



Gathered Here Final Report: Summary

Following is a high-level summary of 1200 One on One and Community Conversations that took place during 2011 and 2012.

The Positive Core of Unitarian Universalism

The Positive Core describes conditions or qualities that give life to our faith. Its elements have been gleaned from participants' stories of times when we (Unitarian Universalists) have been at our very best. If we consciously replicate these elements, we will enhance our vitality and open the door for similarly life-giving results in the future.

To be clear, it is not necessary for all of the elements of this Positive Core to be present in order for an experience to be transformational. But in general, the more elements that are present at a given time, the more vitality we are likely to unleash.

We are at our best when we ...

- **Grow into our best selves and honor the divine in each person.** Taking the time to respect, connect with, and value other people is one of the spiritual practices that we UUs affirm. When we see another person as “real,” we help them connect with their inherent worth and dignity and ensure that this connection is reflected back to them. We also open ourselves to be changed.
- **Practice spiritual justice: justice-making grounded in faith and worship.** As a general rule, UUs are strongly committed to social justice and social action work; but we are at our best when, emboldened by faith, we do the *religious* work of building the world that we dream of. Through worship, meditation, prayer, and other spiritual practices, we prepare ourselves to engage in social justice and social outreach in a faithful manner, practicing habits of

gentleness, compassion, humility, and expansiveness. When faithfully practiced, spiritual justice provides safety and respect to others, while making us more open, vulnerable, and receptive.

- **Embrace fellow travelers within and beyond our faith, building community together.** Commitment to both invitation and spiritual partnership logically flow from our principles. They are important to our sense of identity and to how we engage with the world. But this commitment often refers to ways in which we invite people to join “us,” rather than expanding our definition of membership to include a community of all like-spirited, like-hearted, and like-minded travelers.
- **Proactively invite people to share themselves and their gifts.** Always and in every setting, we recognize each person’s unique gifts, talents, hopes, and dreams; and we regularly find ways to engage those gifts to support one another, strengthen our movement, and give form to our vision of beloved community.
- **Have such a strong sense of our religious purpose and identity that we must act on it.** Even when personal cost is involved, we hold tight to our religious purpose, persevering against the odds to do all that we can to make real what our early forbears might have described as “the kingdom of heaven on earth.” We do it because we must: because *not* doing it is not an option.
- **Covenant together to create sustained relationships across all ages and cultures.** Within our communities, we consciously covenant to live respectfully and well. In so doing, to learn how to live well with those outside of our communities. Our commitment to covenant gives us courage to compassionately confront everything from misunderstandings to outright prejudice.
- **Transcend geographic, national, and language barriers.** We reach across borders with open hearts: to form new relationships, to serve, to learn, and to make the world a fairer and more just place.
- **Experience spiritual depth, individually and collectively.** Our extended, repeating, structured time together enables us to develop a deep sense of spiritual identity and connection with the faith. Through all we do, we form intimate, respectful, unconditionally loving relationships while engaging in worship, spiritual discovery, and powerful rituals.

Possibilities for the Future

Some of the repeating patterns that participants articulated, when asked to envision the future of our faith, are below. They have been clustered and listed in order of frequency, along with supporting quotes from selected participants.

We are seeking ...

- **More spiritual justice work.** We should *“spread our faith through evangelical endeavors, encouraging everyone to be willing to be changed by their experiences.”*
- **Growth and increased visibility for the faith.** *“I want to see a physical, recognized, supported, and visible liberal religious congregation within average commuting distance of every single person in this country.”*
- **Enhanced opportunities for spiritual growth and development.** We want *“transformative worship, woven through our days,”* further incorporating international traditions, family camps, body-centered traditions, multi-media and other forms of shared awareness.
- **Partnership within and outside of the faith.** *“Reach out to new groups and ideologies, find shared interests with other faith traditions,”* and take bold steps to collaborate locally, nationally and internationally that expand our capacity for good.
- **Multiculturalism and intergenerational support.** *“Create accountable and meaningful national structures for UUs of color, youth and young adults, and older people. All of these groups talk and are connected. Nobody is isolated, or siloed.”*
- **Political awareness.** Form a UU political action committee; coordinate political action on a national basis; and form UU institutes and think tanks, like the religious right, but involving some of our best thinkers and influential people. Support more UUs in holding political office.
- **New Models of stewardship.** *“Make stewardship more communal, vs. congregationally based. Consider fundraising partnerships, where congregations raise funds in relationship to other communities. Share our resources in ways that more closely approach an indigenous philosophy of ownership.”*

Our Shared Vision for Unitarian Universalism

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.

Closing

Visit uua.org/gatheredhere to download a copy of the complete 27-page Gathered Here report, which includes stories and multiple quotes from participants. This web site also contains both Reflection Questions (pertaining to the findings), and downloadable materials that you and your community can use to continue Gathered Here conversations on a grassroots basis.

Thank you for your ongoing interest and participation in Gathered Here.