

First UU Omaha 2019 Survey Summary Congregational Survey-What Did We Learn?

Our 2019 Survey was based on the UUA's template. Several of the open response questions were replaced with a check box format, and a few questions from other survey sources were added by the committee. Respondents were offered links to the Google Form, and paper copies were made available. In addition, one Sunday, laptops were available at church for members without computer access. Though typical Sunday attendance this time of year (August-September) averages about 90, 120 members and friends of the congregation responded. The Search Committee met and discussed the survey responses shortly after completion.

Who Answered?

Out of the 120 responses, about 64% were over the age of fifty. While most identify as white, three persons identified as Latinx, two as Native American/Alaskan Native, and three as multiracial. (This question allowed for multiple answers.) About 18% consider themselves a part of a multiracial family. Our congregation is (self identified) 65% female, 35% male, with one individual identifying as Genderfluid/Genderqueer, one as transgender, four as Two-Spirit, and four as Agender/Gender Androgenous. (Check all that apply.)

We are a 5% Queer, 3% Gay, 1% Lesbian, 5% Pansexual, 12% Bisexual, 5% Asexual, and 80% Heterosexual congregation. (Multiple answers allowed.)

Three-quarters of our congregation is in some type of committed relationship(s), with half of spouse/partners attending regularly.

Eighty-four percent of us have a degree (bachelor's and above). A further 17% have post-high school education.

Almost all of us travel less than half an hour to get to church. Two-thirds of us have belonged to the church for more than ten years, while about 60% have been UU's for at least a decade. Just over ten percent of us were raised as UU's or attended as youth. Over 90% rate their spiritual life three and above on a five point scale.

Engagement

As expected, there is a high level of participation in Sunday services, including volunteer activities such as welcoming/greeting, musical performance, and acting as Worship Associates. Sunday Service, Volunteering, Social Justice and Small/Affinity Groups drew the most responses among activities that help us live a dynamic UU life, stretch & grow, experience transcendence and feel most UU. Interestingly, 15% didn't respond to the question about where you experience transcendence.

More than 50% of the respondents volunteered in the past year. Furthermore, greater than 50% participated in some small group or affinity group.

Of note: Our team didn't include the Young Adult Group everywhere it would have been appropriate, despite the fact that two of our members belong! Though some respondents may have treated it as a small group ministry, we feel we may have lost some important input. As a congregation constantly fighting the aging process, this may indicate an area for attention.

Welcoming/Community

Three-quarters of respondents felt a strong feeling of warmth, friendliness and supportiveness in the congregation. Fewer (about half) feel the congregation is a source of support when they need it. Of the newer folks, 2/3 feel very welcome. Over half claim to have taken steps to integrate new members. About half agree that we are welcoming to marginalized communities; 12% feel we are very unwelcoming.

UU Beliefs, celebrating common values and community brought us to First U and keeps us coming back. The perception of whether our congregation is open to change was divided 1/3, 1/3, 1/3. (During our discussion with Rev. Michelle, she conveyed that leadership has been very open to change during the interim ministry.)
Almost half agree that the congregation focuses on the strong preference of some individuals.

Programming

In addition to the data listed above (Engagement), respondents expressed the following:

-14% are unhappy with the children, youth, family RE.

-38% are unhappy with Adult RE.

(Note: We have just hired a new DRE, and have increased the position to $\frac{3}{4}$ time.)

While respondents reported having nearly fifty children at home at least part time, parents identified the number of participating children as only nineteen.

Financial

As for work, 45% of us work full time and 16% part-time. Of the other non-working respondents, about 33% are retired.

We have a large span of income. Ten percent of our congregation lives below the poverty line, with another 7% living just above that. The median average income in the state of Nebraska is just over \$50,000. Roughly a third of our congregation lives on or below that line. Earning between 50-75K are 17% of our population, with the same number of those earning between 75-100K. The remaining third earn over a hundred thousand a year.

Over half agree that they have concerns about the congregation's financial sustainability, though 62% have increased giving within the last two years.

Five percent of our respondents donate over \$10,000 a year, six percent between 5 and 10K, 11% between 3 and 5K, 27% between 1-3K, and 17% donate from \$600-999. Eleven percent donate between 300 and 600 dollars. Twelve percent of respondents pledge less than three hundred dollars, and 13% pledge nothing. (Survey included friends of the church and frequent guests).

Congregational Self-Image

On a scale of one to five, less than a quarter of respondents strongly consider this congregation open to change, though around 30% feel our structure is flexible enough to allow new ideas to be implemented. Half of respondents felt strongly that our congregation focuses on mission and the greater good. Thirty percent answered neutrally to this question. When asked whether our mission and ministry continue to adapt to changing conditions, most respondents chose neutrally on a one to five scale. Roughly 18% feel that some voices in our congregation are given more weight than others, even though only 12% reported a low level of trust in congregational leadership. Over 85% feel neutral or positive in our leaders' abilities in leading change in a non-anxious way. As far as staying in community during difficult times, only about a quarter felt strongly that we do well here. Half considered our acceptance of diverse theological viewpoints positive, and over a quarter answered neutrally. This left a final 25% of the congregation feeling we do not accept all theologies.

Ministry

By far, the top two functions we want in our minister are "fostering a sense of fellowship and community within the church" (62%) and "presenting stimulating and challenging Sunday services" (70%), followed by "caring for and counseling individuals" (31%).

In general, changes to the building, music program, or moving toward theism are considered contentious. Welcome changes include more social justice work, more healing around past conflict, and fostering new leaders.

As to whether a person disagreeing with the minister would approach them directly, thirty-seven percent answered that they would. Fourteen percent would communicate with either the Right Relations Committee, the Minister's Advisory Committee, or the Board. About 15% would simply keep their opinions to themselves, while another 15% would discuss the issue with their friends.

When asked why a minister should consider First Unitarian of Omaha as a new home, words such as 'good', 'people', 'grow', 'committed', 'caring', and 'potential' were frequently used.