

**Summarized Notes**  
**Growing Together Focus Groups**  
**May-June 2018**

This is a summary of the ideas generated by five small groups of members and friends that met in May and June of 2018 to discuss the impact of rapid growth on the UUFCO congregation. A total of 40 people participated in the groups.

**Question 1—Why are we growing?**

- warmth and welcome of UUFCO community
  - all people, “ages and stages” are welcome
  - “casserole” rather than anonymous congregation; spirit of caring, a place where people feel cared for and “held” in times of need
  - “fellowship feel” from when we were smaller
  - opportunities for social connection (Circle Suppers, kayaking, hiking, interest groups) and opportunities for spiritual growth (Sunday services, Soul Matters groups, RE classes)
- dynamic presence of our minister
  - youthful, energetic spirit
  - sermons
  - creativity, laughter and uplift;
  - mutual trust between congregation and minister
- great facility
  - beautiful and inspiring building and setting
  - RE spaces attract young families
  - located in an area of growth in Bend
  - known in the community through rentals, presence of community groups
- UU principles, beliefs
  - freedom of thought, not dogma or creed, obligation or guilt
  - there is a space for brokenness
  - safe place for spiritual exploration
  - inclusiveness
  - emphasis on love and justice
  - we’re doing a better job of articulating what we stand for
- connections to larger community
  - population explosion in Bend
  - visibility through interfaith, social action and justice work
  - use of our building by community organizations
  - political environment makes people seek a liberal community based on shared values

**Question 2—What do we want to preserve, nurture and develop as we grow?**

- commitment to social justice work; live into our mission; community outreach and visibility,  
Greater Community Collection
- nurture social connections, sense of community and small, medium and large group opportunities as we grow
- openness and flexibility
- “conscious inclusivity”
- meaningful rituals (joys & sorrows, children’s arch, covenant)
- offer many opportunities to explore our faith and grow spiritually
- thematic ministry
- intentional spirituality—meditation, walking the labyrinth
- music and art
- online recordings of Sunday services
- more involvement in UU regional and national work
- many opportunities for new members, friends, people of all ages to participate (Sunday services, committees, social activities, spiritual formation); honoring each person’s gifts
- integration of children and families in the fabric of our community, part of our culture
- play, laughter, creativity, informality; embrace “mistakes”
- make clear there are many ways to contribute beyond financial obligation
- caring connections and service to one another
- care and maintenance of our building and grounds
- outreach to colleges and young adults

**Question 3—How do we respond to rapid growth in Sunday services (without adding another service)?**

- expand into Gathering Hall
- use an overflow room where the whole service is piped and projected
- stream services so people can listen remotely (in neighborhood groups?)
- rope off back rows early to encourage people to fill in closer to front
- ushers guide late comers to stand until children leave for RE
- use choir seating on Sundays even when choir isn’t singing
- have children go directly to RE rather than start in sanctuary
- hold satellite services in other communities (esp. Redmond)

**Question 4—If we expand to more than one service, what might that look like?**

- early and later service (8:30 or 9:00 and 11:00) on Sunday mornings; the same or different content? one relaxed and conversational, the other more formal and structure?
- one short service (half-hour model), one longer service
- late afternoon Sunday service—more contemplative, vespers, Taize
- “folk” service on Saturday evening

- Wednesday service (informal family service; vespers; service for young adults/ college group)
- Circle worship—an intimate, unplugged service (not in sanctuary?) that addresses need of a particular generational group
- multicultural services—emphasis on Latino community?
- more lay-led services
- use rooms and physical space in new ways; changed seating in sanctuary to create intimacy when groups are smaller
- coffee hour between services so people can stay connected
- children’s RE between services
- faith development groups between services
- social justice and other meetings at 9 a.m. or at the same time as one of the services
- discussion group before the service
- satellite services in Redmond/Sisters at different times
- shuttle from auxiliary parking lots to address parking issues

### **Things to consider as we move forward:**

- growth is an opportunity rather than a problem
- don’t be afraid of change; this congregation has continued to experience change since our founding
- make changes on a trial basis before settling on final design
- keep the lines of communication open
- survey the congregation (targeted) about structures, how they want to worship
- research what other congregations do
- introduce a change in the fall or at the start of a new year
- not everything needs to be intergenerational—services can address interests and needs of a particular generational or cultural group
- acknowledge that people have different spiritual needs, thus different structures, opportunities
- use our physical spaces intentionally to create intimacy (have a dedicated “connection room” after services for deeper conversations than at coffee hour; go back to fewer chairs more widely spaced in the sanctuary)
- use this time of change as an opportunity to co-create and examine our culture, how we relate to change; this is not just about the mechanics of a second service
- remember what we stand for and the ideas that keep us united--core issues and values, our mission

### **Challenges**

- scheduling of children’s RE
- scheduling of small group ministries and social justice informational sessions
- scheduling of meditation group
- scheduling of the coffee hour/social events

- parking (carpooling, shuttle service from parking lots, shuttle to COCC dorms and OSU, Cascade to encourage more young adult participation)
- recruiting volunteers for two services; AV needs
- choir—when will they sing? different music at two services? House band, youth choir
- impact of these changes on Scott's and staff time?