

University Unitarian Church (UUC) Congregational Survey Process and Summary of Results - Fall 2025

The Process

The congregational assessment was one opportunity for UUC to reflect on our prior ministry and to begin to imagine a different future with a new minister. The UUA Transitions Office maintains a survey template and they recommend that Search Teams use as many parts of that template as can be adapted locally to assess ministry context and needs. The UUA Transitions Team, in partnership with ministers and colleagues in UU identity groups, recently revised the survey template for the 2025 search cycle and beyond. Questions were designed with an equity and inclusion lens.

All UUC Ministerial Search Team members received a link to the survey template. All Search Team members gave feedback on the survey and held discussion about whether the survey needed more open-ended questions and whether the meaning of questions was clear. A team of three Search Team members further reviewed all questions, revised some for UUC's context, added one question about worship service preferences, and dropped a few that seemed to be redundant or not specific to UUC. We also added an open-ended question at the end, asking for feedback on anything that had been missed and questions that people would like to address in small group gatherings. The final survey had 50 questions and we estimated it would take 15-20 minutes to complete.

The survey was divided into 5 sections:

- Congregational connections
- Observations about congregational health and culture
- The role of the next settled minister
- Demographics (including age, racial and ethnic identities, gender, gender expression, and sexual orientation, disability, relationship status, children under age 18, and more).
- Thoughts and feelings about the ministry ahead

The survey was open for responses from September 19-October 26. Anyone connected to the life of UUC in any way was invited to complete it. An email inviting survey participation went to ~ 1700 persons on the UUC email list. On the second day after the email, the message had been opened by half of those receiving it. Paper copies were provided to congregants who preferred to complete the survey that way and were entered into the electronic survey form by Ministerial Search Team members. Members and friends of UUC were invited to complete the survey via pulpit announcements; articles in the Gateway, the UUC website, flyers posted in the church, and the Fall Opportunity Engagement Fair.

Summary of Results

In total, 259 people completed the survey: 78% members, 19% friends, and 3% visitors. A majority (57%) have attended UUC for more than a decade, while 20% have been part of UUC for less than three years. About 85% of respondents connect to UUC through Sunday services; many also participate through music, adult programs, Family Ministry, governance, and wider UU connections. Most respondents attend worship frequently (monthly to weekly), with a mix of in-person and online participation. Only 24% reported a decrease in their current level of participation or connection. Nearly 90% live within about 45 minutes of the church (most within 15–45 minutes). Respondents expressed a wide range of worship preferences, with a strong desire for variety and balance.

While not a full census, the survey paints a helpful picture of who responded.

Age: Respondents span youth through elders. As a whole, the survey reflects a strong presence of middle-aged and older adults, along with a smaller but meaningful group of younger adults and families.

Race & ethnicity: Roughly 96% of respondents identified as White or of European descent. 3% identified as BIPOC (Black/Indigenous/Person of Color). About 23% of respondents reported being part of a multiracial family.

Gender & orientation: A majority of respondents (65%) identified as women, with a substantial number of men, and smaller but important groups of non-binary, genderqueer, and transgender congregants. About 74% identified as heterosexual, and about one-quarter as LGBTQ+ (including lesbian, gay, bisexual/pansexual, queer, and asexual identities).

Disability & health: A minority of respondents identified as disabled or living with a chronic health condition, and most respondents say they either do not need accommodations or receive the accommodations they need to participate.

Households with children: About 20% of respondents have children under 18 in their household; about 80% do not. Among those with children, some are actively involved in Family Ministry/RE, while others are not currently connected there.

Education & employment: The congregation is highly educated - a majority hold at least a bachelor's degree, and 74% have master's, doctoral, or professional degrees. Just over half of respondents are retired, with others employed full-time, part-time, or self-employed. Some reported being unemployed and actively looking for work.

Religious Background & Theological Diversity: Many respondents came to UUC from other religious traditions or after being unchurched for a time, while a smaller group were raised UU. Most identified their prevailing theological identity as Unitarian Universalist, often alongside other identities: Humanist, Buddhist, Christian, Agnostic, Atheist, earth-centered, and more. This reflects the pluralism of cultures, experiences, and theologies that many in the UUC community deeply value.

Attitudes and Hopes: More than half of survey respondents view UUC as generally open to change and 70% say that UUC's ministry continues to adapt to changing conditions in the world. Sixty-four percent feel that UUC is making progress in its work toward diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Sixty-six percent are confident about UUC's financial sustainability. Seventy-five percent think that UUC has core leaders who lead steadily and effectively, and 80% have faith that the new minister will be someone they can trust. Respondents identified clearer communication, flexible strategies for implementing new ideas, and healthy ways to handle conflict as key growth areas.

The final questions asked participants to share how they feel about the ministry ahead and why ministers should consider UUC. Our congregation is hopeful, optimistic, and energized about the future, with many members expressing excitement for new possibilities. They describe the community as engaged, committed, vibrant, and caring, rooted in inclusive and progressive values and resilient in the face of change. While a few voices note challenges and the importance of strong leadership, the prevailing tone is one of readiness, openness, and enthusiasm for growth, signaling a congregation eager to partner with a minister who shares these aspirations.