

2012 Congregational Survey Results

1. To what extent do you find All Souls to be a vibrant and joyful community where seekers find connection, support, and spiritual growth in groups large and small?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Very significantly		34.1%	72
Significantly		52.6%	111
Slightly		11.8%	25
Not at all		0.0%	0
I don't know		1.4%	3
answered question			211
skipped question			1

Eighty seven percent (87%) said to a “very significant” or “significant” extent.

2. On a scale of 1 (dispiriting) to 5 (amazing), how would you rate your experience of Sunday worship?

		Response Percent	Response Count
1 (Dispiriting)		0.0%	0
2		1.4%	3
3		13.3%	28
4		58.1%	122
5 (Amazing)		27.1%	57
answered question			210
skipped question			2

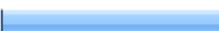
Eighty five percent (85%) rated their experience as a 4 or 5.

3. To what extent do you find All Souls offers you opportunities for spiritual growth and development (1 - Lacking, 5 - Abundant)?

		Response Percent	Response Count
1 (Lacking)		0.0%	0
2		5.3%	11
3		20.3%	42
4		41.5%	86
5 (Abundant)		32.9%	68
answered question			207
skipped question			5

Seventy four percent (74%) reported their opportunities as either 4 or 5.

4. Are you taking advantage of spiritual growth and development opportunities that are available?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		62.4%	128
No		37.6%	77
answered question			205
skipped question			7

Sixty two percent (62%) said yes; 38% said no.

Question #5. What is your greatest source of spiritual growth and development at All Souls?

Summary of Comments:

- Sunday Service
 - Music/participation in church choir
 - Sermons (some specifically mention Rob’s sermons)
- Community (working with others, interaction with like-minded people, volunteering)

- Covenant Groups
- Adult Spiritual Development Classes
- Children’s RE

Question #6. What would you like to see more of in spiritual growth and development?

Summary of Comments:

- Smaller and deeper (more small group discussion opportunities, more opportunities/retreats to deepen spiritual development)
- More focus on welcoming and retaining new members
- Better access to ministers
- More ASD offerings, consider one-time session offerings/drop-in offerings/lecture series, more general/less specific themes, family-friendly times and locations
- More youth participation in services
- More focus on/attention to/add/increase:
 - Asian Americans
 - Women’s issues
 - UU parents/parenting
 - Silent meditation/mindfulness/Buddhism
 - Earth-based services with humanist themes
 - Long-term covenant groups
 - International focus
 - UU History
 - Jewish Studies
 - Community Sing
 - Vespers

7. To what extent do you feel that you have opportunities to share your gifts and talents at All Souls in way that feels meaningful to you?

		Response Percent	Response Count
1 (Lacking)		1.9%	4
2		11.1%	23
3		21.3%	44
4		36.2%	75
5 (Abundant)		29.5%	61
answered question			207
skipped question			5

Sixty six percent (66%) of those responding rated the opportunities positively (4 or 5) with 5 being “abundant,” while 33% rated them less positively (1-3).

Question #8. Say more about your answer to the previous question (on opportunities to share your gifts and talents).

Summary of comments:

The majority of comments described ample opportunities for involvement. In fact, a number felt limited by the lack of time such that the challenge isn’t finding opportunities, but making choices.

The activities mentioned where members/nonmembers used their gifts and talents included the gamut of Church programs, activities and governance: the choirs, ushering, worship associate, serving on committees, social justice work, teaching children, teaching adults, plant sale, giving financially, the Generosity and Capital campaigns, the visioning process, direct service to neighbors, helping “green” efforts, the Change/All Souls Housing Corporation, preparing the Sunday lunch, the church council, Kuumba players, participating in ASD classes, Young Souls, Silver Souls, and covenant groups.

A minority of comments described difficulties with: newcomers knowing how to become involved; finding information and contacts; the challenges of getting involved in such a large congregation; being well used; too few volunteers (e.g., Sunday lunch); participating in social justice actions that are during the weekday; and feeling welcomed, valued and appreciated, with some contributions not being recognized equally or at all.

A very small number complained of barriers to participation caused by the dynamics of an “inside” group, seeing longer-term members as running things, and not being invited to participate in leadership.

Recommendations for improving opportunities or new activities included:

- more opportunities for direct service outside of the church (including outside the U.S.)
- providing more short-term opportunities requiring less time commitment
- more covenant groups that are open, metro-accessible, meet on a weeknight and are general in focus
- restarting the Sunday lunch
- opportunities for visual artists, not just musicians, to be able to show their work at church
- an online directory of volunteer activities—searchable by activity, topic and date
- an email suggestion box, with members encouraged to send questions, suggestions and ideas -- to help solve the issue of who to send questions and ideas to -- the Board, Ministers, others? -- the inbox would be monitored with questions sent along to the appropriate person.

- finding ways to engage/involve new members and inactive members who would like to be more active
- encouraging specific individuals to share their gifts and talents in addition to the general invitations
- finding ways to do the work with less “process”
- doing a better job of recognizing our volunteers

Question # 9. What does the term “shared ministry” mean to you?

Seventy nine percent (79%) in the survey provided comments. Of those, 13% said they didn’t know or weren’t sure, so a total of about one third of survey participants didn’t offer a definition.

Summary of comments:

Comments offered a range of definitions of both “shared” and “ministry.” Many suggested the term suggests that both congregants and staff (including ministers) contribute to the wellbeing and spiritual growth of the church community as well as minister to our neighborhood community. Ministry for some is ANY activity involving and contributing to the support of the church and its work. A number of comments associated the term shared ministry with a narrower, shared responsibility for helping with the work or “functioning” of the church, such as worship, education and spiritual teaching.

A striking common theme was that shared ministry is seen as the “responsibility” of members and staff -- 30% of those offering a definition used that word and many more implied it. A number of others who didn’t say it’s a responsibility saw it as an “opportunity.”

Many comments focused on describing “shared” and assumed ministry is more understood.

10. To what extent do you perceive All Souls community members to...

	Very significantly	Significantly	Slightly	Not at all	I don't know	Rating Average	Response Count
... Practice hospitality, welcoming all who enter?	30.9% (64)	49.3% (102)	19.3% (40)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	4.10	207
... Foster a multiracial and multigenerational community that sees diversity in all of its manifestations as a sign of its strength?	36.2% (75)	52.7% (109)	10.1% (21)	0.0% (0)	1.0% (2)	4.23	207
... Listen with respect and attention and speak with care?	24.9% (51)	59.0% (121)	13.2% (27)	0.0% (0)	2.9% (6)	4.03	205
... Resolve conflicts directly, using openness and compassion?	13.8% (28)	37.4% (76)	21.7% (44)	2.5% (5)	24.6% (50)	3.13	203
... Acknowledge mistakes and shortcomings, and be willing to forgive those of others?	13.8% (28)	37.4% (76)	23.2% (47)	2.5% (5)	23.2% (47)	3.16	203
... Support each other in times of joy and need?	35.6% (73)	45.9% (94)	11.2% (23)	1.5% (3)	5.9% (12)	4.04	205

Responses to four of the topics reflected broad agreement:

...Practice hospitality, welcoming all who enter? 80 % very significantly or significantly

... Foster a multiracial and multigenerational community that sees diversity in all of its manifestations as a sign of its strength? 89 % very significantly or significantly

... Listen with respect and attention and speak with care? 84% very significantly or significantly

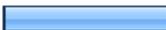
... Support each other in times of joy and need? 82% very significantly or significantly

Responses to two topics showed significantly less agreement or uncertainty on how well members:

... Resolve conflicts directly, using openness and compassion?

... Acknowledge mistakes and shortcomings, and be willing to forgive those of others?

11. Are you familiar with the Covenant of Right Relations?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, and I know what's included in it.		34.8%	72
Yes, I have heard of it but I'm not sure what is included.		37.2%	77
No, I have never heard of it.		28.0%	58
		answered question	207
		skipped question	5

12. How do each of these activities/experiences contribute to your spiritual development and well-being?

	Very significantly	Significantly	Slightly	Not at all	I don't know/don't participate	Response Count
Weekly services	54.8% (114)	35.1% (73)	7.7% (16)	1.4% (3)	1.0% (2)	208
Music at services	67.6% (140)	26.1% (54)	5.8% (12)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	207
Other parts of Sunday services	29.4% (59)	48.8% (98)	15.4% (31)	1.5% (3)	5.0% (10)	201
Volunteering on Sundays (e.g., usher, worship associate, greeter, counter, meals, etc.)	10.2% (21)	25.2% (52)	18.0% (37)	4.4% (9)	42.2% (87)	206
Covenant Groups	19.5% (40)	18.5% (38)	8.3% (17)	6.3% (13)	47.3% (97)	205
Pastoral Care	6.0% (12)	13.9% (28)	15.9% (32)	11.4% (23)	52.7% (106)	201
Social justice activities	13.2% (27)	28.3% (58)	26.3% (54)	6.8% (14)	25.4% (52)	205
Religious education (children)	7.8% (16)	13.2% (27)	9.8% (20)	6.3% (13)	62.9% (129)	205
Religious education (adult)	9.0% (18)	19.5% (39)	22.0% (44)	7.0% (14)	42.5% (85)	200
Affinity groups (e.g., Silver Souls, Young Souls, Black Folks Potluck)	8.8% (18)	13.2% (27)	21.6% (44)	9.3% (19)	47.1% (96)	204

- Highest ratings: Weekly services (54.8% rated very significantly) and music at services (67.6% rated very significantly). This is consistent with the top items that emerged in the previous question.
- Of note were the areas where 42-63% of respondents selected, “I don’t know/don’t participate”
 - Volunteering on Sundays
 - Covenant Groups
 - Pastoral Care
 - Social Justice Activities
 - Religious Education (children)
 - Religious Education (adult)
 - Affinity Groups
- Covenant Groups, Adult Religious Education and Children’s RE were all endorsed in the previous question as greatest sources of spiritual growth and development, yet 47%, 63% and 43%, respectively, indicated “I don’t know/don’t participate” for these items. This suggests a need to identify ways in which access to and participation in the areas can be enhanced.
- Comments that may explain the above ratings:
 - For some, schedules, time limits, work commitments prevent them from participating more fully
 - For some, they do not fit into an established affinity group. Recommendations for a Middle Souls group and Empty Nesters. Some concern expressed that Affinity Groups make it too easy to stay within one’s comfort zone
 - Many activities centered around children and families
 - Services seem less intentionally universal
 - Closed circles of friends forming in some affinity groups
 - Music has become less diverse, more jazz focused; interest in more meditative, classical music
 - Interest in seeing more educational and socioeconomic diversity
 - Diminished sense of connection with loss of John Strang and lunches
 - Focus on Capital Campaign was alienating to some

Question #13. Do you feel like you practice a ministry yourself at All Souls?

Of those responding 71% said yes, 23% said no, and 6% weren’t sure.

Summary of responses:

Examples of what a “practice” means included: welcoming visitors, reaching out to people, helping other members in need including, keeping an eye out for members who have medical and transportation needs, being a pastoral associate and working on the Caring Committee, including organizing caring cards. Other examples included formal church leadership, serving on church committees, as a Worship Associate or covenant group leader, singing in the choirs, teaching RE and ESL, gardening at the church, helping with the Generosity and Capital Campaigns, participating in the church’s anti-racism work, and donating money to increase the church’s ministry.

Several reported burnout and frustration in their efforts to practice a ministry, citing reasons of insufficient support and church processes that are not seen as readily understandable.

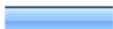
Question #14. Is there anything else you would like to comment on with respect to the ministry at All Souls?

Summary of Comments:

- Concern about turnover of staff/lay leaders; not enough attention paid to this
- Want to see more social justice work
- More attention to including non-theist themes in services/sermons; concerns about frequent god talk and standard church service format
- Concern about sermons going too far politically; political conservatives would not feel welcome
- Concern about lack of follow up or lack of timely follow up from staff
- Strong ministerial leadership in Hardies and Newman
- Large size makes it hard to find a place and feel at home
- Reduced sense of spiritual development opportunities since Shana left
- Interest in being able to connect more with ministers to get care
- Concern that there was no formal evaluation of the minister
- Concern about staff/minister who do not identify as UU
- Concerns about how spirit is felt in service (e.g., too much noisiness/clapping versus not enough expression)

15. How many years ago did you first start attending All Souls?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1 year		12.0%	25
1-5 years		40.9%	85
6-10 years		20.2%	42
11+ years		26.9%	56
answered question			208
skipped question			4

16. Are you a member?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		81.8%	166
No		18.2%	37
answered question			203
skipped question			9

17. How would you describe your activity at All Souls outside of Sunday worship?

		Response Percent	Response Count
I belong to a covenant group, religious education course, or other group that meets regularly or provides an ongoing service (e.g. ushers, choir members)		71.4%	147
I am best described as an ad hoc volunteer/participant		16.5%	34
I usually only attend Sunday worship		12.1%	25
answered question			206
skipped question			6

18. How old are you?

		Response Percent	Response Count
0-10 years old		0.0%	0
11-17 years old		0.5%	1
19-34 years old		28.2%	58
35-49 years old		30.1%	62
50-64 years old		26.2%	54
65+		15.0%	31
		answered question	206
		skipped question	6

Ideas offered through the congregational survey include:

- Candle light service of quiet reflection and sharing the in Eaton Room; does not require the commitment of a covenant group; a drop-in, small, quiet hour on Wednesday evenings/mid-week.
- Other Affinity Groups (e.g., Middle Souls)
- Offer childcare in the evenings (2 hours) so single parents can take advantage of evening programs or Parents Night Out (one Saturday a month, for nominal fee)
- Connect older members (who may be lonely) with parents of young children (who may not have local parents) for get-togethers or break for parents/treat for elderly
- Interest in seeing more people wearing name badges
- Open office hours for ministers
- Pair new members with seasoned members as church mentors
- Have a few services in which terms like “prayer” and “worship” are intentionally left out
- Consider having 20% of all ministerial staff time dedicated to pastoral care (to improve access to pastoral care choices)
- Something like a COM for staff to protect, support, nurture (in an effort to address turnover)
- Improve website
- Keep helping people meet 5-10 people and form smaller communities
- Small group discussions around the theme of the month (grace, joy, compassion), perhaps with book suggestion to go with each theme
- Consider daytime ASD courses
- Post information about sermons after service (e.g., readings)
- Recordings of entire Sunday service re-broadcast via Internet
- Pay more attention to the diversity of socioeconomic status in the congregation
- Improve communication about church happenings and appropriate contact people
- Consider office hours for ministers
- Create visible multigenerational services and programming
- Create an information clearinghouse
- Treasure volunteers and increase opportunities for fun in the work
- Consider covenanting as a practice for committees/groups
- Create additional space for staff through the building renovation; acknowledge we are a growing congregation and staff will have to grow alongside it