

Report on the 2023-24 Congregational Survey

At First UU Church of Austin the Board of Trustees conducts an annual survey to learn the congregation's assessment of how well the church is doing to achieve our Mission and Ends. The Board uses your feedback to monitor the performance of the executive team.

Because we were in the middle of a search for a lead minister, this year we conducted the survey in January, slightly later than usual. We had 151 individuals respond to the survey this year, which is 50% greater than the number that responded last year. The survey asked respondents to give an overall rating of their satisfaction with First UU Austin by asking how likely they were to recommend the church to others. In addition, we asked about the importance of each of our ends and the amount of progress the church is making towards our ends.

[The Ends](#) (as presented in the survey) are:

- Acting on and Living our UU values
- Supporting Each other
- Caring for the Earth
- Being Generous with Time, Talent, Treasure
- Dismantling a Culture of White Supremacy
- Practicing a Rich Spiritual Life
- Teaching UU Values to our Kids
- Intergenerational Fun and Fellowship
- Inviting others to make a spiritual home with us
- Collaborating with a Greater UU Movement

Overall, congregants rated the church highly. The mean response on a 10 point scale, where higher values indicate more satisfaction, was 8.8 (see [Table 1](#)). This value is up slightly from last year's already-high score of 8.6. By far the most common response to the question of how likely respondents were to recommend the church was "Extremely Likely". Some who gave a low response explained in the open comments that they

wouldn't likely recommend the church to anyone else because they'd already recommended it to all their friends. A small number of respondents were less enthusiastic because they did not feel welcomed or had other concerns about the church.

Respondents' reports on **importance and progress of each of the ends** is provided in [Table 2](#). This table is organized so that the ends rated as more important appear higher on the list. All of the ends perform well, with none averaging less than 3.6 on a 1-5 scale. Yet there is some variation in how dearly congregants hold each end. The highest ranking ends are "Supporting one another", "Caring for the Earth", and "Acting on and Living Our Values". Also ranking high are "Being generous with our time, talent, and treasure" and "Dismantling a culture of white supremacy and other systems of oppression."

Looking at the progress column, we see that again all ends are performing much better than the midpoint on a 1-5 scale, but there's some interesting variation. The three ends that congregants rate us as making the least progress on are "Dismantling a culture of white supremacy and other systems of oppression", "Collaborating with the greater UUA community" and "Inviting others to find a spiritual home with us."

Note that "Dismantling a culture of white supremacy" appears on both lists. This might be an area where the church leadership could focus more energy. Caring for the earth could be another area of investment because of its high importance and middling progress.

Our policy documents state that our moral ownership extends beyond our current church membership. Specifically they state, "The moral owners of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin are the past, present and future congregation and those with whom we work to co-create the Beloved Community." For this reason, we collected information on where our members come from—how they **found us**. Nearly a third of the people who answered this question said that they found FUUCA through friends and

family. This shows us how important it is to share our community with those whom we think might benefit.

Because one of our ends is **being generous with our time, talent, and treasure**, we asked two questions about giving money and many questions about how people spent time with the church. We also offered respondents an opportunity to learn more about how they could offer their time and talent to the church. When asked about why they give to the church, 92% said that they are motivated by their values. Of these, almost half (47%) mentioned the importance of making a difference in the world. An additional 49% mentioned the value of the church community to their lives and wanting to do their part to support this community. When asked about how they determine how much to give, about half said that they determine how much to give by what fits within their budget. Twenty percent say that they give a percentage of their income and another 8% base their giving on how it feels. Many are balancing their contributions with donations to other meaningful causes. Note that the percentages add up to more than 100% because some people gave more than one answer.

Most people, about two-thirds, reported attending church every Sunday (see [Table 3](#)). In addition, three out of every four respondents reported engaging in other church activities. When asked about how they like to engage with the church, in person or online, about one-third prefer that *no* activities take place *solely* online. Many answers expressed having “Zoom burnout.” The most common activity that people liked to have online was small group discussions or committee meetings. Some respondents mentioned specific activities such as Chalice Circles, book clubs, Senior Social Hour, and Readers Theater. Several respondents mentioned reasons for preferring online options, including not living in the Austin area, avoiding traffic, avoiding driving after dark, and being COVID-conscious.

Just under one-third of respondents prefer Sunday Services to be hybrid. Several respondents mentioned that they are glad to have the option to attend in-person or online depending on factors such as travel time or illness/disability. Just under one-third

of respondents prefer small group meetings to be hybrid. Some respondents mentioned specific group meetings such as Chalice Circles, Wellspring, and Social Action Committee meetings. Slightly more respondents said they prefer all activities to be hybrid versus respondents who said they prefer no activities to be hybrid. Several respondents who prefer all activities to be hybrid mentioned accessibility as the reason for this preference.

What are we going to do with this information? The Board is working to develop stronger ways of monitoring the Executive Leadership. We are asking the ministers to provide plans for the coming year on how they plan to make progress on our ends. We will ask the ministers to explain how they are responding to the feedback offered in the congregational survey.

Thank you for providing your valuable feedback.

Table 1. How Likely would you recommend the church to others?

	Frequency	Percent
Not at all Likely (0)	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	3	2
4	1	1
5	5	3
6	6	4
7	13	9
8	19	13
9	29	19
Extremely Likely (10)	75	50
	151	100

Table 2. Mean rankings of Importance and Progress on each end on a scale from 1 to 5

	Importance	Progress
Supporting one another	4.6	4.1
Caring for the Earth	4.5	3.9
Acting on and living our values	4.5	4.1
Being generous with our time, talent, and treasure	4.2	4.0
Dismantling a culture of white supremacy and other systems of oppression	4.2	3.6
Intergenerational fun and fellowship	4.1	3.8
Practicing a rich spiritual life	4.1	3.9
Teaching Unitarian Universalist values to our (collective) children	4.0	4.2
Collaborating with the greater Unitarian Universalist community	3.6	3.6
Inviting others to find a spiritual home with us	3.6	3.6

Table 3. How often attend Sunday Services

	Freq	Percent
Almost every Sunday	68	53
Most Sundays	26	20
Half Sundays	17	13
Occasionally	13	10
Never	5	4
	129	100