed by God in those practices. We are also called to transform the community in which God has placed us.

We have a wonderful heritage, a "cherished past" in the United Methodist Church and in this church in particular, which we do not want to replace. FUMCR has a rich and deep foundation of vision for 125 years driven by our abiding faith as Christians and United Methodists, abundant God-given gifts and congregational members whose personal spiritual journeys have greatly affected the world in which we live. We have been seen and still are seen as a leadership church. So our call in these days is for both continuity and change.

As such, with this rich legacy of leadership and serving, we are once again challenged to think about the future. We could remain quite comfortable behind the "four walls" of our five-year-old awe-inspiring worship and ministry center, but the world in which we live, work, play and worship is undergoing unheard of transformation and in some cases groaning with pain. We believe God is leading us and wants us to respond. As a pastor friend of FUMCR said recently: "What good is it, even if you fill all your worship service opportunities with people every weekend, and yet the city and the world surrounding you remains the same?" And similarly, if we are not increasingly relevant to the spiritual growth of our members, and welcoming more members to be a part of FUMCR, can we really say we are fulfilling God's wishes for our Church?

So continuity and change: preserve the past, build on it, and grow from it, and yet change for the future to which God is calling us. What or who is God calling us to be in the future? And hearing this call, will we, like Moses, respond "Here I am"?

This document, with appendices, serves as a blueprint to that calling and includes key approaches in administration, communication and implementation to help drive this bright future.

The Guiding Team

Members

To begin this important journey, a Strategic Vision Team was appointed by the Church Council, and consisted of the following members:

FUMCR Leadership and Staff:

- Dr. Clayton Oliphint: Senior Pastor
- Rev. Debra Hobbs Mason: Executive Associate Pastor

Lay Leadership:

- Tim Griffy: Chair
- Catherine Burdette
- Ida Dwight
- David Gonzales
- Melinda Lawrence
- Holly Lee
- Michael Massey
- Mike Renquist, Consultant and former FUMCR member
- Emily Winnenberg
- Jeff Wright

Goals

The goal of this Team was to gather and compile the ideas, feedback, and recommendations of church members. In addition, through a comprehensive process of listening, interviewing and surveying community agencies and civic leaders, other nationally-prominent church leaders, UMC leaders, as well as extensive readings, research and prayerful conversation (United Methodists call this “holy conferencing”) spread over a year, the team, as enrolled and challenged, had this mission:

Mission of the Team

To develop a strategic plan for the Church Council and Congregation of FUMCR beginning in 2011 and continuing that will:

- Focus the overall mission of the church for the next five plus years and identify concrete, specific objectives of faithfulness and fruitfulness in response to the mission entrusted by God to FUMCR;
- Identify and offer strategies to meet current needs of the parish area and world-wide challenges;
- Include standards of accountability, a communication plan, and an implementation strategy.

Even though we are excited about this vision herein cast in terms of balance between boldness and achievability, we know this will still be an enormous challenge to our staff and lay leaders. While we build a bridge to the future in this plan, we are still who we are today, with the same gifts and graces, yes, and also the same limitations of time and energy. Someone has compared this process of laying important stuff on top of the other urgent, everyday important stuff we do in our faith journey at FUMCR, as “trying to change one tire at a time of a car that is still moving down Central Expressway... and there’s lots of traffic!.” We will still have worship

every Sunday, we will still visit the sick and homebound, carry a burden for significant ministry, take up offerings and help the poor. Youth and children will grow in the faith, the Bible will be studied, beautiful music will be sung and appreciated, pancakes flipped, adults will mingle in the Welcome Center. Babies will be baptized and couples will be married. Life goes on, and yet there is more.

Visioning Process

- **Strategic Planning Meetings :**
 - *Strategic Vision Team Meetings:* 14 meetings of the whole committee over the past year since March, 2010, for prayer, study, reflection, processing of inputs; each had a duration of at least two hours a session including one day-long retreat .
 - *Sub-Committee Meetings:* In addition to the above, approximately 30 meetings of various small teams or sub-groups within the Team for specific analysis, preparation or processing of information plus countless phone calls and conference calls
 - *Background Analyses:* Review of all data from FUMCR 2010 *Five Practices* study and the *Dreams* worship theme data (personal and for the church)
- **Rigorous Process and Planning:** Composition and editing of a Code of Conduct, a mission statement for the team, various communications, several small-group drafts of goals and objectives and at least four drafts of the report document (the strategy)
- **Town Hall Focus Groups:** Ten focus groups conducted by team members to gather information from church members and community groups
- **Parish , Community and Key Influentials Inputs:** Numerous interviews of civic leaders, neighborhood non-Methodist church representatives, UMC church and denomination leaders, non-profit and service agency leaders and business owners and managers from the nearby retail community
- **Internal and External Demographic Analyses:** Just over one hundred documents related to either specific understanding of our church demographics, history, trends, etc., or other generic articles and resources about church growth, structure, approaches to community ministry, challenges to the church of today. This included a walk-about/drive-about of our parish “footprint” area
- **Strategic Communications Plan:**
 - Communicated our progress to the congregation from the pulpit, in the church newsletter and in town hall meetings
 - Creation of web-site concepts, images (journey, boat, path, compass, arrows), logo; exploration of Biblical themes and defining communication expectations and directives
- **Prayerful Consideration:** Hundreds of hours of prayer by committee members and others in the congregation praying for our success

Strategic Outcomes: How Are We Going to Accomplish the Vision?

The structure of the strategic plan is based on the FUMCR mission:

With open hearts and minds,

We WELCOME people for Christ

We GROW people in Christ

We SERVE people with Christ

Members of FUMCR will easily recognize that phrase as the existing mission statement of this congregation. For many of us, the sentence trips off our tongues as a mantra (again “continuity and change”). In all the information gathering sessions conducted by the Strategic Vision Team of both individuals and groups in the church and within the community, there was universal accord, even respect, for this expression as the quintessential essence of what it means to be First United Methodist Church of Richardson.

The Strategic Vision Team believes that this remains the strongest possible expression of our church’s future direction, and we have chosen to express the strategy as a roadmap to achieve what this congregation has already expressed as our objective to fully realize our role in God’s kingdom.

So what shape, what is the vision of how we welcome, grow and serve in the future? In each of these three areas, we state a vision in goals and objectives that we think captures God’s purpose for us and sets a bold journey for us all as a congregation intent on following God’s lead in our lives.

This report, if approved, will become the guiding action plan for the Church Council which will then set annual plans in light of these goals and objectives. The language of these goals is specific and measureable, and each objective is put against a calendar (“end of year 2012,” etc.).

We know we are human and trust that we are spiritual men and women, but we are not omniscient, so embedded in our strategic plan is an understanding of three enablers (communication, staff development and physical space realities) to do effective and productive ministry.

Through the continued ownership of the Church Council, which will provide a venue for discussion and evaluation of progress on at least a semiannual basis, a living breathing reflection of our cherished past and a vision of a bright future.

With the strong confidence of God’s people, nurtured in God’s grace and love, cognizant of our rich past, challenged by a brilliant future, the following are the results of this year-long process broken down into **Welcome, Grow, and Serve**.

Action Plan for Success: What We Will Do to Drive Results



The over-arching goal is to drive a transformational process that creates a strong culture of welcoming people for Christ, growing people in Christ and serving people with Christ

We WELCOME People for Christ

We will welcome people for Christ...

1. As mandated by our UMC ministry areas of focus, we will “**provide new places for new people**” in the following ways:
 - a. **Survey Current Programs:** By the end of 2011, and annually (or as otherwise determined by the Church Council) for the next five years, survey all our current programs, communications and approaches for effectiveness in inviting, welcoming, including and supporting others who are new to us, and make any immediate and necessary changes for improvement
 - b. **Improve System for Connecting People:** By the end of 2012, create a more effective and efficient system of involving and connecting people, “plugging them in” when they get here
 - c. **Increase Involvement with UTD:** By the end of 2012, see increased involvement and connection with the University of Texas at Dallas (“UTD”) population by focusing on relationship building, campus ministry to students and faculty, and shared mission work with the UTD community
2. We will **increase participation in worship by at least 20% over 5 years**, Increased participation will need to come from both new members and increased attendance patterns from existing members (bringing people back into a higher level of involvement and participation).
 - a. **Identify Satellite Church and/or Community UMC Congregation:** During 2012-2014, identify one location for a satellite church (condominium cluster, apartment community or store front) and/or target a group in the community (through existing or new partnerships), and identify resources dedicated toward evangelistic support of a community UMC congregation
 - b. **Create Alternative Worship Service:** By the end of 2012 create one more opportunity for an alternative worship service on our campus

- c. **Improve Member Attendance:** By the middle of 2012, emphasize the securing of individual member attendance on a regular basis through creative means of capturing more detailed individual attendance data, and design initiatives to highlight the importance of regular attendance
 - d. **Commitment of Children and Youth to Worship:** By the end of 2012, reinforce commitment of children and youth for active participation in the worship experience
- 3. We will **ensure that our church (in the services, in groups, in the hallways) is intentionally inclusive and looks more like our evolving parish** through the following means:
 - a. **Target Evangelical Outreach:** By the end of 2012, identify three areas of our parish where a targeted, intentional evangelistic push and/or using the Zimbabwe model to reach out and be open to other communities, can result in connecting people to Christ
 - b. **Review Demographic Profile:** Beginning in 2012, there will be an annual assessment of our demographical profile in comparison to our community that is presented to the Church Council, for the purposes of evaluation and consideration of appropriate outreach to underserved populations
 - c. **Exemplary Practices in Attracting Young Adults:** By the end of 2011, explore and use other churches' approach to 20's/30's in which FUMCR can be exemplary in adopting best practices associated with attracting young adults

We GROW People in Christ

1. **By transforming the current study opportunities for adults into a comprehensive, yet simple and accessible discipleship model** wherein people can self-assess where they are on the journey of faith and easily see the next steps for their personal growth. Our desire is to provide a choice of studies for people at varying stages of faith to develop them into exemplary Christian leaders.
 - a. **Assess the Current System for Faith Development:** By the end of 2011, fully analyze current faith development system to evaluate how it is meeting the needs of people at varying stages of faith and notate gaps that need to be addressed.
 - b. **Needs and Resource Assessment:** By the end of 2012, identify resources to meet identified gaps as well as enhance current offerings and develop an implementation plan.
 - c. **Self Assessment Process:** By the end of 2012, create a self-assessment tool whereby people can see where they are on the journey of faith and be directed to "right next step" opportunities for their individual faith development.
 - d. **Web-Based Tool-Kit for Faith Development Rollout:** By the end of 2013, create a web-based version of the self-assessment tool that is customized and integrated throughout the website.

e. **Create a Mirror System to Youth Faith Development:** Throughout development stages, using similar building blocks, mirror the system for children and youth, recognizing different and appropriate delivery.

2. By developing a **leadership program for people to experience the fullness of serving and deepening their understanding of United Methodism theology and practice.** Our desire is to grow servant leaders for FUMCR, United Methodism and the community.

a. **Servant Leaders Assessment:** By the end of 2011, assess ongoing leadership needs in all three areas (FUMCR, UMC, Community)

b. **Survey of Best Practices for Leadership Development:** By the end of 2012, research “best-in class” offerings in leadership development (e.g. Summit, UMC district/conferences; Alban, Center of Action and Contemplation, etc.)

c. **Strategic Partnership Development for Leadership Programs:** By the end of 2013, identify ways to partner with various groups (i.e. business school, seminary, business & civic leadership groups, etc.) to develop a program or organizational approach to foster leadership development.

d. **Servant Leadership Institute Kick-Off:** By the end of 2015, launch a Leadership Institute to address the needs identified above.

3. **Enhance our youth, college and young adult ministries** through improved focus and superior resources (possibly including space) so that we will **have the most dynamic ministry in the city for developing young principled Christian leaders.**

a. **Best Practices Survey:** By the end of 2012, conduct a comprehensive analysis of the youth, college age and young adult ministries (program, space, leaders, etc.) by evaluating, reviewing and establishing needs and opportunities of all four groups (junior, senior, college age and young adult).

b. **Best Practices Evaluation:** By the end of 2012, explore the best in class resources and curriculum for all groups.

c. **Execution Plan Development and “Call to Action”:** By the end of 2012, communicate/promote the “new” direction and build ownership and identify dynamic leaders, all to be engaged in ministry by the beginning of 2013.

4. By transforming the current stewardship program/efforts into a **year-round gifts ministry that educates members and provides members with modern, creative and innovative ways to share time, talents and financial resources;** cultivate a culture where sharing gifts is an expectation and a joy.

a. **Establish the “First-Ever” Board of Stewards :** By the end of 2011, elect and/or

appoint FUMCR members to a Board of Stewards to provide guidance for the gifts ministry (possibly create an annual Leadership Summit of targeted givers prior to annual campaign).

b. **Identify and Hire a Chief Development Officer with Overarching Responsibility for Fiscal Stability:** By the end of 2013, hire a Chief Development Officer (person whose primary responsibility is to grow the memberships' gifts and administer/direct annual campaign, special campaigns, reserve funding sources, grant and foundation monies, stewardship emphasis year round, expanded and enhanced bequests and legacy programs, oversee endowments for trustees, etc.)

We SERVE People with Christ

1. Align ourselves with the UM church around the **Four Areas of Global Focus: Fight Global Poverty; Improve Global Health; New Places for New People and Leadership Development.**

- a. **Community Engagement and Issues Management:** By mid 2012, intentionally develop capabilities and relationships within the community, using both our public commitments to do justice seeking and also through our organizational system and links with other religious, community, government and non-governmental officials and leaders, so that we can proffer a roundtable forum on a quarterly basis to discuss key issues affecting quality of life within the gathering institutions' sphere of influence, that is, Richardson or beyond.
- b. **Community Awareness, Education and Impact:** By mid 2013, begin to publish findings and develop evaluation tools for outcomes, hopefully seeing change in the community in all four areas above.

2. By end of 2012, we will **identify and leverage partnerships to effectively and efficiently serve in the local and global community**, avoiding duplication of effort and leveraging skills and resources (volunteers and dollars) of the whole community, within FUMCR walls and beyond, including churches and governments and agencies.

3. In conjunction with the goal of Intentional Faith Development, by the end of 2012, we will **develop and or secure a curriculum that can be used by small groups to push the serving leadership agenda**, by educating FUMCR members on how important serving is to Christian development, and using small groups (newly formed by interest/commitment, Sunday school classes, etc.) to push "grass roots" initiatives.

- a. **Curriculum Evaluation:** By end of year 2011, identify existing justice-seeking curricula

- b. **Curriculum Development:** By mid 2012, create and/or tailor UM conference or denominational materials with three phases: Why serve? Who to serve/how to serve? Sustaining change and what's next?
 - c. **Implementation:** By mid 2013, begin recruitment of volunteer teachers/ leaders/mentors/coaches and start installing the curriculum, phased in a three year approach
- 4. By year end 2013, we will **create an active focus on volunteerism** with tools for selecting the appropriate volunteer activities based on community needs, individual interests and FUMCR mission, such that a pool of trained, capable volunteers is always available for serving others.
 - a. **Establishing Volunteerism Baseline:** By year end 2011, create a survey instrument to identify current members' involvements and commitments and capture volunteer hours
 - b. **Web-Enabled Tool for Volunteer Engagement:** By mid 2012, use computer program to connect concerns/commitments of individuals with needs in area (sample program is www.volunteermatch.com)
 - c. **Link Volunteers to Strategic Community Partners:** By year end 2013, align volunteer opportunities with strategic community partnerships identified goal above (partnerships)
 - d. **Develop Recognition and Celebration Programs for Volunteers:** By mid 2013, visually recognize volunteer efforts (for example—recognition in worship/volunteer highlight in magazine, etc) and create visible list of where FUMCR members are already actively involved

Organizational Impact and Key Considerations

Background

As the Vision Team discussed how to implement our objectives of Welcome, Grow, and Serve, we realized that our view of the strategy would not be complete without presenting for consideration several elements that are critical enablers of the strategy itself. These items are absolutely essential to supporting the difficult work of change, and their overarching nature was reaffirmed to our team by the frequency with which they were mentioned not only in our own discussions of strategic elements, but also in conversations with church members in town halls and in our external research as to necessary characteristics of successful strategic planning.

1. STAFF

The first and probably most critical enabler for the strategy is our church staff. The issue of adequacy of staff may have been the single most frequent issue raised at town hall meetings. There has been substantial pressure on the number of staff that FUMCR has for the last several years due to budget concerns, at the same time as the Church has seen new opportunities come due to the new facility and other environmental factors. The Vision Team would like to make a specific recommendation as follows:

We will retain, appreciate, and provide for the best church staff. By the end of each calendar year for the next five years, 2011 through 2015, there will be a process to re-align staff resources to match the mission of the church and the annual application of the goals of the strategic plan for the next calendar year through a systematic program of performance evaluation, revised job descriptions, and stretch development goals, using the best-in-class human resource approaches and appropriate budget to grow, develop and nurture this most valuable resource.

We recognize that this is a challenging proposition, and want to explicitly also recognize that we are NOT asking the church staff to do even more with the same resources they currently have. That is simply not feasible in our view. Rather, in aligning staff resources to the strategy that is adopted the leadership of the church, both lay and clergy, will have to provide additional resources (through more financial resources and additional volunteer assistance) and/or make the choice to shift resources from current priorities to match deployment of staff to strategic imperatives. Although certainly difficult, we are convinced it is of critical importance.

2. PHYSICAL PLANT

In terms of importance of assets, after our church staff the physical plant is perhaps next in importance for the implementation of the overall church strategy. We are truly blessed as a congregation to have been given such a wonderful tool to help us grow God's kingdom – a point that was often addressed when we talked about FUMCR's strengths. But having said that, during our discussions in the town halls and in other congregational inputs there is clearly a lot of interest in "what's next" in terms of the physical plant. The Vision Team was unanimous in our position that we do not believe it is appropriate for us to make specific recommendations on alternative uses of the existing physical plant or future investments to change or grow on our church property. However, we were equally unanimous in believing that appropriate decisions about the Church property are crucial aspects of a successful long term strategy. As a result, our recommendation to the Church Council is that FUMCR will make the commitment that:

We will examine, assess and enhance building space to continue to have world class ministries. During the next five years, 2011 through 2015, we will revisit the building master plan as needed to align our physical space with the mission of FUMCR and strategic plan goals (for example, space for youth, offices, worship - contemporary/ chapel space - music needs) and take steps to resolve shortages and issues by maximizing the return of our incredible church plant or adding/changing space as required by growth and the priorities of the Church.

3. COMMUNICATION

During our deliberations on strategy implementation, creating change in our organization of 6,000 people was considered to be analogous to turning an aircraft carrier – it's difficult to do and takes a while. If that is indeed the case, the primary rudder that will help us move in a different direction will be communication. As a supplement to this strategy document, and as outlined in our charter as a tool for implementation, we will be presenting to the Church Council an initial communication plan. This plan will be preliminary in nature, but is intended to both

emphasize the importance of the rigorous and ongoing nature of keeping the elements of the strategy in front of the congregation, as well as providing a framework for the types of information that must be passed along to our members and non-members about where FUMCR is going. Although it is almost impossible to over communicate, our suggested communications plan will provide what we believe to be a good approach for the Church Council to consider as part of the initial communications effort about a new strategy for FUMCR. The communications plan will be presented to the Church Council in March.

4. MONITORING AND FOLLOWUP

Multiple studies have underscored the fact, with a consistency so significant that the accuracy of the assertion can no longer be in any doubt, that organizations that fail to achieve strategic success don't fall short because of bad strategies but because of poor implementation. As a group, the Vision Team believes that we are bringing forward a strategy that will us faithfully accomplish the mission of **Welcoming** people for Christ, **Growing** people in Christ, and **Serving** people with Christ. But both through our research and through our own experiences we are also profoundly aware of the challenges that will face FUMCR in the execution of this strategy. The risks are significant, and they are many – lack of sustained focus by FUMCR, lack of coordination among various parts of the organization, lack of a common understanding of objectives . . . these are just a few of the pitfalls. There is no “magic” to ensure successful implementation of the strategy, but as a group we believe that a structure that is devised in order to regularly monitor and report on “how we are doing” is absolutely essential. Equally important, the reporting mechanism must be transparent to Church leadership and visible to those who are given responsibility for moving us ever closer to our goals.

There are a variety of ways in which this can be accomplished, but the recommendation of the Vision Team is as follows:

The Church Council should form an Executive Committee, reporting to the Church Council, with a specific purpose to review metrics and progress toward Vision FUMCR.

This Committee would be comprised of both lay and staff, would be composed of 5 to 7 people, and would include a Chairperson that would be a lay member of the congregation. The Executive Committee will report quarterly to the Council and recommend on an annual basis the steps needed or changes warranted to make progress on Vision FUMCR. Such recommendations could include changes in the Vision itself, although it is not anticipated that this would happen every year. The Executive Committee may recommend the formation of additional program committees to facilitate the design of steps necessary to accomplish the Vision,. In no way would it be anticipated that the Executive Committee could itself initiate change in the Vision or other aspects of implementation without the approval of Church Council.

To reiterate, the Vision Team is of the unanimous opinion that in the absence of this or a similar group charged with oversight of implementation, that there can be no successful achievement of strategic change.

Conclusion

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a Spirit of power. (2 Timothy 1:7)

First United Methodist Church Richardson has a long history of doing outstanding ministry. After our relocation to the Central Expressway campus in 2006, it would be easy for us to sit back, relax, and enjoy our new facilities, and lull ourselves into the belief that we have accomplished our mission. However, during our relocation our congregation continued to ponder a question, “Now that God has led us to this new place, what is God calling our church to do?” This question led us away from the natural human tendency towards complacency, and toward a strategic vision that will challenge every member of FUMCR to a deeper level of discipleship, and a renewed sense of purpose around our mission: “With Open Hearts and Minds, We Welcome People for Christ, Grow People in Christ, and Serve People with Christ.”

If I had one phrase to describe the work of the Strategic Vision Team it is “Good to Great.” The hard work and comprehensive look at our church in which our team engaged revealed a strong church with so much going right. We saw things that can be immediately addressed to shore up various areas of ministry, and a need for members to take more seriously their own spiritual growth and faith development. But looking beyond the walls of our own church into the needs of the community and world, the team began to assess the various ways God is calling us to step into a leadership role that will impact, in an even greater way, the mission field in which God has planted us.

I am so grateful to each member of our Strategic Vision Team, who has worked so hard on this strategy. My prayer is that each member of FUMCR will read this document, and not put it on the shelf. Open yourself to the spirit of what is being proposed here. Look in the mirror and ask, “God, how can I be a part of what you want to bless?” Look out the window and pray, “God, show me the greatest needs that I may be a part of your answer in meeting it.” The vision being proposed here is one that can only be accomplished when we all join together in a common quest to do something great for God we could never do on our own or without God’s help. It will take a renewed commitment from each of us to make these dreams a reality.

In Christ,

Clayton Oliphint



Appendix

FUMCR Strategic Plan Focus Groups Summary

To be good listeners, the Strategic Vision Team formed an Information Gathering Subcommittee to conduct 10 focus groups with stake holders within FUMCR and outside FUMCR. Primarily, the committee felt it necessary to hear from the church membership on the present and future wants, needs, and concerns.

The focus groups, or town hall meetings, were led by lay church members Catherine Burdette and Michael Massey. To gauge stake holders' thoughts, town hall questions centered around **“what the church members’ needs are that are being fulfilled or not being fulfilled.”** Also, stake holders were asked to **“dream big with ideas for improvement and share ideas on how we could be a better church within our four walls and within our local community.”**

It became apparent to the Strategic Vision Team that the information gathered from the focus group meetings falls into two different categories.

- First, there are immediate needs/issues heard that were not strategic in nature, but rather more about short term “for the good of the church” or “ways to conduct or improve church business and activities, in the present.”
- Second, there are overarching strategic issues that are long range needs to be addressed in the strategic plan.

For those immediate needs and issues discovered, a committee could be formed of church staff and volunteers to further examine the focus group data and begin addressing those more immediate items. This action plan will gain instant credibility from the Town Hall participants that they “were heard” and the time and effort of participating in the Town Hall focus groups is turning into immediate action on items that are not strategic in nature.

As for the strategic issues discovered from the Town Hall meetings, the following summary is a brief description of strategic topics:

1. **What are your needs that the church is fulfilling?** (what are we doing that we should continue?)

Town Hall Focus Group Summary: **FUMCR is currently meeting the needs of a variety of people in dynamic ways through worship services, Bible studies, missions, and social outreach, all leading to personal spiritual growth. A vast number of people feel satisfied with the level of service the church is currently providing in the above mentioned areas.**

2. **What are your needs that the church is not fulfilling?** (What should we start doing? Is there anything we should stop doing?)

Town Hall Focus Group Summary: **FUMCR needs to improve focus on reaching people on a personal level in areas of youth programming, singles, young adult programming, and college age ministry.**

Strategic goals for Sunday school support, Bible studies programming, and leadership development can also be delivery items in the plan. Completion of the music suite is high enough in point value from the focus groups to be part of strategic planning along with other campus needs, however, deserves more study.

Lastly, communication is always a challenge for any large organization. With staffing shortages communication challenges are compounded. Goals for the strategic plan should include an improved communication plan for the church at-large. There are so many programs and functions that the church does, yet the focus group participants did not know about them, most likely due to limits in our communications due to staffing or other resources.

3. **What are the unmet needs you see within our church community or the community at large?**

Town Hall Focus Group Summary: **Focus group participants expressed a strong desire for the church to reach outside campus boundaries. Forging partnerships outside our walls and seeking FUMCR's place in our changing community are issues that could be served in a five-year program.**

The participants also recognized a need for programs serving older residents and special needs community members. Some of these programs are already in place; perhaps increased/more effective communication about FUMCR's programs can be helpful to those who see a need for the services as well as those who are in need. The community service priorities expressed, specifically health concerns, are in keeping with the global initiatives of the United Methodist Church and should be addressed in our five-year plan.

The networking opportunities suggested by participants indicate an area where FUMCR could likely be both effective and efficient. FUMCR may be able to serve a large number of people in a broad range of areas by facilitating resources through existing agencies instead of attempting to provide a wide spectrum of programs and services at the church level.

Participants also indicated being a “welcoming” church and the need for a safe environment to tackle controversial issues. While the “acceptance” initiative may be worked into a long-term plan, the practice of addressing current events and trends may be something that can happen through sermon topic selection and small group study curriculum.

4. What needs would you want FUMCR to meet if unlimited time and resources existed?

Town Hall Focus Group Summary: **The desire for additional staff members is clear. It is possible that “more staff” could translate to “more people doing the work.” Concerns that are seen by participants as understaffing issues may be remedied by a larger or more effectively trained/mobilized volunteer force. While the five-year plan may (or may not) include the addition of staff members, it should address volunteer recruitment, coordination and training to capitalize on the large number of FUMCR members who are interested in serving.**