



roots
hold
me
close;
wings
set me
free

Welcome to the
Unitarian Universalist
Church in Eugene, Oregon
(UUCE)

Congregational Vitality Report

Unitarian Universalist Church In Eugene

07/09/24

CONVERGENCE

Our Partnership	2
Church Data	2
Membership and Demographics	1
Survey Demographics	5
Congregational Perceptions	10
Your Neighborhood	12
Nearby Congregations	14
Communications	14
External Community Engagement	15
Conflict Skills	17
Spiritual Life	18
Finances and Facilities	19
Finances	19
Facilities	20
Congregational Welcome	22
Openness to Change	22
Your Congregational Lifecycle	23
Recommendations:	24

OUR PARTNERSHIP

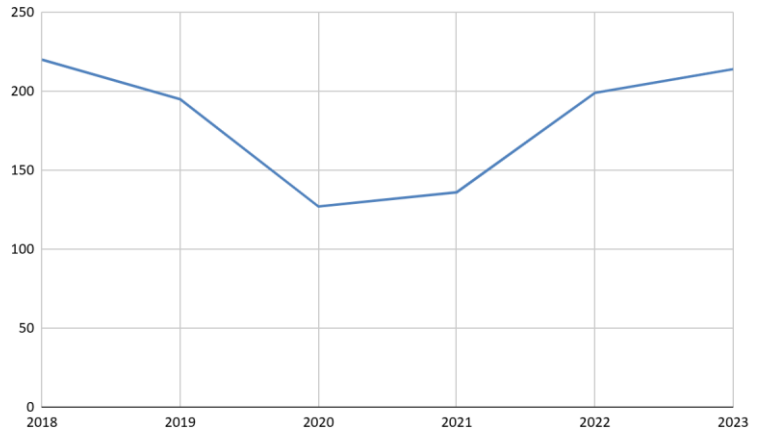
Convergence partnered with Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene in 2024 for Assessment and Consultation services. This report contains the data from your church assessment, an analysis of the data, and creative thinking about what the church could consider as you determine your future.

CHURCH DATA

MEMBERSHIP AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene has approximately 375 people who participate or support the church in some way. The church currently has:

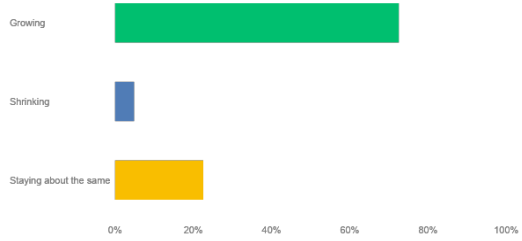
- 1 Primary Gathering per week on Sundays
 - 161 average face-to-face attendance
 - 53 average online attendance (Zoom participants)
- Average attendance has rebounded from a dip during the pandemic
 - 2018-220
 - 2019-195
 - 2020-127
 - 2021-136
 - 2022-199
 - 2023-214
- Approximately 21 additional activities per month, including:
 - Potlucks
 - Birder
 - BAG
 - Crafters
 - BIPOC
 - LGBTQ,
 - Earth Action
 - Produce Plus
 - Accessibility Task Force



The Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene had an average of 13 visitors per month in 2023, measured by number of people who filled out a visitor form. This was up from an average of 9 per month pre-pandemic. That is up to 156 visitors per year!

In 2023, the church gained 35 new participants (31 adults, 4 children). This shows very strong engagement with new people.

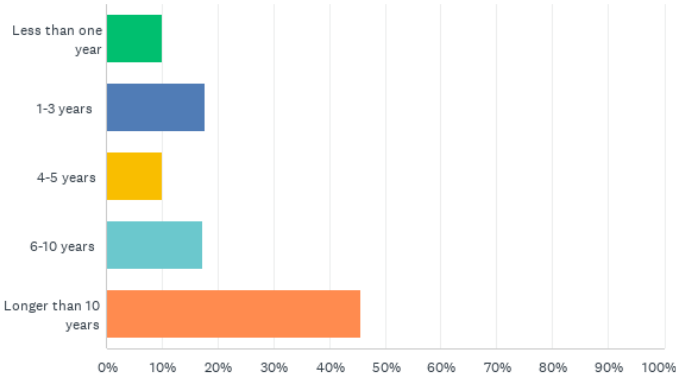
When asked, “Do you think your congregation is growing, shrinking, or staying about the same:”



73% of respondents believe your congregation is growing. 23% believe it is staying about the same. 5% believe it is shrinking.

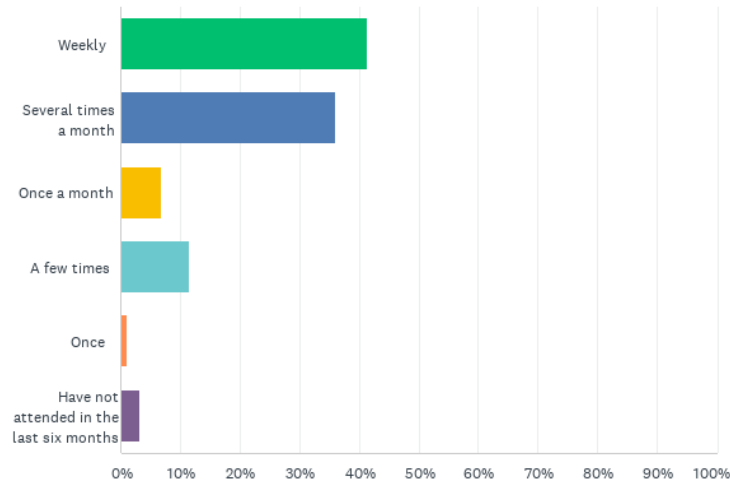
Most respondents have participated for over 6 years. 46% of respondents have participated for 10+ years. However, you have newer people as well, with 28% beginning participation during the last 3 years.

Q1 How long have you attended worship, gatherings, or other events (online or face to face) with this congregation?



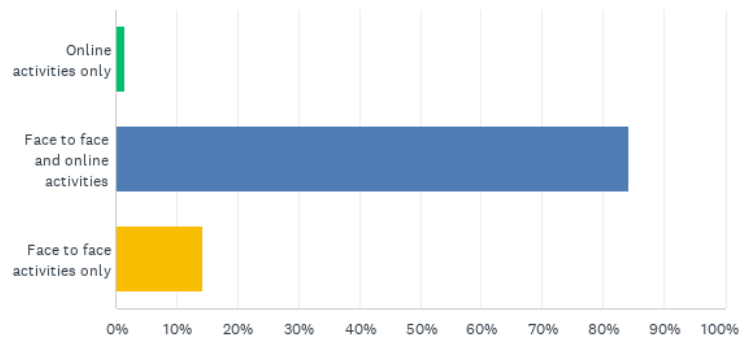
Most respondents participate at least several times a month. 41% participate weekly, 36% several times a month, and 7% once a month. 12% have only participated a few times in the past six months, and 4% only attended once or have not attended during that period.

Q2 How often have you attended your congregation's gatherings/worship, programming and/or events (face to face or online) in the last six months?



84% of respondents have participated both online and face to face with your congregation. 14% have only participated face to face, and 2% (3 people) have only participated online.

Q6 During my time as a part of this congregation, I have participated in:



In recent months, 79% of respondents are most often participating face to face, 17% are most often participating online. Those who chose the other response were either dividing their time equally or in other ways, such as reading the newsletter or donating to shelter meals.

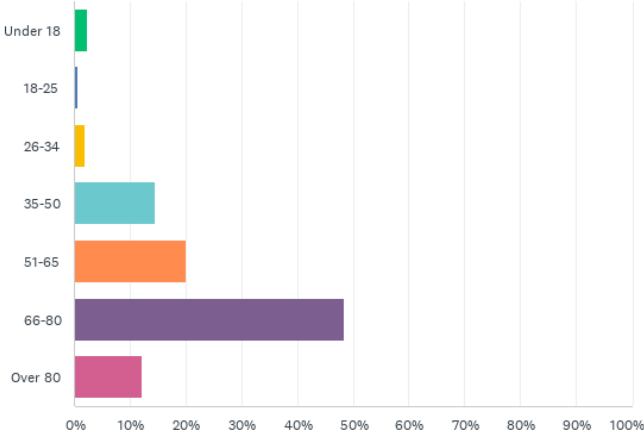
Face-to-face (Physically present with others in congregational activities outside my home)	78.84%	149
Online	17.46%	33

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene is larger than the average size congregation in US Mainline Christianity. The National Congregations Study indicates the average among congregations is a median of 65 in attendance at weekend worship.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The largest age group of respondents were over 65 (60%) followed by 51-65 (20%). 17% were adults aged 18-50.

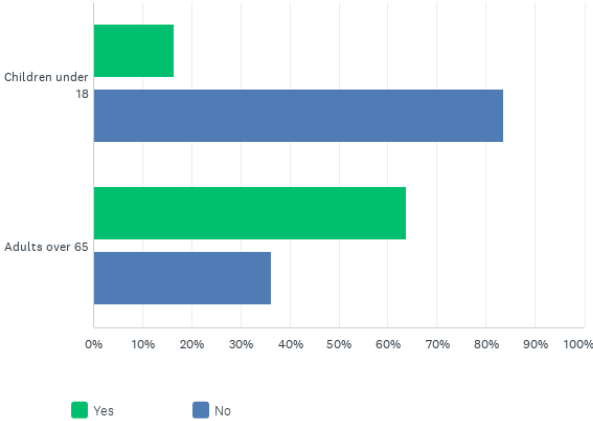
Q39 How old are you?



The leader survey reports that 12% of the congregation is under 18, 18% is 18-50, 20% 51-65, and 50% over 65. This means that adults over 65 were slightly over represented on the congregational survey.

Our survey was taken by 4 congregational youth, and we also captured younger voices through their parents - 16% of respondent households contain children under 18.

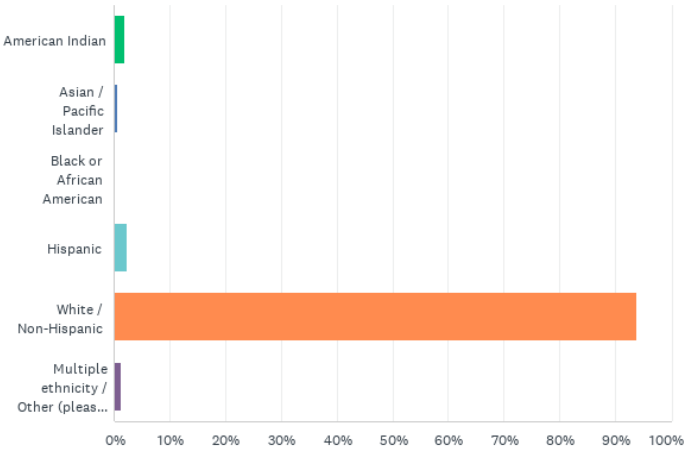
Q42 Does your household contain?



The ages of those on the governing body of the church also skews older with 70% being over 50. You have youth representation on your governing body, which is commendable! One small suggestion - a greater representation by young adults would increase the fit between the ages of those on the governing body and the congregation, as there is currently no member on the governing body 18-35 years old, while 10% of the congregation falls into this age group.

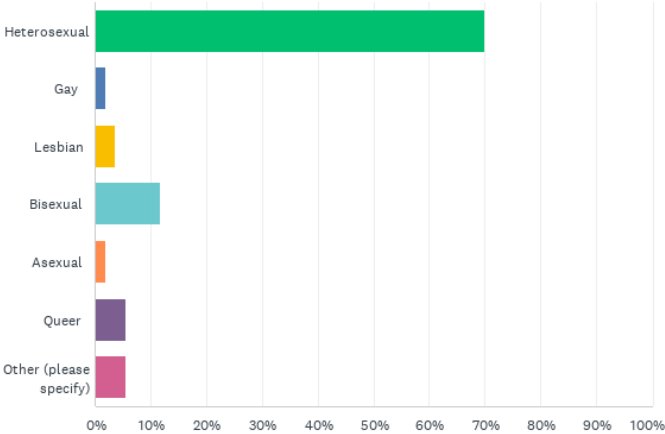
94% of respondents identified as white/non-hispanic, 3% Hispanic, 2% American Indian, 1% Multiple Ethnicity/Other, and 0% Black.

Q40 Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)



70% of respondents identify as heterosexual, 2% as gay, 4% as lesbian, 12% as bisexual, 2% as asexual, 6% as queer, and 6% as other.

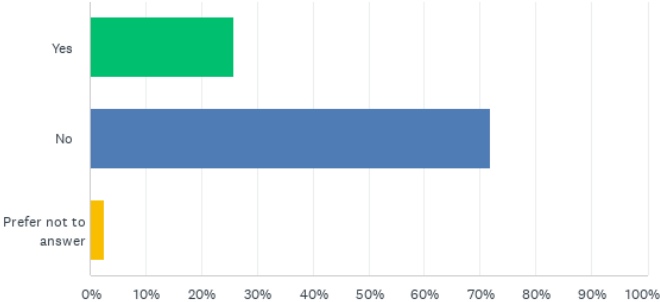
Q43 Would you identify yourself as:



29% of respondents identify as male, 65% as female, 2% as transgender, 1% as gender nonconforming, and 2% as other.

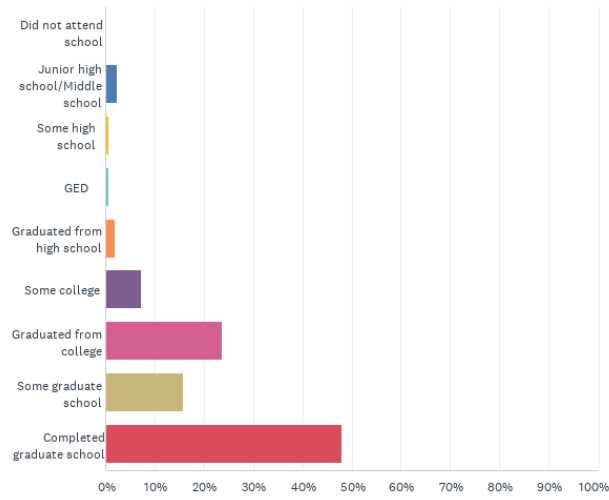
26% report that they identify as a person with a disability or other chronic condition.

Q45 Do you identify as a person with a disability or other chronic condition?



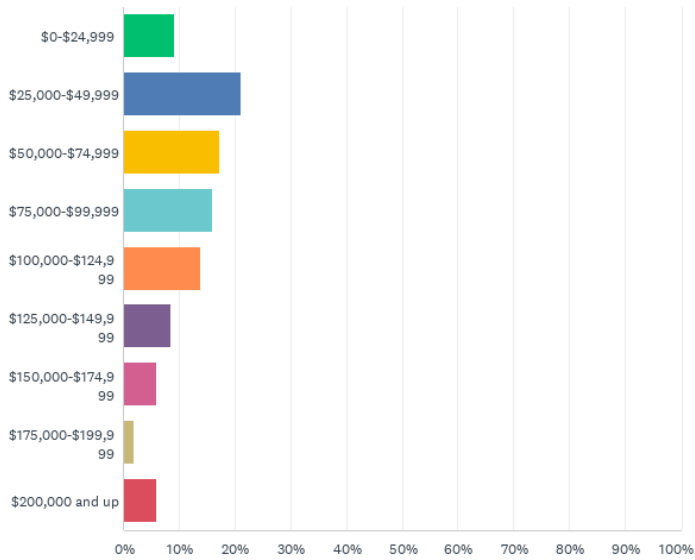
48% of respondents completed graduate school, 16% attended some graduate school, 24% graduated from college, 7% reported some college, 2% graduated high school, and 4% were either still in school or had their GED.

Q41 What is the highest level of education you have completed?



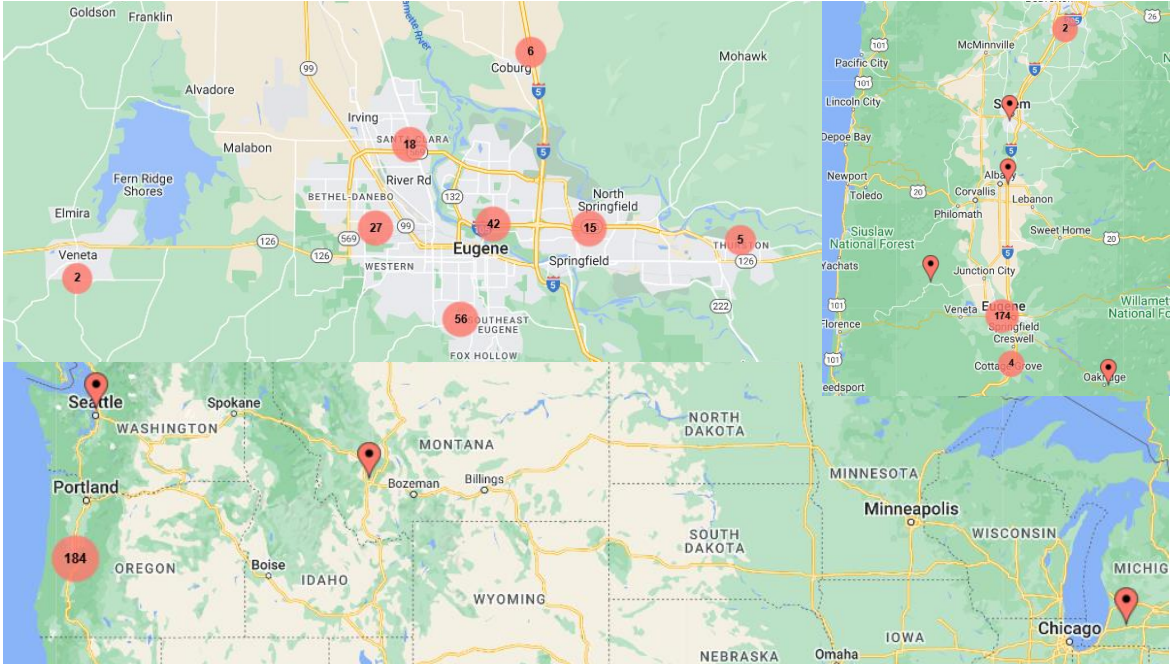
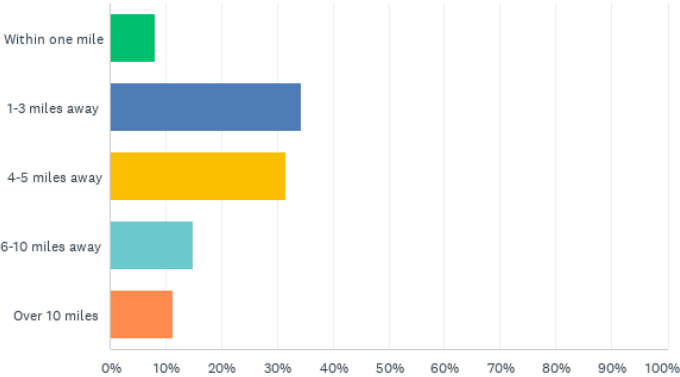
The majority of respondents (64%) had incomes under \$100,000, with 30% having incomes between \$100,000 and \$200,000, and 6% having incomes over \$200,000.

Q46 What is your approximate average household income?



Most respondents (74%) live within 5 miles of the congregation. Another 15% live within 10 miles, and 11% live over 10 miles away.

Q4 Where do you live in relation to this congregation?



As you can see from these maps, your folks are spread across the Eugene area, up and down I-5, with a handful even in other states! You may have to work to make sure those who live farther away feel connected.

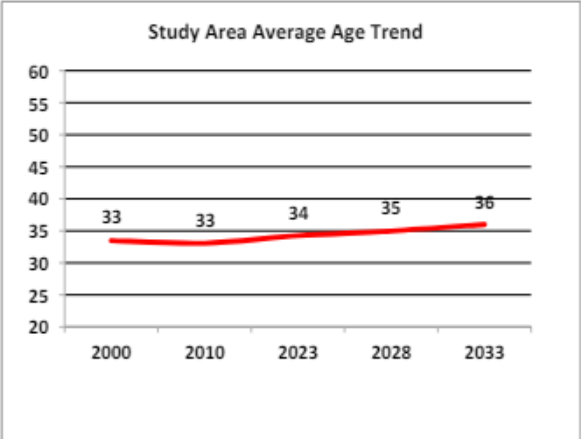
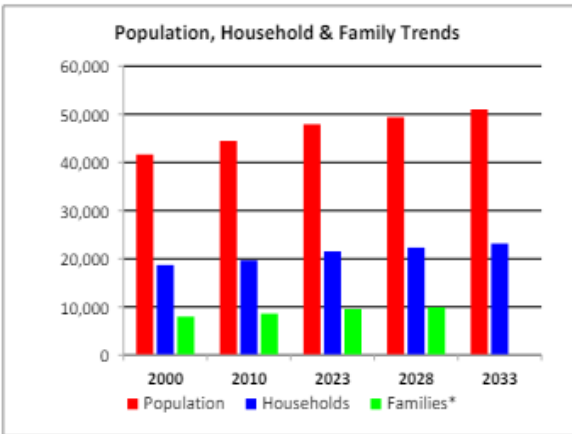
When asked, "What do you see or sense could hold you back as a congregation?," your members responded with these words:



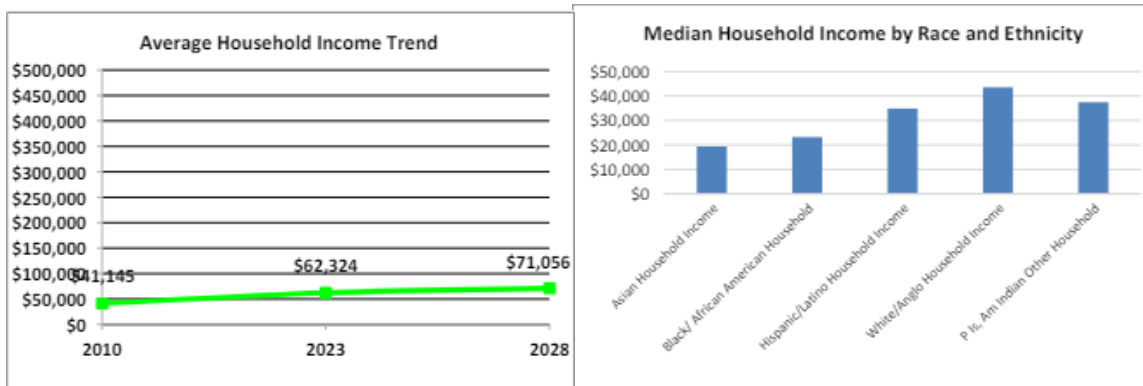
Themes here included needing greater financial sustainability, more people, and concerns about member and staff burn out from overfunctioning. Many of these challenges are not uncommon to congregations such as yours. One that was mentioned more frequently than we usually see in vital congregations is your finances.

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

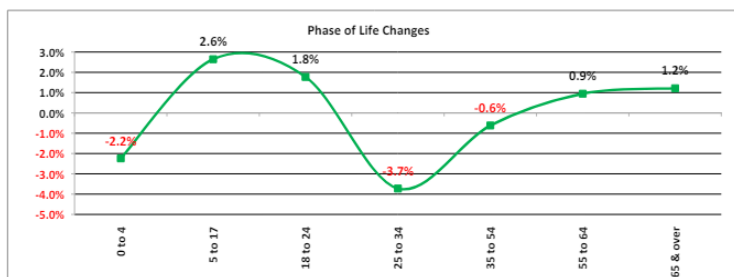
Eugene is a largely progressive community that is growing. Households are increasing, and households are also increasing in size due to additional children. The fastest growing age groups are 5-17 and over 65.



The community is somewhat racially diverse and diverse in income levels. There are income inequalities along racial lines.



When looking at the neighborhoods closest to your congregation’s building, residents are younger and under 18 age groups are growing faster than older adults. Those in nearer neighborhoods are more highly educated but more likely to have lower incomes than the city as a whole.



While Singles and Starters(24%) are the largest demographic group in both the city as a whole and in neighborhoods near your building, the percentage is much larger (45%) nearer to your building. Other significant segments include older adults and a small segment of younger families.

Your neighbors have somewhat strong beliefs that align with UU values, including that God is the realization of human potential, that tolerance is necessary, that climate change is real and people must be good stewards of the environment, and that diversity and justice are worth embracing and working toward.



Only 35% of your neighbors are involved in a religious congregation or community. This is projected to decline further over time.

- Only 0.3% of your neighbors identify as UU, but this has increased over the past 10 years.
- 24% identify as no religious preference, with 0.7% of those identifying as spiritual.
- 0.3% identify as Wiccan, and this is also a growing segment.

Other than Covid-19, their top concerns in recent years include social and political tensions/discord, financing their futures, racism/racial injustice, fear of the future, and health crisis/illness.

Strong community connections are not a magic bullet to grow a congregation, but they are a mark of a vital congregation. Adding value to the lives of those in your neighborhood, will help your congregation be known to those who may be seeking a congregation with your values and beliefs. Keep in mind - all needs are not material, and those who may seem to have more than enough fiscal and physical wealth may still have deep spiritual and relational needs. Meeting the needs of those neighbors may not end up with them attending your gatherings, but will be an important part of being a congregation that is fundamentally rooted in your community. Such connections also generate the goodwill needed for community financial support of your congregation and its work, which is rapidly becoming an important segment of the financial picture for congregations.¹

To read more about the people that make up your community, see the reports in this folder: [Mission Insite Demographic Reports](#).

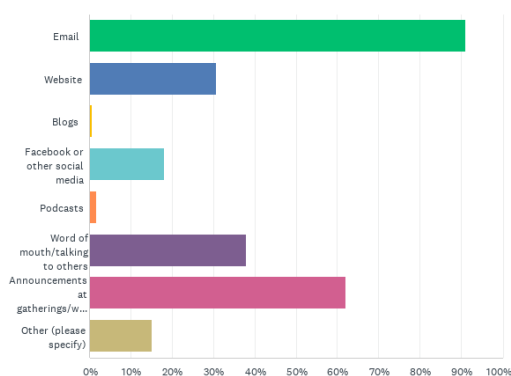
NEARBY CONGREGATIONS

People in Eugene have many congregations to choose from. There are 0 other churches of your denomination in your larger community. Churches in your area with similar values to yours exist, but none with the unique UU perspective. Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene has a unique mission and vision, one compelling enough to set it apart from all the other churches in its area. You will still need to be strategic and focused to make the impact you seek and to communicate that mission and impact to the community.

COMMUNICATIONS

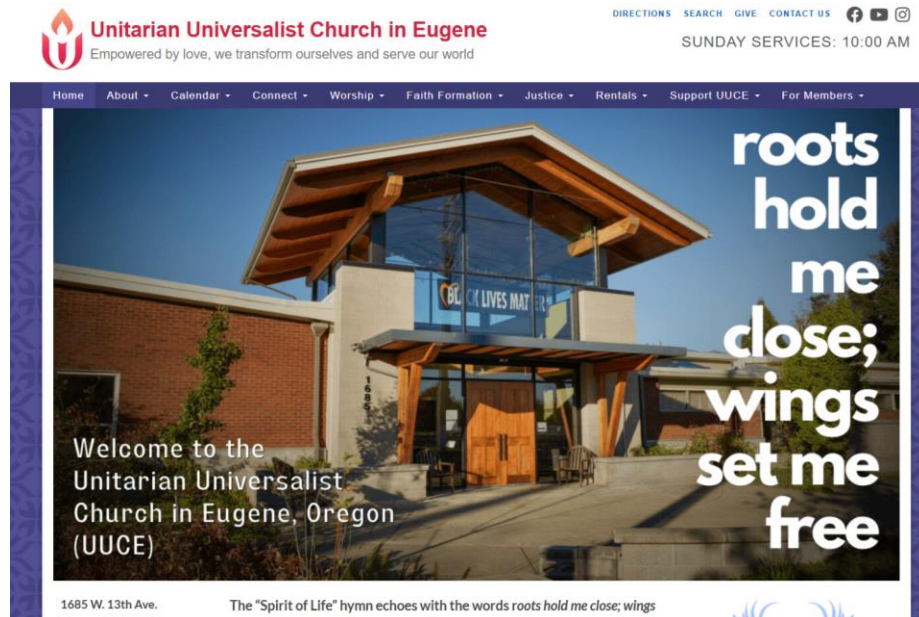
Email and announcements at gatherings are the main way people find out about congregational news and events. Word of mouth and your website are also frequent sources of news.

Q33 How do you most often hear about congregational announcements and events? (Check all that apply)



¹ In several recent cases, the majority of donations for capital campaigns to support historic church buildings came from outside the congregation (Partners for Sacred Places). Community connections and goodwill are essential for this kind of community financial support to occur.

The website is attractive, and it was easy to find details on upcoming events, but adding a few items would be more visitor friendly, as currently you have to scroll to find out certain details. You could add visitor info above the fold, or at least further up the page between Quick Links and Volunteer. Where you have it now, under Visiting Us? you could move the Visit UUCE link higher than the form, as that will be what people look for first in considering attendance.



Your Facebook page is lively and up to date. The videos of Church News presented by staff are great for newer folks to feel connected. There was a recent issue with a webform for camp registration, so double checking all links and attending to user experiences is always a good idea. Your Youtube and Instagram are also updated frequently.

Keeping all communications formats fresh looking and up to date is a great way to be welcoming to those seeking a congregation and to engage your members and those in your community in the programs of the church.

EXTERNAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We at Convergence believe a vital church is instrumental in changing their community for the better.

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene is an engaged congregation! Your leader survey indicates the top priorities for the church in the community are:

- Food Justice
- Trans Justice
- Climate Justice

Approximately 100 congregational participants connected with these issues in 2023.

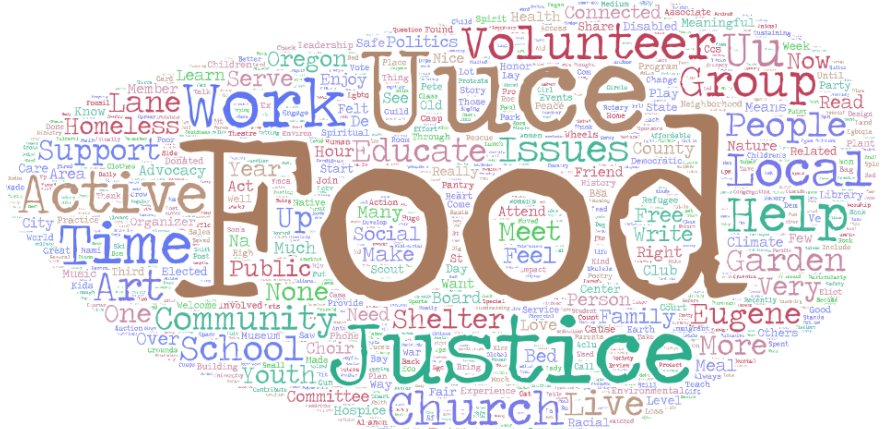
In 2023, UU Eugene impacted your surrounding community by:

- Collaborating 4 times with other congregations/organizations
- Creating/advocating for policies and programs to address community needs
- Providing fiscal/material/facilities support
- Providing education to adults, youth, and children on issues
- Participating in interfaith/intercultural experiences
- Helping 1200 individuals beyond your own participants
- Participating in 4 public actions
- Giving 6% of the congregational budget to external organizations
- Preaching sermons on social justice issues

Survey respondents are volunteering either in church or their community quite frequently, with:

- 126 respondents volunteering over 9750 hours in congregational life in the past 12 months.
- 112 respondents spending over 11000 hours volunteering in the community outside of congregational activities.
- 92 respondents made over 3350 contacts with elected officials.
- 102 respondents attended over 1800 hours of learning about issues facing your community.

The most commonly mentioned areas for your respondents to volunteer were:



Your survey respondents are largely positive about your community impact:

- 84% say your congregation is changing your community.
- 78% say members of the greater community are in your building on a regular basis.
- 90% believe the congregation is working with other organizations to achieve common goals.
- 86% of respondents say that if they have an idea for a way to minister in the world the congregation helps them make it happen.
- Additionally, 98% say your congregation empowers members to do ministry in the world.

Although, with your level of involvement and impact, we'd love to see 100% say your congregation is changing your community!

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene has 4 community partnerships (local governments, non-profits, businesses), and numerous non-church organizations that bring community members into the building (Sharing space, not partners):

- Violin Academy
- Showing Up for Racial Justice
- Big Little School (preschool)
- Al-Anon Family Group
- Bereaved Parents Support
- Black Thistle Street Aid
- Housing & Neighborhood Defense
- Party for Socialism & Liberation
- Refuge Recovery
- Hardy Plant Group

Over 1000 people from the community are in your building for activities led by non-congregational partners/tenants on a regular basis.

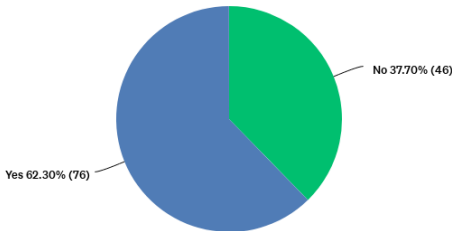
This is an excellent track record of community engagement! If your congregation vanished, you would be dearly missed by all who are impacted positively through this work. Using this solid foundation to become a hub where those in the neighborhood who are not part of the congregation can plug in to service and action in their community could be a way to maintain this energy and enthusiasm even in these times where so much service and action seems needed to create a just and generous world.

CONFLICT SKILLS

62% of respondents report some conflict in your congregation within the past 2 years. The majority of those (68% said the conflict was easily reconciled or resolved. Another 26% said you worked through it together. This likely indicates a few people who practice unhealthy conflict behaviors, maybe only 1-2, but with a persistence that creates avoidance of hard decisions on topics that might trigger them.

Comments relating to conflict identified triangulation, complaints and criticism, toxic/boorish behavior.

Q35 During the past 2 years, has your congregation experienced any disagreements or conflicts?



The most common responses to conflict, your respondents say, are to negotiate to reach solutions and defer to congregational leadership.

61% of your respondents reported some training in conflict resolution or healthy communication. A refresher for your congregation, or at least your leadership teams, in how to address unhealthy behaviors as they arise will be beneficial.

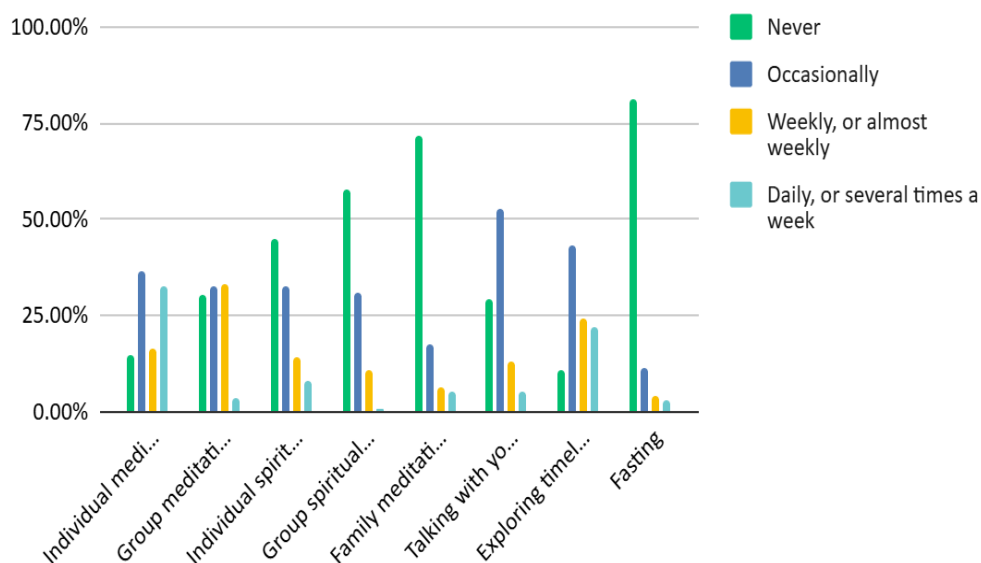
Any congregation working to grow or renew could benefit from healthy conflict skills. Perhaps those who have been trained as healthy conflict could encourage other participants to take a conflict course, or you could hold one just for your congregation. This could be a very beneficial part of the process as you all discern your next steps.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Growing and renewing a congregation requires a deep engagement with spiritual practices. Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene regularly promotes group spiritual/theology study and exploring timely topics in light of faith. The church occasionally promotes group meditation, prayer, or devotions, and talking with your family about spirituality/faith. The church does not promote individual meditation, prayer, or devotions, individual spiritual/theology/Bible study, family meditation, prayer, or devotions, or fasting.

86% say their spiritual life is very important to them. The most common spiritual practices in your congregation are individual meditation, prayer, or devotions. Followed by exploring timely topics and group practices, and group study. However, only individual meditation, prayer, and devotions and exploring timely topics can be said to be practiced habitually (weekly, or almost weekly, or more often) by even half of your survey respondents.

In the last 6 months, how often have you engaged in these personal and family religious practices?



You are great at service but can be weaker in areas of personal and spiritual growth. Any congregation would be well-served to look for opportunities to expand your spiritual development experiences but do so in a way that honors busy lives, commuting realities and short attention spans. Shared spiritual practices can be particularly meaningful. An all-church book read, create-your-own-chalice crafts, agreeing to all light a candle at a certain time each week - these can bring people together even if done in their own homes. A deep well of spirituality can carry members through many challenges and help them engage in healthy ways when things seem hard.

FINANCES AND FACILITIES

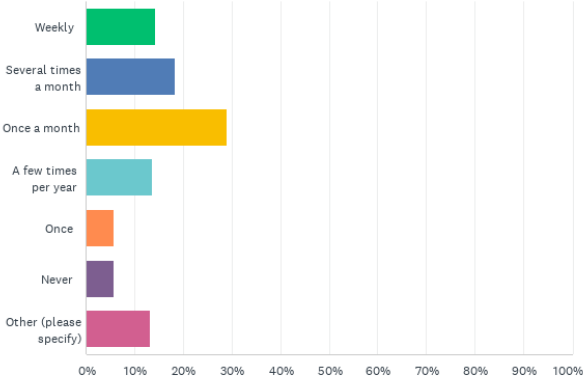
FINANCES

Your current finances include:

Total budget for 2023	\$646,858.00
Tithes and offerings for 2023	\$494,187.00
Other income (not tithes and offerings) for 2023	\$97,551.00
Current value of endowments, reserves, restricted funds, etc.	\$211,049.00
Total budget for 2018	\$552,678.00
Tithes and offerings for 2018	\$385,053.00
Other income (not tithes and offerings) for 2018	\$ 46,600.00
Value of endowments, reserves, restricted funds, etc. in 2018	\$132,725.90

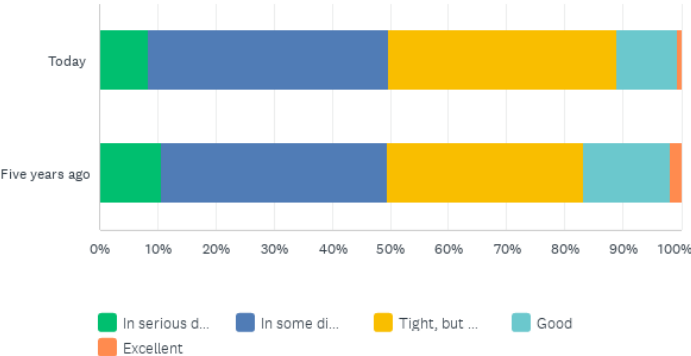
93% of respondents have donated at least once in the past year.

Q3 How often have you donated financially to this congregation in the last year?



Most respondents see your finances as tight (39%) or in some difficulty (41%). 10% would say they are in good condition, while 15% would have said so five years ago.

Q34 Overall, how would you describe your congregation's financial health?



Your giving levels are healthy for a church of your size - approximately \$2298 per worship attendee per year, which is higher than the national average giving level of ~\$2250 per person per year. However, your endowment/reserves are low and your budget exceeds your current giving capacity. It seems as though this gap is partially filled with other income, but since it is affecting congregational morale, you will need to work toward greater financial sustainability.

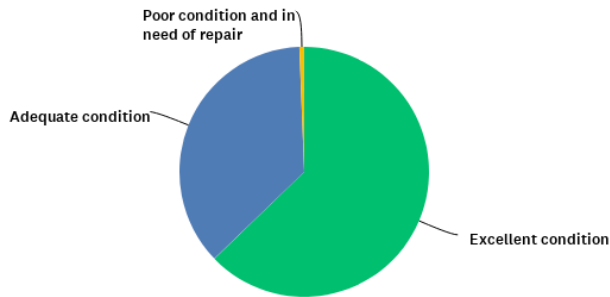
Options for this work include:

- Increasing number of regular scheduled givers and auto-givers. You have about 300 adults who are associated in some way with your congregation. Be sure all have been encouraged to contribute.
- Asking for neighbors to give to support your impact in the community. Do they know about all the good you are doing? How can you let them know how they might be a part of this work?
- Leveraging your building for greater sustainability. See ideas on this in the next section.

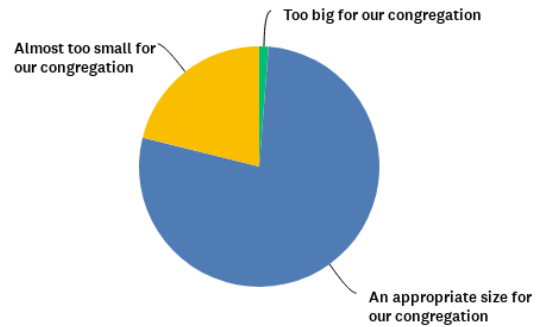
FACILITIES

Most respondents see your facilities in excellent condition. Most also say they are appropriate size, and a significant minority say they might be too small.

Q31 Our facilities are in:



Q32 Our facilities are:



Pictures on your website and social media show contemporary spaces that appear to be in good condition. Photos on your social media show attractive and well-maintained spaces, but of course can't get in all the nooks and crannies. Continue to be attentive to your space. Make sure it is clean, well-repaired, smells good (ask a stranger to come and tell you the truth, we develop a tolerance to smells over time), and is clearly marked as to restrooms, elevators, and other necessary spaces. All of this will ensure your welcome to those in your space is as warm in practice as it is intended.



Your financial concerns indicate that It may be time to explore how to use your facilities strategically to support the congregation's mission.

Your building is already serving as a community center of sorts, which could be leveraged for greater sustainability in several ways. Many congregations have found it helpful to spin the building off into its own 501c3 for greater access to fundraising from grants and neighborhood giving. Other congregations have sold their facilities and utilized the money for their work in the world. Still others have worked with developers to turn the site into housing or offices with a lifetime leaseback of some of the space for congregational activities. There are specialists in this transition that can help assess your building and discern the possibilities. However you end up proceeding, it is worth considering all the possibilities available to you as you seek to do God's work as a congregation.

CONGREGATIONAL WELCOME

In terms of congregational welcome,

- 96% say you want to be racially and culturally diverse
- 98% say you want more members and active participants
- 95% say you are welcoming to people of all races
- 100% say you are welcoming to people of all sexualities and genders
- 96% say you are welcoming and accessible to people with disabilities
- 80% of respondents say it is easy for new people to join existing groups.
- 80% of respondents say your congregation loves the enthusiasm of new people with new ideas.

This is a high level of welcome. However, only 66% make it a point to speak to new people present in worship. Training your folks to speak to anyone new who sits in their area of the gathering space is a great way to broaden your welcome even further.

OPENNESS TO CHANGE

In areas relating to openness to change, survey respondents indicated:

- 83% of respondents say that your congregation embraces change.
- 91% say you regularly do new things in worship.
- 83% say you frequently talk about change.
- 80% say the members are willing to change in order to achieve shared goals.
- 69% say new ideas are welcome, and 67% that members are always willing to try something new.

However, 59% say the congregation is more comfortable when things remain the same.

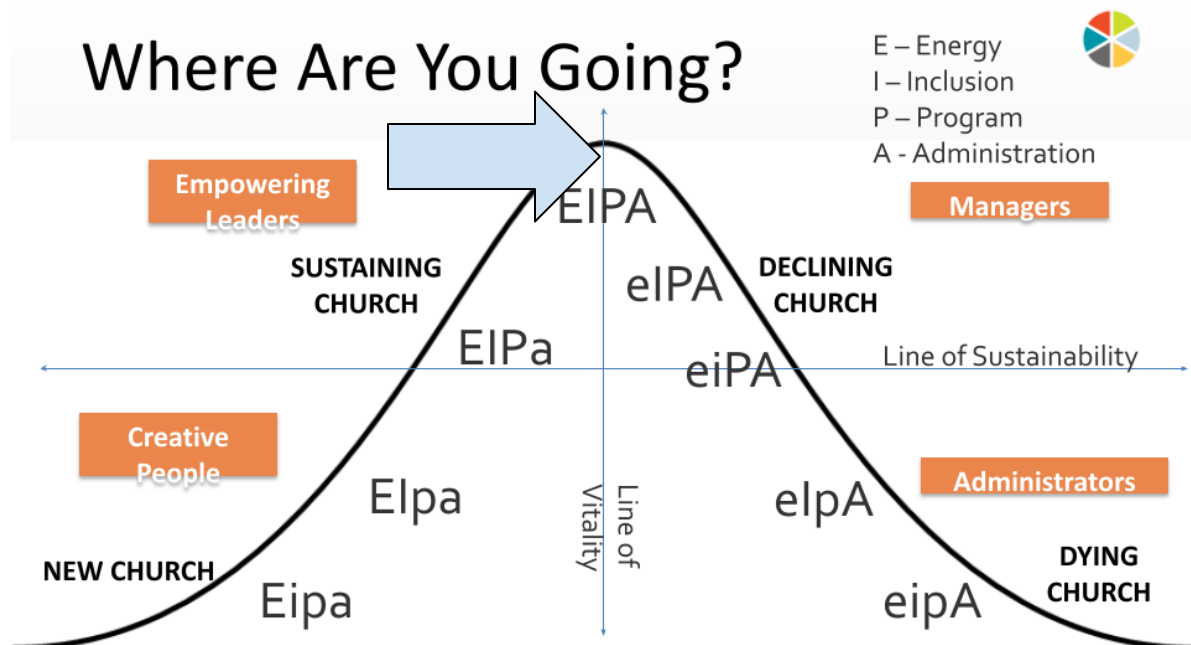
Also, some commenters saw change skills as something that could hold you back.

- Some people like things to stay the way they are and are uncomfortable with change.
- Valuing being "nice" over taking uncomfortable steps towards change.
- Too much discussion before action
- Rigid thinkers who say and do harmful things with good intentions
- Being stuck in our ways or too committed to making EVERYONE happy.
- I keep hearing "We've always done _____."
- fear or resistance to change,

With so many changes facing all of us these days, it never hurts to work on this area. The biggest growing edge seems to be slow decision-making and action on new ideas, and so it may be worth checking to see if some of your procedures could shift to a more permission-giving approach. However, if the issue is that you have a lot of idea people but not a lot of time and energy to make those ideas happen, clearer communication with those idea people about their responsibility for gathering support/participants can help. If the challenge is that you just have too many good ideas as a group, a forced-choice activity can help people embrace the fact that every idea can't be a priority at all times.

YOUR CONGREGATIONAL LIFECYCLE

Every congregation experiences growth and decline. These stages are marked by certain milestones that point to changes in organizational health and development. To better understand this, we use four indicators to measure health: energy, inclusion, programs and administration. At each stage in the life of a church, these indicators play a more or less active role. These roles are indicated by the upper and lower case letters on the graph.



The “Energy” indicator highlights the level at which the congregation is motivated into action around the vision and mission of the church. It speaks to the spirit of the faith community as well as its passion about its ministries.

The “Inclusion” indicator highlights the dedication and enthusiasm of church participants to invite people to be a part of the ministries of the church. It speaks to an outward focus on growth and an intentional commitment to hospitality.

The “Program” indicator highlights the level at which the church is able to start, grow and maintain ministries that transform both the community and the people within the church. These are particular to each church context and to the needs of the people within the church.

The final indicator, “Administration,” highlights the need of every church to have systems that promote growth through policies, procedures and staffing. Collectively, these indicators tell a story of where a church might be in their lifecycle.

Currently your church would be considered on the line between Quadrants 2 and 3. You are strong in Inclusion and optimistic in your Energy. All of your new folks mean you have some energy that is similar to a new church. You have some solid Programming for your people and the community. The newness of many people means you have some new church energy when gathered, but you may be lacking in some of the sustained Energy needed to get things done while your financial restraints and congregational polity means you may get bogged down in Administration. If you can achieve greater financial sustainability, you will be able to redirect energy away from administration toward inclusion and impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

These recommendations could strengthen your church’s vitality in the next year:

- **Embrace Change**
Some survey comments indicated that change skills might be an issue. While being thoughtful about decisions is important, it sounds like some things get stuck in endless debate and discussion, making change slow at best. Practice an experimental approach - try something for just a season or year. Be permission-giving to those with new ideas wherever possible. And build your change muscles by doing something new or in a new way every week. Address unhealthy behaviors that block change as they arise. If you need training on this, we can help.
- **Strengthen Relationships**
The survey comments indicated that people would love stronger relationships with their fellow participants. The need to know and be known is universal. You are already doing a lot and your people are stretched thin volunteering in congregation and community. Rather than adding new programs, examine how every existing activity can be relationship-building. What about a time of reflection built into each congregational activity, from

meetings to fellowship potlucks, to talk about what is weighing on each person's heart and how they can support one another?

- **Be Creative about Your Budget**

You have difficulty supporting your budget with current giving. Decide on the core expenses that serve your mission, and pause or end any others that use time, money, and energy. Identify potential new ways, including entrepreneurial use of your resources, to shore up your financial picture. Look carefully at your budget and ask the question: What will be the most impactful use of the funds we have to achieve our mission and goals? It may not look like congregational budgets in the past, but it will help you move forward in healthy ways.

- **Celebrate your Impact**

You are filling an important need for your members, as well as doing so much for your community, and it is worth celebrating! Make sure you proclaim widely the work you are doing and its impact on your community. Do so in your congregational gatherings, through local newsletters, blogs, and other news outlets, through visible banners on your building, and by connecting with local organizations that share your values. Ask for financial support from your people, neighbors, and community businesses/organizations who want to see your impact continue.

- **Know your Neighbors**

Many people in the neighborhoods surrounding your congregation have values which align with yours. They may not be interested in traditional congregational activities, so you will need to get to know them and their needs. What would help them thrive and build the world they want to see? How can that aid in your discernment of your mission and goals?

- **Partner, Partner, Partner**

Speaking of organizations that share your values, the best way to do a lot with less people and money is to share the load. While you are the only UU congregation in Eugene, there are others in Oregon that could use your strengths to support their even smaller congregations. There are also many progressive congregations and organizations in Eugene, including UCC, Disciples Church, Quaker Church, Center for Spiritual Living, Wesley UMC, First UMC. They might love to partner with you for greater community impact.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH IN EUGENE:

*The question for you as members and leaders of Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene is: “**are you willing to live into God’s future**”? Our recommendations, born out of our expertise in the life cycle and renewal of churches, are for the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene to work on the above areas. If you get stuck, our consultants and coaches can help you make concrete plans for improving all these areas. Putting your energy into these things will help your already vital congregation grow more vital and transformational in the years to come.*