

This summary has been a bit more challenging since we had input not only from the 3 holy conversations questions related to vision, but also from polls and the online form that was available to complete and submit. Lots of great input, but it is a bit longer than previous summaries. For that reason, I think we might consider doing this update in two installments. The draft I'm including here includes two separate summaries: one for the holy conversations that is similar to what we have done for the past conversations; and a second that covers the input from other sources.

Dear Church Family,

Along with the challenges that we are continuing to face, there is also hope and anticipation. It was exciting to talk together and share thoughts about our vision for United Christian Church. We would like to share this input with you in two separate communications.

First, here is a summary of our Holy Conversations on Vision:

Summary of Holy Conversations on Vision

What have we learned during this interim and pandemic time?

- Being together physically is a powerful and important thing. Continuing to offer virtual options could expand our accessibility to, and participation in, worship and other activities and programs.
- Many members have talents that they can share, and more may be willing to do so when there are virtual options in addition to in-person options.
- We have learned we can be flexible and creative. We can adapt and explore new ways of doing things. We are a strong, resilient community
- It is good to see one another's faces in our Zoom worship services...there are ways in which we have deepened relationships and felt even closer while being together virtually.
- We can be church without being together physically in a building.
- Virtual worship has been creative and meaningful. It has helped us explore use of media, graphics, and film in addition to more traditional elements.
- We can do amazing things when we all work together collaboratively.
- Virtual coffee hours have helped us meet and get to know new people. We may want to explore in-person, structured ways to foster conversations that develop relationships and connections.
- Sharing prayers requests is very meaningful...being able to connect and submit them online streamlines the process in good ways.
- Incorporating music into worship in a variety of ways is important to us.

What ministries and issues do we think God is calling us to focus on?

- Ministries to families who want to raise their children and youth in a progressive, open and affirming community

- Hands on social justice projects we can take on together as an intergenerational community
- Find ways to contribute to addressing root cause social justice issues
- Showing love to those on the margins...serving the poor, loving our neighbors, speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves
- Community outreach to let others know about our church and what we have to offer
- Creating and nurturing community within our church
- Finding ways to model and show love to all to help create unity in a divided nation.
- Offering a progressive Christian witness in general that is welcoming, inclusive and also prophetic
- Keep witnessing to the rights of the LGBTQIA communities
- Deepening our own awareness of white supremacy and white privilege and our commitment to undoing racism and becoming antiracist
- Expand and diversify our music ministry
- Widen and deepen our connections and working relationship with the interfaith community
- Develop opportunities for adult spiritual formation that consider schedule and space limitations

What do we wish for our church, United Christian Church of Austin?

- That our clergy, staff and members work together more effectively and collaboratively.
- That we offer more well defined volunteer opportunities that allow members to serve, contribute to the work of the church and to share their gifts and talents in ministry.
- That we develop and implement structures, plans and processes to support our church's work
- That we grow and stabilize our giving and finances.
- That we care for our building and property so they are welcoming, reflect who we are as a community, and are utilized more fully.
- That we form more active relationships with those we serve, our denominations, other churches and other organizations involved in ministry.
- That we grow and mature our focus, activities and giving related to social justice and mission/service.
- That we continue and grow our programs for children and youth.
- That we expand our understanding and expression of being open and affirming, welcoming and inclusive.
- That we grow and expand our music ministry.
- That we continue online ministry to expand and enhance our in-person ministry.
- That we develop and deepen our relationships with one another and strengthen our community.
- That we develop a more visible presence to let people know about our church.
- That we be a place that helps us be Christians in the world.

It is exciting to think together about our future. We are moving forward through our interim process and encourage you to watch for a second update that will talk about input from our other activities related to vision.

Continue to pray for and celebrate our church community!

The Interim Support Team

Miguel Flores, Cherie Hinch, Chase Larson, Clark Thompson, Bryan Thornhill

Hello again, church family!

In addition to our holy conversations, we also gathered other input from our after-worship polls and from online forms that were available to complete. Along with the holy conversations, these provided insight into how we are envisioning our church's future.

Adjectives we would use to describe our vision for our church:

- Progressive, open, diverse, radically inclusive, welcoming
- Contemplative, prophetic, courageous
- Joyful, renewed, evolving, active
- Growing, giving, generous
- Caring, serving, speaking
- Maturing, learning, organized
- Strong, community, connected

Verbs that describe what we are called to do:

- Love, forgive, hope
- Awaken, enliven, grow, transform
- Serve, respond, care
- Pray, worship, contemplate
- Give, act, witness
- Support, befriend, connect, welcome, accept, help, listen
- Mature, organize, focus, speak
- Innovate, create

Adjectives that describe the leadership we envision for our church:

- Growing in love and knowledge
- Contemplative, visionary, wise, creative
- Thoughtful, honest, authentic
- Patient, empathetic, supportive, mature, secure
- Strong, collaborative, effective communicator

Ministries we hope to focus on in the future seem to center around:

- Racial Justice, particularly Anti-Racism and Border/Refugee issues
- LGBTQIA ministries
- Economic Justice related to both the poor and the homeless

Our hopes for future gatherings seem to focus on:

- Children and Youth Education;
- Worship - both in person and a continuing on-line worship option;
- Service Projects;
- Adult Education groups; and
- Music Ministry.

The top areas we are thinking about as important areas in which to invest our time, talents and financial resources as we move forward seem to focus around:

- Social Justice and Mission;
- Building and Grounds;
- Fellowship and Community; and
- Clergy.

Again, thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and ideas. This input is very valuable as we plan together for our future. We continue to move forward through our interim process and will continue to keep you updated on where we are and what our next steps will be.

Peace be with you all as we journey together,

The Interim Support Team

Miguel Flores, Cherie Hinch, Chase Larson, Clark Thompson and Bryan Thornhill