

# First U Congregational Survey 2025

## Key Findings

### What Brings People to First U and Keeps Them Here

Respondents consistently describe First U as their spiritual home and chosen family, a place where they can grow without dogma, raise children with a liberal religious education, and engage in meaningful social justice. Strong music, inspiring sermons, and deep friendships are central to this sense of belonging. Members value intellectual and emotional nourishment, intergenerational connections, and being part of a community that reflects their values, e.g. inclusivity, justice, and compassion.

### What First U needs now

Respondents identified several things First U needs now, to grow stronger in our new home, and to thrive:

- Spiritual vitality – strong worship, inspiring leadership, and authentic engagement with UU values. Sunday services with some variability, including some that draw on Unitarian history and connect more directly to justice and environmental action.
- Membership growth and diversity – attracting more young adults, families, children, and members reflecting the cultural, racial, and social diversity of our city.
- Community connection – becoming well-integrated into Oakwood–Vaughan and known as a welcoming place. Encouraging more members to volunteer in greeting, hospitality, and outreach to the surrounding community; creating newcomer pathways such as post-service info sessions, Open Houses, and social activities.
- Financial transparency and sustainability – clear communication about finances; more creative fundraising opportunities.
- Music program – continue strong music program, while sometimes blending traditional hymns with more contemporary and diverse musical styles.
- Stability and leadership – a settled minister and cohesive volunteer base to guide continuity.

## **Moving Forward Together**

Respondents see the coming years as a time of rebuilding trust, grieving losses, and re-establishing vibrancy after long disruptions.

Priorities include:

- Rekindling community bonds through social gatherings, intergenerational activities, and honest reflection on who we are now.
- Settling into our new building at 473 Oakwood and making it a visible, welcoming centre for the community, and a public face of Liberal Religion; establishing partnerships with local leaders, interfaith groups, social service agencies, and businesses.

## **Qualities Sought in Our New Minister**

Across all responses, these qualities stand out:

- Inspirational Preaching and Spiritual Depth - sermons that challenge, move and guide us intellectually, emotionally and spiritually
- Strong, Compassionate Leadership – balancing vision and organization, with integrity, humour, and the ability to support staff, volunteers, and lay leaders
- Being warm, approachable, and visible both within the congregation and in the wider neighbourhood
- Being a voice on justice
- Providing stability after our long transitional period

## **In Summary**

The congregation is proud of our heritage and eager for renewal. To grow and thrive, First U needs a settled minister who is both spiritually inspiring and outward-looking—someone who can attract new members, deepen connections, model inclusivity, and provide stability and vision. Members felt that this leadership will help First U move confidently into our next chapter.