

## Question 1 Why PUUC? - Notes compiled from all sessions and online responses - unedited

### 1)a What brought you to PUUC?

- Moved to Peterborough and wanted to find a place to meet people.
- Chose UU as wife was and I was not a church goer.
- To join a community outside of residential community where I live.
- Wanted a community compatible with my not being religious
- Met the minister then and he was connected to my father.
- Belonged to a UU church elsewhere.
- Always been a UU and family was UU.
- Came to Lyceum when living elsewhere so when I moved here I came to PUUC in winter too.
- Going to church on Sunday was in back of mind after childhood so started going when my children were young.
- I agreed with UU principles. Wanted a place where there was not a doctrine of Trinity and God responsible for all approach.
- Looking for a church that cared about the world and not just about each other's behaviors. UUs look beyond ourselves.
- UUs help each other.
- UUs are like minded.
- My blood is UU because of parents and my mother was important part of PUUC. Inside I am a UU
- Want a community that is not dogmatic.
- Part of move to Peterborough was because there was a UU church!
- UU teaches that people all over the world with many different religions need to along and form a peaceful world.
- Lyceum was attraction.
- Appreciate freedoms and embracing many sources of wisdom.
- Women's Alliance brought me in.
- Had young children and as former Catholics realized we didn't want to perpetuate what we didn't agree with for our children.
- Wife led the way.
- Was a UU as a child.
- Moved to Peterborough.

- Wanted my children to be religiously literate
- Wanted more spirituality that applied to real life
- Catholicism didn't do it for me
- Music and community
- Worship leadership
- Welcoming
- Open
- Liked different take on spirituality
- Had small children and was looking for a spiritual home for them
- Leader of parent group told her about UU congregation
- Came to an event here
- Wanted family to experience something together
- RE for my children. DITTO
- Leaving another Christian religion where there was inadequate sense beyond obligation. DITTO
- Moved to Peterborough and was UU - DITTO
- Openness to different lifestyles
- Finding a religious community for children. DITTO
- Upset with other religions' lack of openness DITTO
- Born a UU (DITTO)
- Moved to Peterborough as young single adult but didn't join PUUC until I had a small child DITTO
- Young families and vibrancy of congregation
- Been coming since 1998 with 2 young children; from protestant/catholic hybrid contentious family; married lifelong unitarian so went to a unitarian church and became one.
- Came to live in Peterborough, wanted to find a church; many thumbs down on churches where no one knew or cared about you. Friend talked to me about PUUC and been coming for 30 years.
- Came b/c grandfather was minister in 1900s; grandparents came here; family members married here; came to Sunday school here; Margo Johnson was a young mother then.
- Didn't find spiritual enrichment where they were going; easy to fade away from their church. Heard about PUUC and decided to come in Sept. and haven't missed a Sunday since. On zoom a few times b/c of family needs.
- Mid 70s children were young and thought they should get some RE. Catholic in upbringing but wanted kids to have something. UU church in Worcester was on the list, they went one Sunday and stayed; kids happy there. Went to a UU church in the Midwest; returned to New England; moved to Peterborough and decided to get involved and decided to join.

- Came b/c earth centered; raised protestant slightly; lives an alternative lifestyle, grounded with earth and one w/ nature. Sydney Wilson Smith ran Grapevine parent group and shared PUUC, and how to raise children and she brought them; child was 3 or 4.
- Came with spouse since 2015. Lived in Miami, then MA but goal to move to NH. Knew no one when they moved to NH; chose a neighborhood. After 1.5 years talked about broadening social connections and trying different churches. Raised strict Catholic until 16, hard to leave that. Went to a few churches, came here and after 6 months decided to join, new experience for them as a couple. Marsha was the backbone of their joining b/c she made them feel welcome.
- New mom, daughter born, made her think about joining a church, curious about Unitarian church, going to church for a break from mothering
- Attended summer lyceum, read literature, principles appealed and fit with beliefs
- Grew up UU - mother was catholic but left after person had first communion, mother chose UU (Exeter) when speaker was in 5th grade
- Great fit, knew that Catholicism wasn't for them
- Raised children UCC - husband was catholic, wife was presbyterian, Never quite grasped the trinity 'thing' - believed Jesus was great person but...
- Parents became UU after was adult, moved to Peterborough, found UU church right away, while raising kids there wasn't a UU church nearby
- Was Unitarian in theology for a long time, didn't know it until learned about UU
- Hooked by zoom, then in person
- Being born in South America, came to US at age 13, became familiar with Catholicism and Judaism (blended family), boarding school was congregational in focus
- Married in California, didn't find out about UUs until them
- Moved to MA in 1974 and joined UU church in late 1970s.
- Purchased property in Jaffrey in 2008, visited PUUC when at Jaffrey home, liked sermon
- Member of another UU church with recorded service during pandemic, but didn't have feeling of community
- Social justice concerns and political openness
- Through Lyceum, liked the place,
- Long line of Presby, as was spouse, went to UU wedding, grew from there, and have joined UU churches since
- Grew up without religion, his wife spouse come, here everyone can be heard, each congregation is independent,
- Looking for fellowship, having been a humanist all of earlier life,
- Fifth generation UU, would come here as a child, sang in choir as a youth, Then dropped out for 50 years, could sing in choir

- Was in area without UUs, joined Church of Larger Fellowship, was in a church where David Robins was
- Met Suzy Mansfield who invited her to UU, raised her kids here
- Raised Presby, didn't communicate, in another town with kids, read UU principles in the newspaper
- Knew about UU, was attending All Saints non-conventional group, eliminated when pandemic came, then Zoom meetings brought him in, sensitivity to people and each other
- Grew up as UU, 4 of 5 sibs are UUs, drawn by David Usher as religious leader
- This church is PCong, Unitarian-Univ; has done all sorts of things
- Raised as Presby, married an Episc, didn't work, started to go to UU, didn't work for her spouse, got divorced was a UU
- Social justice concerns and political openness
- Community, intellectual rigor,
- Buys into ethics of group, SPLC tracks hate groups, and we do the opposite
- Likes the people, wants to go into world and help others
- Democratic spirit
- Likes the people, the sermons, stimulation,
- People, could sing in choir
- Moved here, found David Robins, Nashua UU was too formal, Wilton was too religious, then found this church as home
- Loves to sing here, loves that she can believe what she wants to, it's a family, very supportive as a community, loves the people
- Best coffee hour in the world, good feeling, likes to work community supper
- Loved Mary Beth and Zoe under hard conditions, people really cared about each other
- People she holds as dear
- People are friendly and welcoming, it is a good place to come
- For 18 years, good fit for her, principles, ethics, community is very welcoming
- Ward Stoop. He and wife took under wing. Experience in Manchester
- Young children.
- OWL Program
- Working out of town – didn't know anyone.
- David Robins
- Traditional religion, no formal
- Lifelong UU
- Ability to question
- Wife was long UU
- Process respectful
- Lyceum

- Friendly, invited to circle supper
- Social justice candle every week
- Manchester former experience
- Raising kids
- shopping for churches
- Curiosity
- Knew other people
- Welcoming place
- Activity in community – social justice
- Opportunity to help
- Community
- Looking for a home
- Welcoming
- Lane
- looking for a place to raise children with moral values
- Long time UU, found my new spiritual home at PUUC, primarily through Zoom
- Void in my life because of experience in former UU church, resigned from church, painful experience
- Grew up in a UU church, have only ever been comfortable in UU church
- Came to this church when we came to Rindge, because we knew we wanted community connection, have always wanted the stimulus of social justice/action
- First went to another UU church because friends were part of the church
- Wife was raised in a UU church, brought me into this church in 2000.
- The organ music was attractive to me, “bit like a magnet”
- Impressed with and captivated by minister David Robins, his expression and spiritual ideas.
- Personal connections got them in the door (friends invited him to a rummage sale and he experienced a friendly, welcoming community)
- Raised a trinitarian, as an adult theology didn’t appeal. When I had children I wanted a community, a friend suggested the UU church in Keene, first service “felt like minister was speaking to me”; moved to Antrim in 2019 decided to join PUUC community as closer to home
- First came to church because of daughter, neighbor’s friends in the RE program invited her to come
- Minister came to her house (5 miles out of town) and invited her to come to a worship service (was touched)
- Moved to River Mead but didn’t want entire life to focus on RM community
- Checked out PUUC ahead of move, part of why they came to the area because had been UUs in previous community

- Moved to Peterborough 7 years ago, wanted a way to find people and friends
- Joined hiking group that was organized by men in PUUC, talking with them and was invited to PUUC
- Raised a Catholic, no religious affiliation after that, seeking something new
- Saw rainbow flag, BLM banner, was welcomed with open arms by Stewart
- Lyceum talks
- After had child ('90s), friend recommended minister at PUUC at the time, brought son along for RE experience
- Mother interested in Eastern philosophies, hippie background and all of that fit in UU
- Came to meet people - moved to Peterb 8 ½ years ago
- Saw sign "love wins" and was drawn in
- PUUC is the UU congregation in Peterb, had been member elsewhere for 25 years so wanted to be connected to UUs
- People will take you in and nourish you at UU congregations
- Lyceum
- Search for community when other things in life changed (retired, moved)
- Came first because Rev VanStrien came to their home and invited them, daughter was part of RE - still comes about 40 years later
- Friends invited them to come, enjoyed the atmosphere
- Looking for spiritual boost and to meet people when moved to Peterb
- Raised Catholic but no interest as adult
- Lyceum had interesting speakers
- Recognized people that had been hiking with in women's hiking group - learned about UU from them
- 2013 moved to Peterb, attended Lyceum
- Not religious, raised Catholic, liked organ music
- Came to find community in Peterb when moved there
- Lyceum
- Knew people who went to PUUC and who invited them to check it out
- David Robins was minister in prior community, became close with David. When David Robins was called to PUUC their family changed to PUUC
- Moved to Peterb because of PUUC
- Seeking a deeper sense of belonging, new to community
- Wanting to feel more connected
- Want to feel spiritually connected in community
- Has been coming since 1983 or so - grew up catholic and was immersed as a child. As an adult distanced from Catholicism but wanted a place for religious ed for children, religious education in a broad way, not narrow or dogmatic

- Daughter's best preschool friend was here and she 'loved' this place so they stayed here after church shopping
- Desire to join a community of like-minded people whose search for truth and understanding is lifelong - combo of people on 'same page' and to help figure out own life
- Never expected to end up in religious community - secular as adult
- Moved to Peterb in 2005 (small town compared to other places lived), wife diagnosed with cancer 2006, decided wanted to find community
- Came to PUUC seeking, found minister at the time to be welcoming, witty, engaging and humble
- Did not have roots in UU until married when Unitarian minister allowed them to write own service, no others would do that
- Came to Peterb in early 1990s and looked for religious education for children
- Liberal values and community
- Sunday morning spiritual practice
- Raised Jewish, connected with UU communities in early 20s
- Moved to Peterb was looking for a synagogue for cultural connection to Judaism byt the synagogue in Peterborough (found on the internet) was in the UK!
- Gravitated toward UU, looking for spiritual growth
- Grew up in this church, had religious ed in this space, grandfather was Unitarian minister
- Left area for about 20 years, but parents still live in town
- Occasionally active in UU church in San Francisco where lived
- Came back to Peterb and was invited back to PUUC by Jill S-H
- Wanted to be with like-minded people and find community
- Arrived in Peterb as a UU, knew would affiliate with UU church here
- Thought UU was Christian when first came
- Originally when getting married looked for minister to allow them to write own service. Only UU minister agreed. That started relationship with UU. When moved to Peterborough, children and youth programs, music, and minister brought them to PUU.
- Started out in UU church in Exeter. Came to PUUC on X-más eve and Meridith Martins's father was so warm and welcoming that they continued on.
- As a 9 yr old was "dragged " to UU Sunday school, which didn't like. Preferred the church. With 2nd husband, became member of UU church in Bedford. Attracted by open spirituality and theology. Least constrictive. Loved bells used to announce service. In community with others. Words don't get in the way of spirit.
- Moved here. Attracted because of progressive values...more aligned with own values.
- Attended a summer Lyceum, speaker was Sy Montgomery - Soul of Octopus. Attracted by First Principle.

- I wanted a space to think about me every week. I tried when my kids were young but I was starting teaching so needed my Sundays to get ready for work. We tried a few different churches but my kids weren't interested. David Robins brought me in, he meant a lot to me. I wanted to be in small groups and meet more people. Some groups were closed (women's workshop), started another one.
- I have been wanting to join a UU church for years, and finally moved to a town where there was one.
- I was raised in the Denver 1st Unitarian Church, following my mother, who brought me there each Sunday, as well as to sing in the choir with her for many years. So when I followed my parents' choice to return to my mother's hometown of Peterborough for the rest of their years, it seemed like an obvious choice of churches, at first, for myself with my young boys, but especially for my mother, who wanted to continue attending church, and who needed support in attending, as she was aging, and unable to transport herself.
- when we relocated from NY to Rindge we sought out the nearest UU church, which was PUUC
- Lyceum attention to Palestine question initially brought me in. Then finding about UU values and theology, and meeting people in the community.
- I wanted a safe religious/spiritual environment.
- Green sanctuary status and participation. Zoom access to worship. Positive and uplifting Zoom worship during covid.
- I originally grew up congregational with some relatives married in Unitarian church in MA. Knew about Unitarianism but didn't attend. Didn't like ritualism in more formal churches, didn't like being told what had to believe. Started UU when living in MD with young kids, knew people who attended, liked the church and the minister, humanist philosophy. Moved back to NH in retirement and started going to PUUC, sang in choir, closer to home than other UU options.
- We had moved to New Hampshire and were looking for a connection to the local community.
- I was attracted to the current seven UU Principles. They are a gem as they now stand especially the 4th and 5th principles which are both absent in the proposed rewrite. It would be very sad to see PUUC lose its congregational autonomy and independence with the adoption of the new principles.

**b)What brings you back?**

- Friends I have made.
- Social justice commitment.
- Closest UU church to where I live.
- It's a habit.



- Haven't been coming lately as getting up early and finding parking and walking in is a challenge.
- Have listened on zoom a few times. Was inspired by previous members.
- Unfortunately I've had conflicts that interfere with going.
- Joys and concerns are very helpful to understand life's concerns.
- Choir and the people in it.
- New music director.
- No pressure from members or minister to join
- Good community for young parents'
- Love the people
- Good RE program for our children
- People that are here DITTO
- Offers an alternative to workplace
- Meaningful community
- Is a tradition after children left
- So many opportunities to do meaningful things here
- People, community. DITTO
- Acceptance
- Values
- Part of my life, it is part of my community. DITTO
- What brings back is the people are amazing, kind, supportive. Not religious, godlike, Christian but believe we should help each other and do good things in the world. PUUC is the epitome of that and stands for values of love and acceptance.
- Love it, people, what we stand for, no problem helping or asking for help; learned a lot about doing that. Did not expect to fall in love with church but it's been a blessing with all the losses in my family. People are kind and loving and live up to my expectations and more.
- When returned to Peterborough and Rivermead it was natural to come back. Not engaged in UU church in their other home; decided to get to know people and Peterborough. It's the people who bring them back.
- Probably move to Peterborough eventually but hard to leave where they live now, in nature. Feel calmness when they come to PUUC and wants to get that and keep coming back.
- Finds it interesting, brain works different when here; intellectual concepts not usually read about or heard in other places. Gets brain working differently. Concepts discussed and that others are interested in appeal to them. if we are going to leave something in the world, help others along the way.
- What brings them back: alternative thinking, not getting a message that you have to believe something; get a la carte sermon here, Buddhism, Judaism, a little bit for everybody.

- The people are what bring them back. Zen feel when you come into the church. Come in, sit down, your people are here, beautiful music, serenity, knowing you are accepted and loved.
- Keeps coming back for 26 years, family was very involved, has become spiritual home, place where I am known and my kids are known
- Want to continue involvement with PUUC
- Come back, great place, enjoy part of community
- Spiritual - love Lane's sermons and lay-lead services
- Community is warm, fun, great to be part of it
- Remote inclusion - appreciates that experience, huge difference to get sense of community, spiritual growth, by being remotely included at PUUC
- First family (wife and 3 kids) killed in 1990, Continued to be part of MA UU church, met second wife there
- Allows me to put together own ideas
- Chosen faith, chose UU, continue changing as time goes on
- Love the zoom services and sense of community
- Started coming to PUUC during pandemic on zoom and are still coming
- Very much part of the community, can't imagine not being part of it
- Great community
- Community, good people and friends
- Want to make church even better
- Still firmly connected to MA community but thinks PUUC should pat itself on the back - so different! Don't know how good you are until you compare against other situations
- Community (4x)
- Value of the Pot Luck.
- Music
- Beauty of Organ/Choir
- Continuing support, values, social actions, love
- Come together, hear others
- Spiritual company
- Welcoming atmosphere
- Explore ideals
- Social action activities
- Fun group of people
- Young people supportive
- May not be ready to give up Sunday morning special time
- Can contribute
- Lyceum – intellectual stimulation
- Lane

- Music/art
- Personal development as a human being
- My longstanding membership keeps me coming back
- Coming back to this church, because I feel the community here, people caring for each other
- The comforting feeling that comes from the people in this community who share my values
- The people, music, social justice keeps them coming
- "Great place, good people!!"
- Why I come back.. Lane offering the opportunity for small group ministries, online tea talks, spiritual reflection
- Been at this church for 2 years, really like it here .."a lot of light here"
- Been a UU since '95, because of shared values that I feel are important for myself and my children
- Next ..a recognition of what an amazing group of people at the church
- All the music was impressive (mentioned Open Stage)
- Always wished for a good sermon.. Her wish has been granted!
- Love church community (a collection of great people)
- Many close women friends that are precious, supporting
- Community
- Want to be part of something in this chaotic world that has our values, principles, feel part of something bigger
- Community, camaraderie, began to feel like a new home
- Building, people, services - all special
- Continued UU affiliation through several moves
- Organ music at PUUC
- Enjoy services, chat with people and snack afterwards DITTO
- Joys and sorrows very meaningful
- Felt welcomed
- Sense of community, people, Lane
- Likes to be encouraged to think differently
- Always getting a different perspective that is grounded in safe place of shared values
- Now it is part of the community that I have committed to and that is committed to me
- People and the things they and I believe in
- Meeting more and more people
- Not always inspired by services but came to hug friends
- Joined Governing Board and kept coming
- Now comes for spiritual inspiration - finds it in every part of the service at PUUC
- Like the people, good friends
- Lots of difference spiritual and educational stuff going on

- Cakes for Queen of Heaven was favored curriculum
- Likes traditional women's stuff - rummage, potlucks - activities where people are together and just chat with each other
- Variety in services
- Spiritual home because of openness to so many different approaches
- Come back because of social justice candle, community, sense of being able to sit and just be and think and contemplate for an hour
- Many friendships
- Beauty of sanctuary
- Rarely hear the word God
- Rev Lane
- Music - prior UU congregation didn't have music director or rehearsals - PUUC did when they came
- Very shy and appreciate having group of friends who accept me
- Follower of an Indian saint, and it's ok to be who I am
- Ditto to all the other ideas that have been shared about why comes back - people are inspiration
- Feel supported, embrace people, warmth, feel recognized
- Community ties kept them here
- Bound by a network of relationships with a number of people in the congregation
- Not much into ritual, hymns, wary about organized religion but UU fits seeking mentality
- Wants to give back to PUUC e.g. Tech Team, AED, CPR class
- Religious Education for a long time - when own children were involved
- Likes spiritual aspects of UU
- Likes to learn about other religions through RE curriculum as well as in services
- Comes back because of values and spiritual growth
- Rides from friends get the speaker to services. :<)
- Comes to services, not sure what to do as a volunteer
- Purifying experience
- Sense of seeking rather than believing they know everything - common theme among UU ministers
- Very involved when kids were in RE, youth group, search committee, mediation efforts and other ways
- Spirituality is fed by being outside in nature, chose not to come to church at times because Sundays were only 'free' day
- In retirement, not sure, somewhat ambivalent about the church
- Feeling of purpose, gives you opportunity to use parts of self not used in other ways
- Loves Sunday services, gets something from every single one

- Respite during dark times - engendering hope and possibility of bettering world
- Community and friends
- Ditto to sense of purpose - esp since not gainfully employed
- Great reconnections with people known in past, nostalgia for simpler time in her life
- Lane
- Sense of community
- Likes services, ritual, collective aspect, questions posed by sermons
- Having consistency in my life
- Daughter loves it here and looks forward to being here
- Nature of services
- Community which is getting to know more and loves
- Willingness of community to embrace growth, development and change
- PUUC has people from a variety of religious/faith backgrounds
- Music, commitment to all people
- Friendly
- Local church....doesn't want to drive
- Services...a lot to think about, music
- First principle brought back as well as people and philosophy
- A diversity of religious and spiritual traditions beyond the Christianity I grew up with.
- The PUUC's efforts along the lines of social justice is the most important reason for coming back for me. I also enjoy the community and want to explore its human connections. Maybe even explore the deeper meanings of life through spirituality.
- Community, have been at the church so long, really know people, feel accepted and cared about. Music. Church means community, support to me. Lane speaks from her heart and I like the sermons. She gives us a lot and we are giving her community too.
- The people and what UU stands for.
- I'm not "back," really. I have returned a few Sundays, here and there, and also when requested, for a donation of Sunday flowers, which I've accepted, in honor of her and my father.
- a desire for spiritual nourishment and community
- UU values and theology, people in the community, and outreach (music, suppers) kept me here
- I never left.
- Social justice work, proactive congregation, PUUC's mission to acknowledge and support all spiritual beliefs, not only Christian beliefs.
- "Like singing in choir, satisfied with services. I like variety in services. Don't attend now, initially because of pandemic, getting older and didn't want to get up on Sundays, liked to go

when singing. Summer break with Lyceum kept me away, then pandemic. Gradually stopped attending, with no choir, no role to play. Now I don't drive and live in retirement community.

- A community of shared values that we can be part of.
- The warmth of the community.