



UU Church of Urbana-Champaign

Build community. Seek Inspiration. Promote Justice. Find Peace.

Dream
Buffet

October 11

2019

Dream Buffets were scheduled by the UUCUC Dream Team. To ensure broad participation, the same session with the same question design was repeated over the course of three different meeting days – September 18, 21, and 22, 2019. This report includes an Executive Summary, a comprehensive summary of participants’ responses, and offers highlights of notable themes.

**Participant
Responses**



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Executive Summary

The Dream Team has been charged by the Board to develop a strategic vision to help guide the church's future work. As we began our work, we believed it was important to build a framework to steer our collective efforts especially since we determined they overlapped and aligned with that of the REEF Team. Integrating each team's respective insights and agreeing to combine efforts, we became the "Dream Team." Collectively, we determined the following three questions were essential and became the basis of a roadmap for our work.

- What is our collective heritage?
- What is our identity?
- What will our continued purpose be?

Building upon this, we organized our work accordingly and delineated it by three phases:

- Heritage – Where have we been?
- Purpose – Where are we at? What is our reason for being?
- Future – Where do we want to go?

Having gathered historical data, both quantitative and qualitative, the team is now into its Purpose phase. To help reveal our purpose, we developed surveys using a pre-determined series of questions and they have been included in the weekly eNews. These questions were designed to be answered through personal experiences and viewpoints. Recognizing it was also important to use a macro lens, we developed a list of questions that could help achieve this end. These questions were developed with an eye toward gaining a collective viewpoint – how we, as a congregation, see ourselves *within* our church community and externally or *without* as we engage with the broader community. To address this need, the team developed and facilitated Dream Buffets rather than continue to use surveys. They were designed using the World Café model which is built on the assumption that people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to address even the most difficult questions; that all the answers we need are inside of us; and that collectively we are smarter together than what we are on our own.

At each session, welcoming comments and notes of appreciation were extended. Additionally, team introductions were made by either Jenny Hunt or Becky Densmore, Purpose Group co-chairs. They also helped set the context and provided an overview of the café process in an effort to level set expectations for the event. The process began with the first of six 15 minute rounds of conversation for the participants seated at tables and each participant was handed a question card which included the same question for all. After 13 minutes expired, a two minute notice was provided by the timekeeper, Michele Grove, and at the close of 15 minutes, she would signal the end of the question round. The table facilitator shared with participants that their next table assignment was listed on the bottom of their question card and each member of the group moved to their respective tables. This process was repeated for the same six questions and each participant was provided opportunities to respond. Table scribes captured these responses and provided their notes to the Purpose Group. The co-chairs reviewed these



data and cleaned it to remove any reference to the people who responded to ensure anonymity. Otherwise, the data recorded are verbatim as they were initially reported in the scribes' notes.

These data represent approximately 50 voices of our congregation. During reflection of the Dream Buffet process, it was noted young adults were not adequately represented in the initial conversations. To rectify this concern, team members informally talked with congregants seated at the Young Adult table in Fellowship Hall after church on October 6, 2019. Team members asked individuals who were present to share their insights and they graciously agreed to do so. They were asked the same questions as the Dream Buffet participants with the exception of #5 because it was covered during the course of the conversation. As such, it is implicitly integrated within other question responses. A scribe recorded the notes of the conversation and they have been included within this report.

During the Dream Buffet, each conversation round was prefaced with a question specially crafted for the specific context and desired purpose of the Dream Buffet, which was to help answer critical questions: Who are we, why do we exist, and what is our purpose? What follows below are the questions and highlights of participants' responses. The full list of responses for each question has been recorded within this document for historical purpose and informational reference.

- **QUESTION 1:** What makes you proud to be part of this church? Stated differently, if you were a bragger, what would you brag about UUCUC? Bottom line, what makes our collective hearts sing?
Highlights – Inherent in many responses were The Seven Principles. From inclusivity to community to stewardship, many if not most responses are a direct reflection and/or are congruent with at least one of the Principles. Additionally, our music program was also cited on a number of occasions as a point of pride as well as our RE program, Our Whole Lives (OWL).
- **QUESTION 2:** What of our faith tradition guides our lives? What does it mean to be a UU?
Highlights – Once again, The Seven Principles emerged as a top response for this question coupled with our mantra “Deeds Not Creeds.” These responses were affirmed throughout the conversations as two key words – connection and collaboration – were revealed as thematic strands. Also noteworthy is the safe space the church creates to explore multiple beliefs and wrestle with “big ideas.”



- **QUESTION 3:** What does UUCUC's role in the wider community look like in five years' time?
Highlights – Leadership rises to the top as a key idea expressed by many session participants. More specifically, leadership within the church will continue to empower and encourage our congregants to assume external leadership roles in community-based organizations and socially transformative events. Also emerging as a highlight are comments suggesting we will become more intentional about the organizations we interact and partner with to ensure we strategically leverage our human capital.
- **QUESTION 4:** What does our congregation look like in five years? Think in terms of size, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, differing abilities, trauma experiences, etc.
Highlights – This question provoked divergent responses related to growth and seemed to be one that touched upon intrinsic values. Responses unilaterally affirmed our desire to ensure our congregation mirrors the diverse, global world in which we navigate and is congruent to our collective 'why'. However, there were mixed responses recorded as to the 'how' and 'what'. Also noteworthy are the number of responses which focus on increasing the population of young people and working to ensure diverse socio economic strata are counted among us.
- **QUESTION 5:** How can lifelong Religious Education deepen connections to UUCUC and enrich our lives?
Highlights – This question provoked several conversations about the definition of 'adult' education and what RE should be called. "Religious Exploration" emerged as a suggestion for renaming. This said, overall, opportunities for connections emerged as a theme – connect with each other, connect with new ideas, and connect with transformative ways of thinking and being. It was also noted that RE is a key differentiator for UUCUC as it prevents us from simply being a social activist club.
- **QUESTION 6:** What is our purpose? Why are we here?
Highlights – A notable theme that emerged from the many responses to why we are a part of UUCUC is that we are here to find our best selves and live our best lives – however we personally define these. The church provides the path for us to do this. It offers us a safe space to explore our spirituality and for many, is our spiritual home. On a macro level, many shared our purpose is to be of service, to help others, and be a change agent for social injustices. Several commented that our current mission (build community, seek inspiration, promote justice and find peace) is our purpose and we are living it.

These data, along with data collected from the survey questions, will be transitioned to the Future Group for our third phase of this critical work.



QUESTION 1: What makes you proud to be part of this church? Stated differently, if you were a bragger, what would you brag about UUCUC? Bottom line, what makes our collective hearts sing?

Highlights

Inherent in many responses were The Seven Principles. From inclusivity to community to stewardship, many if not most responses are a direct reflection and/or are congruent with at least one of the Principles. Additionally, our music program was also cited on a number of occasions as a point of pride as well as our RE program, Our Whole Lives (OWL).

Session Responses

- Inclusivity – one person said lots of different kinds of people (clarified to national origin and LGBTQ; second countered with we are not diverse by race or socioeconomic class
- Great community
- Whole-hearted commitment to increasing social action (in recent years)
- Exciting things and changes happening
- Dynamic “young” minister
- Lots of good energy
- Organization – membership committee, hospitality teams, etc.
- Generosity – how quickly the congregation responds to special projects fundraising e.g. piano, solar panels, etc.
- Support of each other – care core meal requests often filled within hours
- We live our values – our values are supported by our actions as a church
- Growing in size
- Services make my heart sing
- Sense of community of like-minded people
- OWL and Coming of Age
- We are welcoming – that has improved greatly
- So generous of time to help others and each other - kindness, generosity, how well we take care of each other
- How wonderful our music program is - want more use of organ
- People - generous and friendly

There are seven principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

1	The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2	Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
3	Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
4	A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5	The right of conscience & the use of the democratic process within our congregations & in society at large
6	The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7	Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part



- Mechanics of how we function
- Generosity - how to follow their passions
 - How do we demonstrate generosity
 - More with financial resources than with previous budget
 - Spur of the moment projects
 - shared offerings
- Sharing generosity with community at large
- Program for kids that is welcoming (even those not from our church)
- OWL program - letting kids grow into who they are
- Our desire to try to feel and not just intellect any more
- Not just the words 'deeds not creeds'
- People holding each other
- Give each other room to follow their passions
- Support each other even if we don't all agree with each other
- Open mindedness
- Principles of worth and dignity
- People are attracted by the core principles
- Prophetic words and deeds in this congregation that help guide our way
- Leading - following - coming together
- Social action we have as a congregation
- Strive - different than childhood church
 - Values, leading, questions, more inclusive, anti-racism
- Engagement in the work
 - Not sitting on coat tails
- T-shirts Deeds not Creeds
 - Not focused on creed collective belief
 - More focused on being in the here and now
 - Comfortable with not having to believe in Good
- Common visions
- Coming from so many different faith backgrounds can all come together
 - 'In this together' culture
- Anyone that wants to be here is welcome
- You can come and be welcome
- Tenets and values make sense - align without any conflict (7 principles)
- Love the music - love to sing
 - Singing makes our hearts sing
- Presence of RE program - seeing our youth grow
 - OWL embedded in our process
 - Where our 7 Principles
 - If this were not here probably would not have moved and taken job here



- Feeling welcomed to participate right away
- Engagement of leadership in getting people involved
- Can bring new ideas
- Our efforts into welcoming all traditions & beliefs, including LGBTQ+
- OWL
- McCollum court case (history/tradition)
- Never asked to check brain at door
- People (what they bring to UUCUC and wider community)
- Sunday morning - inspiring services
- Community, Support, Care Core
- Strong tradition of supporting music/musicians, strong talent in our church
- RE program, importance of strong YRUU leaders
- People with diverse backgrounds come together to create community, which is supportive, engaged.
- We are conscious of race, the violence of white supremacy, and strive to do better.
- It is cohesive by virtue of common goals. We work together and have and share a common understanding of important issues.
- The music program makes “our collective hearts sing.”
- We are caring, connected and knowledgeable leaders. We have agile activism, and rise to community needs.
- The church “meets you where you’re at.” Members (and friends) have “permission” to be involved, OR not.
- “I love the Seven Principles.” The banners of the world’s religions are inviting, and recognize diverse backgrounds of members and guests.
- Religion is being replaced by spirituality.
- This is a place to speak honestly, from the heart.
- External community involvement: social justice, racial justice
- Church culture: welcoming, inclusive, “extended family,” friendly, supportive
- Ministerial transition demonstrated the strength and resilience of the congregation
- Social justice. Alternative to traditional religions, with more openness and acceptance for all people.
- In response to OLLI question, what do UUs believe? Bring out UU 7 principle card. Very open to people who are still seeking. Open minds, open hearts.
- For people who don’t yet have community, Jan will recommend UUCUC as a place to find welcome (esp. for young families that are having a hard time transitioning). A decent place where you don’t need to believe in anything specific. Adds that there are not many people of color, but there is congregational hope for this, and that if you are a POC, you may have a lot of attention and hope (too much attention?). A lot of involvement and decent human interaction and warmth.



- Occasionally talks about church choir, doesn't do much proselytizing. We have some formidable ingredients that are not yet out there (we have a great choir and conductor; this is not widely known in CU). Worrying less about FK being okay, and relaxing into admiring the things that she does (e.g., at Char Brady's memorial, FK's simple and powerful message really made him proud). Experience in committee work has been superlative; effective, on-task, reaching conclusions in a logical, efficient way that brings in multiple viewpoints.
- Why is basic decency and warmth so important a dimension of how people perceive the church when they arrive?
 - Helps newcomers to feel truly welcomed. SB: a lot of people come because they're in pain, and need a safe place. The welcoming is a critical first piece of that. Good for us to show to the broader community that this welcoming is real.
- This church is beyond words sometimes, looking for decades for a spiritual home (since being raised in Catholic Church; where's my soul going to go?); found some pockets of help along the way (feminist, pagan groups, but sort of sporadic); she and partner wanted to find a place where they could both worship, and this has been great for them; was super skeptical of organized religion hierarchies (patriarchal, unsafe); she feels she can now put time into soul work; family visited a couple of weeks ago, brother felt welcomed in a way that he isn't in a lot of other places
- The whole question mark is part of the attraction, it's not about obedience but about questioning ethics and faith
- Welcoming, open, young adults here
- Welcome people of all faiths and backgrounds, Pagans, Atheist, Jewish, Christian
- Encounter a diversity of ideas and intellectually stimulating
- Our religious education offered to kids and OWL program
- Community of mutual support
- Positive outlook and common world view
- Large number of ways to be involved
- Social justice initiatives – make the world a better place
- Mission – of community draws people, like-minded
- Excellent music and choir
- Proud of care core – look after members
- Caring community; know there will be support if/when I need it
- Tolerance of all backgrounds/faith but core of shared values
- Can be my authentic self without being judged
- "Extended family" of church members
- We're like a big family
- Our shared values -the seven principles



- Inclusivity, diversity, I can be an atheist here, inspirational community, no doctrine, Deeds not Creeds, respect held for all, church draws on many faiths traditions, all can find something that speaks to them, the community is inspiring, support provided, lifelong support and recognition of need at all stages of life, able to join in lots of things, all ages welcome. Our church is visible welcoming ,
- People come when we invite them, people come to hear terrific sermons , one can find serenity, music makes the heart sing, well thought out and beautiful services from start to finish, joys and concerns always can move you...moving one to tears is a good thing.
- Social justice work and activism
- Not just about outreach – also in-reach to those attending
- Use of pronouns - nontraditional
- Radical acceptance/ inclusive of all
- Willing to change ourselves as well as others
- Not afraid to criticize ourselves
- Growing but doing a good job of maintaining a feeling of closeness in our community and in the Sunday services
- Not huge and super-formal; we really care about keeping interpersonal experiences in the service.
- Music and a huge variety of music
- Reverend Caplow, her sermons and attitude and her activism
- Pluralism of approaches to spirituality and spiritual journey



UUBadger

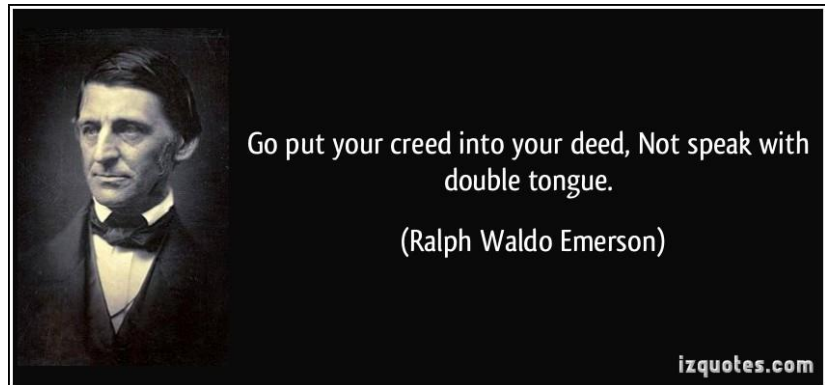


QUESTION 2: What of our faith tradition guides our lives? What does it mean to be a UU?

Note: Some struggled with this question as they felt it was more of an individual question, not a church wide one. There was also discomfort expressed with the word “faith.”

Highlights

Once again, The Seven Principles emerged as a top response for this question coupled with our mantra “Deeds Not Creeds.” These responses were affirmed throughout the conversations as two key words – connection and collaboration – were revealed as thematic strands. Also noteworthy is the safe space the church creates to explore multiple beliefs and wrestle with “big ideas.”



Session Responses

- Inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Doesn't feel part of a faith tradition; faith implies belief; sees ethical principles rather than faith; is atheist
- Science and the use of the scientific method
- Our seven principles
- Freedom to each be on a spiritual journey of our own making
- Agree to disagree
- Banners in church - draw on numerous traditions
- Attracts people who are interested in the principles and live their lives that way
- Principles are 'useful'
- Church community - something philosophical, ethical, and moral
- Place to process the 'big' questions
- Most liberal on protestant
- Don't pledge any creed other than what speaks to your heart
- Leading edge of all social/civil/justice activities
- Knowing that we are fundamentally good people
- Jesus as prophet not divine person
- Having faith in our ability to think through things
- Do not have to have a supreme being
- Sense of responsibility - be stewards to each other and to the earth



- Care about the future of our life here - not the afterlife
- Interdependent web
- Have to think about what we believe - someone else isn't telling us what to believe
- Come together to be around like minded people
 - To be challenged
 - To be supported
- 7 principles consolidate what a good person should do - without being scolded from the pulpit
- Being open minded and welcoming
 - One of the few places can be authentic self
 - UUs in general believe this but here this is actually acted upon
- Respect
- Here we focus more on 'we'
 - Here is what I think - what do you think
- Empathetic - thinking of others and their viewpoints as much as one's own
- We do communication well now
- This congregation has a trust in our teams and leadership
- Democratic process is a tenet/focus point
- People individually create their own faith tradition
- Split number in groups about comfort
- Some discussion/lack of identification regarding the use of the words faith tradition in the original question
- What does it really mean to be UU? What are the requirements?
- Work to be better as a UU
- Aspire to principles in everyday life
- Inherent worth and dignity of all people
- Freedom to find your own answers
- Love connects us as humans and makes for a better world
- Accepting of others
- Member of a group of open, like-minded people who care for each other
- Collective search for truth
- Community that shares the work of making the world a better place
- Self-reflection
- Tolerance
- Multiple ways to exercise spirituality, e.g., music.
- Collective search for truth
- The banners speak to us.
- We don't have a corner on truth; not threatened by differences.
- We are open to new ideas, suggested as possibilities, not as dictates.
- Everybody has their own "truth." This creates creativity.
- Referring to the Tower of Babel, having diverse ideas is not punishment, but a challenge.
- Many have no reason to connect, are in spiritual malaise.
- We address the diverse spiritual needs of teenagers, e.g., through programs at Camp Unistar.
- We never stop exploring, and finding, ourselves.



- Spoke about the notion that a person is “silly” or simplistic if they have faith. (position that all people suffer, contrasted with declaring people good or bad DMS)
- “Many mountains, many paths,” acceptance of other belief systems, the seven principles allow for all faiths
- Interconnectedness of life, the worth and dignity of each person
- Justice, equity and compassion
- Spiritual growth is a process of “both/and, not either/or”
- 7 principles guide her life, cut across all lines, don’t exclude anyone; this is one of the things that welcome people the most at UUCUC; principles, not creeds, guide our lives (guide without shaming); what does it mean? openness and acceptance of other peoples’ differences, we’re all putting one foot in front of the other in our journey on earth, supporting each other along the way
- Covenant-, not creed-based: this is how we’re going to live our lives together, how we’re going to BE together;
- What does it mean to have an institution to support this **way of being together**
 - It’s nice to have company; the principles are just a starting point; enjoying peoples’ company along the way as we’re finding our own way, learning from them; went to first-ever drag show: what it means to be a human being, exploring any way of doing this and sharing it openly
 - Still learning as member of church; loved the convenental vs. creedal distinction; these principles are the things we’re shooting for, holding each other accountable; what is it that I like about this place? it’s that **people are trying, there’s a spirit of trying** that is exciting and unusual
 - Loves that people have come from other faiths, and share it with the rest of us
 - It’s like a giant pot of stew
 - Being open and sharing doesn’t happen that often in the world; it’s not to be taken for granted;
 - In response to what makes it important to have the institutional side of this: we might not be as willing to take risks, but this is a safe space to try new ways of being and thinking; it’s safe for us to go anywhere as a group because we support each other
 - It’s great to see how many people out there feel similarly, but just don’t know about us
 - There are times when we all need to show up
 - Way more comfortable with speaking up in the face of injustice or mistreatment of others; before being at UUCUC, might not have felt as comfortable in speaking up; group has decided to be people first (comparison to a part of France that has historically been welcoming to immigrants and the oppressed)
- How has your relationship with the 7 principles changed/evolved as a result of coming here?
 - Don’t remember all 7 at any given time, but have assimilated them as a result of repetition; has come to appreciate their depth and importance
- Have assimilated them, don’t think about them directly; might think about them directly if having to make a case for something
- Shared seven principles



- Inherent worth and dignity of every human being
- Deeds, not creeds – humanity rather than divinity
- Faith tradition – fits my life
- How do you make the world a place that reflects those principles? 1) Sermons make me think about what I should be doing; 2) how to put them into action
- Value being part of faith tradition that values deeds over creeds
- Even if can't participate in all social justice efforts, feel good and it matters that others in church are doing things
- With shared goals, can negotiate inevitable conflicts – we learn to listen
- Book groups – learn and open eyes to injustice of different types
- Exploring whiteness class was mind-blowing in terms of opening eyes to white supremacy
- Learning from book group – about Buddhism, personal beliefs growth
- Personal growth at every service, not just from sermon, but from joys & concerns, and from remarks shared by visitors about life issues, from moments of silence
- Caring about one another stretches growth and faith
- Active listening, being open to all traditions, that we can go outside of our comfort zone, intellectual and curious
- Inspired to live my life values in and out of church. We make the world better by contributing in all dimensions, head hearts and hands from local to global. We keep moving forward never want to be stuck. We can find in this church what resonates personally, Collective search for the truth. Our church believes in equal access to all for all, we invite conversation and dialog even when there is no agreement...we go outside of our tribe!
- “Don't fit anywhere else”
- Able to join without having to the “God” thing
- Non Prescriptive and community
- Having a place to explore “life's big questions” without a prescriptive God figure as central
- Need spiritual fulfillment without dogma
- To be part of a broad and open community where everyone is accepted
- In her Catholic upbringing, dogma was getting in the way, now proud to be UU
- Still feels connected to a higher power or God – UU facilitates that connection even if it is not the central view





- Respect our capacity but grow our capacity
- Direction comes from the leadership of church
 - Need someone setting the course
- Determining what we are 'called to do'
- Reorganizing leaders in issues
- Find balance - spiritual growth to our members to stand on our own feet
- Involved, perhaps cutting edge of social justice
- Change
- (Strive) Take steps in increasing diversity
 - Membership and staff
- Work in a systematic way to support social issues instead of pockets
- Leadership team should make strategy to create engagement in community in smart, strategic way
 - Organizational connections
 - Start proselytizing
- Youth becoming more involved
- Resource for people - joining with others to make the community a better place (i.e. backpacks, gun violence vigil, etc.) - community sees us living our purpose
- A place to come and learn things - we have a lot to offer besides "church"/worship - adult education opportunities for those searching/seeking who want to do that in community (but may not be looking for worship)
- Community Outreach - All Ages
- We can't do everything - How do we focus?
- Grow to 400-600 members with more ministers with one focused on community outreach
- More visibility in wider community
- People know who we are
- Is a prophetic voice in the community; not timid, states what we believe – our covenant.
- We are known as leaders; active in interfaith work.
- Growth in the budget makes it possible to have a 2nd, or 3rd, minister, especially a community minister.
- Discussed resistance to real growth in the congregation (or any congregation).
- The church "shows up" and continues to be active.
- The church is more accessible; the building, parking, offers more service in/to the community. May be losing an opportunity.
- Issue of space discussed at length.
- Person was not in favor of getting bigger – rather, open up to more working relationships with other groups.
- Be beautiful with each other.
- The church's voice needs to be heard.



- We are inviting in many dimensions.
- Energy to grow (e.g., larger congregation, building) is transformed into energy to build relationships, not numbers.
- Leading in bringing together other churches/groups to address social issues, e.g., gun violence, immigration, climate change, racial justice, white supremacy
- Being strategic in outreach by building alliances to leverage impacts
- Will be considered a leader in racial justice in addressing white supremacy because we're working on a plan to get there in a much more concrete & understandable way
- Not sure, but hope it looks like KP's vision; hope it's not just racial justice, but that there are many different social justice programs, making connections with the wider community; not just for getting more members, but for really making a difference
- Listening to how people see needs (both internally and externally); at a community meeting, heard hope that UUCUC would do things not only for congregation, but for the broader community; there are some things that we should NOT be trying to signal leadership around; there's a need in CU for the broader community to learn ways of working to address white supremacy; CU lacks a place where people can cross paths, keep moving, find support, and how the 7 principles become alive and in practice; see this church as a nexus for that capacity building—UUCUC doing great work and not asking anything in return; there's incredible infrastructure here for sharing
- Need to do something about the number of people; ultimately have an Urbana UU and a Champaign UU, working hand in hand, to spread out throughout the community and have larger impact; surprised not to see more happening around immigration; more UUs in town spreading our message
- Broader message: looking at structural white supremacy and asking how we can make changes is something new
- Confident that we're on a roll, and that CU will see a benefit from this in 5 years; current political and social situation is working in favor of UUCUC's work and message spreading; it's challenging all of us to step up our game; we want to share this with more people
- This church is well-positioned to have a role in interfaith alliance building; what might grow out of this?
 - This plays into connectedness with organizations in the community that have similar social justice missions, like CU FAIR or Bend the Arc
 - Florence has encouraged this, and is directly involved; she's more interested in being part of this herself than previous ministers
 - In Ann Arbor in early 70s, Interfaith Council for Peace; it was really exciting to be part of this; could imagine this happening again
- Mennonite church is interested in running an internal audit, and looking at the UUCUC as a model; we should be sharing tricks for how to accomplish new objectives for fairness and justice; interfaith work could help with capacity-building



- A lot more recognition – have heard of us and know what we stand for
- Known as active partners in social justice among local social justice organizations
- Recognized as place to get faith traditions for my children – in a wide and deep way
- Our exciting new ideas and our growth and vitality will serve as models for other UU churches – e.g. membership committee work to retain youth; interim RE process to share with larger UUA community
- Will be known as a hub that pulls together other faith communities working on common ends to further socioeconomic justice (which underlies all the other injustices)
- Collaborating with people of color
- Known as a church that's involved in social justice
- Think beyond just interacting with other faith communities, i.e. maybe with local government entities; getting diverse groups to talk to each other
- Leader in climate crisis justice work
- Alone we will never move mountains
- It will be something we want and shape, we will increase membership and collaboration locally and beyond on projects to help enhance peace and social justice and shared concerns like global warming. More members will be more hands on in these endeavors. In five years, we will have a community minister in addition to regular full-time minister. We will have had an impact in establishing more gun control and in working toward addressing climate change and keep those and other initiatives going. We will embark on social change projects. We will grow our staff to meet our growing needs. We will address our building needs, we could buy a church or do major renovations or tear down and start over to make sure our church home meets our needs. We will have that well underway in this time frame if not close to completion. We will embrace change and not be stagnant.
- We will recognize this period of turbulence in our world yet time of growth for us as a both a challenge and an opportunity to evolve to meet both.
- Liberal, progressive religious presence
- Hope it is bigger and doing the same things right
- Doing more small groups; fostering small groups in many different formats for our community and the larger community.
- Soul Matters good, but some wanted less formal and more opportunities to structure small groups like UU Happy Hour, Gastronomical Society
- Expand the diversity of small groups in a more formal way; think about how expectations about groups reflect white, upper middle class, e.g. Soul Matters facilitators lead groups in their homes, assumes they have room for eight guests at home.



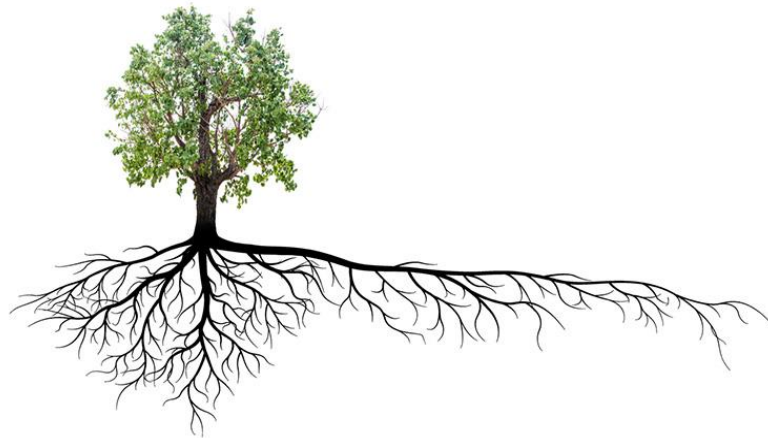
PARTNERSHIPS
WITH PURPOSE



**QUESTION 4: What does our congregation look like in five years?
Think in terms of size, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, differing
abilities, trauma experiences, etc.**

Highlights

This question provoked divergent responses related to growth and seemed to be one that touched upon intrinsic values. Responses unilaterally affirmed our desire to ensure our congregation mirrors the diverse, global world in which we navigate and is congruent to our collective 'why'. However, there were mixed responses recorded as to the 'how' and 'what'. Also noteworthy are the number of responses which focus on increasing the population of young people and working to ensure diverse socio economic strata are counted among us.



Session Responses

- More racially & ethnically diverse – reflect the wider population which is changing – not all agreed we would look like that – because we are not now
- Would like to reflect the community more – but still be liberal thinkers and educated
- If we want to be more welcoming to increase diversity, we will also have to offer more diverse programs, some of which will make us uncomfortable.
- Offer a program that is spiritually engaging to more people.
- A higher percentage of newcomers who try our church will be lacking any prior faith tradition – building a faith from scratch rather than rejecting an old one they were raised in
- Hope families with children will be a large part of the congregation
- Discussion of why young UUs don't continue, but also noted that many of those in young adult group have a UU background



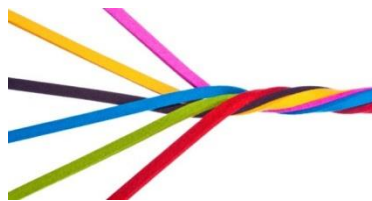
- Hope we would be more diverse and appeal to more people (this is happening; less intellectual “lecture” sermons; more variety in services)
- If we don’t become more diverse, we can still go out and connect with others in the community; we have to go to their house even if uncomfortable for us
- Racial diversity - dream - doesn’t believe it will happen
- Look more like the population of America
- Need to speak of diversity across the board
- More accepting and capable of serving those that need accommodations
 - Don't see us as accessible
- More socio economically diverse congregation
 - Would be a richer congregation if we were
- Have to trust each other
- Supportive of spiritual, emotional, mental health
- Bigger
- More kids
- Youth group bigger - more inclusive of those outside the congregation
- More diversity in all categories
- Like church size where knows many of people
- Like full engagement
- Energy
- Concerns about growing too big too quickly
 - Too big to know people
- Many of us fear losing a sense of community
 - Knowing the people they see
 - Sense of belonging
- Try to grow gradually in a thoughtful way
- Lively number of programs attract people
 - Will grow even if not trying
- Good distribution of age ranges
- To stay the same size we need 20-30 new people to offset departures
- Not just having diverse people sitting in pews but need engagement in each other’s lives
- If we want to accomplish our goals in social justice, we need to have the numbers to truly make a difference
- Thomas Jefferson - After seeing a UU church in New England, said, “It won’t be long before everyone becomes a Unitarian.”
- This is the church that makes sense.
- We have figured out where to put people on Sunday morning
- More diversity the better
- 30-40% bigger
- A more accessible space



- Younger, browner, “waving all the flags”
- Thoughtful about our growth
- IF we want to grow, we also need to make sure we keep people
- Growth with purpose - examine why we want to grow
- Bloomington, IN as possible inspiration? Recommendation to visit other churches
- Will look similar to today. We’re not needed by everyone; we can serve the world in our own way.
- Not markedly different in 5 years, but need to be committed to accepting change.
- Accessibility issue: compare Unity Chapel by Frank Lloyd Wright, which is inaccessible (and has no members in wheelchairs for example)’ with the Springfield church with its movable seating, which accommodates people in wheelchairs.
- The issue of our “elevator”
- The church is becoming more diverse. It will be larger, with a more accessible space.
- We will attract young adults, both singles and people with families.
- Our young people, e.g., teenagers, have a lot of energy, outreach for young families – “outward facing events.”
- Member asked what it was like 5 years ago (2014). Membership is up about 50%, indicating our potential for growth.
- More accessible for people with a wide range of disabilities
- A virtual community established for those who are not able to get to church
- Less emphasis on size and careful attention to building face to face relationships
- More diversity, however we define it; may not be all that diverse with respect to socioeconomic strata (SES); would those working their way up in the world feel welcome here? Much of the congregation has been blessed with many opportunities; we talk about wanting to become more diverse, but what are we doing about this? Where are the benchmarks, how do we want to get there?
- Gave a sermon 14 years ago about precisely this, but not much has changed since then
- A bit leery about action plans in terms of increasing diversity; goal shouldn’t necessarily be to get more POC in congregation; if we take care of our own house, less influenced by white supremacist culture and more genuinely welcoming, increased congregational diversity may happen organically; make ourselves the best we can be
- Would welcome us becoming more diverse; shouldn’t do this by recruiting POC, but rather make our services open and welcoming to broader cultural cross-section; pleased with extra capacity that we have in comparison to where we were
- Has a lot of friends in social work: **income inequality** is the umbrella framework for influencing diversity, community engagement; ask ourselves what we can do for others; was in foster system, working for everything that he has; trying to have more compassion for those who have experienced lifelong privilege



- Watched documentary on autism, struck by the extraordinary intelligence of the autistic; we should try to understand and be open to all forms of diversity
- Should our congregation try to be open to many more types of psychology? BG: we should at least learn more about people on the spectrum and make our services more welcoming
- Some exclusivity is difficult to avoid (e.g. coffee hour is too busy for her taste); sometimes services feel too busy for her (sometimes just wants Axel being intellectual and keeping it quiet)
- Are we a bigger congregation in five years?
- Group: resounding yes, as long as we keep providing multiple niches for people
- Look more different from each other than now – on all dimensions in the question
- Board and leadership more intentional about sending people out into the community to be involved with other organizations to represent UUCUC, i.e. hand select members to serve in other community organizations as reps of our church.
- Over 500 members, in new facility
- Finding ways to help those in the community who are UUs and don't know it yet
- Are in process of redesigning/rebuilding on this site, or we are in larger existing facilities
- Discussed – is growth dependent on Florence? No, growth began during period of interim ministry; not necessarily on Florence, but on social justice-oriented minister and that is who we searched for and found in Florence
- Concern over our lack of socioeconomic diversity—this person volunteering at Parkland food pantry; making efforts to increase our presence at Parkland and not just U of I centered members
- Providing a homeless shelter
- Have moved elsewhere to a more usable building
- Are ministering to other populations
- Different colors of hair and different skin colors will open ...
- We are OK in age but want to know about what the YRUUs do after they leave RE, where are they what are they doing will they come back to our church, maybe we can plan to ask them and let the congregation know!





- We will welcome all who come and will be sure to anticipate our differences and provide ways to share and connect over them. Expanding Care Corps or shared ministry with more pastoral care will be done to reach out to those who have endured trauma or who need a time and space to share any story experienced. Our services will foster more diversity and be ready to accommodate different approaches to worship in all aspects. We will be stewards of evolution and welcome fluidity. We will explore all kinds of music. We will be ready to wrestle with questions like what makes a church a church, and we must accept that we won't always agree as we are always stretching ourselves. We must realize that growth equals change and will result in demands on our time and resources. We will embrace or accept change as we grow. Shared ministry will be enhanced and an Associate minister added. We will be able to accommodate anyone with differing abilities in our building. And we will do outreach and engagement to support our community.
- Hope average age is a bit younger
- Better job engaging with college students – other religions have well-resourced student ministries on campus; no model for UU campus ministry
- Others hold a worship service at campus ministry every Friday night
- Recommend we talk to Bridging 18-22 year olds – they have been talking about how Young Adult group (mostly grad students in later 20s) is not that welcoming for those just out of High School/in college. They have different interests, are at a different life stage.





QUESTION 5: How can lifelong Religious Education deepen connections to UUCUC and enrich our lives?

Highlights

This question provoked several conversations about the definition of ‘adult’ education and what RE should be called. “Religious Exploration” emerged as a suggestion for renaming. This said, overall, opportunities for connections emerged as a theme – connect with each other, connect with new ideas, and connect with transformative ways of thinking and being. It was also noted that RE is a key differentiator for UUCUC as it prevents us from simply being a social activist club.



Session Responses

- Rather call it RE – religious exploration, not education
- Anytime you search your heart/mind and share with others, you strengthen connections with each other
- Power of moments – peak experiences within religious exploration that you remember forever
- Couples enrichment retreat was meaningful and enriched relationship as a couple (many years ago)
- Spiritual exploration to go beyond information based “learning” of facts, e.g. About other religions
- Tech society dehydrates us in terms of connections with others
- By providing opportunities for people to connect in a broad range of ways
- Nourishing our own strength and spirit refills us to do the work we need to do in the world
- Have larger numbers of people step up to lead. This is happening, mentioned: meditation group; soul matters; shared ministry; hospitality team leaders



- Strengthens commitment and understanding
- Builds connections
- Building relationships
- Relationship and money
- Anti-racism
- Parenting class
- Couples enrichment
- Adult OWL
- Life changing transitions
- Places, ways to take things deeper
 - Building connections
 - Shared mission
 - Community connections
- People need to be engaged
- People need to be talked to
- Hard to make connections on Sundays
 - Make those connections in small groups
- Provide quality of
 - Relationships with money
 - Movies
 - Cultural experiences
 - Intergenerational activities
- Already doing it - just not calling it that
 - Book studies
 - Committee groups that sponsor workshops
- Broadening and planning and coordinated in such a way that offerings are considered adult education
- Getting RE involved with what other committees are doing
- Opportunities for people to explore and find others of similar thinking
- Make folks aware that we are already doing this
- Stronger central planning
- Every committee should identify what they are doing that is educational
- Opening our minds to what pockets are doing and realizing I can do more in the community
- Being an RE teacher really enriches life
 - Beyond belief
 - Learning so much about Unitarian Universalism
- Soul Matters - get to know each other on a deeper level which deepens UUCUC connections
- Lifelong learning - answers to bigger questions can be re-examined as you age
- Good to revisit what we think we know



- Deepen connections/create bonds
- Learning by nature enriches our lives
- We need to “advertise” lifelong learning and why it is worth time in our busy lives
- OLLI involvement of our church participants shows that UUs value lifelong learning
- Helps adults who weren’t raised as UU
- Question: What is lifelong religious education?
- Question: do we want LLRE here, as opposed to being in other places?
- OLLI is enriching this person’s life, and strengthen the sense of being a UU. So, how does LLRE differ from other opportunities?
- Every church event is a learning opportunity.
- Question: is there an adult RE going on here?
- Soul Matters is LLRE.
- Suggestion to change the question: “How does LLRE . . .” rather than “How can LLRE . . .
- ”Person referred to a monthly pot
- Enrich/learn about one another as well as ourselves, opportunities to interact with others, continue to expand your brain
- “Religious education” takes place in groups other than identified RE classes, e.g. pagan group, soul matters
- A new word is needed for “religious education”
- Eliminate the “silos”
- Lifelong = religious education throughout the ages, not just for kids
- Why do we do it? Church highly values knowledge and learning, helps deepen faith, strengthen small group interactions and connections
- Confused by what adult religious education would look like in UUCUC; what would the analog be here?
- No one connected all the offerings for adults and looking at them as a form of RE; also, do people over 70 need something different than those in the 30s, 50s?
- There may be an inherent distrust of the ‘religious’ in RE; may need to describe this in a different way so that it encourages more congregants to participate (what does this mean to you?); where you are in your life matters, and affects what types of groups might be useful for you; differentiating these experiences is important
- Church is not just Sunday morning; all week, all year (weeknight workshop is RE too); connect spiritual needs to wish to make lives and community better
- It’s really religious exploration rather than religious education
- The invitation needs to be clear; participated in Soul Matters; curriculum is beautifully created; asking one to do a soul journey with others; it’s such an activist church that we sometimes don’t pay attention to spirit; we’re here because we have a yearning for kindness, and a different thing happens here in groups; can we teach each other how to listen; if someone miss-speaks, they’re not ridiculed, but there’s compassion and trust in good intentions; there’s an agreement here that we’re going to treat each



other decently; would like to see us be more intentional in how we create relationships, both within and without the church

- Wrestling with the big questions; my learning is informed by all of your learning; having spiritual company of fellow seekers helps to inform my own truth
- What value does youth RE bring to the world?
 - Helps them to understand the values/principles of the church
 - Neighboring faiths is very important; UUs can tend to grow up feeling like they're superior, need to make sure they understand and respect other traditions
 - Want to make sure that my grandchildren grow up to be caring, kind, good stewards; RE is critical to help them have that sense; there's an intentional curriculum (e.g., drawing 'You are kind'); doesn't just happen by osmosis, you need to teach; I look to RE to help my grandkids navigate this more complicated world
 - Our RE curriculum teaches these basic values without bringing extra baggage
 - Didn't want my kids to grow up without all the extra baggage; raised them without Sunday school because none taught without baggage; important for children to know their history
- Soul matters circles are learning experiences and deepen connections to each other
- OWL
- Soul matters engagement helps her connect to Sunday services/ help connect her to spirituality and what other UUs believe
- Connection is search for truth and ethical directions
- Take us beyond basic education/ we received in formal education, keeps us exploring and searching for truth
- Duh! Adult RE – discussions about things that enrich our lives always deepen our connections
- Young adult table challenges us
- Black lives matter banner discussion – challenged what we thought we believed
- Sermons are a form of lifelong learning
- Need RE to be not about how it is organized but about the outcomes
- More engagement by more in church leads to learning and to deeper connections
- Need ways to engage without a huge time commitment as current committees now take (and why they are mostly comprised of old folks)
- Would like to see a personal counselor on staff to help members with personal crises; minister is stretched too thin
- Wider selection of classes and topics



- Soul Matter may be one avenue to grow and can watch that this year. We can expand and introduce for example new program like an Adult Owl program or marriage class
- Expand pastoral care and teach. Keep young adults engaged...survey YRUU about experience and interest in church?
- Find happy medium way to connect people, people want to get together, especially in turbulent times and need more. Soul matters Ok but too time consuming, consider congregation and needs of congregation members and adjust events accordingly for all life spans in our community.
- Need joyful connections community Fellowship Hall too crowded.





QUESTION 6: What is our purpose? Why are we here?

Highlights

A notable theme that emerged from the many responses to why we are a part of UUCUC is that we are here to find our best selves and live our best lives – however we personally define these. The church provides the path for us to do this. It offers us a safe space to explore our spirituality and for many is our spiritual home. On a macro level, many shared our purpose is to be of service, to help others, and be a change agent for social injustices. Several commented that our current mission (build community, seek inspiration, promote justice and find peace) is our purpose and we are living it.



Session Responses

- To have a refuge – a spiritual home of like-minded
- Share values
- To be UU – walk the talk; honor each other’s worth and dignity; be open-minded, encouraging discussion and debate
- Be a spiritual community that supports
- Feel less alone
- Stronger together than we are individually
- We bring out the best in ourselves
- Here to learn from each other, aspire, challenge each other
- To be/live our best selves
- To help others through the hard stuff of life
- What is one’s best self? – seven principles we all agree with
- To make the world a better place
- To do the hard things – the kind thing, the difficult things, things that scare you, the right thing because it is the right thing to do
- To keep being the place that stands on the side of justice
- Setting an example for others
- Doing what we can do to make a change; address inequities and injustices
- To learn from each other
- Connections and community
- Make life better for all of us



- Providing connections
- Providing basics
- Building community
 - More effective together
- We are better together
- Place to come together
 - So we are not all struggling alone
- Help each other find joy and ease struggle
- Geese “V” formation - when one gets tired, it falls to the back and another takes the lead
- More emphasis on making our larger community better
- Further UU principles
- We need each other
 - What would be missing if we weren't here?
 - Wouldn't have any place to go to church
 - Meeting spaces for community groups
 - Places for interfaith, same sex safety
 - Wouldn't be a place for people who don't fit in other places
 - Support of campus foundation would be gone
 - UU campus presence would be gone
 - Lose moral and ethical hub
 - Lose OWL - comprehensive sex ed
- Better person for being a member of this church
- Build community, seek inspiration, promote justice, find peace
- Have always really liked our mission statement
- Looking for community of like-minded people
- Still fits - expresses it - really smart mission statement
- We get inspiration and then are nudged to get involved
- Have succeeded in meeting this and living this out (our mission)
- Put mission statement up on wall where we can see it
- If something new, making sure it still aligns with what we already have
- “If it ain't broke, don't fix it.”
- Look at what we are doing that meets each piece of the mission statement
 - What can we do to draw more congregants involvement in these things
 - Encourage larger percentage participating without shaming if not doing
- People need to feel like they are needed
 - Will what I do really make a difference
- We are looking at new members coming in but are we really getting them engaged and belonging
 - How do we engage new members?
- “Island of sanity in cornfield of insanity” - maybe not as true anymore as it once was



- Religious home for those who may not be religious
- Offer a place for people to come find their purpose
- More people are coming as spiritual people, not necessarily as someone who is rejecting something else
- Love the hell out of this world
- Inspiration and truth in supportive community
- Work with other religious communities - stronger together, see our humanity in other faces, find connection
- Listen
- See each other
- Take care of each other
- Help us learn to take care of ourselves
- Church is a focus for ideas
- Creedal vs. Covenantal perspectives
- Nonjudgmental community seeking spiritual meaning; UU church has many paths.
- Church is place where you go, a place to connect.
- Care Core serves the purpose of service. So does Repair Corps.
- We have a covenantal relationship, and support each other, care for each other, without judgment.
- Re purpose: How do we extend to the larger society? Do we have a collective purpose, are we empowered?
- Church is a way to combine energies.
- “Social Fender Bender”
- “Feeding your soul,”
- Explore what it means to be human and live a good life, making the world a better place
- Coming together, supporting and serving each other
- Continue to learn/explore our spirituality and take this knowledge outside our church
- Experience joy about life, growth and service
- *Facilitator asked: What would you miss if the organization went away? Responses to this question, seemed less of purpose*
- Place to start the conversation is the mission (inspiration, justice, peace, community): the four precepts encompass everything; our purpose is to provide the opportunity to strive for these; not necessarily to make sure that these things happen, but help varied group of people to try together
- Can't solve today's problems with yesterday's solutions; our purpose is to address the bigger issues (e.g., white supremacy)—how would we address these with yesterday's knowledge; we need to identify some solutions so that we're not talking about the same things in 100 years
- Has heard that the church has been on a new social justice journey; social justice is why I'm here; spiritual salvation in dark political times; need community, shared spirit



- and values to engaged with the reality of the times and feel stronger and do something about it; see a lot of people that feel this kindred value within UUCUC; not sure if the rest of CU recognizes this
- What's the difference between the church and ACLU?
 - Mission statement, wrapped up in spirituality, being with other people of like mind to feel safe?
 - Organization for educated liberal minds to deal with the world; so many of my friends are doing 'whack a mole' with so many of today's issues; in contrast, UUCUC is a place where there's ongoing continuity, safe place for my heart because there's some organization around it
 - One of the deep reasons we're here is the community and personal relationships in our congregation, and who we partner with; one thing that we have on our side; we have a commitment to the questioning (so that it's not scary when we address white supremacy); there's a leaning in; how else are we blind? we have a lot of blindness around class that make those with lower SES feel left out; there's an exciting change that we're willing to lean into some areas of discomfort; we're going to try out best to lean in with kindness; we're not going to berate or belittle each other; we'll grow in deep ways when we call forth these blindness
 - For me, it's safe harbor, getting recharged and reenergized, to find community
 - If we closed tomorrow, what would you miss?
 - I would miss about ¾ of my life; I've sought out UU churches wherever I've lived; no matter where it is, it's a place of belonging and shared values; it's a place to get away from the world (EM: for me it's a place to engage with the world) and also to engage
 - It supports so much of our whole lives, whereas the ACLU is a small sliver of who we are
 - Would like to see the grounds be used for more of a service orientation towards the community; happens every now and then, but could we make this an ongoing practice? (would like CU to know that 'On Green St., that's where you go for resources)
 - If we could do this in partnership with other organizations that are doing this, and not all happening here, we'd get out more and be building our community while engaging with the broader community at the same time
 - A lot of this already is going on, but not communicated within the UUCUC; JK: might be much richer if we made these connections clearer, building inner strength and service at the same time
 - Every week, I know I want to get enough hugs to last through, farmer's market & UUCUC are a big source
 - This is our extended family; Purpose – to be here for each other
 - Be a community of like-minded people
 - Purpose = what is our responsibility? To make the world a better place; church helps us do that



- To help us become the best humans we can be
- Discussion of we are not the ACLU, we are not the Elks Club, but we could be some combination of them
- To provide diverse programs for many interests and needs and ages
- Why here? Because being a UU is part of who we are – the way we live our lives
- To live our values
- To learn how to live our values better
- To sustain what we have but move forward, keep on planning like this event to explore our purpose. We do good things together but must keep noting our values the whys that keeps us moving forward. There are several layers as to why, macro we want to do good in the world and micro we want to cherish our spirituality. History of the church reveals our purpose in the things accomplished be inspired by them and serve as stewards but also gardeners, we have a great legacy to fulfill.
- We are an island of sanity remind ourselves of our commonality even while we embrace diversity.
- We have a tradition of care and knowing about our church brings out our best.
- This church is our family and finding it and UU values reinforce a code of basic and inspiring human values as evidenced in the principles.
- Our local history shows how we built community and we crave that still; connections and values are a great mix to create even deeper connections and to then live better our values.
- Want to keep that fellowship ever growing -- ever inclusive -- ever joyful.
- To create a spiritual home and grounding for people
- Have a liberal, progressive approach to spirituality
- What makes CU Indivisible different from UUCUC? We wrap social activism up in “church stuff” and they only do it in electoralism. UUCUC gives us an option to do social activism as values-based rather than electoral.
- Lifts you up and provides self-care and activism in the same place
- UUCUC helped her feel more whole as a person, safe, sense of meaning and connectedness
- To be a community, meet people, make small talk; everything else is secondary

