

The priority of the Listening subgroup of the Futures Task Force was to ensure that everyone in the congregation had an opportunity to be heard. We used a mix of tools:

- One on one interviews with 25 individuals using Appreciative Inquiry questions. (reference)
- Group listening sessions with the Youth and the Love and Justice Ministry, during Seabeck summer camp and 6 “Listening sessions” offered before or after service, focusing on dreams for our future church.
- Congregational Survey offered online and on paper.

We focused on two areas: where has our church been and what are our hopes, dreams and priorities for the future.

This report provides a detailed picture of the opinions, hopes and dreams of the people who are currently involved in this church community. Close to 250 individuals participated in listening sessions and 198 individuals completed the survey. Our process did not include outreach to those outside the current community. A summary of our learnings follows. Please see detailed survey and forum results in the appendices.

**WHERE OUR CHURCH HAS BEEN:**

**Interview results:**

Our one-on-one conversations were very rich and poignant, as people recalled times during which they were most engaged in, and excited about, our church. It became very clear that many of the people we interviewed have felt most engaged and alive (outside of worship) when they were participating in a small group effort, working towards a goal or on some sort of a project. Prolonged discussions about controversial decisions have been a bonding experience for our community in the past.

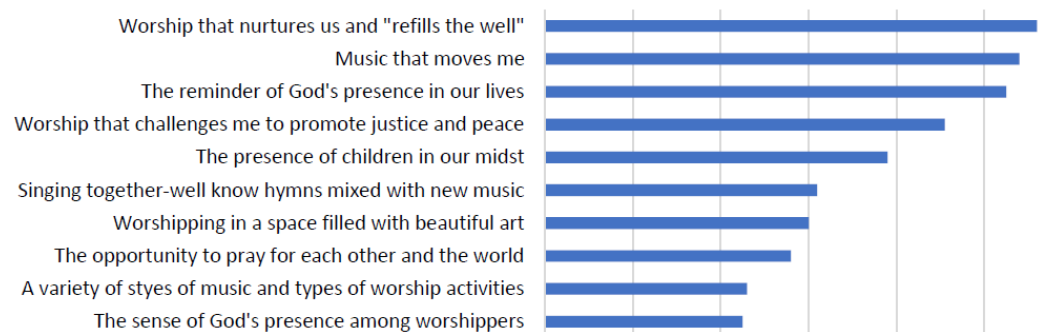
**Survey:**

**Worship, Social Action and Church Community are essential to our identity.**

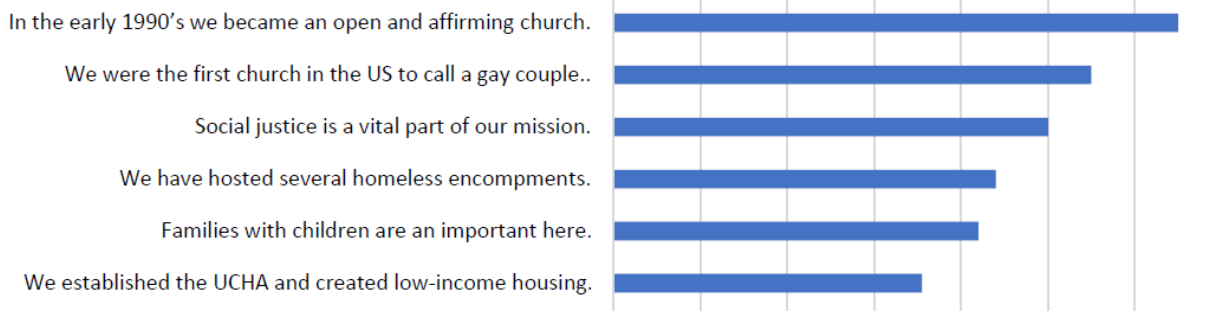
When asked “what are the most valuable ways in which our church has contributed to your life”? The most frequent answers were:



**Worship** - When asked about factors that led to attending **worship**, the most frequently cited are listed below. We did not include “sermons” as a choice in this question; however, sermons are highly valued as evidenced by the responses to our question about qualities desired in a future minister (see below)



**Social Action**—Over 80% of the respondents said they were “proud to be a member of a church that was involved in justice work.” The following are important to telling our church story.



**Church Community**—Connections and friendships within the church community was the most frequent choice when asked about current connection to this church. Of responders who were “very satisfied” with their relationship to this church, the most frequent comment cited connection to the community. The congregation is engaged in the work of the church, selecting an average of five different activities from the list below.



**Children and Youth and Families**—The value the church places on the participation of children and youth was evident when “children’s presence in worship” was chosen as the fifth most important factor in attending worship. And “children and families are welcome here” was the fifth most frequently selected choice for stories that tell us most about our church.

**Satisfaction**—When asked, how satisfied are you with the relationship with the church, 82% were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied”



## HOPES AND DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE:

Most of the discussions we have had with members have been in an open group format either during our week at Seabeck summer camp or in 6 Listening sessions. These listening sessions were a rich discussion of our hopes and dreams for the future of our church.

### Worship and Music:

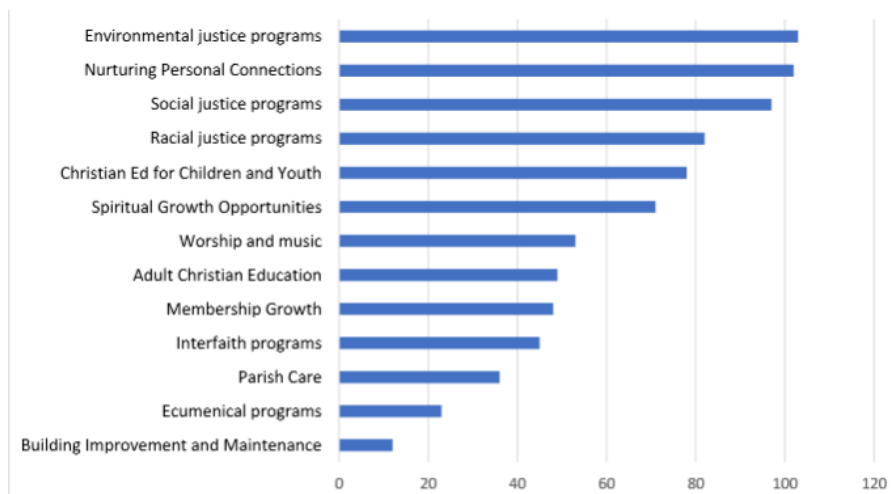
Worship and music are a foundation of UCUC. We thrive on worship that brings the holy near and preaching that prompts us to carry the Word out into the world. Many of us dream of expanded liturgical arts and more embodied expression of worship. We appreciate and enjoy music of various styles and from other cultures, and very much want to continue that tradition. And, we hope to expand the ways and times that we offer services using technology and additional worship styles and times.

**Social Action:** In the future, we aspire to continue as a leader for justice in our community. We envision building strong partnerships with outside organizations and faith groups to offer lectures and workshops that engage attendees and lean into community service: “talk, learn, do” groups.

**Christian education and spiritual growth:** Many in our congregation voiced a longing for more Christian education and spiritual growth opportunities for all ages. Enhancing our already strong programs for children and youth while building a more robust array of spiritual growth opportunities for adults of all ages, will be a challenge and an opportunity ahead. In the future, we anticipate more interfaith and ecumenical connections and involvement. And we also heard hopes for non-traditional opportunities to engage and explore the Spirit, such as Spirit Workshops (now called Gathering Ground) have in the past.

**Church Community:** The UCUC community places a high value on personal connections with one another. And we offer visitors and one another active authentic welcome. We envision a loving and caring community with multi-generational activities and gatherings, a knitting together of our communities of everyday life and faith. We want to continue the retreats and Seabeck family camps that we cherish. We also desire more opportunities to gather in small groups of all sorts, sizes, durations and interests – from young adults to raising children to the difficult transitions of older years. The sheer volume and breadth of our dreams for our community will necessitate setting priorities and having an engaged group of lay leaders.

In the survey, we asked “what areas should receive more emphasis over the next years? Select up to 5. The legend indicates the number of times the area was selected.



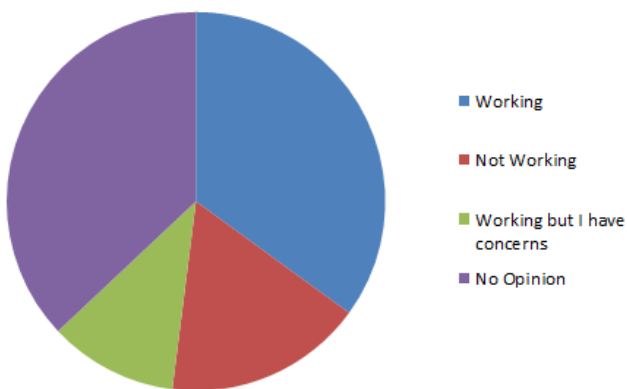
## LEADERSHIP STAFF:

Church council's charge to the Futures Task Force included "Recommend the leadership staff we will need to achieve (our)...goals." The results from our listening do not provide specific answers, but do contain useful information relevant to future detailed discussions of leadership and staffing.

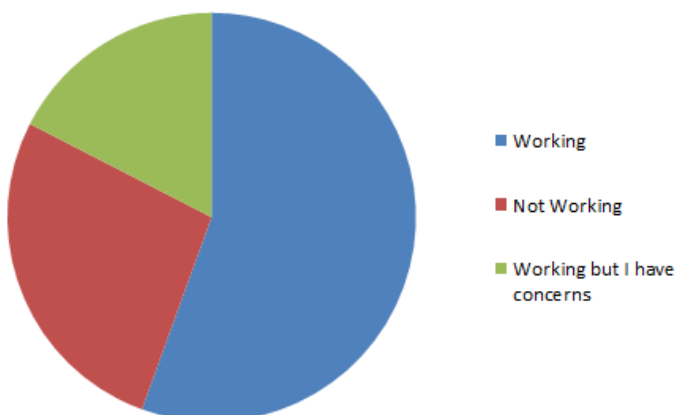
**Team Ministry Structure:** One of the stories we tell about our church is that few churches have our team ministry model, with leadership shared equally between three pastors and a church administrator. This story was selected by 30% of respondents as important to the story of our church. It's also a part of our church history that the vote to adopt team ministry was an almost evenly split vote (nearly 50 to 50.)

In the listening sessions, we did not hear a clear preference for a particular leadership structure. We did hear areas of concern around accountability, communication, and greater integration with lay leadership and ministry work.

The survey included an open-ended question asking about individual's experience with team ministry. One third of respondents did not answer this question. Of the 124 people who provided a response to this open-ended question, 54 percent provided affirmative comments about the team ministry model and 44 percent either felt it was not working or had concerns about it. In general, the comments in support of team ministry were general while comments of concern of team ministry were stronger and more specific. Concerns about accountability, communication and leadership were also expressed in the comments in the satisfaction question.



All responses

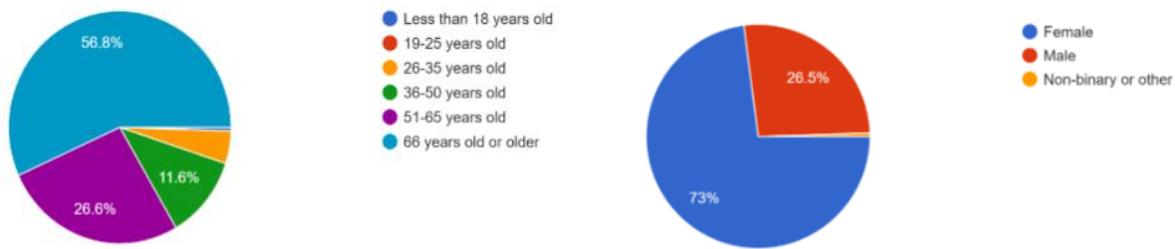


124 responses (excludes no opinion)

**New Minister:** What are the skills and qualities most important in a new minister? We asked for five responses.

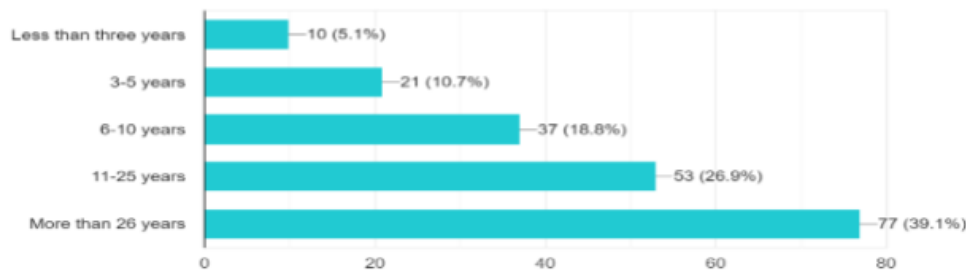


**A note about our process:** We listened to currently engaged people in our congregation. The age and gender of those who responded to the survey compare fairly closely to the demographics of the church membership. Younger participants in our community were under-represented and people over the age of 51 were over-represented by about 15 percent. Men responding to the survey were under-represented by about 12 percent.



**How long have you been actively participating in the life of our church?**

197 responses



Submitted October 7, 2019 by the Listening subgroup of the UCUC Future’s Task Force: Mary Sue Galvin Ellen Naden, Mary Jeanne Phipps, Margaret Stine, Todd Smiedendorf (staff liaison)