



A 4D FUTURE FOR  $e^3$  PEOPLE

# Five Year Vision Plan

February 2018

Suntree United Methodist Church  
Melbourne, FL



## Suntree UMC 4D Vision Task Force Report 5 Year Plan

*“Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.” Habakkuk 2:2-3*

*“Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” Isaiah 43:18-19*

*“You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven.”  
Matthew 5:13-16*

### The Chronology of the 4D Vision Process – Discerning a 4D Future for e<sup>3</sup> People

In 2016, the Suntree UMC Church Council approved the start of an Appreciative Inquiry Process to discern what God’s plan was for the church over the next 3-5 years. We chose to use an “appreciative inquiry” process, which seeks to discern mission and vision out of the current gifts and strengths of the church while inviting us to listen for how God was/is calling us to use those gifts to accomplish God’s purposes in the future.

In September/October 2016 we engaged the whole congregation in a 6 week, 4D Process (Discovering, Discerning, Dreaming, and Designing a Destiny for Loving God, Loving One Another, and Loving Our Neighbors in Extraordinary Ways) of discerning and discovering our strengths as a church and where God was calling us to move forward in ministry and mission in the church, community, and the world. We asked the congregation what keeps them returning to Suntree UMC, what inspires them about being a part of this congregation, and what hopes and dreams they had for ways that we can be a part of shaping this community and our world through the gospel of Jesus Christ. We asked the congregation to dream about the ways that God might use Suntree UMC to make a Kingdom difference in our community and our world.

Then a 4D Vision Task Force was appointed by the Church Council/Charge Conference in November of 2016. This Task Force held its first meeting in December 2016 and has continued to meet monthly over the last year. During that time, this group has studied scripture, prayed, and listened for the guidance of the Holy Spirit; met with numerous community leaders to listen and learn about the unique needs of our community and the ways that we might partner with community leaders for change; sorted through the data collected from the Suntree UMC congregation; studied current demographic trends; conducted a book study on *The Unstoppable Force* by Erwin McManus; and finally sought to look for the connections between our unique strengths and passions as a church, the needs of the community and the world, and where God is calling us to move in mission and ministry in the future.

This process has affirmed our mission and vision, to invite seekers to be followers of Jesus and to love God, love each other, and love our neighbors in extraordinary ways. The question we have constantly asked ourselves is, ***“How do we continue to live into that mission and vision in***

*new ways in the future?"* This 5 year vision plan is our way, after months of prayer, study, dreaming and discernment, of answering that question. ***It does not offer every detail of how we will accomplish God's vision among us. However, it offers a God-honoring, Kingdom oriented, mission stretching blueprint for mission and ministry in the future.*** Many of the goals named here will require further, detailed development by staff and lay leadership in the process of implementation. And no doubt, we may discover the need to alter or change some of our plans and dreams as we move down the path of implementation. But this plan offers a framework for mission and ministry that we hope will provide focus and intentionality to all that we do as a church in mission and ministry for the next 5 years.

We invite you to read this 5 year vision plan, to think and pray about it, and discuss this vision with your fellow members of Suntree UMC. Through this vision, we pray that God will enable us to live more fully into what it means for us to love God, love each other, and love our neighbors in extraordinary ways.

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### **How is this report organized?**

This report begins with 3 Big Ideas that provide a foundation for all the specific strategies and measurable outcomes to follow. These 3 Big Ideas represent three key, overarching commitments:

- Commitment to love
- Commitment to reconciliation
- Commitment to Kingdom transformation.

These 3 Big Ideas find their fulfillment in Five Mission Essentials, which will serve to organize our mission and ministry in the future. These Five Mission Essentials are the basis for healthy, thriving discipleship and Christ-centered community for the church and for individual followers of Jesus. These Five Mission Essentials are:

- Worship
- Serve
- Grow
- Connect & Care
- Give

Each mission essential contains strategies that will move us toward the fulfillment of the 3 Big Ideas.

### **Why did we choose the Big Ideas, strategies, and measurable outcomes in this plan?**

These Big Ideas and strategies align with our mission statement to, "Invite seekers to follow Jesus" and our vision to, "Love God, love each other, and love our neighbors in extraordinary ways."

Each Big Idea and strategy is rooted in biblical teaching and in our Wesleyan heritage of love, grace and tangible, hands-on service in the name of Jesus Christ.

Each strategy was developed based on results and input received from the congregation during our 4D Vision process. The results showed staunch support for our current mission and

vision, and the desire to deepen our connection and impact on the community beyond the walls of the church.

Each Big Idea and strategy aligns with an understanding of our community's demographics and needs and our commitment to be a church that seeks to reach, welcome and serve all God's people in the name of Jesus Christ.

### **How will we know we are making progress on the Vision?**

As this strategic vision is implemented, the Church Council and ministry areas will develop specific, measurable outcomes for each strategy so that adjustments can be made along the way. Progress will also be seen in:

- A growing congregation that reflects the diverse community of God's Kingdom and the community in which we serve including diversity of race, economics, culture, age, and lifestyle.
- Number of lives impacted by the ways we offer hope, healing, and grace.
- Number of people who know the joy of using their gifts to make a Kingdom impact.
- Feedback we receive from others as they refer to Suntree UMC as a leader in the community offering reconciliation, welcome, support, and assistance.
- How we feel in our hearts as we continue to build the Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

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## **Big Ideas**

***Foundations for our vision that can lead to maximum Kingdom impact/transformation for each ministry area:***

1. **Commitment to radical, unconditional love** for others as a reflection of God's radical, unconditional love for us.

*"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also so should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* **John 13:34-35**

We will intentionally reach out to, welcome and engage people who feel unwanted or disengaged from relationships with God or with the church, in order to grow as a church that increasingly reflects the welcome, acceptance, and hospitality of Christ.

### **What does this Big Idea mean for us?**

Statistics show that many people believe in God but only a small portion of those folks are a part of a faith community. Many people experience a disconnect between what they know of Jesus Christ and what they believe about the church that seeks to represent Christ. Too often, whole demographics of the population are missing from the life of the church and Suntree UMC in particular. Our goal is to continue to create a welcoming atmosphere and to reach out to and engage these folks, especially under-

represented populations in the church. Establishing these relationships can be a bridge to faith in Christ and relationships with the faith community.

2. **Commitment to reconciliation** and bridge building in our church, our community and our world as an expression of the reconciliation we know in Christ and in recognition of the diverse beauty of God's creation.

*"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation."* **II Corinthians 5:18**

In Christ, barriers that separate us from God and from one another are torn down and communities of respect and love can grow and thrive. We will create intentional listening and learning opportunities where respectful, loving, Christ honoring community can grow among people of diverse backgrounds and experiences.

#### **What does this Big Idea mean for us?**

We live in a world that has grown accustomed to division and discord. When it comes to challenging issues, we talk past one another if we even talk at all. Rather than accepting this as the norm, we are committed to creating a culture of holy conferencing through ongoing dialogue and growth groups for the purpose of learning, listening and building respectful community. We will intentionally engage in crucial, honest and respectful conversations concerning difficult issues, in ways that will enable us to learn and live and grow together as the body of Christ.

3. **Commitment to real, practical Kingdom transformation** through Christ in our backyard and beyond to the world, using the unique gifts that God has planted within this congregation.

*"He has told you, O mortal what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."* **Micah 6:8**

*"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**

We envision Suntime UMC as a church of "optimistic Kingdom builders" where transformed people engage in transformational ministry in the community and the world.

#### **What does this Big Idea mean for us?**

We will engage in practical, hands on ministries of hope, help, and healing, especially with those in need. This will likely involve partnering with another UM Church in a high need community for shared mission, outreach, and transformation.

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## Mission Essentials

### Mission Essential #1 - WORSHIP

**Worship is the primary means for connection with God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and creates community within the body of Christ. In order to grow in our worship of God and invite others to connect with God, we will:**

- Create new worship opportunities outside the walls of the church. This includes Fresh Expressions which targets those not currently worshipping at Suntree UMC through niche opportunities for connection, community, and spiritual conversation.
- Create special worship events such as Beach Baptism, Blessing of the Animals, Blue Christmas, and Christmas Concerts to reach out to and connect with new folks in the community.
- Provide a variety of targeted worship experiences beyond our current Contemporary and Traditional forms to reach different generations and populations.
- Increase the variety of musical styles and musical opportunities offered in worship.
- Increase experiential/participatory opportunities as well as integrate more opportunities for personal stories and testimonies in all worship experiences.

#### **Measurable outcomes:**

- Reverse worship attendance decline and increase worship attendance by 3% over the next 5 years.
- Increase the number of local visitors who return for a second visit by 25% over the next 5 years.
- Increase the Professions of Faith by 3% over the next 5 years.
- Increase the Reaffirmations of Faith by 3% over the next 5 years.
- Use the new Shelby database system to track more complete data related to worship attendance, including flagging and following up with people who have not attended worship in 4 weeks.

**Alignment implication:** Full-time Director of Worship and Arts to oversee all of worship, the implementation of new strategies related to worship, and to more fully develop the use of lay servant leaders in all our worship experiences. This person would oversee all of the worship ministry teams.

**Who is responsible:** Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, along with other worship ministry staff, and lay worship teams.

## **Mission Essential #2 - SERVE**

**Serving others in the name of Christ both within and beyond the walls of the church is a fundamental part of vital faith and discipleship. It is also an essential part of our vision – to love our neighbors in extraordinary ways and to commit to real, practical Kingdom transformation through Christ in our backyard and beyond to the world, using the unique gifts that God has planted within this congregation. In order to grow in our service in the name of Christ, in the church, the community and beyond, we will:**

- Work to increase the number of people that serve through ongoing education and inspiration of the congregation around the idea of spiritual gift-based ministry. This will involve message series, spiritual gift classes, leadership training, and the creation and maintenance of a servant ministry data base that can be utilized in identifying and making use of the gifts of members.
- Partner with another local UM Church (and the district and conference) in a high need community of Brevard County for shared mission, outreach, and transformation.
- Build upon our current ministry with Family Promise of Brevard by partnering with other agencies and churches in the work of eliminating homelessness in our community.
- Expand the number of mission partners and mission trips, both foreign and domestic, and the number of adults who participate in those opportunities.
- Develop a list of community resources and make it available to those within the church and the community in need of practical services. Provide assistance in matching such services and volunteers to those with specific needs.
- Continue to build on our ministry with children and families in need through our partnership with Harbor City Elementary School.

### **Measurable outcomes:**

- Increase the percentage of people serving in hands-on mission and ministry inside the church by 10% over the next 5 years.
- Increase the percentage of people serving in hands-on mission and ministry outside the walls of the church by 20% over the next 5 years.

**Alignment implication:** Expand Director of Outreach Ministry to a full-time position to provide leadership in engaging the congregation with mission and ministry in the community and beyond to the world.

**Who is responsible:** Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Director of Outreach Ministry, Mission and Outreach Team, Director of Congregational Care, and other lay teams as necessary for the establishment of new ministries.



### **Mission Essential #3 – GROW**

**Growing in faith, in our relationship with God through Jesus Christ and in our understanding of how God is calling us to live as disciples of Jesus is a lifelong, intentional process. In order to continue to provide opportunities for people to grow in faith and in the knowledge and love of God we will:**

- Develop an intentional disciple making process (Discipleship Map) that will assist the Suntree UMC community of faith in personal, spiritual transformation into the image of Christ. This involves offering a wide variety of growth experiences for those at various stages in the faith journey. This includes the development of a new system for new member education and assimilation as well as more advanced spiritual growth opportunities.
- Create opportunities for learning and honest, healthy, God-honoring dialogue and crucial conversations around difficult social issues such as race, poverty, world religions, gender, generational divide, and sexual orientation to create a culture of mutual respect, love, acceptance, and reconciliation.
- Create and provide leadership development opportunities for those who serve and lead others in the congregation and the community.
- Build upon and expand our Men's Ministry through ongoing men's groups and special events. Suntree UMC already has an excellent Women's Ministry. It is our desire to develop that same level of ministry excellence and opportunity for men.
- Build upon our current Children's and Youth Ministry programs to implement intentional, age appropriate discipleship plans and to connect with the needs of children and youth in our community. This could likely include developing specific children's and youth ministry programs to educate parents and to mentor at-risk children and youth.

#### **Measurable outcomes:**

- Create and grow a Discipleship Map program to involve 25% of the congregation over 5 years.
- Expand participation by 75 men in regular Men's Ministry programs over 5 years.
- Expand participation in Children's Ministry programs by 20% over 5 years.
- Expand participation in Youth Ministry programs by 100% over 5 years.
- Expand participation in Senior Adult Ministry programs by 20% over 5 years.

**Alignment implication:** Realign existing staff to devote more time and resources to Grow (Discipleship) Ministries.

**Who is responsible:** Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Children's Ministry Director and staff, Youth Pastor and staff, Director of Welcome and Program Ministries, Director of Outreach Ministry, and lay ministry teams for each of these strategies.

## **Mission Essential #4 – CONNECT & CARE**

**Building and being a part of healthy community is another key characteristic of a vital personal faith and a growing church. The Connect & Care mission essential refers to all the ways that we seek to help one another experience healthy community and the ways that we seek to care for one another and for our neighbors. In order to grow in the ways we help people connect with and experience Christian community and experience the care and compassion of Christ, we will:**

- Expand and build upon our current Life Groups Ministry, creating new groups based on geography, interests and other demographic categories.
- Reimagine our Welcome ministries, membership education (classes) and assimilation to help people connect with Christ, with the church and with their purpose, and to create a culture of welcome and hospitality. This must include a system for absentee follow-up.
- Build upon our excellent Congregational Care Ministry by identifying and developing a team of lay leaders to support specific Congregational Care Ministry areas.
- Begin a program of education and training to raise awareness about mental health issues in our community. Partner with local agencies to provide training and resources to the church and community regarding mental health issues.
- Establish a support group for caregivers. Continue to offer caregiver educational opportunities.
- Build upon our current communication strategies – including our website, social media, email, bulletins, e-letters, local newspapers, and possible phone tree communications. Research and implement beneficial communications strategies used by other churches.
- Seek to inspire and educate the congregation regarding their role in invitational evangelism and the responsibilities (prayer, presence, gifts, service and witness) of membership through teaching, written communication, classes, etc.

### **Measurable outcomes:**

- Increase the number of people in Life Groups by 5% over 5 years.
- Increase the number of number of people in educational classes (mental health, caregiving, diabetes management, etc.) by 25% over 5 years.
- Increase the number of volunteers in Congregational Care Ministries by 10% over 5 years.

**Alignment implication:** Add part-time administrative staff to allow the Director of Congregational Care to devote more time to caring ministries.

**Who is responsible:** Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Director of Congregational Care, Communications Coordinator, Director of Welcome and Program Ministry, Administrative Assistant for Finance/Data Systems, appropriate lay leadership teams, and other appropriate staff for these areas.

## **Mission Essential #5 - GIVE**

**Healthy, God honoring, biblical stewardship (the giving back to God of our time, our talents and our resources) is an essential part of being a follower of Jesus Christ and an essential characteristic of a vital church. In order to grow in giving, we will:**

- Continue to preach and teach (in worship, classes, and Life Groups) about stewardship as a spiritual discipline that honors God. This education must go on throughout the year, not just once a year in the fall.
- Promote financial education and awareness as a spiritual discipline that enables us to best use God's resources in our personal lives and in the church. This includes budget education and mentoring, financial planning for young families, singles, and senior adults (people at all stages with varying needs).
- Integrate stewardship education into all education and spiritual development programs. Seek to remove the stigma of talking about finances and money through ongoing education and dialogue. Accept and acknowledge the difficult aspects of the topics of money, finances, and giving.
- Build upon the Permanent Endowment & Planned Giving Committee's work to educate the congregation about giving to the church through our endowment by special gifts, memorial gifts, trusts, annuities, estate planning, etc.
- Work with the Stewardship Committee and Finance Committee to develop new strategies for stewardship education and communication. Expand electronic giving opportunities. Continue to invite the congregation to share stories and testimonies about the joys of giving and the ways that the mission and ministry of Suntree UMC are empowered through faithful giving.
- Develop a 5-year strategy for stewardship and budget development, including a possible capital campaign for the operating budget and debt reduction. This would begin with a potential stewardship audit with a stewardship consultant.

### **Measurable outcomes:**

- Increase giving by \$20,000 per year over 5 years.
- Increase participation in financial planning/stewardship education classes by 10% over 5 years.

**Alignment implication:** Train and empower lay leadership in order to provide the congregation more educational opportunities about stewardship.

**Who is responsible:** Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Finance Committee, Stewardship Committee, Permanent Endowment & Planned Giving Committee, Director of Welcome and Program Ministries, Administrative Assistant for Finance/Data Systems, and other lay leadership teams as needed.

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## Summary

The mission statement of Suntree UMC is to, “Invite seekers to follow Jesus.” Our vision is to, “Love God, love each other, and love our neighbors in extraordinary ways.” Through this 5 year vision plan, we have aimed to answer the question, ***“How do we continue to live into that mission and vision in new ways in the future?”***

We identified 3 Big Ideas which represented three key, overarching commitments: **Commitment to love, Commitment to reconciliation, and Commitment to Kingdom transformation.** Each one of these commitments is supported by specific strategies and measurable outcomes in our Five Mission Essentials: **Worship, Serve, Grow, Connect & Care, and Give.**

Once this 5 year vision plan has been adopted by Suntree UMC, the strategies and measurable outcomes for each individual ministry area will be reviewed in order to form appropriate action plans.

This 5 year vision plan will be re-visited periodically. Specifically each year, over the next 5 years, an annual report will be presented to the Church Council. This report will include what has been accomplished and what modifications have been made to the plan.

Through this 5 year vision plan we pray that God will enable us to carry out our mission statement and vision for shaping Suntree UMC, our community, and the world.



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