

Listening Conversations

Notes Compiled

No Names Version

12/4/17

First set of questions: How are things going?

- Most important/working best for you

- Participation in worship
- Program groups
- Music
- Community - feel welcome
- RE (OWL, faith exploration)
- Spirituality
- Summer service leadership
- Opportunities to get involved - committees
- Opportunities to share - joys & concerns, congregational reflection, coffee hour

- What could work better? How could that happen?

- More people participate. Some may be holding back. Maybe people could write down their comments in reflection, etc.
- Time limit on individual comments.
- How to include people more at coffee hour? Table for people who want to discuss service?
- Don't like multi-generational services.
- Want focus on Spirituality, less emphasis on social action

Second Set of questions: Looking forward

- What can we do to improve congregational life?

- Encourage involvement/ownership.
- Take action and reflect on results
- Stream service
- Re-brand service, format dated.
- Combine joys and concerns
- Promote FUSW - get message out, full time administrator
- Change of leadership (minister)

Third Set of questions: Making it happen

- Ads (Rivertowns Enterprise?)
- Congregants invite friends more.
- Summer camp to raise money
- Cut expenses - more lay led services and guest speakers
- More administrative support

How are things Going?

BEST:

- The Best things about FUSW are Sunday (endorsed by three attendees); more specifically the choir, intellectual stimulation, inspiration. Spiritual uplifting and enrichment is getting better this season.
- Today's service was good (on Death) -- endorsed by at least two members.
- New Intern (William) -- endorsed by 4 members.
- Religious Education
- Men's group
- Diane's piano -- endorsed by all members
- Rock and Soul
- Drumming Group.

WHAT COULD BE BETTER:

- Engender more cooperative responsibility to help FUSW function well.
- More Participation -- endorsed by 2 members
- More social connection -- 2 members
- Support from other members
- Caring Committee
- "Concerns" in service can be too detailed/heavy sometimes.
- More "Inreach" (i.e., care for our own congregation) vs. outreach (i.e., social justice) -- endorsed by 2 members.
- More spiritual enrichment -- endorsed by 3 members.
- More intellectual stimulation
- Finances
- More volunteering -- endorsed by 3 members.
- More responsiveness to requests for volunteers.
- More lighthearted events outside of service.
- A meditation group
- Larger RE group

IMAGINE ONE CHANGE:

- For congregants to recognize responsibility as well as benefits -- endorsed by 3 members.
- Membership committee to increase numbers and visibility.

IDEAS FOR RAISING MONEY:

- Increase endowment
- Serve a regular community meal (taking advantage of location).
- More events (like our auction for example)
- Have/hire a notable performer (off site) and share the proceeds.

INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS:

“Not a crisis but need to regroup.” He thinks about 10-25% of congregation are dissatisfied, about 20% regularly involved, balanced between just-showing-up and somewhat-involved.

“There’s a steady drumbeat of concerns. Especially pledges. The one thing that keeps her/him coming is choir.”

“Sermons are improving in that they are more spiritually stimulating.” He/she mentioned, “in-reach”. We need to communicate more effectively with present members.

“My initial experience with FUSW immediately after 9/11 was a strong sense of unity and purpose of community. There’s been a steady diminution over time.”

Another member said there was a growing lack of participation at FUSW. His/her last child was not interested in RE. He/she doesn’t feel as connected to FUSW, but admits that the reasons may lie more within himself than external reasons.

“FUSW is best when people are engaged in projects that are fulfilling. We should have more fun.”

Looking Forward:

All 6 members thought there should/could be more connecting with all members especially ones that seem not involved. He/she again mentioned, “in-reach” as a practice. There was some confusion about the status of the committee on ministry. One member explained there is still a committee and people are participating. This led to a larger conversation about how committees function and how the findings are reported to FUSW. He/she asked if Joys and Concerns recorded by weekly board members is processed and disseminated. There was no definitive answer.

Again, more and better communication between the board, committees and the congregation at large is needed. Many people don’t read the Scoop. Fewer use the Facebook Page and other platforms. Many ideas were suggested for outreach: sales, concerts, more robust advertising in local outlets. All these suggestions involve greater participation by our current membership.

Making it Happen:

He/she said, “It is necessary for members to understand that benefits are related to responsibilities. Many people walk in at 10:30 and leave at 11:30.”

In this group we had 3 members that know the financial details of FUSW. Cutting expenses has been accomplished. Anything else would change the nature of FUSW.

We could have a “contract minister” rather than a full time minister.

We could ask for more volunteers to do office administration.

Someone mentioned a food dinner, especially for commuters coming off the Saw Mill and the Sprain Parkway.

One member explained to the group the opportunity of the legacy sharing grant, extended to the end of 2018. Not everyone in the group was clear about how this works. We could workshop this idea further.

In conclusion, the group thought Sundays were not the issue, but rather the other 6 days of the week. Perhaps more appreciation of volunteers is needed. "Work on our group vision and don't call it covenant."

and then the group asked, What will be done with the information and when?

How are things going?

1. what are the things that are most important to you at FUSW?

- sense of community
- Sunday service, meaning all the things that are in it – varied now with music, prayer-like thing, invocations to various things, small talk or sermon, singing music, conversation, sorrows joys reflections on the sermon – all of those and how they work together
- Putting above together, Sunday service that then builds community
- Being part of the hour set aside for spiritual sustenance
- Community important but message of the sermon is very important
- Happens a lot when program groups are putting on a program – worthwhile to be there
- Like program groups more than I thought I would. Very rich a lot of times. Particularly potentially able to connect people.
- Agree lay led services are very important part of offering as well as congregational comments every week.
- Unknown small number of churches anywhere in the world that operate in this fashion. Many ministers hate feedback.
- RE super important for the institution
- Also youth group very critical

2. What aspects of cong. Life are working the best for you

-- diane's music

-- sense of community

-- one of the few things we do (a couple) together

-- sense of community, had stopped attending for a number of years then began feeling more of a need to feel connected. Then felt different in positive way after returning.

-- community, which is why I joined

-- what do we all mean by "community"?

-- like minded people

-- interesting when we disagree

-- feeling welcome

-- anybody in the room would want to know how I'm doing and potential for conversation with 50 people with whom I've had a meaningful exchange at some point even if small. Sense of acceptance, of welcome.

-- difficult to define community – great question, don't have intellectual answer but maybe not due to intellect. Something mysteriously good about being in a room of people trying to be best human beings they can – something magical about that

-- one can be by yourself always, book group gives richer experience than reading by yourself.

Program group gives richer experience than by yourself. Where can you go to get that group experience? Not neighbors, work, country club. Something that is available at the Society...nowhere else.

-- curious how you get that in an hour with coffee hour, something passes for a sermon, joys and concerns stuff like that

-- the actual opportunity to come together in a meaningful way I don't see that

-- what about tonight? This is rare

-- not so rare for me (other speaker)...I was involved in RE and other activities

-- not a matter of agreeing, but like-minded in the sense of similar values. Not cookie cutters. Core values. Things that matter most to me...maybe different versions but at its core those values and feelings are shared, protected, honored, and mutually understood.
-- in last year attending services less so not so much where I'm getting value as a community but still very active in committees. Not always about Sunday services. There still is something about being in those meetings of a shared sense of purpose that satisfies me and is valuable to the congregation.

3. What could be working better and how could that happen

-- sermons could be more inspiring, hopeful, more vital. Have lost interest in coming compared with walking outside

-- joys and concerns people abuse them same people talk too much. Don't talk from the "I". things that don't build a community

-- agree with the above

-- what are you going to do

-- other congregations do it differently

-- bothers me a lot to the point where I don't feel like coming

-- joys and concern - need to take a moment to sink in with the community vs people grabbing for the mike

-- wish it was a more spiritual place!

-- could be a place where we could help one another (wrt politics etc).

-- don't like the applause (e.g. music performance) or after J&C

-- agree...don't think Sunday service is a place for applause, not a spiritual gesture

-- don't think program groups are working as well as before. Used to meet more than once to prepare program. At someone's home. Groups were smaller then, times were different. Thought they could be better. UUA started to push small group ministry ideas. We could have combined them with program groups. No creative impulse to do that.

-- There are many among us who have tried to move program groups in that direction and in a variety of ways. It is difficult to get leaders to agree to facilitate that. Especially when they are larger. We tried making them smaller purposely...this happened a long time ago...perhaps doing this again - making six PGs instead of four - might facilitate having PG's do 12 services instead of 8 as part of any transition to a part time minister, as well as making them smaller and thus more intimate, like a small group ministry.

-- intergenerational services not working...sermon dumbed down. Theory that it helps them later in life not proven. In the meantime losing adults for dumbed down services. There's a place for the kids, that's what RE is for.

-- reaction sometimes to things the minister says in the context of sermons. Broadest question is I'm not always sure what are her thematic interests. Pulls a lot from personal experience which doesn't always work for me. Recent ministers including Emily (both) have interesting pushing social justice issues. I would think I would be an advocate for that but for some reason doesn't work for me. See others as well feeling that way. This form of leadership is not working for me.

-- feel RE is a bit adrift as well. Our "kid scene" is really different these days. Feel that the leadership is feeling the anxiety. UU movement is toward "get rid of Sunday school"...for a boat not doing well, how to make it sink is no more Sunday school

--minister and others posting on social media negative or other questions can be jarring and not helpful to the community.

-- between spiritual and social justice have listened to people on both sides of that debate. Would love to see it be "and" instead of "or".

-- Activism and social justice are not in conflict with reflection, meditation, and need for spiritual sustenance. We need both, not "either/or."

-- joined both for community and social justice

-- don't like it when people say you should go save all the world

Looking forward

1. What can we all do to improve cong. Life?

- create an envt. that has more focus on presence and being and resonance and spirituality and less on acting and doing – a quiet space and time for peace, refuge, notes of music. Less is more. Having a moment where we can breath
- maybe one fewer hymn to allow more time to slow down
- used to be full minute after cong. reflection, now we zip right on to the next thing
- less is more with sermons too, could be shorter – fewer facts etc. quieter. Sermons would be less and hence more.
- Difficult question – financial concerns are huge.
- We could find a way to encourage people to speak more tersely, concisely, not to dominate the conversation. Remind them to keep comments to a few sentences.
- Those who talk a lot have a need...bring same sense of empathy to them even if it irritates us!
- When attending Quaker meetings can't imagine someone saying keep comments short. We'll all have a different subjective experience. I kind of like it.
- Some congregations have a small book – you can write it down ahead of time and minister might read them or they get read. Tighten the process so folks don't ramble or speak on the spur of the moment. Thought about in advance not just that the mic is near. Little slip you fill out before the service. Place it in a bowl and it may or may not be read. Usually read if it's in there. (others say they are edited).
- There is a split in the cong about services being a call to action and those that are more reflective and spiritual. Thinking about how to improve goes back to minister drawing a lot on personal experiences. To me that is neither necessarily a call to action nor spiritual. Could challenge the speaker to be more spiritual, more profound.
- On the contrary people did welcome Williams' personal experience and statements on diet, health, etc
- How you synthesize personal experience is the issue – leading to general messages vs cerebral. Processed, felt something, and gave us something
- Not "don't include personal details" but how you reflect on them
- Loop everyone in
- Congregations struggle with their ministers, not the first or last...not being hurtful or negative. So what can be done, one balance to personal experience is to use texts (bible, torah, etc) so more reference and use of texts as opposed to just going into yourself and personal experience.
- Finding better common ground, exciting examples from out in the world

2. If you could imagine one change what would it be?

- make ourselves more visually visible to the world at large. A place that people would say "oh look at that a UU church there". People don't know we're there but they might walk in the door.
- don't be too touchy feely talking "us us" avoid using things like "everyone knows that" or "we all remember". Be more visible and public.
- Most people don't know what UUs are
- Maybe the minister could be more visible in the community not just in the UU world but in the Rivertowns world too.
- Nice to be in a place where more people pass by

- Discussion group at the library in Hastings
- Community discussion about something anything
- Sculpture in the backyard visible from old Jackson
- Like to have William as the minister
- Had several years of indifferent sermons
- I think we need a new minister, seconded. Think it's time both for her and for us. She's looking in a different direction so a resentment of our "littleness" creating a dynamic against the community. Haven't spent my entire life helping the needy so I "suck". She has great things ahead of her and there is a timeline when the honeymoon is over. Company that stays too long...I feel it's time.
- There is a time when the minister's tenure is unhealthy. And I think we're at that point.

3. What ideas do you have to bring more people in to our doors and get them to stay?

- get out of that meeting room!
- Not moving, but outside, beautiful garden, musicians marching...magical. Nothing magical in the service anymore.
- Being visible, how to become a physical entity - "Guy with hot dog stand on Jackson Ave" - trying to make us more visible
- "Bring a friend Sunday" - this is a fantastic idea that should be given some real thought!

Making it happen (considered all together given the evening was running late)

1. we're confronting challenges. Outside of pledge amount how to address this issue

2. Are there ways to raise money we're overlooking

3. If we had to cut expenses, what would you recommend

- what have other congregations done?
- Go to part time minister
- Look at childcare staff and RE staff
- Make more program groups
- Redefine what ministry is. Sharing a meal, having a conversation like this.
- Auction where people have meals in their home...would sign up for chance to talk with people
- Mt Kisco auction is very creative and wonderful...off the grid
- Bequests is an underutilized source of income.
- Long term financial plan, funded by bequests. Make sure the promises will be kept.
- Ask for 10% of their estate.
- Market the space more for events, e.g. weddings
- Other kinds of family events
- Phone calls instead of emails gets people to respond, personally
- Cut cleaning and yard work

■ **What are the things that are most important to you at FUSW?**

-
- The people here, being connected to them
- Not having enough person-to-person conversation after the sermons and in other opportunities
-
- The community here – the sense of community – feels like family, accepting, can be yourself, a safe haven
-
- What UU stands for in the world, our values, and these values ground me in relating to the world
-
- Spiritual quality of the services, sense of quiet and peace, the music, and the little ritual that we have
- The small group ministry has been very important to me
-
- The minister and her availability and personal support – she is the anchoring point for me
-
- Spirituality, spiritual explorations including the minister’s sermons and the members living the values of UU
-
- [Need for a framework to address issue of congregants who are not embodying UU values
- [Some people act appallingly and I know it drives people away. And there is no framework to address this problem]
- e.g. someone speaks in congregational sharing thinking it is a safe space and then another member criticizes him strongly]
- e.g. someone left because they felt that someone was being unkind]

■ **What’s working the best for you:**

-
- I love the Program Groups
- Having the senior youth group for our children
- Sunday morning services
- Our self-governing
- Religious education
- The Minister
- Mid-night Run – a spiritual exercise – provide help and bring UU values into the world
- Hospitality – coffee hour
- Joys and sorrows
-

■ **What could be better and how could that happen?**

-
- Like to see more people self-govern – take charge of something
- More people participate, come up with new ideas
-

- More people taking leadership role
- The same people are doing everything and the same people are being asked to do things
- If more people took a leadership role or just got involved, it wouldn't fall on the same people
- One year we did a "reboot", so that people could sign up but not feel that they were signing up for the rest of their life
-
- Want more opportunities for person to person contact; discussion.
-
- What are the barriers to volunteering?
-
- We need more money
- Financial commitment is really important – it takes money for us to survive
- Think of more ways to bring in money
- What percentages of time is the building used?
- Could we share the premises with another congregation?
-
- But the emphasis on pledging can be negative – people say "that's the only time anyone calls me. I could be dead for six months and no one would call."
-
- Cut down on the number of programs and focus our talents and money on these. e.g. religious education and other top priorities
- have the minister work only 10 hours – what would happen?
-
- Covenant of right relations in which we would all commit to each other and to the fellowship – the need for more clarity in purpose, or what brings us together.
- (One person described people saying that working on a new Covenant was "a waste of time," that our time could be spent doing something else, like fund raising" and this was very troubling)
- Only commitment anyone has ever asked of me is money – it's got to be more than that – we leave out the spiritual component
- Who are we and what are we here for?
-
- I want us to be mission-driven, but I don't want to be banging people over the head to do what they are not so committed to
-
- Open conversation about issues that involve us.
-
- In the past, we had meetings about what UU Pathway to Membership Re-emphasize
-
- New member dinners: Old members invite 3 new members to dinner
-
- Sorrows – that the congregation would send condolence cards or notes of sympathy
- Emily did that when she was here

- Emphasize Pastoral Care more – from the Congregation, or a committee, not just the minister.
-
- **Looking Forward and Making It Happen**
-
- **If we had to cut expenses**
-
- Part-time minister – as a way to wake people up and deal with reality
-
- Rent our space more – advertise to attract renters in the Enterprise and other places
- Attractive space location to Westchester and Rockland
-
- How to manage space rentals??
-
- Have a soup lunch after services and charge
- Or do that before Common Ground events
-
- Targeted fund raising – raised money, e.g. to replace the roof
- A way of making clear to people what the money is for
-
- Sharing the plate can increase our Sunday donations
-
- Strike the phrase, “we have always done it this way” – Be open to new ideas, or re-trying ideas that “didn’t work when we tried it before.”
-
- Annual report, one-page statement of what we’ve done and on the other side list the names of the pledge donors; also recognize them in other venues – e.g. plaques on chairs. Need for greater transparency in money matters. Make clear during services that money is donated in yearly pledges, not just what is put in the plate.
-
- Some way of recognizing donors – e.g. a brick with name on it for a walk - \$200!
-
- Need a forum, a safe space, where we can talk and discuss things – brain storm like we are doing today.
-
- Need some kind of system to address issues/problems. Confrontations.
-
-
-

How are things going?

1. What are the things that are most important to you at FUSW?
 - The people – at services 2
 - Groups – Women’s, Small Group Ministry 2
 - Lay led services – interesting subjects, get to know people, investment of presenters 4
 - Hymns – moving, many are non-traditional 2
 - Music – choir, musicians, piano, special performances 2
 - 7 Principles as guidelines for action – do it, don’t talk about it
 - Social justice – engaging in specific campaigns: Midnight Run, environmental justice, LGTTQ (welcoming, active members), Common Ground 2
 - Sermons 2

2. What aspects of congregational life are working the best for you right now?
 - Events and activities are organized well

3. What could be working better? How could that happen?
 - Some members are over-taxed with too many responsibilities
 - Lack of enthusiasm, spirituality – fewer volunteers
 - Lack of follow through on committees
 - Lack of spiritual leadership, pastoral care 3
 - Lack of diversity
 - Too much emphasis on social, political action
 - Lack of info sharing such as Board minutes
 - Dynamic, spiritual minister 2
 - Outreach by the community, collection of communities

Looking Forward

4. What can we all do to improve congregational life at FUSW?
 - Invigorate the Caring & Sharing Committee
 - Invite communities of color to connect with us
 - Assessing & prioritizing the number & importance of committees
 - Guidance on running a committee, a small group ministry

5. If you could imagine one change, what would it be?
 - Half time ministry
 - Expand the music program – more choir, soloists
 - Minister – more emphasis on spirituality

6. What ideas do you have to bring more people into our doors & get them to stay?

Making It Happen

7. We’re confronting challenges meeting our financial goals. Outside of your pledge amount, what ideas or thoughts do you have on how to address this issue?
 - Volunteer musicians instead of paid
 - Half time minister
 - Sharing the building with other congregations

8. Are there ways you can think of to raise money for our congregation that we’re overlooking?

9. If we had to cut expenses, what would you recommend?

10. Any final thoughts?

- Creative interactions between the members and the minister on their needs

First Set of Questions:

- Expect intellectual stimulation in sermon and congregational response x 5
- Love the music. X 5. It's way above par.. Spiritual side to music. Wishes there was more great music. Would like hear more from certain talented individuals. Would like more ways to get people involved.
- Likes the way that Rev Peggy pushes the bounds –attended Standing Rock. Would like to hear more about her experiences. Being more of a presence in social justice and making it part of our mission.
- Tired of hearing from same people x 3 during Joys/Concerns and Congregational Response. Certain people can take up the whole time.
- Wants more meditation and less soapbox
- Don't mind staying longer for congregational reflection if it is rich
- I just want to be part of the audience
- This is the one place I want to be Pollyana

Second Set of Questions:

- Talk to people that you are not inclined to speak with, those who may be left out.
- Get local papers to write a piece about us
- Lay-led alternative summer services offer a rich variety that may interest people
- Joys and concerns should not be separated
- More opportunities to socialize -sitting down together and getting to know each other
- Our location is a challenge. Can't do outdoor activities that are high visibility with public, esp activities for families (carnivals).
- Use our musicians to draw in the public

Third Set of Questions

- Tag sale –happy that it's re instated
- Want more planned events that are open to public
- Lease our space
- We have maxed out the capacity of our membership to raise money
- Promote planned giving –have announcements from people who have done it to show how easy it is
- Common Ground –raise more public awareness of FUSW and UU even if it doesn't raise money
- Hard to make recommendations on budget cuts without knowing expenses
- Go to Half time minister. Would need to fill in with more program groups and musical groups.
- Consolidate RE
- Find volunteers in our congregation to do admin
- Sell the building –sell the asset, lease space and brand it
- Merge with another congregation

Final Thoughts

Understand these are hard questions and want to hear back from the Board
Interested in knowing where this information is going.
Fascinated in hearing what other people think.

Comments from facilitator:

Add to instructions: Emphasize to participants that “this is about you” and not to temper thoughts, because of others.

What is most important?

- Social justice work
- People (x3). The only place where I'm comfortable being a Christian, because it allows people to disagree despite our beliefs
- Like minded community –even if you meet someone new here, I am comfortable speaking with them. Dialogue stems from a common understanding
- Connection –sharing
- Space to allow honesty and vulnerability
- Opportunity to make friends
- RE program x 2
- Breakfast Run and Midnight Run
- Caring cards
- Program groups and lay led groups (x3) –people talking from their hearts
- Social hour

What's working best?

- Welcoming, accepting and non-judgmental (x2) –opportunity for deep connection
- Common Ground, Rock and Soul Revue –what brings me here is not the Sunday sermons but all the cool things people do here
- Congregational sharing, Joys & Concerns (x2)
- Congregational reflection shouldn't be cut short. Congregational reflection is sometimes the most stimulating part of the service
- Services are inspiring and provocative
- Social gatherings like New Member Dinners
- People are happy to see me even if I haven't been here for a long time. I can come and go as I please
- Opportunities for being involved in the congregation like committees
- People want to listen and do care about what you are saying
- Piano music (x2) "Diane is the most spiritual thing in this place"

What could be better?

- New connections through social media (x2). "To be part of what's going on you need to be part of what's going on (ie/social media)." Have a social media presence that people are going to run into.
- More people in my demographic eg/single, active
- More opportunities with structure for deeper connection. Men's Group too much time spent on check-in. Would like to hear more about struggles, challenges, what makes people grow. Discuss themes or topics.
- Less meetings. Burdens on time and need for volunteers and is not uplifting work.
- More talking about faith, god, praying –"very little spirituality here for me"
- More music.
- More upbeat, contemporary music. (x3) We have a lot of talent here.
- More commitment to social justice - very low attendance at meetings is disappointing.
- Joys and Concerns do not resonate for me. Doesn't allow me to create relationship with someone. Excludes people who are not comfortable speaking out.
- Services "do not work for me...are an anachronism."

- Services are not an anachronism –can be better, more lively
- Want services that are less social justice and more spiritual
- More kindness
- More time for personal sharing

What is one change? What can bring people in?

- Social media presence
- Community activities at other locations. There is no visibility at FUSW.
- Rent a piece of land and put up a sign along Jackson Ave , Farmers Markets to advertise “UU is here”
- More dynamic stuff in the services.
- Services that are more accessible to people who do not have UU or religious background.
- I want to be more inspired, stimulated and challenged by the minister’s service. I have not felt that with current minister.
- I want a group that talks about different faiths –faith in God. Prayer circle.
- Need to act based on our mission statement. Move forward based not on individual preferences but based on vision of being UU

How to make it happen?

- More fund raising concerts
- Ask other UU congregations, religious organizations, non profits how they are doing fundraising
- Shelter Rock –once a month has live entertainment, spiritual program –may bring in younger adults
- Ask families to pay for RE
- Selling goods and services at Farmers Market

Comments: What works for one person will not work for someone else here

LC Group 8

<p>SUMMARY OF CHANGE FAVORITE THEMES</p>	<p><i>CHANGE IDEAS - PHYSICAL</i></p>	<p><i>CHANGE IDEAS - PEOPLE</i></p>
<p>ADVERTISE OWL PROGRAM (2X)</p> <p>BE ACCESSIBLE TO OTHERS WITH NO CAR</p> <p>DISTRIBUTE RESPONSIBILITIES EQUALLY</p> <p>SHARE FUSW CARDS TO THERAPISTS</p> <p>PERSONALIZE CANDLES</p>	<p>FUSW location sends message about... income/social strata.</p> <p>FUSW should build a road sign to showcase.</p> <p>FUSW should place chalice in front of VFW in Hastings in December.</p>	<p>FUSW is not reaching people we do not know if we rely on members inviting friends only.</p> <p>FUSW should target people learning other religions, such as middle age seeking community.</p>
<p><i>CHANGE IDEAS - SERVICE</i></p>	<p><i>CHANGE IDEAS - COMMUNITY</i></p>	
<p>FUSW first service was more nourishing.</p> <p>FUSW should have more in-reach, i.e. rebalancing of in-reach and out-reach.</p>	<p>FUSW activities should bring people from outside more, i.e. drumming circle.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">SUMMARY OF MOST IMPORTANT THEMES</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MOST IMPORTANT IDEAS...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MOST IMPORTANT IDEAS...</p>
<p>FUSW IS FOR CHILDREN/RELIGIOUS ED (2X) FUSW - PLACE OF LACK OF TRADITIONAL DOGMA (2X)</p> <p>FUSW IS MELTING POT OF RELIGION. FUSW IS A COMMUNITY OF OPENNESS & ACCEPTANCE. FUSW IS A COMMUNITY OF DIVERSITY.</p>	<p>Nourishment needs is important. Religious education is important. Music community is important. Hearing opinions is important. Programs groups is important. Personal sharing is important. Support minister is important, i.e. Standing Rock, Paris trips for social justice.</p>	<p>Place to be yourself is important. Friendship seeking is important. Partnering with spouse's social life is important. Small group ministry help is important. Live music is important. Choir is important. Spiritual leadership is important. Traits of intelligence, compassion, and inspiration is important.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SUMMARY OF WELL THEMES</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WELL IDEAS...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WELL IDEAS...</p>
<p>PEGGY/MINISTER IRESONATES WITH HER SERMONS AND WHO SHE IS....</p>	<p>Program Groups are well. Coffee Hour is well. Service topics are well. People give help to others is well. People can find support is well. Small Group Ministry is well. Music is well. Happenings of resonating services is well.</p>	<p>Program Groups are opportunities for learning about others is well. Stand up and be counted messages is well. Current ministerial intern is well. Getting nourished is well. We do a lot here message is well. Outreach is well. Listening conversations is well. Julia Calderola as RE teacher is well.</p>

<p align="center">SUMMARY OF WHAT WE CAN DO BETTER THEMES</p>	<p align="center">WHAT WE CAN DO BETTER IDEAS... BENCHMARKING</p>	<p align="center">WHAT WE CAN DO BETTER IDEAS... SERVICE</p>
<p>FUSW MEMBERS WANT CONNECTION TO NATURAL YEAR AND MORE EARTH BASED RELIGION.</p> <p>FUSW VOLUNTEERS FEEL BURDENED AND NOT EVENLY DISTRIBUTED.</p>	<p>Identify how other religions promote social justice.</p> <p>Identify how to grow religious education due to low attendance/not beneficial of learning experience and religious education teacher overburden and potential burnout (limited energy).</p> <p>Identify how to engage members in community, i.e. surveys, polls, voting.</p>	<p>Become less of a melting pot congregation (Yom Kippur vs. Christmas Eve).</p> <p>Determine why minister is not performing Yom Kippur service.</p> <p>Have more members in choir.</p> <p>Evaluate congregational services and religious education since a parent believes their child/young adult did not benefit while attending in multiple year due to small classroom size.</p> <p>Evaluate consistency of religious education program since a parent believes the children and young adults are not learning what they want them to learn, i.e. OWL Program.</p> <p>Desire to have more relaxed congregational services, less neckties and stoles.</p>
<p align="center">WHAT WE CAN DO BETTER IDEAS... ADMINISTRATION</p>	<p align="center">WHAT WE CAN DO BETTER IDEAS... HOSPITALITY</p>	
<p>Governance is not aligned for what the congregation decides, minister to be called by congregation, committees in place not established by bylaws, such as Committee on Ministry, Covenant, Worship Associates.</p> <p>Loss of Administrator and impacts.</p> <p>Small community with big ambitions.</p>	<p>Catholic/Evangelical aura uncomfortable.</p> <p>Struggle with Christian roots of Unitarianism.</p> <p>Hymns selection perceived as Christian only, and prefer Jewish songs.</p> <p>Belongness not felt.</p> <p>Religious education volunteers not feeling rewarded and feel the role is hard to do a good job.</p>	

What are the things that are most important to you? What aspects of congregational life work for you right now?

- Music, choir x 2
- Community x 3
 - knowing that the people here are ones that you will care about; have similar ethics; and are easy to connect with even if there are differences
 - “home when you are here”
 - sense of belonging
 - safe place for sharing intimate aspects of life
- Get here what you can’t get from the rest of the week
 - Structure –can just show up, do not need to plan
 - Pause – reflection, deepening spirituality, calming inner chatter, connection with what you love
- Childcare –allows parents to be able to come here
- Meaningful activities so that you do not need to attend Sunday services to feel connected to FUSW –Midnight Run, Common Ground, Men’s Group, Drumming circle
- RE and OWL curriculum set us apart from other congregations

What could be working better? If you could imagine one change, what would it be?

- Things do not need to be working better. Problem is what’s happening with faith communities and organizations all over the country. May need to do things differently
- Smaller membership is affecting multiple things eg/choir, RE (classes that encompass many grade levels may not be great for teaching or learning, because they are at different developmental stages in thinking; not enough families to generate the same sense of community that we used to have when there was a parents co-op)
- FUSW is not part of the larger UU conversations eg/ Black Lives of UU; lack of congregational involvement in larger UUA activities
- Not attracting young parents
- Our services are not meaningful to young people eg/ young adults who have graduated from RE have shared that the services do not have the same power/intensity as worship in youth cons
- Maybe invite and enable youth to help create more services.
- Losing our humanist voice and the language is becoming more religious x 4. eg/ “Let’s worship together.” Getting too “churchy.” “This is what I was leaving.” “This is why I don’t come to services that often.”
- More purposeful inclusion of holidays of other religions; otherwise we can fall into a narrow tradition (Christian)
- Music
 - Want to hear new music –not the same hymns, yet contemporary music is challenging (hard to sing along)
 - Too many hymns
 - If you are not familiar with the hymns and music, it’s harder to feel the music. Suggestions: set core repertoire, choir previews each week’s hymns and supports congregation in singing, hymn singing workshops
 - “there are some hymns that are very powerful to me”

- “Dylan and Beatles songs... I can feel it so much more. The stuff in the hymns I can do without.”
- More lay led services and program group activity on Sundays would translate into newer music, more community building, more youth involvement, more identity
- More musical events and concerts outside of Sunday services
- “We are spread too thin... I am burnt out... There’s too few of us... Same people wearing multiple hats doing a lot. “

What are ways that we can increase funds and decrease expenses?

- Maybe activities held here could routinely ask for a donation that would go wholly or partly to FUSW.
- Increase membership
- The services that we are doing now don’t distinguish us from other congregations in the area. Lay-led services would set us apart.
- Research congregations that are successful
- Monies to be generated outside of pledges, outside sources eg/rentals
- Maintain the vitality of the RE program. Important not to short change the RE portion of the building.
- Mission driven activities can build community eg/ sending groups and families to PR and FL to help rebuild affected communities
- Partnering with other UU in the congregation
- Part time minister. Share with other UU congregations.
- Lay-led services have down falls. People have things to say, but may not know how to focus or speak and give a sermon; the service “can go into the weeds” and may not resonate with the audience; it can be stressful for an audience member to understand what the speaker is saying
- Jar to collect spare change

What are the things that bring you here?

Learn, find explore new idea: expressed by all. The group repeatedly mentioned community in its many different aspects. They like being in a place with like-minded people, but also diverse with shared values. Many have come for their children, the RE program. Some are looking for a haven with people who are similar to ourselves. Social justice, social action, environmental justice.

Group members talked about the support they feel from FUSW, especially during difficult times, getting parenting help, FUSW helps their children, the RE and youth programs. Open minded community, and spiritual inspiration were mentioned. "Even after my kids have aged out of RE, I still come. I have enjoyed rediscovering why I come." A place for growth.

What aspects of congregational life is working best for you?

Some members mentioned the minister, the DRE, all the people here are working well. They are helping me. Small Group ministry is working well; it helps meet/builds community. For one person, they shared that they first came to be part of RE teaching. At first it was just helping with kids and their education but now this person has joined because she can connect the service to the RE program and to herself.

"In the small group ministry, I feel more comfortable with speaking." Some are less likely to say anything in the larger group. The small groups feels more intimate, allows for discovery and exploration. Other items mentioned were the youth programs, the band (music), the choir, exploring one's musical side with the drumming circle. The program group planning and services were mentioned.

What is not working?

One member felt there is very little to appeal to young adults, since there are few people of that age group and the programming doesn't appeal to them. When teaching RE or working with the kids, there are few opportunities to attend service. It would be nice if there was a way to listen/watch the sermon afterwards either online or as a pod cast. Scheduling rooms is a problem; one person mentioned that after booking a room for an event, they found another group also scheduled for same time and room. We need more assistants for RE as well as more help scheduling assistants. Generally speaking we need more admin help.

One person mentioned that in the larger group setting, they are less comfortable speaking and sharing what they are thinking driven by partly not feeling comfortable but also intimidated by some of the other members.

Being a new member can feel uncomfortable, it draws too much attention to someone who is new. We need to find a way to make people feel welcome but realize not everyone is comfortable with attention.

We should consider different times or different days like Friday nights maybe. It would be nice to explore new ideas and try new things. Some people liked when we had two services; some liked the early morning service, and felt like this was a smaller tighter community. A question came up: how to create intimacy within our means.

If you can image a change, what would it be?

Very few direct comments on this question, most of the comments discussed fall under other questions.

What ideas do we have to get more people to come?

We need to advertise. Hard to find the place unless you know where to look. Do we need a “Are you a Unitarian and didn’t know it” advertising program? We should place signs in public places where people are standing and waiting, so people can read what FUSW offers. Would a road sign help? Personal invitations would help. For example, if we had something like a business card which highlights what FUSW is and why you should visit, then a person can be invited by members by handing out the card. It would be a personal invitation given out by members.

Is there a better way to follow up with new members to find out what they thought and try to get them to come back if they decided not to? It’s difficult when you feel you are the youngest person in the group. We need to find better ways to attract and bring in new younger people.

Can/does the minister reach out to people outside FUSW to help get people to know more about FUSW? Should we be trying to draw people from outside the river towns? Can Peggy do more to be part of other communities to draw interest to FUSW?

How can we solve our financial constraints?

The group basically did not have any suggestions on this topic other than to say that without increasing and drawing in more and younger people, it will be difficult to deal with the financial constraints of FUSW.

Things to raise money that we are not doing?

One suggestion is an example of another UU which buys art from women in Zimbabwe, sells it and part of the proceeds go to the UU and part to the artists. Can we sell/offer things that a portion of proceeds go to FUSW? The idea is to combine social action and community into a business activity.

One point of concern is we keep going back to the same people and asking them for more and more of their resources when they already pledge, and then they feel it is difficult to give more at auctions and other fund-raising events.

The ideas that were shared to raise funds centered around: Can some type of business activity be created to help? As an example, and more as an illustration, perhaps have a Starbucks at the FUSW that the profits could support FUSW. Basically find a business that can operate in the space that can raise money. Need to advertise. Rent out the space more.

Where can we make cuts?

Many felt that we are bare bones at the moment and it is difficult to cut more. Hard for people to identify areas for costs cuts.

Ending thoughts.

Discouraging to feel that we are between raising more money and or cutting expenses. Some express concerns that there are members who are not happy with Peggy’s leadership. Some in this group were very supportive of Peggy and felt the stress will divide FUSW, if the minister were to leave. Some believe there are members who would leave.

A question was raised: Could we survive without a minister? If the cost cuts resulted in losing Peggy, would the number of members fall even faster and make the finances even more difficult?

A follow-up email indicated that a new source of members and revenue might be the new Friday night drum and dance activity.

How Are Things Going?

1. What is most important to you at FUSW?

- the community, I love candles of joys & concerns – 1 other agreed “it’s a big plus of FUSW”
- the Program group took care of me. It saved my older daughter’s life! When she started participating in OWL, she was accepted, she flourished!
- The people, the Connections with certain people Another added- If Sarita had not called me, I would not be here now. It’s through people reaching out to me... to one another
- Peggy as minister – the topics of the sermons (except the “dark” topics, too negative)
- To learn about different points of view, that people are open-minded, everyone is accepted

2. What aspects of congregational life are working best for you?

- See Above also
- Building relationships, seeing the same faces week after week
- Child care services
- To see Nature! Through the huge window in the sanctuary
- Program groups, lay led svcs.
- “At one time, when Peggy walked the walk”

3. What could be working better? How could that happen?

- topics – want more uplifting, not like “guilt trips about white privilege”
- in a different congregation, did not like lots of committees, a flurry of activity after the svc. I like that it’s not like that, there’s the coffee hour, it’s not as pressured.. Taking me the way I am, where I’m at
- when I was much more involved, I resented that 10% of the members do 80% of the work
- I fell off the volunteer lists, which is fine for me now. I found it frustrating to try to get people to come help. People come to events and leave without offering to help!
- We need to add to our membership pledge, more than just a financial commitment, but also a “time” commitment. Example of the RE CONs – teens are assigned to a group & some work responsibility
- To assign/invite to have each program group to do an event or a specific “set of duties”, to structure responsibilities
- Program groups would be in charge of some aspect of other activities in addition to the lay-led svc. At each event, some groups are assigned tasks

Looking Forward

4. What can we all do to improve congregational life at FUSW?

- To attend! 1 other agreed
- When there was a membership committee, I would call people... Do people who share candles of concern get a call? I feel that I should call those people... Another said, it’s enough to speak with them after the svc.

- Reaching out to someone you don't know right after the svc. and forming relationships- 1 other agreed
 - Someone said "everything else is worked out" Another disagreed, some things may not be working
 - The good thing and the bad thing about FUSW is that people are coming from all over the place, near & far
5. If you could imagine one change?
- less social action sermons that make you feel guilty, more uplifting
6. Ideas to bring more people into our doors & have them stay?
- Having Potlucks for no reason!! (We used to do it at one time, it was great! Very ad-hoc)
 - An alternate service time? (kids have sports, etc. on Sunday am) (...we have offered Fri. evenings)
 - to invite people personally to come to the Holiday party
 - "One of the big draws is inter-faith & inter-racial couples/families, we celebrate all holidays!" How can we let diverse groups know about us? To attract these diverse populations
 - letting people know about our Musical events
 - "broader PR to the local papers"
 - better journalism coverage – 1 other agreed
 - have someone write up ads about what we're about
 - offer Live (or delayed) streaming of some parts of some of the service

Making It Happen

7. Challenges meeting our financial goals?
- Where could we cut? Child care svcs.? RE program? Minister's salary/time?
 - To fundraise something very substantial like a car! (the DF school Dist. did this)
 - Reminding people about percentage of annual pledge

How are you doing?

What is most important? What is working best for you now?

- Sense of community
- Religious education program very important, but I sense that the congregation has changed - there are less children and families; less participation by parents and the congregations; lots of gaps in teacher volunteers
- Community outreach but difficult to find time to join all the great activities
- Liberal, “come as you are” community
- FUSW gives my children exposure to a liberal community that they may not get in their daily routine –rainbow flag, LGBTQ persons
- Safe space for my children –great to see my daughter who grew up at FUSW finding this to be a grounding place as an adult during a hard time
- This is a place where I can be my authentic self
- I value the people –low key, welcoming; the people are more important than the programs or the minister
- Minister –I relate to Peggy
- I love the Program Groups –I enjoy listening to the services (not participating) and hearing from everyday people
- Congregational sharing
- Youth group –being involved with youth
- Question doesn’t apply: We’ve been away. Our kids are older, no longer in RE. Would take time to reintegrate, bc people are new. Limited time and energy for FUSW at this time. Can’t make the time commitment
- Don’t feel like I have a congregational life. Household schedule and health has made it hard to participate
- Feels disconnected –in part because of what is going on in my own life

What could be better?

- There needs to be more care for one another eg/ caring committee, more outreach to those who haven’t been here.
- Friday night Vespers was very good –liked the alternate time, intimacy, meditation, peace, but there was not a lot of attendance
- I’m a small group person (x3). Want more opportunities to do small group activities.
- Want more opportunities that do not require long term commitment. Eg/ can drop in, spearhead an activity on 1 day

Looking Forward

What can we all do to improve FUSW?

- It needs to come from me.

One change:

- A different minister. I want a minister that recognizes the uniqueness of our congregation.

Making it happen

Ideas to raise money:

- Amazon smile
- Makers –crafts and wares to sell

- More visibility in the community –volunteering at B&N with big FUSW sign or doing a food pantry collection in the community

What expenses to cut?

- Cut hours on staff
- Regulating thermostat better

Final thoughts

Ask if there's a way to get names of other people who have expressed an interest in small groups to get together

Could we share the premises with another congregation?

time
would call.”
But the emphasis on pledging can be negative – people say “that’s the only anyone calls me. I could be dead for six months and no one

these.
Cut down on the number of programs and focus our talents and money on

e.g. religious education and other top priorities
have the minister work only 10 hours – what would happen?

together.
Covenant of right relations in which we would all commit to each other and to the fellowship – the need for more clarity in purpose, or what brings us

Covenant was “ a waste of time,” that our time could be spent doing something else, like fund raising” and this was very troubling)

be
Only commitment anyone has ever asked of me is money – it’s got to be more than that – we leave out the spiritual component
Who are we and what are we here for?

I want us to be mission-driven, but I don’t want to be banging people over the head to do what they are not so committed to

Open conversation about issues that involve us.

In the past, we had meetings about what UU Pathway to Membership
Re-emphasize

New member dinners: Old members invite 3 new members to dinner

Sorrows – that the congregation would send condolence cards or notes of sympathy
Emily did that when she was here
Emphasize Pastoral Care more – from the Congregation, or a committee, not just the minister.

Looking Forward and Making It Happen

If we had to cut expenses

Part-time minister – as a way to wake people up and deal with reality

Rent our space more – advertise to attract renters in the Enterprise and other places
Attractive space location to Westchester and Rockland

How to manage space rentals??

Have a soup lunch after services and charge
Or do that before Common Ground events

Targeted fund raising – raised money, e.g. to replace the roof
A way of making clear to people what the money is for

Sharing the plate can increase our Sunday donations

Strike the phrase, “we have always done it this way” – Be open to new ideas, or re-trying ideas that “didn’t work when we tried it before.”

Annual report, one-page statement of what we’ve done and on the other side list the names of the pledge donors; also recognize them in other venues – e.g. plaques on chairs. Need for greater transparency in money matters. Make clear during services that money is donated in yearly pledges, not just what is put in the plate.

Some way of recognizing donors – e.g. a brick with name on it for a walk - \$200!

Need a forum, a safe space, where we can talk and discuss things – brain storm like we are doing today.

Need some kind of system to address issues/problems. Confrontations.

Please Note: 1. Additional agreement by group members on a topic is indicated by (x1), (x2), etc.

2. Several attendees commented that they attend FUSW rarely or sporadically.

OVERALL THEMES OF THE LISTENING CONVERSATION

1. Community – we are a like-minded safe place where people can share with one another

2. Not everyone feels that they can talk to Peggy. The process of openness and sharing with her is lacking. There is no safe place to bring concerns.

3. Time of Personal Sharing needs to improve. Members need some “coaching” or guidelines.

4. Public Relations – we need to target PR to colleges, high schools, friends and other like-minded people. This

can including holding services in different location and at different times. Religious Education is our strongest feature.

HOW ARE THINGS GOING?

- Community – like- minded people, safe, good interaction (x1). Getting to share and hear others
- Creativity – music, performing with others
- Atmosphere of intellectuals. Honesty, integrity.
- Lay-led services and program groups (x2). Not getting nourished by regular Sunday services. Just come when possible for lay-led. People have different opinions of Peggy’s sermons.
- Why have there been some service changes, i.e. separating joys and concerns. (x2) Joys and Concerns could be done together if done with care. It’s good for kids to hear about different events among people in a spiritual community.
- We are in a transitional phase with the minister.
- RE (x2)
- UU Values – should be shared more
- Social action
- To grow, we need to be out in the community more, i.e. White Plains police issues/violence

CHANGES/LOOKING FORWARD

• Need for specific PR that communicates about our special RE, OWL and other programs directed at kids.

Kids need our type of RE. Target people with young children who are looking for FUSW’s open intellectual curiosity in a non-judgmental setting. To learn how other worship and to respect different traditions.

- Bring guests. FUSW offers a safe, welcoming community.
- FUSW has a logistical problem. If you don’t have a car, you can’t get here.
- Living the change you want
- Getting into the community more - speakers, colleges?
- Go beyond Sunday services, such as Sunday afternoon for kids and teens. Hold services at different locations, such as at a college.
- More advertising, like the ad in the Enterprise about broad wings and deep roots. Perhaps tables at street fairs, notices on bulletin boards. May and June is when people are looking for religious settings for the fall. Target this time.
- Colleges that that stress cultural. Reach out to religious groups on campuses. (X1)

MAKING IT HAPPEN

- Better communication. Need to look at what’s happening to long time and older members, not just bring in new ones.
- Regarding personal sharing, there is a need for “thoughtful coaching” regarding how and what is said. The skill of personal share is lost. We need to be succinct and not meandering during personal sharing. (x2)
- Find out why people are leaving. Is it because they can’t confront? Lack of congregational sharing? Need a clearer mechanism to share. Where does a member go when one doesn’t agree with what’s been said, i.e. during a sermon, or something that’s been done or changed? Who do you talk to at FUSW? Don’t want to complain to the wrong person.
- No place to complain - weird control. Lack of trust in Peggy. A feeling that there’s an agenda that’s not forthright. Can’t talk to the minister where his ideas will be heard and respected. (x3)
- There are youth who are looking for people who are not narrow minded. Our youth groups and Cons

are great for disenfranchised kids. We should reach out to high school counselors re: students can come and be themselves.

- We are not branded well to attract people. It's not just us, but the larger UUA too.
- Membership is down all over, i.e. clubs, religions.

WHERE TO CUT, WHERE?

- We are already barebones.
- Bring people in from the outside for auctions.
- Lack of trust in minister lowers money being pledged, etc. There's a lack of enthusiasm right now. While the dinners are good, there's a lack of prioritizing right now. That's the elephant in the room
- Stop and Shop cards
- The group feels safe
- No minister is perfect. There are many good features to Peggy's ministry. How can we make it work?

Share and set boundaries with love.

- Peggy's voice tone and amplitude are at issue. Peggy's oratory skills could benefit from professional coaching. Some of her speech patterns are not inviting. She needs to use the microphone better. Leslie offered to coach on this. Peggy is touch and can take/receive this kind of feedback.
- If we had a common denominator of what we need from Peggy. This takes courage. People have to say what is off putting about Peggy. It gives Peggy an opportunity to improve her skills.
- Sermons need to be deeper. Some are good, some light. (x2) Perhaps schedule them less often
- Ministers come and go

How are things going?

Areas of Satisfaction:

- Love the music (x3) – choir, Diane, Paul all mentioned
- Love the sermons (x3) – “they really address my personal development”
- Meeting up with people, the opportunity to spend time with like-minded, concerned liberal thinkers
- RE program and its connection – including children as a part of the congregation
- Program groups are essential (x2) to adult RE – they reinforce the sense of community, and are unique to FUSW
- Sunday mornings are important – being here is being a part of a community
- In favor of “build your own” theology
- The whole service is good – from beginning to end (x2)
- Drum circle!

Areas of Concern:

- We need a cohesive policy
- RE not working as effectively as in the past, or as a driver for growth
- “There’s something in the service that isn’t speaking to me” (x2).
- There is a sense of conflict, like we’re not all pulling in the same direction – in the past this was not the case. Maybe it’s about getting something done and having a sense of purpose, not just in social action, but as a congregation.
- Sometimes this feels like self-help/group therapy, we need to be motivated to go beyond just what happened last week.
- We need a deeper conversation – something “transcendental” – something that would pull people off the street and want to come in and have a discussion.
- We need the synchronicity of social action and a spiritual sense.
- We lack gravitas – in the past (90’s) we all wanted to grow, to become more, to be taken seriously in the community at large, we were more “future-focused” then.
- We need a Sense of Purpose (x4)

Looking Forward:

- There’s a sense that people come, sign the book and then fade away – we need to change that, get them engaged. It’s not about the advertising – it’s about the conversion rate.
- Hard to get people here all the time – competition for time demands from other activities.
- Want/need to avoid “blaming and shaming”.
- There’s a different energy now, it’s not as bad as Desperation, but it’s a bit like Defeatism – we need more Optimism.
- We need “Open-ness to Change” – in general, not in specific. “That’s not how we do it” is holding us back. Think about new ways to approach things. But don’t try everything at once.

- Maybe shake up the order of service. More time for congregational feedback – it used to be called “Talk Back”.
- Noted that many organizations are struggling, both with similar issues, but also with “pessimism”, an outgrowth of the current political environment. Lots of self-reflection is going on.
- The institution should not have to act as psychologist.
- There’s “communion” here, but not as much “community”, especially for people outside of the norm (i.e. straight whites). (x2)
- Shared activities build community. We need to find a Purpose and center around a focal point. Could be climate change (as an example).
- There’s a group of people from previous years who feel “bruised” – they’re not being consulted, they’re ways are being overlooked or cast aside.
- We need to involve all of the stakeholders.
- In the past, the congregation was “fully in charge”, there was no hierarchy. This may or may not have been “good”, but things are different now. There is a group from the past that misses it.
- Maybe find some sort of outside moderator who can help bridge the divide between “then” and “now”, an evaluation of governance structure (x2).
- Above all, We Need a Purpose. (x4)
- In the past, there was always some big thing on the horizon – yes, all the little things were still there, but the “big thing” gave energy, lacking today.
- Hard to look like you’re accomplishing things when you lack a variety of programs, but hard to provide programs without enough attendees.
- Who are we serving? The congregation and new members? Or the wider community?

Making It Happen

- Grow membership (x3)
- Shaking people down for more money is not the solution (x3)
- Once, we had excitement and wanted to “talk it up”. Need that back. Big RE program helped. (x2)
- “People aren’t going to come here just to keep this place alive. That’s not enough of a reason.”
- We need to offer thing(s) that make us significant.
- We need to do something Special, commensurate with our own spiritual beliefs – something Tangible.
- We offer Spirituality – it’s more than just the League of Women Voters. We need to more than just a political safe space.
- Not just supporting ourselves, but making a difference in the world (x2). “Healing the World” is part of what we should be doing.
- No cost reduction items noted.
- We should be doing more, not less. Maybe a job support group, Common Ground in its early days as an example, become a place for people to come.

- People need to feel like they're getting something when they're here.

Over-arching Themes:

These appeared to resonate with the group most deeply – in rough order of importance:

1. Find and Establish a Sense of Purpose
2. Make a Difference in the World – think outside of just the bounds of FUSW
3. Try to re-establish RE as a driver for growth
4. Allow more time for reflection/sharing
5. Be open to change
6. Keep up the good sermons – their applicability to individual issues and needs

Themes that got multiple mentions:

Community, nurturing, enjoying the people in the congregation; support to be more themselves. Involved and committed congregation.4x

Program groups—own our worship and process.2x

R.E. a nurturing place. Children in a safe place.4x

Adult R.E. or topics of interest, discussion groups, besides services and social action.3x

Quality Music.2x

We need people to have a realistic and detailed understanding of the financial situation.4x

Tell the congregation we need more volunteers.2x

We need to know more about the money, the financial situation, a pie chart of expenditures and income, and details. Forthcoming financial details from the Board.4x

Raw data—verbatim comments—follow below.

(See individual answers for What To Do section below.)

HOW ARE THINGS GOING?:

I enjoy the people in the congregation, Midnight Run, Common Ground, Program Groups, and being a member of the finance committee, equally.

Second the program groups, the community of people, warm, accepting, nurturing, creative people, and I feel that the warmth and nurturing is almost therapeutic, healing for people. People discover who they are, being more of who they are, with the nurturing of spiritual growth. Music is also good, and R.E. is also a nurturing place, starting with the nursery. I treasure how committed and involved members are, devoted, and willing to spend their creativity. Program groups are important because each of us owns our congregational worship and we get to create how we worship. It is not handed down from on high by some other authority.

I've had a lot of the teenagers, they've started with me and grown up. It's a good feeling. The nursery is very important for young people (young adults coming with children) coming in, young people will come in and try us out. I always make it known that if their children cry I will get the parents from the service. It is important to have childcare during the summer, because sometimes people come then, for continuity. On occasion, we don't have any children, and I don't know who changed it, but now we have to stay in our rooms. I would like to sit in the back.

I value how welcoming our community is to everyone. I love that we're multigenerational, and I love the music. Programs for our children are important.

Happy to know that the congregation is there and there will be a constancy of the community. You don't have to be concerned that there will be a service. Continuity. Music of high quality is really appreciated.

I like the sermons, I like the fact that Unitarians are very brave people, because it takes a lot to define your own teachings. I like the R.E. We had the kids and we went to Ethical Culture and the kids were running wild. Our childcare is excellent.

WHAT COULD BE WORKING BETTER AND HOW COULD THAT HAPPEN?

I'm happy the way things are. I like the sermons and I think Peggy is wonderful.

I'd like to learn more about the building, my dad was a carpenter (put on the grounds committee by acclamation). During Sunday services in my conservative Baptist Church of my youth there were deacons in the front to greet people who came in late.

I don't like our Society referred to as a church; I would prefer society or fellowship. I don't think we would vote to be Christian.

I think we ought to have an ad hoc committee to look at the security of the building—anyone could get back there (to where the kids are).

My thing is working great.

Something we have had in the past and we haven't had for a long time is Adult R.E., groups that are led by someone with expertise, in the evening, may be programs of 4 or 5 sessions. Another thing would be something for young adults, even though they are not so likely to come to something like ours, but if we had activities that could draw young adults (20's). Other ways to get together besides services or social action. I don't have a solution in mind, but it is fair to bring up the fact that the money situation is not great. We don't have as much in pledges, or members, as we once did.

I would like to see our congregation be more multiracial.

I would like to see an adult R.E. trip to Boston like the kids go on.

I am painfully aware that something must be done—I'm sorry there's not a realistic understanding of our financial situation. We don't have the revenues—you either get the revenues or you cut expenses. The congregation is in a state of denial. We will have a music presentation and Common ground refreshments are

sources, but the finance committee is in its little room wringing our hands and the board doesn't want to have a discussion but a lot of people are not owning that we are all in this together. Do we want to shrink our expenses. I think we have to maintain R.E. Our major cost is in our employees. There are not enough volunteers, and I think people fear they will get stuck with the job until they die. Where you have a healthy flux where old people can go off a post and new people will come on. I am on the greeting committee now 4 years, and nobody stepped up and nobody will volunteer to make it happen.

Making it clear that there are committees that need volunteers would help.

Could there be an orientation for new members where they get a list of what they could do?

I want people to want to volunteer.

I liked the auction last year, but nobody volunteered to run it.

If there are members who have extra bedrooms they might offer rooms for visiting UUs and give the proceeds to FUSW. There is something called UUHome and could we join that. (Multiple people endorsed this)

LOOKING FORWARD—WHAT COULD WE DO?

More people contributing to the congregation in terms of the congregation as a whole. Volunteering is my main thrust. This is a community that has to be supported. It doesn't take much if there are a lot of people doing it.

More "upfrontness" from the board and people who know about the financial situation. More acknowledgement about the facts of what is needed to run that place. It takes at least \$1,000 a month to run the physical plant. This is not to frighten people that we're after their money, as if it is just about the money. The board is in charge of this. It is also about how we talk about this.

We need like a pie chart of where the money goes. If people could see how much it takes every month . . .

. . . people would be able to understand where the money goes. I have faith that we can talk about it. We had a pie chart for the last pledge drive, but it was not understandable.

They used to sell organic, fair trade coffee, and if people would like to buy it . . . not just holidays, all the time.

People could bring in homemade goods and people could contribute at coffee hour for the congregation.

We should do bingo. Everybody else makes money off of games. Monthly business meetings for the whole congregation. Casino night?

I was not aware of the financial situation, but you've got to make people aware.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Make across-the-board cut from everything. That would be fair to the staff. If we had to.

This is pretty theoretical unless you have the budget in front of you. Colored pie chart.

Education. It is too late to do it at the annual meeting. Where the money goes and where it comes from. You need some detail below the pie chart. We need to look at the school. We would be in bad trouble without that rental income. We have raised the rent as much as possible.

The yoga people all pay money.

We need more detail. There are a lot of people who may not want to know all of this detail, but they can duck it if they want. We need to think about how we are now paying for some things to get done and volunteers might do it. I'm not looking forward to cleaning out the congregation. When we don't have office staff things fall apart. To increase rentals—a concern about not having on-site office staff. Could a cleaning company or someone else who needed office space, also use the office space and answer the phones for UU too. Use the office in exchange for service. Grounds service, housekeeping . . . We have a personal handyman because he stores stuff in our garage for free, and he fixes stuff all the time.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Thank you for being there: from the group.

1) Ralph Waldo Emerson—this time is a very good time if we only know what to do with it. 2) I have faith in our congregation that we can work out how to go forward.

Could we charge people to hang their stuff on the walls. Asking for 5% of their profit is not outrageous.

It is important to be part of a group, as a congregation, to do things such as contributing to Blanca, Common Ground, Midnight Run, you couldn't do it individually, and it motivates me for wanting to increase the participants in the congregation.

In the summer, a lot of times there is nothing for childcare in the summer. You need someone to organize it, they cut it and say that parents will make up for it, and parents don't want to do it. Sometimes these choices are not a real choice, and cutting child care is not realistic.

Faith in us as a congregation that we can do it.

Should we take trips to other UU congregations to see how they make money?

First set of questions: How are things going?

- Most important

- Music
- Sermons directed at adults. Prefer more spiritual, less political.
- Community, the people I meet/know.
- Program group services
- RE curriculum
- Small group ministry

- What is working?

- Peggy's sermons since sabbatical (more spiritual)
- Coffee hour
- Program groups - get to know people, get a chance to be a leader, like that groups last 2 years
- RE - They are doing a great job.
- Music
- Adding links to Scoop

- What could work better? How could that happen?

- Sermons more spiritual
- Music more energetic, modern, familiar
- Greater pool of volunteers, too much reliance on the same people
- Centralize list of volunteer opportunities, make them more accessible,

Second Set of questions: Looking forward

- What can we do to improve congregational life?

- Some volunteer jobs seem overwhelming, try to make tasks simpler
- Give people more time to consider accepting a volunteer role.
- Maybe make announcements at the end of the service
- One change you would like to see
 - Minister - a stronger voice in the community to bring people in. Organization makes it difficult for minister to lead.
 - Minister more focused on spiritual life of the congregation, less on administration
 - Minister more personable, more approachable

Third Set of questions: Making it happen

- Full time sexton or administrator to free up some of minister's time
- How to get more members
 - New ways to connect with the community

- Facebook
- Podcasts
- Live stream
- Concerts

- Promote great things about FUSW better
 - OWL
 - Liberal religious community
 - We look at other faiths
 - Music
 - Social action

 - Think of ways to bring in more young people
 - Think of ways to maintain connections among young people who went through RE together

- Improve finances
 - For profit concerts
 - Improve rental income
 - Impress on parents the value of RE, charge non-members for RE
 - Volunteer cleaners
 - Better promotion of FUSW
 - More outreach to people who drift way. Find out why.
 - Part-time minister
 - Reduce UUA dues
 - Congregants offer classes/lectures
 - Community garden rental
 - People pledge time if they can't pledge money

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AT FUSW?

- Personal Relationships – knowing people from FSW allow for outreach and caring. There is comfort in outreach (x2) (x3). The feeling like in an emergency, you could call on anyone with whom you have a relationship here. Relationships here are deeper and have more content.
- Even if one doesn't feel entirely comfortable in outreach, at least one is left feeling accepted.
- Choir participation. Helps puts other thoughts away. You can look around and see the congregation from the front of the room.
- Peggy
- RE Program – especially OWL program and COA
- Here it is more about spirituality than formal religion. Friendships are of a spiritual nature which helps with loneliness.
- Small Group Ministry
- Programs like the Sermon writing workshop. Writing one's own spiritual story is valuable yet challenging. Peggy leads it well.
- Small groups facilitates getting to know others
- Shared values around social justice and right actions. A sense of kindness.
- Openness, acceptance and an inviting environment . It doesn't feel like much is required to be here

WHAT IS WORKING WELL?

- Things are working well in terms of the openness felt here. One feels a lot of support. One can come out of one's shell
- Diane's piano (x2x3x4).
- The personal connection formed from comments of others, or by Diane's music. Sometimes is just a 30 second conversation, or a comment made during the time of personal reflection that is the most important thing that happens on a Sunday.
- Program Groups and people sharing personal stories (like Carter's about Parkinson's)
- Program Groups and individuals sharing music
- Coming here to just be accepted.
- A deeply accepting place
- Peggy's depth of thought and passion of belief inspires him and one's family. Keeps them attending.
- Seeing the participation of people makes one feel part of this place.

WHAT COULD BE BETTER?

- Hard to get to know people, especially in coffee hours. Sometimes overwhelming with so many others around. Dinners together help with this.
- Sometimes Peggy's sermons are confusing. They seem frothy. One is left with the feeling of "What did she say?" Sometimes can't remember what Peggy has said. Sermons have been better since Peggy's sabbatical. (x2) The song at today's service was beautiful but Peggy's sermon was not sensitive about it being a white man's song. Felt attacked, not understood.
- Would like more small group conversations to deepen responses and reflections to services. This would be useful for new people attending too.
- Congregation is suffering from a division. Some people struggle with Peggy's governance style. Who's in charge? Is it the congregation generating plans or is Peggy in charge? Some people no longer coming because of our minister. We are congregationally driven, i.e. how the men's group started. Peggy wants to lead, to govern. How can we come together to work on this?
- How can the congregation best support leadership constructively? It is surprising that members have issues with the minister about leadership.

DUE TO LACK OF TIME, WE CONSOLIDATED THE "MOVING FORWARD" QUESTIONS (WHAT CAN WE DO

TO IMPROVE CONGREGATIONAL LIFE? WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU CHANGE? WHAT CAN BE DONE

TO BRING MORE PEOPLE HERE?)

- We should get the word out about our RE program to more people. This would bring in more

people. A lot of people came here because of RE.

- The question is how to get people to attend and how to get people to stay It's important to help newcomers and current congregants feel satisfied and that is done through personal connections, small group gatherings and dinners and even discussions like these about or needs and wants. (x2)
- Figuring out how to manage finances more effectively. How to monetize what we have to offer, and leverage our space to increase revenue here, i.e. classes, workshops, including about the skills of people here.
- FUSW's out-of-the-way location works against us – may limit others finding us.
- Get more local newspaper write-ups about programs (x3) such as RE and the Midnight Run.
- More musical activities, recitals, benefits, the Rock and Soul Reviews, etc. Need to get more energy in and out of the building.

HOW TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE OF MEETING OUR FINANCIAL GOALS?

- Pledges have dropped by \$50,000 and the number of people attending has dropped. We need to learn more about why. Most of the budget is staff. Can we afford a full time minister? When/if we should go to a half-time minister?
- Fundraisers may be one-shot events. We need something more stable and reliable.
- Musical fundraisers, like ones with original songs.
- Perhaps looking to do more outreach to young families through RE might help. Articles about our RE program and that we offer something unique may help.
- Small or medium sized groups together from the congregation build relationships and thus build congregational cohesion. People stay and support the congregation is they feel personally connected to others.

Note: Asterisked items were statements or ideas that met with unanimous, enthusiastic agreement.

How are things going?

- 1) What things are most important to you?**
- 2) What aspects of congregational life are working best for you?**

*One of the things that's most important to me is having a community of open-minded, accepting, nonjudgmental people. It's a safe place—the safest place in the whole entire world. (There was universal agreement about this.)

Yes, at one time David, our former minister, also talked about safety. What's said here stays here, and that helps you to feel safe.

Maybe the sanctuary concept is the model that we need and should use. On the whole, I believe that this is a sanctuary and a safe place. But maybe if someone says something that's negative or disruptive during the service, then they might need more counseling, listening or support.

Given enough time during congregational sharing, the wisdom of the group works on things and takes a concept or a feeling from the sermon and takes it a step farther.

People clustering together, helping one another.

The unity and community here that 99% I hear and see. For instance, I questioned a statement that was made during the candles of sorrow by a man I didn't know. He said, "Don't go here for the sanctuary," a rather negative comment. I spoke to him about it afterward, and another congregant agreed with me.

What I have liked, and I hear it less often or experience it less often now, has been the opportunity to hear from other people about how they wrestle with theology and/or emotions. We have in the past had more of that than we have now. For ex., congregational sharing time during the service has been cut from 20-25 minutes down to 8-10.

I also miss having more congregational sharing after the service. I think other people miss it very much, and they may not be coming anymore because of that. With personal sharing, you hear things, and you can work out things in your head for yourself. We have more hymns now, and maybe we should have only one or two hymns, and that would give more time for sharing. I had lots of hymns in Catholic school for years, and I don't need them anymore.

An example is the wonderful young woman who spoke in congregational sharing today, who spoke at great length, so personally, and there wasn't any time given to digest it.

We shouldn't shorten the sharing for the sake of keeping within a schedule. What's five extra minutes of service? The emphasis of this service was on inner peace, why not extend the congregational sharing to let people have more of that?

One thing that makes the congregational sharing, sometimes a bit inhibiting is that the same people tend to talk—and sometimes they go on at length, I understand that you can't restrict

people, but it gets difficult. So that's a bit of an obstacle. Realistically, what do you do about that?

Well, William the intern minister was trying to give people signals to shorten it up a bit.

Maybe there should be an announcement or note to the effect that people should keep it short. There are the usual suspects, who always go on. Maybe we could explain what congregational sharing is in the Scoop, and lay out the ground rules, that people should be mindful of how much or how often they speak, and be considerate.

But I personally don't mind hearing people speak at greater length, as the young woman did today. I don't mind running over five minutes. It doesn't have to stick to just one hour long.

If you allow another half hour, though, the same people who take the mike would just extend their comments, and that still doesn't allow the opportunity for others to speak. There is a need for a facilitator, whether it's the usher or the minister.

There's the question of the Black Lives Matter banner, which may put off some people who come to visit, but it also gives people the opportunity to open their hearts and minds.

When I was running a conference, I put times on the agenda so that people could keep track of time, and we managed to finish earlier than usual. If we could get an awareness of time to people, that might also help.

3) What could be working better? How could that happen?

If we're going to have the whole congregation move towards something, like a mission or covenant, then it should be the whole congregation involved, not a committee. We need the whole community to be involved, so that everyone is heard from, beginning, middle and end. "If you want to discuss something in more detail, go and see someone from the committee"—that doesn't do anything for me.

I'm filled with good feeling, and I learn, when I hear everyone speak their minds and hearts.

I agree, and I think we need a methodology or a procedure to enable that. Some people are sprinters, and some people need more time to open up, or a different format.

Looking forward

4) What can we all do to improve congregational life?

5) If you could imagine one change, what would it be?

I worry about our finances. To me, the one change would be not just that more people are encouraged to attend, but also that they're encouraged to pay their fair share of pledging. Because if not, we cannot afford to pay for a full-time minister or other things. Money matters.

In keeping with that, there's two sides of the money issue: there's the money that comes in, and the money that goes out. For ex., I was on the consistory of the RCC. They were going through money problems; any nonprofit has them. They didn't know what to do. I said, "First of all, we have a manse for the minister to occupy, and it's in a very expensive part of town. We also own a house next door with an apt for the sexton and offices downstairs for the RCC, and they weren't paying rent. Possibility: sell the manse, move the minister into the sexton's apt, help the sexton to

find another place and collect rent from the RCC people downstairs.” Instead, my fellow RCC members were saying, “We can’t afford to have Xmas trees, we should have no more of anything.” This is a question for further conversation at FUSW; I don't have any suggestions right now.

I would like to see more transparency between the Board and the congregation. I would like to see a report (fleshed-out minutes) after each Board meeting, easily available to each congregant. There was a gap of eighteen months in the minutes, and I complained to the President, and she was responsive and resumed the minutes, but they were bare-bones minutes, and I didn't learn anything from them.

Maybe there needs to be some training about how to communicate about this? Maybe the BMOW needs to announce that the minutes exist and are available to congregation?

Could they be made available on the members-only portion of the FUSW web page, so that everyone could see them?

6) What ideas do you have to bring more people into our doors and get them to stay?

We don't have any publicity about the great things happening here at FUSW. Look at this great RE room, and we don't have any publicity about the classes, the children, the programs—nor is there any publicity to bring people to the congregation, or to grow membership. The Midnight Runs, the unity and community here, are wonderful and should be publicized.

Maybe there are ways to publicize FUSW gratis, in the Patch or elsewhere.

One of the things that the RCC church used to do was when they had events or functions, they'd video it and put it out to the local cable networks. The drumming circle, or intergenerational events, if we could video those, it would be great to publicize them that way.

Common Ground Coffee House is a great example that would be great for people to see videos of, if that could be done without compromising people's privacy.

That's a tremendous incentive for people to come here, when they see what a great time people are having at events like these.

In the past, we have had people with expertise to lead a limited, six-session seminars, to bring congregants together to discuss important issues. We don't do that at all now. If we did, I'd really want the workshops to be internal to this congregation, rather than opening it to other congregations.

I feel that I'm an exception, because I work and travel a lot, but I've stopped into other UU congregations. I have no questions about the unity we have here, with some exceptions. Maybe the RE teachers here can communicate with other teachers or parents by Zoom. My book group gets together every two months, and it's challenging to meet—I've moved, changed jobs, etc. I don't live on this side of the county anymore, either, so can't get here that often. I can't get to the Friday women's groups, etc. What about virtual options for people like me? It could grow community engagement, grow commitment, but how do you draw outside nonmembers and other people in further, invite them to attend services? At Common Ground Coffee House, do you make an announcement about an upcoming service, or dedicate a service to that specific group, or a given theme?

I always thought we could do something to improve the sign on the main road, which doesn't have much information or give a sense of what the place is. It's very plain.

There is a brand-new banner, Standing on the Side of Love, that's available to put up, but it hasn't been put up. Three members went in on buying it, so we can put it up on the building.

So there's a gap in communication, I would say. You bought the banner, so is there an action plan or procedure to get it done, and whose job is it to take care of it? Maybe there wasn't an action plan outlined to take care of it?

Maybe there needs to be an announcement at the service: "We need two people to hang the sign!" Or just put up a ladder, and I think you'll get people to do it.

In summertime there's no AC.

But these fans are making a major difference.

Making It Happen

7) We're confronting challenges meeting our financial goals. Outside of your pledge amount, what ideas or thoughts do you have on how to address this issue?

In terms of financial goals, we're down to 129 members when we used to be 160 members. To me, that's telling me that something's not right. Given my pension and SS benefits, I am paying my fair share. And you can't separate the money from the fact...That's a low number. I used to be a member in the Huntington fellowship, and they've dropped down over the past five years, but not as much as we have.

*What are the reasons for the drop in membership? People died, moved, lost interest, didn't feel welcome? Before we make any decisions about loss of m'ship, or make any statements about those numbers, we really need to know the details of why people are no longer with us. (Everyone agreed.)

Getting back to the loss of members, I've read two articles saying that this is happening everywhere.

That's not true everywhere. UU membership has stayed about steady, while other denominations have dropped by a third. Our services now are not distinguishable from any liberal Protestant church service. We could go to a UU, RCC or UCC service, and there's very little difference. If we're to have people to come to us, we have to have a niche. If we head for the center of the market, where there's a decline, that's a mistake.

They say the Millennials, and another generations behind them, don't want religion in general. They feel a lot of pressure with jobs, and modern stresses...I'm glad I'm not them.

I've seen a lot that the generations coming behind us are absolutely wonderful when it comes to social action and volunteering, but they don't believe that formal religion is the channel for doing this.

I agree, having children of that age. The way into connecting with them is food—healthy living, sustainability. They've chosen not to go into businesses: they've gotten trained as cooks, etc., they want to be healthy living, body-mind stuff, restorative health practices. I think that that's foundational. But I was happy to hear about Betsy's son wanting to continue to attend UU services where he is. That's more of a community engagement. Maybe a story about the Fair Trade coffee we serve here would attract people—they might say, “Wow, what a great place to be!” That's something we could focus on—that's very appealing to younger people.

There was a story about a Brooklyn church that's attracting thousands of younger people. I think it's more on the evangelical end of things. It's growing to three more churches.

Well, you know, like the service today, we can draw from any spiritual tradition to attract people.

My daughter is a full-time college student; she doesn't have much time to go to church. I'm trying to get her more connected. My question is, Do we have the structure to grow here, and to maintain growth? My understanding is that there might have been discussions regarding the ministers, but I don't know exactly what was determined.

I don't know if anyone has asked the people who have left, why they've left.

There has been some follow-up, but it hasn't been 100 percent complete.

I'm really disturbed, because if those who have left are not interviewed about why they left, and their comments are not shared with the congregation, that's troubling.

We always did exit interviews at my workplace, and they were very helpful.

8) Are there ways you can think of to raise money for our congregation that we're overlooking?

9) If we had to cut expenses, what would you recommend?

10) Any final thoughts?

There has to be transparency about the comments we've made here, and there has to be an action plan after that.

Typically you'd merge it into themes and present it that way.

*I think we need to have more, ongoing listening conversations throughout the year. (All present--eight people—enthusiastically agreed.)

We should also have someone taking minutes at them.

I think that's a great idea to have them more often, because if you have new people and new members attending, you get new ideas and new input. Like the Stop & Shop idea, which has brought in quite a lot of money.

I'm trying to think who said that the congregation should be responsible, through pledges, for approximately one-third of the expenses, and that the rest should come from fundraising or other sources. We get a bit of money from rentals, but....

I was taught that any fundraising should not be for operating expenses, but for other things such as capital projects or other actions.

I know they've tried things here, they have had committee, but...

The Katonah church has two tag sales annually, raising \$25,000 each. They give the money to social action.

*A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) might be a good follow-up on these conversation. There's a chart you can get and put the information on it. Makes it easier to visualize and present to the congregation, so that might be something the Board could consider for when they're preparing to present the outcome of these conversations to the congregation.

Also the 7P's: Prior Planning Prevents Piss-Poor Performance.