**Feedback from Town Hall March 28, 2021 re Ministerial Search**

On March 28, 2021 the UUCBV held an open Town Hall meeting, at noon via Zoom. Roughly 30 participants were separated into five “rooms.” Each room was led by one of the members of the Search Team: Pam Johnson, Maya Lazarus, Rob McGeachin, Brian Lockridge and Kathi Appelt.

The first session discussed statements #’s 1 and 2. After completing session one, the groups came together and participants were randomly assigned to a second group of breakout rooms, where they discussed questions #3 and 4.

Below is a list of the answers that were offered.

1. **In previous ministries, I wish our congregation had had more \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

* Collaborative spirit of leadership bringing us together.
* Ministers who work well with staff, board, and committees and have previous experience with such--better administrative skills, including the day-to-day operations of the church.
* Effort toward welcoming new members.
* Local presence in our community, including engagement with the larger progressive faith community.
* Involvement in all the church’s ministries (committees), including more behind the scene organizing.
* Embrace and comfort with hi-tech platforms and help make church more visible on the internet.
* Closer contact with people in need, including follow-up.
* Reach out to younger people, especially young families.
* Greater ability and willingness to abide by our by-laws.
* More empathy and counseling in times of stress.
* Attempt to meet with each of our congregants
* Someone who would be willing to write for the Eagle, and to be more visible in the larger community.
* Before embarking on big changes in the congregation, someone who will take the time to get to know our congregation.
* Dynamic Sermons and sermons on UU theology.
* Ministers of Color.
* Circle Suppers/Covenant Groups
* Opportunities for sermon feedback
* Clarity in the role of the Minister. (This seems to be coming from our congregation having multiple types of ministers in the recent past including Developmental, Contract, Interim.  Each has a different role and they are also different from a Called Settled Minister)
* Greater involvement and direction for the RE program.
* More diversity, more humor.
* Focus on spiritual development, including an evolving church that appeals to young Gen Zs.
* Involvement in activities outside of the church, thinking ‘outside of the box’ with more interesting activities, not the same run of the mill activities.
* Closer interaction with marginalized communities.

1. **In previous ministries, I wish our congregation had had less \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

* Theme-based services from Touchstones
* Disorganized participatory events. (Specifically a Bread Sharing service was mentioned as being very disorganized).
* Single Issue Ministry
* Dance Elements to services (interpretive dance) (Dance that specifically excluded men was not inclusive).
* Less drama, less divisiveness and personal agendas.
* Do we really need to have the announcements read out loud every week?

1. **What do you hope never changes in our congregation?**

* The intimacy of a small church--covenant groups, small dinners
* Music program
* Social justice activities
* Being involved in the community
* Friendship and welcoming
* Diversity of viewpoints, opportunities to grow, freedom of thought, questioning, willingness to listen.
* Core UU Values  (There was a recognition that UU values continue to evolve)
* The “current” service format with specific mentions of keeping the Welcoming, Chalice lighting, times of silence for meditation. Variety in the order of service was also recognized as OK (That Balance comes to mind)
* “Now we are in a time of worship and sanctity” That phrase or something very near it was mentioned as following the chalice lighting.
* Willingness to adapt to change.
* Questioning authority, Speaking our mind, and seeking the truth.
* Music (Yes, this was intentionally mentioned twice here).
* Being a congregation that is welcoming to all.
* Keeping a strong relationship with UUA; UUA credentialed ministers.
* Keeping our congregation’s diversity of beliefs and respect for that diversity, staying open to such.

1. **What do you think could be improved with fresh perspective and energy?**

* We need fun activities like picnics, cook-outs, Bingo, dancing. Maybe hire a social director.
* Other activities such as small potluck dinners, small group ministries.
* Programs for the community, including those for adults and children.
* Growth--attract faculty and students, write articles in newspaper and social media
* Hire a PR person, improve our communication with larger community
* Improve communication with the community.
* Renewed energy, more involvement of the children
* One member would like to see us start our own food pantry, at the very least to have members bring food items with them to services
* Minister’s participation in local ministers’ group
* Long-term planning
* Some discussion was had that keeping the core UU values could be both a “never change” and an opportunity for improvement.
* “Wide open” (All kinds of things are possible)
* Order of service needs to be less ritualistic and formal and more fun and relaxed with unexpected order of service changes that will keep people’s attention and attract a younger crowd.
* Frequent renewal (of commitment to mission and vision I believe was the intention of this)
* New membership (Times 2), including more reach out to new members.
* There was a recognition that fresh perspective and energy did not have to originate from a new minister or new members but often came from long-time members.
* Have a widely known path to membership; foster a path to leadership among members
* Lean toward younger and enthusiastic over older and solemn
* Services need more fun music to fill the soul and have more music videos with more pop music so people can get up and dance.
* Announcements at the beginning of service need to be changed since they are repetitive, take up time and don’t add to the service.
* Sermons need to cover current events more and discuss things to which we can better relate.
* Services should include more Interfaith services.
* Services should include some Spanish maybe through poems and Hispanic music in order to reflect the local Hispanic community.
* Really do something as a “welcoming” congregation.
* Programs to bring in the community in the arts - music series, have community forums separate from the regular sermon.
* More inclusivity, with a mindset of being out in the community
* We cannot be just a bunch of old white people. Church needs more direct involvement with communities of color including the Hispanic community.

*Submitted by the 2021-2021 Contract Minister Search Committee*

*Kathi Appelt (final compiler), Pam Johnson, Maya Lazarus, Brian Lockridge, Rob McGeachin*

*April 13, 2021*