



Multicultural Ministries Sharing Project

Executive Summary

The Unitarian Universalist Association's Multicultural Ministries Sharing Project was launched in July 2013 to solicit input through a survey from Unitarian Universalists (UUs) historically marginalized by ability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race, and/or ethnicity about their unique experiences and ministry needs within Unitarian Universalism.

The focus of this project is to help congregational leaders and Unitarian Universalist Association staff understand where we are now and what we need to be well-equipped to meet the ministry needs of people seeking a liberal religious home in the 21st century.

We started off with a detailed survey, which we were pleased to see elicited responses from approximately 1,500 people. Following a preliminary review of the survey results, Sharing Circle conversations involving sixty-five people randomly-selected from the respondents offered an opportunity to delve more deeply into the big questions raised by the survey.

KEY FINDINGS

Contextualizing the Survey: Demographic Highlights

- Respondents face societal discrimination every day, including, but not limited to, slurs and jokes, poor service in retail establishments, rejection by family or friends, and being unwelcome at a religious organization
- Respondents are highly educated, although financial status is low considering the high levels of education
- Mental health issues rank highest of all disabilities identified
- Bisexuals represent a significant portion of the population

Priorities Expressed

- Building multicultural community is the highest priority
- Economic justice should be the top UU social justice priority for the next five years

Spiritual/Religious Needs

- Religion is important in respondents lives yet UU involvement is relatively recent, with a significant number joining in the last ten years
- Spiritual needs are largely unmet by congregations
- Grief is the number one reason for seeking pastoral care/support
- The majority of parents in the survey who have children have had positive Religious Education (RE) experiences

People Living with Disabilities: Responses about Congregational Life

- The primary concern raised by people with disabilities of all types is that they cannot participate fully in congregational life
- Microaggressions and feelings of being different are regularly experienced by people with disabilities

- Although physical/emotional threats are not common, people with disabilities still experience them
- A majority people with disabilities in the survey attend congregations that have welcoming facilities and resources
- Close to half of congregations attended by people with disabilities in the survey are welcoming to them

LGBTQ People: Responses about Congregational Life

- LGBTQ people feel physically safe in our congregations
- Transgender people experience higher incidences of microaggressions and feeling different from others in their congregations than people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer (LGBQ)
- The majority of LGBTQ respondents in the attend congregations that have gender-neutral bathrooms
- The majority of these congregations have LGBQ-inclusive policies and procedures and use inclusive language in worship
- Less than half of these congregations have transgender-inclusive policies and procedures and use inclusive language in worship
- LGBTQ people think congregations should have education for all ages that is inclusive of LGBTQ issues but the majority of congregations do not offer LGBTQ-inclusive education
- Those who have experienced the Welcoming Congregation Program consider it to be effective. For a significant number of LGBTQ people, the fact that their congregation is a Welcoming Congregation impacted their decision to visit for the first time
- The Beyond Categorical Thinking Program helps congregations be more open to calling LGBTQ ministers

People of Color/People Marginalized by Race/Ethnicity: Responses about Congregational Life

- People of color and other people marginalized by race/ethnicity consistently experience microaggressions, tokenization, and invisibility in their congregations
- The majority of people of color and other people marginalized by race/ethnicity in the survey attend congregations that are welcoming and inclusive in their language
- The majority of congregations attended by people of color and other people marginalized by race/ethnicity are not racially or ethnically diverse
- People of color and other people marginalized by race/ethnicity would like their congregations to be more active in social justice issues that impact people of color communities
- Close to half of congregations attended by people of color and other people marginalized by race/ethnicity in the survey regularly incorporate multicultural elements and experiences into worship

The Multicultural Growth and Witness staff group, of which the Multicultural Ministries staff group is a part, hopes that congregations and other UU communities will be inspired to use the Sharing Project Report to engage dialogue about how they can enhance their ministries to UUs who share the identities and experiences highlighted in this report. We also look forward to partnership and collaboration with UU covenanted communities to make Unitarian Universalism a spiritual community "where all people are welcomed as blessings and the human family lived whole and reconciled."ⁱ

For more information and the full Sharing Project report, visit www.uua.org/sharingproject

ⁱ Unitarian Universalist Leadership Council