

# What gives life to our faith?

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Overview and Summary of the  
*Gathered Here* Initiative

General Assembly, 2013



# Session Agenda

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- BRIEF high-level summary of Gathered Here design
- Validation and amplification of the “positive core”
- Implications for the future
- Closing reflections



# First, a story...





## *Gathered Here Purpose*

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- To engage thousands of Unitarian Universalists, within and beyond congregations, in conversations about
  - What “gives life” to our faith when we are at our best
  - Our hopes, dreams, and aspirations for Unitarian Universalism’s future
- For use by UUA Board for future decisions about “ends”, and UUA Staff for programs and services, including ongoing stewardship and development
- Perhaps most important, the grassroots conversations forged or strengthened relationships



# Who Did We Hear From?

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- Reported conversations:
  - 70 Community Conversations
  - 122 One on One Conversations
  - 1200 individual participants
- More participated ... no summary sheets



# Historically Marginalized Participants

- 25% Youth or Young Adults
- 15% identified as NOT "White, European American/ and/or Anglo American"
- 16% identified as GBL, 3% as Transgender or Genderqueer
- 21% identified as having "visual, hearing, mobility, psychiatric, intellectual and/or other disability"
- 7% were not currently affiliated with a congregation



# *Meaning Making*

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- Six person, max mix team
- Pre-work: each person read 1/3 of the 160 summary sheets
- Meeting Design:
  - Conduct **narrative analysis** of stories and themes
  - **Reexamine and validate** findings through the lens of historically marginalized respondents
  - Articulate “**Positive Core**” and collective **Vision Statement**
  - Identify **supporting stories, quotes, and visions** of the future



# The *Positive Core* of Unitarian Universalism

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- Conditions or qualities that *give life to our faith*
- Gleaned from episodes in our history *when we were at our best*
- If *consciously replicated*, these conditions will enhance our vitality ... create similar life-giving results





## *We are at our best when we ...*

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- Grow into our best selves and honor the divine in each person
- Practice “*spiritual justice*”: justice-making, grounded in faith and worship
- Embrace fellow travelers within and beyond our faith, building community together
- Proactively invite people to share themselves and their gifts



## *We are at our best when we ...*

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- Have such a strong sense of our religious purpose and identity that we **must** act on it
- Covenant together to create sustained relationships across all ages and cultures
- Transcend geographic, national, and language barriers
- Experience spiritual depth, individually and collectively



# Interview

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- Gather in groups of 3 or 4
- Share your responses to the interview question
- Positive Core elements are described on the bottom of the interview guide
- *15 minutes total*



## Imagine ....

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It's ten years from today. The Unitarian Universalism that you imagined back in 2012 is now a reality. All of your *highest and best aspirations* for our faith have come true. Together, UUs have taken action to fulfill our *most positive potential*.

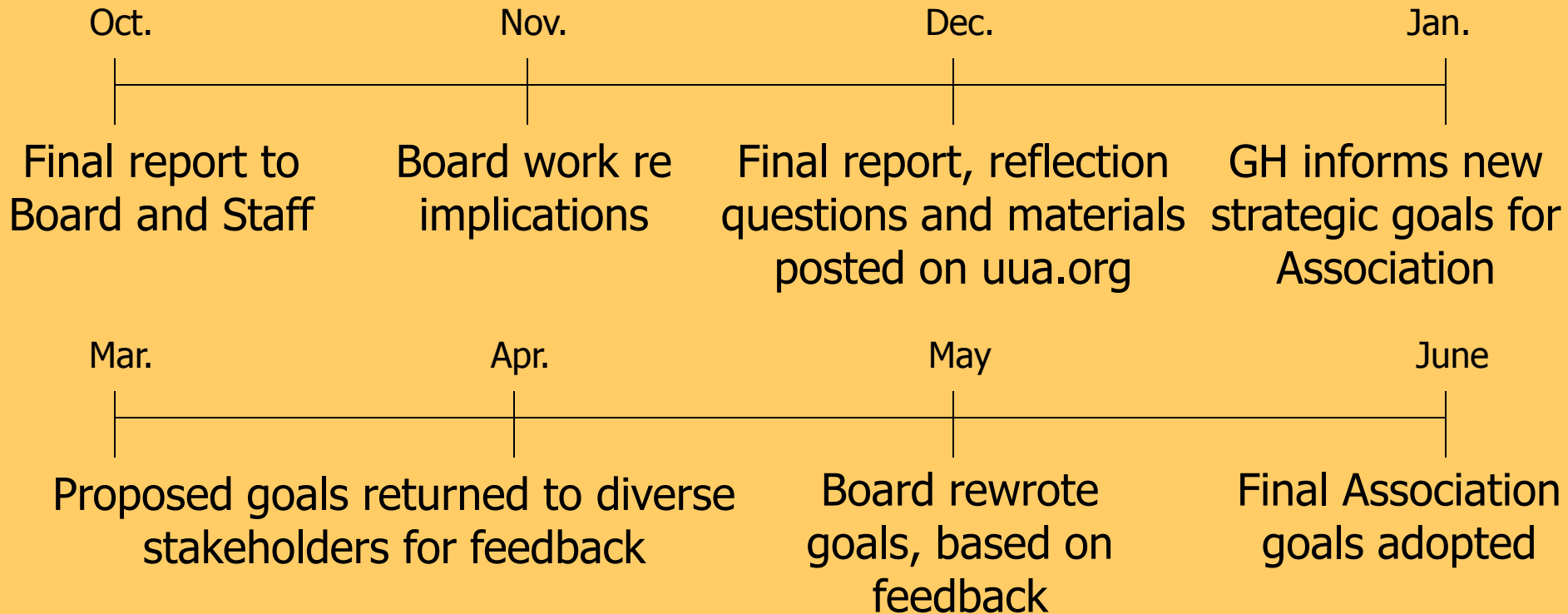
***What do you see?***



*We Unitarian Universalists envision a life filled with compassion for all, shared in beloved community, and lived in a just world. We commit ourselves to pursuing this vision faithfully, passionately, and humbly. We invite all who share our vision to join us in this spiritual journey.*



# ... and *then* what happened?





## For more information...

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- *Gathered Here* report, reflection questions, original materials, and links to new strategic goals:

[www.uua.org/vision/gathered](http://www.uua.org/vision/gathered)

- *Gathered Here* and *Appreciative Inquiry* details:

[amanda@positivechange.org](mailto:amanda@positivechange.org)

- Board strategic planning details:

[llaskowski12@comcast.net](mailto:llaskowski12@comcast.net)