

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines
Congregation Survey August 2020 – Pandemic Response
Report prepared by LENS of Future Church (Pandemic Response Committee)

The Lens of Future Church Committee thanks everyone who completed the survey for your tremendous response! The survey was open for response from July 29 to August 11, 2020. A total of 198 surveys were received, 194 of which were completed online and four of which were received by mail. Those of us on the Lens of the Future Church Committee were touched by the authentic, heartfelt thoughts and feelings that you expressed. The depth and richness of your sharing gives us much to work with as a congregation to strengthen our connections and adapt how we care for ourselves as a community during the pandemic and for time to come.

One thing that comes through clearly in the survey responses is that the pandemic and resulting closing of the church has profoundly impacted our ability to be in relationship with each other as individuals and as a congregation. For most this has been difficult. Many people are grieving the loss of church and the loss of relationships. At the same time, some people who found it difficult to come to church in person before the pandemic are able to participate online and feel connected in ways they didn't before. Woven throughout the survey responses are the love we feel for each other and the vibrant, determined, hopeful spirit we have.

It is evident from the demographics of survey respondents that we have a large proportion of people who are in an age group or have underlying conditions that put them at risk for serious illness if they contract COVID-19 infection. There was a strong message that we want to protect those of us who are vulnerable. As much as most people want to be able to come together again in person, they don't want to do it until it is safe for most or all of us. They want decisions about reopening to be based in science and informed by our values.

Also important is the message from approximately 10% of respondents that being able to meet in person and resume church activities very soon is extremely important to them and to our viability as a congregation.

It is evident from the responses of families with children and youth how much of value to them has been cut off with the necessary shutdown of church. It is very hard for children and youth to engage and participate in church when it must be done virtually, especially in context of having to spend so much time online for school. We are especially concerned about our children and youth and about the pressures on young families at this time.

The Lens of the Future Committee would like to recommend the following:

- Regular, ongoing outreach to individuals in the congregation (cards, emails, phone calls, etc) to maintain personal contact and caring. It can be organized so that this is something we all do and no one is left out.
- An organized small group ministry that is facilitated and uses focus questions to allow sharing of our experiences during the pandemic and to deepen relationships. It is especially important to offer new members this opportunity.
- A regular schedule of virtual programming that offers a variety of opportunities for people to be together: classes, book clubs, dinner parties, spiritual practices, discussion groups, young adult groups, parents, etc. When it is possible for small groups to meet in person, offer options for in person and online participation.
- Continue and expand the good work that has been started to serve the needs of our children, youth and parents during the pandemic.
- Work to improve the quality of Sunday services, especially in the areas of technology, music, virtual choir and creative elements.
- Invest in technology and process improvements that will serve the congregation well during the pandemic and into the future, after the pandemic is over.
- Make this survey report available to the congregation and perhaps organize two or three zoom meetings to present and discuss it.

The Lens of Future Church Committee invites you to explore responses to the survey questions in depth in the pages that follow.

In gratitude,

Kate Allen
Reba Eagles
Elaine Imlau
Mike Lauer

Andrea LeMeuse
Crystal Loving
Al Powers
Debra Rodgers

Anne Rozeboom
Margaret Schultz
Ellen Taylor

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH

Question #1

What about church is important to you?

189 responses

Response Themes	Count
Community	90
Relationships	42
Social justice, social action	31
UU Faith/Denomination/Principles/Values/Traditions	26
Spirituality (awareness, expression, growth, leadership, refuge)	25
Sunday Services	18
Connection	18
Fellowship	16
Intellectual stimulation and challenge	14
Adult programming, small group ministry, faith formation, child/youth programs	11
Liberal religion, liberal presence in community, presence for good in the world, moral leadership in the community, ethics and moral standard	11
Music	10
Sunday Sermons	8
Learning and growth	8
Service	7
Support, comfort, safe place, grounding presence	6
Inspiration	6
Inclusivity, diversity, acceptance of all	6
Ritual, marking passages	3

Sample responses
I'm tired of answering this question over and over again
Introduced me to philosophy of Humanism
Kindness of the Congregation
Provides opportunity to explore values amid a community of fellow explorers
My husband's participation
To be honest I'm not sure anymore
The people, the opportunity to live out my values and the principles, to learn grow and be awed/ inspired.
Things most important include connections with others, wise words at difficult times and acceptance of all.

Question #2**How has the church closure affected your church experience?**

188 responses

Response Themes	Count
Connections - less connected/disconnected, less engaged, less involved, less sense of community	53
Miss in-person service/activities/experience	38
Impact - no impact	20
Zoom - don't attend; don't like	17
Feel distant, isolated, alone, lonely, empty	11
Impact - little impact	10
Like virtual services, zoom meetings	9
Zoom is okay, better than nothing	8
Zoom has opened more options; we are more creative/innovative now	8
Children/Youth less connected/engaged	8
Appreciation expressed - for leadership, for safety, for virtual options	7
Impact - large impact	6
Church is less present/central to my life; church is slipping away	6
Fewer activities/opportunities	5
No interest in attending, had already stopped attending	4
Zoom - feel safe with zoom	3
Miss choir	3
Spirituality is lost	2
Miss singing	2
Finding alternate ways to connect with people	2

Sample responses
I have been worried about the ability to integrate newer members into the life of the church. Equally important, retaining current members without the face-to-face interactions will be difficult.
For the better. I suffer from extreme back pain and I love that I can participate in Sunday service, evening meet-ups, my Soul Matters group, and my own arranged Zoom meetings with church friends from the comfort of my chair at home.
I am still attending virtual Sunday services. There really isn't anything that makes my teens want to participate.
I appreciate care crew/pastoral team
I don't feel as connected, but I attend most of the virtual services. I think the Church is doing a good job to keep everyone connected under the circumstances.
I feel more removed. Church feels less central to my day-to-day life. That said, I not being critical of the closure or church leadership in this trying time.
I feel my health and safety is valued
I have mostly lost interest in church and am finding community with my family and online coworkers instead.
I haven't attended Sunday Zoom meetings - I had enough Zoom in my life that I didn't want to add another hour on the computer. So I've been disconnected from church since the pandemic started.
I usually don't attend Sunday services, so being able to watch online has enabled to participate more often.
It feels like a political statement to have the church closed. I think we are being innovative and have time for deeper reflection as we shelter at home.

Missing programs for my kids the most

Question #3

What have you missed since church closure?

182 responses

Response Themes	Count
In person connections	108
Music	37
RE and small groups	22
Sermons, Sunday services	20
The physical space	14
Community	12
Everything	10
Coffee hour	8
Church activities/classes/forums	7
Wed night	4
inspiration	3
Kids' programing/activities, kids themselves, getting child involved, child's church friends	5
Ritual	2

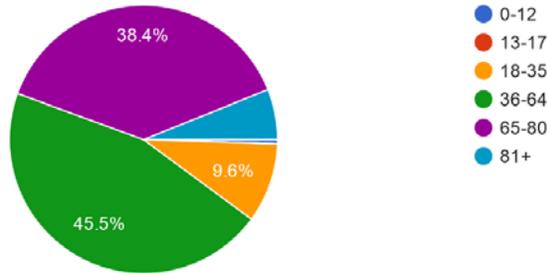
Sample responses
Wish for more on-line programing
Please print Joys and Concerns in the Newsletter
Relatively new so missing deep connections, feel need to start all over again
Appreciates zoom meetings
I hope we keep zoom meetings for some things going forward
I think yall have offered an AMAZING number of ways to connect, so nothing that stands out to me.
I wasn't able to attend before so I watched sermons on you tube
I have missed the feeling I used to come out of services with—that of a positive perspective on the world and insight into myself and humanity.
While I enjoy the Soul Matters written materials, I have found the format very formal and not helpful in making connections with others.
Would have missed church more if we were a "better/more vibrant/connected community"
Zoom meetings feel flat and uninspiring. There is not a real "Connection"
i have loved that I can be engaged in many things without traveling all over town or using my whole evening.
I've missed meeting in small groups and the dinner club (which we haven't had for a few years).

THE PANDEMIC, SOCIAL DISTANCING AND SMALL GROUPS

Question #4

What is your age group?

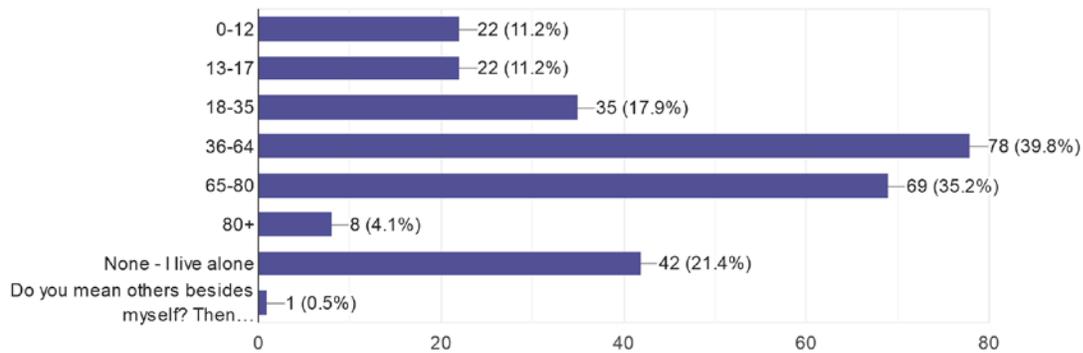
198 responses



Question #5

What age groups are in your household?

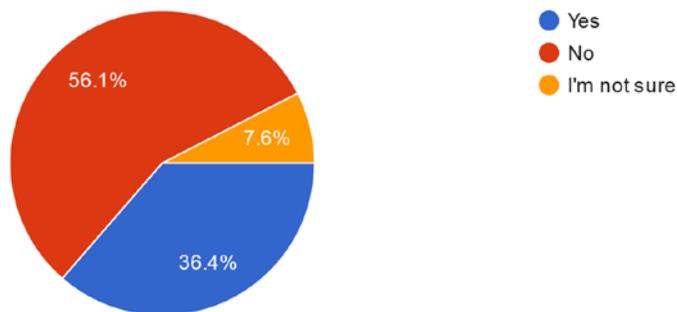
196 responses



Question #6

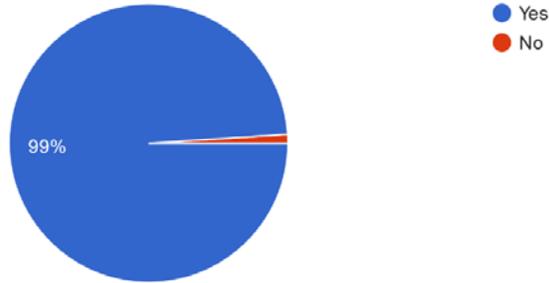
Do you have health problems that put you at higher risk for serious COVID-19 infection?

198 responses



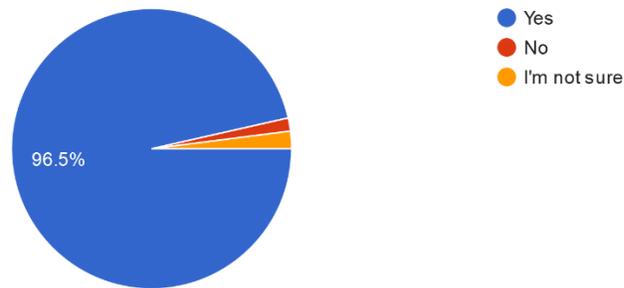
Question #7

Do you have access to internet service?
198 responses



Question #8

Do you have a device that can support online meeting software (such as zoom)?
198 responses



Question #9

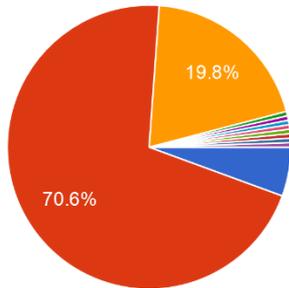
How comfortable are you using online meeting software?
197 responses



Question #10

Would you like training to use online meeting software?

197 responses



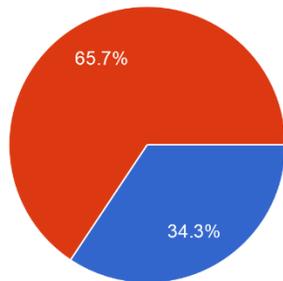
- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Yes, I would like training to zoom's ho...
- I think church needs to be help memb...
- I could host if zoom or teams
- Perhaps, when I have internet streami...
- I'd like the church to come up with so...

▲ 1/2 ▼

Question #11

Have you participated in any in-person small group activities since church closure, either on or off church grounds?

198 responses



- Yes
- No

Question #12

If yes, what was your experience?

71 responses

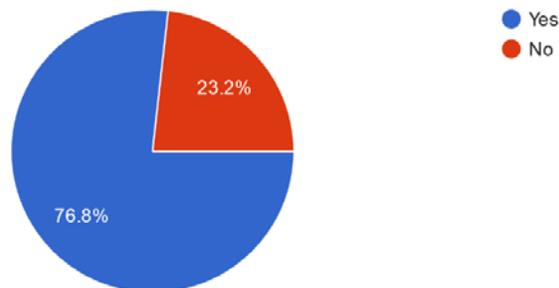
Response Themes	Count
Group (response indicated met in person in a group)	25
Joy, connection	18
Good	10
Other (difficult to tell if meeting was actually in person or only listed a class)	7
Meh	4
NO, would not meet in person	2
Two (met with one other person)	2
Anxious	1
Awkward	1
comfortable	1

Sample responses
I won't do them. Not safe
I'm not willing to do so as I am high risk
I've met with up to 6 people outside using social distance and masks and bring your own food and no bathrooms. I really enjoyed these!
It's been great to still feel connected and to deepen those connections.
Mediocre
Nurtured my soul
Pretty good. Some of our group have difficulty hearing when we socially distance
Study group. Works very well
Very positive

Question #13

Have you participated in any Zoom church services or activities?

198 responses



Question #14

If yes, what was your experience?

146 responses

Rating of Zoom church services and activities	Count
Very Satisfied/Very Good	21
Satisfied/Good/Like it	56
Ok	37
Dissatisfied/Not Good	19
Very Dissatisfied	6

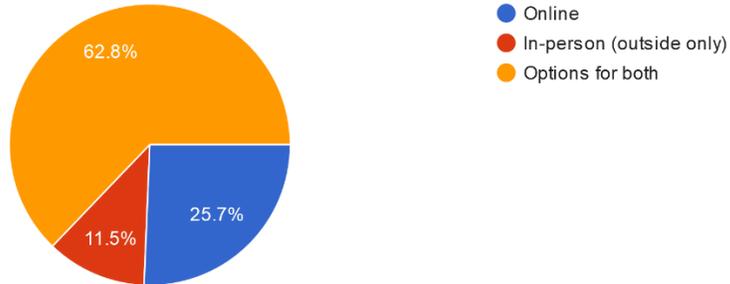
Response Themes	Count
General positive comments: enjoyably chaotic, allows participation without travel, much better than nothing, good connection during pandemic, well done	34
Positive comments about meetings: more convenient, no travel, annual meeting went well with voting & ability to see everyone, am able to attend more meetings remotes, want more online small group opportunities	4
Positive comments about Sunday services: enjoyable, uplifting, like seeing everyone's faces, about the same as before, better than nothing, appreciate everyone's efforts	24
General negative comments: hard to interact, can't use social cues, many problems with technology, sick of zoom (use it at work all day), less engaged, easy to get distracted at home, not the same as in person, passive experience, feels distant	26
Negative comments about meetings: annual meeting exasperating in content & squabbling, couldn't talk to people at annual meeting, delays & glitches in annual meeting by those unfamiliar with technology, low attendance at social time zooms	5
Negative comments about Sunday services: clumsy, poor sound quality for music (many complaints about music/sound technology), disjointed, delays in elements, not the same as in person, can't get children interested, miss choir-bells-singing, would like more variety in soloists,	34

Sample responses
Zoom works well. I would like to see some innovation in the Sunday services, especially with regard to music/hymns; I would like there to be more group activities available online (small group such as Soul Matters, book group, learning opportunities, etc.)
Very pleasant although the coffee hour is less enticing for us since we only attended church once in person. Feeling like the odd one out when everyone else knows each other makes it awkward. If there was a way to do a break out group of just the new members that might make it nicer.
Church services have been spotty. I do think we could do a better job of smoothing out the experience. Perhaps recruit a group of savvy members to coordinate the services. I am getting impatient with not hearing the choir. Other churches are managing to have a variety of music experiences, we need to do better.
Sunday services, weekly Sangha meetings, Board meetings, committee work. This has gone well for me. I'm really happy for going online with these activities with zoom because I can participate so much more. And with zoom where we can see and hear each other, I really feel that I am with the other person/people. I like it.
It's been great! I still really enjoy seeing everyone
positive experience. there is a sense of connection even over the internet. I acknowledge that it is not the same as in person, but a bridge to after the pandemic
I listened in on one of the first few services. It was fine, but I didn't find it as fulfilling as in-person services. My job shifted to all online (like many people), and after spending 40+ hours staring at a screen all week, I didn't find I wanted to look at a screen during the weekend. (My yoga studio has also shifted everything online, which I also opted out of for the same reason). It's nothing personal, and I appreciate everyone's efforts to continue offering programming. I just find that the ritual of attending and being in a physical space with others is not easy to recreate online. If I want to listen to an inspiring message, I can find that a lot of places - not just online church. That being said, until there is a vaccine I most likely wouldn't attend in-person services either. Again, I'm not unhappy with the church's efforts -- its just a difficult situation and I'm being honest about where I'm at with it right now.
Overall, I think it has been handled quite well. I like the virtual choir singing the Hymn of Valor (thanks to Bill Paxton)
Its not the same, feel clunky and I'm not a fan of the virtual experience.
Fairly good experience early on, but in the last month we have lost interest. . Sometimes technical difficulties make it substandard. I am not a fan of long children's stories that are just YouTube videos. That's not personal to our church. Breakout rooms are awkward as conversations stay at a surface level.
They work; not as well as being there, but it's a pretty good substitute!

Question #15

When small group activities resume, would you prefer:

191 responses



Question #16

Would you feel safe attending an outdoor small group activity either on church grounds or in someone's outdoor space?

196 responses



Response Themes	Count
Depends on certain factors	30
If guidelines are followed	19
Unsure / don't know	9
Depends on county COVID statistics	7
Maybe	5
Concerns about trusting other's careful habits	3
Comfortable but not likely, not interested	2
ADA accessibility	2
Depends on number of people	2
Concerns about being able to hear while distanced	1
Weather	1
Bathroom concern	1
Depends on the activity	1

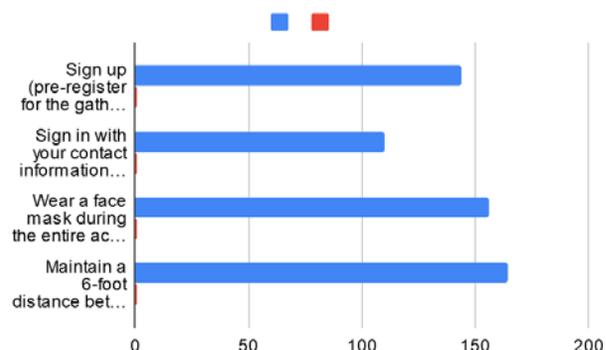
Sample responses
"I just don't know. What does ""small"" mean? I presume precautions would be taken, but it would be too easy to feel compelled to have close break-out conversations which would certainly be closer than 6 feet. "
I am not sure I would unless there was a good reason to not go online.
I would feel safe, but I haven't found small groups very helpful in the past, so I probably wouldn't go out of my way to do this.
Maybe. Need to think more on it
ONLY if clear precautions were taken and rules made clear. UU's are lovely people, but are terrible at following rules. And white privilege seems to make us incautious with this virus.
Possibly, if I felt that the others in the group are as careful as I've been. I don't feel that way about many people!!!
When? Right now? NO. Emphatically no. In 2021? Maybe. In 2022? It depends on what's going on with the pandemic.
While we would feel fine attending an outdoor activity at church, it is not likely that we would go to one. Prior to the pandemic, we had been struggling with making any meaning fun connections, despite endeavoring to show up as much as possible.
Yes, but extreme heat and weather would deter me from participating.
Yes, depending on distances--6 feet is not enough for long talks

Question #17

Which of the following would you be willing to do while attending outdoor in-person small group meetings either on church grounds or in someone's outdoor space?

184 responses

Sign up (pre-register for the gathering ahead of time	144	78.30%
Sign in with your contact information at the gathering	110	59.80%
Wear a face mask during the entire activity	156	84.80%
Maintain a 6-foot distance between yourself and others	164	89.20%



Question #18

If you have a 13-18 year old in your house, which of the following would they be willing to do while attending outdoor in-person small group meetings either on church grounds or in someone’s yard? Please check all that your 13-18 year old is willing to do. Please check whether or not you are comfortable with your 13-18 year old attending an outdoor in-person small group gathering. If you have a comment to share, please also check “other” and enter your comment.

38 responses

Sign up (pre-register) for the gathering ahead of time	14	36.80%
Sign in with their contact information at the gathering	12	31.60%
Wear a face mask during the entire activity	18	47.40%
Maintain a 6-foot distance between themselves and others	16	42.10%
I'm okay with my 13-18 year old attending outdoor in-person small group meetings	14	36.80%
I don't feel safe with my 13-18 year old attending any in-person small group meetings	9	23.70%

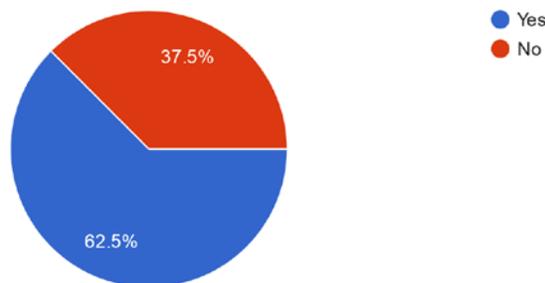
Response Themes	Count
Child not interested, would not attend	2
Not sure if child wants to participate	1

Sample responses
Please consider delaying COA until the following year. I don't think it would be the same over Zoom, and I really want my child to participate fully.
I'm not sure my child wants to participate, regardless of COVID
I would feel safe but my 13 and 15 year old would not feel inclined to attend

Question #19

Would you be willing to donate face masks, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, money or time (setting up, cleaning up, etc.) for in-person small group gatherings?

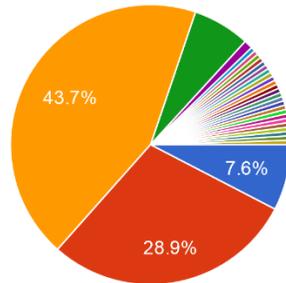
184 responses



Question #20

Thinking about reopening for in-person Sunday church services and other in-person church activities, which statement best describes your thoughts?

197 responses



- I think it is very important to resume o...
- I have reservations, but I would be ok...
- I don't think we should resume on site,...
- I'm not sure
- I would be okay with resuming on site,...
- Not coming until there is a proven vac...
- My heart wants to resume! But, my he...
- I'd like an outdoor option.

▲ 1/4 ▼

I think it is very important to resume on site, in-person church activities in the church building, including Sunday services, as soon as possible, with social distancing adaptations and with virtual options for people who choose not to attend in-person.
I have reservations, but I would be okay with resuming on site, in-person church activities in the Church building, including Sunday services, with social adaptations and with virtual options for people who choose not to attend in person.
I don't think we should resume on site, in-person activities in the building until it is safe for all members to attend.
I'm not sure.

Response Themes	Count
WAIT – until lower case rates in Iowa, until an effective vaccine is available, until it is safe for MOST people, until it is safe for everyone, until it is safe for Rev. Amy	19
Want zoom option to continue always, even after pandemic is over.	3
Want outdoor option	2
Critical to resume in person activities	2
Would not attend in person or remotely	1
Small groups of 10 or less in large room, only	1
Outside only	1
Okay if it is important to a lot of people	1
I am afraid	1
Hybrid model	1
Follow established models	1
Fear opening would cause division	1

Sample responses
If we open before it is safe for all return, I fear the division that would take place & would feel a need to justify my non-participation based solely on safety. I really want to be out & about & yet I'm hesitant because I have no idea of how the virus would play itself out in me & no one can predict that for me.
Lets get back to living and let people make their own adjustments.
My heart wants to resume! But, my heart also says, "I CARE for others and do not want anyone to get sick."

There is no rush to resume on site activities but neither can we wait until every "safe" criterion has been met.
We are making a political statement by not opening which I support. I do not think we should open until the election is over and the number of cases and deaths on the down slide.

Question #21

Under what circumstances would you be willing to attend on site, in-person church activities in the church building, including Sunday service?

176 responses

Response Themes	Count
When an effective vaccine is available	55
Masks - Everyone wears a mask, practices social distancing, and limited # of attendees, with recommended precautions, strict safety measures	41
When there is a decrease in cases	32
Small groups only	15
Not now!	13
When there is an effective treatment	8
When it is safe	6
Want a virtual option	6
When CDC criteria met, public health guidelines	5
Disinfection, hand sanitizer	5
Now!	5
With music limitations	4
When COVID is better controlled	4
Outdoors	3
Screen temperatures before entering	3
Ventilation system inspected.	3
When there is widespread testing	3
When there is a decrease in hospitalizations/deaths, hospitals not at risk	2
When the pandemic is over	2
When science says it's safe	2
None, almost none	2
If it's only option	1
When there is population immunity	1
indoors with virtual options for overflow	1
For a memorial service	1
No food sharing	1
Non-political problem	1
Staged reopening	1
When Amy can attend	1
When I feel secure about safety precautions	1

Sample responses
Being in a higher risk category, we unfortunately will be some of the last members to return to the in person services. We will feel safe once the transmission of COVID-19 drastically reduces and there is a vaccine. Until then, we hope you maintain online services even after the move to in person.
I think our plan should build from smaller gatherings first, then larger ones like Sunday services more slowly. As earlier noted, I actually prefer online esp. when weather is a factor.
I would be willing to do that now, assuming we comply with the first answer to the above question.
I'm not sure. It feels too soon to think about Sunday worship in the building. I do think small groups could meet with proper protocol.
if my husband asks me to accompany him
Not until it's safe for all people. If we start doing this earlier than safely recommended, we are excluding people who have health issues. We should be INCLUDING people per our church mission and vision. If we start in person without it being safe for everyone, we are hypocrites who aren't living UU values.
Social distancing, small crowds, face masks, perhaps a shorter time frame of meeting. The online option is very important to me. While it may be difficult for the church to navigate or put together, I think it will help meet the needs for those who want to connect in-person and those who want to connect more safely.
When I feel secure about safety precautions. I am thinking about memorial receptions teaman important function for families and friends ...how to insure everyone's safe participation. Maybe too many variables for this stage of the pandemic. But I am willing to talk and make plans on how this could happen. Having had to postpone my own father's memorial service now three times, I feel that pain of postponed closure.
When it is possible for Amy to be with us.
When the numbers are steadily declining, there's guidance from reputable experts (Fauci, CDC NOT Iowa DPH or Reynolds) when there's a vaccine. We have no business reopening until it's safe for all to attend.

VISION FOR FUTURE CHURCH

Question #22

What do you need to feel engaged and connected with our church community?

154 responses

Response Themes	Count
Virtual online activities: services, small groups, activities potlucks, regular schedule of activities online	21
Small Groups: diverse groups, women's meal group, potlucks, young parent group, book club, facilitated, Soul Matters, less formal and more intimate than Soul Matters	16
In person contact, interaction	12
Ok for now	12
Connect with others in a variety of ways	11
don't know, not sure	7
Feel connected and engaged now	6
nothing	6
I need to make effort to reconnect	5
Good services, sermons, well thought out and executed	4
acceptance, appreciation, recognition	3
Accessibility, more accommodation for disabilities	3
choir	3
communication -newsletters, emails, phone, zoom	3

community	3
discussion groups, discussion about Widening the Circle, discussion about how we are being transformed by the pandemic	3
activities with important discussion	2
confront our white privilege	2
music	2

Sample responses
More diversity of thought. While I think it is critical, we need to engage with the outside world and live our principles, I feel like the church has got hardened on many policy and political positions in the name of social justice. There is less room for a diversity of thought, ironically through efforts to reach groups facing adversity it has become less welcoming to others.
A WHOLE NEW PARADIGM
being tolerant of Republicans
Commitment to accountability, commitment to accessibility, commitment to repair and accountability by privileged folks to build right relationship with trans members and other marginalized identities.
Connection to people through genuine efforts, not effort that feels like recruitment.
Considering we are living in a pandemic, I would like to see innovative online programming - Soul Matters, Wellspring, Book clubs, Study groups, etc. I wish it was safe to meet in-person, but it is not safe to do so at this time.
Consistent and sustained focus on social justice issues. Serious confrontation of our shared white privilege. Outrageous leadership in our community (outside church) for social justice causes
discussions about how we are being transformed by pandemic
Honestly, I need in-person services, but the pandemic prevents that for me regardless of whether the church is open or not. I am not feeling engaged and connected to much of anything beyond my immediate family right now.
I do feel engaged and connected: phone calls, emails, newsletters, Zoom chats-meetings-classes-services. Plus I've gone to walk the church grounds a couple times.
I feel engaged & connected but worry about our membership in general.
Need to feel appreciated for what I was doing in Sunday services
opportunities for spiritual growth with others in congregation
phone call reach out to members

Question #23

What are your ideas or vision for our future as a congregation?

134 responses

Response Themes	Count
Community, community building, concerns about community, presence in community	30
Online option, online groups	17
Small groups: small group options, small groups outside, in person when safe, facilitated, creative, virtual evening groups, connecting seniors with juniors	15
Social justice	14
in person option when safe	13

Membership growth	13
Outreach: to city, to existing members, to underserved, to youth, to marginalized	7
Adult Ed	6
inclusivity	6
Discussion opportunities: coffee hour topics, all church read, Gadfly papers	5
Spiritual growth	5
Adaptability	3
Increase diversity - racially, youth	3
Gradual opening	3
RE children, youth	3
Accessibility	2
Connection	2
Consult new members, younger generation	2
Guest speakers	2
Maintain current skill set	2
Movement for change	2
Outdoor activities	2
Political action	2
Return to normal when safe	2

Sample responses
A thoughtful, engaged and vibrant spiritual community that inspires me to be a better person. A place where actions follow intentions.
Building leadership with the next generations. Listening to younger members. And also listening to our new members on what drew them here and how they see themselves, their families being within the community.
Building liberation and right relationship visions with our marginalized community members. Supporting the Black Spring and marginalized communities fight against oppression at local, state, and federal levels.
An commitment to accessibility and conflict resolution strategies.
CONTINUE TO BE THE SAME CHURCH
Flexibility and adaptability and multiple avenues for communication
Hopefully that we'll be an awesome virtual church for everyone. I hope we can continue to be a welcoming place for newcomers.
How to embrace all abilities. How to incorporate justice in all the ways we are together.
I have difficulty being visionary in our current climate
I have no particular vision at the moment. I believe that we have been and continue to be in a period of retrenchment. That this started well before the COVID. That we need to openly and thoroughly examine what brought us to this point. That we need to make whatever adjustments are required to maximize this moment and move past the issues that got us here. That the conclusion of the discernment. process will lead to the next actual vision.
My hope is that it will be to become a beacon of liberal faith in our world.
I hope that we will see this radical break in our activities and processes as an opportunity to think creatively about what we can do and how we can be in relationship with each other as a congregation. I would like to see social justice balanced with spiritual and emotional growth. More than other congregations i have been in over

the past 35 years, First Unitarian seems to have a culture that is reluctant to do "inner work." We don't seem to want to do any kind of self-examination or attend to group process. There are many ways in which we are healthy and vibrant. I'd like to see us grow in this aspect and become even healthier.
I need to engage with members or I will float away.
I worry that we won't make it financially as a church, so I don't have a vision right now.
I'd like the church to be less of an organization and more of a community. I hope we change the CEO orientation, with policy governance, back to an expectation that every member is will contribute energies and time, rather than hiring what we need done which I think encourages a feeling of community and mutual responsibility. If no one volunteers, it won't get done. It sounds like membership has fallen significantly (whether true counts according to our ByLaws or by attendance in the building or through ZOOM meetings until in person attendance resumes), so we have to plan realistically to operate on a scaled-down basis. This could offer an opportunity to re-think what our church could be.
I'd like us to be known in the community as the place to go for vibrant religious education, especially for children. With all that's going on in the world (social justice issues, inequality issues, etc.) parents really need a place to bring their children for education in UU values. This is critically important to the long-term health of our church.
It's hard to say, bc we were already going through so much recent transition, but I think when we can all be together without so much anxiety over covid-19 we're going to have a resurgence of people coming to be a part of our holidays and small groups, as well as Sunday services. After all this time apart I think a lot people will want to be together as much as possible.
Not sure but I think that the congregation will shrink unless we are better able to reach out and connect to young people and young families
Something like where we were before the pandemic but more use of virtual meetings, especially in the evening
That the church members realize that our church was the very first to label my philosophy "humanism" which occurred in 1917, and that the philosophy be recognized periodically in our services.
This question does not belong in this survey. It is beyond its scope.
Ways to hear how others in the congregation feel about the church and where we are headed. Have an all church read with discussion groups. Have conversations about the Gadfly papers.
A thoughtful, engaged and vibrant spiritual community that inspires me to be a better person. A place where actions follow intentions.

Question #24

Is there anything else you would like us to know?

87 responses

THEMES ARRANGED BY ISSUE				
IN PERSON MEETINGS	ZOOM SERVICES & SMALL ON LINE GROUPS	CHURCH OPENING	PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON ACTIONS TAKEN	OTHER COMMENTS
Vaccine requisite for in person meetings	Virtual interactions built connection	return only when 100% safe: need to protect everyone	reduced congregation numbers; will be long recovery period	social justice outweighing spirituality. needs church to be rock in swirling sea, feels members looking for fellowship via shared activism, agrees needs to re-engage
Risk and benefits of in person meetings personal decision	increase agility of virtual meetings and conferences to	adhere to scientific guidelines; protect everyone	we have responsible leadership	new minister

	maintain connecton			
Individuals have responsibility to others to prevent spread	unable to maintain strong connection virutally	don't be premature in opening	depression and lethargy has increased as pandemic continues	no solid ministerial leadership during interim
without in person connection church is weakened	concern about Zoom security and uncomfortable trying it	Caution needed in each phase		lost way with church
meet outdoors	appreciates all the work in providing on-line Services	retrenchment if necessary is ok	impossible task; will not be judgemental as to decisions	bias of survey towards reopening
concern over elderly and single members discounting risks resulting in joining groups that might but them at risk	appreciates efforts and planning by staff and members for interesting and safe programs	Constrain those who push for openings-keep it safe for all	loves community and church	vision and future of church outside purview of committee
let youth use bathrooms if they meet outside	on line small groups needed asap	safety	rarely leave home	concern over coding results
weekly calls need to resume	appreciates efforts of Amy, staff and volunteers to keep Zoom servcies andmeetings going	only open when 100% safe	comfortable unmasked with family and 4 person pod that adheres to CDC	Providing cleaning supplies and doing the cleaning is an organizational responsibility
	wonderful sermons and activities due to loyal workers	Legal Libaility concern if COVID contracted at an activity	misses everyone	doesnt know anyone who has covid nor does anyone in their circle
	continue virtual forums for those at risk or have anxiety about pandemic	Be responsible	touch deprived - time frame for remedy unknown	concerned about school situation- and safety of students and faculty
	sermon on not judging how someone deals with risk/perceived risk	misses church -but do not rush church opening	has opted out of trying to help	grateful and in awe for support given by church community when husband had terminal cancer
	without in person connection church is weakened	we are clever., we can figure out how to reconnect with endangering lives	appreciates those who remain and try to make improvements and guide the congregation thru this	Grateful for Erin's memorial service
	more participation in hymn singing and special music	be conservative in reopening	thank you for work and survey	our death and dying group was of tremendous support

	drive in church - provides sense of attending church willing to help set up	err on safety , no deaths of members	thanks	long time member and enjoys being here
	appreciates efforts in maintaining connections	What are other UU Churches doing- other churches seem to have moved quickly to adapt; we seem to to be in holding pattern	good luck pulling this together	wants glowing,blossoming and happy community within church
	Slacking off regular Zoom sermons- wants longer ones and of more substance to them	without in person connection church is weakened	appreciates efforts	aware that more going on within church than is involved in
	Rev Amy Petri Shaw doing a good job during this time	opening church at this time seems reckless	thanks	Concern among older members that Policy Governance a mistake
		open building- find ways to manage the risk	grateful for church and leaders	talk to older members to find path forward to rebuild the church
		supports decision to close early; leadership and responsibility demonstrated	Spouse has health concerns	concern about Rev Erin, can we get an update as it has been about a year
			appreciates attempts to plan ahead as evident in survey	
			church was there when needed this past month	Trump should not be relected
			caring team very supportive when needed	exploring religion and spirituality elsewhere
			thanks -challenging issue	concern about being fair weather members due to financial issues of church
			optimistic	left due to racism in church; no followup
			healthy and acrive	Patience is a virtue
			Family POD	
			Thanks Miss you	

End of Congregational Survey Report