

## Worship Ministry Assessment—4/20/23

### General Comments:

1. Return rate was 39 responses, 3 from Friends. Roughly 1/3 of the Members responded.
2. Only a small proportion of comments suggest that worship does not hold much meaning.
3. A strong sense that worship does develop a spiritual sensibility, and that that sensibility spurs deeper connection to the Fellowship and action for good in the larger world.
4. On many responses, some replied that they really liked “x,” others that they wish we wouldn’t keep doing “x.” Indication that we need to continue robust conversations among ourselves about what speaks to us, and recognition that we are many and with varying perspectives/needs/desires.
5. What follows are thumbnail summaries of what “spoke” to the Committee for Shared Ministry. A compilation of all responses is attached at the end of the summary.

### Q.1: How has worship with this community helped to deepen your own spiritual life?

1. Comfort, balanced by challenge (intellectual/spiritual)—without dwelling in “anger.”
2. More committed to spiritual life/holding stillness/reminded that “everything is holy now.”
3. Time in my week to contemplate/explore/discover/deepen own spirituality and prepare for coming week.
4. Community of like-minded people/kindred spirits; part of something greater than the self.
  - a. Comment: How do we take our commitments outward—not just “our friends are here,” but how do we take our Principles into the world (to use an adversive term, “evangelize”)?
5. Welcoming/accepting space and people
6. Learn from others’ perspective, depth, reverence, while still responsible for own spiritual growth.
7. While only 1 respondent identified ritual, responses to later questions show strong attachment to our rituals/patterns (apparently we just don’t like to use that word).

### Q.2: How has worship with this community helped to deepen your relationship to this community?

1. You can be who you are/”Come as you are.”/Enabled by & enables welcoming.
2. Good to be part of the bigger group. Speaking/singing/listening/meditating together strengthens my bond to this community.
3. Learning from each other.
4. Feel more empowered to go out and do social justice work.
5. Coffee Hour is an extension of our worship ritual.
6. Connection to others (through Joys & Sorrows, and just sharing space together, interactive services like flower/bread communion). “Bearing each other’s burdens” and celebrating together.

### Q.3: How has worship with this community helped to deepen your community action in the wider world?

1. Catalyst and support to engage in justice work, Second Collection/Pride/Indivisible/Green Sanctuary/Land Acknowledgement, etc.
2. Action brought me here, not worship (although that has since *become* important).
3. Makes me realize how everything is connected, spurring action on social issues.

4. Learn from others, who care and are committed to generosity and kindness, and who motivate me.
5. Worship service highlights what is going on in the world.
6. Encourages me to go outside my comfort zone.
7. Worship service educates and challenges me—actions tied to values/Principles.

**Q.4: For you, what (if anything) is missing from our worship together?**

1. Categories of wishes:
  - a. more diversity of services, in terms of shape and speakers;
  - b. more communication forms, including some paper;
  - c. more congregational interaction during worship;
  - d. missing children and choir
  - e. personal sharing of joys and sorrows (although others prefer the current format).
  - f. discussion of service themes during Coffee Hour [is this an example of an initiative that the congregation could/should take?]
  - g. thematic addresses on current issues [again, an initiative the congregation could/should take outside of the Worship Service—perhaps before/after the service, or on another day?]
2. At least some, perhaps many, of the wishes will depend on more congregant engagement to initiate and pursue them (ie, the Minister can't/shouldn't do everything).

**Q.5: For you, what (if anything) should absolutely be retained in our worship together?**

1. Essentially, everything in our current Order of Service was listed by at least someone (see comment 7 under Q1).
2. While not part of the formal Worship Service, respondents also identified the Library and Table Topics at Coffee Hour.

## Worship Ministry Assessment— Collated—4/20/23

### 1. How has worship with this community helped to deepen your own spiritual life?

- More committed to spiritual life.
- Chance to calm down, take different perspective.
- It is a constant reminder of possibilities for connection and service.
- The Second Collection is important to keep our connection and awareness of great causes in our community.
- Having home of like-minded people that I can draw inspiration from is important in my life (ii)
- Greater compassion and able to be more open and engaged, rather than staying isolated
- Helps remind them of where they want to be as a person- ready to be better for the next week
- Piece of the whole fabric of life- one of many ways of recognizing the holy in life/ Reverence (space for the personal) (iii)/With kids, helps to ground me (iii)
- Helps be more disciplined; holding the stillness helps
- Favorite thing: shared joys and sorrows
- Sense of community, feels accepted and a part of something- something they have struggled with all their life/Feeling they belong to something greater/being in community among other ways in their life
- How Spirituality goes in different ways.
- Like having time in week to focus on things not otherwise thought about.
- Continual reminder of something I knew but often forgot.
- Marketing—takes 3 touch points for people to remember something.
- I like the feeling of community I experience when I am in the sanctuary with everyone.
- Kindred spirits—suffer from same delusions as I do.
- Don't know what "spirit" and "spiritual" means.
- Okay to allow it to be a discovery--keep exploring. You stop listening when you know the answer.
- "Spirituality" is more open than dogma—it is mystery—opens you to bigger than yourself.
- Allows space for discovery of what your spirituality is.
- Gives me time in my week to contemplate, explore my own spirituality.
- Enjoy rituals that are meaningful to me
- Enjoy having time to think about bigger, global issues as sermon unfolds.
- Being exposed to other views/perspectives/ideas and being open/encouraged to explore them for my own growth
- Not what I look to UU for—I do self-discovery on my own and look to fellowship for building community.
- Not particularly spiritual but find inspirations in others who are.
- It's non-judgmental, open, accepting.
- Attending worship at UUFM is the first time she felt happy and excited to be going to church
- Felt so welcome, people so forthcoming- felt at home
- Whole spiritual life changed so much since COVID- less strength and less involvement
- Being part of UUFM worship reminds me that everything is holy now; helps me contemplate ideas that I wouldn't have thought of on my own

- In recent years, worship with our UUFM community has not deepened my spiritual life. However, I have observed others in the congregation who show a greater sense of spiritual connection to the UUFM community. I realize that I have the responsibility for my spiritual growth.
- All of the elements of worship contribute to my spiritual life. I have repeatedly experienced new insights and shifted priorities because of worship. About the only thing that doesn't help me is a focus on anger.
- Renews a connection that's deeper sense of community.
- Belonging to something greater.

## **2. How has worship with this community helped to deepen your relationship to this community?**

- Opportunity to be with others, connect on meaningful level.
- Coffee Hour
- Community of love—support and compassion
- You can be who you are—come as you are
- Even though we are diverse, feel safe space here.
- Principles and values in common
- Like engagement with kids—grew up in church setting where kids were regimented and kept quiet. Feel a welcoming environment for parents with children.
- The energy and commitment to write letters to representatives and senators recommending the repeal of the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment came from their involvement at UUFM
- Feel more empowered to go out and do social justice work
- Being together is a form of worship
- Bearing burdens together and celebrating together (ii)
- Brings diverse buffet of new things to learn
- Again the Second Collection brings awareness to what we can do to serve the community.
- Our involvement with the Pride parade is a concrete visible way for us to connect to the community to see and be seen is important.
- Relationship to this community is main reason for attending worship. Enables me to connect with like-minded people in a place that is safe and supportive.
- It doesn't. It's the coffee after that brings us together.
- Joys & Sorrows—you learn who people are.
- What if we had small sharing groups at the beginning of worship to share joys & sorrows and how you are present in the morning?
- What if we took out the pews... round tables?
- Flower communion, bread communion, etc. ... interactive services like that.
- Sorrows & Joys
- Reminds us that we are spiritual beings, and share common concerns.
- Coffee Hour—it is our eucharist (ii)
- “We are spiritual beings in human form.”
- The longer I am in this community, the more I see the different lifestyles that people are living their lives.
- I am impressed by the creativity I see.

- I have developed a deep liking for people who are traveling through life.
- It feels good to be part of the bigger group.
- Being able to be physically present has enriched my personal friendships with friends who have similar philosophies to my own.
- It has given me a set time to catch up on what is happening to others I care about in our community.
- Singing has deepened her relationship to the UUFM community and the outside community—especially singing for the Central High graduation in past years; participating in gay pride activities helped increase her relationship with others
- More knowledgeable about people in transition
- Increased my gratitude for the chance to accompany the choir and congregational hymns—deepens my connection to hear those voices as I play.
- I don't have a meaningful answer to this question.
- The fact that together we speak, sing, listen and meditate strengthens the bond I feel to this community. It also changes my sense of being one in a sea of others with opposing ideas to being one of many who can make a difference.

### **3. How has worship with this community helped to deepen your community action in the wider world?**

- Catalyst to getting involved with EdJ./Spurred other activities/frequently mentors them to be more active; eg: George Floyd protest/ inspires me into action instead of just talking about it.
- Supportive, find a place here to connect/feel supported in issues that matter for me.
- When I participate in community, I find other UUs there. Interesting that we are out in the community, not just here.
- Action brought me here, not worship—although that has since *become* important.
- Greater awareness of actions like Pedal Past Poverty, able to join in and donate
- Feels more empowered and more vocal with strict Catholic family members as they talk about being the “Chosen Ones” to defend all people as being chosen/worthy
- Hears from others that “your church does so much, I wish mine did”
- Doesn't need the structure of church deciding actions for them- action for social justice in all community involvement they participate in
- I feel guilty of the overwhelming needs and that I am not doing more.
- Reinforces it in itself—my basic beliefs, “Why are we here?”
- Community educates me on causes that I am in sympathy with
- Rita does a good job of highlighting what is going on in the world (ii)—land acknowledgement, Joys & Concerns
- Group of people sensitive to what is going on in the planet, and model to me what I can do.
- People who care and can motivate you.
- And a chance to donate, too.
- I have been very impressed with the different commitments that people have shown to make our society more generous and kinder. I have benefitted from their effort and am inspired by their successes.
- Have participated in walks/marches/protests that I never would have before (still not my favorite thing)

- Sometimes I take what I learned in the sermon and apply it to my life and an action the following week.
- Raises opportunities, knowledge makes me realize how everything living is connected- spurring me to action on justice issues (ii)
- Doing knitting for the washcloths to give to the community.
- I have appreciated the opportunity to be involved in group action for local and global issues, like Pride Fest and Indivisible.
- Worship has challenged me to be more active in the larger world than I have ever been before.
- Reminder to commitment to action.

#### 4. For you, what (if anything) is missing from our worship together?

- Choir (xi)—or more music/singing together
- More families with kids coming back. Hearing children in the sanctuary/miss seeing kids gather in the front of the sanctuary
- Like my kids to meet kids here; shared values.
- Like action item at end of today's service. Action item at end of service helps us keep grounded. Action-to-impact/"Acting for good in the world"
- Miss personal sharing of joys and sorrows (iii)/having it read to us is NOT the same, even general political/societal concerns carry more weight when shared by a caring member. Otherwise, it's just moralizing.
- Spontaneity missing in whole service, too strict and scripted (even though really like Rita's sermons)/service more like a performance now/figure different ways to vary the service so the congregants aren't just receivers of words
- Want pews that move around
- Turn and face each other with the ending song
- Christmas Eve service- miss singing together in a large circle
- More visiting ministers/lay speaker/variety in format
- Our worship is often too somber, our space is somber (dark).
- I want to be uplifted and joyful when we come together. Not wallow in our world woes. Let's make a joyful noise together and celebrate.
- I would like to have video/music playing on screen before service starts, love being exposed to music that I might not have known about before, I often write down what is played so I can explore more on my own. What other churches play Bob Marley videos, love this about UU.
- Announcements/reminders: not everyone reads the weekly. Important information such as upcoming meals being offered after service or game night, or happenings in the community that would broaden our outreach/Send email reminders for different events or meetings or have a printout available at service./Information/handouts printed for availability. List of Committees and happenings? Hard for newcomers to be in the "know"
- Sermons could be shorter, with some discussion after (ii)—more active response/involvement in the message, maybe a question at the end that would lead into discussion.
- More "topic" sermons—used to have speakers on solar, etc.—or maybe in addition to worship service (like the Speaker Series)
- Our silent moments could be longer.
- Children & families (ii)

- A very minor thing—when we use the same refrains/music every week it becomes rote, meaningless (for the offertory, singing the children out, etc.). I do understand the need to simplify the service.
- Diversity—we need more diversity in our congregation.
- Diversity—more diverse guests. A Muslim speaker?
- Sunday meals together
- Do we need a marketing committee/team?
- Kids who grew up at UU coming back for a sermon?
- Campus outreach
- Paper bulletins
- The kids
- Mixed emotions about the new way of Joys and Concerns- could learn who people were and which kids went with which adults doing it the old way- but it was too long
- Appreciates not having to clean off the tablecloths and candleholders of wax!
- A sense of serenity, from the moment one enters the front door; the vestibule is cluttered and the UU/UM values and messages are “in your face,” the altar is cluttered with drums, keyboard, extra chairs, the banners are fine but need to be pressed.
- Rev. Rita conducts a well-prepared service, and her sermons are outstanding, but I feel she is with us too few Sundays.

**5. For you, what (if anything) should absolutely be retained in our worship together?**

- More people (although I am a fair-weather participant)—It is appealing that there is no guilt, come when you can, no guilt.
- Library
- Music
- All-inclusiveness at the beginning of every service, including land acknowledgement/ Land acknowledgement (maybe break it up sometimes and talk about how it relates to current events)
- Continue conversations like this—openness to sit down & converse about meaningful things/Table Topics at Coffee Hour about meaningful things
- Children’s story
- Sunday services
- Chalice lighting and extinguishing (ii)
- Ending song
- Water and Bread communion
- Time for stillness/ taking a deep breath together (ii)
- Intergenerational services occasionally
- Children’s service and book readings, absolutely love being inspired by the lovely books that Macey brings to our attention. Would love a list of past readings for reference.
- Everything should be retained!
- “Longtime Sun”
- Singing the Children Down
- The “communion” worship services
- Left blank on purpose

- Likes what we're doing with Joys and Concerns now- no waiting for kids to share, and then not sharing
- No advertisements about art shows etc now
- Keep the children's story, chalice lighting and singing
- Continue professionally written and delivered sermons.
- I like joys and concerns, and it was more personalized when the congregants came forward and presented their own.
- Children coming forward for the Story for All Ages
- Guest musicians on Superbowl Sunday
- The music, both singing and instrumental, readings, sermons, meditation, announcements by the minister or associate, joys and concerns, offering, greeting one another, singing benediction, singing the children out, chalice lighting and extinguishing, greeting the minister/speaker, worship assistant, choir, children's story, Zoom.