

Feb. 27, 2022 Forum Comments Summary

A. What first event or activity really made you feel connected to First Unitarian?

[Each # reflects the comments of an individual member.]

1. Vegan Potlucks. First started going to attend them. Then noticed BLM sign on building. Caused him to dig deeper to find out what we're about and really liked what he found. Likes that he can "meet allies" at our church.
2. Wife identified church as one she might be interested in attending. She knew no one in town and thought she might find like minds at a UU church. He went along, though he'd lost any desire to attend church. This was many years ago. Our then Pastor gave a sermon on a new book – "Silent Spring." Member really liked what the sermon, particularly the line, "No supernatural power will solve this (how we harm the Earth) it's up to us." They kept coming back after that. Reason #2 – someone invited them to discussion groups (6-12 members met monthly, or more frequently, at members' homes. They could either discuss a prearranged topic or just visit. Member said the discussions helped him learn and to widen his views.
3. Takes religion seriously. Started attending UU church in Iowa City. Liked the "anything goes" philosophy so came here for same.

B. What do you need from your church to feel more connected over the next year?

1. Sermon today hit home. It was very relevant to his present life situation. He's really thrilled to be with us. Likes that we have so many groups at church. It's on him to rope in his friends.
2. He fears being even more connected. Strongly desires more church members sharing their philosophies during Sunday service. Love's Amy's sermons, and strongly favors her "teaching style." But really likes hearing members' sermons now and then. Noted Elaine Imlau's recent sermon as a good example. Wants more potluck dinners. Likes Unity Circle Potlucks very much. Liked the Wednesday evening meals as well until a timing conflict made attending it impossible for him.
3. Also agrees that he would like to hear more sermons from members.

C. Some general what I consider "nuts and bolts" suggestions:

- Let after-service Zoom breakout rooms be open longer. Timed out at 10:35 – 10:40 in recent weeks and that was much too short a time to visit.
- The Zoom coffee hour breakouts are really good. Can have more personal discussion than at church with all the folks around. Can talk about more personal things on Zoom.
- Keep offering Zoom services. Zoom enables folks who are ill, out of town, or otherwise unable to be there participate. One member said he attends from work and generally works Sunday mornings so wouldn't be able to attend without this option.
- It has been hard to hear forum speakers on Zoom. Sound echoes. Maybe use a direct connection to laptop or move forums to the auditorium where the sound is better.

Made you feel connected

1. Halloween party – lots of families and children; Saturday/Sunday concerts
2. Times of occupy movement – First U members at the Capitol, pitched tents, speakers at the church. Talked about viewing of movie “Bible told you so” and discussions; LGBTQ coming together. Just a neat place.
3. First services attended had childrens sermon/story during service, showed a church doesn’t just have/hear from adults. Inclusive of kids and kids activities.
4. “Merle Fleming” (I didn’t catch all of this, but noted it was a person who was welcoming. Discussed relationship and activities enriched life.
5. Felt connected to UU (from another state) by a sermon on free choice and to vote your conscience. The message from the beginning spoke to way of wanting to live.

Need from church in the next year (which became discussion on specific suggestions)

Space to feel connected at the Table, connection. Talked about need for spontaneous, but also organized. Need for circle dinners, and use of coordinators.

Small group get togethers, again mentioned circle dinners. But especially being in someones home. Doesn’t have to be home cooked meal, could be potluck. Could have a topic. Noted need for mixed group to really engage new people.

Noted feeling connected when doing projects together. Kitchen project mentioned, but immigration work also. That gives space to feel connected to church but also the people.

Patio church, which was actually small groups on the patio in the summer. Have a topic for discussion, think together. More interactive.

Saturday church – evening service, usually smaller.

(I interpret as adult RE) but better understanding/explanation of who we are as First Unitarians. When asked what is a unitarian universalist, can readily say and talk about. Many join the church later in life and connect, but hard to explain outside church. And important for growing the church.

Need from church to feel connected

Small groups – dinners, socials; Wednesday night dinners

Soul matters, wellspring

Breakdown of the barriers to feel included

INVITATIONS

More visible social justice

LGBT Discussion group, Support group (ie, interweave)

Common themes (collated by Crystal)

Small group meetings

Meeting in the church – potluck, small group, vegan (this will be particularly difficult with upcoming kitchen renovation)

Dinner in homes – groups pre-arranged, maybe a topic

Adult RE – Unity circle, what is UU?,

Activities that unite – social justice, projects working towards together, LGBT

Invitations extended

Non-traditional formats - Hearing from our members, other service times (Saturday evening), patio church (also fits in small group)