

2017 Congregational Survey Board of Trustees Summary

There's strong support at Unity-Unitarian for how the church is doing at achieving its goals or "ends." That's one of several conclusions supported by the results of the annual congregational survey, which 272 Unity members completed this spring. The Board of Trustees, the Executive Team and the whole congregation benefit from this invaluable resource; we are grateful that so many of our fellow Unity members take the time to respond.

For the Board of Trustees, here are some of the survey results that stood out for us.

1. The survey reveals a high degree of loyalty to Unity among the respondents. In response to the question "would you recommend the church to a friend or relative?" 78 percent gave a strongly positive rating. With confidence in institutions eroding generally, it is heartening that the strength of reported loyalty to the church has increased steadily over the last 10 years.
2. The survey asked members to rate Unity's progress toward each of 15 specific ends, which are grouped into the three categories — within (in our individual spiritual lives), among (in our relationships to each other), and beyond (in our engagement with the broader community and world). For each of those three categories (and for each of the 15 individual ends), the average ratings were above 4 on a 5 point scale. This reflects strong support for how well Unity-Unitarian is doing at meeting our ends.
3. While the responses were strong overall, some goals received noticeably higher or lower results, differences that are statistically significant to a 95% degree of confidence. These differences demonstrate that perceptions of our success on meeting a specific end can vary quite significantly within a category.
 - The higher results: Serve as a trusted and visible leader, partner and advocate for the creation of a just society and a sustainable environment (beyond); Open our doors and our hearts to those who seek comfort, courage and meaning (beyond); Are generous with our time, talents, resources and creativity (among); Are careful stewards of our resources and facilities (among)
 - The lower results: Build authentic relationships with people across differences, in the spirit of humility and reverence (beyond); Sustain and encourage one another in love (among); Value our shared ministry and practice it with integrity (among); Participate actively in the larger Unitarian-Universalist community (beyond).
4. While the average ratings for the three categories (within, among and beyond) were relatively similar across the categories, we did see somewhat stronger results for the beyond-related ends, compared to the within- and among-related ends. This

sustains a pattern that has emerged in recent years, with the ratings for the beyond-related ends increasing steadily to have parity with the other two areas. Comparing specifically the within-related ends and the beyond-related ends, this is the first time in a nine year stretch where the beyond end evaluations were higher than the within end evaluations, albeit by a small amount. This trend suggests a perceptual shift, that our inward and outward ministries are now more in balance.

5. For the survey as a whole, we saw lower scores overall compared to 2016, although scores were similar to the results from 2014 and 2015. (Factors that could be contributing to the change include the longer time it took to complete the 2016 survey, as well as the more stressful political environment, which could trigger perceptions that there's more for Unity-Unitarian to take on in this context.) While the Board does not see the drop for 2016 as a cause of concern, we will be watching for how things shape up in this regard next year.
6. There were some differences in the results among various groups within the church. The board considers these differences to better understand the perspectives of congregation members.
 - White families gave higher ratings than those who identify as families of color.
 - Older respondents gave higher ratings than those who are younger.
 - Respondents with no children at home gave higher ratings than those with children at home.
 - Respondents who pledge financial support to the church gave higher ratings than those who did not.
 - Respondents who attend worship services more than one time a month gave higher ratings than those who attend just once a month.

One way the survey results have already been used this year is in helping the board plan for renewal of Unity's ends statements in 2018. The renewal process focuses on a "powerful question" that the Board and Executive Team discerned, in part, from the survey responses. The church's executive team reviewed the survey results as well, and uses the results to inform church programming for the coming year. The portion of the survey that asked about spiritual priorities — the set of Spirit Map questions — is particularly helpful for the executive team.

The value in the survey is not just in the numerical results, but also in the comments that are shared. The board reads through all of the comments, deepening our understanding of the responses.

Sharing results

This summary and detailed reporting of the survey results are shared with the congregation. That happens through an e-mail in October, the website, the Congregational Meeting in November and Wellspring Wednesday sessions in the fall.

Seeking feedback

Share any thoughts you have about the survey with any of the trustees. You can find our contact information on the unity website (unityunitarian.org) or stop us when you see us at church.

The board of Trustees appreciates the critical roles Laura Park and Bill Etter play in completing this project and analyzing the results.

Fall 2017