August 22, 2021

This summary note is designed to brief each reader about the path the Church Council has taken with church leadership and with the congregation to reach this moment: our request for affirmation of this work and your vote of approval of First United Methodist Church of Evanston's Strategic Plan for 2021-2024.

Path

February 2021	Shared draft of the plan with leadership and received feedback Incorporated leadership feedback Shared report at All Church Conference and invited feedback from the congregation via Google Form and email
March 2021	Hosted open Church Council meeting to encourage dialogue Invited committees and staff to engage with the plan and consider the work to be done. Groups submitted "action steps" and ideas for collaboration and measurement to Church Council. These plans are available to all.
April 2021	Received and discussed feedback from the congregation Supported committees in drafting action steps
May 2021	Revised Values and language of vision and objectives based on feedback
Summer 2021	Collected action steps documents from committees

A Few Plan Highlights for 2021-2022: what you'll see soon

1. New website - enhancing communication, easing access to activities, easier online giving and more. Website design will include input from many within the church.
2. Blending virtual and in-person church activities in ways that are welcoming and inclusive
3. Collaborative leadership - leadership retreat session focused on identifying partners in ministry across committees and councils
4. Increased and intentional focus on justice and equality ministry, from reparations and children and adult education to mission and outreach

Larger Denomination Issues: Plan as our Steady Ship

Our strategic plan allows us to know who we are so we are prepared to respond to changes created in the broader denomination (General Conference). Our Values make clear our commitment to inclusivity. This plan is designed to keep us on course amid turbulent waters.

First United Methodist Church of Evanston
Strategic Plan 2021- 2024

Mission: First United Methodist Church is a community of Christians inviting all people to grow in their relationship with God and to live their faith in the world.

Values:
1. We value meaningful worship, preaching, and music that inspires people of all ages to love God and one another.
2. We value being a welcoming community that offers hospitality, congregational care, and fellowship for all.
3. We embrace individuals and families of all gender identities, sexual orientations, ethnicities, races, and economic backgrounds.
4. We value good works to bring justice and comfort to our beloved community, and to mend and protect our earth.
5. We value Christian faith formation through lifelong learning.
6. We value our historic building as a beacon in the community that helps make our worship and ministries possible.

Vision: "We are a community of faith seeking the transformation of the world by living out Jesus' courageous love."

We are a Community of Faith… Who we are matters!

The history of First Church that we have inherited provokes each of us to prayerfully and actively learn about the difficult and complex issues that face humanity…trusting in God as our guide. As a community, we will care for each other and grow our faith through our lifetimes. Further we will challenge each other to question and think deeply through our worship, music, Bible study, Christian education, spiritual formation, fellowship, mission, and work for social, racial, and environmental justice.

…seeking the Transformation of the World… What we do matters!

Rooted in our faith, we will commit to changing the world in a positive, loving way, especially for those with limited power and voice. Strengthened by conviction and driven by compassion, we are called to come to the aid of all people seeking help or hope, embracing each person's unique faith, appearance, identity, and background. We will embrace those seeking shelter on our steps, with us in Sunday Worship, down the street in Evanston, living in Appalachia, and around the world. We are committed to eliminating social and racial injustice. As the earth supports our mission, we will work to protect and repair it.

…by Living Out Jesus' Courageous Love. How we act matters!

Jesus Christ did not stand idly by during his time on earth. His behavior was considered radical because he met human beings where they were: at the well, on the road, in locked rooms, and at wedding feasts. He loved and accepted all people as God's beloved. Still, in his humanity, he could demonstrate real anger when the powerful took advantage of the powerless. At First Church, we will be brave and act with humanity and let Jesus' example be our daily guide.

Strategic Objectives

1.The Beloved Community - Cultivate a congregation that loves and acts in the example of Jesus.
2. Relational Discipleship - Design and enhance in-person and virtual ministries that foster connectedness, engagement, and growth.
3. Dismantling the Sin of Racism - Engage as a community of faith actively, critically, and courageously dismantling the sin of racism.
4. Action for Justice - Integrate action for racial, social, LGBTQIA+ and environmental justice into congregational life.
5. Financial Stewardship as Spiritual Discipline - Steward financial gifts and a balanced budget as a spiritual discipline and a tool for transformation.
6. Collaborative Leadership - Promote leadership that fosters collaboration in order to educate and empower congregational discipleship and ministry formation.
7. Building and Technologies as Fellow Disciples - Develop and maintain an efficient facility and effective technological resources as tools for sharing the Gospel.

Scope

Offerings Ministry, Worship, Education, Fellowship, Mission, Buildings and Grounds

Geographic Location Evanston, the surrounding area, and beyond via virtual connection

Integration Committee and staff interconnectedness and Church Council synthesis

Advantage: Ultimately, we seek to engage followers of Jesus Christ who wish to have the courage to act as He did for the benefit of others. Membership is inclusive, not exclusive, and differences of opinion on matters of faith are encouraged, not discouraged.