

CONGREGATIONAL VISION MEETINGS
First Congregational Church of Burlington, UCC
2021

Spiritual Nourishment and Need



Question #2 Why have you stayed?

Themes:

(listed in accordance to frequency of occurrence)

The most frequently mentioned answer to this question listed some feeling of **Belonging** as being important, including:

- + mentioning the community generally
- + sense of the church as family
- + church as home
- + a sense of pervasive welcome
- + friends and connections that have been made
- + fellowship
- + feeling cared for
- + presence of diversity

The next most popular category mentioned was **the Worship Experience**, including:

- + music
- + spiritual nourishment and spiritual need
- + the sermons
- + the whole worship generally
- + intellectual stimulation

Next was Opportunities for and Level of **Engagement of Community**

- + opportunities for service and mission
- + opportunities to engage
- + opportunities for growth
- + general vibrancy
- + being invited to engage

Many mentioned **Staff** – Elissa, and current staff.

Some mixture of **Values** was the next most common reason folks listed for staying, including:

- + values generally
- + inclusivity
- + living like Jesus

It was common for folks to say they stayed for their **Kids**

Some mentioned the **Building and Grounds** as being an important reason they stay.

Others mentioned **Duty**, loyalty, or sense of ownership the reason they return.

A few mentioned **Convenience** or comfort

Question #2

Why have you stayed?

Quotes

- I've stayed because I feel very met by everyone's work...I feel met by the activity of the church, both in the community with each other and in our wider Burlington community. ... I feel valued by the church and by this community. I want to keep being a part of it.
- The opportunities to get involved were varied and things that I was interested in getting involved in - as opposed to stretches, or insignificant...
- The 8 o'clock service was small enough that I really felt it was a family within a bigger church. And...I've always thought that the mission part of our church was very important.
- Because we've made wonderful friends.
- It's the people we know now - the connections - or children and the involvements we've had...it is a real anchor in our family life.
- I'm staying because it's a familiar place with familiar people that I care about and that I feel cared about by them as well.
- The welcoming, the way people welcomed us in church...I think because the sermons have been excellent and the worship services (even though they are remote, which I don't like at all)...I am really interested in how things are going to change.
- The leadership is great! .. It seems like it is a real opportunity to create a new face and a new conversation around who we are.
- I think what keeps me connected (in the time of Covid), frankly, is my husband, who is committed to continuing to go. So as part of our family life, the church is part of who we are and how we've been as a family...the strength of the community that is so welcoming...that inclusive element.
- Community, a welcoming community that has reached out to me personally, in some ways, in several ways... it is not just the choir for me either... the whole church has been very supportive.
- That hour has been a very peaceful and thought-provoking time for me... the welcoming statement is very significant for us.
- Out of a sense of duty...I feel the church has a place in the community, whatever that is. I feel I owe the church to try and make it work...I want to see the visioning work.
- The UCC has been a very wonderful, accepting of humanity... you seem to live what Jesus taught. That's good enough for me.
- I don't see anything better around the corner...this is just so much like a family.
- The messages that come from the pulpit each week are very timely...the connections you feel to the other members of the church are very important.
- We have been able to develop relationships with several of the people.
- The people are so caring and thoughtful.
- I feel confident in Elissa's theology...of great importance to me was a minister with substance, likable, kind, loving, ... and opportunities to serve.
- The minute you said that the first thing that popped into my head was "engagement and involvement."
- Family. And the sense of family at this church is huge.

- We've stayed because we love your pastor and we have stayed because we love your people... I've already been asked to be on a team... I am thrilled.
- I think it is a really high quality place in terms of sermons...I think Elissa's sermons are smart and engaging and provocative in the right ways. Also, high quality music. ...being invited to join in events... in addition to the service opportunities around the church.
- Someone welcoming me for the first time the family was here. What keeps me here is a sense of community. You know, the whole song "From a place where everybody knows your name."
- I stay because of the people..., because it is open and affirming and shows the love of God to our community.
- I like the community and the ministers. I find peace when I come here. It's part of my life.
- I stayed because of our child.
- This is my church home for more than 30 years.
- When you invest in a family, you stay.
- I could not leave this church for it was my family.
- It definitely goes back to the connection with the members of this community.
- I fell in love with the people.
- Family. I was a part of this family.
- I see the church as a chance to get to know people that might have similar values, and have a chance to reach out and be of service and grow.
- Most of our friends are here.
- It's relationships, community and friendships. .. I'm still learning, so I am still here.
- I became involved with the family.
- I like the sense of connection to something larger than ourselves and the world.
- I stayed to support my mom..... I have been comfortable here.
- I haven't stayed all the time....I am back,... mostly because I need church.
- Because it is always growing, always challenging...I want to be part of making change.
- Church has a vibrancy to it, a very active congregation, stirring sense of fellowship, lots of mixing and mingling... also like the minister's sermons. Lots of purpose.
- Every time I was moving away, someone reached out to me and re-engaged me, which I really appreciated...I feel good about our leaders and my connection to them.
- Sanctity of that time with people in worship...Church felt like home away from home ...seemed like a family... Cannot imagine life without FCCB..Music....
- My contributions are in no way complete... Music.. connection...mission and global outreach.
- How I feel when I sat in the pew... a feeling of peace and comfort,
- Because it is an important part of my life...I know the church is not the building, but I have still missed the place...It's always been my home...it's the people.. it's the building itself..
- We have been impressed with the activity going on during the week. ..It's a ministry I think we have all internalized and taken out wherever we are.
- It has become home. It makes sense...the music.

- We have felt welcomed here.
- The level of importance that we do hold in outreach, the music's kept me here, and my wonderful friends I look forward to seeing.
- This church has really been home for all of us.
- It is a family oriented church.
- I would say the question is not so much why have I stayed as why do I keep coming back....It feels like a faith home and it is not stale.
- It feels like home...
- The feeling of belonging, meeting new friends, getting to understand the Bible through Bible study, belonging to the Women's; Fellowship because there was a lot of activity there.
- All the opportunities for fellowship and getting to know people in a variety of different activities - good mixture - and the people....
- I am in sync with the church's belief system; I like the social justice aspect of church... I am a teacher and the teachings - equity and diversity - echo what I try to do in the classroom.
- I don't want to go anywhere else.
- We have enjoyed every pastor that came. We have enjoyed the music and Dr. Neiweem.
- Love for the community and the people. Love for the music and for the programming and dedication to social justice. I'm committed to the mission of this church.
- Family and activity kept us. Great place to meet people and do stuff together.
- I really have a church family.
- The Christian Action Committee and Lucy. .. this volunteering was a huge part of my satisfaction...the social justice and equity work.
- I made really close friends with a number of people in the congregation...I enjoy physically being in the building for worship. I find it comforting, relaxing.
- Well, because of the kids... It feels like a sanctuary....For sure the music...
- The sanctuary is a peaceful space...I find the diversity certainly a strong piece.
- It feels like my church home... I love the music.
- David's introductions to the music.....I love everything about it.
- I stayed because of the music program... I stayed on because I became interested in all of the programs First Church has and I've been a part of them in some way.
- First I want to clarify that we have had ample opportunities with moving around not to stay...Zoom has saved us. I really feel a strong bond to the Burlington Church. I think our present minister is unbelievable... We very much enjoy the fellowship hour.
- It fits my values and my understanding and belief practices of what it is to be a Christian, and to live in the way of Jesus...the fact that the church is ...looking to discover things and continue its collective journey, faith journey... I need some sort of religious activity on a regular basis.
- We had the opportunity to meet with Elissa out on the front lawn..and we're so taken with what a down to earth, real, open person she is.
- The primary reason that we're still here through this time is Elissa and her preaching, and Hannah, I would say.
- The church community is important to me. .. The music program is incredibly important to me.

- I find the minister incredibly important... I feel a connection with the Memorial Garden.
- These are my peeps. These are my faith family, regardless of who is behind the pulpit...I am just delighted by Elissa, the entire staff...its the pastors, the preaching, the music, people who come to church, the laughs and the smiles and the crying and the hugs - and the committee work, too.
- The sermons.
- It's a wonderful opportunity for expression of my faith and for my opportunities to serve and to be with others.
- The theology is right... and I love the people.
- Excited to raise my child in a diverse, supportive community.
- I have stayed for the faith and the worship platform it provides me, the encouragement.
- I enjoy going every Sunday. I'm looking forward to getting back to being able to go.
- I stayed because I became a member and people kept asking me to do things...But when we got Elissa...I'm one who the minister has got to be spiritual, and that's Elissa... and the music.
- One is the excellence of the staff....Elissa is inspiring...at least 50% of my dearest friends are members.
- People!
- The welcoming... inclusiveness...caliber of the people - living their faith and mission
- Convenience
- Why do I stay? Because it's my church. And that's it.