

Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence 2018 Congregational Survey, Verbatim Comments

January 2, 2019

Following are all verbatim responses¹ to open-ended questions in our 2018 congregational survey. Please also see the full survey report. A summary of repeated comments and themes follows each question and precedes each list of comments. Themes are ranked by how often these or similar ideas were repeated by multiple people. Numbers in parentheses indicate the approximate number of times these or similar ideas were cited.

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¹ Only spelling errors were corrected

PARTICIPATION How extensive is your participation in the life of our congregation? Comments

Summary of themes and repeated comments

- ❖ Mostly people offered explanations of why they are not more regular participants
- ❖ Family obligations prevent participation (cited two times)
- ❖ Active in Small Group Circles (cited two times)

All comments

- Active in small group
- Am on a break
- Because I have a teenager who does not like tiger up on Sunday mornings and the youth group is Sunday nights—which is a regular music rehearsal for Ryan—we have not participated in the past two years.
- Except recently due to family issues
- I am now a member of another religious community so not very active at the UU.
- I don't feel fully connected, although I have treasured my time with Irida
- I get to participate about 3 months a year.
- I have found it very difficult to get to know people & get involved in this congregation, with the important exception of Small Group.
- I have previously been a very active member and I plan to increase my UU activities again next year with life changes
- I have struggled to get myself to services on a regular basis, but find that if I make a commitment to be at services to usher or something, I will be there.....need to get that set up....
- I would like to participate in more than Sunday service, but I have to find balance with other aspects of my life (namely, school)
- I'm still struggling to get all of us coming for regular service
- My participation had been significant in the (now somewhat distant) past, but care for my adolescent and grown children has taken my Sunday mornings and much energy. Things might be different in the future. I've also participated by providing music when asked, and very much enjoy and value that.
- participate in Climate Action Group ongoing
- Regularly on Sundays but not often during the week
- Slowly getting more involved

VISION Do you have an additional or other vision for our congregation?

Summary of repeated themes and comments in order of most frequent mention

- ❖ Add spirituality, faith or worship (cited 10 times)
- ❖ Replace sanity with a less reactive word, what we're for, not against (10)
- ❖ Statement is abstract, impersonal, bland (5)
- ❖ Add peace, justice, or equity (3)
- ❖ Add multigenerational (3)
- ❖ More specific calls to action, especially climate action(2)
- ❖ Support each other (2)
- ❖ Add compassion (2)

All comments and suggestions

- "openness to new ideas and voices" is an empty phrase for me without knowing what those are
- "protection of the planet" is bland and very non-committal; specific actions or directions much stronger, given disaster we are all headed towards.
- "sanity" feels like a reaction to Trump - would speak to me more if used a different word that is more about what we're striving for and/or supporting (rather than reacting against). Sorry - a different word isn't coming to mind right now....
- (a quibble) "Protection of our planet" is a more resonant as a phrase than "tending the web of all life of which we are a part," but it's not really the planet we are protecting, it's the interdependent web of life we care about -- but, as said, planet protection is a probably a sufficient and economical way to express the same intention. And a more muscular one.
- [Just a note for you... having done committee work in the past, I appreciate you all and thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking on this work!]
- Add spiritual growth to first sentence. I think I understand why sanity is included in first sentence, but I think it is not appropriate. Too much room for interpretation. What is sanity anyway? Prefer integrity, meaning and purpose.
- Basic sentiment is good, but I find it telling that the phrasing is very impersonal and abstract.
- Flat and uninspiring. The congregation seems overly protective of the ways USNF used to be. Sermons are uninspiring. No real warmth.
- I just finished James Doty's "Into the Magic Shop." It's an extraordinary book. He argues that, without opening our hearts and developing compassion, willpower and [in his case personal] strategic planning can be misguided. So, I hope that we can work more on developing compassion, both as individuals and as an organization. We do this for Irida, but I think we have to go further.
- I might suggest a couple of wording changes (I'm sure you'll get this a lot). I would prefer something like "clear-thinking" over "sanity". And I might add peace as something we work toward, so, "strength to work together for peace, justice, and the protection of our planet."
- I seek to be part of a community which, by the shared example of its members, inspires me and us and others to acts of fearless compassion that bends the arc of the moral universe towards justice.

- I think the word sanity is a given as we read this document and although it makes sense its shelf life is limited and it sounds like a joke.
- I would add "economic, social and environmental" + "justice". I would put the phrase, "protect the planet" first.
- I would replace Sanity with Action. In the second sentence, I would suggest that it read "strength to work together, and individually, for EQUITY, justice, and the protection of our planet. Equity is important for it is pro-active in establishing equal opportunity, not just reactive (justice happens after a crime or violence)
- I would suggest the word "balance" versus sanity.
- It resonates with me. I like it. But don't find it the experience there.
- It seems to be a rather impersonal and detached statement, though the message is certainly good.
- many of us to work outside of UU as well and feeling held is very important to me
- May we be a congregation that takes a leading role in our community in working for justice.
- May we look beyond the present and search for any kernel of light and wisdom that lies within each of us even when present behaviors and motivations are harmful to self or others.
- May we offer a community that supports one another
- maybe include the notion of multi-generational?
- More focus on connection among members More focus on faith
- Multigenerational
- must say don't care for the word "sanity", seems, hmmm, too dramatic, and tarnishes the hope and resilience. May we cultivate openness and kindness to new ideas and voices.
- My statement would include "provide support to each other in difficult times and situations" and I would add "realistic" in front of "hope".
- no, i really like the vision you wrote
- Nuanced thought and sober reflection. Focus and attentiveness. Able to pause. Worship as more than an afterthought. Stop rushing.
- Put work to sequester carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases at top of agenda!
- replace sanity with something like reasonableness, curiosity,???
- Something about sharing spiritual experience?
- something about spiritual growth, cultivating transpersonal awareness, search for truth and deeper meaning
- Spiritual growth. How to be better, more fulfilled and more caring people.
- Spirituality & worship - connection to a higher power or purpose. The purpose is clearly stated above, but is put in very secular terms. I'm agnostic, but spiritual connection is a big part of worship for me.
- Spirituality needs to be included. The current vision includes needs that can be met outside of a religious context, so there is no compelling reason to be a part of this religious community.
- Take out the word "sanity" and substitute something like "service" or "clarity."
- The word "sanity" pops out. With mental illness such a problem, I wonder if another word might convey this sentiment better.
- The word "sanity" rubs me the wrong way. Also - safety, which is included in the USNF mission, is missing. I would have included it in the vision.

- There is nothing about spiritual life in this — that’s a huge gap. Also, what does “sanity” mean in this context? Seems strange.
- this misses the spiritual aspect of what I think should be part of any vision of our community. Reflects fact that spirituality seems in fact to be downplayed.
- tolerance/acceptance

HOPED-FOR OUTCOMES What would you most like to see our congregation accomplish in the next 3-5 years?

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ Continue our good work: inspiring worship, RE, community building, social justice, climate action, etc. (cited 19 times)
- ❖ Attract more young people and families with children (17)
- ❖ Continue and expand our community leadership, outreach, and collaboration with other congregations (16)
- ❖ Welcome all, diversify our membership re. privilege, class, race, religion (14)
- ❖ Strengthen our climate action work, integrate into all we do (13)
- ❖ Build our RE program, integrate youth into congregation (10) Continue and expand our social justice work (9)
- ❖ Better connect, support, inspire each other (9)
- ❖ Build our membership (7)
- ❖ Engage new people in leadership, volunteering (4)
- ❖ Graceful transition as Janet retires (3)
- ❖ More adult education programs (2)
- ❖ More social activities to connect us (2)
- ❖ Balance robust social activism with nurturing our community (2)
- ❖ Cultivate openness (2)
- ❖ Grow our choir (2)
- ❖ Welcome and engage newcomers (2)

All comments

- As a youth, I will probably be leaving this congregation in the next 3 years to go to college and I will have to try to find a different congregation, but I really like what the church is doing right now.
- Attract a few more younger people and families with children for RE
- attract young adults
- Be a beacon for those fleeing their homes due to climate destabilization or other connected needs.
- Be more welcoming to less affluent, less privileged people
- Become known as a congregation that is welcoming of people from other religions and sexual and gender identities. Increase the number of families with children attending the congregation.

- Become more attractive to a wider variety of people in our community
- Become more diverse
- Become more diverse.
- Become more welcoming and a stronger community.
- Climate action
- Continue book groups, listening circles. Continue sanctuary efforts and climate change activism. Forge ties to Jo Comerford and Lindsay Sabadosa around critical issues.
- Continue current outreach efforts and the re-building of the RE population - which would help lower average age of membership.
- Continue expanding and deepening the programs for children and youth.
- Continue genuine ways to activate our community. Fill needs that fit what we can do in a meaningful way. Provide a smooth transition for Janet's retirement. Make the board accessible to all congregants. Provide ways to support our elders.
- continue our sanctuary work; expand religious education program by continuing outreach; start programming for young adults
- Continue the Social Justice work, community connections, pastoral care, inspiring services.
- Continue to encourage membership of younger congregants
- Continue to find a balance between social justice and sustaining a safe, nurturing environment for congregants and visitors.
- Continue to focus on attracting members who will answer yes to #10 below. Hear more of the inspirational stories of members who are actively engaged in the struggle to make a difference.
- Continue to grow into being a vibrant, thriving place where people come to engage in the confluence of social justice with deeper meaning and spirituality. Grow into a congregation with more participation across the age spectrum.
- Continue to increase our emphasis in social justice, climate action, working with other congregations in the community.
- Continue to provide support for members in spiritual growth, religious education, & community, as well as taking leadership roles in social justice issues in the community at large.
- Continue to welcome, continue to be there for those in need (all of us).
- Continue with the good work on social justice issues and climate. Reaching out to younger people.
- Continued leader in our local community for equality and social justice from a faith-based perspective. clarity of word, deed and purpose in a confusing and painful time in our country. Commitment to a meaningful search for truth. Beacon of truth.
- Courage and resolve to act right now as a society on climate breakdown /ecocide and after that, plan on how we are going to act in during the upcoming societal disruptions
- Create a new generation of leaders. Find an inspiring new minister as Janet transitions to retirement.
- Create a truly inclusive religious/spiritual community.
- Expand, engage larger community, make the strategic vision visible.
- Expanding outreach & more public services (maybe a service on the front lawn at some point)

- Feel less stuffy; find ways to train and engage new leadership (lay ministers); cultivate diversity-age, socioeconomic, race; grow RE (this area seems like the curriculum would resonate with, so assess why new families don't come)
- Financial stability from year to year.
- Find way to engage younger adults
- Full time employee for community outreach and social justice. Fill permanent music director position, with hopes of expanding choir participation. More social activities to build community.
- Get everyone inspired to work together on a project. Bring back more adult education. Find a way to cool the sanctuary when it's too hot and don't turn the fans off claiming that they're too noisy!
- get newer folks involved in committees
- Greater coordination with other social activists in our community esp. re planning for climate change resilience
- Grow the RE program
- growth
- growth in members. Growth in choir
- Have a center. What stays with us as leaders come and go?
- help people and inspire one another
- Help work with the community to support efforts to solve challenges.
- I think giving sanctuary to Irida was a good accomplishment. I don't know what to suggest for the next 3 to 5 years.
- I want the congregation to become more open in practice, not just in theory.
- I would like us to continue to grow our relationships to each other (and performing meaningful work together has knit us together over this past year!) and to create programming, structures, and cultural commonplaces that will help us sustain not necessarily numerical growth, but an openness and ability to weave in newcomers more deftly to ensure we thrive -- avoiding closed groups, making the pathways into involvement clear and apparent, providing shorter term, but meaningful opportunities for connection, and living our values. Offering Irida sanctuary has galvanized us. Assuming that she will not always be with us, how do we retain a sense of purpose, urgency, connection, and goodwill? (Not to mention connection to our larger community!) The demographics of Northampton have changed in a gray direction, but I still hope we can cultivate our programs for children, youth, and their parents. Jessica's work has made us feel more solid. We shouldn't assume that growth of interconnection will result in more younger people joining with us, but I hope that we will bring in people who come for their kids, and stay for themselves. I think it is extremely important that we make choices to do based on the larger community and look for synergies, connections, or things we don't need to do based on living in such a vibrant community that reflects many of our basic values. We're not in UTAH, or in a red community. How do we leverage this?
- I'm wonder if there's a way we can help more immigrants rather than lock up so many resources in protecting one. I love the choices that connect us with other congregations in the area.
- If it's possible, we need to build our membership.
- I'm not sure, I have been paying attention to other, personal matters for the past few years.

- Increase active membership among families with children birth to grade 12. Continue to increase intergenerational activities. Reduce reliance on volunteers and continue to streamline and simplify volunteer responsibilities.
- increase participation of families and folks with a more diverse background
- Increased work w/ projects such as Haiti girls' school, etc.--and climate actions
- Integration of the climate emergency into all the major functions, committees, planning; develop more capacity to help us huddle in our bewilderment;
- Inviting guests from beyond the traditional UU community to share their community needs and their spiritual path. Guests could include our local police officers, other religious institutions, Republican party members, firefighters, etc. Also, reach beyond Northampton, and create relationships with communities different than our own. This would truly test whether we really are as open-minded and tolerant as we say.
- It needs to become more diverse (racially and with younger members).
- Join with other houses of worship and community groups to work on climate issues
- More climate action.
- More connection between the Youth Group and the Community as a whole.
- More members, more younger members. Continued leadership of sanctuary movement.
- More of what we're doing - inspirational worship, social justice work, keeping our community strong and vibrant.
- More participation from members—develop more opportunities for teens to participate.
- Net zero energy through both conservation and the addition of community solar to our energy budget.
- New people of all ages
- no opinion
- Not sure.
- Open to debate...
- Remaining a vital part of the community
- solid and graceful transition to a new minister if Janet retires
- Strengthen connections to outside social organizations Keep imagining and re-imagining RE Find ways for people to connect and volunteer Find new/improved ways to communicate with each other
- Strengthen middle school program Diversify
- To a leader for the world and the local community in reversing global warming, ending global and local hostile behavior towards the earth and its people, and growing a human community of that nurtures and enriches life in every way.
- To sustain the positive, reduce the negative and persevere
- Unlikely to happen, because of expense, but I'd like to see a better design of the location of the choir so that singers can hear each other well, and also see and hear the conductor/ [pianist/organist, and be seen by the congregation.
- We are doing so many wonderful things! I would like to see our RE program grow - more young families, and more young adults.
- We continue our presence/impact on social justice and climate action activities in Northampton and the area. We continue to nurture our members and friends.

- We have climate activism from the bottom up. I would like to see serious climate activism from the leadership. Literally billions of lives are at stake.
- Welcome and integrate younger people, especially families.
- what we are doing
- What's going on is great. Would like more opportunities like the house meetings for intimate discussion.
- work on the area between recruiting new members and working with those that just come to us in order to "grow" some younger members and those with families to broaden the membership.
- younger people families

CHANGES What might we do differently that would be important to you?

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ Offer services at alternate times, e.g, evening vespers and after traumatic events (cited 7 times)
- ❖ Deeper spirituality and inspiration in services (6)
- ❖ Build community, more one-on-one community building (6)
- ❖ We're doing well (6)
- ❖ More varied music (5)
- ❖ Not sure, no opinion (4)
- ❖ More social events, home gatherings, meals (4)
- ❖ Fewer children's stories, intergenerational services (3)
- ❖ More interfaith elements in services (3)
- ❖ More young adult programs (3)
- ❖ Be open to change (2)
- ❖ Better communication, PR in community (2)
- ❖ More active social justice (2)
- ❖ Encourage young families (2)
- ❖ Welcome and engage newcomers (2)
- ❖ Climate action more widely held in congregation, more urgency (2)
- ❖ Less stuffy congregation (2)
- ❖ More emphasis on inclusivity (2)
- ❖ More active anti-racism work (2)
- ❖ Better sermons (2)
- ❖ Stop community greeting during service (2)

All comments

- Remain open to the idea that we need to change with the times, which may mean giving up some revered traditions.
- ?
- a bit more depth to the services

- A bit more social activity, simply for the pleasure of it, and for fostering community. Potluck meals for example.
- A focus on spirituality and behavior that indicates inclusivity.
- Add more contemporary and internationally-influenced music
- Better communication with the outside community, e.g. more media publicity. I've never seen publicity about our solar panels - guests last year from Transylvania, etc.
- Bring more expansive spirituality into services and congregational life.
- Can't find it now - but recall a sheet that Annie has shared about, I think, doing social justice work and accompaniment (think has 5-10 points). Wonder if we could deepen our commitment to those and explore more fully how to put them into practice, especially when differences arise. Incorporate opportunities to pause and reflect as part of the process of moving forward and getting things done.
- Can't think of anything, but that does not mean i think we are perfect!
- Climate change is the ultimate downer for good reason and I'm not looking for Polyanna but I am looking for inspiration (see #7) and I'm not sure I'm hearing as much about that as I would prefer.
- Continue to have Dana for our music. I think she is fabulous, creative and knowledgeable.
- Distribute a version or the Pioneer designed for public consumption to engage the larger community in our cause and activities
- do a home gathering in the fall AND the spring.
- Engage in more racial justice work as a congregation
- Engage! Person to person communication. The "candles of community" activity a lot of UUs include in services is an authentic and easy way of fostering connection.
- Experiment with a more varied music program. The emphasis has always been on classical. I would like to see more inclusion of contemporary music from varied sources.
- Find ways to engage folks in a true community.
- Focus on developing compassion, focus on climate leadership that is not delegated to the Climate Action Group.
- Formalized young adult gatherings
- Have more variety in the musical aspect of worship
- Have services on Friday night instead! UU feels really intellectual- which I like. But I want more spiritual as well. More diverse music.
- Have services Sunday at 4.
- Hire a better musician/organist/choir director. Almost every Sunday there is some annoying incident, such as missing a cue from the minister, "accidentally" hitting the pedal board while sitting down at the organ, obviously hitting wrong notes -- nothing very serious, but, as I said, annoying and unprofessional.
- I am a happy camper with the way things are. Would love more meeting space. Hmmm....guess we can't add a third story.
- I get wistful for more spiritual stimulation and reflection. We're a pretty rational service community, which is great, but I come for light into ultimate questions, too, and take great pleasure and growth in that element of services. Would love to experience that more.
- I think we are doing great!

- I think we are doing so many things right!
- I think we need an inspirational, engaging minister. And a more friendly atmosphere -- and stop the 'greeting your neighbor' in the damn middle of the service. The coffee hour is crowded, awkward and with terrible tasting coffee. Just unappealing!!
- I think you're/we're essentially doing fine, I hope you/we are still there when I'm able to come back in the future.
- I want the congregation to become more open in practice, not just in theory.
- I would love to see the service for all ages go beyond enacting a story ... at this point I avoid this service ... I would love the services to be more spiritual/inspiring we all need good stories.
- I'm happy with how we do things now.
- Implement energy-saving strategies like asking folks to bring a ceramic mug and leave it to be used by others after being washed. Eliminate all paper goods from food service.
- Include more readings from other religious traditions and other cultures in our services. Re-instate the Welcoming Congregation training on a yearly basis and have separate (additional) transgender workshops for board leadership and members on a yearly basis. I also would want to have additional anti-racism/white privilege workshops.
- Involve the congregation in planning for the ministerial transition that will happen when Janet retires.
- Less focus on how we appear to others. Less focus on money.
- Love the monthly social gatherings that happened this fall, especially the "sing" night. I hope these will continue.
- Make it more interesting and accommodating for younger people.
- Miss the later service which is why we rarely come.
- More adult sermons on the pressing moral choices facing civilization. Fewer children's stories.
- More guest musicals
- More human touches in the service. A facilitated joys and concerns--mediated by a facilitator. An introduction of the members who light the chalice so that we continue to be introduced to one another.
- More humility, less self-certainty
- More inter faith outreach and coalition and partnership building with other community groups
- More interfaith speakers- Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, climate change leader
- More social activities, like pot lucks, dining out groups.
- More social justice action. So much of our time and resources seem now to be going to Sanctuary.
- no opinion
- NOT have to stand up and greet people in the middle of the service. Plenty of time to do this before and after the service.
- Not sure.
- Not sure.
- Nothing comes to mind.
- Oddly, the one thing that comes to mind is a regular opportunity for reflection and solitude that is separate from our Sunday services. For a long time, I have wished that we had a(n at least) monthly vespers service, with an opportunity for calling out concerns, worries, losses and large

moments -- maybe even celebrations -- in a quiet setting, with an opportunity to light candles, and be quietly or silently in community. I think we need a place for grief, worry, concern, and time/place for reflection -- but NOT in our Sunday service as J&C. It could serve us also at times when there is a loss in the community. Could there be a regular time apart from services so that it could hold us in times when we need holding? I am looking for the physical, sacramental, non-intellectual, mystical, or even just quiet aspect of religious life that exists more abundantly in other traditions. Hard, of course, when we have two little girls squirrelling their way into every nook and cranny, but surely, they would notice candlelight too!

- offer events and groups that appeal to younger adults
- Offer more of the talks etc. after church, along with childcare. Or even offer some of the talks and things like meditation during the day, maybe Fridays lunchtime. Lots of part time working folks or retired folks might be able to attend, versus late nights during the week.
- Offer services on Friday or Sat nights so parents with teens and those who work on Sundays could attend. More options for service attendees—even if it is not the same formality as Sunday morning. I think this would support lots of folks who are unable to attend Sundays. Music might be a combination of classical (I love it—but not everyone does) and more popular/gospel-like music for a more modern audience.
- One important thing to me is the chance to associate more with other members of the congregation to form an even stronger community.
- Person to person engagement opportunities. It's a trivial thing but I would love to see the kind of "candles of community" sharing that many UU congregations do.
- Reach out to community members who would add diversity to our membership.
- Reach out to young families
- Remove the first benches in the sanctuary to offer more room for people with mobility issues. Hold and take care of our congregation and make space for new people. Meet them where they are at, not where we want them to be.
- right now, I find myself busy on several "fronts" and have not considered what might be different. I always keep any new ideas I have in my head and then share them with the appropriate person(s)
- Same as number 8.
- see above
- See above
- See above. Also, staff and established members reach out individually to newcomers — it's difficult to become part of USNF. Perhaps having a "mentor"? There doesn't seem to be a culture of established members taking it on because they care/ want to.
- Some congregations I've visited have a saying or reading for extinguishing the chalice, which I find to be a satisfying conclusion.
- Talk more about what we as a congregation can best do together to be the most powerful, we can in the climate mobilization which must now happen. I know this is not the only problem that we can work on, nor is it the most important, but it's the one with a deadline AND we're looking at the end life as we know it. Also, it's a multiplier of almost any other injustice. This is a screaming public health emergency right now, and the effects are delayed by a few years. IF we are going to do something big together, we need to apply ourselves with urgency. I almost think

we need an emergency meeting to kick off a discernment with a timeframe that reflects the urgency.

- The minister could be much more expressive and engaging, not reading and looking down continually! Speak more slowly from the pulpit. Many of us frequently cannot take in what is being said.
- The services are often disjointed and don't have a clear point. The sermons are not usually thought provoking or stirring. Janet is difficult to understand...she uses a monotone and alternates between speaking extremely slowly to incomprehensibly quickly. The music could be livelier!! The congregation feels stuffy.
- There are disturbingly many violent and traumatic events that seem to bring visitors and members into our worship service in larger numbers (mass shootings, most notably). I wish we had a way to set aside the planned Sunday service after an event like the Tree of Life murders and offer something that met the needs that bring new and infrequent attendees on Sundays like that.
- This isn't that important, but maybe this is a venue in which to mention it: I love our worship service, and I love the (relatively) unchanging format, which grounds me and always inspires me. I think we could consider having fewer inter-gen services, maybe once every 2 months rather than once a month or 6-weeks.
- What if we truly realized that vision?

WHY NEWCOMERS VISIT [Newcomers: Why did you first come to our Unitarian Society?](#)

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ UU who moved to area, looking for another UU congregation (cited by 7)
- ❖ Long-time UU, looking for a UU congregation (5)
- ❖ Seeking a conducive spiritual home (5)
- ❖ Seeking connections with a community (5)
- ❖ Seeking a religious education program (3)
- ❖ Value the UU philosophy (3)
- ❖ Appreciated the worship services (2)
- ❖ Curiosity (2)

All comments

- Am a UU and visited USNF when moving to the area.
- At influence of my then girlfriend - some 16 years ago. Then started going back on my own, was married here 12 years ago, and now, finally the children's program brought me back. It has always been a welcoming place of peace and upliftment.
- curiosity
- Curiosity.
- have been involved with UU in other cities
- I am UU with a need and desire to always attend one.

- I believe in the inclusive views and embrace the need for community and responsibility to work toward solving the challenges for a more just, humane, and protected world.
- I came in my sophomore year of high school so September of 2016.
- I have attended other UU's in other states where I lived. I like the UU Community and actions. I feel good here.
- I have been a UU for years and this congregation is the one closest to me.
- I live in South Hadley and looked on line for the closest UU churches. Went to the one in Amherst - very nice, engaging congregation. Then we went the following Sunday to USNF, and heard a sermon from Jan Nettle, and was intrigued. She called us to follow up and encourage us to continue to come. We kept coming back and liked the sermon topics. Music was wonderful. And it's more difficult to feel connected when you don't live locally.
- I travelled frequently to the area and was drawn to the beauty and the wonderful services that I attended. Moved to the area.
- I was a new Smith student and wanted familiar traditions and an off-campus community.
- Impressive social justice work; need for more lively interaction than in previous faith community
- Invited by the late Laura Cranshaw.
- Like the UU philosophy.
- looking for community accessible to atheists
- moved here - had been a member of another UU congregation
- Moved to area and needed a spiritual home.
- Needed a "church" home
- new to area - this was a good way to connect with new, like-minded friends.
- Seeking children's RE and open-minded, introspective worship for adults.
- Seeking community and my teen wanted to explore church
- Seeking connection
- Seeking the right match for my spiritual needs.
- UU church has long been an important part of my life and I was looking for that when I moved to Noho.
- UU congregation was a very central part of my life in my former home.
- Was a UU where I had lived and wanted to find a congregation to join
- We were looking for a UU congregation when we moved to the Valley.

WELCOMING Newcomers: How well were you initially welcomed into our congregation?

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ Was welcomed, but it's hard to get to know people (cited 3 times)
- ❖ Have met many people, made friends (2)

All comments

- A few members were welcoming but I think I mostly felt invisible and as if members had full lives and were interested in connecting with those they already knew.

- Early on were introduced to Joanna Brown, Runa Wasserman and Runa Skar - who we are still friends with today!
- People were pleasant but not especially welcoming or personal. Had to really work to make relationships and still feels like the incomer must make the effort.
- Post-service coffee hour is overwhelming because of the number of people in such a small space; it can be hard to find people to start conversations with.
- Was easier for me as I immediately joined CAG so met many people that way.
- Welcomed, but impersonally and with zero follow up—sometimes the same person would welcome me a couple of weeks apart with no indication they'd ever seen me before.

COMMUNICATION What else might we do to improve communication?

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ Doing OK, keep it up (cited 12 times)
- ❖ Not sure, no ideas come to mind (9)
- ❖ Use redundant means of communication (4)
- ❖ Continue Facebook updates (2)
- ❖ Print the Pioneer (2)
- ❖ Improve communication to youth (2)

All comments

- Enhance communication to include more about what we've done-- accomplishments, especially by individuals or small groups. We communicate well about upcoming events and larger accomplishments. Janet actually does this from the pulpit sometimes-- mentioning what someone did, or a meeting that happened last week. I'm not sure in what format this would be done, but it recognizes all the "smaller miracles" that happen all the time.
- Again, I think you're doing fine, if I miss something it's on me.
- Beth Ann has done a good job of enhancing our Facebook presence. It's important to keep this up.
- Bulletin/poster board as you come in to vestibule
- Can't think of any further ways
- Communications is very good, I think.
- Doing a good job
- doing fine
- Ensure that all parties affected are aware.
- Expand the Sunday Times? More email? Duplicate platforms? FB does not reach the young!
- Facebook events have been helpful and would continue to be helpful.
- find more hours in the day? I feel that I receive the information, I just don't always have time to find and read it

- I do not have any idea of how to help on Sundays. I believe I am on the "red" team but its chair has not contacted me in the three years, and I want them to contact me now that I am fully recovered from brain surgery last July.
- I do think it's going well, I'm just usually in the fog of parenting!
- I feel well informed but have other social justice work that I am involved in - mostly political.
- I might be inclined to take a printed copy of the Pioneer, which is easier for me to read, if there were some available at the back of the great hall.
- I stay more informed through direct communication than those types that require me to seek information. It is good that those sources are available, but I rarely seek out the web site or open the Pioneer. I don't remember how to access the member section of the web site. I sent an email asking for assistance with that and didn't receive a response. Then I keep forgetting to ask until I need the information, which is usually a time when the office is closed.
- I think communication has been great.
- I think the communication is pretty good so nothing comes to mind. I wish we could afford another minister, because personal communication draws people into the cyber communication.
- I think you hit all of the major means of communication. The weekly and monthly newsletters.
- I'm not sure. Sorry.
- Jessica's new role is helping a lot! Also the changes in the focus & format of the Coordinating Council could help, too soon to tell yet. Communication is always difficult, USNF works hard at it!
- mail the Pioneer
- Maintain multiple ways to communicate; people connect in different ways
- Make events more accessible to Youth.
- Make sure that everybody is on the email list who would like to, because almost everybody uses email nowadays and it is a quick and cost-efficient way to deliver info. I'm not on the list, only the YG group.
- More of a heads up. I feel like I hear about book club with only 3 weeks' notice. As a single mom that doesn't give me enough time to get the book and read it.
- n/a
- n/a
- Na
- Not sure!
- not sure, always working on that. Seems the ultimate is the contact with other people despite the print or social media. Seems effective if communication happens almost too often.
- Not sure. I think we do well communicating, but I think not everyone reads they materials they receive via various means.
- Nothing comes to mind.
- Put Sunday Times online on the website
- Shout the Sunday Morning announcements and shake people vigorously and often.
- Sunday when reading announcements. Keep inviting folks.
- Text msgs? Electronic Bulletin board. Reminders - e.g., on Weds, heads up of an imminent event. Announcements from pulpit. Send us Xmas cards, not just pledge updates.

- That is on me
- This survey is a good step!
- What steps might we take to improve communication?
- Wish I had a better idea, but I don't
- you're doing a good job

SOCIAL HOUR Please share your suggestions for changing/ improving the social hour experience.

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ Parlor is too crowded and noisy (Cited 17 times)
- ❖ Keep reminding us all to greet newcomers (6)
- ❖ Use social room more often (5)
- ❖ It's OK, fine with me (5)
- ❖ Try games to meet new people (find someone wearing red) (3)
- ❖ Encourage folks to visit in the Great Hall (2)
- ❖ Identify/introduce newcomers (2)
- ❖ Move coffee service (2)

All comments

- ??
- Always crowded in parlor. I wonder about having it routinely in social room.
- always have table with upcoming attractions/partner church stuff/sign up petitions etc.
- Basic tours of the building for newcomers would be a good first step.
- better downstairs as more space and not so noisy--Parlor lovely but very "bright" for hard-of-hearing (me!) even w/ hearing aids. I know kids are using this space still-it is a problem
- Better tea selections, because the ones offered now are all designed to induce sleepiness; and non-sweet munchies. It's also hard for me to hear, with the din of many conversations making it impossible for me to hear anyone who is speaking to me.
- But always when I go to a service...but, I have rarely attended services this past year.
- Can be pretty crowded in there. Not sure what to suggest.
- Childcare doesn't go long enough for me to attend. I also sometimes feel shy to just talk to someone. It would be interesting to have a way to connect. Like- "find someone who has the same color shirt at you".
- Create a way of connecting with someone else at social hour by color or by some piece of information that is shared and then find the person who wrote it. Ideas are written down on cards.
- Don't drink coffee and find crowd overwhelming. Much prefer getting to know people in small groups.
- Don't know if there's been a community conversation about whether or not we want to be more welcoming. If we do, encourage members outside of the welcoming committee to say hello to

newcomers and those they don't already know. Perhaps which ever color team is responsible for Sunday jobs team members could be encouraged to make an effort to say hello to someone they don't already know. If new members bios appear in the Pioneer, perhaps Sunday Jobs team members could make an effort to seek them out and say hello.

- Don't know. It's difficult to get around in there, but don't know what would make it easier to navigate.
- Full disclosure, I am a member of a team that lingers in the Great Hall to promote conversations with folks who do not go into the Parlor for whatever reason. Hang at the Welcome Table etc.
- Hold it downstairs. The Parlor gets crowded and too noisy to hear people (and my hearing is normal).
- I am not sure. I am super busy and have little extra time to go to social hour?
- I don't know but, as an introvert, I'm generally alone during the whole thing....
- I find it too crowded, overwhelming, and lonely.
- I hang out in the great hall with the people I want to chat with ... social hour scenes are chaotic and it's hard to hear.
- I like it.
- I really like it, so I don't have many suggestions about it
- I think it works well.
- I think that people who do not know anyone feel overwhelmed with the experience but I have noticed specific people make an effort to engage with these people to make them feel at home. Keep that up!
- I would like some way to get to know other people. I'm just not sure how.
- If visitors/newcomers had an opportunity to briefly introduce themselves during the service, we could more easily find them and talk with them during the social hour.
- I'm not really a social hour person but sometimes get brave.
- Inclusive behavior
- Is the coffee fair trade and organic? If not, we should switch suppliers to one that is. Also, do all those cups really get composted? There are times when I would enjoy the opportunity to have a discussion about the service with the minister and others. One can do this a little bit one on one in the social hour but not in depth.
- It is fine the way it is, I just usually meet someone for breakfast or go for a ride right after church.
- It is hard to tell who is very new to the congregation and who is not. A hand-written name tag doesn't necessarily imply newness. Perhaps have a stick-on symbol (bright flower, or something else) that new people can voluntarily add to their name tags that will alert older members that the new person wants to meet more people, and allow new people to meet each other.
- It is very crowded in the Parlor, which makes it impossible to move around.
- It's crowded. I linger in the great hall instead.
- It's too loud.
- It's way too crowded when it's in the parlor. People can't circulate and it's "dangerous" for people with mobility issues since it's so crowded. Wherever it is, the food and coffee should be separated so the backup is reduced.
- Just a thought: express a direct invitation to gather right at the end of the service

- Keep reminding us to speak with new folks.
- Maybe more simple, non-volunteer heavy structure could help, such as announcements, joys & Concerns, and even informal discussions?
- n/a
- Not sure if kids are welcome, and how long I could keep them in program downstairs if I went alone.
- parlor feels too crowded, honestly. I tend to enjoy it more in downstairs, but that's hard for RE
- Pondering this....It can be very chaotic and jammed when the service is well-attended. I think for new people and visitors it can feel unwelcoming or overwhelming unless they are especially extroverted.
- Room is too small and noisy Members are still not good at seeking out and welcoming visitors
- Set up tables as close to the walls as feasible to keep more open space for mingling. Encourage old timers to speak to newcomers. Approach strangers who are reading bulletin boards.
- Space is terrible, too small, coffee hour is unappealing.
- Take away the coffee donation. Reorganize the traffic flow. Maybe pour the coffee table by the bench so that folks who need to sit aren't as isolated; would open the room up I think for conversation room. Have nondairy creamer.
- The parlor is loud and crowded. Not a great encouragement for new people (those who do are quite brave). The social room is better, but conflicts with RE space.
- Too noisy and crowded. Not sure of what to do
- Use the largest room.
- Welcoming visitors and newcomers seems to be improving, but we still need to raise consciousness so that more people take responsibility for being actively welcoming.
- We've tried this before, but: expand into the Great Hall? Set aside a portion of the GH for newcomers, staffed by friendly people, where it's OK to bring coffee and treats. The parlor is so small and it's all but death for introverts. The coffee is usually horrible, undrinkable. Get a Cambro and brew (well) once, then not keep hot rather than burning during the service? Snacks, on the other hand, have been really good. Other? Our recent higher attendance has really packed the Parlor. This is a perennial problem. Criticisms offered with full knowledge of how architecturally limited we are.
- When I attend services, I most always attend social hour.....a scavenger hunt might be fun....one would need to talk to different people to collect matching info....lol.....

HELP ENGAGE IN ACTION Would you like to be more engaged in social justice/climate action through USNF? If so, what would make it easier for you to get more active?

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ Already deeply engaged (cited 13 times)
- ❖ Don't have enough time (6)
- ❖ Already working at capacity (5)
- ❖ Not sure (4)

- ❖ Offer more anti-racism workshops/readings/initiatives (3)
- ❖ Identify specific tasks (3)
- ❖ Provide more information about how to be involved (3)
- ❖ Transportation a problem (2)
- ❖ Meetings not conveniently timed (2)

All comments

- Not feeling pressured by enthusiastic members of the CAG to do more than I'm comfortable with. Making room to be a "little involved", if that feels right.
- Anti-racism readings, discussions, and activities.
- carpooling
- email writing campaigns
- Extend the hours of the day to 30 or so....
- get up and get out and attend USNF programs on social justice
- Greater variety for ways to be involved
- Have a pretty full schedule as is to take on anything else on a regular basis.
- Having more time.
- I already chair the climate action group, and I can't really take on more organizing at this time, but would take advantage of educational opportunities such as an anti-racism workshop.
- I am active in my life and cannot take on anything else.
- I am as engaged as I can be
- I am doing ok. get engaged as needed.
- I attended the Haydenville congregation last Sunday as part of our sanctuary effort. Race and class issues were addressed explicitly. So, I think we have to try and engage ourselves with action on these issues.
- I don't even know what they do when they meet or when they meet.
- I don't have time to go to any more meetings or join any more organizations/committees but would welcome ways to participate in events, vigils, protests, letter-writing related to the issues that I'm not part of at USNF.
- I would like to be more involved in social justice either here or in the larger community, but I need to make more time in my life to make that happen.
- I would like to see broader involvement from our congregation.
- I would like to see the congregation re-engage with racial justice initiatives.
- Identify more discrete tasks I can undertake, as when CAG suggested specific individual actions I can take.
- If I attended Sunday services
- I'm happy with my level of participation.
- Information about how to become involved
- It is not convenient for me to travel a half hour to get to UU, so I usually do my social justice efforts through other organizations and individually.
- It is on me
- It's already happening
- Meetings at a different time.

- More time
- More time. Nothing that USNF can really do.
- Mostly by having more time since I am involved in many other ways at USNF. Also, by communicating the various ways to get engaged.
- My age is a barrier right now,
- No, I'm comfortable with my level of commitment through USNF
- Not now. I would like to. But, not now.
- not sure
- Not sure exactly at this timetry to get an energy audit of building and fix, repair, and replace what is needed
- Nothing ... until my life changes I cannot participate much ...
- Nothing that USNF does or doesn't do - I need to make myself more involved.
- Only said no because I am already engaged!
- Plenty already
- Prioritize climate action!
- Reminders, engagement, tasks.
- Retirement
- See above about my current level of participation.
- Small actions we can do at home - like writing letters/calling congressional reps without having to go to meetings
- Speakers/education program
- Time that fits my schedule
- UU is not the only way most of the members are active
- yes and no. I am very engaged in climate elsewhere and will definitely spend more time at the usnf if we end up doing an effort involving more people!
- Yes and no. I fight cynicism every day and just getting through my full-time job, voter engagement actions, community service commitments and connections with family and friends is about all my little battered soul can put out.

MORE TO ADVANCE SOCIAL JUSTICE/CLIMATE ACTION What else should we be doing as a congregation to advance social and environmental justice?

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ We do a lot already, let's keep it up (cited 10 times)
- ❖ Continue/expand interfaith efforts with other congregations (4)
- ❖ Highlight/celebrate stories of what we do, individually and collectively (4)
- ❖ Make anti-racism work a priority, readings, discussions (3)
- ❖ Invite more guest speakers or workshops (3)
- ❖ Stress climate action urgency (2)
- ❖ Political action is key (2)
- ❖ Sanctuary is great example of what we can do (2)

❖ Not sure (2)

All comments

- It is still not clear, upon entering the front hall, that the engraved stone plaque (professing Christianity) is historical, not current. The brass plaque on the back inside wall is much more a statement of our current values. I would like to see the engraved stone plaque be moved, or covered up, or that there be a very explicit statement that USNF is NOT A CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Currently, the side plaques are too subtle and the large plaque dominates. Are the sconce lightbulbs and perimeter lights (inside, high up) and flood lights all LED?
- A concerted effort to promote environmental advocacy
- Anti-racism readings, discussions, and activities.
- Build relationships with action committees in other congregations in our community. Take public positions on issues consonant with our principles.
- Collaborating with other congregations
- Continuing to be an advocate for racial, gender and environmental justice.
- Create more opportunities for members and friends to share what they are doing in the individual initiative category, above.
- Focus locally.
- For my part I think we are doing what we can do and if people are interested, they will speak up, I think.
- From my limited point of view, I think we have enough projects going, although I think now the refugee project deserves a bit more of the spotlight.
- Highlighting what we and other groups do locally
- Hold vegan cooking classes; more discussion groups and speakers with invitations for public participation
- I believe the congregation and her leaders are doing an exemplary job.
- I find the personal stories of members most inspirational so more of that would be good
- I really liked the focus on draw down - concrete things to do
- I think it's sad that there are so few people working in social justice. Your list should have that many committees.
- I think we are doing a lot - keeping people apprised of what we do could be helpful.
- I think we're doing a pretty good job right now.
- I think you are doing well.
- I would like to see the congregation re-engage with racial justice initiatives.
- Keep inviting folks to join activities. It is our spiritual practice.
- Keeping up what is already happening.
- Lifestyle workshops to build resiliency and climate-compatible habits. National/International advocacy. We're doing this, but as I see it, those are the two hubs -- trying to change the situation, and trying to survive the situation.
- Make sure that everybody is in the loop. Information is key.
- More inter faith and community outreach with other congregations/groups
- More motivational and informative speakers.

- More racial justice, somehow increasing diversity of congregation. Not sure how. Maybe visiting/exchanging with predominantly black churches
- not sure
- Not sure.
- Organized trips to our elected reps' offices
- partnering with other faith-based Northampton orgs to increase reach
- Personal sharing and unifying actions around issues including climate change, racism, classism
- Political action is the best.
- Provide van services to demonstrations.
- sanctuary takes a lot of UU's time/money/effort
- see note above
- The leadership has to lead--I rarely see members of the leadership at meetings or demonstrations. Sanctuary may be the exception--and look how the congregation has signed on to this!
- The sanctuary effort has been amazing to watch and a real credit to the usnf. As I stated earlier in this survey, I hope we can come together with a sense of urgency at the scale the climate crisis demands. I will help.
- Thinking more about health inequities. uu often comes from a lens of privilege. Also- can we somehow reduce paper in Sunday's. I feel mixed because I do like to read it and follow along. But it's so much and I don't see a recycle bin.
- This has been tried before, but some community letter-writing campaigns/calling could bring people together for short periods to discuss and act.
- Try to attract a diverse membership — Muslims, Jews, people with Latin or African heritage, East Asians, etc. Our congregation seems to be comprised of mostly white Christians.
- We do a lot! Sometimes it feels like we are always striving to do more, instead of focusing on what we are already doing.
- What you're doing now is fine.
- Working on modeling everyday conversations that can be taken into the community about climate destabilization and engendering hopefulness about being able to address this together. Similarly, to encourage dialogue that avoid us and them framing and encourages framing our wider human family as "us" even those of "us" with whom we disagree. Distinguish between people's honest perceptions of the world and the intentional promotion of oppression and such narratives with the awareness that we are operated for our benefit at the expense of others.

LEADERS' EXPERIENCES Have you served in leadership at USNF (elected position, chaired a committee, or initiated a congregational project and encouraged others to join you)? If yes, what has leadership been like for you?

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ Not currently in leadership, used to be more active (cited by 8)
- ❖ Learned a lot (7)
- ❖ Rewarding, fulfilling (7)

- ❖ Both challenging and rewarding (6)
- ❖ A good experience (5)
- ❖ Time consuming (4)
- ❖ Felt supported, appreciated (3)
- ❖ Inspiring (3)
- ❖ Became more connected with others (2)
- ❖ Energized, empowered (2)
- ❖ Stressful, difficult (2)
- ❖ Sort of/mixed results (2)

All comments

- Challenging, fulfilling, a time of increased self- knowledge and growth.
- A good way to learn a lot more about the ins and outs
- board, headed up Re art Projects
- But, not for quite a while.
- Challenging, but interesting.
- Committee work & leadership was new for me. I learned and grew a lot and made mistakes. It took a lot of time and some of the work seemed useless, but others were necessary.
- Draining, stressful, burdensome
- For the most part I felt good.
- Generally inspiring, though I'm increasingly wanting to follow the lead of the next generation of leaders.
- Good when I was younger and had more energy.
- Good, important for my own growth as well and I would do it again, really.
- I have always received more than I give in these capacities.
- I learned a lot, felt supported and appreciated
- Inspirational and energizing. It is the basis for most of my relationships within the Society.
- It feels good as long as others on the committee are stepping in to participate, which they have been. For example, someone always steps forward to take minutes at the meeting, which is hugely helpful. Though there are some things I could do better, I feel like I play an important role in helping the CAG members to function better together.
- It's a wonderful way to make connections with others in the Society, and I enjoy being involved with the "inner workings". My wish is to help make USNF sustainable and meaningful.
- Leadership has been a very rewarding experience which has enabled me to participate in making our organization a meaningful, viable organization. Working so closely with others has engendered a real sense of community.
- Leadership is difficult for me. I am usually a behind the scenes type worker.
- Lots of note taking, participating in meetings.
- Mixed results, with hopes of improvement over time.
- Most often it has been rewarding and has helped me deepen my connections to other members and to USNF as a whole.
- Not at all this year. But, did all those things some years ago.
- Not for some time. I am gradually becoming re-engaged with this community.

- Not in a while
- not this year.
- On Board of Trustees I learnt that so much more was going on that one would know from being a simple congregation member
- President back a while, great but consuming
- Rewarding, but time consuming
- Satisfying. Challenging. Inspiring. Sometimes I wish it could be a little less serious & a little more joyful & fun!
- Sort of -- I helped the team to establish protocols for volunteers who would provide safe sanctuary at USNF -- the initial AV group. It was a big commitment of time, when I was also involved in other commitments in my town - South Hadley Democratic Town Committee (Chair), 'Bag the Community' Board to support the food party in South Hadley, and worked on initiative to get CPA adopted in South Hadley - twice - both voted down.
- Supported and appreciated
- Though I have been more involved in the past on various committee'
- Time consuming, meaningful, challenging interpersonally at times, satisfying when work gets done.
- Usually, it has been a fulfilling experience that also lets me deepen my connection to other members, although it is sometimes too time-consuming.
- Very empowering and positive.
- Very rewarding
- Very rewarding, deepening my connections here, giving me a sense of purpose and belonging
- Very satisfying. I've learned to be more comfortable speaking to groups, I've learned to run meetings, I've deepened my commitment to USNF, I've gotten to know many wonderful people better. It's become, over the years, an integral part of my life and my psyche, even if I go through periods of lowered activity or participation in leadership/committee roles.
- Wonderful, fulfilling, and more
- YAC, Freshie Rep, Communications Director, and Co-Director
- Yes, is MANY years ago. It was generally a good experience.
- ying and yang, both challenging and rewarding. I find my tolerance for that level of involvement short lived

NURTURING LEADERS What could help identify and nurture the leadership potential of more of our members?

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ Ask directly, one-to-one (cited 9 times)
- ❖ Learn the strengths and skills of members (6)
- ❖ Offer more information about leadership opportunities, more invitations (6)
- ❖ Start people with small tasks and grow responsibilities (4)
- ❖ Mentoring (3)
- ❖ Training (3)
- ❖ Don't know (3)

❖ Ask leaders to share their experience (2)

All comments

- "Shadowing" (pairing up) of board and committee members to give regular members a one-time experience of sitting in a board member, next to their "mentor" and then debrief the experience in private after that.
- Ask individuals to perform "one task." If done well, praise and explain how their contribution supported the community. Up the ante with the next "ask." Have Christine Sass make the "asks" for she has a gift in that area.
- Ask the people who sit in or near the back, on Sunday morning, and those who do NOT come to the Coffee Hour.
- Being direct and asking people to take on roles always seems to be the best route.
- Demonstrate genuine interest and engagement versus a need for a body to complete tasks
- Do we have a problem with not enough of our members taking on leadership roles? If yes, more shared leadership might make it easier for people to try on leadership roles. Have we recently asked members to self-identify strengths and areas in which they would like to grow to create a membership inventory, so we could match our needs to members' strengths or desires for growth opportunities?
- Do we regular announce the need for leadership volunteers? I'm not aware.
- Don't know
- Dunno - mentoring?
- Encouragement, support and training
- Explaining what we do (summary) during Sunday service or during social hour.
- Funding for training More evidence of tangible benefits An appeal to forming friendships
- Getting to know people better- strengths, interests, personally asking people to get involved at less complex levels.
- I don't know
- I don't think that many people want a position of leadership, but making sure that people are able to become active in groups that could have elected positions would be very helpful
- I really want to learn more about UU and learn to be a lay minister or leader. Build those skills like a 1-2-year course
- I see the Coordinating Council as a gratuitous bureaucratic layer that distances the congregation from leadership & adds meetings to already-busy schedules.
- I think de-mystifying the work of the board and committees, continuing to ask newer members to serve in various ways, providing opportunities to contribute in smaller ways that can lead to deeper commitment to leadership. This will always be a work in progress.
- I think that after we have small gatherings, such as the ones at member's home in October, there should be some way of communicating information about skills and interests that come up in those settings back to folks who are looking for volunteers or tasked with filling positions (such as the Nominating Committee). This might help identify potential in some newer or reconnecting members.
- I think that informal group this fall was a good idea; didn't hear how many people attended

- If a person comes in contact with other folks, they learn what they can do, not do and then things click, so we get out and "rattle the bushes."
- Invitations to help in all sorts of ways. Which we already do!
- It seems that people are most likely to become involved if they are asked. Perhaps we should keep a list of the interests that people indicate when they initially sign up and revisit it in the future (about a year?) to see if they have gotten involved and then extend a follow-up invitation.
- Keep asking personally when one sees a possibility.
- Keep being friendly! Ask Newbies to come to one door, and one of us will bring them into the parlor for the coffee hour. Make sure they have someone to guide them. Make sure they know they do not have to join if they fill out a blue card. They are just asking to be informed. phone, or email, or address.
- Leaders need to continue to communicate the fulfilling aspects of their roles
- Maybe a fall house party on the topic and encouraging discussion both of barriers to this and benefits of this
- Maybe create a survey that people fill out with their names and indicate the committee they may be interested on serving.
- Meditation.
- Mentoring/cochairing.
- My impression is that leadership does a fabulous job of supporting and mentoring new leaders.
- No idea
- Partnership/mentorship with involved members. BTW: hate the term leadership, here and at work. It's a divider, and privileges theory over practice. It's hard to come up with an alternative, but often leadership just means involved members who make commitments.
- Rule # 1 of all volunteer engagement: people will step up when personally asked. Otherwise it looks like a closed circle, that new people aren't needed or welcomed.
- share the purpose of each committee. testimonials emphasizing how members can transfer their everyday skills to serve on a committee. you don't have to be a leader to serve on a committee.
- small leadership opportunities- build on strengths.
- Some Ideas: 1. Clearly described expectations of the leadership role. 2. Ask committee chairs about who in that group might be a good choice for a certain position 3. Incremental increase in responsibility 4. Making the point that this church belongs to all of us and that we all have to take a role in making it work. (like a co-op) 5. Find out what the professional role of the person is, and tap experienced leaders
- Systematic and targeted one to one recruitment conversations about leadership opportunities and "job descriptions". Use the minister more in leadership recruitment.
- Talk more about opportunities for service, invite people to join in the discussion. The group read of Serving with Grace was a good start.
- The membership committee likely does this, but it could be part of our welcoming someone as a new member. But sometimes we just need to ask--directly. This helps people feel seen and valued.
- this is done so well already!

- timing is hard. 80 hr-wk job makes my volunteer efforts pathetically choppy. is this an issue for many others?

OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS What else is important for us to consider as we plan for the next few years?

Summary of repeated themes and comments

- ❖ Prepare for Janet's eventual retirement/ministerial transition (8)
- ❖ Plan to help community during social/environmental disruption (4)
- ❖ Try to attract young people and families (3)
- ❖ Welcome diversity (2)
- ❖ Welcome and engage newcomers (2)
- ❖ Better interest/serve young people (2)
- ❖ More social/home gatherings (2)
- ❖ Help care for our elders (2)
- ❖ Shorter surveys (2)
- ❖ Thank you (2)

All comments

- ~thank you~
- 1. What should be the role of our congregation be as a community resource given the real possibility of society unraveling due to increased economic disparities, depletion of resources (for example of fuel once the fracking boom is over) potential local severe weather events and an influx in climate refugees? 2. Is it possible for us, as a predominantly white, politically progressive congregation, to be more welcoming to people of other races and ethnicities?
- Again, if I think of something the folks in the congregation will be the first to know, we have good structure for that.
- Continue to talk and share information during the service
- Continuing to develop communication of volunteer opportunities/needs.
- does the traditional Sunday service reflect the interests shown in this survey?
- Embracing a political agenda endorsed by the UUA and perhaps the National Council of Churches or an organization like that.
- Encourage diversity and younger people
- Having someone actively working with the choir, which seems to have flourished under Dana's direction. Christening more babies, in front of the congregation. inspiring more future ministers. More ecumenical connections. A children's choir. Care for the stained-glass windows.
- How do we prepare for a change in ministerial leadership change?
- How effective and cherished is our minister?
- How to give people options for worship and coming together other than Sunday morning.
- How to make this congregation more interesting for younger people to want to get involved.

- How will we sustain our congregation if we cannot grow?
- I could have said earlier in this survey. Take the threat of climate destabilization as a given in planning for the future and supporting each other near and far moving forward.
- I really had to work to feel as connected to the congregation as I do now; it wasn't easy. One thing, among many, to consider for the next years is how to welcome people in in a better way. I have no specific suggestions at this point.
- I still wonder about the idea of somehow linking with a community of faith from another city in our area around some common matter or activity/work or idea. I think it's a kind of difficult idea to contemplate for a wide variety of reasons, but I still wonder about it and what we might learn from it.
- I would be interested in participating in a listening circle about communication, but only if it followed a more relaxed, format.
- Incorporate chalice lighting and a brief meditation/silence at the beginning of all meetings and activities to bring the energy of reverence for something greater than ourselves into the gathering.
- It is my understanding that Janet is beginning to think about her next phase of life and any planning for the future should consider who we would like to next walk alongside.
- Just an anecdote: I send a brief email personal thank you to every single person who signs up to provide a meal for Irida. (Over 100 now.) Recently, several people have told me that they sign up to provide food because of the thank you notes. When I went to Haydenville, people introduced themselves because of the thank you notes. It's not a big deal. But I think it's related to the heart/compassion issue that I mentioned earlier.
- Keep the great music and Janet's wonderful words. Is there a storytelling listening circle? What is a Listening Circle? I went to someone's home recently and we listened to each other. It was wonderful. Was that a Listening Circle?
- Keep up the good work.
- Meeting the needs of young adults feels to me like the one area I'm not seeing us be pro-active.
- Ministerial succession space problems if we grow more
- Ministerial transitions, given Janet's age, tenure, and intentions. We are so stable and connected now, that it's hard to think of a next. Congregational demographics as they affect our size and the ability of members to contribute. Celebrating and recognizing the things that have worked for us -- and trying to understand what the underlying values are that have caused us to flourish. (For a long time, the UUA didn't understand that Western Mass is different, and has always been less affluent, and more radical -- and we were mistreated.) I think we are living into this root identity now, and reclaiming an important part of who we have always been -- it is important for us to express this identity, and live it. I love the tone of this survey, by the way -- it feels like us. Really well done, you all!
- my needs are being met, I'm not clear about the unmet needs of others
- Please write shorter surveys. I would not call it brief.
- Preparing for Janet's departure/retirement.
- Put a task force in place to prepare for the enormous climate changes to come so we will be ready.
- Some steps have already been taken, but we need to continue trying to attract young families.

- Strengthening lay leadership, particularly among younger members, as we prepare for a ministerial transition
- Taking care of our elders
- The congregation as a whole is getting older. How can we support each other through more social gatherings?
- The retirement of our minister and finding someone to lead us into the future
- The Unitarian Universalist faith is still not well-understood. The greater Unitarian congregations of Albany, NY advertise on WAMC out of Albany, NY and have a shared website that is referenced, with links to congregations. How about considering that? Our advert in the Daily Hampshire Gazette is too tiny to do any education. It should reference at least one Principle, and say "for more information about our principles, visit uunorthampton.org"
- There is increased urgency to act on climate issues.
- Think about how lay leadership must adapt as we prepare for Janet's retirement.
- This survey was too long, and somewhat redundant. And my current energy is spent in the political arena which is consuming a lot of my time. Except for taking time to visit with Irida, I am not pulled to service on any area currently being offered at USNF.
- Ways to draw in younger people and families.
- We are devoting a large percentage of our time & resources to the support of a single person & her family. Originally this was presented as a short-duration effort. Is there any end in sight? How does this situation affect our ability to engage in other social justice work? To attract new members? To search for a new minister? To maintain our endowment?
- We need to plan now for future generations to carry on the mission articulated at the beginning of this survey...
- Would appreciate more facilitated gatherings in members' homes (similar to the one held recently and 2 years ago).