

UUCA Campus Reopening Task Force Congregational Survey Results

The Campus Reopening Task Force (CRTF) conducted an online survey with everyone on UUCA's email distribution list for a two-week period in late December 2020 and early January 2021. The goal was to learn how well UUCA's "virtual" church and our approach to reopening is meeting congregants' needs and how we might improve. This is the first in a series of efforts to "take the pulse" of the congregation with respect to the impact of the ongoing pandemic as circumstances change.

The following overview summarizes the key results of the survey and how they will guide the CRTF and our reopening efforts going forward. Additional details on the survey and the full slide deck of graphs and tables are available upon request. Throughout the overview, comments and quotes from respondents are shown in the grey boxes.

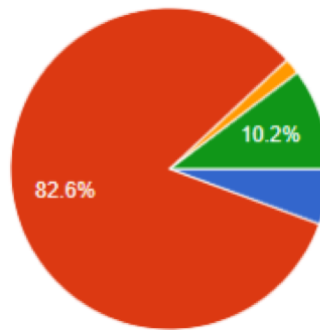
Who participated in the Survey?

438 people participated in the survey, including members, newcomers, and inquiring friends.

Respondents representing all ages groups and household arrangements shared their perspectives.

Are we doing the right things?

- 82% of respondents feel that UUCA's restrictions on in-person gatherings at the church are reasonable under the circumstances.
- Additional analyses will also look at how these opinions may differ among various groups in our community.



- The church is overly restrictive with respect to in-person activities on campus and should permit more, as lo...
- The church's current restrictions on in-person gatherings are reasonable under current circumstances.
- The church's restrictions on in-person gatherings are insufficient to protect it...
- I am unaware of the church's restrictions with respect to in-person gatherings

"I am deeply impressed and moved by the efforts made by UUCA to have a vibrant online connection with the Congregation.

I am proud of our staff and the many capable volunteers who have UUCA operating at a superb level."

What are we doing?

- The vast majority (84%) of respondents have participated in on-line Sunday worship services. From 22–31% have participated in one or more of various small group ministries, including covenant groups, social and racial justice activities, and adult education. Smaller proportions have participated in RE for children (13%) and music (12%).
- And yet, these are many of the same activities that respondents miss the most.



- Some congregants find the use of virtual platforms like Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube to be isolating and difficult. Indeed, most of us are pretty “Zoom-ed” out. However, these platforms have allowed former members and new friends to participate and join in our community. In fact, many survey respondents like having the option to attend services on their own schedule and to be able to participate in meetings and other events without having to drive to church.

“I became more involved with social justice at UUCA through online.”

“I now live far away from the church and am grateful for the increased opportunities to participate in church life through Zoom, etc.”

What are we missing most?

- Collectively, we are most missing all the elements of personal connection and social interaction associated with church participation (59%). This word cloud illustrates the most commonly voiced aspects of church life people are missing during this pandemic.



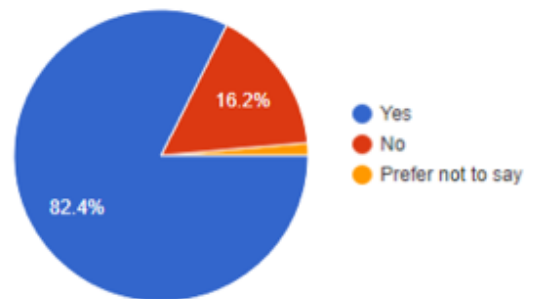
“I am impressed with the quality of online services but miss the sense of community from seeing familiar faces week after week, holding hands or hugging in church, and socializing after the service.”

- About 66% of respondents feel positively about the support and resources they are receiving from UUCA, given current limitations.
- However, 57% feel less connected this year than last (48%), or totally unconnected (9%) to the church.



When and how can we come back?

- A large majority (82%) of respondents are concerned about elevated risks for themselves or household members of contracting COVID-19.
- This level of awareness and concern is consistent with the responses to questions related to circumstances under which people would feel comfortable returning to campus and the types of activities respondents are most eager to resume.
- The most important factors for people to feel comfortable returning were community and individual vaccination status. 75% of respondents would return when local vaccination rates met whatever level is deemed safe enough by public health authorities to remove COVID-related restrictions on public gatherings. About 55% of respondents (some or all of which may have also been among the 75% relying on community vaccination rates) would return when they themselves were vaccinated.
- When asked about the types of activities that people felt would be the best approach to expanding activities – and perhaps to meeting some of the needs for face-to-face community – is to plan more outdoor activities for children, youth, and adults. The following word cloud illustrates many of the great ideas for safer activities that inspire our community.



What comes next?

This feedback validated our approach to keeping our community safe and healthy during the pandemic. Many respondents shared feelings of loss and disconnection while also appreciating the wide variety of online activities that are keeping them connected to our beloved community. These findings provide important insights into how the congregation is coping now and where we can expand efforts to better support congregants and prepare for reopening:

- The efforts taken to enhance online worship services and other virtual activities have had a positive impact on maintaining a sense of community and connection. Yet, with many people missing socialization at church and the ability to be with people “in real life”, we believe that there would be **benefits to bringing more live elements into worship and opportunities to engage more actively with online services.**
- Congregants are eager to return to in-person activities; however, **many have found the increased use of online platforms for meetings, educational offerings, and worship to be a positive alternative** and hope that we maintain some degree of virtual programming once the pandemic ends.
- While additional analyses are pending (looking at responses by age and participation), preliminary reviews of the data indicate that some groups within our community are struggling more than others and are finding it hard to stay connected and supported virtually. **Parents of children and teens, our youth, and some older members are particularly eager for reopening** and for the church to explore safer activities (for example, outdoor events) as soon as safely possible. The CRTF will use this feedback to prioritize and expand efforts to support these groups of our church community.
- The UUCA community will feel **most comfortable returning to in-person church when we have achieved a high community vaccination rate.** Toward that end, UUCA is committed to supporting local vaccination efforts. The attachment to this overview provides additional details on UUCA’s approach to supporting community vaccination and local resources for getting yourself and your loved ones vaccinated when eligible.

We will be incorporating these lessons learned into our next steps as we move closer toward full reopening - hopefully in the not-too-distant future. Within the next few weeks, you will receive the 2nd quarter report which will talk more about reopening plans and implications on our budgeting based on current financials.

“I have been very impressed with the many varied opportunities to connect with the members of UUCA. The services have been so creative and meaningful; I frequently forward them to friends and family. Through coffee hours, I feel I know so much more about the members than I ever would have learned pre-pandemic.”

COVID-19 VACCINATION RESOURCES FOR OUR COMMUNITY

One of the take-aways from our recent Congregational Survey is that the UUCA community will feel most comfortable returning to in-person church when we have achieved a high community vaccination rate. Toward that end, UUCA is committed to supporting local vaccination efforts. While some of you have already received the vaccine and others are impatiently waiting on a fresh supply, we do encourage all UUCAers to—when supplies are available, and it is your turn—get vaccinated!

Currently, Virginia is in phase 1b of the vaccination program which includes frontline essential workers, people age 65+, people age 16-64 with an underlying medical condition, people living in correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and migrant labor camps. For more information, you can find more vaccine information at the following sites:

- Virginia Department of Health page at <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine>.
- Arlington County Information about receiving a vaccine for those living and/or working in the county, including how to determine if you are eligible and sign up, visit the Arlington County vaccine page at <https://www.arlingtonva.us/covid-19/vaccines/>.
- For those living in Falls Church, vaccine information including sign up links can be found at <http://www.fallschurchva.gov/civicalerts.aspx?aid=997>.
- Fairfax County information can be found at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/novel-coronavirus/vaccine/registration>, with signup information, including a registration link at <https://fairfaxcountyemergency.wpcomstaging.com/2021/01/15/process-for-scheduling-vaccination-appointments-at-health-department-clinics/>.

If you are able to help others navigate the process of registering for and signing up for vaccines, please be in touch with Rev. Walter Clark at wclark@uucava.org. We would love to match folks together to support our community getting the vaccines we need.

UUCA is keeping close tabs on efforts in Arlington County and is committed to pressing for ease of access and equity in distribution, particularly given the racial disparity in COVID rates and in hospitalization and mortality rates in Arlington (and across the country). Rev. Amanda is working with the Arlington Interfaith Network - a group of interfaith clergy - on this effort, and Annie Parker is staying in touch with Arlington County to see how we can be of support to their vaccination efforts. For information-sharing or concerns, email aparker@uucava.org.