



Peterborough Unitarian Universalist Church

**Who We Are!**

---

Question 3 Community - Notes compiled from all sessions and online responses - unedited

**3)a How is PUUC seen in the community?**

- Does our building turn people off? Do we look like the current and future or just the past.
- Like wayside pulpit.
- Welcoming cheerfulness when you walk in front door.
- Our sanctuary is very comfortable compared to many others. You can feel engaged because of its openness.
- Offers a community supper.
- BLM sign is good.
- Building that is iconic and presents history. Heritage DITTO
- Seen as an aging community DITTO
- Place for concerts. choirs and plays
- Not sure we know how we appear by those outside DITTO
- Are seen as interdenominational friends
- Liberal religion
- A place where you can learn (Lyceum) and agree philosophically if not religious
- Does a lot of good things in the community
- Do people think we are weird?
- I don't know how we are viewed in the community. DITTO x 3
- Many Democrats
- Insular as a faith community
- Broader community does not know about the good work we are doing and are becoming more introspective and becoming more organized and deliberative
- As a new person not from Peterborough per se I did not know about you for years
- Known for community suppers
- Wayside pulpit and flags on front of building
- Wealthy people
- Not sure how PUUC is seen.
- Seen as welcoming, right in the middle of the town.
- Seen as welcoming, opening, every year at Xmas seats filled up because people will be accepted and welcomed. Rainbow flag.

- People see us as a kind, welcoming, open community and wants to continue to be seen that way.
- Thrilled we stand up for Ukraine; the vigil stopped people in the street and it was extremely moving; caring for people we don't know and people in the community see it.
- Summer lyceum is an important part of how the community sees us; many non members come to that and it gives community people a view about the church.
- We're seen as pretty favorable as accepting, except by people who don't want to be accepting or don't like the rainbow flag.
- Don't know Peterborough community b/c does not live here.
- Building has important physical presence in the community; it's often in photos of the town. It's a bedrock in the community and intellectually as well.
- Perceives positive awareness in the community. Proud to say they go to the unitarian church on Sunday morning.
- Community is a subjective word. Comes from outside Peterborough community so sees it as a larger community than Peterborough.
- The building is big and in the center of town. Community suppers, monthly social justice donations.
- Views rainbow flag not just for LGBTQ but a wider message of acceptance. Sending a message that we are accepting of everybody.
- The building is seen as a very positive influence b/c we welcome things like the Lyceum, community supper, Messiah; people are familiar with the building.
- Gets a "hmmm" if she tells someone that she goes here b/c there is no religion; not so good if you are not a Christian.
- A little bit of people not knowing what we are, think we are a little off the beaten track.
- Does not like words church or worship. Says "we are on our way to church" and it sounds so lame; does not think of us as a church. No one is saying you have to believe in something in particular. Very different and does not think of it as a church.
- MLT - see articles about people from PUUC in paper, creates favorable impression of PUUC as a force for change DITTO
- PUUC is mentioned in MLT
- Learned about PUUC before came to worship
- Dinner for Two fund raiser - people came back
- No idea. Lives a distance away from Peterborough.
- Hopes that people read press releases and learn more about PUUC.
- Hard to get more than press releases published.
- Churches in general aren't of interest to young people
- Don't think young people have a negative impression, just have an old school idea of what church is about.

- Need to think outside the box for that.
- Lives in Peterborough but not sure how the community views us.
- Lyceum
- Interfaith service after Pulse Nightclub shooting got a lot of press
- Ukraine vigil
- Things that happen on the lawn
- Community supper
- Strong values that help others
- Doing good work
- “They are a bunch of libs”
- Politically liberal
- Rotary said he found a good source when he looked at UU hymnbook, people say they love that church
- Known as church, not a fellowship or something else
- Seen as a community place, open to all sorts of groups and activities, many people have no idea of what UU is
- Actively supports marginalized folks, arts happen here,
- Building known and loved, but don’t always know what happens here; know about our openness, love all religions except Christianity; church respected for social justice
- Known for social justice, Ukraine bell-ringing, people are confused about what we do or don’t believe; lyceums are our most obvious and positive connection
- Odd, extremely liberal, seditious regarding 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment
- Lyceum, Messiah, Ukraine – people think you can believe anything or nothing,
- Social Justice always strong, has always heard about it
- Very inclusive, but sort of mushy,
- UUs, if we pray, pray to whom it may concern
- recognized in Peterborough, not Rindge
- Unknown
- big church in center of town
- music
- one of several, but liberal
- not well known
- Lyceum, music
- Not understood
- known only by individuals from their interaction
- Lyceum
- don't know
- have to go into a building to know it – many have not

- unfamiliar with church attendance
- don't know the benefits
- Think we believe in anything
- social justice
- music
- unknown
- music, lyceum help
- don't know
- music seems to draw in
- Community Supper
- Not familiar with community of Peterborough, assume positive presence
- Looking from outside in, think outside view is positive
- Different observations over the years... Back in the early 70s neighbor told me "If I ever go back to a church it would be to a UU church." Someone else made the gesture of "Loop de loop" referring to the UU church, someone else didn't like someone at the church so would never go. Several of my walking group members have joined the church.
- For some people we don't fall under what church is supposed to be,
- Think they see church members as old, white, people who do good things, liberal
- Get some of this "stuff" from my own family...get comments like UUs can believe whatever they want
- Don't think there is a lot of communication between the church and people in the community (Time when church was full...Handel's Messiah)
- No idea, I live in Jaffrey
- Beautiful building
- Those we have more contact with see us as an activist fringe of society, out of the general mold
- Don't know how PUUC is seen
- Black Lives Matter sign tells something
- Location on Main St in center of town
- Don't know DITTO
- Somewhat mystified by how community sees us
- Haven't heard anything negative
- Have heard some remarks - are you a bunch of agnostics? People don't understand UU as a formal religious group
- UU has a reputation - heathens, OR don't believe in anything, OR believe in everything, puts them on the defensive and have to try and explain what PUUC really is
- Political reactions - objection to using LCHIP money on 'church' building
- The 'gay' church

- Sometimes semi-derogatory comments (about being different)
- Respected but not always understood
- Beautiful historic building in the center of town
- Wealthy white liberals
- Mystery because it's not clear what they believe in - big unknown, mystery place
- No idea what people think of the congregation
- Anecdotal knowledge - oh yeah, I sent my kids to RE there when they young but never went back
- Music - Messiah performance
- We are snarling up the traffic with BLM protests on Saturday - comment from community member
- Don't know much
- Demographic - older, white liberal, highly educated
- Don't know how we are seen now
- One side views us negatively - too liberal, not religious, former minister sent tone of anti-semitism (history, not present)
- On positive side, people see us as a home for different things, help with community activities, downtown location
- Don't know how people view us spiritually DITTO
- Historically viewed as being very conflictual in the UU system (i.e. regional UUA) - need to be mindful of that because perceptions last a long time
- Not sure about now
- Building in center of town that does some good stuff that is known by some of the community some of the time DITTO
- Single people ask is UU a religion?
- Building with rainbow flag
- Not very well known with young adults
- Historical reputation - musical events
- politically liberal because of flags and banners
- Church is for older people, not for young people - don't have a vision of how to connect, don't know how different we might be compared to other churches in proximity
- The building
- Older, white, homogeneous population
- Non-comprehension - people don't understand initially
- When people get to know individual UUs, they may have different viewpoint through social interaction
- River Mead people think of PUUC as well-respected, well thought of institution
- Don't have larger sense of community reaction to PUUC

- Unseen in younger people's peer groups, not part of conversation
- Misunderstood
- Young people have distrust of churches in general if they don't have direct experiences
- Hasn't heard much. In general known to be more progressive.
- Historically - stubborn, liberal, and older
- Wealthy...so New England. Now Pagan, reverence.
- Everyone he knows in Peterborough is a UU.
- Respected church in community. Known religious entity.
- As a welcoming and diverse religious/spiritual community
- I'm not sure I know. I have never asked my friends how they see us.
- Seen as fairly liberal, radical, even more so recently since old conservative people have died or left. I really believe in rainbow flag and strong social justice committee work. Don't live in Peterborough now, visit. We have a 'brand' established - PUUC - what about the word "community" as the C word? Community feels more welcoming. That's why I come. That's the purpose.
- Positively, though it is not everyone's cup of tea.
- Good question.... as the Church that doesn't believe in God, and instead focuses on doing good in a God-less world.... intellectual, up in the head, a bit odd, very progressive.
- I don't really know, but the few people who have discussed it with me view PUUC as set apart and "above" other congregations in town
- Lots of people don't know much about PUUC. Maybe they know about Lyceum and musical events.
- I have no idea
- Liberals :)
- Haven't a clue
- People don't know much about Unitarianism
- People who think like I do are already at UU
- As the local UU church upholding generally liberal values, As the church in the center of town which is an historic landmark in Peterborough
- A place where spirituality can be freely celebrated in non-traditional forms: Buddhist Meditation, Sacred Circle Dance, Pagan Celebrations, etc.

### **3b. How would you like PUUC to be seen in the community?**

- That we are a physically accessible church.
- A welcoming community that is nondogmatic and welcomes all religious backgrounds.
- Visible in media PR that is not bragging about us but is offering community something of value.
- Venue for non-church groups

- Need more ways to do PR
- Work on attracting families in different ways
- Explore ways of using downstairs space
- Share more about what are doing NOW
- Change is inevitable and we need to embrace new generation of leadership
- Miss minister coming to RiverMead
- Known more for what we do
- Welcoming place of safety and sanctuary for people in need and source of social justice DITTO by many
- Place that welcomes others who are not often welcome in other places. DITTO 2
- A place to join with others to do good things DITTO 2
- Community to see us for who we really are
- Need to bring church more to community than expect them to come to us
- Outreach. DITTO especially to communities outside Peterborough
- Be more regional Let people know this is a welcoming and accepting place
- Welcoming to mixed religious families and that we accept people of different beliefs
- A place where families can be together
- People see us as a kind, welcoming, open community and wants to continue to be seen that way.
- PUUC is already seen that way in the community. People from the community ran around the May pole.
- Be nice if we had more publicity so community was more aware of what we are doing.
- Community is a stronger word than church. If we are othering by calling it church. Should we be called community instead of church. Or a cohort. The C can stay but call it a community.
- Attended a program a few months ago when someone of Jewish heritage was uncomfortable. Maybe eliminate the word church and replace it with congregation or something else.
- Don't want anyone telling me this is the truth; get away from the churchy aspect and come together.
- Seen positively in the community b/c of all the things that go on here, seen as a community building.
- Some of their other communities try to use attraction messages rather than publicity. There are ways to do it and they are willing to volunteer if we get to that point.
- Would like PUUC to be seen in the community: many have been in the building and may have a handle on what kind of people we are. Would like to be seen as not so unusual.
- Would like PUUC to be seen as partners with different organizations
- Working collaboratively in the community

- Want to see PUUC in an ethical framework as opposed to political framework (given current polarization)
- Understand that PUUC as a faith which accepts diversity of world views, points to our principles as an ethical foundation
- See UU as people who accept different ideas on a spiritual level, not political
- Best place in town!
- Want others to see what PUUC is for me
- Witness what who we are
- Place where people feel comfortable and safe, a shelter from the storm, a refuge from all the difficult things that happen around the world
- Place that feels like home, provides safety
- Want young people to see PUUC as a safe refuge from all the crap in the world
- Wants to save the world, or our little corner
- Collaboration - WindowDresser program has great potential, will help see PUUC as helping people in the world
- Shine the light brighter
- Amplify what is going on already
- Provide OWL for sexuality education in the region - brings people in
- Youth service trips can broaden perspectives
- Seen as a happy hard-working bunch of contributors DITTO
- Seen as welcoming
- A place that is welcoming to young people
- Seen as courageous
- Seen as good neighbors, good friends, with strong moral compass
- Welcome people in the church, we could talk to kids about sex; history is important
- Being connected to community, educating, offering things, need to really be inclusive
- Loves when we are doing things in partnership with other churches, known as nice people, a safe haven
- Be more known as full of joy
- Wants young people to surge in, OWL program; continue to be known as good place; wants to hear wonderful organ every Sunday
- Welcoming and inclusive, joy and moral compass
- Books for kids
- Important to emphasize education, given what's going on
- Experiment with different formats, in the round, don't let building define us
- people to know more about how we allow belief to evolve
- room for growth of belief
- safe to explore belief



- people need to know more about us
- known for inspiration, social justice, stewards for learning and celebration
- place for spiritual exploration
- resource for activities
- open community of liberal thinkers, social action, all ages
- involved in local community
- accessible to all
- welcoming to all beliefs – exploration not just Christianity
- safe space
- welcoming to anyone
- caring, accepting explore values
- better communicators to outside world
- Joint support
- as a shining beacon of light (live our values not just talk about them)
- as contributing more to town society and types of activities that can be done by a church (take advantage of our fabulous building)
- more respected as a “real” church with great history
- as a group of active people who are supporting good things in the community and larger world DITTO
- as the unique place that we are (all other churches are struggling with membership)
- as a place where people want to come because of the inspirational and soul reaching services
- as more than a Sunday morning service, institutional recognition, a place people want to go for music or theater
- communicating with the non-churched folks (the ‘nones’)
- Caring
- Spiritual community where you can find your own way to feel spiritual and develop in that manner
- Place where you will be accepted and respected
- Place to learn
- Welcoming place that supports others
- More accessible than we look like we are
- Dynamic, more engaged with the community
- Be more welcoming - saw sign over side door at another church that says “whoever you are, you are welcome here” - have something over each door with “welcome” on it
- Show our light - take it out from under the bushel
- Ads in the paper - with a question: are you wondering about? Interested in? Come Sunday to UU

- People don't know who and what we are
- More pamphlets around that show what we are
- In pews, Community Supper, principles in OOS and every communication from PUUC
- Visitor cards could have more follow-up - e.g. bring a loaf of bread with a pamphlet
- So afraid of pushing ourselves on others so we hold back
- Assign a buddy to go to coffee hour with new person - red cup held by Board so you know who to ask questions of, rather than new person who sometimes gets ignored
- Follow up call after visiting
- Intergenerational - need younger voices
- Active with others beyond ourselves
- Serving needs of Monadnock Region
- Visible in the community, establish who we are, special and different
- Welcoming in all parameters - put others first
- Inform people, follow up better
- Diversity of age, belief, interest
- More community driven so what's outside our walls is more important than ourselves and what's in our walls
- There are many people who are unchurched but would have a memorial service at UU
- How to communicate with those people to say 'come while you are still living'
- Figure out how to invite young families and support them to create their own 'church' within us - bring kids, come have family night, help change and reform the congregation itself
- Have the building used more - e.g. used to have a food coop - find other groups to use our empty spaces in addition to AA
- Sunday services outdoors was looked forward to
- Snowshoeing, xc skiing opportunities
- May pole celebration
- McDowell Dam, invite nonmembers to come along on outings DITTO
- Continue to be socially aware
- Welcome everyone, inclusiveness
- Bunch of people who are willing to learn and grow, show wisdom and respect
- Have greater diversity of age and background
- Have to be inviting to people of diverse backgrounds
- Need to walk our talk - SJ group thinks about important issues, would like to see us step forward to demonstrate social justice values
- Place of incredible music
- Come for an hour can be fabulous for your ears and your brain
- Feel the love that we have

- Ad campaign to inform people who we are
- Facebook postings
- Something for the new people events in various towns
- Strongly push back against societal trends toward isolation by creating multiple and varied opportunities
- Be seen as a force to building community, which requires words and deeds.
- Like PUUC to be seen as a welcoming place for anyone, in particular as an opportunity to embrace spiritualism and liberal values with opportunity to explore in community
- Like it to be seen, seen for the good that it does, values that align with what people want but they don't know it!
- Place that is welcoming for anyone who wants to explore their spirituality in community
- Safe place
- All ages and stages of life
- Interesting and accessible
- Inviting
- Interconnected with the community
- Young and old
- Dynamic, energetic growing with lots going on
- Great place for all ages, strong children and youth programming
- Seen as a welcoming place for everybody, don't have to be like-minded because we have to be able to reach 'across the aisle' to understand what is going on and make larger societal change
- Liberal word can be unwelcoming to those who see themselves as conservatives
- Like to see PUUC as open to people with liberal and conservative political persuasions DITTO
- Problem is getting people in the door, once here people are surprised (pleasantly)
- Community center, place for community
- Unaffiliated people might be surprised if we can get them in the door
- Music is really important as an integral component of the spiritual experience - so emphasize this more
- DITTO to reaching younger people and being open to diverse perspectives
- Place where one can express various viewpoints and be accepted - being inclusive means being open to all political or values positions
- Safe place for everyone. Generous in every way. More evidence of what is our global outreach (PUUC). What do we do to reach further than this place.
- Welcoming- acting in line with positive inclusivity and connecting to global.
- Welcoming and affirming congregation. Generous, safe place. Seen active in world in a liberal way.
- Accepting, strong, and lively

- Energized and progressive. “Things happen here.”
- As a welcoming and diverse religious/spiritual community
- I would like us to be seen as a rock-solid paragon and leader of fairness where all seekers are welcome. It would also be great if we are seen as a place where children are nurtured and offered an open and wide-ranging spiritual education.
- I would like us to be communicating with other churches, trying to coordinate dinners, see what we can do to help the community in general. Share information - don't want to step on each others toes, support each other. We could advertise other church sales, activities, bring more people in. Concentrate on the sense of community - like Toadstool is a community space. Libraries too.
- A strong spiritual community that is active in making the world a better place. A hub of events and activities that educate and help everyone.
- As willing to consider and embrace the concept of "God" as Love, and thus, bridge gaps with other churches, and be able to offer heart-felt, and compassionate guidance and support to its congregants through actual life challenges
- as a religious leader for compassionate justice-seeking in the greater Peterborough community willing to work with people of other faiths
- Creative center, intellectual leader, pro-social justice
- as a guiding force for right relations
- Open to and accepting of all spiritual beliefs and a strong environmentally aware culture.
- Encourage positive actions and work to improve or help others, overcome injustice
- As a thinking, caring, ethical place
- Look at the what and the why of issues
- Showing respect for everything, all living beings
- As a community of caring people bound together by liberal values, striving to improve the world we live in and concerned about all our neighbors in our local community.
- A welcoming spiritual place for non-theistic and theistic folks alike.