

Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Report to the Board and Congregation by Interim Minister Joy Atkinson
 Results of eleven “House Meetings,” conducted from December to
 February, 2012-2013 (total number of participants: 64)

Some of the Things We Like About HUUF

(areas of congregational life are grouped together, number of “x’s” indicates that the same idea was voiced by x additional people)

The People xxxxxxxxxxxx

Variety of people

Most of the friendliness

The people, warmth xx

Friendships

Long-time friends

Caring community

Warm sense of family x

Love—feels like family

Community xxx

Feel at home

Camaraderie

Fellowship

Awesome teens

Elders

Diversity

Compassion

Multigenerational

Spiritually like-minded people

Meeting with like-minded people xx

Good people I feel aligned with—searchers

Acceptance, different families, religious backgrounds

Acceptance of each other x

Acceptance of different views

Our sense of tolerance

Enthusiasm, openness

Mature, broad-thinking people, engaged with the larger world

Not overly Christian

Progressive thinking

Liberal

Caring about people and the natural world

Things We Like, Continued

Greeters are friendly
Welcoming x
Small, intimate group

Enjoy meals together, such as during holidays
Potlucks x

Many events
Varied programs
Small groups, small group activities x
Our one and a half hour service
Lay-led services x
Lay participation in service
Variety of ministers—depth of their experiences
Intergenerational participation x
Intergenerational activities
Hymns and music x
Music
Music—choir
Joys and concerns
Interesting talks
Social action
Religious education program

Like that this is a “fellowship” rather than a “church”

Having an Endowment Committee

Physical facility and space x

That HUUF exists!
Spirit of HUUF

Some of the Things We Would Change About HUUF

More people of color and more cultural diversity
 More diverse demographic—youth, young adults, college students x
 College outreach
 Encourage younger members—have a presence at HSU and CR
 HUUF should be more of a presence in the community
 Be a spokesperson for liberal causes
 More outreach
 More involvement of HUUF people—e.g. in homeless shelter
 Use Access Humboldt to promote HUUF
 Need active Adult RE program that is open to the community

More members
 More people and financial resources

Need better ability to get more people involved in leadership and participation
 Need more volunteers—too much burn-out of leadership
 More turn over in leadership
 More volunteers x
 Volunteer coordinator needed

Want settled minister x
 Full time minister
 Settled minister
 Settled minister with breadth of vision, to attract a variety of people

RE families more integrated into the whole group
 More intergenerational events and services
 Integrating generations and social action into the whole group

Return of 9:00 AM service (except for the “silent greeting” part)
 An earlier service on Sunday x
 Want a mainly adult service—as in the past (the 9:00 service)
 Go back to two services to allow for growth x

More Adult RE and discussion groups
 More small groups
 More intellectual stimulation—e.g. through adult education and talk-backs after the service
 More personal and social interaction

Things We Would Change, Continued

Integration of social action into the larger whole
 Social action interacting with the spiritual
 Need more leadership to follow through regarding social action
 More people on Social Action Committee
 More visibility of Social Action Committee in congregation
 Want more people to share their ideas about social action in Social Action Committee

Would like people to be less “uptight” about religion
 Fear of the “G” word
 More curiosity and interest in Christian traditions
 More tolerance of Christianity
 More tolerance for different religious points of view
 More tolerance of different viewpoints
 More comfort for different philosophical viewpoints

See that all participants are comfortable—both those here for social action and those here for spiritual nurturance

Different place for coffee hour
 Need social hall
 Larger foyer
 Sound system needs to be cushioned
 New chairs (folding)
 Larger space for socializing
 Enlarge sanctuary
 More storage
 Additional building
 Need a comfortable room to sit in for a dozen people or so
 Need opportunities to communicate among groups, beyond quarterly council meetings
 Better communication about activities
 Hard to find out what’s going on
 Some groups closed to new people, hard to find groups to join
 Fewer committees
 More cooperation among various groups
 Committees too isolated

Things We Would Change, Continued

Only greeters spoke to me when I first came
 More people should be greeting newcomers
 Group for new people after the service
 Be a more genuinely welcoming community for visitors
 Took a long time not to feel like an outsider
 Do a better job of welcoming, recruiting and retention of people
 Lack of clear distinction between members and non-members (e.g. no advantage to being a member vs. a friend)

Want us not to work by consensus
 Consensus—want to go back to a democratic vote
 Talk about policy positions we can take, and listen to the other side
 Need policy for disruptive or bullying behavior
 Dog policy—eliminate or modify—eg. Dogs on leash

More inclusivity during joys and concerns
 More flexibility in Sunday service format
 Certain “wheel of the year” events observed
 More spiritual content xx
 Lectures at times other than Sunday services (keep services emotionally and intellectually connective, but not just lectures)

Need effective planned giving program

Our Visions of the Future—A Guided Waking Dream

(Based on images and ideas that grew out of an imagined trip to the Fellowship on a Sunday morning ten years from now)

Buildings, Grounds, Furnishings

Still in this location

Same space, but with another couple of rooms

We arrived today for a dedication of our new meeting space, which seats 250, and there is a new fireside room in the main building

Building the way it is now but expanded xx

Meeting hall expanded x

Building expanded to accommodate one larger service

A greatly expanded sanctuary

Everything more open—more spaces for activities

Facility is more “finished”

The sanctuary looks more pulled together physically

We have five-year plan for a new building

Better flow into building, better social spaces

There’s a bulletin board inside as you enter, with information on what’s going on today, today’s topic and suggested readings

There is a social hall for coffee and socializing apart from the sanctuary—a different building xx

Larger foyer to allow for conversation and greeting xxxxxxxx

Foyer is different—less cramped, more light, warmer

Larger doorway, more inviting and open entryway xx

A new building to the right of current building, housing offices

As in the original plan—another building for minister’s office and other offices

An administrative wing

Still a feeling of connectedness to the outside of the building

Beauty outside still evident from inside xx

There is still grassy land around the building

Plenty of parking, well-lit, expanded, paved, no parking in grass or mud xxxxxx

Better kitchen with good dishwasher, good coffee pots

Better location for library in a space designated for one, near coffee hour

Buildings, Grounds, Furnishings, Continued

More building space for RE

Another building for RE, multi-purpose, socializing, with its own kitchen

A big lounge for teachers, also to keep their supplies

No folding and putting away of chairs necessary

We have different chairs—more modern, stacking, that link in rows

Comfortable chairs

There are pews that are moveable

A stage-like front, fixed chairs

Pews

Comfortable, stackable, portable pews

Piano is not front and center

A grand piano, no organ

Organ

There is a designated space for the choir x

There is a place other than sanctuary for the choir to warm up, with a piano

Covered walkways to all buildings

Small chapel for weddings and services x

Small apartment for caretakers

Adjunct store front in Arcata for teens and social justice

An archive room—storage for history

A permanent meeting room, like a “fireside room” with a table for meetings
and places to chat and conduct classes

The deck is enclosed and is an indoor/outdoor space with another deck off of it

Memorial garden with taller trees

Gate at the entrance to the memorial garden

Attractive fence around memorial garden

More beautiful landscaping

More composting

There is a community bread oven

Beehives on the premises

Communal sustainability is evident in buildings and grounds

Vegetable garden

Community garden

Gardens more mature

An organic garden with children involved

Cooperation with Redwood Roots farm, children involved

Booths outside for activities like adult education and social justice issues, like a bazaar

There are tables after the service, with information on special activities, sign-up sheets x

Another row of tables contains food

Congregation Composition

Lots more people xx

More people of color

More children

More young adults xxx

There are lots of kids and more teens

Kids running around, lively presence of children, happy and involved xxx

College age group

More age diversity—elders, young parents, young adults—good cross-section of community

New faces—lots of mid-range aged people

My son is still involved as a young adult

Different age groups are mingling as they arrive

More diversity of people in all categories—ages, ethnicities x

Diversity evident—all kinds of people excited to be here

Welcoming and Greeting, Ambiance, Feeling

Same as always, comfortable

As we come in—high energy, sense of connection

Continuing greeters program

People are milling about, smiling and hugging

Minister is greeting people

More people give “an Awanna greeting”

Greeters are working to introduce newcomers to others

All should be greeters

Many congenial people greeting each other and newcomers

People are mingling and introducing people to each other

People are in conversation but are open to newcomers

There is coffee, tea and cookies before the service, with people mingling

People are behind the coffee tables helping to serve—good hospitality

Lots of talking among people before the service—satisfying, then quiet before the service begins

Vibrancy, transition into quiet, then vibrancy again x

People greeting each other, then settling down

I felt comfortable, though there were people I didn’t know

Same feeling as now—a safe place for people of diverse views

Congregation is more connected pastorally with each other, hanging out together before and after the service, more deeply connected

The Sunday Service

Service is the same

Familiar feeling—I get to let go and nurture myself

Chance to bond with like-minded people within the service

Candles present on entry

Holding hands in the service

Hand-holding and a quiet, meditative moment

More people participating in service x

There is more age diversity involved in the service xx

Teens participating in service

Teens giving the program

Minister is facing congregation from up front

Minister was doing a dedication

Sense of joyous ritual, playfulness

Lovely sharing of joys and concerns, but only one sentence apiece is spoken

Everyone who got up to drop a pebble was more concise

Children interacting—also sharing joys and concerns before the story

Candles lit during joys and concerns

Every voice can be heard every Sunday

Choir is integral part of each service x

Children's choir

Two services with two full sanctuaries

Minister

Full-time minister x

Minister present, who's been there awhile

Settled minister either full or part-time

Two services to allow for growth

A minister is in the pulpit

Minister engaged and engaging—half or full-time, speaking 2x/month

Music

Music as it is now xxxxx

Singing as it is now

Keep current music and add more

There is fine music, as there is now, there is "an Annette"

Organ music

Good, lively, sacred music

There is a bigger choir xx

More diversity in music: chamber music, trios

The music makes you want to move

Music varied

String music is playing

After the Service

People are going out of the service to share a meal

Committees and groups meet after the service

Coffee cart is brought into sanctuary after service

Talk back after the service

Discussion after service with refreshments—ten to twenty people attend, prepared to talk

After the service, people are in small groups interacting

There is not a big gap between the end of the service and the start of discussions

The college-age group was going off together to have lunch

Other Programs and Ideas

Programming is expanded

Facilities are used by the community and by membership for other activities during the week

A more Monday through Sunday program—people feel like HUUF is an extension of their home

Meetings on Saturday—small groups of 10 to 12 people sharing life stories, feelings, beliefs, experiences, others listening

More art shows

A singles group

We sponsor a high school essay contest

Continuing strong RE program

Teen participation—teen group

We are present on campus, where we pass out literature for students

Continuing Circle Dinners program

Concerts on a regular basis

Coffee house gathering on Friday night, with local musicians and poets

There's a program for orienting new members

More social action projects, well-communicated

There is more participation by the congregation in Social Action brunches

A crew is dedicated to working on the Social Action brunches x

There is an active Adult Religious Education program

There are still ceremonies for young people—coming-of-age, bridging

Kids still grow up through the congregation

Large work parties, with work shared

Not so many “committees of one”—more participation

Committees staffed so there isn't an infinite time-suck on one person

Part of the membership responsibility would be to volunteer, make a pledge of time

Acknowledgement of volunteers

Better incorporation of new members

More incentives to become a member

Endowment Committee works

Newsletter 2x/month, smaller but more current

Staffing

Teen program with paid director
 A good administrator—like Shay, but full-time
 There is a paid treasurer, accountant and check recorder—we just get by with
 volunteers, who burn out

As People Leave on Sunday

I leave excited and inspired
 People are enthused and leave inspired
 I left uplifted
 I expected a positive experience, and it was
 I felt filled up emotionally and intellectually as I left

Other Comments

Congregation’s involvement in community is obvious
 HUUF seemed more sure of itself—more connected, confident, integrating UU values
 into the community
 Congregation has a more mature sense of itself
 It’s a “church” now
 It is much the same as it is now xxxx

Continuum Exercise—People placed themselves along an imaginary line with “polarities” on either end.
 This gives very rough numbers and their approximate positions:

I am
 Humanist.....27.....7.....14.....8.....7.....Theist

I like
 Lively music, modern.....4.....8.....36.....10.....6.....Traditional, classical

I come mainly for
 Spiritual nurturance.....11.....13.....21.....9.....4.....Social activism

I am oriented more toward the
 Scientific.....16.....9.....18.....9.....7.....Mystical, spiritual

...
 I prefer services to be more
 Intellectual.....5.....18.....18.....13.....7.....Spiritual, feeling

People come mostly
 To be with friends.....14.....15.....15.....12.....7.....have values deepened, clarified

I like the congregation to be
 Small and intimate.....13.....12.....15.....8.....13.....I want to
 Spread the word, bring more in

I like the service format to be more
 Traditional.....6.....18.....12.....19.....6.....Innovative, changing