

# Listening to the Congregation and the Formation of Transformation Team and Work Groups

All Souls' Transformation Team and work groups grew out of listening and consulting processes initiated by All Souls' leaders.

In January 2018, the Senior Minister and the Board called a town hall meeting to address a congregation demanding information on Rev. Moore's unexpected departure. The atmosphere was highly charged! Congregants who spoke were overwhelmingly challenging the church's leadership. They questioned the process(es) leading to Rev. Moore's departure and weighed the costs of belonging to a multicultural, progressive church. Following the town hall meeting, it was clear to ASC leadership that the church needed to provide spaces for people to express their feelings as well as to talk with one another to try to address the confusion, unresolved issues and feelings of hurt and betrayal. Three meetings were held for this to happen:

- ***A Listening Circle*** Held Feb. 17, 2018. Facilitated by Rev. Rebecca Parker and Rev. Rob Keithan. This had more than 100 attendees.
- ***An ADORE meeting*** Held Feb. 20, 2018. Facilitated by the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Task Force. Approximately 120 people attended.
- ***Church Council meeting*** Held Mar. 11, 2018. Facilitated by the Church Co-Moderators, Brenda Barron and Patee Roper. More than 200 people attended.

The Racial Justice Collaborative played a vital role in assisting with planning, scheduling and promoting these and other relevant events. The Collaborative formed in the fall of 2017 with Rev. Rebecca Parker, Rev. Rob Keithan, Noel Tieszen and Paula Cole Jones to coordinate antiracism programming between Adult Spiritual Development, Social Justice, the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Team and ADORE. In December 2017, the new Co-Moderators, Brenda Barron and Patee Roper, joined the group. Each of the three meetings were planned with input from the collaborative in an effort to assess the needs and create a seamless progression of opportunities that did not replicate each other. A sermon entitled "Many Voices, One Spirit," was delivered on May 20, 2018 in reference to this collaboration. <http://www.all-souls.org/node/1952>

In addition, the Church Council organized a steering committee that worked on the design of the March 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. They collaborated with the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Team in compiling and sorting the tremendous amount of information in the congregational report on the outcome of the meetings.

## **Congregational feedback**

The three meetings resulted in 1600 pieces of feedback from participant responses to these questions:

### ***1. Listening Circle***

- How has the announced separation of Rev. Susan Newman Moore from All Souls impacted you personally?
- How do you feel the congregation has been impacted?

- What can you offer to help get us through?
- What values should guide us now?

## **2. ADORE**

- What concerns, interests or opportunities do you think should be addressed in order for ASC to be a healthy, vibrant multicultural community free of racism and oppression?

## **3. Church Council**

- Why did you initially come to All Souls? Why are you here today?
- What questions remain for you about what happened? How do you think we (the congregation) can obtain answers?
- Why are you here today?
- What changes do we wish to see? How should we as a congregation take ownership over that work?

All 1600 pieces of feedback were compiled in a report. This provides the basis for our transformation. The first step was to begin to understand the impact of the crisis by sorting all feedback into the categories in the table below. The results were presented in an April 17, 2018 meeting hosted by the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle Team. At that time, attendees were invited to review the 88 page report and to be a part of discussion groups according to the category of their interest.

## **CONGREGATIONAL FEEDBACK CATEGORIES**

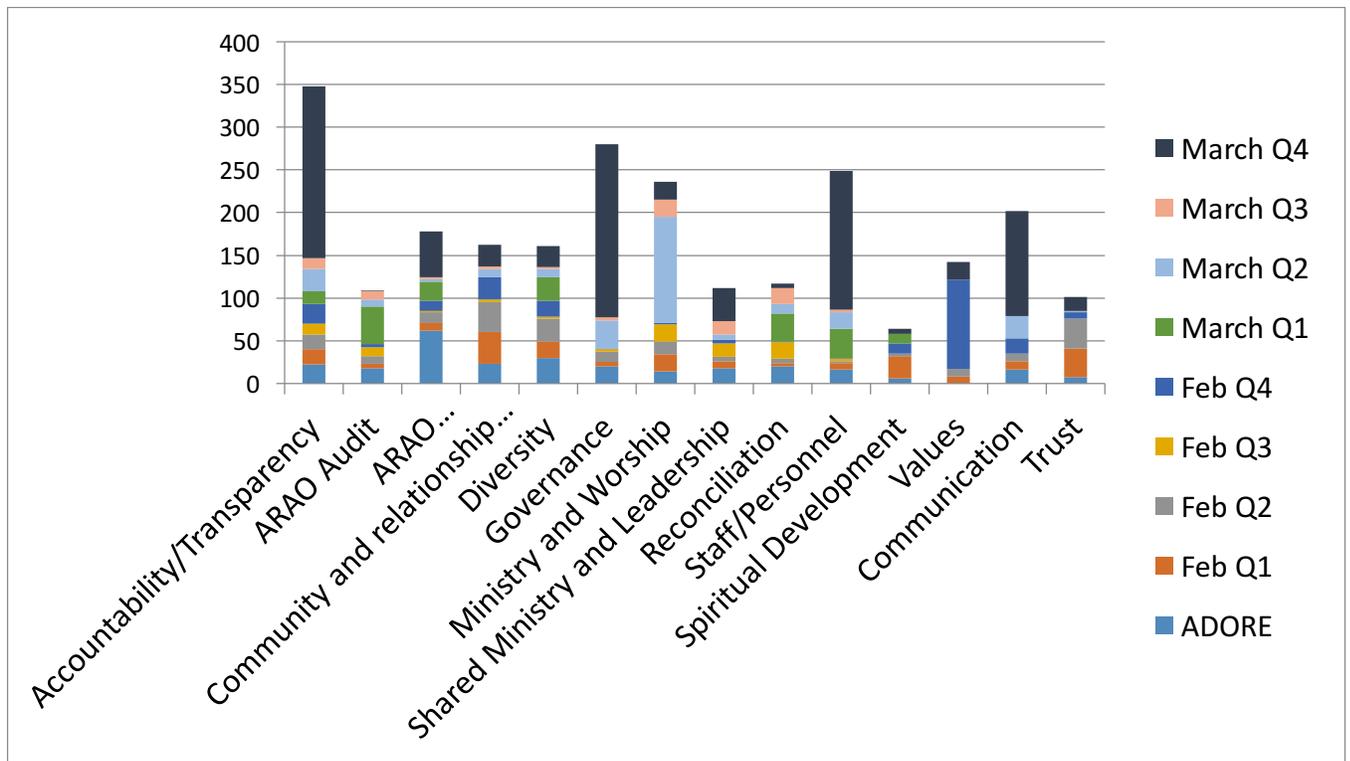


Chart courtesy of Tom Loke

Ten work groups formed in the spring to begin the next stage of the process which was having initial conversations on the results of the Report. The first iteration of these groups had varying numbers of members, from just a handful to more than ten.<sup>1</sup> With things slowing down for the summer, we did not have enough structure in place for all of the groups to be sustainable. By July, the Team decided to combine several of these work groups so that all would have a critical mass. Following that combination, the workgroups were later narrowed to five.

<sup>1</sup> The original workgroups were: Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Audit (8 members); Reconciliation/Trust (13 members); Community & Relationship (4 members); Diversity (7 members); Governance (10 members); Adult Spiritual Development (4 members); Spiritual Development (6 members); Shared Ministry and Leadership (5 members); Accountability/Transparency (4 members); Worship & Ministry (3 members).