

Summary of Responses from Cottage Meetings and Focus Groups

This document summarizes the feedback provided by the 77 congregants (+ 7 Search Committee members) at the 10 Cottage Meetings/Focus Groups that we held in October and November. It highlights the most prevalent views expressed and will be used in our evaluation of ministerial applications to ensure we find the candidate that is a successful fit for our congregation.

Question 1: What's most important in a new minister?

A consensus is that a forward-thinking enthusiastic minister who really wants to be a part of our community would encourage more and especially younger people to join. A minister who offers strong leadership and knows traditions from other religions as well as UU activism. Someone who can bring more diversity to the congregation in all areas, including "blue collar," fire and police, students in college, small business owners. Someone who can lead us and inspire us to achieve individual spiritual growth. Good preaching is essential; we seek someone who can provide deep, challenging, and thought-provoking services that make you say, "Yes!" Someone closer to the children and willing to involve them in services and, possibly, intergenerational bonds. A minister who spends time with the congregation and greets people, knows their names, and has after-service conversations about the service.

Question 2: What should a minister know about our congregation?

We are an aging congregation. We are well-educated, interesting, friendly, respectful, accepting, kind, sociable, open, and welcoming, with a lot of humanists and atheists. We have a strong Fellowship identity and value the tradition of lay-led services in addition to minister-led worship. We have passed the 8th Principle but have yet to formulate a strategy as a congregation to live out this principle. We value high quality music of all kinds and are proud of our team of talented musicians. Social Justice, Racial Concerns, and Community Service are very important. A very small L.I. congregation will be merging with us in 2024, and they are understandably tired and grieving over the loss of their congregation. Everybody helps with everything no matter what it is. We have great team spirit.

Question 3: Looking back after our minister has been with us for a year, what will be your measures of success?

If Sunday attendance has increased, if we have progressed in significant areas, if we are moved by the sermons, if the staff is happy, if the minister is truly engaged and connected to the community and the congregation, more community outreach to other religious groups, Muslims, Baha'is, etc.

Question 4: What would make you say you are glad the minister is among you?

They spend time amongst the congregation, greet people with warmth, friendliness and openness. We've been moved by their sermons and feel a connection between minister and congregation.