

Results Summary of Our Congregational Surveys

Introduction

Members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Milford (UUCM) engaged eagerly in the Search process as we began our search in 2018. The initial survey was completed by 94 out of 140 members (67%), as well as 9 friends of the congregation. Fifty people participated in at least one Focus Group. A second, shorter survey in 2019 was completed by 83 members and friends, providing important information not covered by the 2018 survey. This high level of participation provided the Search Committee with valuable information about the congregation's hopes and visions for the next settled minister.

Survey Results

About Our Congregation

By the numbers:

- The majority of regular attendees at UUCM have been members for more than 15 years. (Quite a few began attending as young families and raised their children in the church.)
- Almost half of the congregation are 65 years or older.
- The ratio of women to men is approximately 3 to 1.
- Roughly two-thirds of survey respondents are married or living with a partner.
- Most of UUCM's members identify as heterosexual and cisgender. About 8% are lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender.
- Currently we have about 10 children (ages 1-11) and 5 youth (ages 12-18) participating in our programs. (The results posted for Question #8 in the 2018 survey is incorrect – perhaps due to confusion about the question's wording.) Many congregants express a strong hope that the next settled minister will offer some ideas and support to attract more families with children.

Members and friends of UUCM hold a wide range of spiritual and religious beliefs. The majority of survey respondents indicated that they found meaning in more than one form of religious/spiritual/philosophical expression. This is in keeping with our 4th principle: "A free and responsible search for truth and meaning." The most common responses to Question #9 on the 2018 survey were Ethical Religion, Earth-centered spirituality, Humanism, and Eclectic.

Many members take an active role in the life of the church. About half of the 2018 survey respondents are serving or have served on one or more committees, with a smaller number taking on the role of committee chair. Many UUCM members have served on the Board at some time. Composition of our nine-member Board changes each year, with the Vice President and President typically serving one-year terms. Board members at large may continue for up to four years, but new

members join the Board each year as seats open up. Responses on the 2019 survey indicate that church members feel a high level of confidence in our leadership.

There is very strong support for the social responsibility activities and projects that UUCM currently engages in. Many members and friends participate in one or more actions of social responsibility. UUCM shares the Sunday offering each week with carefully chosen organizations that promote social welfare and justice. Many members work to provide a free supper for the larger Milford community once a month. During autumn 2019, church members have participated in weekly Fridays for Future climate demonstrations in front of the church. During Search focus groups, people expressed a wish to see more social justice activity, especially if a large part of the congregation (including children and youth) can be involved in a specific project. When asked on the 2019 Survey if they would volunteer more time if needed to work on a social justice project, many indicated that they would be willing and able to volunteer.

Congregants share a wide range of social concerns. We are strong supporters of protection for the rights of LGBTQ individuals, people of color, immigrants, and refugees. The Climate crisis, peace movement activities, women's issues, safe schools/gun safety, homophobia, and racism are other topics sometimes covered in Sunday services and adult RE discussions.

What We Seek in a Minister

We seek a minister who is energetic, compassionate, and inspiring. Our next settled minister will energize us, blending spiritual messages with a sense of humor. We expect our minister to be well-read and articulate.

Our congregation places a strong emphasis on the Sunday morning service. Virtually all survey respondents value an inspiring Sunday sermon, and a clear majority would like our next minister to speak from the pulpit three times a month. The congregation views the minister as a primary source of spiritual leadership and guidance. More than 3/4 of survey respondents prefer that the Sunday service follow a "fixed format with variations when desired or for special Sundays."

The congregation was asked how they hope the settled minister would prioritize their time. Providing spiritual leadership was deemed most important. The role of administrator was viewed as least important. Perhaps reflecting the aging of our congregation, we place a considerable emphasis on the minister's ability to provide pastoral visits and pastoral counseling to those who are sick, terminally ill, or grieving. Many also view the role of the minister to include stimulating intellectual development as a vital aspect of ministry.

The responsibility of the minister to engage in or lead social activism was viewed as a relatively low priority by more than half of respondents to the 2018 survey. However, given the importance that many members place on our social responsibility actions and values, there is an expectation that the minister will be aware of social justice issues and will provide inspiration and leadership in a variety of ways. On the survey (and in other discussions) members often indicated their hope that our next settled minister would lead to a growth in membership.

Survey responses indicated that most members feel that the minister's age, family status, gender, or personal lifestyle are not important characteristics for the Search Committee to consider when selecting a minister. On the 2019 survey, respondents indicated that they would gladly support a minister who was new to ministry or a transgender minister.

Our 2018 survey included this statement about freedom of the pulpit: "UU tradition and the congregation's historical practice is that the minister should have freedom of the pulpit, whereby she/he may express whatever views she/he may hold without censorship from the congregation." A large majority (82%) agreed with this policy. Almost half (45%) felt that this should include the freedom to express partisan political values.