

UUCGT Congregational Survey Summary Report

Dear UUCGT Members and Friends,

Recently, ninety-five of you (61% of our membership) took the time and effort to complete the 2020 Congregational Survey. We, your Ministerial Search Team, want to thank-you for helping us know about your needs and wants as we go about the process of locating a new leader for UUCGT. Our team has thoroughly analyzed your responses looking for trends while honoring all the ideas you expressed. We've had in-depth conversations centering around the qualities you told us you most wanted to see in a new minister. We also noted all the things you love about our church and being a UU as well as those areas you'd like to see improved, expanded, or changed. It was heartening to read just how important UUCGT is to you.

We noticed that respondents appreciate gathering on Sundays, at committee meetings and other events to celebrate and further discern UU principles. Being in fellowship with one another is very important. We hope for a more focused social justice theme as we live out our ministry. Respondents appreciate the very caring nature of our congregation, although staying in relationship with difficult conversations remains an area of concern. Luckily, the recent Healthy Congregation focus can help.

Demographically, we are not surprised that respondents are primarily older (age 60+), Caucasian, highly educated, middle class, and female. Many are concerned about the financial sustainability of the congregation. Seeking more age, gender, ethnic, and social-cultural diversity will be beneficial for UUCGT to thrive.

The full body of feedback informs us as a search team and will be made available to prospective candidates so that they can start to get to know us and determine if they'd pick us. Then, of course, we'll begin our in-depth inquiry into which candidate best matches our needs based on your feedback. We are guided in this process by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) which has long experience and resources they have developed to guide UU congregations worldwide.

The following charts, graphs, word-clouds and narratives in this summary represent in most cases a synthesis of trends and big ideas we learned from your highly detailed feedback. Rest assured that every single one of your ideas has been reviewed and considered by the search team as we do our work. A complete Long Report is available upon request. Again, thank-you for sharing your ideas with us.

Sincerely,

*Charles Brackett, Dusty Culton, Geoff Norman-Anderson, Jim Linsell,
Mary Van Valin, Chris Walter, Jan Zerbel*

SHOW ME THE DATA - Some of you will say. So here is just a small but important sampling of the data from 95 respondents of UUCGT's congregation of 155 in September 2020.

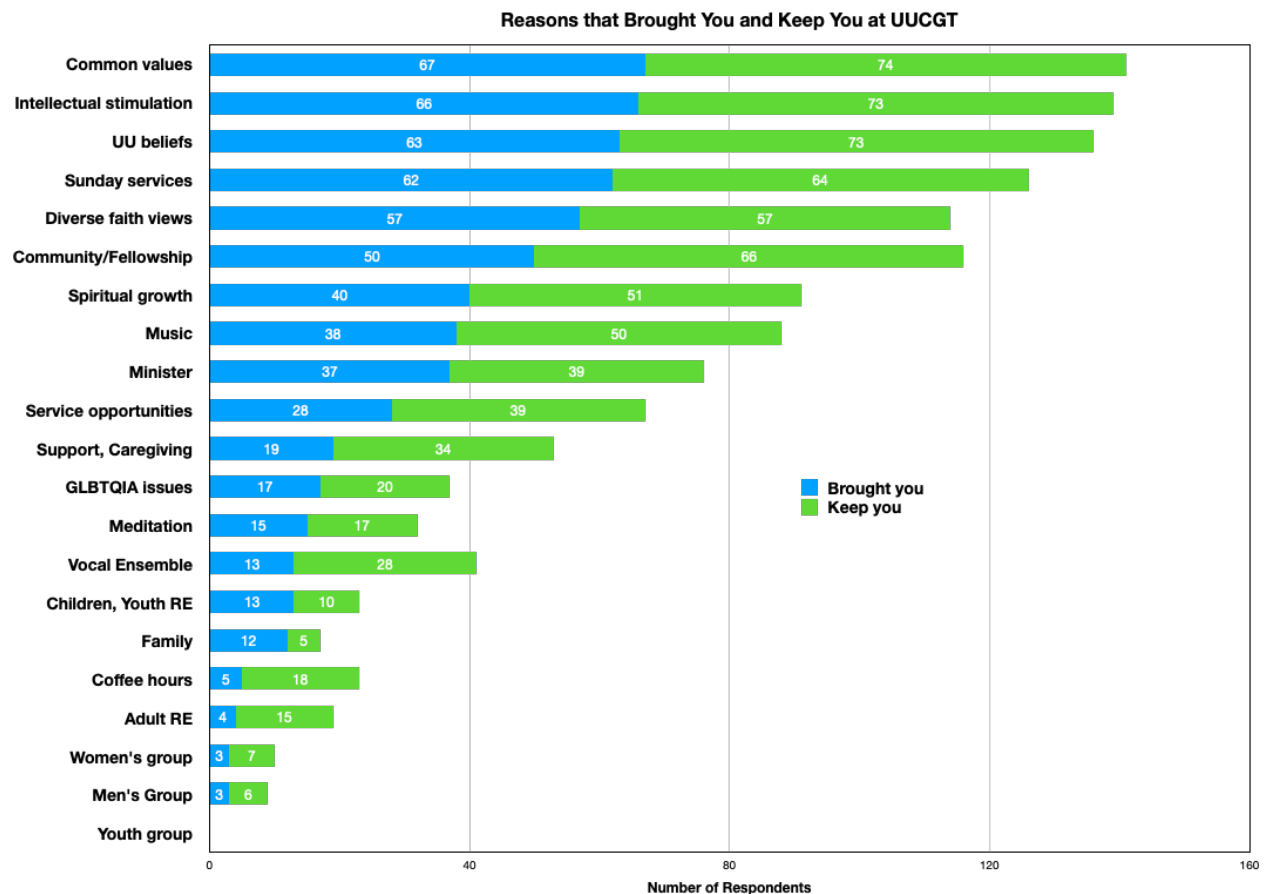
What we Like

Question #1: What is your favorite thing about our congregation?

A high frequency of responses indicated how much respondents valued their fellow congregants in different ways including their diversity, viewpoints, tolerance, welcoming nature, talents, and experiences. Open-mindedness and like-mindedness, liberal and tolerant attitudes, acceptance of all beliefs, all sexual orientations, living our UU principles, and a sense of community were valued. Others commented they wanted to become better people or have an opportunity to grow. Finally, Sunday services and community involvement were mentioned.



Question #45: Tell us which of the following are reason(s) that Brought you to UUCGT, and reason(s) that Keep you here, checking all that apply.



This charted data “jibes” with and confirms the many favorite things respondents like about UUCGT in Question #1.

Areas For Improvement or “Of Concern”

Question #2: Describe an area in our congregation that you would like to see improved or developed more fully.

A pattern of responses reflected a desire to improve or develop: Social action in the local and world community, expanded adult education opportunities and increased membership with participation of young families, better promotion of opportunities to participate in committees including fellowship/service groups for women, increased size of the Vocal Ensemble and additional musical performances, having some committees meet in the evening so working people can be included.



In addition, data from Questions #11 - #17 are noted as areas for improvement or “of concern.”

- **82% of respondents believe UUCGT’s structure is flexible for implementing new ideas. However 18% do not feel that way.**
- **76% of respondents feel the congregation focuses on Mission and the greater good rather than the strong preferences of some, whereas 24% disagree or strongly disagree.**
- **Fifty-five out of 88 respondents, or 63%, are concerned about UUCGT’s financial future. Thirty-three or 37% do not share those concerns.**
- **Although there is a high level of trust in leadership in the congregation, evidenced by 81% of respondents, 16 individuals out of 86 (19%) do not feel this way.**
- **An overwhelming majority of respondents, 75 or 86.2%, believe the core group of leaders are able to lead change in non-anxious ways. Twelve out of 87 (14%) do not agree.**
- **While a little over half of respondents believe we stay in relationship when having difficult conversations, 45% of respondents do not feel that way. Interestingly responses trended toward the middle - somewhat agree and somewhat disagree.**

- UUCGT Mission and Ministry is felt to be adapting to changing conditions in the world by 74 out of 86 respondents or 86%. Twelve respondents or 14% disagree. **Although we did not ask and we cannot know what “changing conditions” respondents were thinking about, several come to mind and are noteworthy. Zoom Sunday Services, Friday Night Vespers, Office Hours with the Interim Minister, and continuing Committee meetings done virtually have shown incredible, creative adaptation. In addition, Community Needs’ (Committee) financial support of pandemic-driven local, fresh food drives, meals for first-responders and hospital medical staff, and a hybrid model for Tuesday Lunch show that UUCGT cares, adapts, and acts.**

Roles of Congregation and Minister

Question #3: What do you perceive the top three functions of our congregation to be?

1. A strong theme emerged related to community, large and small group connections including Vocal Ensemble, fellowship, loving support, authentic and trusting relationships, and care for each other including pastoral support honoring the many passages of life.
2. Spiritual and intellectual exploration and growth through interaction, Sunday Services, and adult education. Supporting individual’s search for truth.
3. Providing chances to participate in peace and justice, environmental and humanitarian activities and learning and living UU principles.



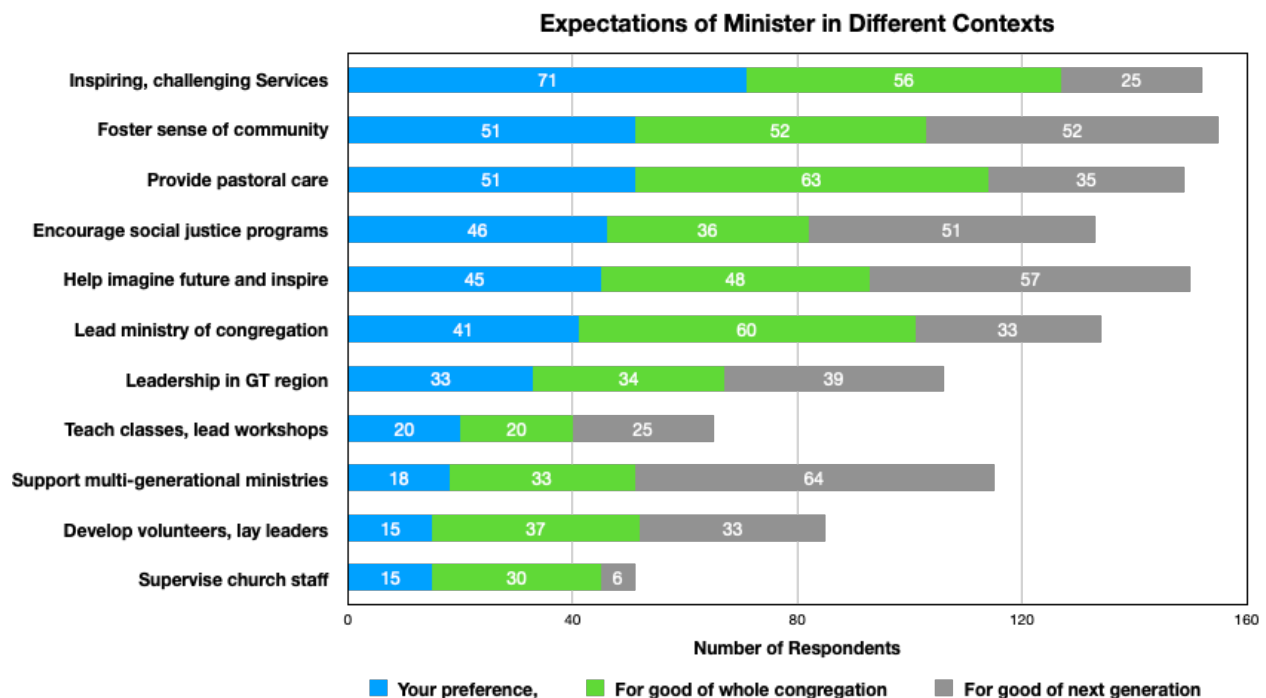
The responses above also conform with “*What brought You*” and “*What Keeps You*” at UUCGT (page 3). Respondents embraced common values, UU beliefs as well as diverse faith views, while valuing intellectual stimulation, Sunday services, and fellowship when considering being a part of UUCGT.

Question #4: What do you perceive the top three functions of the minister to be?

1. Pastoral support in the form of counseling to all including those in crisis or need, to model calm leadership and guidance when disagreements arise, to bridge generational components, to seed the causes of hope in all, and nurture leadership development.
2. Leadership on social justice to include groups of congregants, connections between UU principles and social action, and to cultivate a role in the broader community in this area.
3. Provide thoughtful sermons and services that reflect needs, interests, and diverse beliefs of members, build understanding of gender diversity, provide hope, and promote spiritual growth.



Question #18: Consider the following roles of our future minister and their importance in different contexts: For each column, choose 5 roles: Column 1 - 5 roles that are important to you; Column 2 - 5 roles that serve the good of the whole congregation; and Column 3 - 5 roles that will make the biggest impact on the next generation.



In general, whether it's personal, for the whole congregation, or for the next generation, the expectations are somewhat similar. Those expectations mirror responses that were given for Top 3 functions of minister (Question #4 Word Cloud, page 6). Overall, Sunday services, fostering community, and pastoral care are highly valued.

And Here's the Most Exciting, Forward-Looking Part of this Summary

Question #46: Why should our future minister consider joining the next chapter of our journey?

This question prompted, by far, the ***greatest length and enthusiasm*** of answers. ***One category of answers reflected what the new minister would get out of service to UUCGT:*** professional growth, opportunities to inspire, a chance to revive and expand a congregation that is already loving, active, vibrant, strong, caring, open-minded, intelligent, talented, resilient, and hard-working (*to quote a few!*). ***Another category pointed to the kinds of challenges we would provide:*** liberal leadership in the broader community, a chance to organize our efforts to contribute to peace and justice and other social concerns, and an opportunity to help us heal, settle, and revitalize after ministerial transitions, short-term, and interim ministers. There was eagerness to welcome a new leader with open arms. ***A third category of responses emphasized characteristics of the Traverse City area:*** a reasonable cost of living, beautiful surroundings, no catastrophic weather events, good schools, and rich cultural and recreational resources.

