

March 26, 2024

Dear Members and Friends,

Thank you again for participating in the work of visioning, assessing and reflecting on who we are as a people and a congregation through our cottage meetings and our Large Group Visioning Workshop.

The timing is good for the work of assessing and reflecting what we are doing together.

The pandemic stopped everything, rearranged the way we do things and diminished our capacities.

As times change our understanding of our mission changes.

It is important to be able to articulate who we are, what our purpose is and what difference we will make and for whom.

What intentions do we have for this beloved community?

We, your Board and Minister, are talking about our next steps. This is important to us and we are strongly invested in the process itself. We will include you in every part of this process.

What follows is a synopsis of our large group visioning workshop and our small cottage meetings. The spontaneous poems we created are at the end.

In our Large Group Workshop, we listed these, as the values we find and live here at UUCUV:

Trust, authenticity, justice, clarity, community, wholeheartedness, questioning, fellowship, kindness, compassion, acceptance,

diversity, respect, hope, discernment, inclusion, welcoming, companioning, openness, appreciation, tolerance, intercultural, thought-provoking, spiritual, caring for all, service, an anchor, sunshine, music, technology, generosity.

Here are the results of the Cottage Meetings:

COTTAGE MEETING QUESTIONS

1. Remember a time or experience that resonates with you when you felt a deep connection to the UUCUV.

What is it about this experience that tells you who we are?

What qualities are exemplified by this experience?

2. What gets in the way of feeling this connection?

Themes

Points of Connection

- Personal connections to others in the UUCUV community.
- Worship services and the music, words, inspiration, participation, comfort and growth.
- Small groups provide a chance to engage deeply and bring one's whole self.
- Collective work toward a common goal. This includes work for the congregation, as well as social justice efforts and work in the wider community.

What gets in the way

- The Pandemic hindered connections through a disruption of relationships and the closeness of the community.
- The introduction of technology that has been challenging, especially when it does not run smoothly.
- A shift in volunteering that has created less connection

- A loss of particular elders/founders
- Personal preferences in music

3. What difference does this congregation make to your life? Within you? Within the community?

Themes:

- Community and personal connections.
- Support of values in raising children
- Opportunities to slow down, rest, reflect; and opportunities to be more active in the world, especially in justice work.
- Ways the congregation makes a difference in the community
 - Demonstrating and participating in vigils for justice
 - Soupathons
 - LISTEN dinners
 - Pods for the Pulpit
 - Provide a gathering space for many community organizations
 - Roots and Wings Concerts

4. What do we do well that is meaningful that we would want to carry forward?

Themes:

- Sunday services and other worship services, ie vespers, Christmas Eve candlelight
- Connections with other local organizations
- Small group opportunities:

- Women's group
- Cottage meetings
- Social justice potlucks
- Book groups
- Chalice Circles
- Meditation Group
- Welcoming for children
- Helping parents
- Music
- Anti-racism learning and action
- Caring for members, such as bringing food, etc.

5. What would your life be like without this congregation?

Themes:

- Lonelier, missing personal connections
- Less meaning in life
- Missing a community of forgiveness that is nonjudgmental
- Missing a chance to connect with children
- Missing the opportunity to provide help to others

Here are some ways people mentioned that they themselves would be different without UUCUV:

- I would have less ability to empathize. I'd be more judgmental
- I would be more complacent and insular
- I would feel unmoored
- I would be less hopeful
- I would be too focused on business/the material world

SPONTANEOUS POEMS

I.

I will be here no matter what
You are my family
Ohana means family.
Family is constant, helpful and magical.
UUCUV is Ohana.
UUCUV is present, mindful and a place where magical community happens.
Welcome to our family!

II.

Variety of music, accepting of all.
There once was a UU minister, calling us to join together,
Each one of us travels a separate path – at this place they converge.
The convergence gives light to new paths
The convergence creates warmth, and conflict.

III.

Caring is not just a word in our community.
If you're feeling down, or just feeling, ask for a Mugs Hug.
A late arrival can mean ignorance, but can also be a beginner's mind.
Help and support just abound
And the music is always just great at a moment's notice.

IV.

Reach out!
We want to be us, together
Thanks to all who join in our journeys
Beautiful humans practicing together being Love
Live in our sunlit sanctuary.

V.

The energy of this community is astounding.
Optimism of this community makes my heart sing.
The openhearted welcome that embraces me at the door
Connecting with others with a sense of caring and justice.
Together we co-create with the collective purpose of Love.

VI.

A group of people came together
The light of love beckons forth
The fun, the spirit, the laughter
The elements of the service weave together to form a tapestry
Nothing is necessarily the way the world says it is.

VII.

We offer each other the courage and trust to ask the difficult questions
People here listen with respect
A full spectrum of voices, from the most optimistic to discordant, all welcome
A home away from home
This is the home of our hearts.

VIII.

I wonder what would happen if
We all lived life with a song in our heart.
Voices of bells, or choirs, of cello, of piano circle the air

We all share the same love
A community bound by music, trust, and friendship.

IX.

The trees and the birds and we are happy that the sun is shining today
Meaning is found outside as well as inside
To learn, to grow, to be challenged, and to be held.
Thank you for a safe space for discomfort and vulnerability
To quote Rumi, "cracks are where the light shines through."

X.

Vulnerability, leads to connection and trust
Sharing needs, sorrows, joys
Sharing art
Sharing personal experiences

XI.

When I'm down and troubled
I almost didn't come today
But if we need to feel a part of we have to show up
I can sing with my voice until my heart is ready to join.