

Looking back , looking forward, looking within” April 29, 2009
Verbal comments from Feedback Sunday

“The increased music and energy and enthusiasm in the music has been great!”

“there have been a good series of speakers”

It is great seeing kids and having them in the service. It is great that there is a highschool group. I want to see more of the kids!

There are resources available on the Midsouth district web page for involving kids. This includes packets of things that give kids stuff to do in the service.

I have enjoyed the speakers from Oxford.

The give away the plate program has been really good. It is especially good when we can have a person representing an organization present to tell about their work. That makes all of the difference!!!

Other music has been good too.. Ken Sizemore, Greg Johnson... all good.

Timing! It is really important to start on time and to finish on time. It is hard on the kids when we go late, and hard of folks who have other plans. If we don't start on time, we should still finish on time.

“Looking back , looking forward, looking within” Written comments from Feedback Sunday, April 29, 2009. Written comments compiled by Shanna Flashka.

Note: “+”= great stuff, let's do more

“√”= okay to do more

“--“= probably don't need to do more of this

Objectives of Sunday Services

a. Build community	+ (20)	√ (4)	— (0)
b. Intellectual stimulation	+ (18)	√ (5)	— (1)
c. Reflection	+ (12)	√ (8)	— (3)
d. Inspire reverence and awe or a sense of the divine	+ (8)	√ (11)	— (6)
e. Promote feelings of self-worth and individual dignity	+ (13)	√ (8)	— (3)
f. Provide a supportive environ/ for dev./sharing personal beliefs	+ (14)	√ (8)	— (1)
h. Show new paths for individual growth and change	+ (13)	√ (10)	— (1)
i. Spur individuals to act on their convictions	+ (10)	√ (12)	— (2)

Other important objectives:

Sharing with one another our experience, knowledge, viewpoint, soul (i.e., learning from each other)

Empower group social action

Categories of Programs

a. Intergenerational	+ (11) √(9) — (3)
b. Visiting UU minister	+ (12) √(9) — (3)
c. Community Voice	+ (14) √(9) — (1)
d. UU heritage or tradition	+ (7) √(14) — (2)
e. UUCO traditional services	+ (7) √(12) — (4)
<i>difference from (d)?</i>	
f. wisdom of many traditions	+ (18) √(5) — (0)

Other categories that would be important to you:

Arts experience, social action/issues

1. artistic/creative. 2/ This I Believe: sharing individual members' paths

Children's RE

Music

Specific elements of a Sunday service

Preparing an inviting space (e.g., flowers, furn. arrangement)	+ (12) √(11) — (2)
+ <i>Replace window treatments with something more attractive</i>	
+ <i>ask for a volunteer each week to bring objects of beauty</i>	
+ <i>space should reflect care and thought</i>	
Announcements	+ (8) √(16) — (1)
-- <i>submit in writing as enter; service leader read</i>	
+ <i>But would prefer they were shorter</i>	
Sharing joys and concerns	+ (13) √(10) — (2)
+ <i>brief and personal</i>	
√ <i>Is there a tactful way to limit discussions of physical conditions? Many people in the congregation deal with such things, so a <u>brief</u> mention (such as Marge's today) seemed very effective and appropriate to me. And I <u>do</u> want to know!</i>	
√ <i>But without the details and the option to leave out for a special speaker</i>	
Chalice lighting	+ (14) √(8) — (3)
+ <i>at every event</i>	
Readings	+ (18) √(5) — (2)
+ <i>variety</i>	
Responsive readings	+ (8) √(7) — (10)
-- <i>I really dislike these!</i>	
Group prayer	+ (5) √(7) — (13)
Silent reflection/prayer/meditation	+ (13) √(9) — (3)
Instrumental music	+ (17) √(7) — (1)
Singing	+ (18) √(6) — (1)
+ <i>(same as instrumental music) lot of volunteers, vary instruments, style, tempo</i>	
Speaker	+ (18) √(7) — (0)
Discussion	+ (16) √(8) — (1)
+ <i>More!</i>	
Children's participation	+ (10) √(15) — (0)
√ <i>occasional</i>	

√ *occasional*

√ *could we involve some of the children in a group music event at some point? Hmm...*

Closing circle + (22) √ (3) — (0)

+ *this could be enhanced somehow*

Coffee and visiting after the service + (8) √ (14) — (2)

√ *wish I had more time after service but mostly I have other things to do ☺*

Other input about service format:

I'd love to see more art on the back wall (where the kids' wood thing is)

Coffee before service is also very nice

√ *offering – we need nicer baskets, and a reverant moment.*

I get restless when 1) takes 30 minutes to get to meat of program, 2) speaker has no meat; is superficial

Often need more time for discussion. I would rather have this than the standard words at the beginning and the readings, especially when there is an invited speaker.

Sunday Program Topics

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| a. Christian or Jewish traditions | + (9) √ (8) — (5) |
| √ <i>but interesting when we relate it to our principles</i> | |
| √ <i>(Jewish is circled)</i> | |
| b. Creative and artistic activities | + (13) √ (7) — (3) |
| c. Current political events | + (5) √ (14) — (2) |
| d. Earth-centered traditions | + (10) √ (9) — (3) |
| e. Intergenerational holiday celebrations | + (13) √ (10) — (0) |
| f. Non-Western religions | + (13) √ (7) — (2) |
| h. Personal growth | + (13) √ (8) — (1) |
| i. Philosophical | + (14) √ (8) — (0) |
| j. Psychological perspectives on life's issues | + (10) √ (8) — (4) |
| k. Science and modern knowledge | + (16) √ (4) — (2) |
| l. Spiritual growth (define) | + (9) √ (9) — (3) |
| + <i>I see UU as providing a structure that allows "individual" spiritual growth in all its complexities and uniqueness</i> | |
| + <i>nurturing, exploring, and challenging a part of ourselves that feels connected to something greater than all of us. The "mystery." Something that challenges us beyond/outside our <u>intellect</u>.</i> | |
| √ <i>I don't know!</i> | |
| √ <i>not sure what this means to me!</i> | |
| + <i>not sure how to define it, but I know it when I see it!</i> | |
| m. Opportunities for acting on convictions | + (7) √ (13) — (2) |
| n. Perspectives on social issues | + (17) √ (5) — (0) |
| o. Gratitude/appreciation | + (12) √ (10) — (0) |
| p. UU perspectives and issues | + (10) √ (9) — (2) |

Might be more useful to have a survey where we rank these. They ALL sound important! ☺

Would like to see a service on:

Nature's awe. How science leads to reverence. Pat & Gail show spiders.

I like variety

1) History of the Jews in Kashmir. 2) Yoga. 3) Changing regional identities and inclusiveness. 4. Southern churches and social dominance.

Fundamental beliefs of the major world religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism) led by religious leaders of each group. These are needed to understand what each "traditional" religion offers. Given the strong Christian tradition in MS, it may be appropriate to invite a Baptist, Methodist, and Catholic to come speak.

I enjoy a variety of services that we already have.

More of "This I Believe"

Healing traditions of all philosophical perspectives.

An opportunity to grow in the tradition of being a congregant at UU

I would love to see more Earth-centered religions and Eastern religions services

Would like to do a service on:

Sharing art

1) History of the Jews in Kashmir. 2) Yoga

I could lead a service on ethnobotanical history of herbs and how the old ways have wisdom that should be passed on, from witches and herbalists to scientific fact. (Anjel)

Other UUCO Activities

Adult religious education	+ (9)	√ (7)	— (4)
+ <i>would like to see more of this</i>			
Children's religious education	+ (17)	√ (3)	— ()
Song practice	+ (6)	√ (11)	— (3)
+ <i>love singing before and during service</i>			
-- <i>but I like singing!</i>			
Denominational involvement (trips to G.A., UUA table in Grove)	+ (6)	√ (8)	— (6)
+ <i>this is so important so we see ourselves connected to a bigger movement</i>			
Fellowship (potlucks, bonfires, talent show, outings)	+ (18)	√ (1)	— (1)
+ <i>outdoors stuff</i>			
Social action/service activities	+ (11)	√ (4)	— (4)
Youth group	+ (15)	√ (3)	— (1)
+ <i>we don't see much of them and I wish we did; I know they are doing good things</i>			
Workshops	+ (7)	√ (9)	— (3)
+ <i>2 a year would be great – fall and winter</i>			

Retreat

+ (8) √ (8) — (3)

Other desired non-Sunday program activities:

We might consider a "small group" program if the interest is there. Ask Ross for details.

Book/film club

Outside service

Offers of Help

Offering a service (1)

Subjects:

Contributing readings (5) *Ross, Cris*

Contributing music (4)

Specifics: *guitar*

I can play piano and guitar-with advance notice so I can practice (Cris)

Help sing

(Christine left a ☺)

Bringing flowers or other items for chalice table (5)

Occasionally

I have quite a variety of herbs (Anjel)

Fixing coffee (1)

never

Hosting a visiting speaker (2)

Helping to clean up after a service (3)

Replace chairs, songbooks and other when needed

Other offers to help:

Occasional service leader; continued work on programming

What I'd like UUCO to accomplish:

Getting ourselves known in the community, perhaps by aligning with other churches in a service project.

Use chalice lighter funds to actually make our space more comfortable through insulated windows and attic insulation so that we can, efficiently, make our service comfortable for shirt sleeves year-round. (This was the aim of our grant proposal)

Solar panels on roof. Increase youth in youth group.

Don't worry so much about how we "should" be or what we "should" do. Trust, relax, allow creative ideas to take form and substance.

Continue growing the music program. This adds a lot to the services.

Staying in momentum around all the great things we're doing. Consider a social action committee that might write editorials and so on.

See more people using the space. The person holding the key can lock people out of participation in the community.

Create a foundation on which to have religious discussion. Without background and history on which to base and develop ideas, these ideas may not be particularly meaningful.

More activities focused on helping the community.

Continue to be here.

Continuing to be a welcoming alternative to local religious practices – and becoming more democratic in terms of the distribution of responsibilities (I worry about exhausting the leadership)

Get a large group together / Saturday to work on Habitat for Humanity house and get youth to build something for the yard (bench, table, etc.)

Enhanced programming

Earth Day celebration; food drive for the needy; planting a community garden.

I hope to bring more involvement in music to UUCO – more lively than just singing the hymns. I love the drums and shakers and would love to see us use those more often. I am always on the lookout for a cheap set!

Other thoughts:

Sometimes I am surprised at what I "take home" from a service and that's good.

Programs I most enjoyed: 8/17, 9/14, 9/21, 11/9, 11/23, 11/30, 12/21 (a real treat), 12/28, 1/4, 2/1, 2/15, 2/22, 3/8

I adore the new artwork. My favorite service ever was Tony Stringer's. Also love Rev. Whittemore. I really enjoy the traditional UU services and those that center around holidays. Beth's service on advent was enlightening. Let's find more holidays – we can all use extra joy!

Let's keep growing, in every way, and work on becoming better known and respected in the Oxford/University/Lafayette communities

Especially enjoyed Sarah Dan Jones, Linda Foshee and the Musical Winter Solstice Celebration. I really do enjoy music!

I have really appreciated the increased emphasis on music/singing. That's one way to create a spiritual space. I have also really enjoyed some of the guest speakers this year. Bravo!

Really good sermons: Tony Stringer, Sarah Dan Jones, LedaSwan, Robert Williams, Advent program

Let's have some meetings at Clear Creek

Each service by itself is thoughtful, but what do they represent collectively? Is there coherence from one Sunday to the next? I don't see it. This is much more difficult for UU than a "traditional"

religion because there are so many separate threads to be synthesized – and no one way to synthesize them without allowing each person to have their own path. Could services be organized around UU core values? Can it be shown how pieces of or whole religions reflect these values? Maybe a comparative religion theme?

I've really enjoyed coming on Sundays for the past months. Wish I could contribute more, but my time is very limited.

My favorite services this year were: Aug. 10-water service = allows everyone present to contribute and share something. Jan. 4-Living Waters = invite Will Howie back to give UUCO a progress report and update. Feb. 15-Journey of a Black Belt Agnostic = brought back memories of my husband, Raymond Prach, and how much he valued UUCO. NOTE: when I am not present on Sundays it is often because I am home with a sick child; my absence does not mean I am not interested!

Some O or √ depend on the knowledge of the presenters.

A great year in programming! Thanks, all you hard-working programmers. Favorite programs: our two African-American men speakers, among many others.

1) Great work, Programming committee! Thank you! 2) We might need to put more effort into starting on time each week. People will learn to get here on time. 3) Give-away-the-plate Sundays are a wonderful addition.

I would like time to think on the aspects of this survey to come up with creative approaches to our purpose and activities.

Good job on creating a very welcoming environment. I enjoyed Dr. Jawad's service.

I really have enjoyed the brief time I've been coming to the church and look forward to becoming a full member with my best friend Enku. I have the most profound respect and admiration for Pat and Gail, who have really helped me feel a part of the community. I enjoy tai chi on Tuesdays and look forward to taking part in more workshops, retreats, musical events, and potlucks. Anjel

I'm very happy and honored to be here – Thank you! My friend's husband is from Thailand and was a Buddhist monk for 9 years. I think he would be an excellent guest speaker to discuss Buddhism and he has expressed to me a willingness to do so. I (Christine) can contact him if there is interest!