

## Responses Part 1 — Describing Emerson

### ***How do we describe our congregation?***

*To prospective members or a close, non-member friend?*

- Old
- Friendly, mostly older generations
- Older, liberal, socially active
- Friendly and welcoming, has work to do in terms of inclusivity
- Making attempts to grow
- Older longtime UUs liberal
- Inclusive
- No dogma
- We work together to make the world a better place.
- Depends on what a prospective member is looking for
- We cannot be everything to everyone
- Liberal
- Intellectual
- Small
- Aging
- Warm
- Honest
- Respectful
- Liberal oasis
- Conservative UU
- In transition
- Community-driven
- Welcoming
- Practice faith not just on Sunday
- Non-spiritual
- Established
- Non-creedal
- Not dogmatic
- Searching for truth
- Open
- Accepting
- Not forced to accept any particular doctrine
- We are eclectic.
- We are homogeneous.
- We are healing. We are coming back.
- We have a lot of hope for change and growth.
- We are irreverent.
- We are small.
- We are mostly older, but welcoming to others different from us.
- We are struggling to bring in families.

- My home
- Progressive
- Diverse, in ways you might never expect
- Inherent worth and dignity of everyone
- Aspirational
- You can see the church's stories in the faces of the people.
- Wealthy. But not everyone. Still perceived as "the rich church"
- Baby boomers
- Perfectionist in some ways
- But easily distracted by the next project/idea
- Not speaking fully honestly
  - There's a need to shape the narrative.
  - Siloed.
- There is a grandness that is impressive.
  - Both building and the people.
  - A grand welcome.
- Generosity of spirit and maybe of money. Charitable
- Tension between nostalgia and openness (vis a vis worship and leadership)
- Perceived "elders" continue to have influence.
- Gravitas; Who some people are carries more weight.
- Curiosity and idealism from new UUs. Unusual structures and processes
- Political alignment
- Conservative UU church. We are more "high church."
- Openness to change vs. happiness about change
- Liberal, Affluent, White. We like to think we are something else but we are not.
- Need to understand if minister is from a different background
- Need alignment with understanding of expectations
- Socially conscious: ESL, Drug Court, e.g.
- Strong foundation
- "Small church that looks big"
- Historical roots with inspiration in the Christian tradition, plus additionally drawing from all religions and philosophies.
- Open, tolerant, welcoming.
- Helps you reach toward your potential
- Plus social justice endeavors
- My extended family
- We are eclectic.
- We try to hear each other. We try to grow trust and stretch together.
- An opportunity to explore and engage
- We support each other.
- Provides an opportunity to grow spiritually and opportunities to work toward building a better world
- Great dedicated talented people in the congregation
- Untapped potential that could make Emerson better (Diversity, talents, etc.)

- There's a fair amount of anxiety in the congregation right now.
- Diversity of religious beliefs, but not all are accepted (more likely to accept non-Christian or Christian when held by people of color)
- Many of us have come from wounded Christian backgrounds so people find it harder to be tolerant and accepting of more mainstream white Christians
- Emerson has a background as a more Christian congregation.
- Have known people in congregation who have come from Jewish, Catholic, Buddhist, Muslim backgrounds
- We are welcoming, if people give us a chance.
- Open-minded
- Social action
- Desire to increase social interaction
- Not a neighborhood church
- Not demonstrative
- Educated
- Resilient
- Community
- Caring
- Intellectual
- Diversity of thought
- Older
- Fewer kids than before
- Mostly white, non-Hispanic
- Intimidating to people with less education, less affluence
- Growing in our diversity
- Resource rich
- Potential for membership growth
- Great physical plant
- Forgiving
- Clear-cut alternative to organized religion, which is declining
- In a diverse area/community
- Tired
- Low/no growth
- Party people — we like to socialize
- We're less welcoming than we think.
- Gray-haired
- Eclectic
- Upper middle class white people with high IQ (now - but we have aspirations to change this.)
- Welcoming to LGBTQIA population; trans friendly (We've had gender nonbinary guest ministers.)
- On-ramp to social action (mentioned multiple times)
- Have different activities
- Welcoming to ESL students (They won't be judged.)

- Can find like-minded people with an openness to differences of opinion
- Acceptance of other beliefs
- Sense of belonging
- We are in a major transition.
- There used to be more small groups, like a women's group.

***How would you describe Emerson to a prospective member?***

- Cross-denominational
- Diverse - but not in some ways
- Creative
- Sharing
- Multitude of talents
- Safe to be self
- Lived faith
- Intellectual
- Community-driven
- Welcoming
- Faith not just on Sunday
- Established
- Non-creedal
- Searching for the truth
- Aging congregation
- Involved in social action
- We have transitioned without growing.
- Growth minded
- We are welcoming and open.
- Supportive; about connection and diversity
- Accepting of differences
  - LGBTQ+ more so
  - Other cultures are harder
  - Economic differences are a turn off.
- Everybody has viewpoints.
- Don't know what to do with birthright UUs
- Individual decisions and we have no control over them
- Adult Religious Education = intellectualized
- Accepting, stimulating,
- Empathetic shown by actions, good listeners to each other
- Children get good background in other religions
- Accepting / welcoming
- History of strong music
- Interest in developing stronger music program
- Friendly greeters
- Strong Adult Ed
- Desire to expand children's RE

- Share-the-plate
- Lay pastoral ministry
- Small groups
- Variety of sermon topics
- Open to a variety of religious beliefs
- Encourage involvement — opportunities for participation and leadership activities

***To a prospective minister?***

- Same as friend-prospective member answers
- I'd tell them the truth about it needing some major work, and it needing to get better at growing and being inclusive. It talks about it but doesn't walk it.
- They need to know it is going to be work, since we are an old congregation that is set in their ways.
- We are a diverse group.
- We seek intellectual and moral challenges.
- Expanding different readings from the Bible and other great books
- Our services have become too "touchy feely."
- We are low on thoughtfulness and applying things to our everyday lives. We need our minds stretched. Few come to church.
- Disconnection
- Miss people
- The community is shakier.
- Smaller & shrinking because of COVID & demographics (societal trends) and interim minister
- Small RE program now
- Like traditional church
- More traditional than other UU churches
- Welcoming to those from other faiths/LGBTQIA community
- Provides comfort to those from other faiths
- Looking for revitalization/to be reenergized
- Still overtly care about each other
- In need of younger demographic
- Want young families
- Excellent RE Director
- Not yet technologically savvy
- Playfulness & fun - we laugh together
- Sociable
- In it for the long haul
- Optimistic - faith in what Emerson has/can be
- We are eclectic.
- We are homogeneous.
- We are healing. We are coming back.
- We have a lot of hope for change and growth.

- We are irreverent.
- We are small.
- We are mostly older, but welcoming to others different from us.
- We are struggling to bring in families.
- Highly educated, large % has graduate degrees
- Mostly white
- Older
- Compassionate and kind
- Many want an intellectual experience (in general activities and from pulpit)
- Want to be emotionally moved
- Won't work to be only emotionally touched or intellectual; needs a mix
- Few children
- Have members who want church to fill a need but they don't know exactly what it is
- Need to seek and define our primary goals/focus
- Seem to be able to generate big ideas, but don't have accompanying details and want someone else to implement (RE an important example)
- A congregation of humans who strive and fail
- Not a big in-person crowd on Sunday
- Welcoming
- Enthusiastic about learning
- Well-educated
- Big city residents
- Sophisticated
- Aging
- Proud of building and location
- Strong interest in social action
- ESL program / community service / outreach
- Increasing diversity