



Peterborough Unitarian Universalist Church

Who We Are!

Notes from April 28 discussion - 53 people in attendance

Facilitated by Rev Michael Leuchtenberger, Senior Minister, Unitarian Universalist Church of Concord (NH)

Single word - joy, hope, excited, inspired

Comments:

- Knowing newer people during process
- Enthusiasm and wishes is great - what about nitty gritty, how do we make things happen
- Important meetings to participate in
- Small group intimacy in meetings
- Hopeful but want to connect to resources, budget
- Learned of agreements within congregation, sense of community, openness that we want
- Image of throwing open the windows, let the light come in
- Past and present came together to embrace a forward future energy
- Happy to grow music and arts
- Wondering what is the stated goal of this process - more definition of the outcome
- If the world as a whole were to identify and adopt these common values, we'd be in a better place!
- What do we do next? How do we go forward?
- Need to be more out-there and proud of who we are
- Very few people felt they knew what others in our community think about us
- Identifying clear next steps means reaching out into public spaces, communities, finding out what others want

Goals/Wishes

What does "more diverse congregation" mean concretely? Why is it important?

- Would love to look and see people of all ages, etc. as part of our community.
- Communication - must adopt an attitude of boldness, who we are beyond a nice building, share what we do and that we are UUs and share our values, why we act the way we do
- Attraction rather than promotion, be who we are and be the best we can be, out of that comes attraction, remember our demographics and lack of racial/ethnic diversity, can't bring in different color because it doesn't exist in our region
- Value seeing different shades of beauty
- Need to have diverse outcome, remember that we have a lot of different viewpoints

- Will we find the new principles as compelling as our current UU principles?
- Joy to have accessibility as a priority, how to bring more people in, always have ways to improve (chair in accessible pew)
- Own children had wonderful grounding in UU principles and values
- Families are so busy, need to figure ways to get out of the box, ways to attract young people not just on Sundays
- Choir schools for children - world music choir for children - could that become a possibility?
- Get more music presence on our website
- Power of child's experience growing up in PUUC
- Important to have experience for families in community
- Parents are important in bringing children into the spiritual community, find out what will bring families in so they bring their children
- Physical space of building has to extend in social media, we have minimal social media presence, need to strengthen virtual presence makes us unknown to people in their 30s or younger - way to engage with their phone, contribute financially through their phone, develop strategies to connect beyond sundays and the physical space
- Need to ask the right questions - what do young families need and want?
- What would have to happen to get kids to bring in other kids?
- How do we think about diversity vs inclusivity? What do we really mean? Do we really want to welcome everyone?
- Bring in more diversity - rabbi, immigrants - to help us become more inclusive in our comfort with difference
- We could reach out to other Jewish people by healing past harms with Jewish community, hold a seder that would bring in more diverse community
- Dance with DJ or band
- OWL sexuality program - include the community in that program - we will be doing it hopefully on Wednesday nights to coincide with community supper
- Connect with The River Center at Community supper to provide resources for families, offer experiences for kids
- Grapevine also brought people in (Sydney W-S) - connect to other social service agencies and groups from different towns
- Climbing toys on the front lawn - liability insurance? Rent colorful bouncing house for picnics
- Youth group - kids bring kids in, their social connections bring teens into a congregational setting - kids got involved with Free the Children SJ project
- Reach out to LGBTQ community as those at PUUC feel welcomed

What can you tell by looking at the building?

- Looks like an anglican, catholic style church, people won't come in because of the name Church, our building does not reflect our theology
- Nothing on the walls reflecting who we are
- Interest in music - piano, music
- Where is the color? Add color to bring in more color

- High pulpit reflects hierarchy
- Likes peaceful nature of the space, not being so busy in the sanctuary
- Different name that says COMMUNITY, break past those barriers
- Saw peace, welcoming presence
- History behind the building, the name, the denomination
- BLM flag, Pride flag

What can we do to be better known?

- Hire someone young who knows tech, social media, social work, community organizing
- Focus beyond Peterborough to smaller towns around to bring in families
- What might happen at church that would make you want to talk about it?
- Word church can be seen as othering - changing our name might break down barriers
- Name change is a large discussion
- Spell church with 2Us -> chUUrch
- What does it mean to have a spiritual life, how can we help new people understand what a spiritual community can do for each other - unique and powerful experience that many people don't have that experience
- Facebook as a place to broadcast who we are

How can you imagine being a more visible leader and participant in the social justice efforts in the larger community? Would you be 'convicted' of being a UU in the moral court of the community?

- We are good at talking the talk and sending money
- Need to be out there 'doing' stuff so people in the community don't see what we are doing - WindowDresser project will help but there are so many needs where we could be physically out there in the community. Other ideas: food pantry
- We do a lot as individuals, don't find group identify and do things together
- Bright colored T-shirts with logo on it to show us as a group - have a design contest
- How do other church communities become active and visible in the community?
- Needs to be location specific because needs are different in different places (in Concord: homelessness, refugees, environmental justice)
- Join with other UU congregations to build expanded community, be more visible, share resources, promote UU values - MIP, KUUC, Milford, other faith communities
- Be open about the activities we do, publicize it so others can learn about it and get involved
- Church 'chat' - list-serv that allows congregants to post what they are doing and share with others (Bedford MA)
- Ring the bell - Ukraine?
- We do service work, advocacy is more challenging to implement

Increased growth of the spirit

- Come to be refreshed, renewed, relaxed, be in the moment
- Come to be aware of SJ causes - is lighting the candle enough?
- Soul Matters, more such opportunities

- Need balance between spiritual and social justice
- Praise for Lane's ability to support and enhance our spiritual journeys
- Heart reaching sermons that move one deeply
- Want minister to draw us together, enrich the community
- More adult religious education
- Lane is heart, we are lungs, have to work together