

## **SURVEY SUMMARY (CLIFF'S NOTES)**

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville participated in an in-depth Congregational Survey as part of our search for a settled minister. This is the overview of what we found out!

### **WHAT WE DO AT UUFG**

In general, our congregation seems to be an active and engaged one, who choose to gather to celebrate common values and community as we explore our UU beliefs together. Intellectual stimulation is another strong reason people began or continue to participate at UUFG. The results seem to indicate that our connections to each other and to UU values increase in importance given time and continued participation, though the bulk of our weekly volunteerism is handled by about 11% of congregants who each contribute 15+ hours/week to UUFG activities (Chalice Table Decorating is a fun way to help that does not require special skills, and 92% of respondents had never done it before). Our membership numbers seem to be stable, with about as many increasing as decreasing their level of participation over the last year. "Meaningful Sermon," "Music" and "Meaningful Worship" are the biggest reasons someone might invite a friend to UUFG.

### **SUMMARY OF LEADERSHIP AND GOALS**

In general, lay leadership is strong and the confidence in their fairness is high with most congregants. There are some stirrings of uncertainty about possible favoritism among groups, but it's not strong or severe. There seems to be a slight downward trend in willingness to take on leadership roles in the future, compared to those who've taken leadership roles in the past. There is strong, unifying desire to grow our membership as well as strengthen our reputation in the Gainesville community. There is generally contentment with the state of our campus/grounds, though non-neutral opinions on the subject are about evenly divided.

### **WHAT WE FEEL AND BELIEVE**

The general map of our congregations' beliefs is, unsurprisingly, widely varied. Some of the standout statistics show strong agnostic, atheist, and humanist beliefs (both religious and secular), with a strong contingent of theists providing rich counterpoint. In general, there appears to be about a  $\frac{2}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  relationship between humanists and theists. We identify strongly with Unitarian Universalism, though Buddhism and Christianity are two other faith traditions strongly represented in people's spiritual development. We like to commune with nature, do yoga, meditate, and listen to music, but don't like to journal. Half of us believe immortality happens in the minds of our loved ones. The vast majority of respondents — by a factor of 10 — held that our UUFG applied mission was best defined as "Benevolence and Justice," (the social activism mission).

### **ON WORSHIP & MINISTRY**

We are a congregation that wants our minister in the pulpit, preaching with a good sermon! We also want them to be on the younger side (under 40), strong in pastoral care, empathetic, a competent communicator and facilitator, and to have strong moral character. The minister we want is able to foster community-building and provide visible leadership in the greater community, and to advise and support the committees as needed in their policy-making activities. Strong trends showed up around minimizing everyone else's pulpit-time, from Guest Speakers to Lay Leaders. Staff relations and scholarship/intellect were also important. We seem to be effectively living our values in our general receptivity to all manner of identities and life circumstances, actively favoring racial diversity

especially. We are generally unreceptive to politically conservative stances. We most want to hear sermons about values and how they apply to personal growth, the community, and the world.

While half of the congregation felt neutral about the experience level preferred in a settled minister, there was a strong split between those favoring “6-10 years” and “2-5 years” prior ministerial experience, meaning our sweet-spot to please the most people may be 4-7 years. The infamous ministerial priorities question (which caused quite a stir among respondents with its requirement to absolutely prioritize 7 different tasks) revealed a disparity between the low priority for a minister to be a Social Activist compared with UUFG’s strong identification as a social justice congregation. That leads us to believe it may be more important that our settled minister facilitate and develop leadership for social activism among congregants, rather than necessarily fulfilling that activist role themselves.

Most agreed with the UU tradition of “freedom of the pulpit.” Nearly every respondent agreed with the UUA equal opportunity policy.

## WHO WE ARE

In general, our congregation is an older one. Statistically, we are predominantly white, physically and mentally healthy, heterosexual. Feedback received in the Cottage Meetings etc show a nearly universal desire to diversify our congregation culturally, racially/ethnically, and in terms of age (want younger people and families with children). We tend to have a longer history of connection to Unitarian Universalism and the family of UUFG. Our most common prior religious affiliations were “Protestant” and “None.”

Many of us are married, about an equal number widowed or single/divorced. Many report having partners who do not participate at UUFG. We mostly live fairly close to UUFG, are mostly middle- or upper-middle class. We mostly (but not always) support each other in times of need. Confidence is generally high in how we handle disability concerns and in how our social groups interact (mostly harmoniously, though some note tension and a lack of discussion about it). We are extraordinarily well- educated. About 1 in 10 of us has a family with minor children, the bulk of which are in Public School and navigating some sort of developmental or emotional issues. Most are in the K-3rd and 7th-9th ranges in RE. A lot of them are gifted (but we knew that).



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