



First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo (FUFON) Ministerial Search Survey Results

Spring 2016

595 Townsite Road
Nanaimo, BC V9S 1K9

p. 250-755-1215

goodmanvi@gmail.com
www.Ufon.ca

Table of Contents

| | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|---|
| I. | Summary Results..... | 2 |
| II. | Demographics | 2 |
| III. | Community Priorities and Desires..... | 5 |

Summary Results

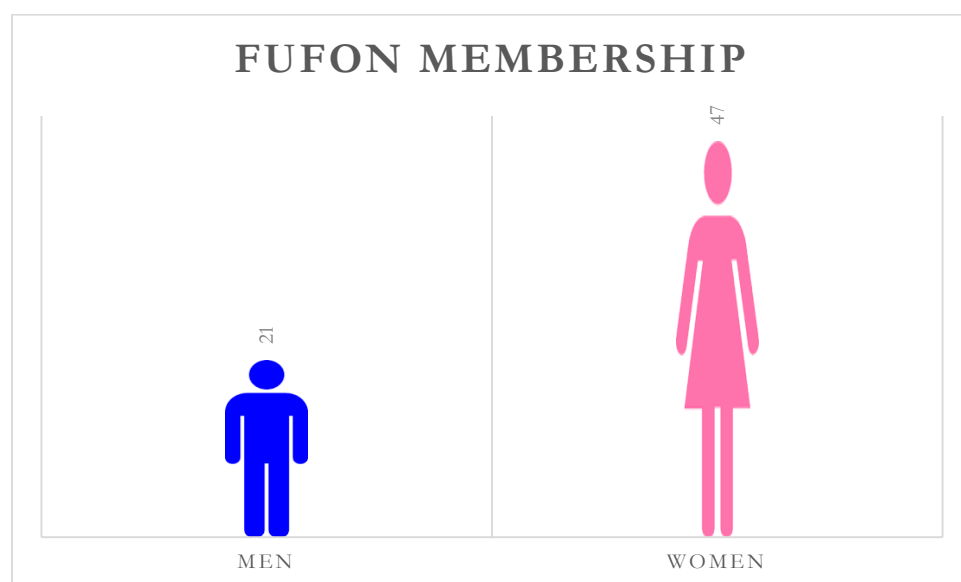
Members and Friends of the Fellowship were asked to complete a survey to provide guidance for the Ministerial Search Committee. The survey ask respondents about the following topics:

- Priorities for the new minister
- Most important duties for the new minister
- Objectives for Sunday services and the most important elements of Sunday services
- The most important attributes for their continued participation at the Fellowship
- Their religious orientation
- Attitude toward growth
- Objectives for next two to five years
- What they liked most or viewed as a strength
- Areas of greatest concern
- What they would like the new minister to concentrate on

The Committee received 55 completed surveys and the results are summarized in this report. Please note that not every person answered every question and not every answer could be compiled numerically but the general themes and aggregate scores are presented here to provide a picture of the community's over-arching views.

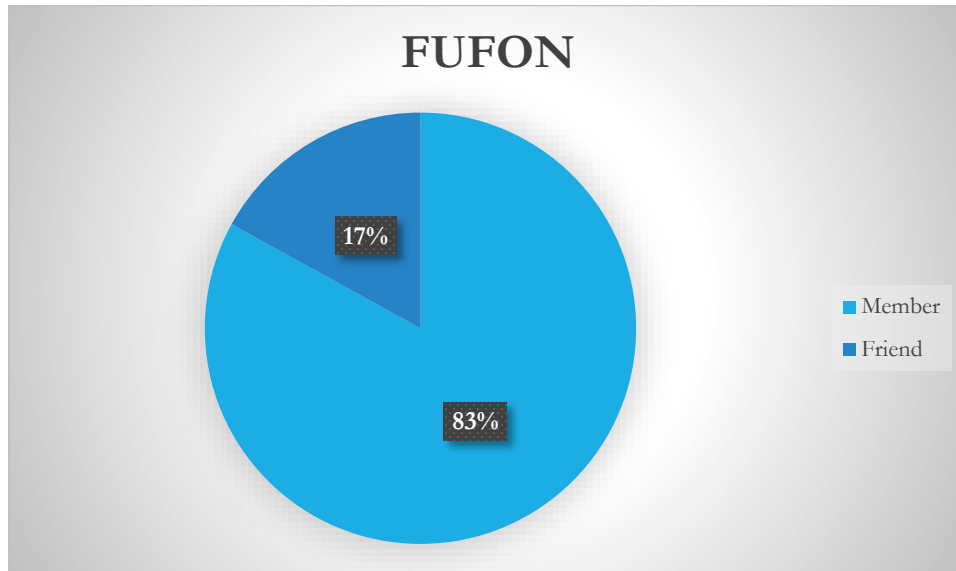
Demographics

FUFON members are mostly women with 70% of the members identifying as female.



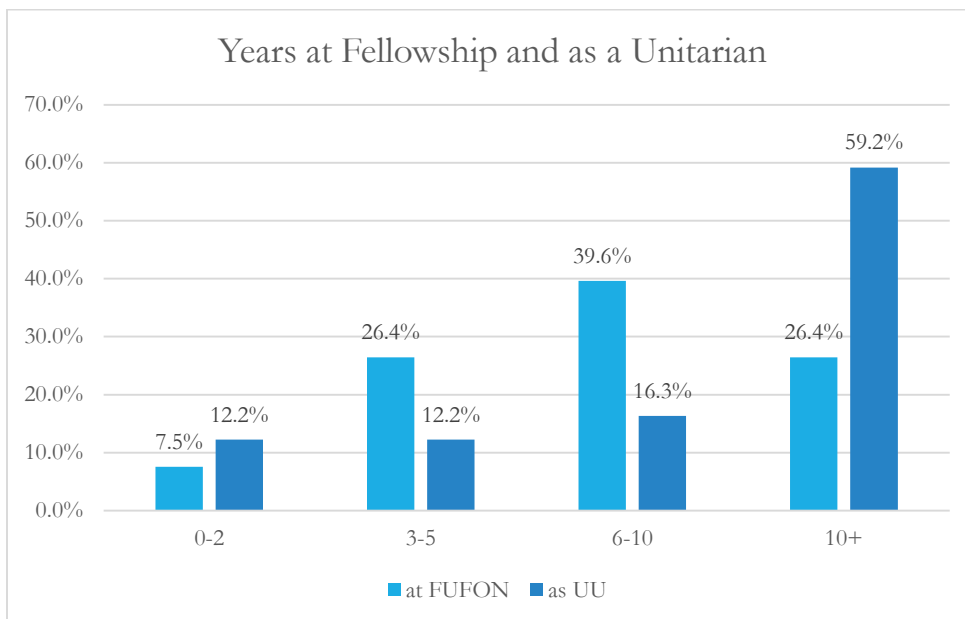
Who responded? The following is a breakdown of the respondents:

- The majority of respondents were members:

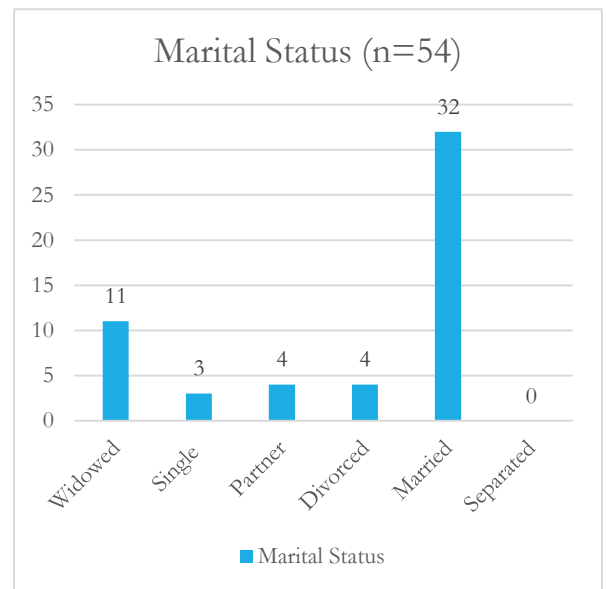
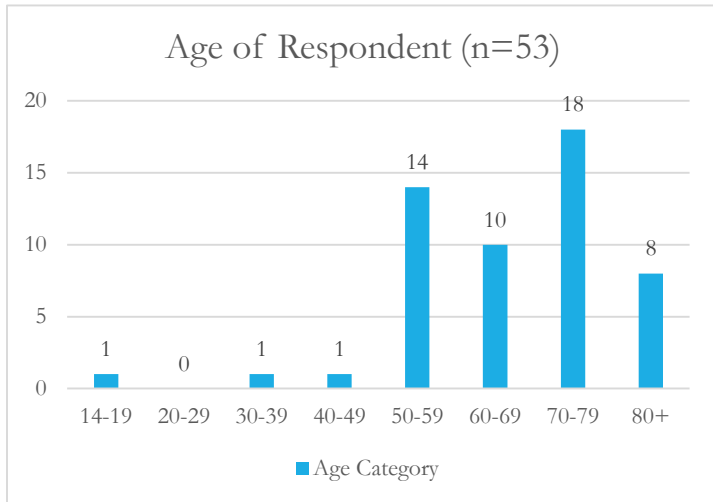


- Member n=44
- Friend n=9

A little over half of respondents reported having been associated with other UU congregations (55.4%) with the median answer for years at the Fellowship as 6-10 years.

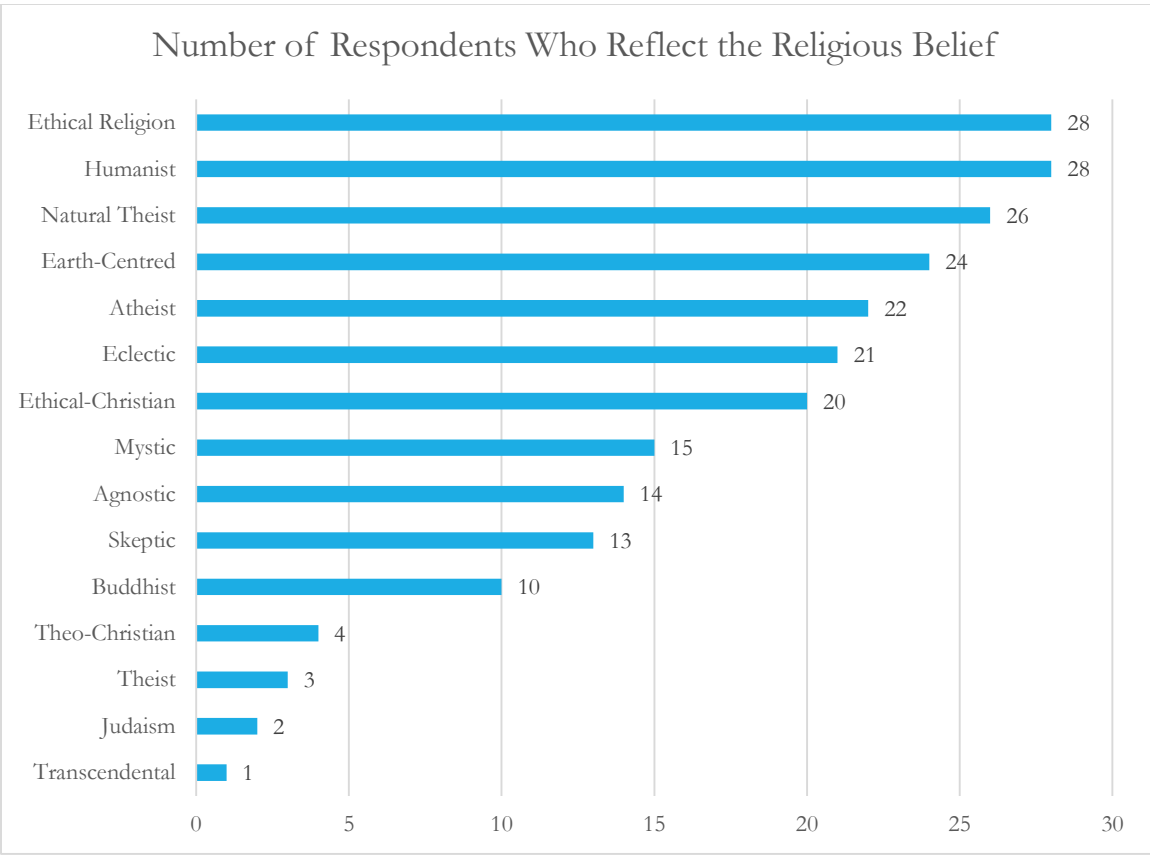


Respondents tended to be older as is reflected within the Fellowship’s membership with 67.9% of respondents being age 60 or older. Two other demographics included in the survey were marital status and ages of children. By far, the majority of respondents were married and those with children were few and far between. Only one respondent had a child aged 7 to 11 and three reported having children ages 12 to 18. No respondents had children from ages 0 to 6.¹



Respondents were asked to identify their religious orientation or foundation and were provided a list of religious beliefs from which they could choose as many as they wished. The results indicate our Fellowship’s greatest tendencies are to view Jesus as a great moral teacher (ethical Christianity) rather than as divine (Theological Christianity); to identify the purpose of religion as to encourage ethical development (Ethical religion); a commitment to showing respect and devotion to the natural world (Naturalistic theism); to believe human nature is the basis for defining and achieving an ethical world (Humanism); and, finally, we desire to celebrate the sacred circle of life (Earth centered spirituality). Lowest among the items on the respondent’s lists were theism, theo-Christianity, and Judaism. These results indicate that fewer members believe in the divine or a God such as the one associated with Christianity and Jewish traditions. The following bar picture ranks the results which includes multiple answers for each respondent.

¹ Despite survey results, it should be noted that the number of families with children regularly attending services grew significantly last year giving us the welcome challenge of modifying our CRE space to accommodate more children.



Community Priorities and Desires

This section shares the highlights from the survey and provides information that may help the Ministerial Search Committee recommend a candidate who is a good match for the Fellowship and help candidates decide if they are interested in and willing to support the Fellowship achieve its goals.

Priorities for the New Minister

For starters, respondents were asked to rank a list of items as priorities for the new minister. 36 of the 55 respondents ranked these items. An additional 15 “rated” the items. The two systems were combined and weighted resulting in a list of priorities as listed in Figure 1. The width of each item demonstrates its priority in comparison to other items with highest priorities at the top of the funnel and the lowest priorities at the bottom.

Figure 1. Ministerial Priorities (n=36)



Other priorities identified by respondents included the importance of administration of the Fellowship's Winter Weather Shelter; a strong desire to see the new minister understand and embrace the existing FUFON culture while guiding the Fellowship into the future; a desire for the new minister to contribute to deepening spiritual meaning for the community; and finally, to craft and skillfully deliver good sermons.

Duties for the New Minister

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of different duties for the new Minister. The most important duties were decisively Sunday service sermons, building community with the Fellowship, and expanding the membership and vitality. Least important were administration, personal counselling, and active participation in denominational activities. Several items were important but not deemed a priority including adult programming, children programming, and youth ministry. Given the current age of our membership, it is likely these three will increase in importance as the composition of the membership grows to include more members who are younger and/or have children. Table 1 organizes the results in terms of the percentage of respondents who deemed them Very Important or Important and Least Important for each duty.

Table 1. Importance of Different Ministerial Duties

64 to 91% Most Important Duties

- Sunday service (sermons)
- Building community within FUFON
- Expansion of membership and vitality

45 to 55% Moderately Important Duties

- Adult Programming
- Children Programming
- Youth Ministry
- Social Action
- Making Pastoral Calls

30 to 44% Least Important Duties

- Building Interfaith Community Within the Larger Nanaimo Community
- Active Participation in Denominational Activities
- Administration
- Personal Counselling

Respondents contributed a number of other ideas related to duties. Many of these were considered priorities. Themes from these comments indicate that our members seek a minister who possesses a number of skill sets to support our varied desires. He or she will need to be strong in ensuring our actions align with Unitarianism but at the same time be a team builder, peacemaker, and flexible enough to share leadership. He or she will need to be comfortable enough to be vulnerable and grow with the Fellowship and intuitive and engaging enough to get to know individuals personally and then enlist and support them in contributing their unique gifts and talents and quick to offer gratitude for those gifts all while being mindful of the limits of our aging membership. Respondents would like meaningful and inspirational sermons and rites of passage. Some respondents want the minister to be the face of the Fellowship out in the broader community and the conduit to the larger UU world. Some respondents would like the Weather Shelter's administration to not be the focus for the new minister. Many expressed a desire for the minister to respond to the congregation's desires rather than the congregation responding to the minister's desires. Lastly, several expressed a desire for the new minister to help make the congregation more comfortable talking about financial matters and managing internal conflicts in ways that are more positive, more direct, and less adversarial.

Objectives for Sunday Services

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of different objectives for Sunday services. Responses were categorized in rank order by the percentage of respondents who deemed them as Important or Very Important and Least Important for each category. The results (see Table 2) put the encouragement of compassion and generosity as the most important objective and the learning of history and tradition as least important.

Table 2. Importance of Objectives for Sunday Services

77% to 82% Most Important Objectives

- To encourage compassion and generosity
- To be a source of inspiration and wonder
- To help us better understand ourselves
- To encourage spiritual growth and change

59% to 68% Moderately Important Objectives

- To provide intellectual challenge
- To encourage respite and reflection
- To spur action on convictions

30% to 52% Least Important Objectives

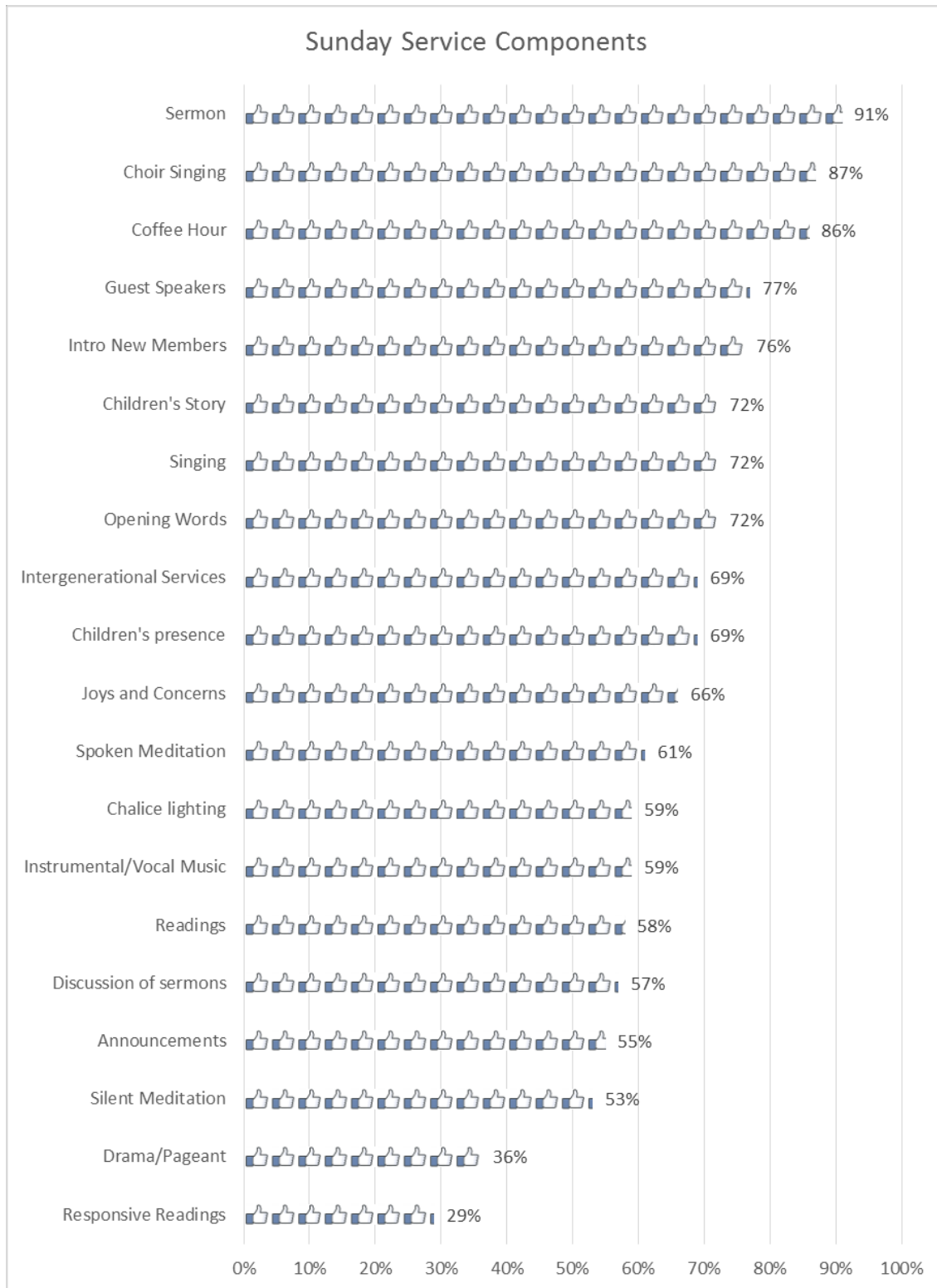
- To share individual feelings and beliefs
- To learn religious tradition and history

Respondents also added ideas for other objectives that were not in the original list such as the inclusion of children in a more active capacity (such as in passing the collection plate); the need to ensure inclusion of messages from a wide variety of sources (such as nature, art, music, and philosophy); and challenging us to be better people (kinder, gentler, actively changing and growing).

Sunday Service Components

Respondents were asked to rate a list of Sunday services components in terms of the importance of each. The following table presents components as ranked-order based on ratings of Very Important and Important. The components that fewer than 50% deemed as important were drama and pageant presentations and responsive readings. It is difficult to interpret this response as these components occur with relative infrequency in Sunday services.

Table 3. Importance of Different Sunday Service Components



Important to Continued Participation at FUFON

Respondents were asked about different attributes that were important to their participation at the Fellowship. Not surprisingly, the top items were Sunday Services, Building Community and Sense of Community. The least important were CUC Regional/National Involvement, Pastoral Care, and Children's Programming. The following table presents the full results.

Table 4. Important to Participation at the Fellowship

82% to 96% Very Important

- Sunday Services
- Building Community
- Sense of Community
- Intellectual Stimulation

56% to 80% Moderately Important

- Minister Leadership
- Choir
- Spiritual Growth
- Social Activities
- Social Action
- Meeting Place/Appropriate Physical Facilities
- Adult Programming

15% to 45% Least Important

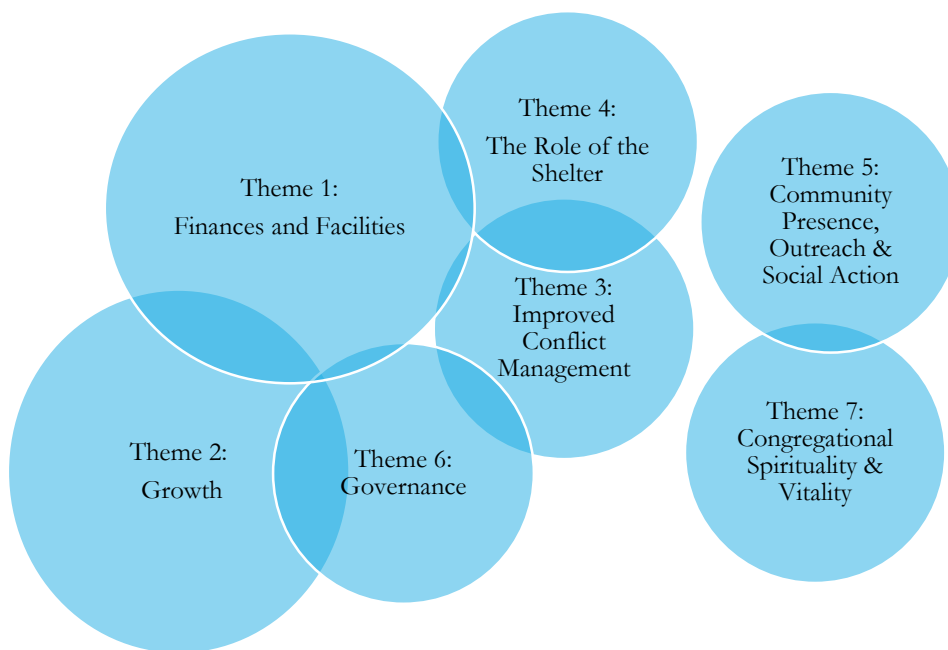
- Children's Programming
- Pastoral Care
- CUC Regional/National Involvement

Respondents added several attributes that they deemed important for their participation at the Fellowship and it is not clear exactly how important these are to the community as a whole but these additions represent the diversity and range of needs and desires that are part of the FUFON community.

Desired Accomplishments for FUFON in the Next Two to Five Years

Respondents were asked about the main things they would like to see the Fellowship accomplish in the near future (two to five years). In reviewing these responses, several themes became evident. The primary themes were (1) Finances and Facilities; (2) Growth; (3) Improved Conflict Management; (4) The Role of the Shelter; (5) Community Presence, Outreach and Social Action; (6) Governance; and (7) Congregational Spirituality and Vitality. Some of the themes may be outside the role of the new minister as defined elsewhere in these results. However, all responses are important when considering the full picture of the Fellowship and its varied aspirations. Together, these seven themes point to a number of opportunities for growth beyond just membership as together they reflect a desire to become a stronger, better functioning organization that is diverse, engaged, and able to weather difficulties constructively.

Figure 2. Desired Accomplishments in 2-to-5 Years



Theme 1 – Finances and Facilities

One of the most recurring themes related to finances and facilities. Many folks would like to reduce the mortgage debt and improve the facilities. These folks offered a number of suggestions such as paying off the mortgage; developing a strategic plan; educating the membership; maintaining and upgrading the current facilities; and expanding options for rental income. Sample responses include:

- Reduction of our debt and pay off the mortgage; upgrade the kitchen; maintain/enhance/upgrade the building; strategic planning for financial and building needs; more financial stability; upgrade building to attract other rental opportunities; run a program such as CUC's Dreams + Dollars to redevelop the financial culture; run financial literacy workshops for board members and committee chairs; replace carpet; relocate to a more aesthetically pleasing building with lots of natural light; ensure we have tenants.

Theme 2 – Growth

Growth is a critical issue for the future of the Fellowship as reflected throughout the responses. There is a strong desire for more families and younger members and there is some uncertainty as to whether the current building is suitable for attracting and growing the community as desired. Lastly, several responders linked the need for sufficient members to maintain adequate volunteer base for achieving the community's objectives and engaging in more visible community outreach. Sample responses include:

- Grow to a pastoral sized congregation and especially with more families with children; attract more young people; attract more youth; deal with building/space issues for growth; develop sufficient members to sustain volunteer work and community outreach; find a building to handle growth

Theme 3 – Improved Conflict Management.

Several respondents suggested that there is a need to improve the way that conflict is handled when differences emerge. Respondents suggested that work may need to be done around right relationships and skill development and awareness of human nature when in conflict. Sample responses include:

- Understand human nature more, become less reactive, improve ability to handle and minimize conflict, need to work on right relationships, and to care for each other

Theme 4 - The Role of the Shelter

The Weather Shelter and its role surfaced several times making it emerge as an area of potential conflict. Some respondents would like to transition the shelter to an independent society or locate

some other society to handle it. Others would like the shelter to continue with more fundraising activities to support it while some others want to keep the shelter but have the Fellowship stop receiving any of the income that is currently associated with providing the shelter. Clearly, this is a contentious issue and one that will require deep discussion and consideration in the future and an opportunity for the Fellowship to practice conflict management skills (as identified in Theme 1). Sample responses included:

- Integrate the shelter with other social agencies and move toward a sound financial footing; transition shelter to an independent society with community support; phase out the shelter and turn over to a separate society; care for the homeless without depending on income generated by this action; taking public praise for doing good work when we are being paid to do it strikes me as false charity; remain active and continue shelter; conduct more fundraisers for the shelter; reach out into the community to develop a non-profit society to share in the running of the shelter

Theme 5 – Community Presence, Outreach and Social Action

Respondents are clearly committed to living their values and becoming visible in the broader community. Individuals expressed the desire for taking action and some made suggestions for types of initiatives. Sample responses included:

- Increasing our Unitarian presence in our community; developing a broader profile so that the community knows we are here and who we are; explore other socially responsible activities; involvement in community projects/causes; get behind the campaign to promote social justice for Palestinians; outreach to the poor and disadvantaged; participate in action to protect the environment; increase our visibility in the community such as litter pick-up, broom busting, invasive species removal, shoreline clean-up, etc.; help refugees get settled; new social action such as First Nations people

Theme 6 – Governance

Issues related to governance were many with concerns as to how leadership can be shared and how committees and volunteer management can be more effective. Comments were both general and specific with detailed ideas for what needs to be changed including the need for skill development and training for committee members. Examples included:

- Adopt a Shared Leadership Model and use Appreciative Inquiry; more participation by the newer members; get more individuals to commit to serve on the board; more individuals to staff committees; treat the learning of organizational skills as spiritual development; develop a board and committee education program, one that will raise ideas and consider means for redevelopment of the organization, using resources such as Alice Mann's *The In-Between Church: Negotiating Size Transitions*, and *Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Congregations in Decline*; run workshops for leading effective meetings and policy development processes so that

members can learn the skills necessary to maintain open, democratic process within the congregational polity – these skills particularly include welcoming diversity of opinion and working creatively with differences and disagreement (e.g., using a gradient of agreement process); restructure the Board to include more effective succession of the President role

Theme 7 – Congregation Spirituality and Vitality

There is a desire among respondents to have a minister who will stay and help strengthen the religious education programming and help foster stronger connections between members of the congregation. The words “settled” and “full-time” were used many times. Examples include:

- Attract and retain a full-time settled minister; strengthen religious education for adults and children; stabilize ministry; strengthen our sense of community within FUFON; stabilize the children’s program

FUFON’s Strengths and Aspect Most Liked

When asked what they liked most about FUFON or what they viewed as the strengths of the congregation, respondents had a lot to say. The majority of responses related to the people and the community. The following summarizes what were most appreciated:

- The community and the people
 - Open-mindedness, friendliness, helpfulness, interesting, welcoming, inclusive, hard-working, striving, experienced, talented, accommodating, inter-connected, flexible, respectful, willing, acceptance, open-minded, supportive, caring, compassionate, dedication, like-minded, enthusiastic, genuine, sincere, free-thinking, non-judgmental, authentic
 - Supportive during hard times
 - Sense of community and feeling of family connection
 - Take action to promote well-being of people
 - People I admire
 - Our diversity
 - Shared values
 - Our principles and sources
 - Persevering in the face of adversity
- Music
 - Choir
 - Music director
- Sunday services
 - Intellectual stimulation and inspiration
 - Life-long learning

- Variety of topics covered and themes
- Deep questions
- Eclectic
- New ideas
- Interesting
- Expansive sermons
- Makes me grateful and able to approach the world in a more positive manner
- Social justice activities
 - We bring social action to life
 - We live our values
 - Interest in community and social justice
- Committees
 - High-functioning
 - Fiscally responsible
- The building
 - Great asset
- Workshops
- Group meetings
- Lots of atheists
- Loving kindness
- Faith education for children
- Coffee
- Fun activities

Greatest Concerns About the Congregation

Asked about their greatest concerns, respondents shared a number of concepts. Many of these themes surfaced elsewhere in the surveys too. Eight main areas of concern emerged: (1) Conflict Management; (2) Finances and Debt; (3) The Building and Facilities; (4) Congregational Composition; (5) Relationship Challenges; (6) Administrative Challenges; (7) Quality and Nature of Sunday Services; and (8) Growth and Retention of Visitors. These types of challenges are common in communities and can be dealt with positively and effectively with strong leadership and process. Example comments for each category are summarized below:

Figure 3. Greatest Concerns at FUFON



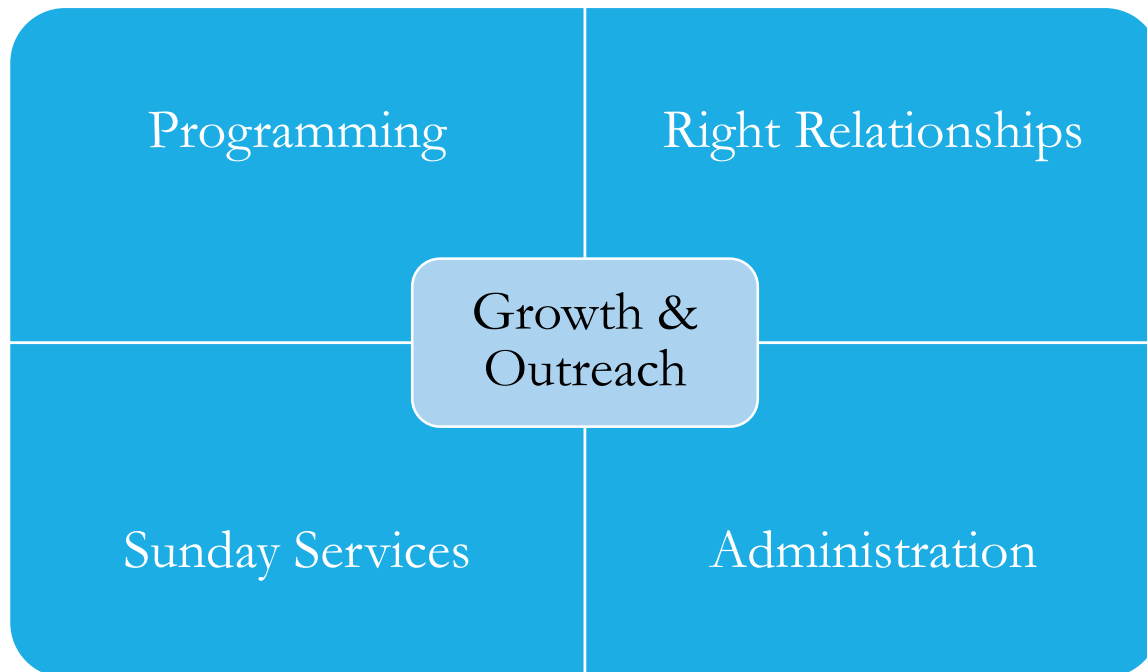
- **Conflict Management**
 - What right relationship looks like
 - How conflicts have been handled
 - Uses a culture of denial to avoid conflict
- **Finances and Debt**
 - Stretching financial resources too far
 - Not self-supporting but reliant on shelter funds
- **The Building and Facilities**
- **Congregational Composition**
 - Lack of diversity
 - Aging membership
 - Not enough younger adults
 - Lack of families and children
 - Not enough teenagers
- **Relationship Challenges**
 - Resistance to change

- Lack of tolerance re non-secular references in sermons
- Too little praise/gratitude
- Too much criticism
- Not enough joy
- Need more informal/social interaction
- **Administrative Challenges**
 - Burn out among overworked volunteers
 - Lack of shared leadership
 - Gendered division of labor
 - Over-management
 - Need for empowered leadership
 - Lack of stable minister
 - Stretching human resources too far
 - Inappropriate “leadership” by the minister
 - The presence of an “old guard” of leadership formally and informally
- **Quality and Nature of Sunday Services**
 - Lack of spirituality
 - Lack of variety
 - Too ‘church-like’
 - Lack of thought-provoking services
- **Growth and Retention of Visitors**
 - Lack of or slow growth

New Minister Should Concentrate On:

Respondents wanted the minister to focus on a number of things and woven throughout is the desire and need for growing the membership especially among younger adults and families. Every element respondents ask the new minister to focus on can relate directly to growing the community and raising the Fellowship’s profile in the community – Excellent programming for adults, youth, and children; high-quality Sunday services; interrelationships that are founded on respect, clear communication, and equality; and expanding and empowering committees can be the basis for the desired growth and outreach activities. The following is a summary of how each of these categories were described by respondents.

Figure 4. Desired Focus For New Minister



Growth and Outreach

- Bring new folks into the church
- Congregational growth and vitality
- Using his/her unique gifts to providing leadership to move forward with our growth and to bring us to a pastoral sized congregation that values right relationship
- Community building and communication
- Growth in the children's program and more young families
- Expand cultural diversity

Sunday Services

- Captivating and thought provoking services
- Interesting and/or inspiring services
- Excellence
- Challenge us to be better people

Programming

- Child and youth programs
- Family programming
- Adult spiritual education

Right Relationships

- Respect abilities of members and seek our wisdom and intelligence
- Have empathy and compassion
- Find out who we are and take the lead from us on what new initiatives we take on
- Collaborate and share leadership
- Able to help us move beyond the past and into a harmonious future
- Comfortable with building consensus
- Keep the values of UU alive
- Foster community
- Work on creating harmony
- Get to know us
- Work with committees and board on understanding small group dynamics

Administration

- Support, encouragement and guidance for committees while embracing the priorities and goals established by the Board
- Get more members to share committee responsibilities
- Support committees
- Remove siloes
- Build on accomplishments in recent years with more electronic and social media
- Leadership
- Facilitate us achieving our goals and don't try to manage and direct everything

In addition, a number of respondents referenced characteristics and skills they would like to see in the new minister. The overarching theme is a desire for a person who is well-adjusted, confident and competent and who possesses leadership qualities that motivate and empower others. The following summarizes the main themes related to personal skills and traits:

Personal Characteristics

- Seasoned enough to be able to receive feedback
- Grounded and secure in self
- Comfortable with consensus
- Happy, warm, and caring
- Curious enough to get to know members and what they care about
- Not easily overwhelmed
- Positive and supportive

Skills

- Teambuilding
- Conflict management and resolution skills – able to negotiate tricky interpersonal issues respectfully
- A focus on spiritual leadership
- Leading by example as a facilitator in supporting and enabling the board, committees and other staff.

Conclusions:

In reviewing all the desires and concerns of respondents, one can conclude that our next minister needs to be a very talented and charismatic person who is strong, capable, endearing, and engaging and who can manage conflict in ways that are transformative. In order to achieve the goals desired, this person will need to be a leader who is kind and warm and thus able to attract and enlist others in working together to grow FUFON toward becoming a pastoral size congregation. At the same time, he or she will need to include the voices of community members in key decisions and work hard to empower committees and lay leaders to be part of what will likely be a lot of change. The new minister needs to be interested in growing his or her job into a full-time ministry rather than in taking on a half-time job and working towards retirement.