FUUSD Music Survey July-August 2014

TOPLINE FINDINGS

Purpose of the Survey

• Give members of the congregation an opportunity to contribute their thoughts as Rev. Kathleen and the Music and Worship Arts Task Group shape the job description and evaluate potential candidates.

• Help the new Minister of Music and Worship Arts (MMWA) better understand who we are as a congregation and where we want to go.

228 respondents: similar profile to those who responded to 2013 Ministerial Search Survey. Good representation from both Hillcrest services and South Bay.

FINDINGS:

• Congregants like the music program we have created at First UU and want to see it grow and thrive.
  o People see great programs, great talent, great resources that we can build on.
  o Open to changes because they will strengthen us and help us grow, not because people see some big problem needing to be fixed.
  o Top priority for a new MMWA is that s/he be able to draw on these existing resources: work well with clergy, music staff and congregants & coordinate our many ensembles.

• Strong common ground about the role music plays for us individually and as a congregation. Major themes (drawn from survey questions and open-endeds):
  1) Building/reflecting community
  2) Creating space for the sacred
  3) Worship and spiritual/emotional development
  4) History/shared culture and identity

• Vision for the future
  o Congregation is open to change. When asked which of two statements about tradition and change came closer to their point of view,
    • 75% said “The world is changing around us: we need to try new ways of doing things, even if it’s uncomfortable and we make mistakes”;
    • 25% said “Our traditions make us who we are: any changes should be made slowly and carefully even if we fall out of step with the times.”
    • Responses on this question were NOT strongly correlated with age, length of church membership, or music preference.
  o Most respondents welcome greater variety/experimentation in music and worship arts. Key priorities:
    • Maintain rich tradition of classical music while making it more varied;
TOP LINE FINDINGS

- Increase use of less traditional sources (including music, spoken word, theater, drumming);
- Widespread openness to a more interactive/participatory worship style;
- Desire for “high quality” music and worship arts: meaning, technically proficient, emotionally authentic, with artistic merit. *(NB: Most have a fairly inclusive definition of “merit.”)*

  o Congregants hope for music that is welcoming, diverse, accessible
    - Reflects full diversity of congregation
    - Reflects diversity of San Diego/is welcoming to newcomers
    - Many expressed preferences for specific types or styles of music, but many of the same people also expressed a desire for variety reflecting our diversity. One respondent put it this way: “Each of us may be able to think something like, ‘I can listen to this if others like it. My kind of music will have its turn too.’”
    - Strong interest in opportunities for congregation to get involved in music, especially in less formal ways (jam sessions, open-mike night, sing-alongs)

  o Widespread support for a larger role for music in RE & better integration of children/youth into worship planning and programming

- Priorities for a MMWA
  - TOP priority: good administrator, able to work with current leaders.
  - Has a deep understanding of liturgical arts
  - Has experience with a wide range of musical styles and traditions
  - Connects well with people (82%); inspiring (77%)
  - Engages children and youth (75%)
  - Not a lot of experience or expectation when it comes to a pastoral or teaching role for music & music leaders.
    - There is little opposition to the idea of creating the position of Minister of Music and Worship Arts, but people want to understand the rationale.

- Communications
  - Strong call for keeping lines of communication open, making decision-making transparent and accountable, ensuring that information about music, events, and opportunities is available.
228 respondents:

Demographically, respondents were largely comparable to those who responded to 2013 ministerial search survey:

- There was the same breakdown in with respect to age and length of membership
- Respondents to the music survey were somewhat more likely to be frequent church goers

The findings described below represent common ground across all demographic categories: there were very few differences in responses related to age, musicianship, or service attended

ABOUT RESPONDENTS:

- Regular church-goers:
  - 92% attend church at least once a month
  - 64% attend 3+ times a month
  - Which service:
    - 54% Hillcrest 9:30
    - 38% Hillcrest 11:30
    - 8% South Bay

- Long-time members
  - 62% have attended First UU for more than 10 years
  - 48% have attended for more than 15 years
**FUUSD Music Survey July-August 2014**

**FINDINGS**

- **Older**: more than half (52%) between 60-79 (NB: this is in line with what was reflected in ministerial search survey)

![Bar chart showing age distribution]

- **Participation in music**
  - About 1/3 of respondents (35%) describe themselves as musicians; 65% do not
  - Q6: During the past three years, how have you participated in providing music at First Church?
    - About 41% of those who answered the question have participated in at least one of the formal musical activities listed, beyond singing with the congregation. Many have participated in more than one:
      - 24% have been in a choir
      - 11% have participated in Looking Glass Theater (LGT)
      - 9% have children in a choir
      - 7% have been guest performers
      - NB these are not necessarily self-described musicians – a fair number of people who say they are not musicians have participated in formal music or performing arts (mostly choirs, also LGT)
  - 90% of respondents sing with the congregation during services
    - 55% indicate this is the only way they participate in church music
**WHAT IS MUSIC FOR?**

- **For me personally (Q7)**

What roles does music play in your PERSONAL worship experience?

For me **personally** music in worship is about….

* (percentage saying they *strongly* agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… Centering &amp; finding a place of sacred calm</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… Appreciating other people’s musical talents</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… Connecting with my church community</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… Appreciating great works of art</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… Getting in touch with my emotions</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… Getting energized</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… Having fun</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… Relaxing</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Comments emphasize the spirituality of music in worship. Top themes:
  - Music connects me to the sacred or to a higher power.
  - Spiritual importance of connecting with other people in creating and listening to music during worship.
  - Thematic consistency—when the lyrics or theme of a piece reinforce the message of the sermon and the power of the service.
### Findings

**For the congregation as a whole (Q8):**

What roles do you think music and worship arts should play in the life of our CONGREGATION?

Music and Worship Arts at First Church should be about…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...Connecting with each other in community</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Celebrating UU values</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Deepening our spiritual understanding</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Helping us open up emotionally</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Having fun</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Attracting new members</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Building bridges to the wider community</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Exploring new styles of music and worship</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Strengthening our commitment to social justice</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Comments emphasize connection with each other & with wider community:**
  - **Music connects us to each other and to the rest of the community. It brings me to church & brings others to us**
  - **Heals us so we can heal the world.**
    - Gives voice to the voiceless
    - Feeds the soul
    - Raises us up, antidote to personal/social challenges we face elsewhere
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FINDINGS

SUNDAY WORSHIP

• Importance of Sunday worship (Q9)
  o Most say Sunday worship is IMPORTANT to their spiritual identity (59%)
    but it’s not the be-all and end-all

![Bar chart showing responses to Q9]

- The only time I think about my spiritual identity: 4%
- Central to my spiritual identity: 18%
- Important to my spiritual identity: 59%
- A fairly minor aspect of my spiritual identity: 18%
- Not at all important to my spiritual identity: 2%

• What are people doing during music in services (Q10)
  o “Listeners” (50%) outnumber “feelers” (38%) and “readers” (12%)
• How participatory should worship be? (Q11)
  • Congregation is split over exactly where to draw the line
    • 55% say “the congregation participates actively in A FEW musical elements of the service; worship team and musicians provide most of the music”
    • 40% say “the congregation is invited to participate actively in MOST musical elements of the service”
    • (Margin of error is +/- 6%)
    • NB: other questions and open-ended responses indicated widespread interest in incorporating more participatory/interactive worship

Q11 Which type of worship service would you find most satisfying?
Answered: 220 Skipped: 8

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

The congregation is invited to participate actively in EVERY musical element of the service
The congregation is invited to participate actively in MOST musical elements of the service
The congregation participates actively in A FEW musical elements of the service; Worship team and musicians provide most of the music
Worship team and musicians provide all the music; congregation participates by listening
• What are the roles of a song leader? (Q12)

Our congregation uses song leaders to help lead the congregation in hymns and group singing. What do you think are the MOST important roles of a song leader? (pick only three)

(percentage saying this is one of the MOST important roles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps me learn the tune</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps me sing more confidently</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates connection between me and people leading service</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps me understand or appreciate the hymn more</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lets me know when to get louder/softer/faster/slower</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tells about the context or history of what we are singing</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains the translation and proper pronunciation of the lyrics</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top two
### ABOUT A MINISTER OF MUSIC AND WORSHIP ARTS

- What are the MOST important roles for a MMWA? (Q13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works with existing music staff to coordinate the many choirs and ensembles in the congregation</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works with other church leaders and staff to integrate music and worship arts into our broader mission</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps engage children and youth in music and worship arts</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engages in worship planning</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors and develops leadership in members of the congregation, especially when it comes to music and worship</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as a “musical ambassador” to the larger community</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides pastoral care to musicians, worship leaders</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preaches sermons on occasion</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches in the Religious Education Program</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides pastoral care for all members of the congregation, including hospital or home visits</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Things most often seen as NOT AT ALL important:
  - Preaching (12%)
  - Teaching RE (11%)
  - Pastoral care for congregation (10%)
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**FINDINGS**

- Most important QUALITIES for a MMWA (Q14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is each of these QUALITIES in a Minister of Music and Worship Arts?</th>
<th>(percentage saying quality is VERY IMPORTANT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works well with ministers and music staff</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is warm and connects well with people emotionally</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a deep understanding of music and the liturgical arts</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has experience with a wide range of musical styles and traditions</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can inspire others</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a talented performer</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a personal call to ministry</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an ordained minister</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 15% say being an ordained minister is NOT AT ALL important

  In open-ended questions, several said they weren’t against having a minister of worship arts, but they didn’t see the need or would like to understand the rationale better.

- Most people have very limited experience with a pastoral role for music leaders (Qs15/16)
  - 65% say they have spoken with a music leader about music or worship
  - Only 10% have spoken with a music leader about a personal problem
  - Some difference between musicians and non-musicians
    - Musicians are more likely to have spoken with a music leader about music or worship (79% have/21% have not [vs 56%/44% for non musicians]).
    - However, musicians are NOT much more likely to have spoken with a music leader about a personal/pastoral issue (15% have/85% have not [vs 8%/92% for non musicians])
MUSICAL STYLES

- Musical styles in worship: what styles/genres help you grow spiritually, help you center, give you energy? (Q17)
  - Spiritual growth: Spirituals/classical music/world/folk/gospel
  - Centering: Classical music
  - Energy: Pop/rock; Latin American; drumming; jazz; gospel
  - Main comment themes:
    - It depends! On tonal quality, mood, tempo, language, quality of performance
    - It is good to have a wide variety of styles and genres
    - Some elements provoke a love/hate reaction, notably: rock; organ; liturgical dance

- Professionals or volunteers? (Q18) If people HAVE to choose:
  - 60% agree that “volunteers from the congregation should provide most of the music during services, even if this means the performances are not as polished.”
  - 40% agree that “highly talented musicians should provide most of the music during services, even if these musicians are professionals from outside our congregation.”
  - Given the margin of error (+/- 6.5% on this question, because of a smaller base) this is not a very strong tilt. Related comments in the open-ended questions:
    - Many people emphasized that there should be a mix of volunteers and professionals
    - Most comments tended to lean in favor of having music come from the congregation, or pointed out “professional” elements that current volunteer musicians have (or should have), including:
      - Depth of well-trained talent in congregation
      - Well-rehearsed, polished performances
      - Authenticity and heart
    - Guest musicians can provide greater variety, or offer specialized music appropriate to a given worship theme

- Comfort with being expressive/emotive (Q19). A rousing and upbeat song is being played during a service. The musicians and some members of the congregation begin to clap in time and dance. What are you MOST LIKELY to do?
  - 37% clap enthusiastically
  - 30% clap, maybe feel awkward
  - 11% participate reluctantly
  - 13% sit attentively
  - 9% want to leave
INNOVATION & CHANGE

• **Innovation or Tradition? (Q20)** If people HAVE to make a choice:
  o 75% would say that “The world is changing around us: we need to try new ways of doing things, even if it’s uncomfortable and we make mistakes.”
  o 25% would say that “Our traditions make us who we are: any changes should be made slowly and carefully even if we fall out of step with the times.”

• **Worship resources—should they be used less, more, or about as they are now? (Q21)**
  o Most respondents generally like how much current grey & blue hymnals are being used.
    ▪ Grey hymnal: 15% would like more; 19% would like less; 67% about right.
    ▪ Teal hymnal: 25% would like more, 10% would like less; 66% about right
    ▪ Purple hymnal 29% want more, 24% want less; 47% about right.
      • Note: a lot of Hillcrest respondents left this one blank (presumably because they are less familiar with the purple hymnal, which is used by the choir but not by the congregation)
  o **Strong interest in more:**
    ▪ Visual arts 56%
    ▪ Participatory arts 50%
    ▪ Theater 48%
  o **Comments:**
    ▪ People open to experimentation; but want new forms to be “high quality” as much as possible (open-ended Q 24 offers some insight into what this means);
    ▪ A fair bit of interest in incorporating more visual elements into service;
    ▪ Many urged more movement, loosening up (with recognition that movement is problematic for some).
    ▪ **Notes of caution:**
      ▪ Cultural appropriation,
      ▪ Some concern that current(previous efforts at participatory elements (rounds, responsive readings, call/response) haven’t always worked well or made the respondent uncomfortable.
      ▪ “Change is challenging but we are open to it”; one or two people talked about ways their own perspectives and preferences have changed as they have gotten more exposure to new forms and more comfortable with them.
**COMMUNICATION**

- **What forms of communication are people likely to use? (Q22)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Method</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk to people on patio after service</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Many/most say they will use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak up at a topic-specific open forum or focus group</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Some say they will use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to worship leaders in the receiving line after services</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion box</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak up at a quarterly open forum (not topic specific)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make personal appointment</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Few say they will use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write in a journal or comment book that is read by the Executive Committee or Board</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a letter</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- People said they were NOT likely to use some communications methods:
  - Letter (64% say they are NOT very likely to do this)
  - Personal appointment (48%)
  - Comment book (48%)
  - Phone call (45%)
FINDINGS

Open Ended #23: Please share a story or a moment when you were moved or inspired by music during worship (either at First Church or in any other worship). Why was this moment meaningful for you?

Top responses:

• **Music enhancing a sense of community/bringing us together** (examples cited by many people include Arvid’s retirement party; Matt Meyer’s visit; congregational singing; singing, dancing together)
  o Especially powerful reflections on choir/vocal music
    ▪ Many people called out occasions when the choir got out of the loft and surrounded the congregation. People described it as very powerful to be surrounded by music, and to be part of making that music
    ▪ Lots of references to specific vocal pieces that brought joy, uplift, powerful emotion—these were a mix of contemporary, classical, popular, upbeat, meditative. Choirs, JUUL Tones, guest soloists
    ▪ Almost as many respondents said they resonated with instrumental pieces

• **Music and its messages reinforcing the theme of the service.** Notable examples:
  o GA Church of the Larger Fellowship service on water
  o Use of “Amazing Grace” in Arvid’s sermon on addiction and recovery
  o Memorial services
  o Bridging ceremony

• **Being connected to a great tradition and to personal memories**
  o Hearing/singing songs I grew up with; connecting to my tradition

• **Music tapping into deep emotions**
  o UUMN/power of a massed choir
  o Beauty and/or resonance of particular pieces

• **Children/youth**

• **Silence:** when people DON’T clap; when there is silence at meditation
Q24: What does “high quality music” mean to you?

Top responses:

- **Well-performed**: This was the most common element cited. “High quality” music is in tune, well prepared, with technical proficiency.
  - At the same time many emphasized that technical proficiency alone was not enough to make something “high-quality” – and in fact most people added one or more of the criteria below.
  - Many also noted that proficiency does not for them equal professional standards -- “professionalism, not perfection”

- **Emotionally authentic**: The second most common element held that “high quality” music has “heart” or is emotionally true.

- **Artistic merit**:
  - For a few people this merit was tied up with a specific genre (i.e. they saw ONLY classical or contemporary or jazz as having merit). Many others said they saw merit in a wide variety of styles or genres, though they had a personal preference for one or another.
  - Several also emphasized that “well crafted” does not equal “complex.”

- **Builds community**: High quality music in worship is not a performance but a sharing. Ideally it connects musicians to congregation, congregation to each other, musicians to musicians. Enjoyable to sing.

- **Supports the theme of the service**: many saw music in context of worship service and emphasized that the music and the message must reinforce each other. Speaks to common beliefs.

Other key themes

- **Variety of genres, welcoming to people of many different backgrounds and preferences.** (Not lowest common denominator—no one style will appeal to everyone—but making sure that everybody gets fed)

- **What we have now.**

- A few people questioned what they saw as elitism in calling music “high quality” in the first place – seeing this as code for “classical,” or as something that excludes people from making and appreciating music.
  - Most of these respondents emphasized the importance of inclusivity and heart.
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Q25: As you know, our music program is going through a period of transition and transformation. What kind of changes would you MOST like to see?

Top responses:

• We are changing because we are growing—we don’t have big problems that need to be fixed.
  o Many people noted that they like what First UU has built in its music program, especially over the last couple of years.
    ▪ A few saw no reason to change anything (it ain’t broke); a very few wanted wholesale changes (e.g. de-emphasize music in service, as it distracts from the sermon and the important work we do).
    ▪ Most described adjustments—ways they would like to see us grow from where we are now.
  o We should continue to make use of the great resources we already have in terms of talent and instruments.
    ▪ Many people called for finding a high-caliber organist/maintaining the role of the organ in worship [NB: this was not universally supported—as noted elsewhere the organ is quite polarizing!]

• What do people want to see going forward?
  o A wide variety of music.
    ▪ Openness to experimentation
      ▪ Theater, movement, spoken word, performance art
      ▪ Guest musicians as appropriate (allows us to hear something new, something that is especially relevant to a worship theme)
    ▪ A lot of interest in music that is interactive, energetic, accessible, spiritual (several shoutouts to Matt Mayer)
    ▪ Maintaining rich classical tradition (and making it more varied)
  o Music that is welcoming
    ▪ Reflects diversity of congregation
    ▪ Reflects the diversity of San Diego.
  o Music that brings us together—wholehearted congregational singing
  o Music that is integrated into worship. Additional comments on this theme:
    ▪ Some concern about amplification (can be too loud/not “worshipful”)
    ▪ Allowing space for meditation
    ▪ Music in worship is NOT performance (applause)
o **Integrate youth**
  - Make music a bigger part of kids’ RE
    - Dancing/drumming
    - More interaction between music programming and RE (church musicians/groups visit RE classes?)
    - Kids as guest performers
    - Kids/youth voices heard more in music and worship planning

o **Music accessible to the whole congregation**
  - Opportunities for congregation to get involved in music (perhaps in a less formal setting). Some suggestions:
    - Guest performances by small ‘occasional’ congregational groups [not standing/ongoing; instead preparing one or two numbers]
    - Talent shows/open-mike nights
    - Sing-alongs
    - Jam nights
    - After-worship music get-togethers
  - Readers’ theater etc offers avenue for people who aren’t musical to make offerings during worship
    - Several suggestions that we bring back the Credo/This I Believe
  - Easy to sing/easy for people who don’t read music
  - Many people noted they like seeing the words on the screen, both in hymn singing AND in performances by vocalists

o **Some wanted a conversation about the role of hymns in worship (especially traditional hymns from grey book):**
  - Need music more relevant to modern world
  - Hymns not welcoming for “unchurched”

• **Keep lines of communication open**
  o Clergy/music staff need to be open with congregation (some noted that this seems to be happening now & that there are opportunities for congregation to stay in the loop and be heard)
  o Congregation – how can we let our opinions be known without hurting feelings
  o How congregants can get involved in musical opportunities