

March 2017 Survey: An Interpretation
By Jeanne Duke, Chair, UCC Board of Stewards
Ex-officio member of Senior Minister Search Committee

UCC performed a survey of the congregation in March 2017 to examine 2 issues:

1. What do we do well?
2. What should UCC's priorities be?

Question 1 gave us 9 different areas to rank from "not well" to "very well." The areas in which we have the best combined scores of "well" and "very well" are the following:

- Ecumenism & Interfaith opportunities for common worship and service: about 38% "well" & 53% "very well"
- Mission of the Church in the world to transform the world in love and justice: about 45% "well" and 45% "very well"
- Worship: about 37% "well" and 51% "very well"

The good news is that these areas of UCC's ministry and mission are alive and vibrant. We owe ourselves an opportunity to enjoy knowing we engage in ministries that have the power to transform the world, one person at a time.

The areas where we have the highest, meaning worst, combined scores of "not well" and "mediocre" are the following:

- External communication: about 5% "not well" and 35% "mediocre"
- Internal communication: about 5% "not well" and 27% "mediocre"
- Preaching: about 4% "not well" and 17% "mediocre"

There is good news here, too. UCC's Board of Stewards recognized the communications problems during its February 2016 retreat and approved improved internal and external communications as a 3-year goal. Under Chuck's leadership as Intentional Interim Senior Minister and with the addition of Patty Poling to our staff, we are on track to achieve that goal.

As for preaching, I cannot remember any time that I agreed with my husband, a professor of church history, more than 20% of the time. This means we currently do very well in this area despite the relatively low ranking.

More importantly, the Senior Minister search committee and UCC's Board of Stewards concurred in April 2017 that the primary characteristic we seek in our next settled Senior Minister will be excellence in preaching.

As for the second question regarding priorities, the top 3 priorities were the following:

- Worship: weighted score of 6.41
- Preaching: weighted score of 6.07
- Pastoral Care: weighted score of 5.71

UCC's 2017 decisions to hire Dr. Todd Pickett as Director of Music and Rev. Shannon Moore as coordinator of pastoral care ministries helped support the priorities of worship and pastoral care. In addition, the decision to focus on preaching as the primary characteristic of our new settled Senior Minister will address the priority of preaching.

Our lowest 3 priorities were the following:

- Ecumenism & Interfaith opportunities: weighted score of 3.67
- External communication: weighted score of 4.01
- Mission in the world: weighted score of 4.38

These scores provide an opportunity for expanded conversations. For example, we do mission, ecumenical work, and interfaith issues well but as a congregation UCC would prefer to focus energy elsewhere. What would be a more appropriate balance? As for external communication, it is both what UCC does worst and what UCC finds to be a low-ranked priority. Is this a way of prioritizing self-care over inviting others or just a misunderstanding about why we might want to "get our message out"?

UCC's future ahead remains in the hands of God made known in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will blow us in a yet-unknown direction. Nevertheless, the results of this survey provide clarity on 2 issues: UCC does many things well and UCC has a collective sense of common priorities.

Praise be to God.

Jeanne

May 2, 2017