

CONGREGATIONAL VISION MEETINGS
First Congregational Church of Burlington, UCC
2021



Question #1 What brought you here?

Themes:

(listed in accordance to frequency of occurrence)

The most frequently mentioned answer to this question listed some form of our ministry of **Welcome** as being important, including:

- + mentioning welcome generally
- + coming because they were invited
- + saying First Church was responsive to their inquiries
- + several said it was important to them that they were recognized by name on their second visit

The next most popular category mentioned was **Outreach** or Social Justice, including:

- + Missions
- + Social Witness
- + Social Activism
- + Progressive Values
- + being Accepting/Inclusive

Having young children or our **Youth** programs was frequently mentioned.

Many mentioned **Music** – in worship or in the form of choir participation – as being important.

It was common for folks to say they first visited the church after **Moving**.

Some mentioned our **Denomination** as being important to their first visit.

Others mentioned **Staff** as being important to what brought them, including:

- + the ministers (Bob or Martin)
- + Lucy
- + preaching
- + *In addition to these, 2 people mentioned they were first brought here as staff*

Several said they were brought by someone in their **Family** – parents *or* children.

Some said our sense of **Community** was important to bringing them here, including:

- + mentioning community generally
- + finding people their age here

A sense of the **Spirit** was mentioned as being important to bringing folks here.

Our **Virtual Services** were what brought a few folks here.

Our downtown **Location** had an impact on bringing some.

A few said the content on our **Website** was important to bringing them here.

A couple folk said they were **Married** here and then started attending.

Others said they liked our **Worship** services generally, and that was important.

Question #1

What brought you here?

Quotes

- I grew up in a Congregational/UCC Church. I was very active in the choir/youth.... By the first stanza of the first hymn, I knew I was home....
- Grew up in a Congregational Church; was friends with the minister's child
- I went to a UCC church in college... wanted to find another one when I moved to VT. I looked online and found FCCB. I liked their missions and interests.
- I was in search of community - wanting to be a part of something bigger than myself. I could be a progressive Christian and be accepted.
- I attended a service and later that same week the minister recognized me, by name. I loved the music and the preaching. It was welcoming.
- Welcoming community. My kids could make their own decisions and their journey would be accepted no matter what path they took.
- I came because Bob Lee was the pastor and I knew him.... Sense of mission..... lots of downtown, physical presence.
- I was friends in High School with some kids who went here. They were having fun in youth group and I came with them.
- I ran into this lady on the ski slopes and she was a member. I had been looking for a church.
- I am a lifelong member of the United Church of Christ. Ultimately, it was my child who brought me here, to FCCB.
- My parents.... Joined the choir, and the bell choir,... and Sunday School.
- The choir, to start with.
- I went to websites of several churches and the website of this church caught my attention...the kind of social witness this church proclaims. We appreciate the fact that this church...has taken a positive move to be inclusive in a lot of different ways.
- I came to the Possibility Shop and liked the warmth that I got from the volunteers.
- What first attracted me to First Church was music.
- I was born here. I've been affiliated...off and on, through various phases of life, for ever.
- My parents. I was baptized as a newborn.... Church School... the trip to Europe with the Lawrences.
- The primary thing that called me there was the music.
- My parents were members of this church. I was brought up going to church, so it was natural for me to come. ...[I was away and now I am back] I started attending church online this winter and really like the openness and welcoming.
- My parents. I think they sampled a couple of places. We came when I was five.
- First Night. First thing that connected us with First Church was the architecture. Martin Copenhaver greeted us by name after we attended just one service. It was that personal connection.
- We were already a part of the UCC and decided we would make a change and be here in VT.
- I sent out emails to every area church and the only church I heard back from was the First Congregational Church.

- I thought I wanted a big church where I could just blend in and hide and not have to do anything.... Didn't turn out to be the case. We attended a few services and just felt really comfortable and stayed.
- A chance to go to Lenten services, which were on Wednesdays. I had a tragedy and people were so kind. "I was a stranger and you welcomed me"
- Found out about First Church outreach. I went to Al-Anon there. I started checking out churches. This was the first one. I stayed.
- I grew up on a Congregational church and was very active in the youth and the choir...Attended a few times while I was here at UVM. When we moved back here, I came back, saying "that's my church and that is where I am going to go." Great kids' programs.
- I had heard Bob Lee other places. When we moved here and we were looking, I said, "this guy Bob Lee gives a nice sermon." And so we went and found a lot of really welcoming people. We felt very much at home. We liked the place and kept coming.
- We were church-shopping ... we drove around Burlington, looking for when churches would open and the first one was FCCB. We went in and were welcomed immediately.
- My friends were singing in a wonderful choir at FCCB and I decided to go sing in their choir. I have been here ever since.
- We considered a variety of churches - there was one in the town where we live. We decided on FCCB...We really feel at home here.
- We were shopping for churches and we came to First Church. I do not think we went to any other churches.
- We were starting a family and we really wanted to have our kids grow up in a church.
- COVID gave us an opportunity to look around from sitting in our living room, and watching the service at First Church was very encouraging to us. ...we were looking for a place, a church, where we could experience community with folks that shared our progressive values, and we feel we have found that.
- What brought us to First Church was Bob.
- When we decided to have children, we both decided we needed to find a church. We went to First Church and Martin Copenhaver was the minister at the time. We didn't look at any other church - that was it for us.
- We thought we would like our children to experience the kind of church experience we had.... One of our friends said, "you know, we're going to this First Church and you should check it out." And so I did... I guess the short answer is my kids brought me to church.
- I was brought up in a ...congregational church... I always sang in the choir and it was important to both my parents....My first job after graduate school was in Burlington...I was late to church and came here...the music has been really important to me.
- I was in and out of First Church 2-3 times a week and I got to know Lucy and some of the other church people.
- I was looking for a church and the First Congregational Church was the only one that answered the phone on a Friday afternoon of the churches that I called.
- Open and Affirming. Theology of letting your form your own opinion...the camaraderie.
- Looking for diversity, activism on social issues. Felt comfortable and welcomed. People weren't "in my face" about becoming a member.
- I met someone who wanted to start a book group, and I was hooked. ...I came in and that was the end of that...and I have never looked back.
- My parents!
- I did some church shopping...I just loved the music... I think music is the way to worship.

- I belonged to another UCC church for 35 years. We moved to this area and church shopped. It was the music that got me.
- My spouse said we should go to church - s/he grew up in a Congregational church.
- We were looking for a church because we had just moved here. We looked at another church, but we liked this one.
- We were new in town and for many years church was a place to form friendships and give back to the community... We knew being active in church would be a good way to get a plan.
- My mom was a member here when she was growing up. I was involved in youth group bells..so this is home to me.
- ..Someone in the community invited me and I felt connected.
- We had gone to another church in town...our kids were here because of the Sunday School program and music is important to me. I've gotten active here.
- We were married here and joined the church. We appreciate the feeling of small community hometown.
- The Youth Ministry when I first joined the church. I had young children and there was a great youth minister and youth service programs.
- ...a friend invited us to the First Church congregation ..and was introduced to Martin Copenhaver and found the service really dynamic and easy to connect to...we also found that the congregation reached out to us and we felt very welcomed and pleased to be part of the church community.
- ...for me, I am not proselytizing, but for me, the Divine makes no mistakes, and the bus came within one block of the church. And I went to the door and people were nice, and I looked at the bulletin and it says that it's Pride Sunday... and the people have been so nice. So, here I am.
- I have a partner who has always been led by the Spirit... I mean what I really liked about the church is their social message. Their friendliness. Everyone was warm. It felt like a bit family....I've always liked warm, welcoming churches and I don't think I have ever been in one like First Church. And that is that.
- When we were raising our kids we..were looking for a church.... What I love about First Church is we're acting our faith; we're reaching out to those in need.
- My department chair invited me to join the choir. Music forever.
- Lucy Samara found five people to help me move in the dead of winter and what a church I got!
- We were shopping around for a community with similar values and principles to the one we had left behind...we were looking for a place for our kids to grow up...and we came here. And Anna and Andy Barker turned around, said hello to us at the end of the service that first day. NO one else in Burlington had done that in precious situations. The real reason we are here is that the second Sunday, they remembered our names. Simple stuff like that means a lot.
- When we thought we might move to this area we were looking for a church that would be progressive and have an emphasis on justice, and, an openness to dialogue with different points of view and breadth of vision. We had been watching FCCB church services since July. That is what brought us here.
- I came as a staff member.
- We moved here and I wanted my daughter to have a youth program like what she had before we moved. She got involved with youth group choir and volunteering with other kids.
- I came to baptize my children. I was looking for an open and affirming church. I wanted them to have something different than what I had.
- We were married here. She joined and I followed.

- We had a falling out with our former church/denomination and we came here.
- I was called to apply for a position here.
- When our first child was born we wanted to find a place for them to be baptized. We wanted our child raised in a similar tradition to what we ourselves had been raised in.
- I was church shopping... the Sunday I came happened to be Jazz Sunday, and there were activities.. and the Onion River Band. I realized this place was special and nice and welcoming... I came back.. and every time I really enjoyed the message, the people and the environment.
- My parents. I was raised in the church. ,
- A friend invited us to First Church...we found the service really dynamic and easy to connect to... and we found that that congregation reached out to us.. we felt welcomed and pleased to be a part of this church community.
- I was church shopping. My daughter and a former pastor both mentioned FCCB to me and the bus came within one block of the church. The Divine makes no mistakes...I went to the door and people were nice... and it was Pride Sunday. So, here I am. I feel blessed and privileged to be in your midst.
- I have a wonderful partner, who is led by the Spirit. .. what I liked about the church is the social message. Their friendliness. Everyone was warm. It felt like a big family. ... I have always liked warm, welcoming churches and I do not think I have ever been in one like First Church. And that is that.
- We were looking for a church that was not judgmental. We were looking for a church that was accepting, a church that realized that we are not put on this earth to judge others.
- When we got to this church it's like this is a church with the potential for exactly what we are looking for....that all are accepted.
- There were people who are my age here.
- One of the things was that it was one of the closest churches for us to get to on Sunday morning.....Our kids were very small and I was pregnant....
- ...wanting to be a part of a spiritual community of people, which we are....when I choose a space to engage in community and engage in worship, I really need to feel that authenticity and creativity in our artistic, different ways of expressing that.
- I have, pretty much my whole life, wanted to be in a community of people who are sort of seeing something deeper beyond just daily activities and I find that in church...I grew up in a Congregational church... Music is important to me.
- ...the church was very close to where I lived (UVM campus)..I knew there were two churches in Burlington and I had every intention of checking both of them out. I stopped at this one and never left....I like the music. That's one of the things that drew me here.
- One of the first things we do in a new location is go church hunting. I was drawn here for two reasons.. there's the preaching, .., and of course, the music - the people were cordial and we went several times and it seemed a pretty good fit.
- It's a two part answer.....My family was attending another downtown church, but my friends were going to the Congregational Church.. .at 15, I wanted to be with my friends,...and when we moved back, we had started a family and we felt it was important to expose the children to church.
- When our child was born and we thought "oh my goodness! We have not baptized our child and she does not have a Christian family.. the people who would help lead her on the path and be an intergenerational connection.
- ...the reason we ended up at First Church was how friendly the people were when we were just strangers - and people talked to everybody.

- .we definitely were looking for a place where we could raise our children within community...The youth program was the number one thing... it seemed seamless with the rest of church life...the music was just great - like going to a concert every Sunday.