

Augusta UUCC Ministerial Search Survey 2023 summary of results

In October 2023, the Ministerial Search Committee sent out the following Google survey to our congregation and had 53 responses which is about a 33% response rate. Detailed summary answers are below, with some purely objective statistical compilations of quantifiable answers and some global summaries of some very long and complex answers. All the answers are anonymous, and no one can access who wrote what. If someone needs or wants to look at the raw data, it can be made available. Overall, the answers are very strongly praising the welcoming, vibrant, active nature of the church, with many positive comments about the Sunday services, the minister, the music program, the Social Justice work, the Small Group Ministry program, and many other group activities. The major challenges include the loss of a formerly very full and busy youth and family program, and some members continued sense that the “Schism” that began in 2019 still needed more attention and resolution. Some shared the need to reach out with and work with the community more as well as look for new ways to attract more young new members. An interesting demographic statistic is that 100% of the responders identified as white, but 29% said they had a multiracial family. We attempted to place the most frequently named answers first.

Interesting demographic results to highlight include: 1) Even though the respondents were 100% white, 27% said they have a multiracial family; and 2) The ages of respondents is quite skewed to retirement ages.

1. What are your favorite things about our congregation?
 - vibrant and welcoming
 - strong social justice activities
 - our UU principles
 - Sunday Worship
 - music
 - newcomers feel welcome and at home
 - vibrant Small Groups
 - Saturday breakfasts for the unhoused.

2. What do you perceive as the three most important things our congregation does, besides Sunday Service?
 - Social Justice activities
 - provides a safe place to explore faith
 - enables strong women to leader
 - Saturday breakfasts for the unhoused.

3. On average how did you participate in the following activities?

	Weekly	1-2X/month	monthly	annually	never
Sunday Zoom Service	4	31	6	9	
Sunday Service (in church)	20	30		1	
Committee meeting	1	29	8	3	8
Social Justice activity	6	7	6	11	10
Music	13	10	2	10	15
Small Group Meeting	1	13		1	25
Read Eblast	17	29	1		
Coffee Hour		2	10	20	10
Sharing Café		2	22	9	7
Enrichment (Yoga, writing, Sangha)	11	7	5	7	9
Discussion: Seasoned Souls, Goddess/Earth	3	6	4	11	21

4. In which programs, ministry or activity did you feel most UU?
 - Sunday Worship
 - social Justice
 - Saturday breakfast
 - fundraising work crews
 - music
 - Small Group Meetings
 - other groups mentioned.
5. Which programs, ministry or activity inspires you to stretch and grow?
 - Sharing Café
 - Small Group
 - Social Justice
 - Worship
 - Music
 - Saturday Breakfast
6. Which programs, ministry or activity gives you concrete tools to live a dynamic UU life?
 - Sunday service
 - social justice
 - Small Group Ministry
 - music
7. In which programs, ministry or activity have you experienced transcendence?
 - music
 - Sunday worship
 - Saturday breakfast
 - Sangha
 - other groups

8. The congregation is generally open to change.

Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0%	2%	2%	13%	41%	38%	4%

9. This congregation has a flexible enough structure to implement new ideas easily.

Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0%	2%	2%	13%	41%	38%	4%

10. This congregation focuses on mission and greater good rather than the strong preference of some individuals.

Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2%	0%	0%	15%	30%	34%	19%

11. I am confident in our congregation's financial sustainability.

Strongly disagree		Neutral			Strongly agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0%	0%	4%	24%	36%	30%	6%

12. There is a high level of trust in the leadership in this congregation.

Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5
0%	0%	13%	64%	23%

13. We have a core group of leaders able to lead change in a non-anxious way.

Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5
0%	0%	7%	70%	23%

14. We do a good job of having difficult conversations and staying in relationship.

Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5
0%	4%	20%	63%	13%

15. Our mission and ministry continues to adapt to changing conditions in the world.

Strongly disagree		Neutral			Strongly agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0%	0%	2%	11%	32%	38%	17%

16. Considering the following roles of our future minister and their importance in different contexts—your preference, for the good of the whole congregation, for the good of the next generation.

	Your preference	Good for Congregation	For Future
Pastoral role, pastoral care, how to care for others	32	32	14
Prophetic role, imagine our future.	21	23	32
Leading overall congregational ministry	30	29	14
Inspiring and challenging Sunday service	37	24	9
Encouraging Social Justice programs	18	21	31
Developing volunteers and lay leaders	9	19	25
Fostering sense of community	29	22	29
Supervising staff	14	21	1
Providing community leadership	21	14	29
Supporting families and multigenerational ministries	13	19	34
Teaching classes and leading workshops	8	8	9

17. If you did not agree with something the minister said or did would you:

Tell the minister immediately	33%
Write a note to the minister	38%
Write to the board	5%
Tell those in your circle	10%
Stifle, keep to self	2%
Would you think it said more about yourself and less about the minister	12%
Stop coming to church	0%

18. It could be contentious if the new minister tried to change:
There was such a big variety of answers including: “became theologically conservative” to “change anything”. People said they wanted to maintain some of their favorite programs like lay ministry, music, social justice were all mentioned.
19. Spring of 2019 schism. Do you agree with the presentation? Has UUCC constructively bridged the gap? Do you feel the gap exists today? What remains to be done?
It is clear from the 41 answers that members on both sides of the issue were represented, though not equally. Many respondents commented that some who opposed the church leadership’s direction ultimately left the church and have not returned; sadness for what was lost remains. A few did not know about the schism, while a few others felt the question’s story failed to mention one individual, who stirred the strife. Respondents generally agreed with the question’s representation, felt that considerable effort has been expended to heal, and that the church is recovering and closing the gap. They specifically mentioned the restorative justice work, new covenant, and the persistence that leadership exhibits in striving to heal.
20. Other considerations.
People mentioned we need to continue to expand community involvement and outreach, find ways to attract youth, strive to keep up to date with technology, increase welcoming to different races and backgrounds and beliefs.
21. It could be unifying and energizing if the new minister tried to change:
Many people mentioned attracting young families again and doing more religious exploration programming. One mentioned creating an online RE program. More community engagement mentioned again.
22. In the absence of child and youth programs, how do you want the church to provide religious exploration?
39 responded and many said adult or multigenerational religious exploration is important to support. Many mentioned ways to attract youth and families.
23. As Maine’s capital UU church, we have been active at the state house and in political demonstrations. Are you supportive?
Out of 42 responses, 12 said they support this (two said depending on the issue), but it should not be the primary focus of the church. Several added we should not ally with a political party or become partisan. Thirty said yes to definitely or strongly yes to being supportive.

24. How important is Small Group Ministry?

40 responses and 10 said not personally important and the 30 others said important to extremely important to them and the church.

25. If you were a minister why would you choose UUCC Augusta?

Many thoughtful and enthusiastic comments about how welcoming and vibrant the members are, great music program, social justice activities, and safe, nice community and natural world.

26. How do you want to describe the congregation in three years?

Many mentioned the need to increase the numbers of youth and attract families. More community involvement and outreach was brought up by several, increase the use of the church to seven days a week, redevelop a vibrant RE program.

27. Other info.

Several people commented on ways to improve some of the questions. Several thanked us for our work. One person expressed concern about Covid and personal need for them to keep precautions and not participate fully at the church.

28. Age: 30 to 39: 4%; 40 to 49: 6%; 50 to 59: 9%; 60 to 69: 29%; 70 to 79: 44%; 80+: 8%.

29. Race?

Race	white	other
	100%	0%

30. Multiracial family?

Multi-racial family	Yes	No	Maybe
	29%	69%	2%

31. Gender identity?

Woman	Man	Fluid	Trans	Spirit	Other
69%	23%	2%	2%	2%	2%

32. Sexual orientation?

Heterosexual	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual
62%	19%	6%	13%

33. Relationship status?

Married	Committed	Widow/er	Single	Separated/divorced
58%	21%	4%	9%	8%

34. Children under 18 in home.

None	1	2
94%	2%	4%

35. Education

Professional degree: 32%; Graduate degree: 11%; Doctorate: 4%; 4 YR College: 28%; 2 YR College 2%; some college 4%; High school 2%; some High school 2%; Other 15%

36. Employment?

Retired	Part-time	Full-time	Looking	Self-employed
58%	15%	21%	2%	4%

37. Income?

<\$15K	\$15K-\$25K	\$25K-\$35K	\$35K-\$50K	\$50K-\$75K	\$75K-\$100K	\$100K-\$125K	\$125K-\$150K	\$150K+
2%	5%	7%	14%	19%	26%	14%	11%	2%