

First Unitarian Church Des Moines

2012 Congregational Survey: Final Report

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The information from this survey is of critical importance to both the Board and the Executive Team. We use the results to evaluate our progress and identify areas in which we need to dedicate additional time and resources

Outline

- **A benchmark survey**
- **Response rate**
- **Sample characteristics: Who are we, what do we do at church?**
- **Survey Structure**
- **Summary of key findings: How did we do in key performance areas?**
- **How did we do with children, family, and youth?**
- **Facilities**
- **Appendix: Process/method**

This is a benchmark survey:

Benchmark: A standard or point of reference against which things may be compared or assessed. The first year we do a survey is a standard, from which it's hard to draw conclusions.

What does this mean?

1. We can't make conclusions that an item is "high" or "low" in and of itself.

Example: About 60% of adults do not participate in adult RE. Is this low? WE DON'T KNOW! However, we can compare across time.

We should be vigilant to recognize that we have a "hidden benchmark," what we *thought* the percentage *ought* to be. This is the beauty of the survey over the years: it will allow us to see how we change over time. It *may* give us insight into how well programming tweaks work.

2. We **can** compare items that we feel are similar. For example, the mean of end one ("religious and spiritual growth") vs. the mean of end three ("social justice")

Rate of participation

57.60% Response rate
53.10% Response rate, complete surveys
92.10% Complete rate, those who began

Total invitations invited, email/mail: 465

Total valid surveys received: 268

Total completed: 247

Survey demographics

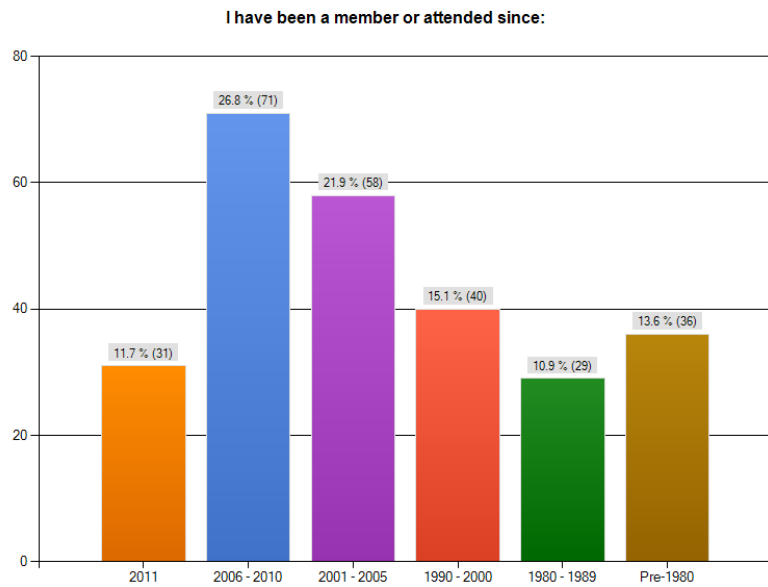
Member/Friend/Visitor

Member 94%
 Friend 5.3%
 Visitor .08%

Gender

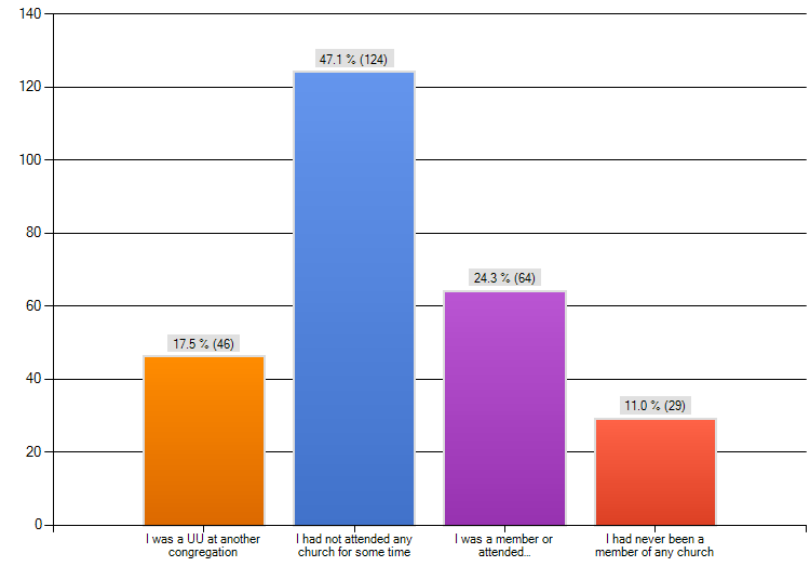
Female 63%
 Male 34%
 Other 0.8%

Length of membership



Church Affiliation UCDSM

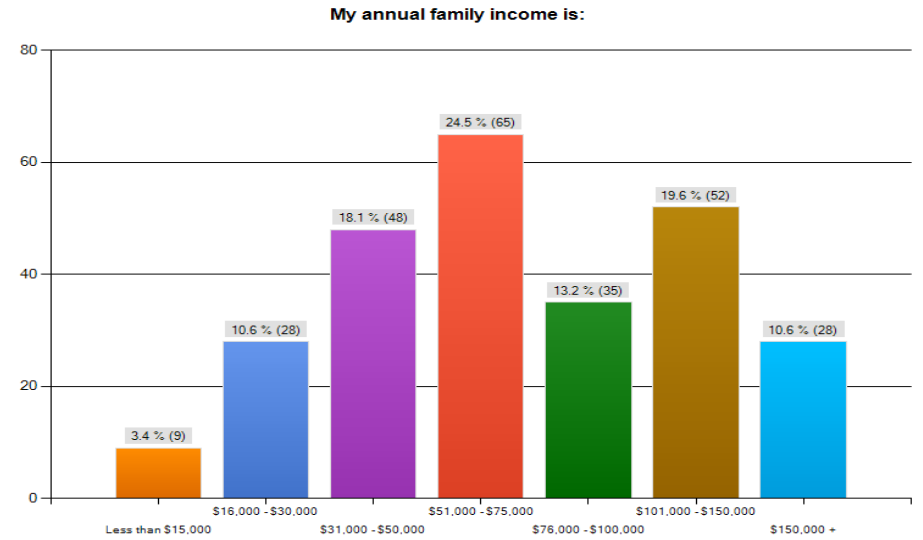
Prior to attending First Unitarian in Des Moines



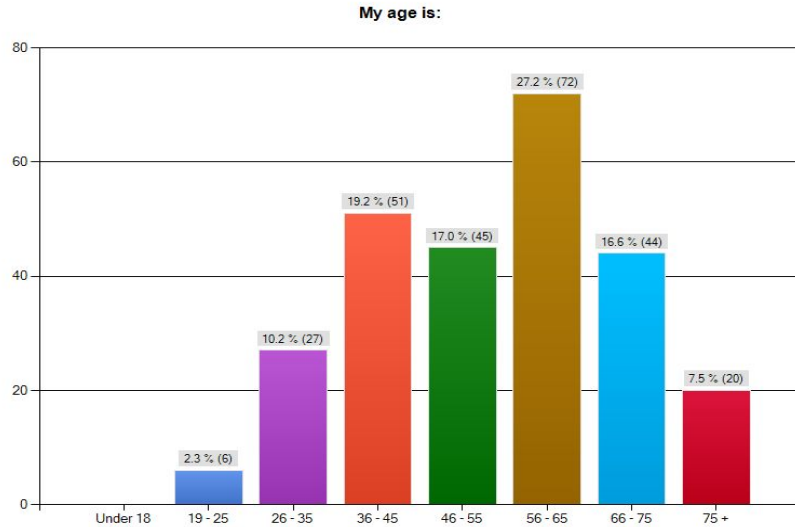
Race

Asian or Asian-American	1	0.04%
Black or African-American	3	1.1
Czech	2	0.8
Multiple	7	2.6
Refused to say	2	0.08
White	250	94.3%
	98.92	Due to rounding

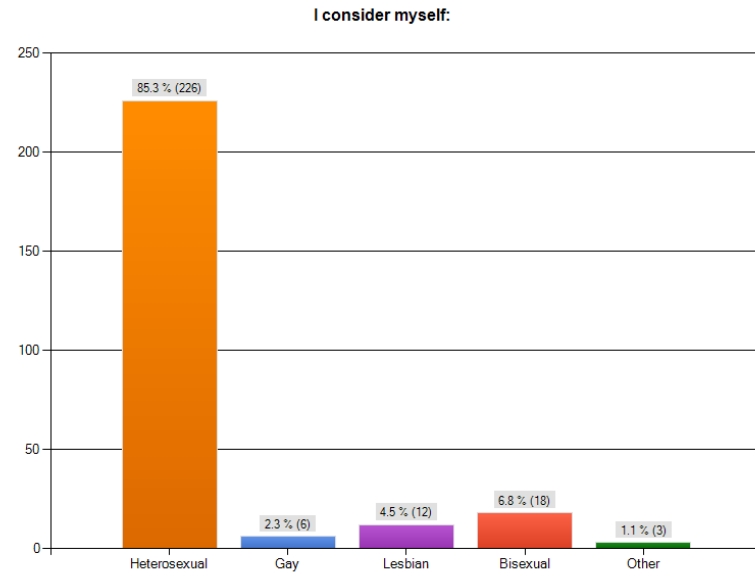
Income



Age

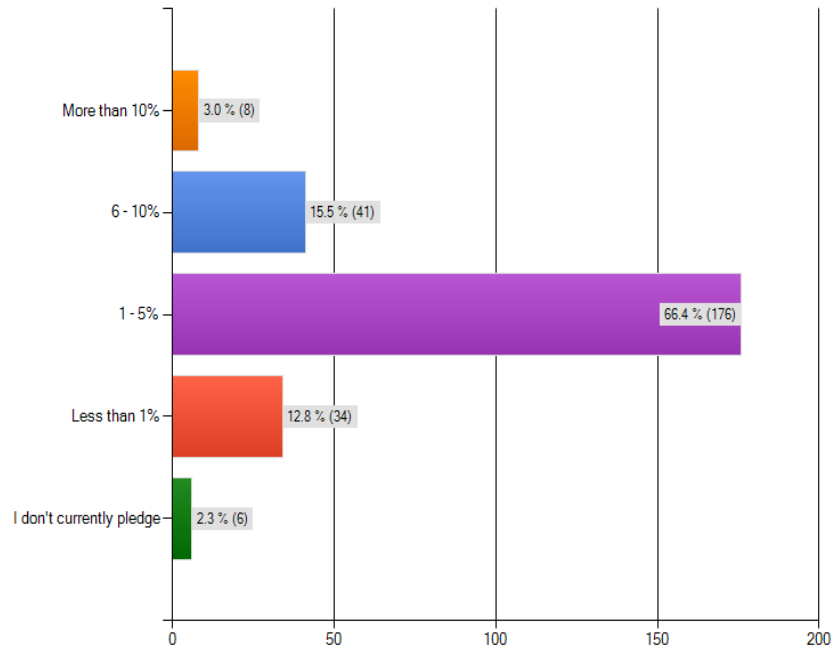


Sexual Orientation



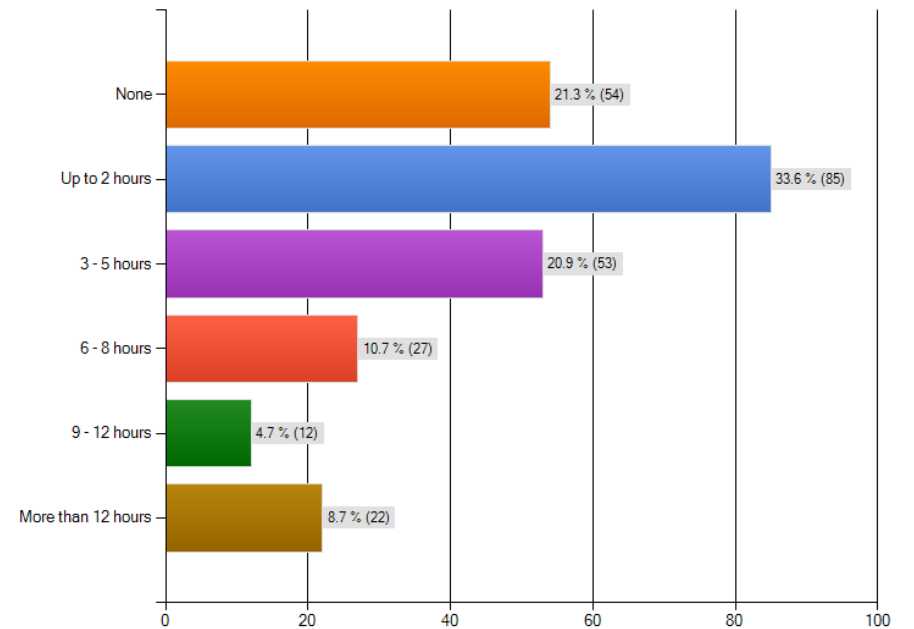
Church Participation Pledging

I estimate my annual pledge to the church as a percent of household income to be:



Time donated

How many hours of service or ministry do you give to the church per month?



Participation

Percent who attend never, once, twice, or 3+ times per month	None	One	Two	Three
Wed night programming	52.2	16.6	11.9	19.4
Sunday Service	5.5	16.6	26.9	51
Children/Youth RE	20	7.1	14.1	58.8
Adult RE	60.5	22.5	9.9	7.1
Other events (affinity, party, etc.)	40.3	30.8	18.2	10.7
Note: only adults with attending children answered question about RE				

How are we doing?

In a nutshell, the congregation feels that overall we do pretty well at meeting our three ends. On a scale of 1-6, with 6 indicating strong agreement that we meet the goal and 1 indicating strong disagreement, we score between 4.72 and 5.04, which places us about at the “agree” category for each end statement. Our strongest accomplishments are considered in the area of creative interchange (end two), while our weakest is around the end of social justice (end three).

End:	Mean (average)
End 1: Religious and spiritual growth	4.82
End 2: Creative interchange	5.04
End 3: Social Justice	4.72

End One: The people of First Unitarian Church of Des Moines engage in a transformative, foundational, liberal religious experience.

End Two: First Unitarian Church of Des Moines invites people of all ages and backgrounds into creative interchange and community,

End Three: First Unitarian Church of Des Moines creates alliances to advance justice in the community and the world

Digging deeper

Let's look at the relative strong and weak areas within each end. Our highest scores that indicate the most agreement are:

5.7 Mean , item 2.3 Our congregation appropriately regards the feelings, abilities and traditions of all.

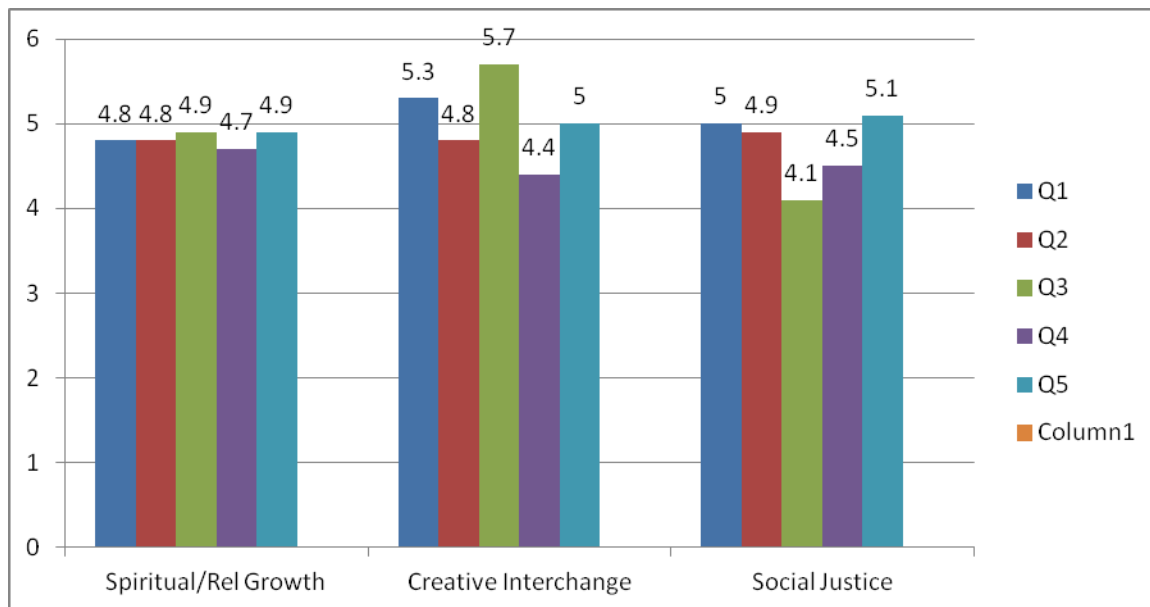
5.3 mean, item 2.1 First Unitarian nurtures fellowship among its participants.

Our lowest scores lie in the only question in which we ask respondent to report on his/her own behavior:

4.1 mean, Item 3.3, I have engaged in social justice advocacy OR community organizing through First Unitarian. (This is one of the few questions that ask respondents to report on their own behavior)

Apart from these

Means per question item



End One: The people of First Unitarian Church of Des Moines engage in a transformative, foundational, liberal religious experience.

1. I engage in an active consideration of concepts and ideas beyond those I already hold
2. My participation at First Unitarian has encouraged me to develop and talk about my personal theology or beliefs.
3. It's difficult to learn about opportunities to further my religious or spiritual growth. (response was reversed to mirror other questions in the data).
4. I receive support and encouragement as I pursue a more fulfilling life.
5. I am challenged to grow as a person here at church.

End Two: First Unitarian Church of Des Moines invites people of all ages and backgrounds into creative interchange and community.

1. First Unitarian nurtures fellowship among its participants.
2. It's generally easy for visitors to feel welcome at our church.
3. Our congregation appropriately regards the feelings, abilities and traditions of all.
4. When we disagree with each other, our members question humbly, challenge respectfully, and handle dissent compassionately.
5. I see my unique background and identity acknowledged and respected at First Unitarian.

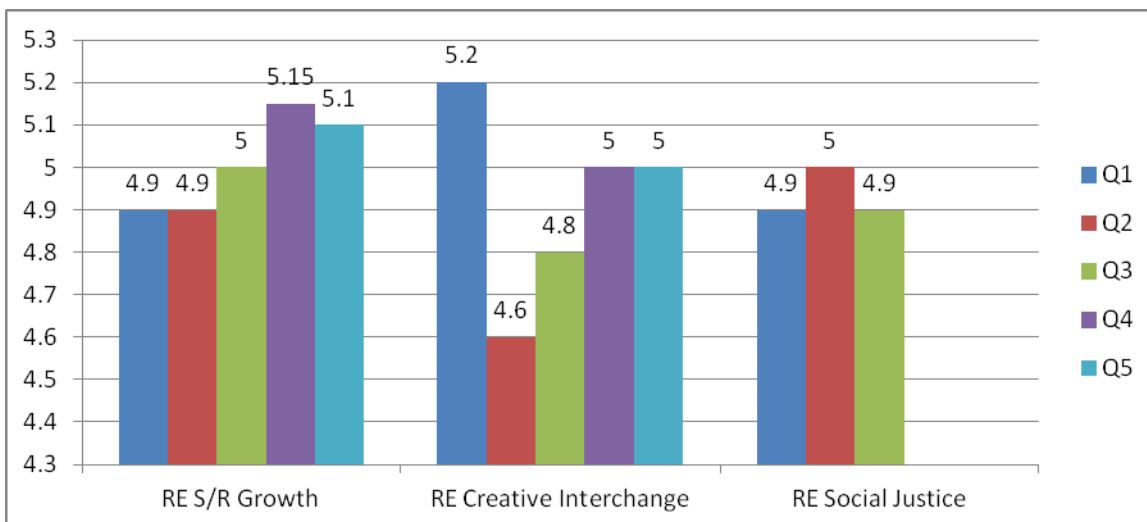
End Three: First Unitarian Church of Des Moines creates alliances to advance justice in the community and the world

1. It is a reliably visible/audible public witness in the community for justice.
2. Church programming, policies and action teaches and motivates me to seek more just ways of living.
3. I have engaged in social justice advocacy OR community organizing through First Unitarian.
4. Within our congregation, we successfully engage in tough conversations around important, divisive issues.
5. Through programming and action, our church advances social justice.

How are we doing with children, youth, and families??

Parents and other members gave their opinions on the experiences of the approximately 161 youth they bring to church with them on a regular basis. In a nutshell, the parents who bring children and youth feel that we do very well at meeting our three ends. On a scale of 1-6, with 6 indicating strong agreement that we meet the goal and 1 indicating strong disagreement, we score between 4.92 and 5.1, which places us above the “agree” category for each end. Our strongest accomplishments are considered in the area of spiritual and religious growth (end one), while our weakest is around the end of creative interchange (end two). *However, none of these means appear to indicate a particular weakness, particularly when compared with the answers all members gave for adults.* Parents overall feel very confident in their children’s and youth’s RE experiences.

End:	Mean (average)
RE End 1: Religious and spiritual growth	5.1
RE End 2: Creative interchange	4.92
RE End 3: Social Justice	5.0



The only slightly lower score was that of kids feeling welcome (4.6 mean on item 2.2)

Details: What the questions said:

End One: The people of First Unitarian Church of Des Moines engage in a transformative, foundational, liberal religious experience.

1. My children engage in an active consideration of concepts and ideas beyond those they already hold.

2. Our family's participation at First Unitarian has encouraged us to develop and talk about our personal theologies.
3. It's easy to learn about opportunities to further my kids' religious or spiritual growth.
4. My children receive support and encouragement as they pursue a more fulfilling life.
5. My kids are challenged to grow as people here at church.

End Two: First Unitarian Church of Des Moines invites people of all ages and backgrounds into creative interchange and community.

1. First Unitarian nurtures fellowship among its children and youth.
2. It's easy for visiting kids to feel welcome at our church.
3. Our congregation appropriately regards the feelings, abilities and traditions of all children and youth.
4. I see my child's background and identity acknowledged and respected at First Unitarian.
5. Our family life is nurtured through our participation in church.

End Three: First Unitarian Church of Des Moines creates alliances to advance justice in the community and the world.

1. Church programming, policies and action teaches and motivate youth and children to seek more just ways of living.
2. My child has a chance to learn about social justice issues at church.
3. Within our congregation, we successfully mentor youth and children to engage in tough conversations around important issues.

Facilities

When I (Darcie) looked at the overall responses on facilities, I was, to be honest, quite surprised. With the exception of parking, most congregants ranked facilities as very or somewhat adequate. I realized that I was using my own "internal benchmark," based on my frequent use of RE facilities as work as a volunteer. I wanted to see how the "average" member in terms of volunteering with the church saw the facilities compared with those who are more active. The survey team used the one variable that would consider the "activity" of the respondent: time volunteered per month. It is important to know that this includes the staff.

When we look at how respondents view the facilities, it looks quite different among different amounts of time spent at church. One possible takeaway: There is a perception gap between the most active church members and the average member.

Here are the feelings about the adequacy of facilities. These tables compare feelings among three levels of volunteers: few/none for those who volunteer three hours a month or less, some, those who volunteer 3-8 hours/month, and many, those who volunteer more than nine hours per month. Below is the percent of people reporting they found the facilities "adequate," "somewhat adequate," "inadequate," or left it blank. :

Kitchen	Very AD	Somewhat	Inadequate	Blank
Few or none	50.30%	25	15.1	9.3
Some (3-8)	42.5	28.8	27.5	1.2
Many (9+hours)	44.1	20.5	36.9	0

Parking	Very AD	Somewhat	Inadequate	Blank
Few or none	18.7	34.5	41.7	5
Some (3-8)	26.3	23.8	28.8	0
Many (9+hours)	11.7	20.6	67.6	0

RE Classrooms	Very AD	Somewhat	Inadequate	Blank
Few or none	52.5	16.5	10	18.7
Some (3-8)	52	21.3	17.5	8.7

Many (9+hours)	20.6	20.6	55.9	2.9
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Downstairs Gathering	Very AD	Somewhat	Inadequate	Blank
Few or none	47.4	24.5	11.5	16.5
Some (3-8)	51.3	22.5	17.5	8.8
Many (9+hours)	35.3	41.2	20.6	2.9

Auditorium	Very AD	Somewhat	Inadequate	Blank
Few or none	72	14.3	9	4.3
Some (3-8)	67.5	20	12.5	0
Many (9+hours)	50	23.5	26.4	0

Upstairs gathering	Very AD	Somewhat	Inadequate	Blank
Few or none	69	14.4	11.5	5
Some (3-8)	63.8	22.5	12.5	12.5
Many (9+hours)	35.2	47	17.6	0

Note: Percentages are rounded, totals run across the row.

Envisioning the Future.

Briefly, here are the rankings of preferred options to look at facilities. Even with the most “radical” options, fewer than one quarter of the congregants found these “unacceptable.”

26. Envisioning the Future : Please keep the future of the Church and its role in the community in mind as you answer the next set of questions. Our Church is growing and to keep pace with an expanding UU community which would you prefer, with 1(one) your top choice and four (4) your least preferred choice. If an option is completely unacceptable, please choose "unacceptable."

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	1	2	3	4	Unacceptable	Rating Average	Response Count
Facilitate forums or other creative interchange to pick options	61.4% (143)	21.5% (50)	9.4% (22)	7.7% (18)	0.0% (0)	0.71	233
Expand our current Church location to add more space.	23.7% (54)	45.2% (103)	21.1% (48)	9.2% (21)	0.9% (2)	1.25	228
Consider an alternate larger location	6.2% (14)	13.2% (30)	37.9% (86)	28.6% (65)	14.1% (32)	2.37	227
Start a second church somewhere in the greater Des Moines area	8.9% (21)	12.7% (30)	16.9% (40)	38.8% (92)	22.8% (54)	2.61	237
					Another alternative		34
					Show Responses		
					answered question		249
					skipped question		19

25. Parking options: In regard to parking, please rank your preference, with 1 (one) being most preferred and 3 (three) being least preferred. If a choice is completely unacceptable to you, please choose "unacceptable":

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	1	2	3	Unacceptable	Rating Average	Response Count
Maintain current parking arrangement	24.0% (54)	29.8% (67)	33.3% (75)	12.9% (29)	1.11	225
Expand out from current on-site parking lots	44.7% (101)	20.8% (47)	23.9% (54)	10.6% (24)	0.77	226
Expand parking elsewhere (for example, across street)	33.9% (74)	42.2% (92)	20.6% (45)	3.2% (7)	0.86	218
					answered question	246
					skipped question	22

Appendix: Bullet Points on Process

Questionnaire details

Ends statements: Five questions were asked for each of the end statements (religious/spiritual growth, creative interchange, social justice).

Demographic information: time in church, age, membership status, race/ethnicity, income, sexual orientation, etc.

Church participation: Where do you participate in church and how often? How much do you give of yourself to the church?

RE: If you have children, what is their experience with the ends statements? The questions mirrored those asked of adults, described above.

Facilities: Are our current facilities adequate? How should we think about future growth?

Comment sections were available extensively throughout the survey.

How did we ask for participation?

Two pulpit editorials, OOS, weekly emails were used to reach out

Large poster kept track of progress, raised profile of work

Staffed table for three weeks and one Wednesday night to raise awareness

Sent follow-up emails to remind about survey.

One participant would win lunch with Mark as incentive to participate (Mary Dycus won)

Access to survey through Survey Monkey

Everyone with email account received an invitation

Reached out those who shared an account with partner/spouse to invite participation from both

Mailed surveys to those without emails on file

Paper copies available at church in office and during coffee time in survey window

Web address to “surf in” to survey

Problems with access:

Very few – some people had delayed receipt of email

One email account did not have web access

Complaints about survey

Didn't like gender question (1)

Didn't like race question (“we're all just human”) (3)

Didn't like income question (“none of your business”) (~10)

Unclear wording reflecting class bias (1 + “people who told me”)

Didn't like that we didn't ask about specific programming ("I want to complain about joys and concerns and there is no place to do so) (4)

Didn't like the "win lunch with Mark" incentive (1)

Cannot assume that these complaints are representative; cannot assume that they are not representative. This survey does not measure these feelings; any conclusions are speculation.

Why are race/income/gender questions important?

- We need to know about diversity in our congregation to see whom we invite (end #1) and who sees the invitation as extended to them.
- If we omit these questions, we risk covering up differences in how different groups in our congregation experience our church.
- We do not know individual answers (assuming ethical behavior on the part of the survey team)

Suggestions for next time:

Add an overall question: "in general, how happy are you with the church?"

Encourage youth to take survey, or give them just the "ends" assessment

Compare across time, using some of the same questions if possible to track changes across time.

Look at changes in demographics of respondents. If samples appear to vary from year to year, consider weighing responses to cancel out these differences.