

Too often people only know what the church wants *from* them; money, time, commitment, volunteer hours, stuff, supplies, money and more money. Sometimes it seems people only know what the church wants *from* them rather than what the church wants *for* them. The following document states clearly what Central UMC wants *for* you.

Here's how we got to these statements. In 2012 a group of Central UMC members appointed by the Church Council set out on a year-long journey to identify the DNA that makes us who we are at Central. We began by reading the book *Church Unique* by Will Mancini. We then met with a Navigator who helped us find our way. Over our time together we remembered stories about the church, dreamed about who we might be as the church, prayed together, got to know one another and tried to put into words who and what Central is. This was not easy. As a matter of fact the group took this job so seriously that we literally argued over every word that you will find below to make sure it was the right word choice.

To help you understand what you will be reading it might be helpful to understand the layers that this document contains:

- * **Mission Mandate** answers the question *"What are we doing?"*
- * **Mission Strategies** answers the question *"How are we doing it?"*
- * **Mission Values** answers the question *"Why are we doing it?"*
- * **Mission Measures** answers the question *"When will we know we have been successful?"*

This fall you have heard sermons about each of these elements and how they relate to one another and build upon one another. You now have before you a document that expresses and expounds upon these elements more thoroughly. We hope that you will read it prayerfully in the hopes that the work that the Vision Pathway team did will be blessed by God and have deep meaning in your life and the life of Central United Methodist Church.

If you have questions about this document, the layers, or any other element of the Vision Pathway team's work please contact one of the members of the team:

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Central UMC: Vision Pathway–Mission Mandate

The bedrock foundation of our work is our **Mission Mandate**. The Mission Mandate answers the question “What are we doing?” The answer to this question is very unique and is what helps us differentiate ourselves from every other church because we have a specific mission in a specific context. Sometimes this element is referred to as a “Mission Statement” but our usage of Mission Mandate reminds us that what we are doing is truly unique to Central.

Think of it this way, Jesus gave the disciples the Great Commission in Matthew 28: *“Go into all the world...”* The United Methodist Church has a great “Permission” in its own Mission Statement: The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Our Mission Mandate is our great “Intention” that focuses everything we do. This is why the Mission Mandate is the first “layer” of our Vision Pathway work. The Mission Mandate is the foundational layer upon which everything else is built.

Naming the Mission Mandate for Central was challenging. We considered many options, various metaphors and worked hard through many exercises to arrive at a conclusion. Below you will find the Mission Mandate that we formulated:

***Growing Christ-Centered Community
in a Distracting World***

Every word in this simple statement is important and integral to the whole:

GROWING emphasizes that the congregation is always changing rather than static. Growth relates both to the organic world and the spiritual life. Growth is part of human development and recognizes that at Central there are people all along the growth spectrum both developmentally and spiritually. Growth also focuses on an entire environment or ecosystem and recognizes that our engagement in the broader world is essential.

CHRIST-CENTERED reminds us that this growth is focused on Jesus Christ. We are not growing to be “better people” or growing bigger and better for the sake of being larger. Instead we are growing in an intentional manner that is absolutely focused on Jesus Christ’s life and ministry that we see exemplified in the scriptures and tradition of the church and proved through the experience and reason of our lives.



Vision Pathway Overview: Mission Mandate

COMMUNITY emphasizes that personal spiritual growth is only one part of the equation. Central is about “US” and “WE” and the importance of the word community brings this to the surface. Community does not mean homogenous or enclave. Instead a Christ-Centered community that grows is diverse, complex and beautiful while holding common values, beliefs and intentions.

IN is important. Some congregations want to remove themselves from the world. At Central we want to engage the world in such a way that we offer a better option for people who are searching for Jesus Christ and a Christ-Centered community. “In” reminds us that our church, our homes and our businesses are part of the world and we have a responsibility to engage that world for the sake of Jesus Christ.

DISTRACTING describes our world today. What we are hoping to do as a church is to focus people on Jesus Christ in such a way that the distractions of work, stuff, money, sex, gadgets, gambling, addictions, escape, etc. etc. all fall away. The Christ-Centered community we are growing is about real life, real faith and real possibilities of love as opposed to the fake substitutes so easily available in our world.

WORLD means we think larger than ourselves. When Jesus was asked about the most important commandment he answered by saying that we are to love God, love our neighbor and love our self. When we say “world” in our Mission Mandate we are saying that having a personal relationship with Jesus is the first step and ministry in the world is where we demonstrate that relationship. In other words, we are not simply growing private Christians who disengage from the world. Instead, we are growing Christians who believe John 3:16: *“For God so loved the world...”*

As you can see, this **Mission Mandate** is huge in terms of what we are claiming for our church in terms of our purpose and mission.

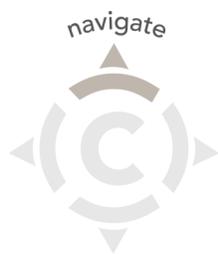
This first layer is what everything else is built upon and it is our best statement of what we believe our church to be and what we want for people who are part of this congregation.

Central UMC: Vision Pathway–Mission Strategies

Our second layer is the **Mission Strategies** which answer the question “How are we doing it?” The scripture emphasis for this element of the Vision Pathway comes from Matthew 11: 28-30:

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Every church has some sort of strategy for equipping its members and friends to help live out its **Mission Mandate**. To be honest, these strategies are quite similar from church to church and usually include some emphasis on worship, study, fellowship and mission. The terms that a church uses helps make the DNA of the church more visible and clear. That is true of the terms you find here. Our **Mission Strategies** were chosen for very specific reasons.



NAVIGATE is a term that reminds us that the journey we are on takes some intentional focus on direction. We are not called to wander or be lost. Instead, we are called to follow Jesus and to navigate our way through a distracting world by following his life and ministry. At Central we want each person in our congregation to be involved in a ministry that helps them “navigate” their life by knowing Jesus more fully.

Then Jesus went to work on his disciples. “Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You’re not in the driver’s seat; I am. Jesus said.” (Matthew 11: 28-30, The Message)

SERVE calls us to action. A reading of the Gospels clearly shows that Jesus put his faith into action. At Central we believe that each person is called to serve others. There are multiple ministries at Central that allow for this to happen and range from homeless ministries to homebound communion to cleaning the sanctuary.

“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...” (Mark 10: 45)



Vision Pathway Overview: Mission Strategies



engage

ENGAGE implies a level of commitment. When Captain Picard of the Star Trek: the Next Generation television show wanted the Enterprise to move he said, “Engage!” In a similar way our usage of this terms calls us to really “engage” whatever we are doing in our faith. We are called to engage in worship and service in Bible study and in a similar way we are called to engage our faith in our work, with our families and the way we interact with our neighbors and the outside world. Engage calls us to be intentional in prayer, spiritual growth and our journey of being more like Jesus who called his would-be disciples to “engage” when he said,

“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16: 24)

WORSHIP is in some ways the most obvious mission strategy. We are called to worship God, to give God thanks and to re-orient our lives through worship away from sin and toward grace. Worship alongside other people deepens community, grows relationships and helps us refocus our lives. Worship is the fundamental practice of the Christian and at Central we want every member and friend of our congregation to be part of one of our worship services.



“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3: 16-17)



Vision Pathway Overview Mission Values

Central UMC: Vision Pathway–Mission Values

The **Mission Values** layer of the Vision Pathway answers the question “Why are we doing it?” and is the element of the Vision Pathway work that differentiates us most from every other church. When we begin to talk about these values we are really getting at the DNA of Central.

There are two kinds of values represented here: aspirational and actual. The aspirational elements represent the church “we hope to be” in some way whereas the actual elements describe us as we are already. Truthfully these aspirational and actual elements sit side by side in the values.

Notice also that for each Mission Value there are two words pairs including an adjective and a noun. These pairings are important and intentional as a way of really expressing what we hold at the “center” of our congregation.

With these Mission Values we have included a “tag line” that helps express the meaning of the Value while giving us a goal to strive for in our lives.

AUTHENTIC REVERENCE: Experiencing how God claims, pursues, comforts and celebrates us.

There are a number of emphases in this Mission Value. The word play of “Authentic” and “Reverence” reminds us that while we take faith and worship very seriously we also remember that ultimately these things are not about us they are about God. In other words Authentic Reverence means that God welcomes us all no matter what and we aren’t called to pretend. The tagline has a very Wesleyan theological core: of prevenient grace that claims us, redeeming grace that pursues us and sanctifying grace that celebrates us. In the midst of our Christ-Centered community we also find comfort as we are able to be “authentic” before God in the midst of our lives.

“Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people God is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before God in their worship.” (John 4: 23 The Message)

VIBRANT TRADITION: Honoring our rich past to nurture a thriving future

Central is a congregation with a long history of service, leadership and faithful people. For many years we have been the “Flagship” of our United Methodist Conference. We recognize this powerful history and seek to build upon it for a new generation who will call Central UMC their home for years to come. This Mission Value reminds us that we are simultaneously receiving the faith and handing on the faith to someone else. Also inherent in this Mission Value is the very design of our building. We are a traditional church with traditional worship elements and traditional style and yet we want to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a vibrant way. Finding the balance between vibrancy and tradition is essential for us; and we do it well.

I am the vine and you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit...” (John 15: 5)

PASSIONATE GRACE: Choosing to love, care and forgive as Jesus does

Grace is one of the most important theological foundations of Wesleyan theology. United Methodist Christians are a people who “lead with grace rather than judgment.” Grace reminds us that each person is loved by God as a child of God. Passionate grace reminds us that we are not a people of “cheap” grace but rather the practice of grace, the choice to live “grace first” is something we are called to be very intentional about in our lives.

“Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone...” (John 8: 7)

ACTIVE FAITH: Seeing each new week as an invitation to serve our neighbor as disciples of Jesus

In the book of James we read that “faith without works is dead” (James 2: 17). While we are a people who “lead with grace” we are also a people who turn faith into practice. In Jesus’ life and ministry he was constantly serving, healing, teaching and eating with people on the outside; we want to live that way and to express our faith through our actions. Active Faith is a value that reminds us that we are the only image of Jesus Christ that some people will ever know and we ought to act as Jesus did.

“Which one of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” (Luke 10: 36)

CATALYTIC GENEROSITY: Trusting God with our gifts and talents

Over the years Central UMC has been given some large financial gifts. These gifts have allowed us to engage in some really amazing ministries. While these gifts are obvious and have been well celebrated, it is also true that countless other gifts have been given to the church by members and friends who have trusted the church and God with their gifts and talents. How many hours have been spent by Central folks in Bible study, Sunday school, Vacation Bible school, Helping Hands, music preparation, cleaning, Thrift Shop, gardens, office, communion, sound, television, Boy scouts, camping, etc. etc.? These gifts of time and talent have made ministry happen and have changed lives. Because of Central’s generosity and trust we have been a catalyst for change in our community.

“The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed...it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree...” (Matthew 13: 31-32)

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Central UMC: Vision Pathway–Mission Measures

The **Mission Measures** layer answers the question “When are we headed in the right direction?” In other words, how do we know that we are hitting the target of faith—as part of Central—in our lives and ministry? The Mission Measures listed below can operate on two different levels. On a personal level each one asks us to look at our lives every day to see if we are living like Jesus would like us to. On a corporate level we can ask as a congregation how we are meeting these measures in our ministries.

It is our hope that these Mission Measures can be used both as a daily devotional practice and a way of guiding our work as church teams, committees and groups as we seek to go “beyond” and into fuller lives with Jesus Christ.

LIVING BEYOND SELF: How do I reach out to others?

What would it be like if we took the opportunity each day to reach out and serve someone in need? This could be done with a phone call, a good word, an inspirational email or a shoulder to cry on. What would it be like if we took the chance every day to put someone else before us as a way of showing we care? Wouldn't that be a little like Jesus?

“And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’” (Matthew 25: 40)

FAITH BEYOND BELIEF: How do my actions reflect my faith?

How did you turn what you believe into how you lived today? What word choices did you make? How did you respond to temptation? Did other people catch a glimpse of Jesus in your life today?

“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit.” (Luke 6: 43)

JOY BEYOND EXPECTATION: Am I willing to be surprised by God?

Are you paying attention to God in your life? Do you spend time with God in a way that heightens your awareness to God's activity in your life? Are you willing to let the God of Mystery lead you?

"Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you!" (Luke 1:35 The Message)

HOLINESS BEYOND SUNDAY: 24/7/365

Worship reorients us to God and invites us to refocus. How are you living the rest of the week? Are you praying, studying, serving, worshipping and spending time in Christian community as a way of deepening your life with God? Do you see every day as an opportunity to worship God?

"Jesus said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22: 37)

GRATITUDE BEYOND THANKS: How did I respond to the Precious in my life?

Sometimes we make the spiritual life, and life with God, seem so big that we miss the truth that God is in everything all the time and we are simply called to pay attention. Thankfulness and gratitude for who God is can be inspired through just about anything; a piece of music or art, a sunrise or sunset, a conversation, even a great meal. What if we made it a point to give thanks to God every day for something?

"Jesus asked, 'Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?'" (Luke 17: 17)

PEACE BEYOND CIRCUMSTANCE: Do I know that God will get me through this day?

Life can be tough; much like what the disciples experienced on the sea when they thought that they were going to die. And yet, Jesus was with them and calmed the storm. How deeply rooted is your peace in God?

(They said to Jesus) "Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (Mark 4: 38ff)