

OCUUC COTTAGE MEETINGS

February 11 through 20

We had six cottage meetings in locations including two in Costa Mesa, one in Orange, one in Huntington Beach, one in Irvine, and one in Long Beach. Less than fifty people attended, counting the ETF members. All roughly followed the "script"--or talking points--provided.

Interestingly, the comments at each meeting did not necessarily reflect the overall "tone" of the meeting. Since people were invited to express their concerns, they were very generous in offering them even though they may or may not have troubled feelings about the potential merger. Here are the raw data:

1. "What do you need or hope to have in your church community in regard to the following?"

a. Sunday services -

- *good music and lots of it (consistently mentioned as big attraction)
- *more meditative and classical music, not always "swinging"
- *sometimes too much music which prolongs service
- *don't like religious revival stuff with arm waving
- *variety in services
- *feeling of community
- *outside speakers as well as good ministers
- *something to think about and inspire, new ideas, brain stretching
- *uplifting environment
- *continue children participating; enjoy them now and would like to see teenagers participating
- *less children participating; make time for all ages shorter and less frequent
- *more space in the sanctuary
- *offertory later
- *silent joys and concerns
- *would like to return to one service
- *like option of two services
- *should expect not to like everything all the time
- *explore language changes like Tapestry is doing

b. Social events -

- *likes potlucks
- *likes auctions
- *too much reliance on auctions for social events
- *dissatisfaction because church rentals make facilities unavailable for social events
- *softball games, dances, family game nights
- *group outings
- *more special day parties (4th of July, etc.)
- *"mix it up" with covenant groups after six months to give more chance to know people

- *keep concerts, good social and music combo
- *work parties a good way to get to know people
- *miss Circle Suppers and monthly luncheons

c. Space -

- *Sanctuary that looks like a sanctuary
- *more space for activities and eating together
- *Sanctuary large enough to accommodate without looking too big
- *WINDOWS (frequent mention)
- *more rooms for different purposes, different sizes
- *sanctuary for 400-500 with separate, large social hall
- *separate rental spaces
- *two separate buildings: sanctuary and social hall
- *perhaps really big rooms with dividers
- *lots of parking
- *office space, kids playground
- *good acoustics
- *"green" building, environmentally sound
- *more storage
- *agrees Irvine is the most central location
- * large room which can be darkened for AV use
- *quiet, attractive space, away from traffic and other distractions
- *light, open sanctuary with garden view
- *bathrooms near children, perhaps one just for them
- *kitchen away from sanctuary
- *thinks finding suitable space for both congregations is a "pipe dream"

d. Community outreach -

- *Faith in Action good, continue it
- *Continue loose plate custom and ATM
- *Would like space for community pre-school and afterschool care
- *need more publicity, missing since Linda S. gone
- *better signage needed, perhaps space to advertise sermon of week
- *ministerial op-ed pieces in religion sections of local newspapers
- *community oriented projects
- *outreach to college students
- *improve accessibility
- *better follow-up to marketing campaign
- *ushers more active in seating late comers
- *don't see outreach as a big issue, loose plate and rental space helps this

e. Decision Making Processes

- *not enough people for volunteers to keep amenities going
- *need new bylaws
- *decide and publicize how much individual needs to do to support church in all ways
- *keep current decision-making structure

- *if we hear better ideas, we'll take them
- * better small group communication, better knowledge of "who does what"
- *for merger, everyone should be heard
- *most satisfied, with two exceptions: request for outside audit was ignored; staff shouldn't speak at meetings.
- *likes cottage-style meetings
- *make presentation before congregational vote taken
- *send out an agenda highlighting important meetings, etc. for those who don't read the REACH
- *not enough followup on members and friends who disappear
- *not enough resources on membership committee for followup
- *hard to find out how to do things
- *church heavy on jobs to do - many committees, taxing those willing to lead. Advantage with larger church in having larger volunteer pool.
- *satisfied with board and town hall meetings

2. What is your "sacred cow"--the one thing that is essential to you in a church home?

- *Look like a church, not a warehouse; appearance and mood of sanctuary
- *murals
- *energize my juices - being motivated by music and sermon
- *opportunities for small groups to be able to meet in intimate setting
- *music--beautiful, aesthetic
- *windows in sanctuary (mentioned at most meetings)
- *physical beauty for the sanctuary
- *comfortable chairs
- *interesting sermons
- *feeling of welcome, including for people not socially adept
- *landscaping for attractive outdoor area
- *high ceilings
- *eating together
- *good RE for children and adults
- *children better integrated into church curriculum
- *stress on UU principles
- *theater
- *sermons that stretch my mind, music that stretches my soul
- *chance to participate
- *good acoustics
- *good coffee grounds, area
- *memorial area
- *no more street noise
- *carpeting

3. Concerns about merger

- *cost of new building

- *location too far away from my home
- *loss of community in larger church
- *no windows
- *loss of members
- *drop in enthusiasm after a "honeymoon" period
- *not being skeptical enough now to anticipate problems
- *coping with new ideas and methods
- *Will it really be more economical?
- *process too fast
- *need for joint cottage meetings with Tapestry
- *concern numbers would be above "critical mass"
- *need to quantitatively explore possible situations.
- *Can one big church do more to further UUism than several small ones?
- *How will potential members from Costa Mesa and HB hear about us? Will they be likely to go to different location?
- *being distracted from five-year plan
- *Shouldn't we just solve our parking problem or look for bigger plant on our own?
- *What are our objectives?
- *Wouldn't we have an extra minister? Do we need two?
- *fear of complete collapse if it doesn't work
- *hard to get to meetings at night
- *need for honest evaluation of prospects, positive and negative
- *more time to work together with Tapestry and get to know one another
- *not enough thought about the Big Vision
- *need to maintain Caring Committee as is

4. Advantages of merger

- *strong expression of looking forward in one group
- *more programs for a diverse population
- *bigger pool of people for leadership positions
- *opportunities to meet more like-minded people
- *more money for better building and program; economics of scale
- *energizing to be with a lot of people
- *attractive location for future UU leadership recruitment (ministers, RE, etc.)
- *We've outgrown our space, need to do something
- *Joint service was wonderful
- *new ideas and methods
- *built-in replacement for Karen when she decides to retire
- *being able to do more, have more activities
- *John's sermon on "state of the congregation was superb
- *slow decrease of membership with space crunch--"frog in slowly boiling water" analogy
- *create a new corps of UUs
- *more volunteers
- *being near a university

*opportunity to have the courage to build UUism for future and see ourselves as stewards of our faith, not just a community for ourselves right now.

*shot in the arm for the congregations

*opportunity for more involvement beyond Sunday morning

*attract more people in "mid-range" age

5. Will you come, and what are you willing to do?

*Group 1: a unanimous yes

*Two: didn't poll but wants another joint service

*Three: ranged from "I'm not happy with it" to "probably...I can't imagine not...of course"

*Four: had 7 yes, 2 maybe

*Five: didn't poll but had offers of helping research details and identify consultants

*Six: also didn't poll.