

First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto

Congregational Survey 2025

Why did we do the survey?

First U is involved in a search process for a new minister

The Ministerial Search Team wanted to gather information about

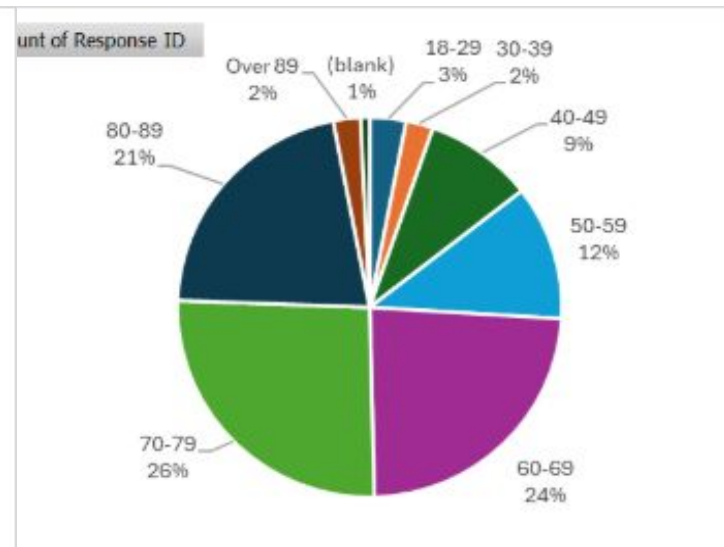
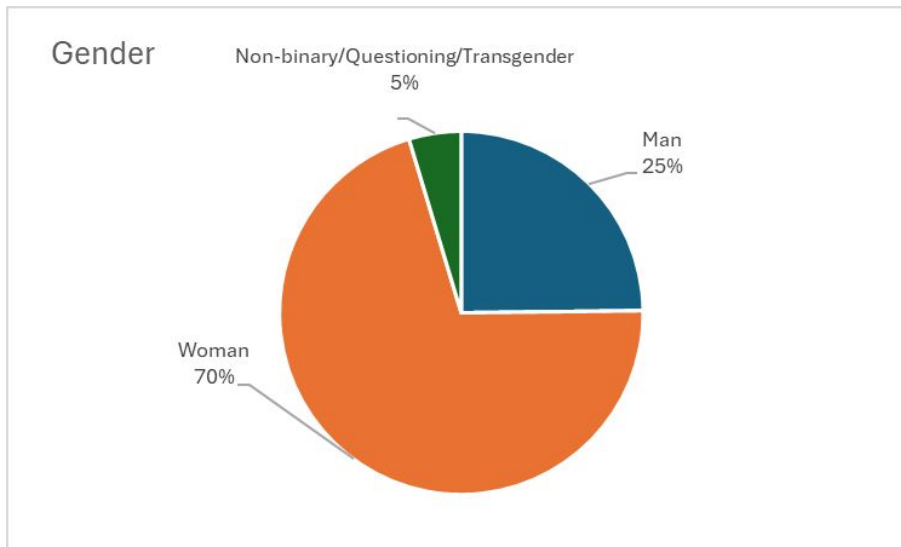
- members/friends and their experience at FirstU
- their hopes and dreams for a new minister

so they can describe our congregation fully to potential candidates and make the “right fit” with our new minister

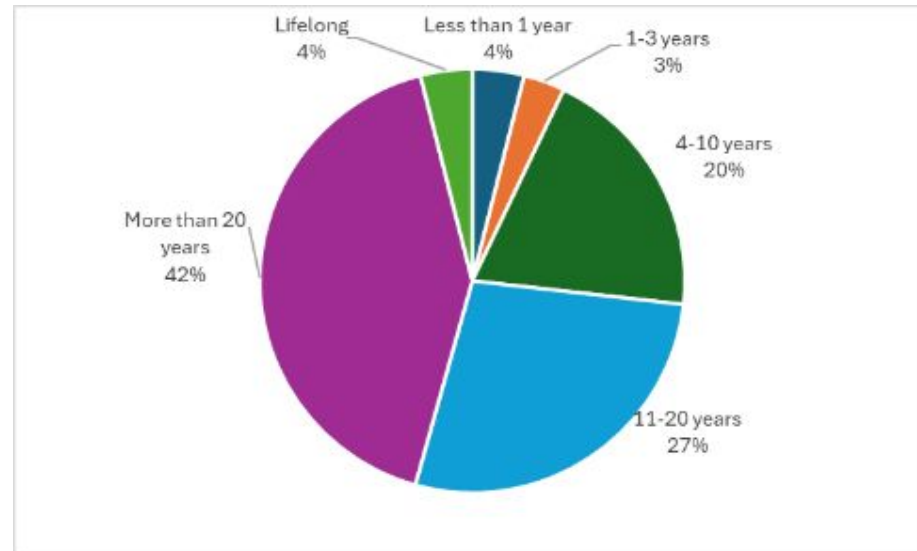
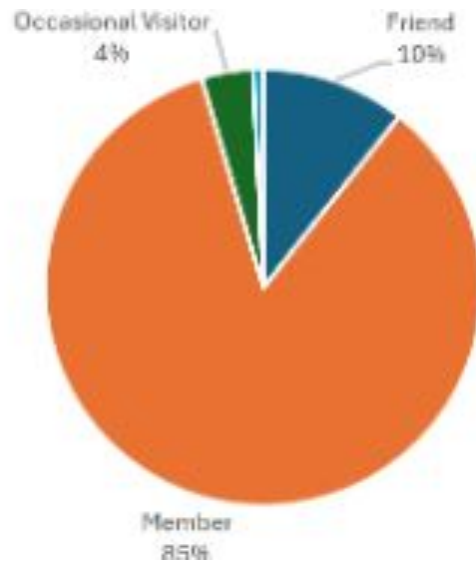
The survey was completed

Mostly by women

who were most frequently
in the upper age brackets

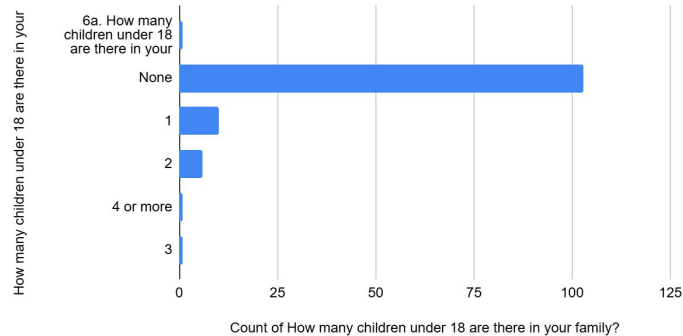


Most were long-term members of the congregation

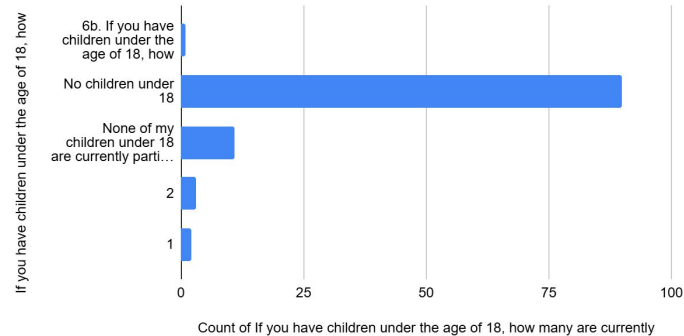


Number of children in respondents' families participating in Religious Education

Count of How many children under 18 are there in your family?

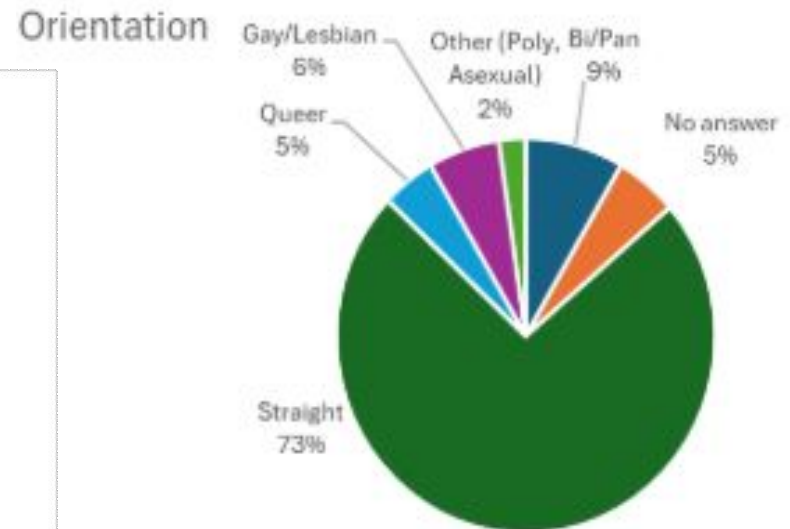
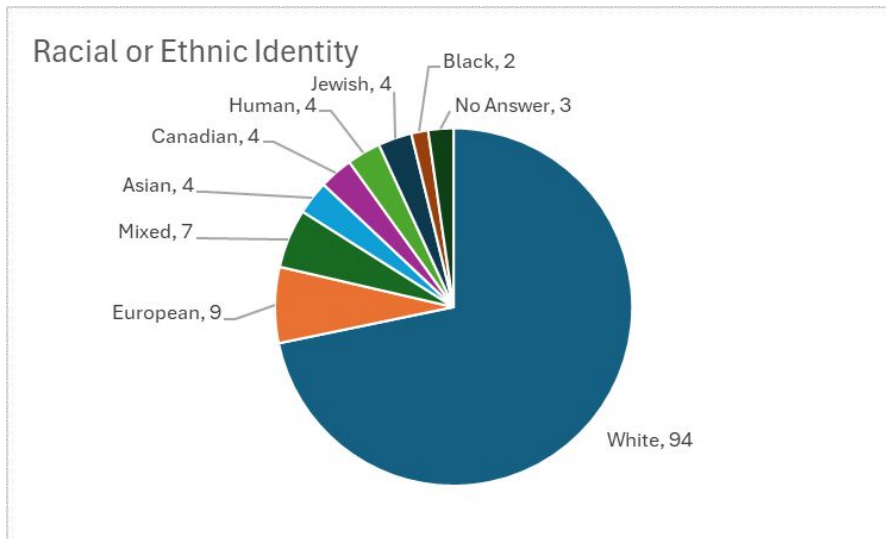


Count of If you have children under the age of 18, how many are currently participating in the Religious Education program



Results reflect the decline in numbers of children in our RE program since online services were the norm during the pandemic and our long period of having different meeting places and/or online Sunday Services.

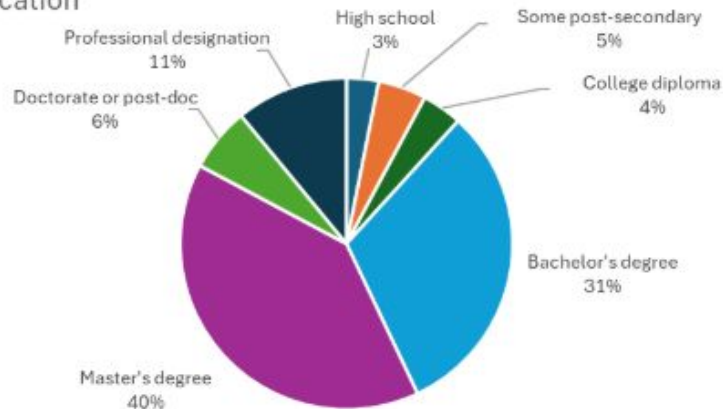
Racial/Ethnic and Sexual Identities of Respondents



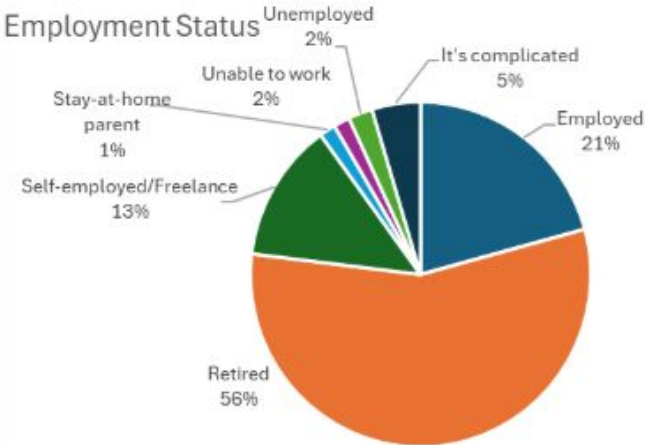
The first graph does not distinguish between racial and ethnic identity, and being based on an open-ended question, shows a mix of racial, ethnic and other descriptions of identity

Education Level and Employment Status: Education level was relatively high among respondents. Many were retired, and approximately 1/3 employed or self-employed.

Education

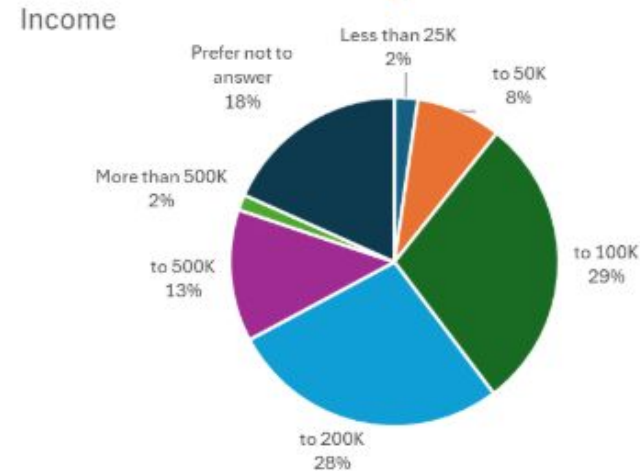


Employment Status



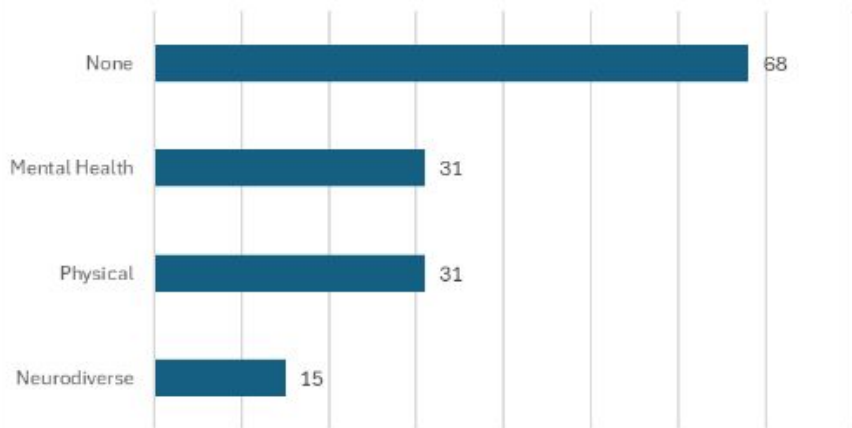
Total annual household income

- Household Income varied widely
- Most frequent categories were in the middle range, i.e. \$50K- \$100K and \$100K to \$200K

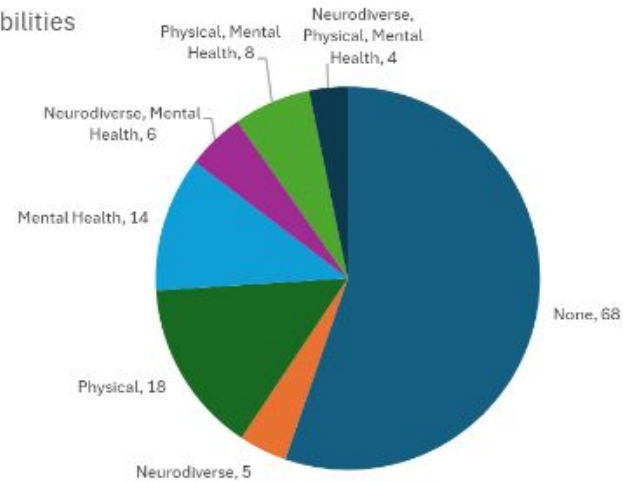


When asked about the presence of disabilities, some respondents reported the experience of physical, mental health issues or neurodiversity

Disabilities



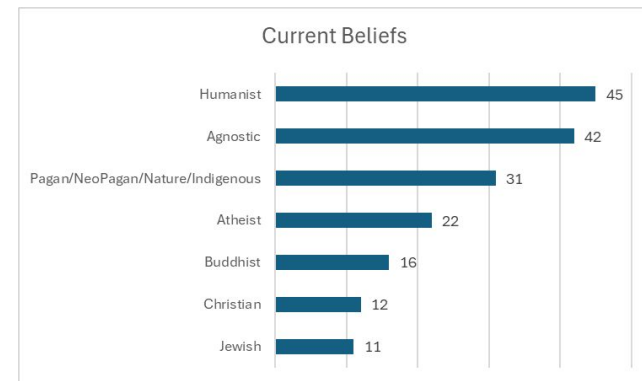
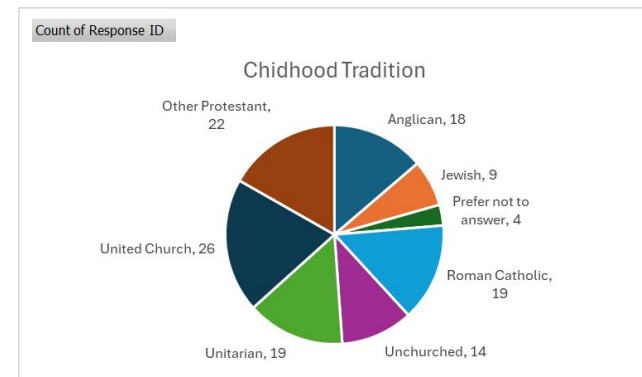
Disabilities



Religious/Spiritual Background and Current Beliefs

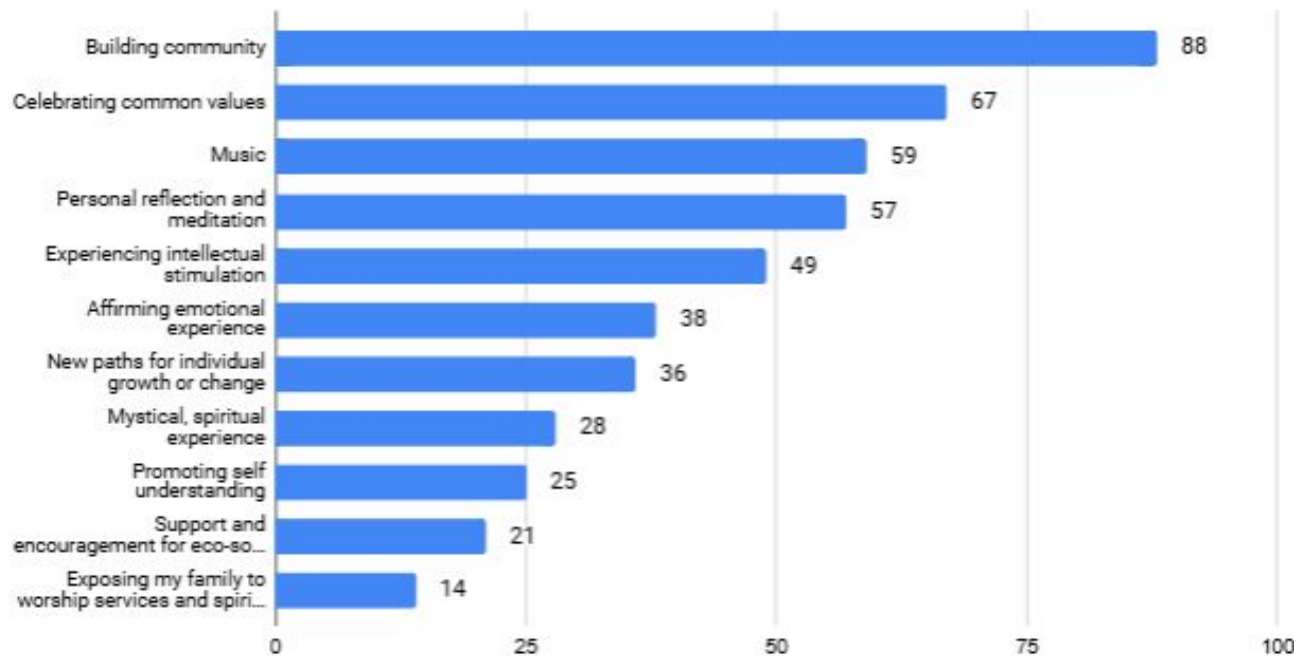
Respondents were asked whether they had grown up UU or in another religious tradition. Most had been raised in Christian churches.

In addition to identifying as a Unitarian Universalist they also identified as having other beliefs. Most frequently they were Humanists and Agnostic. Multiple answers were allowed.



Why do people attend Worship services?

Most important reasons for attending Worship services



What brought people to First U?

- Religious education for their kids
- Seeking Spiritual Community
- Thought-provoking sermons
- The company of others with common values
- Absence of dogma or credo
- Ministers promoting Unitarianism, its values and principals

And what keeps them coming back?

- A sense of belonging (including by members of minority groups)
- Feeling no pressure to conform
- Decades-long friendships
- Opportunities to volunteer
- First U's commitment to social justice
- Zoom discussions after the service

Where could our congregation improve?

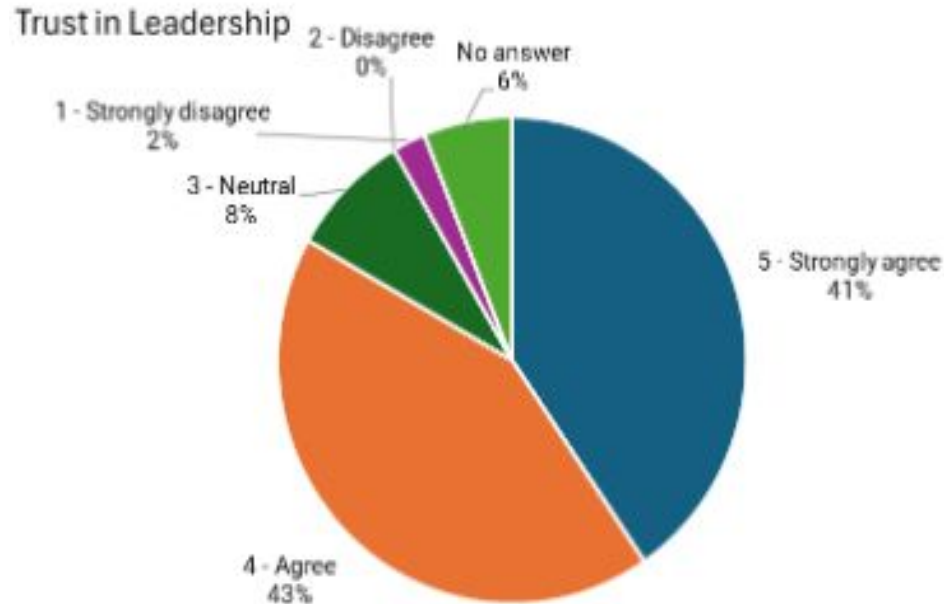
- A larger, more diverse membership
- More young folks and families
- More varied, streamlined services
- More contemporary music, less emphasis on traditional hymns
- More fundraising activities & discussion about congregational finances

Where could our congregation improve? (p 2)

- More social activities
- More membership participation (welcoming and informing newcomers)
- Open house events to introduce our congregation to Oakwood Vaughan
- Sermons linking of Unitarian history with social justice and environmental actions

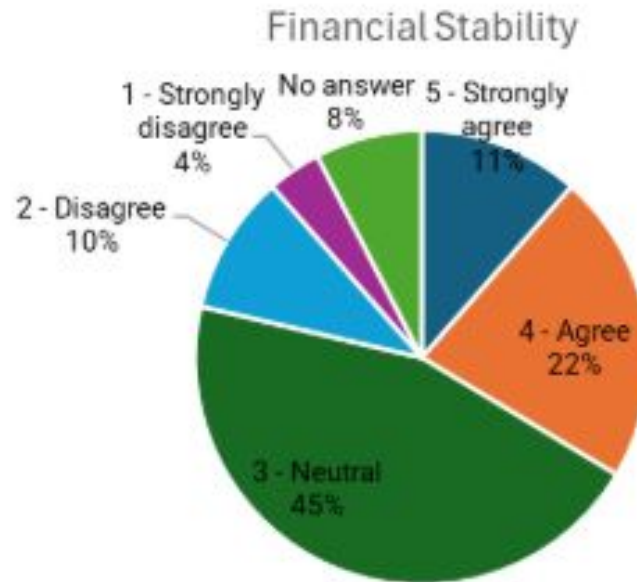
Trust in First's Leadership

There was a high level of trust in the leadership of the congregation.



Feelings about First U's Financial Stability

- Responding to the statement: I have concerns about our congregation's financial stability, about 1/3 expressed concern.



Looking ahead

Asked "What does First U need most now, in order to thrive in the years to come?" people mentioned:

- Growth in membership, particularly young families, with more racial/ethnic diversity
- Financial sustainability
- Spiritual vitality
- Community connection
- Stability in leadership

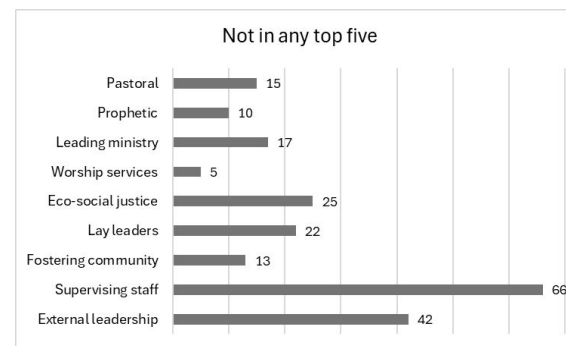
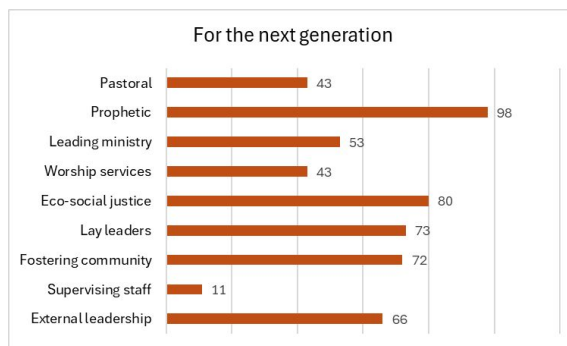
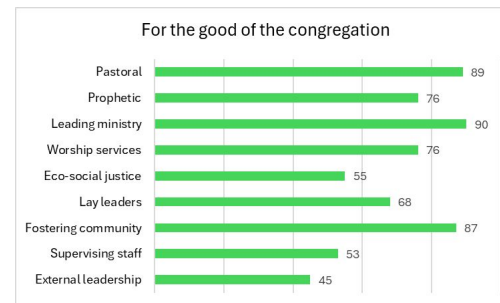
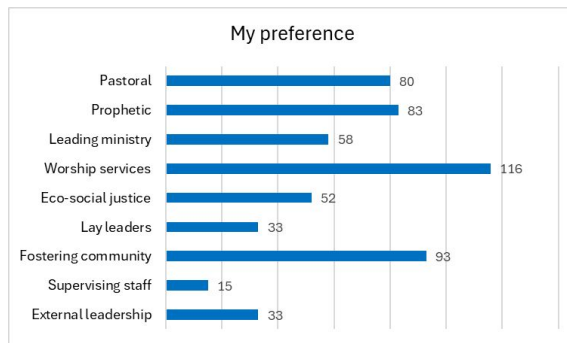
We've been through many changes in recent years. How do you envision us moving forward?

- Settling into our new community, e.g.
 - Hosting public events at 473 Oakwood
 - Getting involved in local events and places
 - Encouraging volunteer work
- Having more intergenerational activities
- Continuing to have inspiring sermons and incredible Sunday services that are core to our identity
- Rekindling our congregation's sense of community

Thoughts and Hopes about our New Minister

- The qualities highlighted in people's responses when asked what qualities they would like to see in our new minister were
 - Strong leadership for members and staff
 - Great communication (listening and articulating)
 - Inspiring sermons, making us think, challenging us
 - Compassion, and emotional intelligence
 - Humour and fun

Varying patterns were seen when people were asked to consider the possible roles of our future minister and their importance in different contexts.



People feel it would be energizing and renewing if a minister...

- Is inspiring, outgoing and creative, engaged with us and with the wider community
- Gives thought-provoking sermons that go beyond the obvious and leave people energized for the week ahead
- Acts as a public face of the congregation in OV and beyond
- Builds trust, encourages social justice engagements, and models UU values
- Balances prophetic vision, intellectual depth and compassion, while fostering meaningful spiritual growth
- Brings stability and long-term engagement

Summary/Conclusions

As in the congregation, most respondents were older, well-educated, female long standing members who attend Sunday Services regularly

There was a wish for a new minister who can challenge and inspire us, and re-build the sense of stability since the long period of transitions in location, method of meeting, and ministerial leadership

There was a strong emphasis on community, both our traditional strong sense of community at First U, and a wish to become integrated into our new neighbourhood in Oakwood Vaughan

There was a wish for new members, especially young families. Recovery from the decline in numbers of children in the RE program since the pandemic and our hiatus after leaving our former home.