

**A Summary Overview of Information Gathered in UUFSD's
"What Now?" Conversations
March 30, 2022**

This is the facilitator's brief report on information and perspectives gleaned from UUFSD's "What Now Conversations." It is certain that additional helpful information can be gleaned from the 628 comments offered by members in the course of these meetings, and likely that such can be useful in helping the congregation set its future directions.

The number of participants was 125 members and friends out of a possible 187+ (about 66%). The lengths of involvement with the fellowship by 79 of the 125 were recorded: 18 of them have been involved in the community for 5 years or less. 24 of them have been a part of the community for 6 to 15 years. 22 of them have been affiliated for 16-30 years. 15 have been in the community for 36-50+ years.

- 1) The RE program is a very significant concern. Healing and recreating a vital RE program after Alison's departure is desired by members of all ages. It is widely recognized that the RE program is a most important contributor to the congregation's vitality and future existence.
- 2) Also mentioned by many was the desire for a minister who is inspiring as a speaker, who provides effective, personal, wise spiritual leadership, and who is a skillful administrator. Rev. Jo Green was often criticized for not demonstrating these skills. 68 of 624 (11%) participant comments indicated dissatisfaction with Rev. Jo's leadership, including outright calls that she be removed or replaced. Over 60 different participants offered such comments. Just 3 out of 624 (.048%) comments reported liking Rev. Jo and/or appreciating some aspect of her leadership.
- 3) Greater transparency, more democratic decision-making, and effectiveness in communications about what is going on in the congregation was often raised as a concern.
- 4) An oft-voiced interest was in fostering a well-led music program, especially a revitalized choir and musical performances like those of the UUFSD Band.
- 5) Significant concern was expressed about the fellowship's current financial circumstances, budgeting for its operations, and operating within its financial means.

- 6) The dampening and deleterious effects of the pandemic, including not meeting together and having to meet over Zoom were frequently mentioned.
- 7) One of the most often mentioned attractors and reasons for continued involvement were the sense of community and friendships people have developed through their affiliation with UUFSD.
- 8) Other important wants voiced by participants (not necessarily in the order of how frequently they were mentioned) were for:
 - better strategic planning and evaluation
 - an increase in volunteerism
 - ways of organizing the community that can help reduce volunteer burnout
 - more effective advertising and marketing in the larger community
 - more frequent in-person gatherings, especially discussions and activities that succeed in fostering a sense of connection between community members
 - an active and ongoing concern for work and training of members related to social and environmental justice
 - a reduction in siloed committees and cliques
 - making it so that decisions are not perceived as being too heavily influenced by larger donors and long-timers
 - refamiliarization, rehearsal and training around the UU principles and related subjects, with a special focus on healing rifts that occurred in decision-making about the 8th Principle
 - more effective ways of working through conflict and communicating in meetings
 - more meetings in the amphitheater
 - refocusing and completing the capital campaign
 - keeping up the buildings and grounds
 - increasing racial-ethnic and LGBTQ+ involvement in the community
 - a more consistent, pervasive and informative welcoming of newcomers
 - better planning and execution of Sunday Services

Based on the quality of involvement and appreciative response by the members of each group, there has clearly been something of great value in holding these meetings...And it continues to be a pleasure to assist UUFSD in this process.

Respectfully submitted,
Frank Willey

Addendum A: Recommendations by the Facilitator:

1. Create a new, relevant and useful mission statement. Choose congregational objectives for fulfilling this mission as you go along. This document will necessarily be passed by members of the congregation many times as it goes through refinement and ultimately needs to be agreed to by the congregation as a whole.
2. In a similar fashion, create a behaviorally oriented Covenant of Right Relations with guidelines for communicating and resolving grievances and complaints or conflicts. This Covenant and accompanying guidelines ultimately need to be agreed to by the congregation as a whole.
3. Find regular ways for the congregation to communicate with its leaders. (Remember, the board and committee chairs of the congregation are servant leaders of the congregation as whole. Organize, execute meetings and plan with this always in mind.)
4. Be redundant in communication and provide more opportunities than seem necessary to inform members, friends, and visitors about what is happening at UUFSD in its programming at every level.
5. Develop creative ways to live within your budget and organize your life and work together.
6. Intentionally welcome and help newcomers get involved. Hold classes for prospective and new members that anyone can attend.
7. Find ways to keep music alive and an important part of community gatherings.
8. Establish a well-directed, consistent RE Program that includes a commitment to building connections and shared experiences across generations, including the active involvement of children and youth in worship and congregational events.
9. Break bread together: reinstitute Circle Dinners. Plan a non-worship group meal 1x per month.
10. Allow current activities that are in alignment with the mission and objectives of the congregation to continue until they falter through lack of interest. Encourage grass-roots congregational organizing and insist on congregational buy-in when developing new initiatives. Have information readily available to members and friends for how new initiatives can be explored and supportively developed.