

FUUCA Ministerial Search Survey Summary

Executive Summary

The Ministerial Search Committee received 192 survey responses, representing approximately 43% of the congregation. Nine themes emerged in response to the question, “What is your favorite thing about the congregation?” Eight themes emerged in response to the question, “What do you perceive the three most important functions of our congregation to be?” Ten broad functions emerged in response to the question, “What do you perceive the three most important functions of our minister to be?” Additionally, the church’s mission, both explicitly and implicitly, was referenced positively by respondents throughout the survey.

Survey Question Highlights (All responses in alphabetical order)

What is your favorite thing about the congregation?

Theme 1: Acceptance of a wide range of beliefs.

Respondents noted that the church is very welcoming, tolerant, and accepting of a wide range of beliefs and perspectives.

Theme 2. Diversity and Inclusivity in all its forms.

Respondents repeatedly mentioned the diversity of members as well as experiences at church.

Theme 3: Leadership of the Church.

Respondents frequently mentioned the minister and stated that they thought the ministers provided thought provoking sermons, meaningful pastoral care, etc.

Theme 4: Progressive/Liberal Values.

Respondents reported that the progressive and/or liberal values were a major draw to the church and the community.

Theme 5: Promoting Spiritual Growth.

Respondents reported that the church fosters their spiritual growth through a wide range of multi-sensory approaches such as lighting candles, the SERMONS, Chalice Circles, participating in various ministries, the MUSIC, guest speakers, etc.

Theme 6. Social Justice and the Penchant for Action.

Respondents frequently commented on the social justice component of UUA and our bias towards action and living out our faith and values in action.

Theme 7: Spirit/Culture.

Respondents commented frequently about what they experience as the “feel” of the church’s culture stating that it truly feels like a caring community.

Theme 8. Sunday Services.

Respondents commented that they LOVE the MUSIC, CHOIR, and SERMONS.

Theme 9: The people of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin.

The people (also referred to as congregants, members, etc.) were described as a community, a family, a way to make friends (through relationships), a way to get involved in the church (through relationships), and as great people to be in fellowship with.

What do you perceive the three most important functions of our congregation to be?

Theme 1: Caring for the Church.

Respondents often named care for the church as a key function of the congregation. In most cases, this was expressed in terms of maintaining the church financially, but occasionally it was also expressed in terms of maintaining the church's mission and practices.

Theme 2: Community Outside Our Church.

Respondents named helping the greater Austin community as a key function of our congregation.

Theme 3: Fostering a Welcoming Space.

Respondents expressed that a key function of the congregation is to create a space for themselves and one another that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive.

Theme 4: Music.

Respondents named music as a key function of our congregation.

Theme 5: Our Mission Statement: Together, we nourish souls, transform lives, and do justice to build the beloved community.

Respondents frequently named precisely our mission statement as the three most important functions of our congregation.

Theme 6: Religious Education.

Religious education was frequently named by respondents as a key function of the congregation.

Theme 7: Social Justice.

Respondents often named social justice action as a key function of our congregation, stating that the congregation should be a "voice" or "advocate" for justice.

Theme 8: Supporting Each Other.

Respondents frequently cited support of one another as a key function of our congregation.

What do you perceive the three most important functions of our minister to be?

Activist/Social Justice Worker - committed to social justice, sets social justice priorities, works for environmental conservation, etc.

Administrator - works with the Board of Trustees to implement Board goals; leads staff in service to the congregation; ensures financial stability; creates a safe, loving, and welcoming environment.

Community Leader - works to build relationships with other churches and groups to support ministries of our church, serves as the "voice" of our church in the larger community.

Connector - welcomes new members, supports ministries, fosters diversity and inclusion of all members.

Pastoral Care - available to congregants, comforter in crisis or loss, provides pastoral support to all members.

Developer - supports youth programs and religious education, fundraising, etc.

Face of the Congregation - represents FUUCA locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally through livestreams, conferences, workshops, and community activities.

Leader - organizes the church, motivates members, sets direction and tone, models the values UU embodies, is open to new ideas, focuses on future generations, models vulnerability, and is present through good times and bad times.

Preacher - offers thought provoking, challenging, questioning, reflective, humorous, uplifting, compassionate, transformative sermons that help with daily living, spiritual growth and development, and they feed our souls

Teacher - instructs congregation in UU perspectives as well as other perspectives, guides the church in reaching its full potential, supports religious education through the lifespan, avoids complacency, pushes us out of our comfort zones.

Methodology

The survey was administered over a three week period in both online and paper versions. It is important to note that the timing of the survey may have had an impact on participation (low participation prior to the return to school), respondents demographics (half of respondents were over 70), and half of the respondents reported being long-term members of the church which therefore may slightly skew the overall results. For a detailed analysis of results, please go to [Ministerial Search Committee Survey - Analysis](#)