



**Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence**  
**Summary of Strategic Planning Key Leader Interviews**  
**January 8, 2014**

As part of our strategic planning process, Trustees and UU Planning People conducted interviews in the fall of 2013 with 42 individual members, friends, staff, and former members. Interviewees were selected to provide a balanced sample of lay leaders including: long-time and newer members, people who have left the congregation, staff, trustees and other lay leaders, GLBTQ and straight individuals and couples, and people with and without children in RE. Interviews complement an open online survey and pending listening circles to engage our members and tap the collective wisdom of our congregation as we envision our future.

This summary documents common themes. Similar comments were clustered in general categories, paraphrased, and counted. The report lists these in the approximate order of frequency. Unique comments are not reported. Word clouds are used --when these illustrated useful patterns --to display the most frequently reported words in the largest fonts. As it is possible to recognize distinctive voices, the full transcript is confidential to protect our promise of anonymity to interviewees.

Thank you to Trustees, UU Planning People, and interviewees.

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## 2) Who are we here to serve? Are we serving them?



Repeated themes: Who do we serve?

- ❖ Our congregation, members, friends, those who attend – mostly we serve them well (cited by 23)
- ❖ Wider community, especially disadvantaged – generally do a good job, but could do better (19)
- ❖ Kids and families (6)
- ❖ Spiritual seekers (5)
- ❖ LGBTQ community (4)
- ❖ Our own elderly or infirm members (4)
- ❖ Northampton and surrounding towns (4)
- ❖ Nation and world (3)
- ❖ White people and middle class (3)
- ❖ Interfaith couples (2)
- ❖ Liberals (2)

Repeated themes: Who should we serve better?

- ❖ People of color, different economic classes (cited by 5)
- ❖ Wider community, we could have more impact on social justice/environmental issues (5)
- ❖ Our own members, those not engaged, those not obviously needy (4)
- ❖ Young people (2)
- ❖ Students and kids (2)

## 3) Do you want us to grow? What does growing mean for you?

Repeated themes:

- ❖ Yes, we need to grow to thrive, new people bring fresh energy, vitality, we grow or stagnate (cited by 21)
- ❖ Growth is necessary for our financial stability (5)
- ❖ Prefer to stay the same size, will need more people to replace those lost (5)
- ❖ We should grow thoughtfully, within our capacity, not growth for sake of growth (5)





- ❖ Spiritual community (4)
- ❖ Smart, interesting people, free-thinkers (3)
- ❖ Strong RE program (3)
- ❖ Beautiful, historic, traditional building (3)
- ❖ Unitarian Universalist congregation (3)
- ❖ Values, principle-driven (2)
- ❖ Diverse religious backgrounds, beliefs (2)

## 7) If we could do ONE thing to make your experience or involvement even more relevant and meaningful what would it be?



### Repeated themes:

- ❖ More active social justice work, more pathways to participate in SJ activism (cited by 9)
- ❖ More programs, adult education, discussion groups, social events (5)
- ❖ Reconfigure Great Hall, other major capital improvements (4)
- ❖ Happy now (3)
- ❖ It's up to me to achieve what I need (3)
- ❖ More spiritual sermons, services (3)
- ❖ More varied services, especially multicultural (3)
- ❖ Deeper connections with others in the congregation (3)
- ❖ Financial security for the congregation (3)