Running a Race that Counts

Let us run with perseverance
the race that is set before us.

Hebrews 12:2
Running is wildly popular in Austin. Just check out the scene around Lady Bird Lake. Many of us walk, jog, or run to keep fit. Some of us participate in charity walks and runs to help others. A few of us thrill to the challenge of a marathon.

*Running a Race that Counts* is a metaphor for living a life that has meaning and significance . . . a life that matters . . . a life that makes a difference. We all want such a life.

The Church is the one organization in our society dedicated to enabling human beings to *run a race that counts* . . . to live a life that makes a difference. It does so by:

- Inspiring our *hearts* to run this race and connecting us with the Power Source that gives us the energy to run
- Training our *minds* with learning, skills, and resources that equip us to run the race effectively
- Giving our *bodies* actual opportunities to serve others, so that we don’t just sit around thinking and talking about the race, but actually get in it
- Providing a *support system* that keeps us in the race, and of course,
- Providing the *facilities and support services* that enable all of the above to take place.

*Running a Race that Counts* is the theme of this year’s financial stewardship emphasis. The pages that follow present FUMC’s Ministry Plan for 2011 divided into five sections. In each section is an estimate of the financial investment required. Staff costs are included in the estimate. In some cases, “dream” items, which could take our ministries to the next level, are also included. These plans and dreams were created by Ministry Teams, reviewed by the Coordinating Team and Resource Management Team, and approved by the Finance Committee.

We trust that when you know not just the numbers, but the real life stories behind the numbers, you will be inspired to re-commit your time, energy, and talents, as well as your money, to ensure that First United Methodist Church continues to equip people to *run a race that counts!*

Putting on our running shoes,

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Barbara J. Ruth
Pastor

John A Wright
Pastor
Worship and Music

Inspiring our Hearts
Worship is at the heart of all we do. See page 3 for more.

“If I could, I would attend every service each week at this church, for God is here in every way and in every place.” Denise Fischer

Estimated Cost: $296,940

Education: Children, Youth and Adults

Training our minds
As worship and music inspire us to love God with our hearts, educational ministries equip us to love God with our minds, giving us the information, values, and skills we need to run the race effectively. See page 5 for more.

“When I’m not involved in a class for a while, I crave that Christian community.” Michelle Cato

Estimated Cost: $232,904

Missions and Service

Giving our Bodies
Once motivated by worship and equipped by educational ministries to “run a race that counts,” our mission and service ministries afford us real opportunities to love God with our strength - to get in the race and actually run it! See page 7 for more.

“FUMC gives me a place to live out my faith.” Keri Boone

Estimated Cost: $250,851

Congregational Support

Keeping us in the race
In any race there are times when the runners are sidelined – perhaps due to injury or fatigue, bodily illness, or an emotional upset. Sometimes a runner gets discouraged and drops out of the race, or stumbles and falls. See page 9 for more.

“This church has been relentless in its caring support of Matthew and me.” - Robert Walls

Estimated Cost: $240,916

Facilities and Support Services

The infrastructure
Just as a race requires running tracks and courses, so too the church requires facilities. With great blessings come great responsibilities for the maintenance of these structures. See page 2 for more.

Estimated Cost: $684,634

Running a Race that Counts

The Church is the one organization in our society dedicated to enabling human beings to run a race that counts . . . to live a life that makes a difference.
Worship and Music
Inspiring our Hearts

Worship is at the heart of all we do. Worship is **awesome**, bringing us into contact with the living God. It is **sublime**, lifting us above ourselves in praise to this God of wonder.

It is **profound**, touching the depths of our being, enabling us to confess the deep woundedness of our souls and to cry out to God for help. It is **communal**, bringing together individuals of varied backgrounds in commitment to a common goal. It is **transformative** as we discover our story in God’s story and hear a word for our lives that challenges, yet assures us. Through worship God empowers us to run a race that counts – to live the life that matters.

Music is a crucial element in vital worship. As the hymn goes,

*How often making music we have found*
*A new dimension in the world of sound*
*As worship moved us to a more profound Alleluia!*

Because different people perceive the Holy through different means, FUMC offers a variety of worship experiences: classic, informal, contemporary, and contemplative!

Whatever the style, our priority is on worship that is **excellent** in form, substance, and execution and **faithful** to tradition while being **creative and innovative**, **passionate** in expression, and **transformative** in effect.

Our best estimate of what it will cost to continue our worship and music ministries at their present level: **$296,940**

Our **dream item** in the near future would be to develop an outstanding contemporary or alternative worship service in order to reach a segment of the Austin population not inspired by traditional forms of worship.
I sit quietly, calmly, peacefully in the silence of Contemplative Worship as I listen with my ears and my heart each Sunday for God. In the grandeur of Sanctuary Worship, I listen for God in a different, more active way: through liturgy, prayer, song, and sermon. In Wednesday evening chapel, the quiet is woven together with sermon and song, and again, I listen for God in yet another way. If I could, I would attend every service each week at this church, for God is here in every way and in every place. He is here in the smile of old friends and new visitors; in the work of pastors and staff; in the very stone and mortar that is FUMC – and for this I am deeply grateful. - Denise Fischer
As worship and music inspire us to love God with our hearts, educational ministries equip us to love God with our minds, giving us the information, values, and skills we need to run the race effectively.

Passing on the “old, old story” of the gospel to our children and grandchildren, so that it becomes their “new” story, is one of the most significant tasks a faith community performs. Equally important is helping adults grow into a mature, resilient faith that “makes them more than conquerors” in the face of all that life can dish out.

FUMC offers a wide range of educational settings:

- Traditional Sunday School classes where the basics of the Christian faith are taught
- In-depth study of the riches of the scriptures through Disciple courses
- Avant-garde Mind and Spirit courses, where adults ask penetrating faith questions, explore the interface between religion and the larger culture of art, science and public policy, and learn how to model a lifestyle of radical compassion as change agents of society.

And don’t forget First United Methodist Preschool providing a safe environment to nearly 100 children (over 50% of whom are children of our members!) in which they can experience God’s love, develop appropriate self-esteem, explore the wonder of God’s creation and their place in it, and learn basic social skills that form the foundation of a creative and productive life.

The following is our best estimate of what it will cost to continue our educational ministries at their present level: $232,904
Evelyn is the five-year-old daughter of Jennifer and Jeffrey Lee. Recently after a worship service, she told Pastor Barbara that she wanted to give her a blessing. Barbara bent down, and Evelyn traced the outline of a cross on Barbara’s forehead with her finger. Evelyn had experienced a similar blessing several times from Dr. Paula Stiemberg, our Director of Children’s Ministries, during chapel time at FUM Preschool.

As they were walking to their car, Evelyn told her mother that she had wanted to give Barbara a blessing because God had told her to do that while she was sitting in “big church.” She said, “I am like Noah, and Noah always obeys God.” Just that week, her mother had re-read to Evelyn the story of Noah and how he was obedient in building the ark.

What a powerful testimony to the power of Bible stories and Christian education to influence and shape the spiritual life of a child and to equip her to run a race that counts!

When I came to FUMC a smidgen over four years ago, I wasn’t sure why I came. I just knew it felt right. When I learned the church offered classes it was just the cherry on the sundae in knowing this place was going to change my life. Taking church classes over the years has deepened my commitment to Christ and the church. It’s another day or two in my week that is spent growing in Christ and now I’m to a point that when I’m not involved in a class for awhile I crave that Christian community.

Michelle Cato

For some, this may be the least significant aspect of FUMC’s ministry plan for 2011. For others, the magnificent architecture of the church’s buildings and their dramatic location by the Capitol of the Lone Star State are what attract individuals to FUMC. With great blessings come great responsibilities for the maintenance of these structures. What can’t be denied is that the maintenance and operation of the facilities are indispensable aspects of doing ministry at 1201 Lavaca Street!

Did you know that it costs almost $120,000 a year just to turn on the lights and run the air conditioning in our buildings?

The following is our best estimate of what it will cost to continue our facilities and support services at their present level: $684,634

Dream Items:
- A new floor in Wesley Hall
- New sanctuary sound system
- Re-wiring sanctuary lighting
- Expanded chancel area in sanctuary
- Repair of organ

Facilities and Support Services
The infrastructure

Just as a race requires running tracks and courses, so too the church requires facilities.
This impulse to join heart and head to hand is a time-honored tradition among United Methodists and it finds many expressions here at FUMC – from children making manna bags, to youth going to repair homes in the mountains of Appalachia, to adults going to the Four Corners and as far away as Russia! Following is a snapshot of a few FUMC Missions Projects.

- 120 members prepared and deliver meals weekly through Mobile Loaves and Fishes.
- 300-400 homeless persons were served breakfast every Tuesday and Thursday in the Great Hall
- 12-15 families with children who are transitioning from homelessness were housed and fed in the Family Life Center through Interfaith Hospitality Network

There are far too many ministries and programs to mention, much less describe, in this brochure. Check out the “Missions” page under the “Open Doors” tab on the church’s web site: www.fumcaustin.org!

Beyond our walls The Journey UMC, a new church start in Kyle, led by the Rev. Kyle Toomire, one of our former pastors. Thanks to gifts of extravagant generosity, we have fulfilled our $50,000 pledge in support of The Journey. Imagine No Malaria campaign, a commitment by The United Methodist Church international to raise $15 million by 2015 to eradicate malaria in sub-Saharan Africa (just as it was eradicated in the western hemisphere in the early 1900’s). This bold attempt to make a difference in our
world is inspiring a new generation of young seekers to take a new look at the UMC!

**Apportionments** - By far the bulk of our mission giving goes to apportionments (“a portion meant for others”). We join with 11 million United Methodists around the world in support of the work and mission efforts of the greater church to start new churches, to develop and publish Sunday school curricula and spiritual life resources, like *The Upper Room* devotional magazine, to send missionaries, social workers, and health care experts to some of the poorest regions of the world, and to respond with emergency aid in such natural disasters as the Haiti earthquake.

The following is our best estimate of what it will cost to continue our **mission ministries** at their present level: **$250,851**

Keri Boone had been telling her daughter Kesleigh about her experiences feeding the homeless on the Mobile Loaves and Fishes truck. When Kesleigh expressed her desire to help too, Keri explained that it would be a month before her turn to help would come around again. Kesleigh responded, “Mom, we don’t have to wait for our turn with Mobile Loaves and Fishes. We can make sandwiches at home and give them out to hungry people.” Keri says, “This is why I love this church. FUMC gives me a place to live out my faith.”

We were having dinner with my youngest brother and his wife, who belong to a church of another denomination. We were talking about Imagine No Malaria, the Free Store, and a few other things going on here. My sister-in-law turned to my brother, hit him on the shoulder, and said, “See Honey, I wish we were Methodists. They DO things.

Brooks Schuelke
Likewise, on God’s Kingdom Team (the church) individuals need care and support to keep them “running a race that counts” or to get them back into the race, so that they can help God’s team make a difference in this world.

Four teams at FUMC work in a variety of ways to carry out this support function. **Communications** works to keep members involved in the race and to attract new runners to the race by informing both those inside and outside the church of current ministries and how one can get involved. The **Connections and Membership teams** work to invite and welcome new runners into the race and to orient new members.

The lion’s share of the work in this area is done by the **Congregation Care Team**, which coordinates some 20 ministries that call, pray with, visit and offer other forms of support to the hospitalized and homebound, and those experiencing bereavement. Transportation and help around the house is offered to those who need it. Support groups serve those struggling with substance abuse and other addictions, and Stephen Ministry provides compassionate companions for any and all of life’s challenges.

The following is our best estimate of what it will cost to continue our **congregational support ministries** at their present level: $240,916

**Dream Item:**
Establish a line item for advertising equal to 1% of total ministry expenditures, which would equal about $17,000. At present we budget $660. (Church growth experts advise that churches which plan to grow invest at least 5% of their ministry expenditures in advertising intended to attract newcomers to their congregations.)
We won’t publish photos of our Care Team at work, but we have received some letters and emails we wanted to share.

In a moving testimony to FUMC’s caring ministries, Robert Walls sent the following note to Rev. John McMullen when his son Matthew was hospitalized following a life-threatening infection earlier this year.

Thank you for checking on Matthew… I appreciate your efforts. This church has been relentless in its caring support of Matthew and me, by visits, phone calls and emails. I got a call from someone I don’t even know! Young was the first one to come. Then came Cathy and Jen with a plethora of UMYFers. I think Matthew felt very loved. I had Adelphites crawling all over the place. In fact one nurse, Rob, is supposed to come with his children to our church. He was so impressed. (And he sees this every day, but not like FUMC lays it on.) I love this church. - Robert Walls

When my husband, Joe, was recently hospitalized, the FUMC Care Team jumped into action in no time at all. Although he belongs to a different denomination and attends church elsewhere, he was immediately added to our prayer concerns. Two different members visited him on different occasions and I received follow-up calls and emails with food offers. Even Barbara Ruth took time from her busy schedule to call me! Joe and I both are very blessed to have the support and comfort of my wonderful church family, and we greatly appreciate the Care Team’s efficient and thoughtful help. Thank you all so much!” - Laura Bustin DaSilva

From a thank you note to the Knit Wits, “I fell in love with the prayer shawl when I saw it. I love the color and the warmth it gives me. I have embraced myself in it and have been wearing it ever since.” - Corinne Cebula, non-member

Gallery of Sharing

Baby shower held for one of our ESL students.

ESL students preparing Easter Eggs for the FUMC annual Easter egg hunt...

... and the hunt itself.
A Closing Word: Sprint or Marathon?

In the last several years, FUMC, like many large congregations, has fallen into the pattern of sprinting in November and December, running as hard as we can, hoping that we can catch up enough in year-end giving to cross the finish line with all our obligations paid. Most years, we have made it, but just barely. Then, still huffing and puffing, trying to catch our breath, we begin a new year, and the cycle starts all over.

What are alternatives to the sprint?
First, thanks to your continuing faithfulness in fulfilling your pledges to the “Building on the Promises” and the “Bridge to the Future” campaigns, we have been able to pay off what we have called the “small note,” reducing our long-term debt and enabling us now to have the opportunity to change our “sprinting” tradition.

Second, Finance and Coordinating Team members studied our situation and came up with some solutions that they adopted as goals.

- Establish a reserve operating fund of one month’s normal operating expenses (around $150,000), enabling the church to pay appropriations on a monthly basis rather than lump sum in December;
- Accumulate sufficient funds to make major repairs and maintenance to our facilities on a timely basis

We can take a big step toward achieving some of these goals by increasing our total contributions by 10% in 2011.

Increasing our total contributions by 10% will position FUMC for the long run—the marathon. Instead of just hoping we can sprint across each year’s finish line with all bills paid, we can plan for the long haul, with sufficient resources to sustain our current programming and fund our dream items, making much needed repairs and renovations to our facilities, and implementing new innovative ministries that will inspire more people to join us in the race.

Please pray earnestly about your financial commitment for 2011. Consider the possibility of increasing your giving in 2011, so that FUMC can be poised to run the marathon for many years to come. Give thanks for the multiple ways God has made a difference in your life through the individuals and ministries of this church. Envision the thousands in future generations who will be enabled to “run a race that counts,” living a life that makes a difference, because of your heartfelt and sacrificial investment in the ministries of First United Methodist Church of Austin.

And put on your running shoes!

Linda Murdock,
on behalf of the entire Finance Committee