

April 2008

Dear UCUCF Families,

As many of you know, a small group recently formed to examine how well our church is meeting the needs of families. The overall question guiding our work is, "How can UCUCF better support families and strengthen itself as a family-friendly congregation?" Our initial step in finding an answer to this question is to forward the attached survey to you. Many of the specific questions on the survey were inspired by written and verbal feedback received from parents in our congregation. Our goal is to hear from *all* of you so that we can better understand what families experience as members of this church community. Our small group represents diverse viewpoints, and it is our prayer that we can listen deeply to one another and to all of you, remembering that we are all beloved members of God's family.

As you reflect on the family friendliness of our church, we invite you to consider two of the eleven priorities adopted by the congregation in 2004 after a year-long discernment and planning process. These priorities were intended to guide the life of the congregation for a five-year period, ending in 2009. To review the entire list of priorities, please use this link:

<http://www.ucucc.org/aboutus/Priorities.htm>.

Ø **Sunday morning worship and education for all ages**

Because worship and education nurture Christian discipleship, make both intergenerational worship and Christian education for all ages central to our time together on Sunday mornings. Change our current Sunday morning schedule to offer one sanctuary service, a chapel service and an education hour for all.

Ø **Family-friendly church**

Be a family-friendly church where all members are encouraged and given opportunities to involve themselves in the lives of children and youth, and programs are designed so that parents, children, youth, adults and elders are welcomed and encouraged in all areas of church life.

From the dialogue that has occurred so far, it's clear that while we share many of the same dreams for our children, we also have unique needs as families. What works for some families at church does not work for others. What feels vital to one family may not be a priority or concern for another family. And, we've learned that what may appear to be a simple or obvious solution to an issue may be more complicated than it seems on the surface. We also know that the life of the congregation is shaped by all who are a part of it -- families with children, young adults in college or just starting a career, older adults, and individuals with no children or whose children are grown.

As you approach this survey, we ask that you prayerfully consider what you most value about our community of faith. What, in the past, has drawn you and your family closer to God? When has your family's spiritual life felt most alive? What can we do together to support the faith journeys of families? We don't want this survey to feel daunting, which is why we've limited the number of open-ended questions. But, please feel free to add any additional information or comments at the end of each section.

How will we use the results of this survey? The small group's role is to gather information, raise awareness, and help formulate recommendations based on the information collected. Survey responses will be compiled by members of this group and shared with all of you at a later date. Survey responses will also be provided to the leadership team, church council, the worship and music board, Christian education ministries (adult, youth, elementary and preschool), and other boards and groups with interest in these topics. While we may summarize or share your comments, we will not attach your name to

those comments without your permission. If you're more comfortable omitting your name from the survey, feel free to do so, though please make sure to tell us the CE programs in which your children are involved.

Our group asks for your prayers as we launch into this work. Thank you in advance for sharing your experiences with us so that we can make informed, faithful decisions, together.

Blessings,

Beth Gatewood, Candi McCoy, Carol Coleman, Catherine Foote, Diane Browning, Lisa Coleman, Mary Kay Westmoreland, Susan Dutro and Susan Ovens

UCUCC Family Friendliness Survey

Please complete the survey and return to mkwestmoreland@universityucc.org or to the church office by May 7th.

Please check the CE programs in which your child(ren) are currently involved:

Preschool Elementary Youth

MEANING OF CHURCH FOR YOUR FAMILY

1. How would you rank the following priorities for your family's connection with the church?

- The church is the center of my/our spiritual life.
- The church is where my family makes important friendship connections/finds Christian community.
- The church is where my child(ren) learn about God, Christian life, the teachings of Jesus, and the Bible.
- The church is where we worship God as a family.
- The church is where we live our faith by engaging in social justice and mission work.
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

What else would you like us to know about what this church means to your family?

WORSHIP

- 2. I value having my child(ren) worship with me.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A or Don't Know
- 3. I feel that the congregation's worship experience is strengthened by the presence of children and youth.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A or Don't Know
- 4. My child(ren) complains about attending worship.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A or Don't Know
- 5. Sermon breakouts have helped my child(ren) develop a closer relationship to our pastors.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A or Don't Know
- 6. My own spiritual needs are not met when I'm worried about or distracted by my child(ren) during worship.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A or Don't Know
- 7. I am worried that others are distracted by my child(ren) during worship
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A or Don't Know
- 8. My child(ren) enjoys the sermon break out session
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A or Don't Know
- 9. Our family's spiritual life is strengthened when we worship together.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A or Don't Know
- 10. My child(ren) seems bored and not engaged during much of worship.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A or Don't Know

11. I have mixed feelings about my child(ren) reading books, doing puzzles, drawing pictures, etc. during worship.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
12. My child(ren) benefits from being included in the entire worship service.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
13. My child(ren) would benefit as much from a briefer experience in worship.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
14. Communion Sundays are valuable to my family when we all can receive Communion together.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
15. Much of the worship service feels like it's not developmentally appropriate for my child(ren).
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
16. I value children and youth participation in worship leadership as readers, liturgists, musicians, etc.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know

What else would you like us to know about your family's worship experience?

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND FAMILY PROGRAMMING

17. I value having Christian Education provided to my child(ren) by the church.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
18. I like being able to attend adult education while my child(ren) attends elementary education.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
19. I value the opportunity to participate in adult education.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
20. Adult education topics do not appeal to me; I am not motivated to bring my child(ren) at 9:00.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
21. I am satisfied with the Christian Education curriculum for elementary child(ren).
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
22. I am satisfied with the Christian Education curriculum for preschool children.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
23. I am satisfied with the Christian Education curriculum for youth.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
24. I want my child(ren) to have a strong peer group in the CE program and to see those church friends on most Sundays during CE classes.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know
25. I believe intergenerational activities (e.g. Fall Festival, Advent breakfast, Ecumenical Palm Sunday Service) should be offered to our congregation.
 __Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know

26. Of the events or programs designed for families, outside of the Sunday morning schedule, please place an asterisk next to those that are most important to your family.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seabeck | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth retreats |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kids retreat at Pilgrim Firs | <input type="checkbox"/> Church picnic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Summer camping trip | <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas pageant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advent workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentor program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bowling/pizza party | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social action/mission projects | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Summer swim party | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Events at Catherine's farm | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family potlucks/game nights at homes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 th /5 th grade sleepover | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mission trips (youth) | |

27. Of the events or groups designed for parents, please place an asterisk next to those that are most important to you:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent's Night Out /with Childcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring Conversations Sunday morning CE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Education events/seminar | <input type="checkbox"/> Family mentors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small groups for Moms/Dads | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Parent Group (support group for parents of children or youth with special needs) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

What else would you like us to know about your family's experience with Christian education/family programming for preschoolers, elementary kids, and/or youth?

CHURCH COMMUNICATION, ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, AND LEADERSHIP

28. I believe Christian Education is adequately funded by the church, through the annual budget and special endowments or bequests.
 Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*
29. I feel that Church Council is aware of issues that affect families with children and youth in our church.
 Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*
30. I feel that the leadership team (pastors and business administrator) is aware of issues that affect families with children and youth in our church.
 Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*
31. I feel that my family is supported by the ministries and programs of this church.
 Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*
32. Ministries for families and children do not receive enough support/resources from paid UCUC staff.
 Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*
33. I feel that information about programs, special events, concerns within the community, opportunities for lay leadership/participation, etc. are communicated in a timely, effective manner to families.
 Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

34. When I have a concern related to the family friendliness of this church, I know where to go with that concern.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

35. I have a clear understanding about how decisions are made that affect me and my family at church.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

What else would you like us to know about your family's experience with communication, organizational structure, or the leadership team, as those areas relate to a family-friendly church?

CHURCH SCHEDULE

36. I value the opportunity for our family to experience Christian Education and worship each Sunday.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

37. Education at 9:00 is too early for our family.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

38. I have a child(ren) in the youth program too, so it works to have our elementary child(ren)'s program at the same time as the youth program.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

39. I value being able to teach in the elementary education program without missing worship.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

40. If our family arrives at 9 for elementary CE, our preschool/kindergarten child(ren) experiences too many transitions and is at church for too many hours.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

41. Our Sunday mornings feel hectic and/or stressful

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

42. Our family usually attends special events after church, such as congregational meetings, forums, fellowship events.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

43. Our family finds it challenging to spend 2 ½ -3 ½ hours at CE and worship on Sunday mornings.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

44. My child(ren)'s participation in the CE program has decreased due to the schedule.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

45. Our family's attendance in worship has decreased due to the schedule.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

46. Our family's attendance at CE or worship has decreased due to reasons unrelated to the schedule

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* *N/A or Don't Know*

What else would you like us to know about your family's experience with the church schedule?

TIME COMMITMENT TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRY

47. I enjoy teaching and/or assisting in the CE program and feel called to this ministry.
__Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know

48. Commitments outside of church make it challenging for me to offer much time to activities and programs geared toward families.
__Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know

49. Teaching in the CE program is stressful to me and/or just not the best use of my gifts/talents.
__Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know

50. I am satisfied with the amount of support the broader congregation (those who do not have children in the program) provides for the ministry of Christian education to preschoolers, elementary children, and youth.
__Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know

51. I would like to be able to serve the church in areas other than Christian Education, but I don't have time to do that and meet my perceived responsibilities to the CE program.
__Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know

52. I feel pressure/guilt/stress with regards to the amount of time that is expected of me.
__Strongly Agree __Agree __Disagree __Strongly Disagree __N/A or Don't Know

What else would you like us to know about your family's experience with sharing your gifts at the church?

53. What are your top two suggestions for making our congregation more family-friendly?

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us through this survey!

Name (optional but appreciated) _____

How long have you been attending UCUC? _____

Contact information: Please provide your contact information if we may contact you about your responses.

Phone _____ Email _____

Please complete the survey and return to mkwestmoreland@universityucc.org or to the church office by May 7th.