

Summary of Comments from Survey of Congregation's Priorities Summer, 2016

Overall:

People feel at home; it's a place where they can be with like-minded people, learn new things, and speak and breathe freely in mind, body, and spirit.

Worship:

People commented on the bright, caring, talented, "earth-shaking" ministers and their inspiring worship services that are contemplative, uplifting, and relevant. They also appreciate that Sunday worship provides an opportunity for spiritual enrichment, can uplift spirits, and helps set the pace and outlook for the rest of the week. Some people requested that we be open to changes things up a bit and add more variety and styles of services.

Music:

People appreciate the thoughtful, creative music selections by a small but skilled group. Some people requested a wider diversity of musical offerings while others requested higher level classical music and less popular music. Clearly an area of disagreement.

RE/Youth:

Those in RE appreciate the opportunity to work with the children and teens. Some felt we need to involve the teens and children more in the church.

Community:

The loving, caring, inclusive community is the single most important aspect of USH. People commented on feeling like they belonged and felt respected, safe and supported. They appreciate the welcoming acceptance, generosity, integrity, commitment, and validation of curious, interesting, and like-minded people that make up USH. They also appreciate knowing they are not alone in their struggles and can be accepted for who they are and what they believe. Although some people commented on the great variety of people from every walk of life, others wanted us to be a more welcoming and diverse community.

Participation:

People commented on the incredible dedication of people in the congregation, the opportunity to use their talents and to help others, and the openness to new people acting on things they feel passionate about. Others felt there was a need to spread the workload and that USH needed to be open to more new and innovative things and be more accepting of different opinions.

Programs:

People appreciate the wide variety of engaging adult programs that appeal to a broad range of ages and the willingness to try new ideas and program experiments.

Governance:

People expressed a desire to be more secure financially so we can support USH initiatives and visionary decisions about the building without having to use the endowment to balance the budget. There also was a desire to strengthen the partnership with other UU churches in the greater Hartford area; one person felt we should remain distinct and another that we should combine and make one building a worship space and one a Spiritual/Creative center.

Communication:

Many people would like to see a higher visibility for USH, both to enhance our identification of our UU beliefs and to attract more people and have a broader impact on the greater Hartford area. In addition, we should consider developing an on-line worship experience.

Belief:

People appreciate the welcoming, inclusive, open, nondogmatic spiritual community that welcomes diverse people exploring their individual spirituality in a safe environment. This is a community where people can find deeper relationships and meaning and bear witness to the UU Principles and where many theologies are included. Although people appreciated the progressive values, others want USH members to be more accepting of all points of view and welcome diversity of opinions.

Membership:

People were thrilled with the growth in the congregation, especially among young adults, and would like to see this continue especially by attracting people reflecting more of Hartford, not only to membership, but to other things we do and offer. There was concern that we lack people of an “in between” age. While some people felt there was engagement at all stages from the Welcome Committee throughout all available activities, other would like to see all newcomers befriended and integrated more smoothly.

Advocacy:

People appreciate the social justice focus of our ministers and the opportunities to engage in local as well as world-wide issues and concerns. They recognize the importance of the current social justice focus on Black Lives Matter and SURJ and hope to see the focus broaden to include additional social justice work, strengthening our AIM, green sanctuary, and other initiatives. Also, they dream that USH becomes a lively hub for engagement and activity and is a vibrant spiritual presence in Greater Hartford that promotes peace and harmony in the area. They’d like it to be often used as a community center and be the go-to place for politician and the press in regard to social justice. In addition, they hope that all members will care more about actions than words.

Building:

This area had the most opposing views. Many people feel the building is beautiful and unique and especially appreciate the symbolism in the architecture that evokes the spirit of UUism—different traditions coming together in harmony and individuals coming from many places but all striving to be better people. People liked the simplicity of the sanctuary and felt the round shape represented being embraced and wholeness, like a mandala, though many would like to see more natural light. Some people felt it was very welcoming giving comfort and a sense of belonging, others felt that it is cold and uninviting and shows we choose not to engage with the outside world. Some people felt the history should be cherished even as we work to maintain it, while others dreamed of a building that is more functional.

Specific Ideas:

Many specific suggestions were made that will be forwarded to the Board and Ministers for consideration.