

First United Methodist Church
Of Evanston
2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan Report

September 2025

First United Methodist Church Of Evanston
Strategic Plan 2025 - 2030



The Rose Window at FUMC is circular which symbolizes unity, eternity, God in Trinity, and wholeness. It also represents one community with many parts, and is described as a "vivid pattern of harmonious colors." We strive to be colorful throughout our congregation. There are 12 petals, which represent the 12 apostles.

The 12 petals can also represent the 12 months of the year, and as we look up to the Rose Window throughout the year, it can remind us of our part in our church's history and the goals we hope to achieve in our strategic plan, including celebrating our 175 years of faith and service in Evanston.

First Church
UNITED METHODIST
EVANSTON

Strategic Plan
Report Outline

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3. Process Summary (pp. 6-8)
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6. Five-year outline of goals (pg. 14)
7. Conclusion (pg. 15)

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- Church Council with Strategic Planning Subcommittee roster (pg. 16)
- Interviewee & Focus Group Participants (pg. 17)
- Summary Survey results (pp. 18-27)

Introduction

First United Methodist Church of Evanston has existed since 1854. Over its 171-year history, First Church has been a strong voice for justice, a center of service to its members and community, and an early faith presence during the founding of the City of Evanston.

As we move through our time as stewards of the flame, carrying it on behalf of First Church Methodists who came before us, and will come after, we have the opportunity to continue to be that strong voice, that center of service, and a faith presence in our own way.

Our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan provides us with a guide for what we hope to do, and what we will do to have greater impact for our members, our community, and for our God. Use this document to help you as you decide your role in:

- Leading
- Nurturing
- Stewarding and,
- Celebrating our time in First Church's history.

The United Methodist Church vision statement (**adopted May 2025**):

The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.

Our Mission, Vision, and Values

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

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

Our Values:

1. Inspiration – we value meaningful worship, preaching, and music that inspires all to love God and one another.
2. Welcoming – we value being a welcoming community that offers hospitality, congregational care, and fellowship for all.
3. Inclusive – We embrace individuals and families of all gender identities, sexual orientations, ethnicities, races and economic backgrounds.
4. Active Justice – We value good works to bring justice and comfort to our beloved community, and to mend and protect our earth.
5. Faith Formation – We value Christian faith formation through lifelong learning.

2025-2030 Strategic Plan
PlanningProcess

Process:

In 2024, Church Council made the decision to take a year to complete the next strategic plan, extending the current 2021-2024 strategic plan one more year. Church Council established a subcommittee from its roster to create and implement a planning process, with the ultimate goal of a strategic plan for the program year beginning in 2025.

The planning process consisted of four phases:
1. Defining subcommittee role and planning process
2. Seeking stakeholder input and data gathering
3. Analyzing input and drafting strategic priorities
4. Presenting priorities for input/buy in and complete plan

Throughout the process our two Pastors were updated and they provided their input into the process, the interviewee and focus group participants, and the strategic priorities and overall plan.

Overall, the committee interviewed 52 FUMC members or community members, individually or in focus groups.

In addition, a survey was created and offered to the entire congregation, which resulted in 100 members submitting completed surveys.

Interview and survey questions included input on our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It also sought perspective on our mission, vision, and values, strategic issues we face, and aspirations for our church.

Following completion of the interviews, focus groups, and survey, the committee reviewed the input and began to identify themes related to the findings, and ultimately after several iterations resulted in the strategic priorities created for this plan.

Once we presented the draft strategic priorities to Church Council and the Pastors, we began to share with committees of the church, both to convey the strategic priorities and to request that they create SMART (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, Timely) goals, applicable for their committee work and connected to whichever strategic priorities made sense given their committee's charge. We received goals from all committees for the current program year.

Finally, once all the goals were provided, we shared them back with the committee chairs and staff at the latest Leadership Retreat on August 9, 2025.

Following the retreat, final touches were put on the plan, which is now presented to the congregation on this September 14, 2025.

Some notes on how to use this plan

The four strategic pillars and six priorities presented on page 9, along with our mission, vision and values, are our guide for the next five years. As you consider your individual faith journey with God and at First Church, your committee or group work at church, and our collective membership, ask yourself, "how could I (or how am I, or how can I learn more about) 1) leading beyond our walls, 2) nurturing

within our church community, 3) stewarding our resources and operations, and 4) celebrating our history and future impact?"

Use our strategic priorities to help guide you in your actions, your decision making, the events you go to, the issues you bring up to improve, the way you approach worship, what you volunteer for, and so on. We hope that eventually you can repeat from memory the Strategic Plan's four pillars.

When you look up at the Rose Window and see the many colors, and our circle of faith, we hope it reminds you of the four action verbs in our pillars: Lead, Nurture, Steward, and Celebrate. We hope it reminds you each and every Sunday.

As a refresher, this plan was created based on congregational input. The plan was developed from feedback offered by the membership, the pastors, the staff and the community. We as a congregation identified these priorities – let's move towards them together!

A note on goals

Some committees provided multi-year goals; however, we recognize that it was difficult to project beyond our current year at this time. Therefore, we know this plan will continue to evolve and be a living document we update and hone as we move throughout these five years. Church Council is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategic plan, and we will work regularly with the pastors, staff, and committees of the church to hone, update, adjust and push the plan forward.

Strategic Pillars and Priorities

From September, 2025 through June, 2030 (5-yr plan), First United Methodist Church of Evanston will focus on the following six strategic priorities under four pillars:

LEAD BEYOND OUR WALLS

1. Champion the progressive Christian message* by increasing the presence of our ministry leadership in the Evanston community and beyond regarding social justice issues.
2. Increase our voice and local leadership among Evanston/Chicagoland faith communities regarding social justice, specifically Race, LGBTQIA+, ethnic justice (including immigration/refugees), the environment, and Mission & Outreach areas such as food/housing/basic needs, with a desire to join leading voices in the national UMC in these areas.

NURTURE WITHIN OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

3. Nurture a broad culture of community and engagement within and throughout FUMC.

STEWARD OUR RESOURCES ** AND OPERATIONS

4. Strengthen and identify new revenue streams to support operations and capital projects.
5. Improve internal systems, operations and volunteer support (governance, policies and procedures, communications, including website, volunteer management) to minimize obstacles and expense.

CELEBRATE OUR HISTORY AND FUTURE IMPACT

6. Identify, plan and execute BIG project (programmatic, community) to highlight during 175th anniversary year (2029).

NOTE: Focusing on these priorities does not mean we will stop supporting existing program/mission work of Soup Kitchen, Bundled Blessings, ASP, and Total Child.

*FUMC stands firmly to embrace the United Methodist Social Principles that emphasize social justice and inclusion for all persons and a focus on Jesus' teachings as a model for living.

**Resources include time, talent, and treasure of members and volunteers

First United Methodist Church of Evanston
PY25-PY30 Strategic Plan, PY25 Detail
Pillars, Priorities and Goals

Strategic Pillars (٤) and Priorities (٦)	Responsible Committees	Staff Connected to Committee	PY٢٦ (٧/١/٢٥-٦/٣٠/٢٦) GOALS
LEAD BEYOND OUR WALLS			
١. Champion the progressive Christian message by increasing the presence of our ministry leadership in the Evanston community and beyond regarding social justice issues.	Social Justice	Senior Pastor	1) Develop checklist of actions and accountability and encourage all members and constituents to commit to social justice action (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly) within and beyond our church. Highlight successes and celebrate annually. 2) Provide small internal grants for various groups/teams in the church such as children, youth, young adults, and others to launch efforts to address an injustice. (What could be done with a $100-$500 to make a difference in the world for good?)
	Social Justice (Earth Care)	Senior Pastor	Increase styrofoam collection for our community and increase volunteers for collection and transportation.
	Faith Formation	Senior Pastor	Provide one opportunity for faith formation focused primarily on those outside our faith community.
	Youth Council	Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries	Build Appalachia Service Project mission ministry to pre-covid levels.
	Adult Education	Senior Pastor	Provide a Social Justice Intersections class responding to social justice concerns as they arise.
	Worship	Senior Pastor	Integrate progressive theology into Sunday service and from the pupit.
٢. Increase our voice and local leadership among Evanston/Chicagoland faith communities regarding social justice, specifically Race, LGBTQIA+, ethnic justice (including immigration/refugees), the environment, and food/housing/basic needs, with a desire to join leading voices in the national UMC in these areas.	Social Justice	Senior Pastor	1) Plan meetings/conversations with leaders of community organizations to discern opportunities for partnership and service to the underserved in our community. 2) Plan and host a two-day community of faith gathering in the fall to form and strengthen relationships and to share ideas about addressing areas of need related to racial justice, gender justice, economic justice, and earth care justice.
	Social Justice (Earth Care)	Senior Pastor	Expand Earth Sunday, in April, to a community-wide event, inviting other interested organizations.
	Faith Formation	Senior Pastor	Collaborate with Social Justice to offer at least one opportunity that explores the intersection of spirituality and social justice.
	Children's Ministry	Director of Children's Ministry	Research partnership opportunities with three arms of the No. IL Conference: United Voices for Children; CEF; and Camp Reynoldswood.
	Music Ministry	Minister of Music	Add 3 new pieces to the Chancel Choir's repertoire around themes of justice.
	Youth Council	Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries	Engage youth with the Social Justice group to teach as well as learn as part of the Confirmation and HS class.
	Adult Education	Senior Pastor	Provide Social Justice Intersections class which offers ways to take action via workshops, in protests, and in attending presentations from leaders in the field.
	Key Metrics:		**1. Earth Care: increase collection by 20%, and increase volunteers by 40%.** **1. Social Justice: increase social justice member actions by 10% (measure via year end survey)** **1. Social Justice: # of projects/grants funded** **1. Youth Council: Increase ASP attendance by 10%**

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Pillars, Priorities and Goals

Strategic Pillars (٤) and Priorities (٦)	Responsible Committees	Staff Connected to Committee	PY٢٦ (٧/١/٢٥-٦/٣٠/٢٦) GOALS
NURTURE WITHIN OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY 3. Nurture a broad culture of community and engagement within and throughout FUMC.	Membership	Director of Communications & Membership	Visitors: Increase number of visitors who become inquirers. New members: Connect each new member to one class, project or group. Existing members: Re-engage through class, project or group inactive members. Membership: Create and host one NEW all-church event for the entire church community.
	Faith Formation	Senior Pastor	Offer several opportunities each year which lend heavily toward nurturing and deepening community.
	Children's Ministry	Director of Children's Ministry	Partner with Faith Formation to offer monthlong intergenerational course for families on integrating spiritual practices.
	Music Ministry	Minister of Music	1) Increase volunteer singers into our choirs this season. 2) Plan a music-focused VBS for 2026 to welcome families and grow our Children's Choir.
	Social Justice	Senior Pastor	In partnership with other committees, such as Faith Formation, Adult Ed, host and offer regular gatherings, meditation offering, educational opportunities nurturing FUMC's social justice commitment and awareness.
	Social Justice (Earth C ar e)	Senior Pastor	Collaborate with Adult Education and Children's Ministry, and increase articles in newsletter, to increase awareness and activism. Host Senior Advent Luncheon on December 10th.
	Congregational Care	Senior Pastor Senior Pastor	Create and implement a leadership development program to equip and support emerging church leaders.
	Nominations & Leadership Development	Director of Communications & Membership	
	Youth Council	Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries	Increase the number of adult members involved, first through education and awareness, in youth member l i ves.
	Adult Education	Senior Pastor	Provide 3 classes (The Christian Experiment, Abide, Faith & Parenting) which will nurture participants in different ways.
	Fellowship	Senior Pastor	Cross programming ideas: two or more fellowship groups will co-host an event to increase fellowship within and throughout FUMC. Provide a structured fellowship activity once a month (during comm hour) such as "find someone who" that encourages someone to make new connections in the church.
	Worship	Senior Pastor	Create and claim space for children in the sanctuary.
	Worship	Senior Pastor	Celebrate the diversity of the congregation with visible diversity of leadership every Sunday. Create welcoming signage in worship space, celebrate pronouns in bulletins/during announcements.
	Key Metrics:		**3. Membership: transition 25% of visitors who have attended more than 5X into inquirers. 3. Membership (new members): connect new members to class, etc. w/i 6 mos. of joining. 3. Membership (existing): re-engage 20% of inactive members. 3. Faith Formation: establish one new Faith Around the Table group each year. 3. Music Ministry: Add at least 3 new volunteer singers into our choirs. 3. Youth Council: Recruit 5 new adult volunteers**

First United Methodist Church of Evanston
PY25-PY30 Strategic Plan, PY25 Detail
Pillars, Priorities and Goals

Strategic Pillars (٤) and Priorities (٦)	Responsible Committees	Staff Connected to Committee	PY٢٦ (٧/١/٢٥-٦/٣٠/٢٦) GOALS
STEWARD OUR RESOURCES AND OPERATIONS			
٤. Strengthen and identify new revenue streams to support operations and capital projects.	Tr u st ees	Executive Pastor	Begin planning for a campaign to increase bequests and planned gifts.
	Administration	Executive Pastor	Create the Wedding, Event and Building Use Coordinator staff position to be paid by the SPRC budget.
	Social Justice	Senior Pastor	Assist each social justice team in locating funding sources to support their efforts.
5. Improve internal systems, operations and volunteer support (governance, policies and procedures, communications, including website, volunteer management) to minimize obstacles and expense.	Church Council	Senior Pastor	Create and propose revised governance structure for volunteer committees of the church. Goal to complete by Jan, 2026.
	Finance	Executive Pastor	1) Review, update, and add financial policies to guide church finances. 2) Assist Bundled Blessings to establish separate checking account to help improve fundraising efforts.
	Administration, Communications	Executive Pastor	1) Create a communications strategy to follow related to our communication channels and tied to our strategic plan. 2) Implement the Realm Taskforce recommendations for full adoption of Realm for all internal church events, gatherings, vol opps, information gathering.
	Nominations & Leadership Development	Senior Pastor Director of Communications & Membership	1) Raise awareness of First Church's committees, their projects, and the interests, backgrounds and skill sets that would benefit each committee's work. 2) Build and pilot a framework for the nominations portion of committee work to facilitate discernment and selection of diverse leadership.
	Tr u st ees	Executive Pastor	1) Create procedures for obtaining bids, approving bids, contracting with vendors, approving invoices, & generating payment of approved invoices, ensuring all account codes are accurate. 2) Review and confirm that all policies and procedures regarding the care of the church's endowment and other funds with Wespath are in writing. Goal is to have two 3-ring binders with all policies, one located at the church office with the Executive Pastor, and one provided to the Chair of the Trustees during their term (and available to any member upon request).
	Staff Parish Relations (SPRC)	Senior Pastor	1) Develop new/revised job descriptions based on current staff configurations, for all positions, and what we need those positions to be responsible for over the next 5 years. 2) Provide care for all staff, both clergy and lay staff, and consult with staff regarding continuing ed, work-life balance, etc. 3) Ensure adequate compensation, within budgetary requirements, to recognize incumbents equitably for the work they perform on behalf of the congregation. 4) Complete the staff handbook project and ensure any employment action taken follows state and federa employment laws to minimize risk to staff, clergy, and the church. 5) Develop a method of communication to newer SPRC members about employment policies, procedures, and action taken, within guidelines of the UMC Book of Discipline. 6) Consider a committee member description for FUMC's SPRC.

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PY25-PY30 Strategic Plan, PY25 Detail
Pillars, Priorities and Goals

Strategic Pillars (٤) and Priorities (٦)	Responsible Committees	Staff Connected to Committee	PY٢٦ (٧/١/٢٥-٦/٣٠/٢٦) GOALS
STEWARD OUR RESOURCES AND OPERATIONS (Cont.)	Children's Ministry	Director of Children's Ministry	1) Restructure Children's Council as a working council to create culture of collaboration and service within Children's Ministry program. 2) Update and regularly maintain Children's Ministry website and Realm pages with regular collaborative m eet i n gs.
5. Improve internal systems, operations and volunteer support (governance, policies and procedures, communications, including website, volunteer management) to minimize obstacles and expense. (cont.)	Youth Council	Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries	Reestablish the Youth Council with a specific role and goals to support youth.
	Music Ministry	Minister of Music	Maintain the music library ensuring we get continued use out of our previous purchases.
	Congregational Care	Senior Pastor	Partner with Trustees to establish a framework to identify seniors in our church community who may have a need for financial assistance via the Clarence J. Luther Fund. Taskforce has been established to begin work.
	Mission & Outreach	Executive Pastor	1) Clearly convey the Mission & Outreach focus areas - Food, Housing, and Basic Needs - in the bulletin, hallways, signs, and online so that all members, when asked know the three areas. 2) Establish leadership transition plans for all ministry teams - including the number of years left in current coordinator terms and plans for growing new leaders from volunteers within ministries. 3) Conduct a volunteer assessment/accounting to understand what capacity our current membership has for taking on more volunteer roles, given the roles they already have taken on within the church. 4) Develop new strategies and partnerships with other committees - including Social Justice, Adult Education, and others - to increase group volunteer engagement.
	Worship	Senior Pastor	Create and claim space for children in the sanctuary.
	Archives	Senior Pastor	Collect committee minutes, records of baptisms, marriages from committees, office, and staff. Reinforce regular & timely delivery to archives.
CELEBRATE OUR HISTORY AND FUTURE IMPACT			
٦. Identify، plan and execute BIG project (programmatic، community) to highlight during ١٧٥th anniversary year (٢٠٢٩).	Church Council	Senior Pastor	Partnering with Senior Pastor, establish an anniversary organizing committee to begin preparations for anniversary year.
	Archives	Senior Pastor	1) Support development of a major anniversary project, eg a participatory history with materials created by members; eg first impressions of FUMC, greatest impact of membership and participation. Could be compiled into book or as posters. 2) Generate items of historic connection in approaching 175th anniversary. 3) Assist with records for whoever is identified by the anniversary organizing committee.
	Social Justice	Senior Pastor	1) Research social justice history of FUMC to celebrate past and present impact in preparation of anniversary. 2) Plan and display each year's activities of each social justice team during community hour.
	Youth Council	Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries	Foster and strengthen relationships with youth and young adults via our anniversary celebration, to help First Church feel like home to them so we have another generation ready to support with all of their gifts.
	Music Ministry	Minister of Music	Purchase a new set of robes that will see us through the next 25 years.

First United Methodist Church of Evanston
PY25-PY30 Strategic Plan
Pillars and Broad Goal Outline

	Program Year (PY)26 (7/1/25-6/30/26) - See detailed goals	**PY27 (7/1/26-6/30/27)**	**PY28 (7/1/27-6/30/28)**	**PY29 (7/1/28-6/30/29)**	**PY30 (7/1/29-6/30/30)**
LEAD BEYOND OUR WALLS	Conduct Community Needs Assessment What's our greatest mission strength?	1D Big goal based on community assessment & greatest mission strength	Implement mission program	Implement mission program	Highlight program during 175th
NURTURE WITHIN OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY	Achieve membership goals and drive engagement Design and create all-church event Encourage committee collaboration Engage children, youth, and young adults with other groups	Achieve membership goals and drive engagement All-church event Encourage committee collaboration Joint events for small groups Engage children, youth, and young adults with other groups	Achieve membership goals and drive engagement All-church event Encourage committee collaboration Joint events for small groups Engage children, youth, and young adults with other groups	Achieve membership goals and drive engagement All-church event Encourage committee collaboration Joint events for small groups Engage children, youth, and young adults with other groups	Achieve membership goals and drive engagement 175th all-church event Encourage committee collaboration Joint events for small groups Engage children, youth, and young adults with other groups
STEWARD OUR RESOURCES AND OPERATIONS	Recommend revised governance structure Inventory and begin creating/revising policies and procedures Develop communication strategy Increase household participation in stewardship campaign	Start planned giving campaign Policies and Procedures work Implement communication strategy Increase household participation in stewardship campaign	Planned giving campaign Complete Standard Operating Procedures, including Policies & Procedures & Job descriptions Implement communication strategy Increase household participation in stewardship campaign	Planned giving campaign Continuing education re: SOP, policies and procedures Implement communication strategy Increase household participation in stewardship campaign	Planned giving campaign Continuing education re: SOP, policies and procedures Implement communication strategy Increase household participation in stewardship campaign
CELEBRATE OUR HISTORY AND FUTURE IMPACT	Recruit chair & committee for 175th	175th Planning	175th Planning	Begin 175th year (1/1/29)	Big 175th event (July, 2029), conclude 12/31/29

Conclusion

Conclusion

In five years, where will First United Methodist Church of Evanston be? Can you envision what a nurtured church means? How are we immersed in the community serving our God while we serve each other? Can you see a waiting list of volunteers who have signed up to serve? And how efficiently we run with our standard operating procedures. Can you see a celebration that brings joy but also shows how important service to our community is to fulfill our mission.

Hopefully you can see it. It won't happen without all of us playing a role. Please help First Church, with your time, talents, gifts, service and witness to LEAD, NURTURE, STEWARD, and CELEBRATE!



Church Council
July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Chair
Jessica Chadwick
2023-2026

Vice Chair
Matthew Moy Johnson*
2023-2026

Members
George Asante*
2024-2027

Todd Bowen
2022-2025

Mary Cauble*
2024-2027

Sam Erickson-Ely*
2023-2026

Linda Federer*
2022-2025

Obi Fox-Nnebedum*
2024-2027

Jim Hagedorn
2024-2025

Matt Peters
2022-2025

Staff
Rev. Grace Imathiu
Senior Pastor

*Strategic Planning Subcommittee

52 individuals interviewed:
2 pastors
4 s ta ff
9 com m chai rs
33 others (past chairs, comm members etc.)
4 community reps.



Surv e y:
110 surveys
(17. 5%) co mpl e te d a s of 3/ 6

Strategic Planning Process
Completed Interviewees & Focus Groups

1. Melissa Appelt, Interfaith Action of Evanston
2. George Asante
3. Dennis Barbour
4. Bruce Baumberger
5. Michael Bergmann
6. BJ Birkhahn-Rommelfanger
7. Betty Bogg, Connections for the Homeless
8. Bill Brown
9. Tom Butler
10. Judith Campbell
11. Lynne Carlton
12. Jeff Carlton
13. Mary Cauble
14. Jessica Chadwick
15. Craig Chambers
16. Tom Clemens
17. Mike Cline
18. Pastor Britt Cox
19. Phil Crihfield
20. Glynis Doyle
21. Linda Federer
22. Jon Fox-Nnebedum
23. Obi Fox-Nnebedum
24. Sam Erickson-Ely
25. Fay Godman
26. Allison Greer
27. Marianne Griebler
28. Rich Grodsky
29. Jim Hagedorn
30. Sydney Harkrider
31. Mark Henry
32. Pastor Grace Imathiu
33. Matt Moy Johnson
34. Sam Kalil
35. Lisa Kampwirth, Total Child
36. Jane Koten
37. Colin McDonald
38. Rob Meyer
39. Abby Ogombula
40. Matt Peters
41. Henry Pleas
42. Steve Prout
43. Sharon Rader
44. Martha Rudy
45. Brian Schoettler
46. Andrew Schumacher
47. Tom Scott
48. Beth Swanick
49. Mary Taylor-Johnson
50. Rabbi Rachel Weiss, JRC of Evanston
51. Connie Williams
52. Jan Womack

2025 FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF EVANSTON

Strategic Planning

Congregational Survey SUMMARY RESULTS

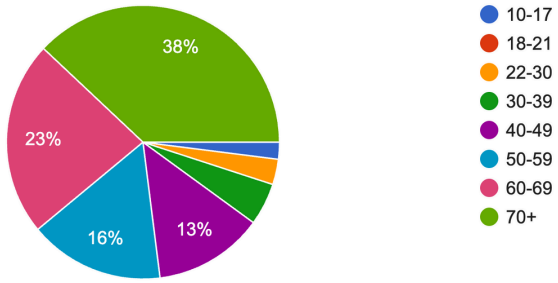
Survey conducted January 2025

GENERAL STATS

Total Responses: 100

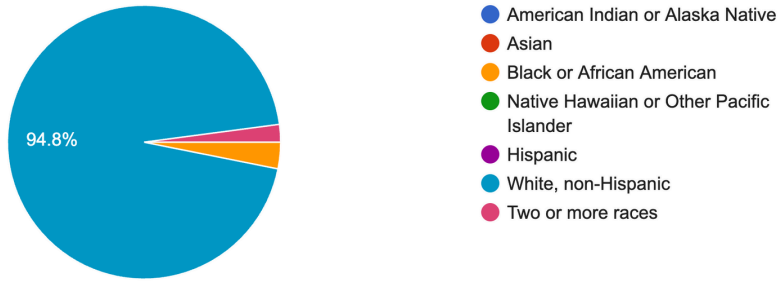
Age Range

100 responses



What race/ethnicity best describes you?

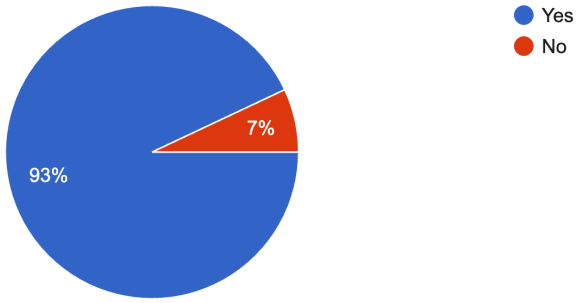
96 responses



GENERAL STATS

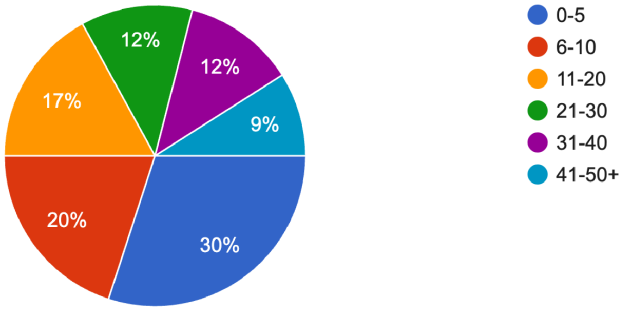
Are you a member of FUMC (meaning you've completed the Inquirers Class)?

100 responses



In years, how long have you been attending FUMC?

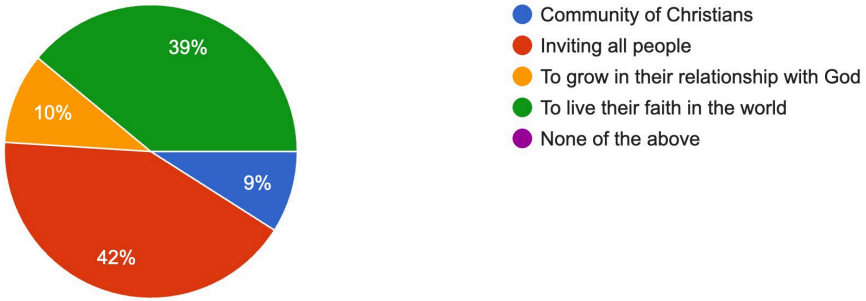
100 responses



MISSION & VISION

What part of our mission statement most resonates with you? (only select one).

100 responses



Representative Quotes

- "One of the things I like best about First Church is its kind invitation to all."
- "I feel closest to God when I'm outside the church and faithfully serving our community."
- "As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, welcoming ALL is what got me in the building to begin with."
- "Living in community with other believers encourages me to think about how my faith can work for justice in the world."
- "It's important for non-church goers to see Christians show faith through humane, supportive, and kindly actions rather than judgmental words."

"IF YOU'D LIKE PLEASE SHARE WHY YOU CHOSE YOUR ANSWER REGARDING OUR MISSION STATEMENT."

Key Themes

1.Inclusivity&Welcome (most frequent theme)

- Many respondents highlighted that our church is inclusive and welcoming of ***all*** people, regardless of race, faith background, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or sexual ori ent at i on.
- Several shared personal stories of feeling welcomed despite not having prior church experience or coming from Jewish or LGBTQ+ backgrounds.
- Emphasis that inclusivity is not just about words but about lived practice: "extending welcome is one of the most important actions we can take as followers of Christ."
- Some also expressed concern that at times the community aspect has not been as strong ("because it does not feel like a community").

2. Community as Essential

- Respondents noted that faith cannot be lived in isolation; community provides the support and encouragement needed.
- The church is described as a "values-based community" where theology, service, and ministry are best lived out together.

3. Living Faith in the World

- Many respondents pointed to the importance of ***action beyond Sunday services***.
- Living faith through justice, service, and kindness was seen as core to the mission: "If we don't live our faith in the world our faith is effectively dead."
- Several noted that community service opportunities (ASP, Interfaith Action, food insecurity, homelessness, etc.) help them feel most connected to God.

4. Personal Faith Growth

- Several emphasized that the mission calls them to deepen their own relationship with God.

Respondents valued the church as a place to receive guidance to "turn faith into action."

- Some noted it as a life-long journey: "Life-long work to grow closer to God."

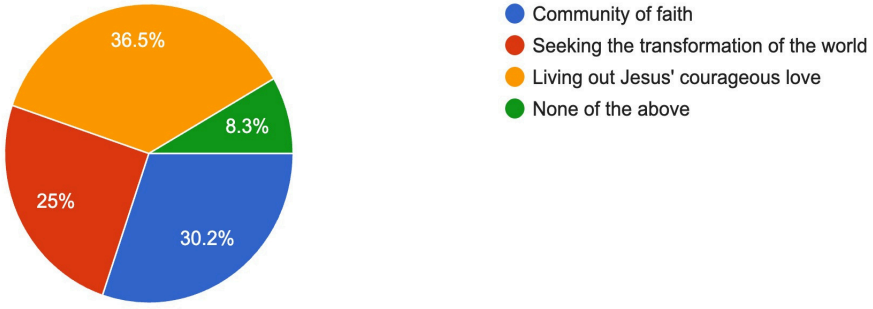
5. Broader Reflections & Concerns

- Some respondents felt the mission statement was too generic but still captured the church's role in shaping Christian formation.
- A few raised concerns that the phrase "to live their faith in the world" has not been used as prominently in recent years (even missing from the website).
- There is a sense that the church should continue to grow in outward-facing service rather than be inwardly focused.

MISSION & VISION

What part of our vision statement most resonates with you? (only select one)

96 responses



Representative Quotes

- "Courageous love is key to fight the evil that is insidious in our world."
- "For me, the church community is what leads to faith for people like me, who weren't raised in the church."
- "As a community of Christians, I seek the opportunity to live into the example of Jesus' radical love – the love that rejects the allure of earthly gain in favor of protecting the vulnerable."
- "By default – I'm not sure I'm up to 'transforming the world' or understand fully what Jesus' courageous love entails. (Or maybe I'm afraid of what it does mean!)."
- "Not just talking/praying but doing."

IF YOU'D LIKE PLEASE SHARE WHY YOU CHOSE YOUR ANSWER REGARDING OUR VISION STATEMENT

Key Themes

1.Courageous Love as Central

- Many highlighted "living out Jesus' courageous love" as the heart of the vision.
- Respondents connected courageous love with:
  - Fighting injustice and evil.
  - Loving people who are different.
  - Protecting the vulnerable and rejecting worldly gain.
- Several shared that courageous love requires bravery: "It takes so much courage to actually live in the way of Jesus."

2. Community as the Vehicle for Transformation

- Community was repeatedly lifted up as essential for sustaining faith and enabling transformation.
- Respondents said faith is best nurtured in community: ***"Community is the key."***
- Several stories described being drawn deeper into faith because of church community (e.g., friendships through Sunday School, feeling nurtured and supported).
- The community was seen as the foundation for action: "small, faithful communities are the incubators for what become big transformations."

3. Call to Action & Transformation

- Many emphasized that the world is deeply in need of transformation (injustice, wealth inequality, suffering, divisiveness).
- Respondents resonated with the idea of ***not just talking or praying, but doing.***
- Some noted that transformation begins with individual change, which then spreads outward to others.

4. Tension: Clarity vs. Vagueness

- Several respondents felt the vision statement was too vague or generic:
  - "As with the mission statement, the vision statement is rather generic and doesn't really offer a vision of anything."
  - "I'm not sure I'm up to transforming the world or even fully understand what 'Jesus' courageous love' means."
- Others, however, appreciated its ambition and broadness: "I like that it's ambitious.

5. Alignment with Christian Call

- Respondents tied the vision to Scripture: the call to "make disciples," to bring about the "kingdom of God," and to embody Jesus' love.
- Many saw the vision as a reminder of what Christians are called to do in practice: "The essence of our lives is to know God's love, to live in God's love and to love."

KEY THEMES

Survey Questions	Key Themes
Name 3 keystrengths ofour church that can help us grow and achieve our mission in the next 5 years	• **Leadership & Pastoral Strength** - Pastoral leadership as a key strength. Congregation & Community - intergenerational connections and opportunities for fellowship. • **Social Justice & Mission Work** - Programs like the Soup Kitchen, bundled blessing, and community partnerships are seen as vital. Church's commitment to social justice, activism, and outreach • **Resources & Facilities** - The church's building, financial resources, and central location are considered valuable. • **Education & Youth Engagement** – The church's children's and youth programs. • **Outreach & Community Partnerships** - Local partnerships and connections to the wider community (e.g., Garrett)
Name 3 weaknesses of our church that could ***negatively*** impact our growth and work towards our mission in the next 5 years	• **Membership & Engagement Challenges** - Declining attendance and membership, cliquish congregation, low volunteerism from new individuals. • **Structural & Organizational Issues** – Confusing committee structure, ineffective communication, and unclear expectations for those in leadership roles. • **Financial & Facility Concerns** – Expensive building, Aging infrastructure, and long term financial viability. • **Cultural & Social Dynamics** - Struggles with diversity, inclusion and addressing the needs of POCs, Perceived overemphasis on certain social issues.

KEY THEMES

Survey Questions	Key Themes
What are the top three things you are looking for in a church?	• **Community & Belonging** – The importance of a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive church community where they feel a sense of connection and fellowship. This includes diversity, intergenerational relationships, and a space where they feel safe and accepted. • **Spiritual Growth & Worship** – Meaningful sermons, thought-provoking worship, music, and opportunities for learning and deepening their faith. Seek inspiration, education, and a way to connect with God and their beliefs. • **Service & Social Action** – Ways to serve others through mission work, social justice initiatives, community outreach, and volunteer opportunities. They want a church that actively engages in making a positive impact in the world.
What should our top 4 priorities be over the next five years?	• **Membership Growth & Engagement -** Increasing overall church attendance and membership. Expanding outreach to younger generations (youth, college students, young families). Creating opportunities for deeper member engagement (small groups, service roles, leadership development). Strengthening member retention through community-building initiatives. • **Community & Social Justice Engagement** - Expanding outreach and partnerships in Evanston and Chicago. Advocating for social justice issues (immigration, homelessness, environmental stewardship, anti-racism, LGBTQ+ i ncl usi on) . **Financial & Operational Stability -** Ensuring long-term financial sustainability (increased pledges, alternative revenue streams). Aligning staff and budget with strategic goals. **Facilities & Infrastructure -** Addressing building maintenance and renovations (**bathrooms**, windows, roof, sanctuar y). • **Worship & Spiritual Growth -** Enhancing Christian education across all age groups. Offering diverse and inspiring worship experiences (traditional, contemporary, music-driven) **Leadership & Volunteer Support** - Strengthening pastoral and administrative leadership and more support for the staff via volunteers

KEY THEMES

Survey Questions	Key Themes
In five years, what do you hope our church is recognized for?	• **Welcoming& Inclusive Community -** Being known as a church that embraces all people. Recognized for radical hospitality and openness. • **Commitment to Social Justice & Community Service -** Leading social justice initiatives. Actively serving the local community (Evanston and beyond). Being a strong voice for equity and advocacy. • **Faith in Action -** Demonstrating discipleship through tangible efforts. Living out Christian values in meaningful ways. • **High-Quality Worship & Music** Maintaining a reputation for excellent and inspiring worship services. Continuing strong musical traditions as part of worship.