

# **2018 University Congregational Church Survey**

## **Summary Report**

**Prepared by Rev. Paul Ellis Jackson**

**Utilizing data gathered by the Hartford Institute for Religious Research survey instrument**

**Dates of survey: March 11, 2018 to April 30, 2018**

**Report prepared on Wednesday, July 18, 2018**

During the fall of 2017, University Congregational Church's leadership voted to conduct a new survey on the attitudes, beliefs and expectations of our congregation. The most recent survey completed in this manner was in 2007 and it was thought that the timing was right to conduct a new one. The church had just celebrated its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary and key church metrics showed our congregation on a solid footing—indicators that it was a good time to gather this information and use it to plan for our future. This Summary Report is simply a “snapshot” of what I deemed the most pertinent results; there is more information to be gleaned from this treasure trove of data in the coming months.

### **Demographics**

We had a total of 130 responses to our survey request. This equates to 48% of the church's active membership. Not every question has the same response rate as not every participant answered all of the questions.

Over 67% of respondents have been active members of the church longer than 5 years. Only 8% of respondents are non-members and the remaining respondents, 23%, have been active members less than 5 years.<sup>1</sup>

Of the respondents, 35% were male and 65% were female. 75% were aged 65 years or older, 20% were between the ages of 35 and 64 and only 5% were under 34 years of age. 100% of respondents answered that their racial/ethnic background is white. 70% of respondents are currently married while 6% are divorced, 16% are widowed and 6% are in a committed relationship. 2% responded that they are single or never married.

63% of households responding report that currently no children are present in the household. 10% reported two or more adults with children present and 4% reported several adults in the same household. 24% of respondents said they lived alone. 90% of respondents report holding a college degree with 59% reporting post-graduate work or degree as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers may not add up due to rounding and also due to differing responses rates on each question.

62% of respondents are retired, 20% employed full-time and 13% employed part-time. 3% reported being full-time “house-persons” and one respondent each replied as either unemployed or a student (1.16%)<sup>2</sup> Of those who are working or retired 66% were employed in professional careers (teachers, doctors, architects, etc.) with the remaining in service or clerical fields. 20% of respondents stated they were self-employed or an independent business person.

70% reported living in the general area for over 20 years with 12% living here between 10 and 19 years. Only 5% have lived in the area less than one year. 67% of respondents reported that they were very unlikely to move out of the area in the next few years with 13% reporting they probably would not move and 14% thinking there was a 50/50 chance of moving. 6% felt they would either probably move or definitely move in the next few years.

44% of respondents drive more than 11 minutes to get to University Congregational Church with 5% driving more than 45 minutes. 51% live less than 10 minutes away.

27% of respondents reported that they were raised Methodist; 13% were raised Presbyterian; 11% were raised Roman Catholic; 10% were raised Baptist; 9% were raised in a Congregational tradition and 7% were raised Disciples of Christ. It’s important to note the diversity of answers in this sections with over 25 different faith traditions being represented.

## **Participation**

39% of respondents reported attending worship services four times a month or more; 40% attending about 2 or 3 times a month; 7% reporting about once a month and 6% reporting once or twice every three month. 7% of respondents stated they only attend once or twice a year with one respondent stating they never attend worship.

35% of respondents stated they hold no additional membership or duties on any church boards or groups such as Deacons or the Church Council. 26% stated they serve on one board or group; 24% stated they serve on 2 boards or groups; and 15% stated they served on 3 or more boards and/or groups.

36% of respondents stated that their involvement in the church has increased over the last few years with 26% stating it had decreased. 38% reported that their involvement remained the same. Of those reporting an increase in participation, 73% stated that it was due to accepting a board or other responsibility within the church. 22% reported increasing involvement due to having more time available. 6% reported more involvement because of better health or a stronger faith, and 27% reported increased involvement because they had a more positive attitude towards University Congregational Church. Of those giving a reason for a decrease in their participation, 38% stated it was due to health problems while 35% reported less time available. 15% stated that it was due to a more negative attitude towards the church.

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<sup>2</sup> Each question had differing response rates. 1.16% was arrived by dividing one person by the 86 responses to this question.

## **Membership and visitor invitations**

69% of respondents reported asking one or more persons/families to attend a worship service during the past year. 31% reported inviting no one. 69% of respondents stated that one or more of their closest friends attend this church with 32% stating none of their closest friends attend here.

## **Worship and theology questions**

There is significant data to be assessed in this section of the survey. Robin and I will be working through this in the coming weeks—I only offer a very broad look at a few of the questions. The robust information provided in this section will help steer Robin's and my work in the coming years regarding our sermon topics and our worship style.

Regarding our worship together, the overwhelming response is that we do most things right. Of the things that we could do better; encouraging our members to act more on the intersection of our faith and social, political and economic issues received the greatest amount of attention (significant responses in multiple questions). Providing more Christian Education programs for both children and adults received a request for more emphasis as well (again, significant responses across multiple questions).

Our survey reported high positive responses (85%) to helping each other out in times of trouble and also very positive responses (88%) to the current morale of our church membership being high.

96% of respondents feel that our church's identity is one with which they feel comfortable while 95% have a clear understanding of what our church stands for. 80% of respondents feel that an effective effort was made to instruct them in our church's mission. 90% of respondents have a strong sense of belonging to our congregation while 10% do not. 91% of respondents said that being at University Congregational Church has made a difference in their spiritual life.

100% of respondents reported being either satisfied or very satisfied with the music at University Congregational Church. 99% reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the entire worship experience (excluding music). 98% percent reported that their spiritual needs are being met in worship.

81% of respondents are happy with our current service time of 10:30 a.m. while 8% would prefer a 10 a.m. start and 8% would prefer an even earlier start. Only 3% would like to see an 11:00 a.m. or later service time.

89% are satisfied or very satisfied with our current children's programs while 25% expressed dissatisfaction with our youth programs. It must be noted that University Congregational Church currently has no young people fitting this age criteria so it must be assumed that the dissatisfaction is with the fact that we don't have youth to participate in youth programs.

There is a great amount of data concerning the content of our Christian Education programs that Robin and I and the CE board will be analyzing in the coming weeks. There is also data concerning the stewardship of the church that will be forwarded to the appropriate members.

In closing, 83% of respondents said it was the minister that originally attracted them to University Congregational Church while 76% say that's one of their primary reasons for remaining in fellowship. 74% say that our music program originally attracted them and 88% say that is one of the primary reasons they remain (numbers don't add up because respondents could choose more than one answer). Obviously, we have much to be proud of in this community—much to celebrate—and much to build upon. Our shared future looks very bright indeed.

--Rev. Paul Ellis Jackson, Associate Minister