

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SAN DIEGO  
Listening Circle Planning Team

**REPORT SUMMARY: DECEMBER 2021/JANUARY 2022 LISTENING CIRCLES  
FINAL - March 19, 2022**

Congregational life changed dramatically for the world and for First UU when, on March 13, 2020, everything shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier in the year (January 2020) a number of incidents related to the congregation's work to become more anti-racist/anti-oppressive/multicultural occurred. Throughout 2020 and until September 2021, services and meetings were held online. Not being able to meet in-person in small or large groups affected communication among congregants, staff, and ministers—in general and about the incidents related to First UU's anti-racism/anti-oppression work.

In early 2021, the congregation learned our Assistant Minister would leave the end of June. An Assistant Minister, Rev. Omega Burckhardt, was hired under a two-year contract to begin in Summer 2021. In April 2021, our Lead Minister announced their resignation effective on August 22. The congregation then entered the UUA's Interim Minister process. A conflict occurred with a member of the congregation over behavior considered hurtful to the congregation and the interim search process. The Board opted to remove that person from membership which was a controversial issue among congregants. The unsuccessful Interim Minister search process left First UU with no Lead or Interim Minister. With no process available to search for minister, the Board sought help from the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and its Pacific Western Regional staff. Retired ministers were asked if they were willing to spend time supporting our congregation as First UU waited for the next application process. Four ministers agreed to support our congregation as Ministers in Residence working with us for between 6 weeks and 4 months. The Board decided to opt for a Developmental Minister to work with the congregation on specific goals for 4-7 years.

Listening Circles were suggested as a first step in healing from the challenges faced since before the pandemic started. This report contains information about the development, implementation, and results of First UU's Listening Circles. 130 members and friends attending 2-hour sessions of deep listening with another 6 individuals submitting responses in writing to 3 questions:

The next 4 pages display simplified results in a Word Cloud format of the 62 pages of responses to 3 questions:

- 1.) What has formed the foundation of your relationship with our congregation? Has that relationship changed in the past 18 months or longer?
- 2.) If you're struggling with anything in your relationship to our congregation, what does that struggle look like?
- 3.) What might motivate you to participate in and support our congregation even more wholeheartedly?

Following those pages is the report (narrative and themes tables of tallied responses) prepared for the Board, the Executive Team, and the congregation. Please refer to the report pages for more specific data about participant responses.

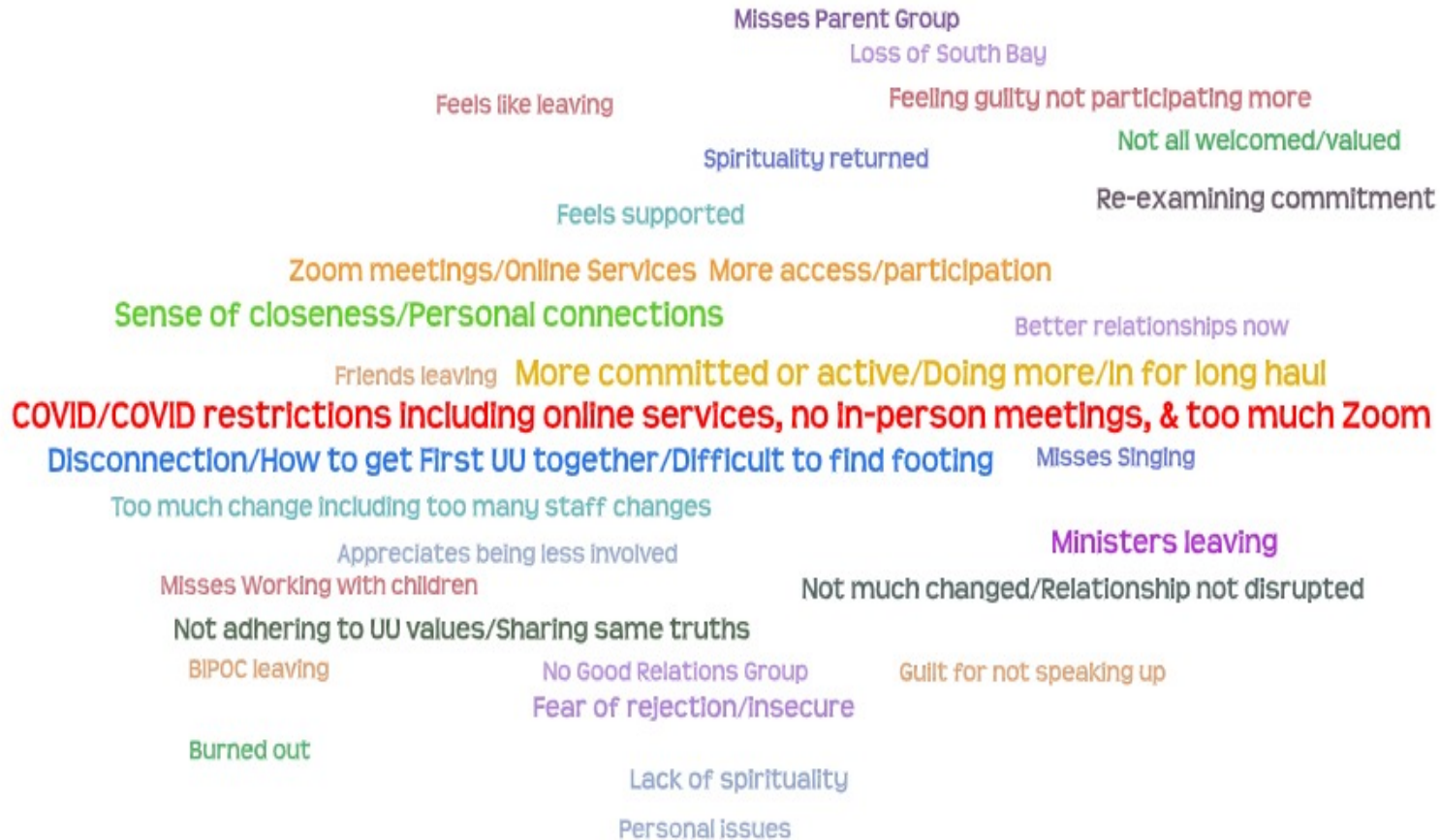
**Question #1 (Part 1): What has formed the foundation of your relationship with our congregation?**

**Note:** Larger text/font size means more responses than items in smaller text/font size.  
For more specific information, please refer to the narrative and table of tallied responses.



**Question #1 (Part 2): Has the foundation of your relationship changed in the last 18 months or more?  
POSITIVE & NEGATIVE RESPONSE**

**Note:** Larger text/font size means more responses than items in smaller text/font size.  
For more specific information, please refer to the narrative and table of tallied responses.



**Question #2:**

**If you're struggling with anything in your relationship to our congregation, what does that struggle look like?**

**Note:** Larger text/font size means more responses than items in smaller text/font size.  
For more specific information, please refer to the narrative and table of tallied responses.



**Question #3:**

**What might motivate you to participate in & support our congregation even more wholeheartedly?**

**Note:** Larger text/font size means more responses than items in smaller text/font size.  
For more specific information, please refer to the narrative and table of tallied responses.



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**FINAL - March 19, 2022**

**INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW**

Rev. Michael Brown, First UU's initial Minister in Residence suggested Listening Circles as a beginning—a first step—in our congregation's return to being in covenant with each other after several challenging years. A planning team was established to design and implement the Listening Circles. The team was expanded to review all responses and provide a summary report to the Board and Executive Team.

The Listening Circle Planning Team includes Rev. Omega and congregation members Marla English, Jan Garbosky, Susan Harding, Dan Paul, and Les Vivian. Our Ministers in Residence, Rev. Deanna Vandiver and Rev. Kathleen McTigue, have also participated as team members. The team has also been supported by the Unfolding Peace team of Rev. Denise Graves and Rev. Deanna Vandiver.

The Listening Circles provided a place to speak from our hearts about our individual experience and be heard in a safe, respectful space. The Listening Circles were also an opportunity for participants to listen to different truths. Additionally, the Circles allowed participants to understand the breadth and depth of concerns and to recognize the need for further healing work.

The anonymized data gathered will provide powerful insights for First UU's Board and leadership that can be used to improve all areas of congregational life—addressing issues in worship, small groups, social groups, education, social action, spiritual growth, community commitment, fairness, openness, and more. The input from participants will also help the Board and committees as they prepare to work with our Developmental Minister.

Process and Design: The Listening Circle Planning Team set a goal of 150 participants (including facilitators) which would be 30% of First UU's 500 certified members as of February 4, 2022. Circles were scheduled as 2-hour, listening-only, sessions with 2 trained First UU facilitators and a maximum of 7 “sharing participants.”

Invitations to Participate: To ensure all members and friends were made aware of the invitation to participate, eblasts were sent to the most wide-reaching version of First UU's eTapestry database of members and friends including those who don't live in San Diego. The information was also posted on the Listening Circles webpage and as an article in the December 2021 *First Words*. Additionally, while the congregation was able to meet outside, in-person, at Hillcrest, the Order of Service contained an insert with the questions to be asked and how to access the online information and interest form. As soon as schedules were available, the sign-up form replaced the interest form. Articles were also included weekly in *The Window*.

Emails announcing the schedule and sign-up link were sent to everyone who signed up on an interest list (prior to dates/times being finalized). Those who missed their scheduled circle or whose circle was canceled also received emails with information about rescheduling.

Outreach was made by Minister in Residence, Rev. Michael Brown, to our Youth Program Coordinator with an invitation for a Youth Listening Circle to be facilitated by Rev. Michael and Rev. Omega. Invitations were sent by email to those who had participated in one or more of the three in-person and two virtual Beloved Conversations sessions, six Transgender Inclusion Workshops, and the Men’s Fellowship.

Facilitators: Thirteen congregants participated in a 2-tiered Facilitator Training. The training consisted of a 2-hour overview session designed by Rev. Sarah Millsbaugh, UUA Pacific Western Region Congregational Life staff person, followed by participation as a “sharer” in a Listening Circle facilitated by Minister in Residence, Rev. Michael Brown, and Assistant Minister, Rev. Omega Burckhardt.

Facilitators included:

- Tony Bianca
- Marcia Biller
- Jenner Daelyn
- Marla English
- Newt Ferris
- Nancy Fisk
- Andy French
- Jan Garbosky
- Valerie Jaques
- Rose Riedel
- Chris Smith
- Rose Van Oss
- Les Vivian

Circle Process: A Facilitation Guide with a script was developed for all facilitators to use. Trust was built by invoking a covenant and by having respectful listening. There was no commenting, no affirming or correcting, and no crosstalk. One of the 2 trained facilitators acted as scribe and listened, took anonymized notes, and read back those notes. The speaker then had an opportunity to correct, modify, adjust, and approve the notes before the next person was invited to speak. The rest of the circle bore a few seconds of silent witness to each participant’s sharing.

Schedule and Participation: Listening Circles were held in November (facilitators only), December 2021, and January 2022 as follows:

<u>Dates</u>	<u># Completed Circles</u>	<u>Total Participants</u>
▪ November 22 & 23, 2021:	2	13
▪ December 6 – 17, 2021:	11	64
▪ January 8 – 23, 2022:	11	53
▪ <u>Subtotal:</u>	24	130
▪ Written Responses Submitted:	---	6
▪ <u>TOTALS:</u>	24	136

The 6 congregants who submitted written responses to the questions posed in the Listening Circle did so because Zoom was not possible for them or they were unable to attend their scheduled circle and were not able to reschedule. Thus, 130 congregants participated in a Listening Circle but 136 shared responses. All 136 responses were analyzed for this report. Only those who attended a Listening Circle received a link to a survey about their experience.

Participant Demographics: No demographic information was collected from participants. The following data is based on what is known from personal relationships or knowledge and is only an estimate of the demographics of Listening Circle participants (including those who only submitted written responses).

- Age: An estimated 94 participants (69.1%) are retired or of retirement age
- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color): 8 based on what is known about how individuals self-identify
- Gender: An estimated two-thirds of participants (including facilitators) identify as female.
- Individuals with Children:

- 4 with school-age child/children
- 2 with child/children less than 5 years old
- South Bay Participants: A total of 15 participated in the December 2021-January 2022 Listening Circles:
  - 8 are regular South Bay attendees,
  - 5 split their time between our two campuses, and
  - 2 did not attend a Listening Circle but sent in written responses to the questions.
- Youth: Although outreach to youth was made to attend a meeting with Rev. Michael Brown & Rev. Omega, none participated.

Participation Rate: Although participation fell short of the 150 goal, more than a quarter of First UU's membership number (27.2%) did participate. (Note: All members and friends were invited to participate in Listening Circles and not all who participated are members. The certified membership number is used only as a reference to calculate a participation rate. Participants included several individuals who have only participated in First UU online services and have never been to either campus.)

While the responses analyzed in this report are from slightly more more than a quarter of the congregation, one could expect others with the demographic profile of respondents (older, non-BIPOC, female) to have similar responses. BIPOC, young adults, youth, and other under-represented groups would not be expected to have similar responses.

Participant Survey: Eighty-four (84) of the 130 or 64.6% of those who participated in a Listening Circle submitted a survey. The average rating (out of 5) was 4.64. As the Planning Team learned from the surveys, the process worked very well. Participants and facilitators affirmed the process was powerful, affirming, healing, and transformative. People commented the Listening Circles were safe spaces in which they could speak openly and with honesty.

Presentation of Data: For each question posed, anonymized responses from those who attended the 24 Listening Circles and the 6 individuals who didn't/couldn't attend a circle and submitted written responses have been analyzed for this report.

- Responses for each question were reviewed and themes identified.
- Counts/tallies of themes were completed.
- Themes were ranked/listed from the highest to lowest count.
- For each question, data are presented in three ways:
  - Narrative description,
  - Themes table, and
  - Word cloud. (Note: The size of the text is indicative of how prevalent the response was. Larger text/font means there were more responses than a theme in smaller text/font.)

In addition to this report, First UU's Board and the Executive Team will receive the 62 page document containing the aggregated anonymized responses of all Listening Circle participants. These data will not be available to the congregation because the covenant with the participants included maintaining confidentiality with only a summary report shared.



**QUESTION #1 (Part 1):**

**What has formed the foundation of your relationship with our congregation?**

As might be expected, a sense of community/commitment was overwhelmingly identified by Listening Circle participants (96 of 136 respondents or 70.6%) as the foundation of their relationship with First UU. Less than half of respondents also spoke of welcoming (44.9%) and UU values/principles (44.1%) as reasons for their becoming part of the congregation. Also mentioned as foundational were:

- worship in general (38.2%),
- small groups (36.0%),
- type of religion (34.6%),
- social groups (33.8%),
- social justice groups/actions (27.2%),
- programs/education/Religious Education/Our Whole Lives (24.3%), and
- spiritual growth (23.5%).

Fewer folks (less than 20.0%) mentioned the following—many of which could be considered as a subset of a previous item above:

- committees (18.4%)
- ministers (14.0%)
- Wisdom Circles (11.0%)
- music (8.1%)
- lay ministry (6.6%)
- Men’s Fellowship (5.1%)
- Zen/Buddhist spirituality (4.4%)
- community outreach (3.7%)
- Camp De Beneville Pines (3.7%)
- South Bay congregation (3.7%)
- Looking Glass Theatre (2.9%)
- online services (2.2%)
- Earth Centered Spirituality Circle (2.2%)

Tallied responses to Question #1 (Part 1) are presented below in table form and as a word cloud.

WHAT FORMS MY FOUNDATION WITH CONGREGATION?	Count =
	<b>630</b>
<b>Sense of Community/Commitment</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Welcoming</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Values/Principles</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Worship in General</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Small Groups</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Type of Religion</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Social Groups</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Social Justice Groups / Actions</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Programs/Education/RE/OWL</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Committees</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Ministers</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Wisdom Circles</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Music</b>	<b>11</b>

<b>Lay Ministry</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Men's Fellowship</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Zen/Buddhist Spirituality</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Community Outreach</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Camp De Beneville</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>South Bay Congregation</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Looking Glass Theater</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Online Services</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Earth Centered Spirituality Circle</b>	<b>3</b>

**QUESTION #1 (Part 2):**

**Has [the foundation of your relationship] changed in the past 18 months or longer?**

Question #1 was asked as one question with two parts. All participants responded to Part 1 of the question, but 28 participants (20.6%) did not address this second part of the question. Another 11 participants (8.1%) indicated not much had changed or their relationship with the congregation has not been disrupted.

For many of the 108 who did respond to Part 2, the past 18 months or longer has had a negative effect on their relationship to the congregation. Important to highlight, however, 53 of the 213 theme responses tallied (24.9%) indicated positive change. These included:

- Being more committed or active/doing more/in for the long haul 34.0% (of the 53)
- Having more access/participation via zoom meetings &/or online services 28.3%
- Feeling guilty for not participating more 5.7%
- Feeling supported 5.7%
- Feeling spirituality has returned 1.9%
- Appreciating being less involved 1.9%
- Having better relationships now 1.9%

The following themes arose from the 132 “negative” change responses:

- COVID/COVID restrictions including online services, no in-person meetings, and too much zoom 23.5% (of the 132)
- Loss of sense of closeness/personal connections 13.6%
- Feeling of disconnection/difficulty finding footing/not knowing how to get First UU together 12.9%
- Loss of ministers 12.1%
- Re-examining their commitment to First UU 8.3%
- Not adhering to UU values/not sharing same truths 8.3%
- Fear of rejection/insecure 5.3%
- Feeling not all are welcomed/valued 3.0%
- Too much change including too many staff changes 3.0%
- Lack of spirituality 1.5%

Other “negative” changes—each cited by one person—include:

- BIPOC leaving
- Burned out
- Feels like leaving
- Friends leaving
- Guilt for not speaking up
- Loss of South Bay
- Misses Parent Group
- Misses singing
- Misses working with children
- No Good Relations Group
- Personal issues

Tallied responses to Question #1 (Part 2) are presented below in table form—containing both “positive” and “negative” responses. The word cloud that follows the table also displays both “positive” and “negative” changes in a single display.

HAS YOUR FOUNDATION CHANGED?	Count
<b>Not Addressed</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Total Positive</b>	<b>53</b>
More committed or active/Doing more/In for long haul	18
Zoom meetings/Online Services = More access/participation	15
Not much changed/Relationship not disrupted	11
Feeling guilty not participating more	3
Feels supported	3
Spirituality returned	1
Appreciates being less involved	1
Better relationships now	1
<b>Total Negative</b>	<b>132</b>
COVID/COVID restrictions including online services, no in-person meetings, & too much Zoom	31
Sense of closeness/Personal connections	18
Disconnection/How to get First UU together/Difficult to find footing	17
Ministers leaving	16
Re-examining commitment	11
Not adhering to UU values/Sharing same truths	11
Fear of rejection/insecure	7
Not all welcomed/valued	4
Too much change including too many staff changes	4
Lack of spirituality	2
Loss of South Bay	1
Personal issues	1
Guilt for not speaking up	1
Burned out	1
No Good Relations Group	1
Friends leaving	1
BIPOC leaving	1
Feels like leaving	1
Misses working with children	1
Misses singing	1
Misses Parent Group	1
<b>TOTAL Positive (53) &amp; Negative (132)</b>	<b>185</b>

**QUESTION #2:**

**If you're struggling with anything in your relationship to our congregation,  
what does that struggle look like?**

There were a total of 191 unduplicated tallied responses that 3 or more participants identified as a struggle or concern which are included in the table below. Fifteen major themes were identified. Three of the 15 themes show sub-categories that have been grouped together to create the total count for the theme.

Not included in the table were 30 additional themes that received less than 3 tallies (mentioned by less than 3 participants). Twenty-six of the 30 themes were mentioned by only one participant.

It's important to note there were some participants (23) who indicated not struggling or having minimal struggles and some respondents mentioned things the planning team felt were positive including:

- wishing they could do more or regretting they can't be as active as possible (8)
- pride of or being okay with or wanting more anti-racism/racial justice work (6)
- being grateful for the struggle or seeing the issues as an opportunity for growth or hope (4)
- asking how they could help (3)
- liking Beloved Conversations (2)
- wanting First UU to be "radically welcoming" (2)
- liking online services (1)
- not wanting to know more about the conflict (1)
- feeling its okay not to focus on the Interim Search Committee (1)

The top 7 identified struggles or concerns were mentioned by 11 or more participants:

- The greatest struggles or concerns (23.6% of total responses) relate to inclusiveness and divisiveness issues.
- Another 18.8% of tallied mentions relate to issues caused by the pandemic—which, for the most part, the congregation could only control the response to the health threat.
- 19 participants (9.9%) are concerned or struggle with staff issues including the loss of our Assistant and Lead Ministers.
- 7.9% of struggles are due to lack of trust in leadership's power sharing, communication, and transparency.
- Another 6.8% are frustrated because they don't have enough facts or understanding about the conflicts.
- Concerns related to the number of young adults in the congregation and the impact on children, youth, and families accounted for an additional 6.8%.
- 5.8% of tallied responses relate to not feeling welcome or safe at First UU.

Mentioned 9 or fewer times were:

- the lack of restorative practices including no functioning ways to handle conflict (4.7%)
- the unanswered question of "Stay or Go" (3.7%)
- a lack of action and enthusiasm with some deciding to participate less (3.1%)
- the lack of support for seniors within the congregation (2.1%)
- feeling First UU is moving away from spirituality (2.1%)
- believing the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) isn't serving the congregation (1.6%)

- groups not being cooperative due to compartmentalization (1.6)
- missing South Bay (1.6)

IDENTIFIED STRUGGLES/CONCERNS	Unduplicated Count = 191
<b>Inclusiveness &amp; devisiveness issues including:</b>	<b>45</b>
▪ Poor handling of sensitive issues (including public shaming, public apologies, judging, naming, & non-BIPOC not being heard)	(14)
▪ Discomfort with welcome words/racial identity/anti-racism work/focus on pronouns	(8)
▪ Lack of addressing White Supremacy Culture/“being white”	(7)
▪ Pace of change too slow/inertia	(6)
▪ Lack of BIPOC & BIPOC driven away by conflict	(5)
▪ One or a few people allowed to do damage	(5)
<b>Pandemic issues including:</b>	<b>36</b>
▪ Loss of in-person meetings/being with people	(15)
▪ Music issues including not singing	(8)
▪ Issues with Zoom	(7)
▪ Service doesn’t meet needs	(4)
▪ Balance handling COVID (too cautious/not cautious enough)	(2)
<b>Loss of two Ministers/staff instability/staff issues</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Lack of trust in Board &amp; leadership/lack of sharing power (including lack of communication &amp; transparency)</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Frustration from not understanding church conflicts/not enough facts including not being aware of troubles before eblast</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Young adults &amp; family issues including:</b>	<b>13</b>
▪ Not a place for family/children impacted/youth impacted	(7)
▪ Want more young adults	(6)
<b>Not welcoming/feeling unwelcome/not feeling safe/conflict impacting community</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Lack of restorative practices/no functioning way to handle conflict</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Lack of decision re “Stay or Go”</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Lack of action &amp; enthusiasm/deciding to participate less</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Lack of support for seniors</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Moving away from spirituality</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>UUA not serving congregation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Compartmentalized congregation resulting in non-cooperative groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Misses South Bay</b>	<b>3</b>

MENTIONED POSITIVES	Count = 28
<b>Wish they could do more/regret can’t be as active as they want</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Proud of or OK with anti-racism/racial justice work/wants more of it</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Grateful for the struggle/sees issues as opportunity for growth/hope</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Asked “How can I help?”</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Liked Beloved Conversations</b>	<b>2</b>

Wants to be “radically welcoming”	2
Likes online services	1
Doesn’t want to know more	1
Feels it’s OK not to focus on Interim Search Committee	1

<b>Indicated Not Struggling/Minimal Struggle/Hopeful/Grateful for Struggle</b>	<b>Count = 23</b>
Not struggling or OK/Moving in the right direction	18
A little struggle/More hopeful than struggling	5

### **QUESTION #3:**

#### **What might motivate you to participate in & support our congregation even more wholeheartedly?**

Nine Listening Circle participants chose to “pass” and not respond to this question. Another 25 participants reported they continue to support First UU, already are doing all they can, or would like to support the congregation more. One indicated they’re more involved now than in the past and another individual indicated they have moved on.

Instead of identifying something that would motivate them to participate more, at least 39 participants described problems or things they want fixed, how to solve problems, how they feel, or what they want First UU to do.

The team tallied 202 responses which did indicate what 3 or more participants stated would increase their participation or support. Thirty themes were identified with the top 5 receiving 11 or more tallies:

- Living our mission, principles, and/or covenant (7.4%)
- Improve volunteer involvement (6.9%)
- Open the Hillcrest campus (6.4%)
- Bring in new and diverse members, ministers, and staff (6.4%)
- Support small groups (5.4%)

Receiving from 9 to 6 tallies were:

- Return to good relations and restorative justice (4.5%)
- Select an inspiring Lead and/or Developmental Minister, live up to the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle, and update the website (4.0% each)
- Offer more deep listening opportunities/Listening Circles and focus on membership and pledging (3.5% each)
- Ensure transparency (Board and ministers), settle “Stay or Go,” improve volunteer coordination, support ministers and staff, and continue social justice work (3.0% each)

Five or fewer mentions were made for the following themes:

- 2.5% each:
  - Improve fiscal responsibility and transparency
  - Make space to allow opportunities for new leaders
  - Develop support for seniors
  - Reinvigorate the music program
  - Re-evaluate Policy Governance
  - Increase All-Church community activities
  - Maintain online access to enable the widest participation
- 2.0% each:
  - Re-open the South Bay campus
  - Restore DRUUMM
  - Support the Board by attending meetings
- 1.5% each:
  - Respond to mistakes without shaming
  - Off only one service (later than 9:30 a.m.)
  - Acknowledge our white supremacist and patriarchal structure
  - Develop ways to resolve conflict lovingly.



<b>WOULD BE MOTIVATED TO PARTICIPATE/SUPPORT IF . . .</b>	<b>Count</b>
Live our mission, principles, & covenant	15
Improve volunteer involvement	14
Open Hillcrest campus	13
Reach out to new & diverse members, ministers, & staff	13
Support small groups	11
Return to good relations & restorative justice	9
Select an inspiring lead/developmental minister	8
Live up to the 8th principle	8
Update the website	8
Offer more deep listening opportunities/Listening Circles	7
Focus on membership & pledging	7
Ensure transparency (Board & ministers)	6
Settle "Stay or Go" decision	6
Improve volunteer coordination	6
Support ministers & staff	6
Continue social justice work	6
Improve fiscal responsibility & transparency	5
Make space to allow opportunities for new leaders	5
Develop support for seniors	5
Reinvigorate the music program	5
Re-evaluate Policy Governance	5
Increase all-Church community activities	5
Maintain online access to enable widest participation	5
Re-open the South Bay campus	4
Restore DRUUM	4
Support the Board by attending meetings	4
Respond to mistakes without shaming	3
Offer only one service (later than 9:30)	3
Acknowledge our white supremacist & patriarchal structure	3
Develop ways to resolve conflict lovingly	3

<b>No Comment Expresses About Motivation to Participate</b>	<b>Count = 36</b>
Continue to support/already doing all can/want to support more	25
Passed/Did not respond to question at all	9
More involved now	1
Have moved on	1

<b>Identified Problems/Things to Be Fixed &amp;/or How to Solve Them/How Feel/ What Want First UU to Do</b>	<b>Count = 39 (at least)</b>
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## FINAL THOUGHTS & NEXT STEPS

Final Thoughts: The Listening Circles Planning Team is pleased by the participation of over 25% of the congregation and the positive feedback from participants and from facilitators. We believe the responses represent important information and will help our process of moving forward to heal and—with the help of our Ministers in Residence, our work with Unfolding Peace (an ongoing program of reconciliation led by Rev. Denise Graves and Rev. Deanna Vandiver through 2022), and the guidance of our Developmental Minister—again practice becoming a beloved community as we nurture spiritual growth, build community, and act on our values to help heal the world.

Tallied responses among the three questions reflect the greatest agreement among Listening Circle participants about the foundation of their relationship with First UU. Despite the homogeneity of participants, the breadth of difference and different perspectives among them is seen in the number of themes/comments made across the three questions by only one individual.

The following are some generalizations of the data found on the previous pages. They are not meant to do anything more than provide an overview what's previously been reported.

Question #1 focused on the foundation of each respondent's relationship with the congregation. For 96 participants, a sense of community was the foundation of their relationship followed by feeling welcome and UU values and principles. Small groups (in general or specifically named) also were foundational to many while ministers were only mentioned as foundational by 19 individuals.

When asked if the foundation of their relationship has changed in the past 18 months or longer, 28 (20.6%) of participants didn't address that part of the question. There were 58 mentions of positive or neutral feelings—including 18 participants who stated they are more committed or active now than in the past.

With "sense of community" as the foundation for 71% of participants, it's not surprising that 23.5% of tallied responses indicated COVID/COVID restrictions caused a change. Next most often mentioned (another 26%) were the loss of personal connections and feelings of disconnection—both of which could be viewed as results of COVID and COVID restrictions—despite all that lay leaders, staff, and ministers did to maintain connection. Loss of our ministers accounted for almost 13% of tallied negative responses.

Question #2 asked for specifics about individual struggles. Despite the pandemic and conflicts within the congregation, 23 participants (16.1%) indicated they are not struggling or are having minimal struggles. Some respondents, if they mentioned struggling or not, made comments (a total of 28) which were positive.

The greatest number of identified struggles or concerns were related to inclusiveness and divisiveness issues (45 mentions). Several other "themes" might be viewed as other aspects of these issues including:

- not feeling welcome or safe (11),
- lack of restorative practices and ways to handle conflict (9), and
- not a place for family/children impacted/youth impacted (7).

Pandemic issues accounted for the second-most mentions (36) followed by staff instability issues (19) and issues related to leadership, power sharing, and communication/transparency (15). Fewer respondents mentioned not understanding enough about the congregational conflicts (13) and the lack of decision regarding “Stay or Go” (7).

Question #3 asked what might motivate participants to participate or support the congregation more wholeheartedly. This is the only question in which respondents chose to “pass” with 9 doing so. Another 25 will continue to support First UU, are already doing all they can, or wish to do more. At least 39 others chose to respond to the question by describing problems or things they would like fixed, how they’d like them fixed or solved, how they feel, or what they want First UU to do.

There were, however, 30 “themes” (a total of 202 tallied responses) identified as motivational by between 3 and 15 Listening Circle participants with many reflecting “themes” identified in Question #2.

“Live our mission, principles, and covenant” led with 15 mentions followed by improving volunteer involvement (14); opening the Hillcrest campus and reaching out to new, diverse members, ministers, and staff (13 each); and supporting small groups (11).

As in Question #2, it’s possible to view “themes” in more than one way possibly grouping them together including:

- Two themes totaling 20 to consider together could be:
  - improving volunteer involvement (15) and
  - improving volunteer coordination (6), and/or
- Three themes totaling 15 might be:
  - returning to good relations and restorative justice (9),
  - responding to mistakes without shaming (3), and
  - developing ways to resolve conflict lovingly (3).

“Stay or Go” as an issue received 7 mentions as a struggle in Question #2 while settling the issue was mentioned in Question #3 as a motivation for support/participation 6 times. This may indicate the issue is important for a few (5%) but not many Listening Circle participants.

Next Steps: Turning to the future, we envision Listening Circles as a valuable tool our community can use with other emerging congregational life matters—bearing witness to each other through “Reimagining our Covenant” and “Becoming a Radically Welcoming Community” as well as other important issues. Participants trust the process and our Listening Circle facilitators are meeting to provide feedback, let the Planning Team know of additional training needed, and if they are willing to facilitate in the future.

We recognize the importance of finding ways to ensure greater participation in the future by under-represented groups including BIPOC, youth, and young adults with and without children.

As the congregation moves forward, may healing from the challenges of the past two years continue as we begin a Developmental Ministry charting First UU’s course live into our dreams of radically welcoming those seeking spiritual growth, an affirming community, and active involvement in helping to heal the world.