

Douglas UCC Listening Sessions: Who Are We Now?

Sunday, 1/7/24: 33 attendees

Monday, 1/8/25: 7 attendees

- What 5 words would you use to describe our church to a friend or neighbor or family member visiting from out of town?

- Family
- Welcoming
- Justice
- Compassionate
- Progressive
- Good size
- Imaginative
- Friends
- Warm
- Joyful
- Opportunities
- Sanctuary
- Respectful of all faiths
- Inclusive
- Generous

- Humor allowed
- Community-driven
- Responsive
- Mature (age-wise)
- Questioning
- Accepting
- Active
- Angelic Troublemakers
- Not 'churchy'
- Historical (Established)
- Open & Affirming for 20 years
- Congregational (Congregation driven)
- Liberal spiritually
- High level of member participation inside the church and outside in the community

- On 1/8 only: How is DUCC viewed by the outside community?

- The 'gay' church
- Generous
- Community conscious
- Activists
- Artistic
- Heretical
- Creatively driven

- What do you like most about our church? What do we do well?

- Welcoming
- Collaboration
- One heart
- Open to ideas
- Better when we are together
- Authentic
- Non-judgmental
- Reaches out to the community
- Not literal
- Light is within us
- Diverse geographic backgrounds
- Gifted members
- Priestly presence – new roles welcomed
- This is the family we've chosen
- Not molded – encouraged to bloom & blossom
- Visibly serving the community in many ways
- YouTube presence allows all to stay with the church even when away or sick

- Different views welcomed
- Optimistic – hopeful
- Willing to question
- Courageous
- Casual/comfortable
- Stripping away the unimportant details
- Diverse spiritual backgrounds
- Respectful of individual backgrounds
- Some are 'orphans' from other churches, but some come to repeat the joy they have found in other churches
- Curiosity respected – opposite of merely 'rule-following'
- Overtly respectful
- Love the music and singing
- Love the service: liturgy, communion, joys & concerns
- Traditional setting with progressive message
- Pastor has been visible in the community

- What do you like least about our church? What could we do better?

- More diversity in age
- Explaining who we are to others – living truths
- More effective at including new members, helping them feel part of the family by getting connected
- More transparent selection process for leadership roles
- Better structure for inclusion for all wishing to step up to leadership
- Changing an aversion to inclusive structure. We are ready to adopt a more transparent/inclusive structure

- More diversity in cultural backgrounds (Hispanic outreach, especially to gays who may not be welcomed by Catholic church)
- Freshen the music. Add more performers. Same folks all the time.
- Need more bathrooms
- Difficult for new members to know what opportunities are available to them
- More inclusive music (more contemporary, more gender neutral)

Skipped questions due to time constraints:

- *What is unique or special about DUCC*
 - *What motivates you to get up on a Sunday morning and get to church?*
 - *What keeps you coming to DUCC*
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- Describe the experience of worship. What are the qualities inherent in our worship?

- Flows well – not choppy or awkward
- Silence after announcements allows all to settle and prepare for worship
- Good energy throughout
- Traditions are comforting: Announcements, Joys & Concerns, Tibetan Prayer Bell
- Coming every week feels important
- Words of Integration and Guidance are important to reinforce the progressive message
- Words of invitation and welcome before communion make all feel included
- Love the Benediction by Bishop Spong
- Love the inclusiveness in our version of Lord's Prayer (Our Mother/Father)

- Love the Aramaic Lord's Prayer. Wish we included it more often
- Clapping after music: Some approved it as thanks for the gift of song, others found it annoying as not worship-worthy
- Love that we follow the Christian lectionary
- Candle tree reinforces the 'light' in our church
- Love communion every week because of sense of community and inclusiveness of all. (No one stated disliking weekly communion.)
- Like that our service is generally around 75 minutes.
- Classic hymnals with comforting, familiar music

- How would you describe our current education and faith formation vision?

- Sal was our teacher, sharing books and giving 'homework' in homilies
- No structured programming currently
- Retreat House Ministry has filled a need for spiritual education
- Spiritual book groups always well attended

- If someone sees an educational need or has an idea, it is easy to carry it out
- Lots of speakers and seminar offerings, but unclear if Sal generated these
- Would like to see 'Living the Questions' offered

- We describe ourselves as “progressive,” “inclusive,” and “open and affirming.” How central is this to our identity?

- It IS our identity
- It is critical/essential
- We show it...not just say it
- Acceptance is central to who we are
- Trans community is welcomed

- Not new. DUCC has decades of inclusiveness and progressivism
- We strive to live as Christ taught
- Extravagant welcome for all is our goal

- What is important to you in a sermon or homily? (1/7 only)

- Practical application for daily life
- Simple message to reach a broad audience
- Progressive interpretation of Scripture
- Not anchored to the pulpit
- Teaching not preaching
- Pastor not afraid to put him/herself ‘out there’
- Social justice focus
- Pastor shares personal path
- Not ‘scholarly’ messages

- Discerning in selection of prayers and Integration & Guidance readings
- Uniformity of length: predictable 1-1/2 hour timeframe
- Scripture based, but not ‘Bible stories’
- Timely messages: Bible in one hand/newspaper in the other
- Appreciate following the church lectionary
- Appreciate humor when appropriate

- What are 5 words that describe the ideal sermon or homily? (1/8 only)

- Clarity on symbolism in Bible
- Respect for all faiths
- Something to take home/learning
- Personal life experiences shared
- Inclusion of progressive authors (Spong, Nowen, etc.)

- Real, not abstract
- Teacher of life and spirituality
- Leading to spiritual growth
- Assignments of ‘homework’