

# Ministry Action Plan Background & Overview for Vista United Methodist Church

**Mission/Vision Statement: Building Relationships of Justice, Faith and Hospitality to bring God's love to All People.**

**Our Core Values:** Family, Belief, Service to Others, Welcoming Others, Remembering our Past, Worship/Music/Arts

*“Then the Lord answered me and said, “Write a vision, and make it plain upon a tablet so that a runner can read it. There is still a vision for the appointed time; it testifies to the end; it does not deceive. If it delays, wait for it; for it is surely coming; it will not be late. Some people’s desires are truly audacious; they don’t do the right thing. But the righteous person will live honestly.” Habakkuk 2:2-4*

**Ministry Summary...** Our Church is essential to the well-being, continued growth and community engagement for the common good in the city of Vista and surrounding areas. The stress of change, sometimes called progress, is taking a toll on our congregation. We are similar to other churches which are seeing the greying of the church and the loss of members due to age and poor health. But, despite this common experience in the Christian church, the non-profit community and even long standing civic organizations, we are a dynamic church with people power, financial resources and the Spirit of God calling us to take a step in faith. What we value most, across every generation and life style, is our relationships with our friends, and our families. There is nothing, which grounds us or grows our faith like the time we spend with the people we care for. Whether we are working within the church or beyond the walls of our local church, we seek to grow relationships that lay foundation of our life together.

*“I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.” John 15:11-15*

Our passion for relationships and one another and our concern and passion for welcoming new people of faith is the common locus of our church’s vision across all age groups and persons within the church. In order to engage our vision and ground our planning, it is important to take a ‘snapshot’ of the community of Vista.

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## Community Context...

Vista, CA has a population of 97,564 people with a median age of 33.4 years and a median household income of \$50,601. Between 2014 and 2015 the population of Vista, CA grew from 96,181 to 97,564, a 1.44% increase and its median household income grew from \$47,782 to \$50,601, a 5.9% increase. The population of Vista is 47.9% Hispanic, 42% White/Caucasian, and 4.91% Asian. 41.1% of the people of Vista speak a non-English language, and 84.5% are U.S. citizens. The median property value of Vista, is \$360,700, and the homeownership rate is 47.9%. Most people in Vista commute by car, by driving alone and the average commute time is 22.7 minutes. Vista is bordered by Carlsbad, Oceanside and San Marcos. It has been noted that the borders of the cities are drawn against intuitive logic and our church draws members from across the so called, 'North County' region running from 15 to the East, the 5 to the West, the 76 to the North and 5 miles south of the 78.

The Vista, CA educational system consists of 27 public schools, 11 private schools and 4 post-secondary schools. Vista public schools have average test scores of 32% which is 15% lower than than the California average and 34% lower than than the national average. The student to teacher ratio of Vista public schools is 21:1, compared to 20:1 in California and 16:1 across all of the United States. A total of 79.1% of students have completed 8th grade, 76.1% have completed high school, 21.2% have completed a bachelor's degree and 2.5% have completed a doctorate degree.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, according to *Voices of San Diego*<sup>2</sup>, urbanist writers and advocates have posited a "back to the city" trend, in which jobs move back to city centers, cities undergo gentrification instead of white flight and central cities see significant growth. Vista's growth rate increased from the 2000s to the period between 2010 and 2015, by a much larger amount than the uncertainty in data measurements. Then it increased again in 2016.

There is a sense in which Vista represents the future of migration within San Diego County. In the region around Vista, there are medium-sized manufacturers, as well as Wal-Mart, and Target, which create a web of diverse job opportunities. Against this influx of growth, Vista and the region of North County near the 78 is struggling with a housing crisis and frustrating transportation options.

The regional growth, social anxiety, and diverse and complex needs of the context where our church is located at demand our faithful outreach, as well as our steadfast support for one another within our congregation. The challenges of this context all point to the loss of social connection. The demands on our pocketbook and calendar, drain our capacity to nurture friendships, family life, children's play and fun, intergenerational bonds, a home to welcome visitors to and much more.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.areavibes.com/vista-ca/education/> accessed 3/22/18

<sup>2</sup> *Voices of San Diego*, *Vista Is the New Frontier for Growth in San Diego*, May 10, 2017, <http://www.citylab.com/work/2015/02/young-people-are-pulling-jobs-back-to-citycenters/385934/>

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**United Methodist Church of Vista is called to build relationships of justice, faith and hospitality to bring God's love to all peoples.**

Discerned at Home Meetings and Listening Sessions between November 2017 and April 2018:

As noted previously, building relationships of family, and friendship for mentoring, support, faith development, fun and to facilitate mutually agreed upon outreach is foundational to UMC Vista. Nearly every person, and certainly every group, talked about past, current and future relationships as valuable and essential. The church as a whole longs for durable relationships which last and grow. The passion for relationships is held in tension, as there is concern around lack of relationships between the generations and diminishment of relationships between the current two worship experiences. Our Ministry Action Plan places at center the goal and focus of **Building Relationships of Strength** now and into the future, both inside the church and beyond the walls.

In addition to the foundational nature of relationships within this congregation, three key themes emerged from every In-Home/Listening session: 1) Issues of Justice/Compassion/Care, 2) Love of God through Study, Worship and Song and 3) A Desire to Welcome others and Include all People. These three themes are anchors to focus goals and actions steps for our congregation and the committees and work groups in our Ministry Action Plan. These three themes are coupled with healthy relationships to further clarify our goals for ministry. The three umbrella themes, which may be used to set goals and actions steps are titled: **Relationships of Justice, Relationships of Faith, and Relationships of Hospitality.**

*And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'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.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." -- Matthew 22:35-40*

Relationships of **Justice** fulfill Jesus call to love our neighbor and include outreach, missions, local and global efforts, And 2 Fishes feeding ministry as well as work of including people who have been left out or left behind, including the Reconciling Ministries team work and efforts to create networks of peace/shalom. Relationships of Justice also include any vision/goals to offer education through a preschool or afterschool program to children of lower income families. Relationships of **Faith** fulfill Jesus call to love God and include discipleship and educational offerings, Sunday school and seasonal programs, as well as worship, music and the arts programs and events. Relationships of Faith should be designed for both intergenerational opportunities, as well as opportunities for people of a similar life experience to get together.

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Relationships of **Hospitality** fulfill Jesus challenge to love as we want to be loved and include the process for welcoming all people on Sunday and during the week. Hospitality includes opportunities for potlucks, and similar gatherings as well as the way we treat one another. (See the Grid/Extended Narrative for specific goals and action steps related to these three areas of focus.)

These three umbrella themes presented themselves in both positive and challenging ways. For example: the hope for doing more outreach and missions is held in tension with fears of insufficient funds and poor budgeting. The hope for a growing congregation is held in tension with new people doing things the way we always have. The hope for a new building to do more ministry in is held in tension with upkeep and insufficient staffing to care for it. Along with hope and excitement for our future, there was anxiety and concern expressed by congregation members. As we move forward, it will be helpful to commit to transparency and respectful communication to achieve the goals within our MAP.

Our goals are designed for the next five years but this calendaring of goals should not be seen as a limit on doing ministry. Setting a one year goal means we are prioritizing those goals and believe they logically and faithfully come first. Since our Ministry Action Plan is a living document, once the goals and actions steps are described, they will be affirmed by the entire congregation but must be revisited every year and within each work group to assess our progress and adjust how the Spirit is leading us. In order to achieve our goals, appropriate resources of people, materials and facilities need to be assigned based on our budget and/or a future capital campaign. Each committee or work area will have a MAP to use to guide their ministry and look toward the future.

\*Resource considerations for our MAP include paid and volunteer staffing, material resources, financial resources, and facility space needed. The reconfiguring of space, staff training and fund raising are also important in planning.

**At the end of each day...** God is always new, and the world in which we live is ever changing. Our MAP is a dynamic, evolving document that will be written and re-written.

Affirming this Plan at our Charge Conference is not a finish line for ministry, but a point of connection and affirmation for our local church. As God reveals new avenues and opportunities for ministry, we will revisit and revise our goals and expectations. With every challenge, change, and divine course correction we will come back and make adjustments. The community we envision is in God's hands and we will listen for God's voice and directions, taking opportunities as they come to the Glory of God.

*[The Lord] asked me, 'Human can these bones live again?' I said, 'Lord God, only you know.'"* Ezekiel 37:9