

Summary Report on the 2012 Annual Congregational Survey

The information from this survey is of critical importance to both the Board and the Executive Team. We use the results to evaluate our progress and identify areas in which we need to dedicate additional time and resources. What follows is a summary of the results of our most recent survey. For those interested in more detail there is a power-point presentation of the complete results on our website (<http://www.unityunitraian.org/>) – click on the “congregational survey” tab.

Background

First, thank you to all 250 who completed our survey last spring. As a reminder the questionnaire is divided into five sections.

1. The first concerns our 2009-2013 Ends Statements: 15 questions partitioned into three groups – (a) within (e.g., a rich and diverse worship life that nurtures, challenges and inspires), (b) among (e.g., people of all ages feel welcome and connected across identities including race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, politics and education), and (c) beyond (e.g., advocating in the public area for liberal religious values in response to prejudice, injustice and oppression).
2. The second set of 18 questions look at “Us as individuals” (e.g., believe your life has meaning and purpose).
3. The third section consists of a single “loyalty” question about “recommending UCU to a friend or relative”.
4. The fourth section consists of a set of questions dealing with the Anti-Racism Leadership Team’s mission of “leading the church in developing and living out an intentionally anti-racist identity in all aspects of church life”.
5. The questionnaire concludes with a set of demographic and behavioral questions, including some dealing with use of social networking sites like Facebook.

One additional question was added to this year’s survey regarding communication about Unity Tomorrow: I received timely and accurate information about the Unity tomorrow project.

Key Findings

Characteristics of Sample

The drop in response rate the last two years is noticeable. This may represent a new “normal,” respondent fatigue, survey being “under-promoted,” or some combination of all these factors.

Gender and age profiles this year are more similar to previous years after deviations last year.

Ends Statements - Macro Level Performance

The pattern of aggregate scores for the Within items being greater than the aggregate scores for the Among items and these Among scores being greater than the aggregate scores for the Beyond items continues in 2012 as in prior years. Said in shorthand: Within > Among > Beyond.

Negative trends for Among and Beyond macro scores stabilized in 2012, largely due to (statistically significant) improved performance on Ends dealing with Unity Tomorrow: facilities management (9)¹ and investing in environmentally responsible ways (15); and the Marriage Amendment: advocating in the public arena for liberal religious values (11).

Ends Statements - Micro Level Performance

At the micro level there are Ends that show statistically significant positive improvement year over year - Ends 9, 11, and 15 mentioned above.

There are also individual Ends that show lower (statistically significant) performance year over year. These are Ends 4, 8, 10, and 14: Lifelong opportunities for growth, learning, engagement and racial healing (4), Shared ministry is actively encouraged and the circles of power, opportunity and access are intentionally widened (8), A commitment to anti-racism and racial healing in covenant with people and communities of color (10), and Full and active participation in the larger UU community (14). For each of these Ends, the 2012 score is the lowest recorded over the four measurement periods. Two of the four mention racial healing and/or commitment to anti-racism. And there is the perception that we continue to lose touch with the larger UU community.

Performance on "Us as Individuals" items (beliefs, feelings, behaviors)

Most scores on the individual items are lower in 2012. There are statistically significant decreases on several items, and no items with year over year (statistically significant) positive change.

The items with statistically significant year-over-year (y/y) decreases are the following:

17. Understand the relationship between your own spiritual development and your actions in the area of social justice.
22. Feel personally connected to Unity Church's Ends Statements (mission, vision, and goals).
23. Feel a sense of belonging to a religious community within UC.
25. Believe your actions contribute to the well being of UC.
28. Have experienced real transformation/transformational moments in your life
29. Have experienced real transformation/transformational moments during the last 12 months.
31. Live a life of service.
32. Work on issues related to your own spiritual development on an ongoing basis.
33. Have a sense of joy in your life.

¹ The numbers in parentheses throughout this summary refer to item numbers in the survey.

It seems like a "downer" of a year: lowest levels over past four years of connection to UC and its Ends (items 22, 23, and 25); living lives of service and joy are at four year lows (items 31 and 33); experiencing transformation has taken a hit (items 28 and 29 at four year lows); finally spiritual development also suffered (items 17 and 32).

Perhaps this down year can be explained at least in part by (1) the disruption and change as a result of the Unity Tomorrow process, and/or (2) a general level of frustration with our state and national political process and lack of civility, and/or (3) the economy.

Loyalty

Would you recommend UC to a friend or relative? Willingness to recommend is viewed in the business world as a key indicator of degree of loyalty to a brand or company.

The Recommend question is asked on a ten-point scale (1-10). Net Loyalty (NL) is defined as the difference in the percent loyal (percent reporting 9 or 10) and the percent at-risk (percent reporting 1-6).

Following a clear gain in NL from 2007 to 2009, NL has plateaued or even declined slightly over the last four years.

Anti-racism Leadership Team Questions

Both non-white and white families show statistically significant year-over-year decrease in terms of "...being involved in activities that demonstrate UC's commitment to working with people and communities of color." Current levels are the lowest recorded for both groups. As noted above, two of the four Ends Statements showing their lowest scores to date mention racial healing and/or commitment to anti-racism.

Non-white families are more likely than white families to be involved in activities demonstrating UC's commitment to working with people and communities of color.

Digging a little deeper

For the last several years we have identified those items in our survey that are most associated with (correlated with) the survey item "a belief that our lives have meaning and purpose" believing that "...meaning and purpose..." is one of the fundamental things we all strive to achieve.

Key correlates this year are shown below, ranked from highest to lowest correlation (the numbers in parentheses are the 2011 ranks):

33. Have a sense of joy in your life. (3)

27. Have an appreciation of your talents and gifts. (4)
16. Believe your actions make a difference in the lives of others. (2)
18. Are satisfied with the positive impact you make in the lives of others. (6)
26. Live out your religious values in the world. (7)
19. Act in a spiritual manner. (1)

Unity Tomorrow Communication

An additional question was added to this year's survey regarding communication about Unity Tomorrow: I received timely and accurate information about the Unity tomorrow project.

Ninety-four percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, suggesting the Board of Trustees and Executive Team accomplished their goal of ensuring the congregation was kept well informed about the building project.