



AGGREGATE NOTES FROM DISCERNMENT GROUPS HELD FALL, 2021

GROUP 1

Overall "takeaways" from the meeting:

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged both spiritually and intellectually?

- FEED COUNTRYSIDE'S PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT - Challenge us with non-traditional theology.
- MORE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE IN OUR SERVICE AND IN SMALL GROUP SETTINGS.
- CONTINUE THE STRONG EMPHASIS ON MUSIC IN OUR CHURCH.
- REINVIGORATE THE LECTURE SERIES WITH LOCAL AND NATIONALLY KNOWN
- SPEAKERS, AUTHORS AND LECTURERS.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- PASTORAL CARE OF INDIVIDUALS IN OUR CONGREGATION - Pastoral Care Director position, Stephen Ministry
- CONTINUE AND EXPAND COMMUNITY CUPBOARD NEEDS.
- ALL ARE WELCOME - Care for new members. Reinstate Mary Beth's position.
- OUTREACH TO IMMIGRANTS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN TF PROGRAMMING: EDUCATION, YOUTH ACTIVITIES, SOCIAL. Small group sharing opportunities like 9 to Dine.
- STRIVE TO BE LEADERS IN THIS RADICAL EXPERIMENT IN INCLUSIVITY.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged both spiritually and intellectually?

- Include a spiritual practice in our worship service. For instance, With Alex providing musical accompaniment, the congregation is provided a relevant topic, shown on the screens. A few minutes of meditation brings focus to the morning lesson.

- Two observations on clapping during the service: It's a distraction. And, artists appreciate the positive feedback on their impact on listeners.

Sermons:

- Bible story interpretations need to have varying viewpoints, historical context, translation variations.
- We want relevance to our lives.
- Feed Countryside's progressive Christian spirit. Challenge us with non-traditional theology.
- More ritual in our services.
- Music at Countryside is a vital component. Alex is a treasure.
- Small groups (4-6) meeting in homes for a period of time, ie: once/week for 4-6 weeks, to participate in spiritual practices/reflections similar to those in the Richard Rohr and Patrick Boland book, "Everything is Sacred (40 practices/reflections on the universal Christ.*)" Small groups build community while deepening our connections with the Divine. Deep sharing opportunities are vital in a large church.
- If we combine the Sunday services into one, we would 1. Enhance to opportunity for community and mixing. 2. Make our large sanctuary feel warmer with more people filling the 600 seats. 3. The wonderful mix of music we appreciate each week is now the same at each service so traditional vs jazz id no longer a preference issue. 4. Ease the work load of our pastors.
- Rejuvenate a Lecture Series. Look for and carefully vet locally and nationally renowned speakers, authors, lecturers to help move us forward on our spiritual journeys.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

Help those who have needs:

- The Community Cupboard is key to our service. Extra needs have been identified through the pantry and we strive to fulfill those needs. ie: books distributed.
- Identify groups working with immigrants and partner to help with needs, ie: literacy, financial literacy, housing, family support, etc. Is the Tri-Faith community working on this?
- Pastoral needs are many. We must have a pastoral care position to work with the ministers. Stephen's Ministers.
- Integrate new members purposefully - plug them in. Mary Beth was great at this. Do we need a staff position like hers?
- Are we ready for political activism? Are we called to speak out more? Join OTOC? Take public stands on moral issues. Focus on environmental activism locally.

- All Are Welcome is a call to offer warmth and welcome. Focus on effectively doing this.
- New talents, teachers and class leaders should be actively encouraged to serve our congregation.

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- More participation in the TF programming and educational offerings. Continue the TFinfo page in the newsletter and C-10.
- More emphasis on our interrelated history: commonalities and differences.
- Visit religious services of others.
- Small group sharing opportunities. Nine to Dine type events. Neighbor to neighbor programs.
- Current events presentations followed by small group breakout sessions. Possible topics: immigration, social justice, racism.
- TF picnic a great success. Food trucks were a welcome addition.
- Youth programming is very positive. Include retreats, join projects, service trips.
- Expand our library and the TF library to include books/music from all 3 faith traditions.
- More active attention to recognizing our “common grounds.” We should strive to be leaders and make connections in this fresh experiment in inclusivity that is the TF.

GROUP 2

Overall: Very soon, we need specific conversations and communication about how information from the discernment groups will be linked to, used by and inform the search for our new minister(s).

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- I’m part of this church to worship – yes, receive information about designations but want to be involved in groups as it works for me. Don’t want to choose between worship and issue involvement. Church and worship should come first. Groups and issues are valued but should be #1
- UCC designations signal our values to our larger community.
- Like that we’re non-dogmatic (2).
- All are welcome is important.
- Like that people can take from church what fits for them.

- Important history of UCC, social justice.
- Need intellectual challenge like presented in Center for Faith Studies (CFS) and Darkwood Brew
- The intellectual and spiritual food from interfaith relationships and the Tri-Faith Initiative should be even more than we're doing currently.
- Explore what we as Countryside have in common, through worship. As in a Thanksgiving meal, our worship is the main course and the same (just one turkey) and then we each plug in to small groups, CFS, boards, etc. as we choose (everyone takes different side dishes).
- Teach and learn about basic Christian and UCC tenets so we don't lose our center.
- Explore who we were in the beginning of Countryside, why Countryside was created originally, what our founding beliefs were, how to carry this forward.
- Study UCC history and Countryside history for all of us, not just new members.
- Our #1 tenet is love. We should explore what love looks like.
- We need intellectual challenge. E.g., more nuanced, in-depth, cultural and historical contextual exploration of concepts like, "no one comes to the Father except through me." In this sentence, the word "me" refers to God, and God is love, which means God is available to all, not just those who follow Jesus.
- I need to be challenged intellectually. For example, Eric reframed the scripture "nobody comes to the Father but through me" as meaning nobody comes to God except the ethos of the one who sent them, i.e., through the love of God. This was not random reframing but taken from studying the Greek, Hebrew, etc.
- Juxtapose biblical and modern theology, explore different translations.
- Emphasize personal reflection and inner spirituality like through the Examen, classes, Interplay, retreats.
- God is still speaking through guiding open dialogue about issues like LGBTQIA equality and justice.
- Honor curiosity and asking questions.
- Coming from diverse backgrounds is a good thing (religions, denominations, belief or not).
- All of this is meaningless without honest seeking and discernment – "standing for everything means we stand for nothing" is a risk.
- Open minds and hearts to other opinions, then reflect on this.
- It's a tall bar to reach the level of preaching sermons that scramble the brain, challenge us to see and understand things in a new way, the way which was intended given biblical history, context, scholarship and translation. Complexity, not a simple answer or understanding, then go into the world and walk the talk.

- We should challenge each other to live out our mission statement.
- I need the scriptures reframed in terms of the overarching theme of the love of God, self, family, neighbor, etc.
- Make our own brand of Christianity more widely known – it's our obligation and an opportunity to change people's understanding of Christianity. Do evangelism Countryside-style, spreading the message of love and not doctrinism, exclusion, literalism, dualistic thinking, simplistic understanding.
- Could be hard to articulate some of this since we're non-dogmatic.
- Gathering together, in-person is so important. We need to talk with and listen to each other, non-judgmentally.
- Should rebirth the special service on the first Sunday of the month, with candles, crystal or singing bowls, evening service, like Taizé, have a meditative focus.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- Make more obvious how to get involved in small groups. Some people feel adrift. (2)
- Meet with new members to learn about their interests and talents to plug them in to opportunities that fit their interests. Also gather this information from current members/attendees. Then share interests with key staff who can connect people with opportunities that need folks.
- Enable each person to find her/his way to serve, and to connect to their passion.
- We used to do a Festival of Talents, run by a volunteer coordinator, where we showed every opportunity to connect so members/attendees could see where to get involved.
- Since the beginning Countryside has engaged with the larger community; this must continue.
- Serving together builds love and commitment.
- Compile a history of Countryside's community and issue involvement.
- Make opportunities for service obvious, e.g., spotlight during a service. Put a face with opportunities.
- Create a volunteer database. (Mary Beth Link previously created one, gave it to Chris Alexander, current status is unknown.) Suggestion to ask Robyn Hubbard whether she knows where to find the database.
- Give an access point for identified needs, to reach those who don't feel comfortable stepping forward to share their skills, talents and interests. Match needs with people, so groups and boards can "shop."
- Some way to connect members with personal needs, with a Countrysider who can assist.

Example was given of someone calling church to ask for help putting in a wheelchair ramp. Church could then connect him/her with a member who could build and install one.

- Pattern ourselves after the Jewish concept of tikkun olam which means “heal the world.” It’s our duty to gather all together – personal, biblical, spiritual, church, community.
- Our mission statement is important, we could use it to explain Countryside toothers, within the Tri-Faith and beyond.
- Explore what God and Jesus look like to us, and how this informs our service.
- Couple times a year, explicitly discuss what the mission statement means to us. Small bits at a time.
- “I’ve found my tribe.”
- When creating the mission statement people spent a long time on the phrase, “...in our conflicted world.” The creation of the mission statement was an important process to go through together.
- More opportunities to engage around things like our mission statement.
- The church is about its people, not its pastors.
- Our call to serve is to love, forgive, be charitable, etc.. First, I need the church, pastors, congregation to help me reframe my faulty thinking I’ve had that does not include love, etc. So it starts with me and continual refinement of my faults in an effort to help me become a more loving person.
- All of the issues and more of the current sermon series are important for our call. However, our collective call(s) may not be one’s personal call. Therefore, no guilt trips for those who don’t choose to participate.

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- Love that we’re the Christian partner of the Tri-Faith Initiative. (2)
- Like listening to the imam and rabbis, helps us understand each other.
- How can we welcome visitors, with a host or a guide. Some people feel awkward to just show up at the other congregations.
- Encourage small groups to meet with the imam and rabbis to explore topics.
- Love the Tri-Faith picnics and Taste of Tri-Faith. Where there is food there’s fellowship and conversation. Heart-warming. Those in the room became one. Should do this more than once per year. (2)
- Beware of gatherings where people sit at their own siloed tables.
- Glean from the other two Tri-Faith partners’ faiths what can inform our own.

- Huge gift that Rabbi Azriel is our Scholar in Residence.
 - Need a Tri-Faith coordinator at Countryside, to guide people in visiting, linking, going to the other services with them.
 - Tri-Faith Garden works because people are doing work together which is toward social justice, which is a shared value. People don't skip their volunteering because they've developed relationships, friendships. They share their faith and life stories and get to know one another as people.
 - Shared volunteering opportunities, need more people and ideas.
 - Neighbor to Neighbor is terrific, need to revive it.
 - Use the Tri-Faith Center building more, it's a great facility.
 - Do a cooking class together. (Make sure to attend to any need for kosher preparation and food.)
 - Need ways to connect on other than weekdays, that don't conflict with work or school.
 - Consider Muslim family structure/culture when offering gatherings/opportunities that may make evening activities difficult. (E.g., Muslim women who provide their child care.) Provide child care for events, meetings.
 - Learn about each of our religious and political structure and cultural norms, and how they're related. This is challenging to navigate.
 - Inclusion, inclusion, inclusion. Learning from each other which, in turn, enriches ourselves, our church, the Tri-Faith and community.
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GROUP 3

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged intellectually & spiritually?

- Education of what is happening in the world will cause us to serve with a SPIRIT OF HOPE
- Always be open and listen to what the Spirit is telling us
- Continue to learn, evolve. (Don't be set in our ways because "that is how we've always done it.")
- Don't be afraid of conflict, realize that is part of change & growth
- Be comfortable with not knowing – rest in the readiness
- Challenged to do something outside of our comfort zone

- Share our journeys and stories with each other
- See the world through other people's eyes/lives – perspective
- Teaching/Preaching environment – multi-media and multi-medium
 - Multi-media/medium approach in worship with music, art, visual media to express and stimulate growth
 - Foster interpersonal connections – continue conversations after the worship services
 - Continue use of Phoenix Affirmations as common core values
 - Keep two types of services: Traditional & Contemporary
 - Teach the original Bible text and convey relevance to today, as well as what it meant in the past. Tie both together. Find the hope and take action.
 - Would like “Aha moments” in worship
 - Make it real and personable
 - We would like a minister who is mature in their spiritual journey, confident
 - A minister who inspires us to want to come to church
 - A STRONG, inspirational leader

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- Go out to the broader Omaha community with our message of inclusivity
- Take the message, “All Are Welcome” to the community
- Service needs to come from the heart, use of our individual talents
- Use our voice and resources to model Jesus Christ's way of responding to community challenges – serve the marginalized
- Put our faith into action – connect with other people in the broader community
- Support our existing outreach programs (Food bank, youth, Box, etc.)
- “Festival of Talents” where we cultivate the existing talents of our congregants.
- Inventory of new members interests/talents so they can get involved in the life of the church
- Inventory of what the broader, Omaha community needs

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- Be Christians – be ourselves
- Be a loving partner – non-judgmental

- Listen, learn, and share
 - Embrace and celebrate our diversity
 - Embrace and celebrate the commonality of the Abrahamic faiths
 - Embrace and live into the Phoenix Affirmations
 - Look for OUR commonality as Christians
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GROUP 4

MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM THE MEETING COUNTRYSIDE AND TRI-FAITH

- Include the full Mission Statement in the new minister profile
- Many of the members present joined CCC because of the Tri Faith Initiative
- Fully describe the demographics of the congregation
- Emphasize a more progressive vs. fundamental approach
- Prospective candidates should have an UCC background
- Minister willing to challenge the congregation
- Seek a collaborative leader rather than the collaborative model
- Have we adequately addressed a grieving process following the loss of two pastors?

SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged both spiritually and intellectually?

- Build a culture of community within the congregation - small groups for social, spiritual and educational experiences
- minister should be interested in knowing the congregation and building rapport with individuals
- develop a non-dualistic approach - no more heaven/hell. black/white
- there are many paths to God
- leader should have a deep understanding of scripture and be willing to challenge the congregation to stretch their understanding

Question #2: What is our call to serve (what do we value)

- need a visionary to promote more outreach programs. Encourage “hands on” projects to seek longer term commitments
- encourage the congregation to set priorities, such as immigration, climate issues, open and affirming
- become politically active
- be respectful of the ways of others if/when we try to help others

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- have respect for the Abrahamic background of the three faiths
- emphasize inclusivity
- take more initiative to seek collaboration through positive programming such as stories from the bridge picnic small groups and/or dinners youth council
- periodic pastor rotation within the Tri Faith
- reports from CCC’s representatives in the Tri Faith

GROUP 5

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- Want a settled minister liberal in thought, intellectual, well versed in Bible and its history yet pastoral in relating to congregation.
- He/she should be able to look ahead and help prepare for future changes (technology, etc.) Very good music of various types. Bring back the choir however possible.
- We need to learn more about the UCC and the workings of Countryside.
- Our church should be welcoming to all Open and Affirming, but also individually person to person as we meet one another. We need to reach out and welcome people who are searching for a spiritual, friendly home.
- The worship service needs to be run more tightly - fewer announcements read and less confusion with so many participating. Maybe we need Examen first to settle us down.
- We need to start up Sunday school again soon. Children wear masks in school, Kindernook and other places. Why would church be different?
- Do we need to offer church to masked and unmasked members by having two worship services or dividing the church seating in half, letting everyone come at once?

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- Let's keep our many outreach groups going, but add a whole church-wide outreach where everyone can participate & possibly with much hands-on.

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- Because of the Pandemic and its aftermath, the large activities seem to be the best for gathering with one another: Summer picnic, "Stories From the Bridge".
 - We need a active leader within our church to help us get involved. Reading about Tri-Faith activities is not enough.
 - Visit others' services.
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GROUP 6

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- Take the Bible seriously but not literally
- Understand the context of Bible stories – retain their tradition – while also applying them to our current time.
- Build on the Bible and following Jesus' example – this is our primary purpose
- Analyze Bible stories and apply to modern times
- Use the Bible and Jesus as our bedrock while embracing that God is still speaking to us.
- Freedom to believe
- Freedom from dogma
- Freedom to question
- Independent growth
- Foster a broad understanding of God but don't force political correctness
- Keep the Lord's Prayer wording – "Our Father" – do not rewrite it, hymns, etc – they are tradition. Their revision in favor of political correctness erodes our common ground.
- Cultivate "God within" – community is Christ's body
- Open and affirming
- Discern God's energy to do God's will

- Be spiritually active in our relationship with God
- Encourage relationship with God and others
- Role of Phoenix Affirmations
- Core to who we are – many ways to God
- Leverage and build on this foundation
- Need a “seasoned” minister (not one just out of seminary)
- Pick up where Eric left off albeit in his/her own way (don’t burden the next minister with expectations of being the “next Eric”)
- However, keep the foundations that Eric began – all are welcome, no dogma, Phoenix affirmations, many paths to God.
- Eric was exceptional intellectually – however, he sometimes focused on other topics and didn’t efficiently incorporate Jesus

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- Follow Jesus’ example – he was all about social justice.
- As progressive Christians – we need to take actions to benefit those who are marginalized
- Apply Jesus’ example and discuss it relative to UCC tenets
- Our primary purpose as Christians is to follow Jesus’ teachings, and we can look at important issues through that lens, especially those issues that the UCC has prioritized. But let us not let any one issue divert us from our primary purpose.
- Community outreach to those in need
- For service to each other and also others outside the church
- Be intentional about welcoming those who are marginalized
- Food Bank, children, elderly, Countryside members
- Small service groups
- Active outreach to marginalized
- Felons, non-English speaking
- Acceptance of others
- New visitors are responding extremely well to the UCC series
- This series addresses relevant, live issues that are important
- Need climate justice focus

- Follow UCC tenets
- Music ministry – should be participative
- ask/invite volunteers to sing with the choir
- Musical expression of spirit
- What is the heritage that our music ministry represents?
- Our music ministry is one of Countryside’s strengths and enables spiritual transcendence for those who share it – whether performing or receiving.
- Paid musicians may separate us from that opportunity (preceding bullet)

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- We have a defining voice in how Christians are portrayed – this was a big point
- Not lose our Christian identity in the Tri-Faith community – this was another big point
- Retain a soft “bumper” of Christianity
- Learn about commonalities
- Learning about other traditions is good within Faith Studies and small groups
- Open and nonjudgmental of Tri-Faith partners
- Seeing God in all
- Model “living in community” with our partners – more frequently Ex: picnics

GROUP 7

General comments after introductions:

1. He doesn’t understand the angst. He thinks that is wrapped up in the bureaucracy. He believes that the good intentions have made it into being bogged down. The process is either opaque or at a stalemate.
2. She says that this is our opportunity to come together and figure it out. Let’s fight for this church. She is excited to exchange the views together. Let’s talk about moving forward, what we want to be, how we want to go together. Let’s focus on what we want to do.

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

1. She used to come to all of the interfaith series, and they were phenomenal. They were so great and they allowed you to travel to a spiritual growth dimension that moved your heart. Compared that to a catholic version that was a book report. She felt like the interfaith series was teaching her to listen. God is still speaking; we just need to be quiet enough to listen.
2. This person shared 3 ideas:
 - a. I prefer more liturgy than we currently use. Calls to Worship, Pastoral prayers, Great Thanksgivings, or some other gathering/gratitude words before the Words of Institution at Communion. Words that draw together the worship theme and integrate what has happened so far with what is about to happen.
 - b. Possible introduction of new theology or progressive ideas of what it means to be a Christian today, in the 21st Century. Make the connections between the Biblical and the current situations, when they exist, and allow new ideas or interpretations to stand on their own, regardless of whether there is a connection, if they have value in our society, and are morally applicable. Present and develop a theology of compassion and then decide how to apply it in our circumstance. i.e. church/mosque/temple, Tri-Faith, local community, world.
3. (We asked what new theology and here is her example.)
 - a. There are some progressive theologies than what we are used to. There are ways to word it differently. There is one that she is familiar with the last 8 years, but she cannot get her brain around. FOR instance, it doesn't believe that Jesus died for our sins, but died because of our sin. How simple words that we use change that and make a difference in our life.
 - b. Develop and present a theology of compassion and then decide how to apply it in our circumstance i.e., Church/mosque/temple, Tri-Faith, local Community, World.
4. When we talked about these sessions, there was the "we" sections and the "I" sections. Here are her thoughts about the "I." She is a thinker by training. It is great and it is exhausting. Her hope that by coming here, she wanted to not think a little more. What she has been missing is the spiritual home piece. A bit of progression meets tradition. There is less tradition in services than of course Catholic, but what we were used to. She has left a few services tired, not renewed. Could it be a heavy cloud of she does not understand what was happening? Her heart needs a place where it doesn't always have to be academic. Her hope was to come here and just be and be filled. Feel spiritually calm and leave without having to be intellectually challenged all of the time. She wants to be here, but she wants to just "hear" sometimes and be spiritually filled. Her day to day is filled with intellectual. She is anxious for some spiritual. She wants to meet people where they are. Where progression meets tradition or we will lose tradition.

5. Those are excellent points. Is there a nexus between the two of you? There is some rejuvenation and peace where there is an orderly service. How to do that? It is not just a Sunday thing. How to take the time we have on Sunday and weave it into the scraps of our weeks. Rejuvenating inside and go forth and be more recharged and deploy your gifts within the committee.
6. When these things are well-done, both things can happen. We need to trust each other and the process that sometimes some people will have their needs met and sometimes someone else's will. But there has to be a process.
7. Talked about how the current meets in the middle. A river.
8. She wants to feel warm and comfortable, welcomed like its family. She agrees with I/we/being filled. Right now, she shouldn't say right now because she has not been in this church for a long time. When Eric left, she came and then the shit hit the fan. She does want to say that spreading the study of Christianity, BBB does that and really does it well. She has learned so much. Someone called for a Bible Study and she didn't want to tell that person that we have that because BBB is so much more than that and so much more open. So much more interesting. She has a Brother-in-law who is a Jesuit and three sisters-in-law who are nuns. Her Mom brought them to CCC. She spent a lot of time in the LDS/Utah and she agrees with them. They take care of their families. She has gotten into the Native American spiritual field. They have more respect for trees/animals/people than she sees in Christianity. She was baptized at CCC at the age of 12. This church needs to be open like that. We had African Americans then. We used to be called "Oh you come from the rich church." She never thought that even though it was probably true. Maybe we are the top percent of the world, but that is because so many are on the bottom. She always thought that CCC was a warm, welcoming church and she does not now. She is happy we (the others) believe that now. She always thought it belonged to one person, not the entire church. We asked why. Some of the people believe that they didn't vote on building this church.
9. A fellow discernment member disagreed with that statement.
10. She always looks at this by being a monument to Eric. She didn't watch him on Zoom even though she sort of liked those things. She thought he was performing/selling. She is looking for a more family feel. Richard Linn was wonderful. He was not the only one, she could go back further. She is very angry about Eric. She knows from people who like him he is very intelligent and knowledgeable about religion.
11. There has to be some beautiful in-between. Feeling that intellectual stimulation as well as someone who she wants to call and have someone be there for her.
12. That is an interesting challenge, the internal challenge of a minister, how to be so many things for so many people. Is it a team approach? If chosen well and can work together, they can help each other and compensate for weaknesses. What other capabilities do we have as a congregation? Is the Stephen ministers a well-understood thing here at church? Our discernment member has a valid point about the building. This is our house.

13. Our ministries are an under publicized parts of the church. There are more than theministers.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

1. All are welcome here. Especially from the last several years. We come from a very diverse family. Lots of different paradigms and perspectives. Everyone is welcome. Maybe that hasn't always been conveyed. Maybe you do not agree with your neighbor, but you can still love them. We share our love of God and community withone another, and we serve each other and the community by loving one another. You may do your thing and I will do our thing, but we still respect one another. Politics really got in the weigh here a lot. It ended up at the pulpit too. It should be acentral core of respect, the gifts of the spirit for one another and to one another andleave it at the curb.
2. "When was it left at the curb?" and "When she talked about politics is it politics atthe national politics" level or playground politics?"
3. It was a gentle erosion that changed what was happening at CCC with pressures from the outside world. She is not immune to it, but she turns it off. Politics from thetop has trickled down to the smallest level. She wants to leave that and come here and be a receptacle of the gifts of the spirit.
4. You are spot on. Our call to serve is to be an example and our diversity can be a strength. It is a continued challenge. What does it really mean to be? "It is not sacrifice, its family" – RBG. We all work together for the good, but we cannot be tooinsular. There is too much insular prevalent.
5. Part of the challenge is we can't be all things to all people. We cannot be "EVERYTHING." Everything positive and good. We can be whatever you want us to be. I want to be the UCC model. In service, we don't know where we are going. She isstill trying to find it. What are we? What is the heartbeat?
6. Can't please all of the people all of the time.
7. Do we need to define ourselves before we can call to serve?
8. Yes, do we need to live with one foot raised (ready to do whatever?) or do we decidehow to share that as soon as we decide what we need to be.
9. Is there a home – what is home to us?
10. Do we need to revisit the opening statement and how it is worded or do we need torefocus on that. It is also a problem of the pandemic, not being together. How to convey that message and get back to people. Getting back to the statement, can we use the opening statement as a central rallying point and get back to where we are.
11. Every church everywhere is going through this. The whole world in every aspect is going through this. It is helpful to examine. Nothing is ever complete. It is healthy tolook at things that we currently do, but how do we continue to make it better.

12. What our discernment member said about what interim minister could be. She has been in both places – the person who didn't like people and was the person that wasn't liked. The pastor has to be a good person at pastoral care. Weddings/funerals/baptism – the individual(s) who guide and lead that will make a big difference. So we have this interim space that we are in and we also have a pandemic. It really is important. We cannot dismiss the pandemic. Dying/brokenhearted. That requires a huge pastoral presence to help us hold that together. So we are looking for someone who is kind of super human or human divine to take us on. We are longing for that community. Interim ministry always take a long time. When an interim ministry that has been as disruptive as this one, we may need a second interim.
13. We need to study the past, but go forward. Part of the problem, is that they did the contracts for the interim ministers, but had a shot at the permanent position. It put them in conflict. It wasn't fair, but it is done and over and we need to go forward. That is the problem of the search committee to solve. We are here to say that here are our marching orders for what goes forward. What do we want to go forward?
14. If we do this ("this) meaning evaluate where we have been and where we are now and where we hope to go and how), we will have a better chance of getting the right leaders.
15. We will have the right RECIPE, but it is a tall order. She was on the search committee for Eric 15 years ago and a lot has changed in that 15 years, but it was a God thing when we found him. They will know we are Christians by our love.
16. Too many people only focus on the first part of the greatest commandment. Love God as you love yourself, but the second part is love your neighbor.
17. It is time to go out and be the family we are.

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

1. She had two written ideas as follows and then one verbal comment:
 - a. For me the benefit of being part of the Tri-Faith comes from being with folks I know have a desire to live in community, a commitment to accepting without trying to change, and hope and trust that what we can do together will make the world a better place.
 - b. My hope is that we will be able to learn to minister together where it makes sense to each of us and benefits another (others).
 - c. She hears Rabbi Aryeh talking that it is time to not just live in our buildings, but go out there. That is why she likes working in the garden, not just for the dirt, but working with those in the temples/mosques. We have a lot more that we can do. We are powerful when we take that love that we know from loving God and turn it into something concrete.
2. Do you see us as a CCC group and a Tri-Faith group – both going out serving?
3. We have a lot of strengths and wisdom in this church and when we get that harnessed, nothing

will stop us.

4. How to harness? We need to get our house in order. The Tri-Faith needs all three of us to work together. We need to get focused on who we are and then we can do better in the Tri-Faith. His perception is that the process has been strangely opaque with a lot of red tape. Have a conversation as a congregation that we are where we are, but how do we get to where we want to be?
5. Go to council meetings and share.
6. He did go through one meeting and there was something strange.
7. She said that that something had been fixed.
8. He responded, but that was a symptom of a bloated bureaucracy. How can we find a path forward?
9. Things are happening even though we don't hear about everything, things are happening.
10. I am hearing "family" as well as "need to know what our identity is" as well as "cooperate with others and clean up our house." If we could sum up what we are known for, what are a couple of thoughts to emphasize?
11. This isn't service, but she thought about how others wanted more tradition. Told a story about a show in Branson with friends, very dark. At the end, they stood up and sang, "May the circle be unbroken." 50 women came out of the dark and joined. How fabulous it would be to have all three parts of the Tri-Faith, singing, "May the circle be unbroken."
12. That is a great vision to be together, singing our/their versions of "May the circle be unbroken."
13. We can put people in spaces and say "go be friends." But it is different when it really happens. Told a story of how Jewish community stood outside of the Christmas Eve service and gave out candy canes. A "call to serve" doesn't need to be 100-1,200 members of us. Can it be just six of us now and again to go forth?
14. Let's finish with a call to serve and be members of the Tri-Faith.
15. In the "call to serve" put in a plug to be a participatory member of the community. Being active and sitting back to see what is going to happen next. Throw our heart over the bar and say "I am not leaving, I am staying, and I am going to be a part of it."
16. That is when it happens for me. I do get joy in service, but more within a community.
17. We need to use the music group. We need to weave the past into the present.
18. We need some of the old songs. BBB appreciates Alex. One of the comments is that they don't like the clapping after the performances. She went to a funeral at an Episcopal church and they sang an old song. She liked it.
19. Don't wait! Sing old hymns at home. It doesn't have to be at church. However, you can't integrate it into all services. Also, if you want to do something, start a group. Start a group to

sing casually! Not for choir. There are ways to do it casually and programmatically.

20. He does not know about the Jewish/Islamic religions and their music.
21. She said the temple is amazing!
22. What if we brought something to them at their high holy days?
23. Bring them bread at Seder. Olive oil! Our call to serve is putting our love into practice into the community. Called out the different groups: BBB, Stephens Ministry, etc. A lot of people don't know what we did here. And COVID was for real.
24. We are doing well with Zoom because of COVID!
25. What does it mean to be Tri-Faith?
26. He says that Questions 2 and 3 is the segue is "what are the gifts that WE bring to the Tri-Faith?" Is it sharing love/justice with the church family? Do not get the ends confused with the means. We need to harness all of the gifts. There is no one best way to serve. Is our church good at a need and where can we go from there?
27. What are the other partners of the Tri-Faiths call to serve? Can we exchange views? Like a Ven diagram.
28. Go to the garden and feed the city! We are building an orchard.
29. With the Tri-Faith initially, she thought that we were getting lost on our attempt to join. The Christian component was getting diluted to be able to fit Abrahamically with the others. She firmly believes in Christ and his message. It is an interesting conundrum with that different progressive perspective from the beginning, but they will know we are Christians by our love.
30. Maybe that is the heartbeat. Just find where YOU INDIVIDUALLY FIT. Not feel like "and another thing and another thing."
31. We do not want to be a chameleon of the Tri-Faith.
32. We do not need to be a chameleon anywhere!
33. We just moved in.
34. Just show up for a while.
35. Showing up is part of it.
36. Show up in droves of 2-3! Something manageable. They will not just know we are Christians by our church, but by my name is Jane or John.
37. Get back to casual and not so many formal moments.
38. My hope is that we will be able to learn to minister together where it makes sense to each of us and benefits another (others).
39. Is it a prerequisite to be an active member of the church to be a part of the other groups. Maybe people think that my heart is in the Christian church. Does everyone have to be a part of

the Tri-Faith to be a member of the CCC?

40. It doesn't have to be "I'm a member of the CCC, which is part of the Tri-Faith Initiative."

41. What if we framed it as an invitation not a responsibility?

42. It is an opportunity, not a responsibility.

43. When she sits with the Rabbi Aryeh, she loves it. We are finding out who we are as people of faith, not just Christians/Jews/Muslims, but people of faith.

44. We used to have a binder at the old church of what groups and how to be involved.

45. We should have a Directory. She wants to join another small group and how does she do that?

46. There should be a central calendar – it is hard to figure out. "I jump to confusion a lot."

GROUP 8

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- One of the things that has kept me engaged is the Center for Faith Studies (CFS) and although he hasn't participated lately, he finds it exciting and motivating. Great value
- Joined in the fall of 2019 and was the last Phoenix Affirmation class beginning pre-covid, third class canceled when things shut down. Loved Eric's preaching, learning how the Abrahamic faiths overlap. Comes here because of the progressive faith but wants to remain Christian. Likes the Tri-Faith piece.
- CFS is important to us, the challenge to understand others. Wants the weekly message for understanding the bible and getting an explanation of the metaphor within was meaningful. Appreciated the intellectual component and how Christianity intersects with other religions.
- A new member who was raised Methodist and became Catholic when married, stayed till kids had first communion then left, coming to CCC because she heard it was progressive and open. She's here by herself and has found it hard to get to know people. Journey groups seem 'settled' so that if you wanted to join one you'd need to start a new one. Joined in with Diane's coffee group and helps Diane with coffee, was nominated for Board of Deacons but generally found it hard to break into groups. Maybe there should be something identifying which journey groups are accepting new members. New members may not feel as excited if they can't get involved.
- A lot of the large mega churches attract a lot of people and are better at engaging new people. Hopes we continue to be progressive and welcoming without having rigid Christianity.

- Do we want to 'grow' our church and if we don't, we should take it off television.
- Yes, we want it to grow if it's organic and based on our mission.
- It's good to have feedback on how difficult it is to join journey groups, meet new people. Maybe there needs to be a portal of some kind that helps people find church activities that fit them.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- Does this relate to UCC categories?
- We need to serve each other first; old, new, young... especially now we need to support each other and then extend that to Tri-Faith and the community.
- We need to inspire our kids with programs that attract and help kids. Kids are in need. Not just the older generation, but the next generation to come. We moved to the Tri-Faith campus to build a future for our kids and for the kids of the other congregations.
- We need to get our house in order. Music and youth programs are important and we haven't had that. It's decimated now and it's the 'meat on the bone'. We need to support our partners and then outreach to the community.
- Does that mean immigrants? That's one but there are many needs in the community.
- It's important to be involved on a progressive basis. I'm left on the spectrum and I'd like to be more involved, maybe with the Tri-Faith Garden. I'm looking forward to discussion about the six UCC designations and how do we decide to do them well when all seem important. If we decide how we want to serve our community maybe we need to just focus on a couple of them in order to do it well.
- The question of whether the church should allow political discussion. Heard the rabbi talk about pluralism and that people need to learn how to talk to people with different viewpoints and keep their integrity intact. Tri-Faith is talking to each other. Maybe our church needs to practice how to talk to people with different viewpoints as a new role or mission.
- It was controversial to talk about Trump and political topics but maybe we need to figure out how to talk about those subjects.
- Politics is everywhere and we need to learn how to be respectful when we do it, in an empathetic way. It's a topic people are afraid of.

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- I'm so proud because it's one-of-a-kind in the world. Heard how wonderful it was when our Jewish partners came to hand out candy canes after the Christmas Eve service. How can we honor their high holy days? It could be as simple as three of us delivering olive oil and challah bread. I know it's hard with the pandemic.

- As the Christian presence, what kind of Christians are we and what we want to be going forward. Accept other religions as part of our faith and bring in the Rabbi and Imam to learn how the three intersect. Get education and knowledge. They believe something different and their journey is different.
- We moved the church to start something new. It's not the 'neighborhood' church so how do you articulate the challenge of the change. Now that we have it, what do we do with it?
- Could have small groups with members of the three Tri-Faith partners; did have dinners with others composed of about six people before covid happened. Those were helpful to meand while we talked about church things, we really just got to know each other.
- We also had a large 'Friday into Saturday' program that involved an exploration of our three traditions. It was very immersive. Got an understanding of temple. I don't rememberwho organized it. But it does back more than five years.
- There was a CFS speaker and it was tied into that with a musical component.
- We have the pandemic and turmoil but wishes programs like those mentioned couldhappen.

Concluding thoughts:

I understood the UCC way was to have an interim minister who would help you grieve, then the ministers were allowed to apply for permanent position. Maybe we need a different interim because I am grieving that Eric left. Maybe we need a true interim to get back to a healthy process.

I agree with that. We need a senior minister, not the collaborative model. Go back to finding a strong leader position, don't break it into components.

I've gone to council meetings and was married to a minister and that conversation is something the council is talking about. You can talk at council meetings. They want to do what's best for the church. We need to separate this from discernment. There's momentum to solve it.

I have to complement the interims I've had in the past – I wanted all of them to stay. We need that from an interim.

We're missing input by not meeting again like they did before.

I like the idea of one service. Eric didn't like it because it didn't allow for two types of services.

Make it easier to find what the feedback has been regarding discernment on the church website.

GROUP 9

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

[Considered the question from an “I” perspective (How do I want to be...?) and a “We” perspective (How do “WE” as a church want to be...?)]

Spiritually Challenged:

- Challenges what I know to be true
- Opens my minds and expands my perspective
- The spiritual experience Includes, teaches, supports spiritual disciplines, such as the examen
- Wanting to go deeper; to understand how my faith/beliefs/scriptures lives in my life today
- Want to hear other voices; hearing and learning about other people’s stories and faith experiences
- I take great comfort in the history of the church, the familiar scriptures and hymns
- I appreciate having both the traditional and contemporary services, taking comfort in the traditional
- I appreciate learning new things, like understanding the historical context – the times in which the scriptures and bible stories take place
- I appreciate learning from the other two faith leaders (AMI and Temple Israel) – providing the sermon/lesson on Sunday, speaking in panel discussions/offering lessons
- I want to learn how to defend my faith; understand how we are different in our beliefs and practices and how we are the same

Intellectually Challenged:

- Translation of the Hebrew and Greek broadens my understanding
- Want to understand how the Abrahamic faiths overlap/intersect – the beliefs that we share

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- We are and want to be very focused on action and service
- Justice Service, taking action that changes the root cause of systemic issues, such as racism, poverty, climate change, economic inequality, etc. Actions include:
 1. Advocating
 2. Marching
 3. Supporting policy

- Mercy Service, taking action to support and provide for the needs of people within our community
 - Food pantry
 - Clothing drive
 - Diaper drive
 - Sponsoring refugee families
- Mission work for Youth and Adults
- Educating ourselves about what we don't know or understand
- Appreciate learning about the six (6) UCC designations
- Like the racial justice book clubs
- Appreciated listening to the voices and stories of those who spoke at these sermons about the six designations
- Interested in selecting and focusing on one area
- Want to understand our Church (Ecclesiastical) Polity
 - What is unique about Countryside and our structure
 - How do we collaborate with the UCC Conference?
 - How do we engage and be in relationship with local UCC communities?
- Service to each other
- Holding each other in grace and love
- Honoring our diverse opinions – it's okay to disagree; Disagreement is where we learn and grow

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- Advocate for other faiths
- Honor our differences and similarities
- Participate in our faith partner's worship, programs, and events
- Working with Temple Israel and AMI to create and co-create small groups, programs, service opportunities in the community to educate, engage and enrich our understanding and our relationships:
- P-Flag (or whatever is possible within the constraints of each faith) for Tri-Faith
- Pre-school/kindergarten for Tri-Faith
- Expanding the children's and youth programming

- Supporting the Afghani Refugees (BOCO)
- Feel a huge responsibility to make sure we are presenting / representing the Christian faith; showing how we can work and live together.
- Recognize how visible we are to the world as the Christian Partner

Group requested to explore the Characteristics of the Settled Minister:

- More relatable; somebody who can speak to everybody; whose language is accessible
 - Wanting spiritual direction from the minister
 - Primarily focused on our congregation (not on how they appear to the world)
 - Broad appreciation and deep understanding of the other faith traditions
 - Willing to challenge and support individuals and the congregation (me/we)
 - Focus on our healing
 - Work together to steward the relationships with the Tri-Faith
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GROUP 10

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

1. Sermons Intellectually Challenging. Preach vs. Teach: preach tuned out/someone teaching listen and assimilate, keeps engaged.
 - a. Preach looking down/talking down
 - b. Teach someone does not equal know answer but points in direction and leads one to do more research on own.
 - c. Minister doesn't have answer- how does this apply to your life?
 - d. Appreciated knowledge of Bible but how is the Bible now? Pastor Tracey look at what does this mean in my life. Biblically based sermon tied to action. What should I be doing now? Likes Pastor Tracey tie to _____majority and tie to idea that we need to be open to interacting with world.
2. Prayer
 - a. Good to be comfortable discussing disturbing topics.
 - b. Enthusiasm/rejuvenation

- c. Center for Faith Studies: bring folks speaking on wide variety of topics that are relevant.
 - d. Kindness, gentleness tying it to our everyday lives help people understand and reach youth, etc.
 - e. Focus on children's programming and family programming. New pastor someone should not be someone who will regurgitate scripture but give meaning. Disturbed by the message that Christ is the only way our church has stood for message that all ways not Christ is the only way.
3. Services
- a. Like more traditional but also like jazz and hymnals miss those.
 - b. Would like being asked about which hymns might want to hear also involve with other churches.
 - c. New people not feeling welcome
4. Get together with people you don't know
- a. Newcomers group
 - b. To get invested equals have to feel welcome.
 - c. Music interaction:
 - i. Miss choir
 - ii. Music has power
 - iii. Songs from different cultures: Phyllis Miller, not just traditional music.
 - iv. Songs are related to sermon not a hymn that is sung (like find in Lutheran, etc.).
Miss singing.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

1. Being focused on all the different topics. Has signed up to be part of racial justice/environment. See the need and what can we do. What can we do to bring to larger group and make a difference? Topic groups:
- a. Stephen Ministry - ways to help those in hospital/rehab but also those stuck at home. Numbers going up need especially more men to help.
 - b. Messenger group: person interested in visiting someone in their home/hospital. Let them know they are not forgotten by the church.
 - c. Groups that give grants to organizations that help those in need: global perspective. Outreach global perspective does not equal charity but help those in need help themselves.

- d. Service programs explore what other things can we get involved in to address issues like the need for affordable housing (Habitat for Humanity). Retirees have time.
- e. A Board take on idea where there are opportunities to volunteer-BOCO? (tutoring).
- f. Racial justice so much need in communities that face racial disparity.
- g. Local and also missions abroad global reach- Los Chavalitos

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

1. Imam, Rabbi sermons: attended Temple service and was surprised at similarities. Also visited AMI service.
2. Need to understand how Muslim and Jewish prayer process works. More about Islamic faith and how they worship and pray.
3. Would like deeper understanding of religion: opportunity in addition to social, picnics.
4. How do we get to know the Jewish and Muslim faith? How do we explain our faith to them?
5. How to bridge gap.
6. Nice to know about things happening at Mosque and Synagogue
7. Get to know them as people in addition to religion. Do they have anything they need help with or joys to share? Include news in newsletter.
8. Share how caregiving is- we have so much to learn at each place.
9. Also, how do they go out into community and serve. Bring back what we learn to share and grow and build upon.
10. Get to know each other and gives us opportunity to share that information/strategy in the community.
11. Three faiths organizing a community outreach together.
12. Ways to get to know each other:
 - a. Center for Faith Studies: varied opportunities
 - b. Opportunities to worship in each other's building *Shabbat services
 - c. Importance of having one leader who can create a successful team. Who are they? How evaluated?
13. Going forward:
 - a. To be an effective member of Tri-Faith we need to strengthen our church and how are

we going to move forward. We need to figure out where we are, what we want and get our own in order. We need to be strong before we can help others effectively.

- b. Establish strong foundation first. If have too many things can't do anything well.
- c. New Members: how do you know how to get involved? Hard to connect with groups in church because don't know what's going on.
- d. Will have to ease into involvement.
- e. Best thing ever did was when got involved in a board. Best thing did to get to know others.
- f. Get involved in groups and then boards.
- g. Don't want to be a church in crisis.

Feedback from a member who couldn't attend: I was unable to attend the meeting yesterday due to feeling unwell. Here are my two statements about the first questions. I want to be challenged to be active in the wider community in relationship to justice issues. I.E. Show up at meetings (possibly legislative), make calls or write letters. Each committee could report their individual needs. I want to be challenged intellectually through worship sermons. I also want to be tasked spiritually from the ministerial staff to follow through on the teachings.

GROUP 11

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- I feel like we need to have more of the Christ in Christianity. More reference to the bible, ancient text, Christ in Christianity. Benefit from modern day translation of bible.
- Deep history/ancient history applied to the 'lesson' for the day. Think about sermon ideas relating back to foundation of our religion.
- Would come away from services thinking about things in a new way. Challenged.
- Historical component of exploring faith. Learning more about Christianity. Understand faith and religion and God in a broader context. Not limited to Christianity.
- Tri-Faith was a draw to becoming a member. It was wonderful to have the Cantor come over and share the call to prayer. Several paths to the same goal. Other faiths have same beliefs but different messages.
- Ways to put a focus on faith and living it in your day-to-day life.
- Continued learning aspect with an intersect of spirituality with the more emotional side to the

service. Take something from a worship service that is carried into our daily life.

- Have appreciated the speakers presentations/learning during the recent series.
- Important to be challenged beyond what I have learned during my previous experiences with church. Be open to what scripture has to say about the world we live in.
- Frustration with the lack of fundamentals being taught/shared/focused on. The youth are not being taught (learning) the basics.
- We need to be the Christianity arm of our Tri-Faith community. Our youth need to appreciate our/the history of Christianity. Teachings of the Old and New Testament.
- I like the basics/history and personal experience (moral dilemma) and learning from the message.
- When I leave a service/zoom/on-line I want to have learned/felt something. It feels like things are 'dumbed down.' Feel like we are not paying attention to our Christianity as we give attention to our Tri-Faith partners.
- It is easy to be pro-active/involved but easy to forget 'why' we are involved.
- Do not want to lose sight of who we are as a Christian congregation.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- We are called to serve everyone. Serve humanity, equality, justice, and inclusion. Every opinion matters.
- I want us to be aware of service to climate issues and our Earth; continuing to be challenged as a spiritual community to these issues.
- Our church has a unique opportunity to relate to other faiths. We have a unique calling.
- A model for Peace. We do not have to think alike to love alike. Bridge the divide among other religions for world peace.
- Appreciate the food pantry for the basic of giving to those in need. Not sexy but important 😊
- Call to serve our youth and children in the church. Instill the best of Judeo-Christian values which we expand our service ten-fold. Bring it back to the words of the Bible.
- Have the (universal) values be grounded and understand the why. Justice, equality, fairness, and inclusion. Teaching the foundation. The environment is a basic component of all of this.
- Many members have come to our church because they have not found a home elsewhere. We are open and inclusive and can support our members.
- Can there be discussion of the music component of our services. Offer both the traditional and jazz.
- Children are a large component of what is important to us. Teach our children why we are

doing what we do.

- Without Christianity/Jesus being woven into the message it feels empty. We are still a UCC church -we do not want to lose that vital message.
- As members of this church we are called to serve in many ways. We need to create and support the type of church we want to be.

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- Participatory, congregational led, the value of participation
 - Being the Christian partner makes us very accessible. We need to capitalize on this and make it accessible to many.
 - A basic responsibility to teach the other arms. Christianity has many arms as well. If you are not educated about the many denominations, then Christianity can get a bad rap. We need to teach our open and affirming message.
 - We as UCC can look at Christianity through many lenses. Our obligation is to educate and share our lens view of love through the eyes of Christ and not through the Old Testament.
 - As the Christian partner our obligation is to support one and other (and our Tri-Faith partners) as well as other Christian organizations.
 - It is our responsibility to not only be on the same campus but develop relationships (such as joining in with the community garden). Help Tri-Faith come to life through relationships and engagement.
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GROUP 12

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- Examine progressive theology from an historical and cultural perspective
- Have prayer retreats to grow spiritually
- Learn about all faith systems
- Multi-generational faith studies and activities
- Listen and respect the opinions of other
- Emphasis on the worship part of Sunday morning and not so much on announcements
- Perpetuate all music programs

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- Making love an action word
- Help others less fortunate
- Multi-cultural church partnerships
- Pantry expansion
- Meals on Wheels” increase
- Promote Stephen Ministries program
- Pastoral care visits to those who may need some extra care
- Ways to support those without technology
- Help members with transportation needs
- Set priorities so ministries can be done well

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- Book studies between the three houses or worship
 - Interfaith dining groups in homes
 - Have congregation leaders of the other faiths come and preach at Countryside
 - Continuation of studies (ie. Abraham’s White Board)
 - Invite other faith communities to identify needs that we may be able to support (ie. Tutoring of Afghan refugees)
 - More personal interaction
 - Promote a Tri-Faith Sunday
 - Encourage/promote youth development
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GROUP 13

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- Sense of community
- We want to sing!
- Bring back other traditions
- Darkwood Brew – incorporated ministers’ voices and also other speakers. Conversational interviews with various perspectives. Live coffeeshop audience – felt connected to conversation. Different perspectives helped spiritual growth.
- Darkwood Brew – some used for small group studies – was a good option and helped us connect when we couldn’t meet in person
- Missing spiritual and human connection. Zoom is ok but so much is lost – face to face is better.
 - Rural connectivity – not always able to access Zoom.
- Spiritual growth -> positive energy and love from others – being in the presence
- Sermons on YouTube – enable us to experience or revisit sermons – expands access
- Interpret Bible stories – other perspectives help us grow and learn
- Introduce other spiritual practices – we practice the Examen – what about alabyrinth walk or other practices
- Connect spiritually with our partners – include in sermons what Islamic and Jewish faiths see in the story / message
- Invite other spiritual leaders to speak at Countryside
- Center for Faith Studies – great way to obtain knowledge from people nationally
- Center for Faith Studies and Darkwood Brew – help us challenge ourselves spiritually
- Different interpretations of the Bible
 - How does it apply?
 - What do the Jewish and Muslim faiths say
- Like to be challenged directly – make me question my own assumptions about how to live God’s word
- Intellectual challenge (from 3 people) – understanding scholarly translation of Scripture
 - Share deeper education – historic and scientific too
- Diverse opinions are encouraged and respected
 - Being comfortable with disagreement
- Being called to live out our Christian faith within community
- Active learning
 - Through a variety of options (Darkwood Brew for example, Center for Faith Studies, Youth Program)
 - Ok to have questions – not necessarily having the answers
- Countryside has a lot of smart people but we also need to honor feeling

- Need a spiritual as well as intellectual home
- Don't just stay in our heads – feel emotionally connected
- Accept a broad variety of beliefs (we used to have this – everyone was valued on the continuum)
 - There is room for agnostics, Christian, traditional
 - Ok to be angry with God and feel welcomed
- Darkwood Brew theme – often we have our closest spiritual experiences when we're in the Dark Wood
- Learn and model this for others
- Book groups
- Youth programs

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- Intellectual + feeling ↔ practice ↔ what are the needs of the community
- Following Jesus – serving the least of these (ex: LGBTQ+)
- Not staying comfortable in West Omaha
- Open to serving broadly – not just specific organizations
- Get our hands dirty – pantry and other challenging jobs
- Sense of community emanates from serving
 - Can overcome disconnection from church
- Board of Christian Outreach – what are the tangible ways our church serves the community?
- Serving is not being the hero
 - Joining the people we serve – being part of their experience – focus here
- Political (not partisan) role of church – organizing around issues (immigration, LGBTQ+, etc.)
 - Advocacy ↔ changing the direction ↔ joining with like-minded organizations – using the church as the springboard
 - Martin Luther King – follow his example
- Recent UCC sermon series and small groups
 - Gave us an opportunity to consider where we want to put our energy and where/how to serve – great place to start
 - Helped us become more educated on these issues
- As an affluent, white church – sharing our time and money is good but there are deeper ways we can connect
 - Requires outreach and meeting people
 - Bringing our experiences back to the church
 - Inviting those we serve to church
- Be a community role model – loving, accepting, open-minded
 - Some younger people look down on Christians (based on the way they have been

- portrayed) and equate them with being closed-minded
- UCC sermon series
 - Considering various issues, we already participate in these issues but don't let them silo us
- Connect with our youth actively and intentionally
 - Invest in them as the future of our church
 - Increase their involvement by incorporating their views
 - Youth board – exists – include youth on the Church Council
 - Be “church-lite” to attract kids
 - Help youth through challenges
 - Offer fun and connection to church youth
- Identify with issues they care about – BLM, racial justice, etc.
- Read, do activities, open discussions
 - Sunday School – our kids need this
- Masking and sanitizing are working at local schools
- Some in congregation are afraid for their kids' health, however
 - Love Rebecca!!!
- Rebecca needs congregation to step up and help her with Sunday School
- We have to serve each other
- Referred to Church Council 10/24:
 - Strategic plan question
 - Issue of communicating youth being back in person
 - Increasing the information shared via the electronic board beyond Sundays to include weekly happenings

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- Encourage members of each faith to attend each others' services
 - Requires communication and a plan
 - Raise the comfort level – help us be respectful of others' faith environments (ex: shoes, etc.)
 - Offer to lead group visits to other services
- Exchange hosting
- Soft structure
 - Designate a visitor welcome weekend
- Let us know where we can go in each others' buildings – how to ensure we don't offend anyone
 - Publish a Q & A
- Here's what to expect at a Muslim service, for example

- Videotape the Iman and Rabbi
- Post on website
- Encourage participation in Tri-Faith events and classes
 - Rotate holding events at each others' buildings
 - Combined choir at CHI event center was successful
 - Singing and food
 - AMI participation has been light- they don't have a "congregation" or a choir
 - Countryside participation at Tri-Faith events has been strong
- Our involvement should help deepen our Christian faith
 - Accepting a range of values
 - All are welcome
- Remember we have skin in the game with Tri-Faith
 - Our commitment to move to shared campus
- Our role as a Tri-Faith partner needs to be priority and should be central
- Look for common areas of interest and find ways to partner
 - Tri-Faith Garden – Greens from Egypt grow there
 - Jewish and Muslim churches are also committed to social justice issues
 - Kids are worried about the environment
 - Partners are working together to identify how we can support Afghan refugees
- Beginning training – will invite congregations to join
 - Community projects
- Beginning to form
- Will get going when agencies open up

GROUP 14

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- Sermons and events that integrate history – a focus on spiritual **and** educational/a call to go forth and serve outside church walls/applied to daily life
 - A **true** balance between spirituality (feeling) and intellectually (thinking) – to feel motivated to leave/feel good about our potential to 'be ok' and simultaneously 'make a difference'
- The group deeply valued the closing messages– "spirit above, behind, beside you" and "and now the service begins."
 - A conversation about the 'joy of predictability' in some of the service components

occurred – and those predictable, tradition focused moments that happen service to service were appreciated and brought structure to a broad range of messages. Some additional “traditional factors” that make church feel “more churchy” came up

- Positive feelings about the new member/welcome classes
- Social justice is very important to the group
- Participants shared some melancholy feelings about the kids’ education situation, namely opportunity for *music* participation for Pre-K- 8th grade groups. The conversation was that high school students had opportunities but even before the pandemic, there weren’t as many opportunities for PreK – 8th grade and desired stronger programming to retain and support families with children in the congregation
- Tri-Faith learning about other faiths (embedded into regular services for those who aren’t able/don’t choose to attend other groups and groups that provide intellectual challenges, such as “Great Courses,” Journey Groups, etc.). Small group opportunities to be challenged are well appreciated but noted bringing the ‘outside Tri-Faith partners’ into our usual services was a welcome idea
- A seated pastor should have “complete buy—in with Tri-Faith, etc.”
 - A seated pastor should provide an opportunity to properly grieve and move on and deal with the past, the ‘elephant in the room’ and acknowledge that the congregation has experienced some abandonment and trauma. That pastor might emphasize that aspect of pastoral healing and care.
- A smaller group noted they can’t imagine an incoming seated pastor as anything except energetic and charismatic (“like Eric”)

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- Several noted the Phoenix Affirmations “are our call to serve and act” and that answers what our call to serve should be (and is)
- Following through on service and being a “service church”
 - The conversation involved what we currently do and acknowledged how much we do (pantry, meals on wheels, adopt-a- family, monthly collections, etc.).
- Focus on including and welcoming ALL by learning and broadening our own horizons to appreciate what others *need*
- FATE and the environmental justice focus resonated with some
- Many found the current sermon series (UCC integration Series) particularly informative and provided thinking around how to serve and who/how to support (LGBTQIA+, Social Justice, Mental Health, Racism, etc.)

- Also provided a brief conversation about support and encouragement for ministers to take on special projects
- We spoke a lot about serving ‘out’ and serving ‘in’ – into the community and serving each other as a church family – this deeply resonated and the group shared we mustn’t forget to ‘love’ and ‘serve/support’ each other, too
 - Supporting congregational families/building stronger families (kids and family programming and initiatives dedicated to supporting and encouraging families into church, keeping them there, and making it a ‘get to’ and not a ‘have to’ to build our younger family membership
 - Serve single individuals equally well and with intention
 - Continue to support our aging congregation
- We also acknowledged that we cannot be ‘all things to all people’ and we need to determine *how* to prioritize these initiatives
 - We imagined there are ‘best practices’ and maybe some guidance from similar other UCC congregations or from the national organization so we needn’t reinvent the wheel on much of ‘how’ to do some of this.
- We believe a community liaison person between the community groups and our church would be a wise and welcome addition – a dedicated soul to that effort to be the go between. Someone noted a Lutheran Family Services type model.
- A strong acknowledgement that the *best way* to create community is through committees and leadership opportunities – encourage folks to become involved.
 - Simultaneously acknowledged we need to equally meet people where they are who simply want to attend on Sunday. Can we serve them *as well as* those who care to be more deeply involved? How can Sunday be strong enough to compel additional involvement (but also serve the folks who choose to come on Sundays, and that is well enough)?

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- A strong inclination that we “need to have our own act together/get our own house in order to be a strong Christian partner”
- Organized opportunities for involvement to *learn* about other congregations/faith traditions
 - Embed some of this education in Sunday services where people regularly attend (more regularly than a one-off session or group to learn more about them)
 - We think perhaps people are less inclined to visit or engage with other congregations because they simply don’t ‘know’ how to be/act respectfully in their space. Familiarity breeds fondness and we don’t have that familiarity yet.
 - Some acknowledgement that *before* we moved to the Tri-Faith campus, the

discernment involved learning about other faith traditions. Newer members to the congregation post move are less familiar or aware of the other faith traditions. It may be time to re-visit or provide education (really tangible 'stuff') about the other groups (what times/dates are service, expectations for visiting the space, etc.). Some 101 courses, in essence. Cultural awareness. Someone said, "a place to ask the "dumb questions." **This idea was really well received especially from newer members who haven't had an opportunity to engage or 'learn' about the three faiths in a tangible, accessible way.

- Might there be a way to share congregational newsletters (another noted the Tri-Faith newsletter)
 - These opportunities may also come in directed, specific ways. How can we send to other congregations what we 'need' in the moment, or is there a particular social issue front and center for another of the three congregations with suggestions about how we might support them?
 - "We could use the other congregations' support in X issue important to our community right now and you can support us in Y way." The global and 'large' feeling of the Tri-Faith initiative is overwhelming but people *want* to help, support, and be involved –but aren't sure where to begin.
 - Doing the above education (in Sunday service and through perhaps a 101 series), the group believed would create an easier 'bridge' to the other faiths. In other words, putting people in shared spaces doesn't necessarily create community but finding commonality, providing *convenient* opportunities to learn more (where our people already 'are' such as service, etc.) or engage will lead to larger, bigger opportunities and interest in engaging with one another.
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GROUP 15

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

Guidelines: Confidential. No attribution.

- Times when we were challenged and go home and think that made me uncomfortable. Discomfort is a good thing. Something in the theology that causes us to reflect and think. Didn't want to have a church where you left your brain at the door.
- Cyndi Kugler project of bringing people in. Center for Faith Studies was a very important piece. Really did get a lot of people from the community engaged.
- Biblical scholarship with good historical context. Relate back to history- Eric was good at that.

Eric's message- has to be strong enough to relate biblically to today and in away that it's hitting everybody and making you think. Not toward literal interpretation. Take it seriously not literally.

- From intellectual to spiritual and how do we take that spiritual message out into the world?
- How do we be Jesus to the world? From the sanctuary to the world.
- Don't like the word liberal. Any first year seminarian knows there are 37 different versions of the bible in different languages. Excluding all other interpretations. We need to focus on the Tri-Faith. Visiting Ceasaria Maritima- lots of different interpretations.
- Inclusiveness. Interesting word in Greek is dialogue so multiple dialogues can occur. Complex.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- We/I dynamic. Called to help other members of our wider community. Part of this is our Tri-Faith picnic because it is open to the wider Omaha community.
- We need to think about who are we serving, what are the needs of that group and how do we define what we can bring to the table and what is happening out there in the community. We do not need to replicate what is being done. We need to have some focus. What is unique to us and what should we focus on the Tri-Faith campus.
- Trying to do too many things. Focus our energy on Tri-Faith. TFI could be stronger.
- COVID damaged the relationship. Lots of stuff and for some being open, welcome and affirming there's a desire to have some focus and put some energy into some of the bigger projects. Goes back to our white privilege and we are going to save the day. Nobody needs that. Going into prisons may not be for everyone. Look at race, LGBTQ, lots of things we should be doing but we can't do it all. What is it that we are called to do? Huge decision to move but then we never had the conversation about what do we do when we get there?
- We need to step back from that and ask why are we in TFI?
- The social justice piece is huge. Everything is not like normal so we don't need to bite off more than we can take care of. Focus on one or two things that we really want to be. Call to business with state mission statement and energy going to reaching out.
- Supporting and nurturing our congregation so then we can go out.
- Only been attending for a few months but all we are focusing on. Strength of my faith is sunk and I need to go do something but I need to step back and save my faith and building up that foundation again. Pushing toward the outside but focus on personal strength so we can be in for the long haul. Making sure those resources, whatever we determine those are, are as important as going out in the world.
- We need to get over COVID. Social justice is in the DNA and we have to get our stuff together and then go out. People are saying I don't have a church anymore, I don't have a minister.

Steven Ministers really need to get out.

- Tie the service to mission and the congregation can tend to the flock. Need self-care/readiness and resilience so we can tend to the needs of self to help others. Get ourselves together first to be able to support and encourage others.
- My faith has gotten stronger after pastors leaving regarding where do I want to be.
- Interim did not help that I did that on my own. CCC has to maintain its spiritual independence and identity.
- Tracey is not helping us heal. We need a message of healing and getting through this. We have no leader, we are rudderless. Have Imam and Rabbi come preach. In order to serve we have to heal individually and collectively. We need to deal with our grief and trauma. We need leadership to move forward productively. Very important to move forward in a productive way.
- Potential is huge moving forward. We have a great church, part of Tri-Faith. Lots of opportunity. We've had some other rough times like when Bill Allinder had a stroke. *Book of Joy* by Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama. All the pieces that go into our ability to serve. Every morning starts with what you're grateful for. Core priority independent of recruiting a new minister.

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- How many of us are participating in the programs being offered to us? Participation is a key. Sign up, look at website. Is part of our reluctance because we are so broken right now? What if we as a congregation take the lead on healing? Starting to bring people closer together. If we lack the energy to reach out, what if we reach out to our TFI to come to us and preach to us about healing? Both groups have a lot of resilience. May be more effective to have imam, rabbi than just another Zoom conference. I want to go and be involved.
- Go to their services and meet in the Foyer before walking over.
- One of the things I have found is TFI has made me a better Christian and get that to resonate. WE will grow in strength by understanding the other religions. Other Christian congregations view us as not taking Jesus seriously and I think it's just the opposite. We learn more about ourselves. Part of the draw from Catholicism and Jewish is that this church walks the walk and talks the talk. You can see that in the wider community.
- Be engaged. How we engage and what we find out about them. Those behind the scenes are like the calm duck above the water and the amount of effort of what the Tri- Faith is doing. How do we find out how many people are participating? We don't really have anything to hang on to.
- The garden has been really productive. The ceremony of the corn was totally amazing. I just want to share my experience with TFI and this is why you will find value.

- Witness and testament. Someone they know witnessing to their experiences. Children who don't get touched and stroked have devastating consequences. WE need to get back to that. New members looking at the church. Looking to see who we are and that we are part of Tri-Faith.
- Conservative background Methodists reaching out to those new people. I asked what happens to the pew registry. Jim was never contacted. Pew registry- remember spraying down the groceries. Task force will be talking about pew registry and youth program.
- People want to feel connected back to the church. Latest membership directory.
- People who are no longer with us or never hear from them or see them at any function. A few people who probably didn't like TFI. More outreach. Get people back talking to one another. Why don't these people come back? Need to actually talk to people. Having an exit interview. So we can better ourselves. Evangelical has a negative connotation but TV has been a way to extend our reach to people. Use that as a mechanism to get people through the doors.

Wrap-up:

- Heal as a congregation and individually. Social justice issues
- Heal ourselves first and then gather as small groups more often. Learning about faith and language.
- Dialogue. Hopeful- we will do what it takes. Things are happening and we are thinking about each other.
- Enjoying each other's company and the importance of listening.
- Connection and being part of something.

GROUP 16

Why Countryside? What's special/important to you?

- ✓ ***Music***
- ✓ ***Kids programming***
- ✓ ***Food Pantry – outreach***
- ✓ ***Relationships/Fellowship/Family***

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- Want intellect looking for spirituality
- Engage with those who read the bible literally and those who think of the bible as mythology

- Respect our different perspectives
- Listen to Learn
- Team builder - a true record of accomplishing this. Experience required.
- One. Strong. Leader.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- Act. Church needs to transform people!
- Choose activities organically. (Let's not make a list and force it to happen. Go where the interests are.)
- Do a few things well. We can't do it all!
- Hands on VS writing checks (We aren't the country club church we once were.)
- Intrigue - challenge - get a little uncomfortable
- Covid - it has limited so much including serving others
- Vision from the Leader - how does it look? (This came from discussing the UCC designations. We can say we support all of them. But how do we live it?)

Random thoughts...

- Keep the message simple - love and serve each other
- Where are the kids?! Our church needs them!
- Church - is about the PEOPLE. Not the building. Not the leader. Strong leader is important, but secondary to a strong congregation.

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- Love the picnic! Love the garden!
- Looking to the TF group - Wendy's group - to plan activities for all three faith groups. We have a lot on our plate... are we to think of these activities too?
- Have the TF visible at our church - ie a spot in the C-10 on any updates
- Concerns - change in leadership from all three denominations.... changes a lot. Is there a lack of respect for women? How does this feel to those in Christian leadership working with them?

GROUP 17

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- need authenticity from our leaders
- need to be challenged by the messages and goals
- must to apply to “my” life—sermons that put us in the picture
- make sure the scriptures remain important and part of the service
- we must include the youth in this challenge. They can smell phony/hypocrisy; they know when we aren’t “walking the walk”
- need to see the messages of scripture relate
- several people enjoyed the sermon series we just completed, so we need leadership that will help us get active in these areas of justice.
- challenge for us (the Church) is how do we bridge our faith with needs and concerns of the community, country, world.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- church is currently fractured
- we do not feel like a “community” and aren’t working together as such
- Service builds Community and Community builds service.
- comment was made that “I don’t know if I’ll stay with the Church”
- service is living out the “Christian You”
- when we serve, we most definitely receive back...it’s a two way “give”
- we need to be standing up for what we profess to be our values....ACTION oriented
- need a commitment to serve
- need to live our’ inclusive’ value
- serve and include our youth vigorously
- we are failing in promoting our” family values”. Kids used to group up in the church and come back with their own children...comment made that that is not happening anymore.
- Participation is the key...we need to get the Fire going again!!!!!!

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- we have a responsibility to live up to our role as the Christian Partner

- continue to strive to understand and appreciate our partners.
- Tri-Faith is what drew me to CCC in the first place (several made this comment)
- extraordinary opportunity to grow and learn....must continue this and try and increase CCC participation in joint ventures of the 3 partners
- mirror to the rest of the community, state, country, and the world on how these relationships can work with respect and tolerance.
- continue to learn about our Partners faiths and assist in their understanding of Christianity as we celebrate together and engage in community services.
- involving our youth in this amazing opportunity...they are the future.

Summary:

- There was a strong emphasis on the need to return to a feeling of “community” at CCC, where we worked together and looked for ways to engage in the larger Community
- There was also a concern that we will lose the Youth engagement if we don’t value and utilize their input.
- Several stated Tri Faith was a big part of why they were pulled toward CCC.
- One member summed up that CCC has a soul that is authentic...and because of that, we will survive this rocky time.

GROUP 18

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- We want visionary challenges: challenges that rely on, and originate from relationship. New and old members are “woven in” as they are encouraged to follow their call.
- We want to be challenged in the way our disciple band challenges us: in conversation, by utilizing a variety of resources in addition to scripture, resource studies, and through prayer.
- There is no point to ignorant spirituality (superstitious religiosity).
- I want Countryside to speak fluently the theology of Progressive Christianity, which is not set but always challenged by interpretations and academic intellect.
- To stay engaged I would need to feel that our community is grounded in the Spirit through contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer practiced by individuals, as well as in small groups. In small group it really develops and deepens.

- Contemplation, meditation, and spiritual practices study opportunities would be popping up for the congregation in an ongoing schedule; including an occasional contemplative worship service. This keeps it before us, reintroducing the concepts for people to pick up as they are ready, incorporating into their personal Christian practice.

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- The UCC Designations we have been studying can identify and inform our calls as individuals and our call as a congregation.
- Creating a “brave space” (this requires first a “safe space”) in which:
 - We can discuss any topic
 - We can develop resources to expand on the “Designation” topics
 - There is accountability
 - We develop deep enough relationships that offer mutual appreciation
 - There is accountability
 - We develop deep enough relationships that offer mutual appreciation
 - There are small inter-community groups based on shared topics (LGBTQIA+, FATE, etc.
 - These groups get basic training on facilitation to hold “brave space”
 - There is a regular outlet for these groups to share info: in worship, at events and at gatherings
- One way we as a congregation SERVE is to help members discern their own passions to serve, and connect people together in small groups where action is detailed out and implemented.
- The congregation as a whole works on prayer practices, listening to Spirit, hearing a direction, and discovering gifts. The action part happens in the small groups formed around particular passions (immigration action, Designations, food pantry...).

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- Being prepared to be surprised, being open, being ready to be shocked.
- Tri-Faith relationship must help us sharpen our own Christianity, strengthen our understanding of our own faith. We allow our Tri-Faith relationships to challenge us spiritually and intellectually.
- It is imperative to have clergy who are capable of representing, in the Tri-Faith Initiative, the beliefs at Countryside – a Christian practice with a developed understanding of Christian

foundations, scriptural history, theology, and spirituality.

- Our partnership in the Tri-Faith Initiative would best be Spirit led. (see contemplative prayer above.)
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GROUP 19

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- Looking for more than preaching sermons
 - Story-based, historical context
 - Real-world applications
 - Bible – who, when, where, how
- Learning – UCC designations series was life-changing – provided a great deal of information we did not have
 - Want to continue
 - Real-world, social justice issues
- Through lens of faith and service
 - Hard for people to get engaged given other responsibilities; we can't do all of them well
- Focus on 1 or 2 of these
- Build on what we started – open and affirming
- Ensuring our youth programs are aligned
 - One youth declined to participate in an off-site activity, stating due to illness
- Was it really, or did the youth not feel welcomed?
- Racial justice – not enough attention on this in Nebraska
- As Tri-Faith members we are part of a community that includes marginalized members
- Environment
- Information shared at UCC series was scary
 - Want more small groups that meet on weekends so people who work and those with kids can participate
 - 101 class was great – what about a 102 class?

- More in-depth
- What do the boards do
- How to become involved

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- While donations are good – we need to also get out in the community
 - Food pantry, coat giveaway
 - Be the face of Countryside to the community
 - Youth have adopted a park
- Service events with Tri-Faith partners
- We like the Pine Ridge toy drive and COYO service trips, and that COYO selected theBox
- Align service with UCC designations series
- Together Inc – are we still affiliated / connected with them?

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- This partnership was one of the reasons I joined Countryside
 - What it shows the community and my family personally, is that, while other Christian churches say theirs is the only way, Tri-Faith says “this is my way but it doesn’t have to be your way – we can all make it up the mountain together”
- Countryside’s participation shows that being inclusive is stronger, more productive than being divisive
 - Not “us vs them” – it’s about being together
 - We’re all humans – we all have the same struggles in life
- Interested in neighbor-to-neighbor program – social group
- Show and tell amongst the partners – find our similarities as well as understanding our differences
- Cookie bank activity with AMI and Temple was fun
- Small group meetings with AMI and Temple leaders
- Reaching out to other faiths as well
- Optimize social engagement – make them easy opportunities
- Build friendships and relationships

- Starting point for other engagement
 - Build on these to create more opportunities for engagement
 - Recorded events – make them available
 - Conduct joint panel discussions
 - In accessible places
 - Maybe even a bar? 😊 (we watched Tri-Faith’s Daily Show video cliptogether)
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GROUP 20

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- A. Expectation that at least one of the Pastors, demonstrate a deep spirituality with the ability to teach a variety of spiritual disciplines. Understand that spirituality includes uplifting and supporting others. Sharing one’s resources, talents, emotional strength is an integral part of spiritual development.
- B. Able to enable my growth in theology, Biblical understanding, ethical foundation to assist in my day to day living.
- C. Able to communicate a Progressive, Liberal Theology to support our daily life.
- D. Able to communicate a Progressive, Liberal Theology to support and encourage other faith traditions. Focus Biblical study on the inclusivity of other faith traditions, particularly those of the Abrahamic Tree.
- E. Sermons should be uplifting, intellectual, spiritual.
- F. Bible studies.
- G. Respect and honor pluralism, not literal interpretations.
- H. The Pastor should be a New Testament scholar.
- I. The Pastor should convey content and context, be highly educated with a long tenure. We should welcome disagreement as an opportunity to grow and learn.
- J. Be challenged and learn more.
- K. Progressive theology.
- L. We should be Christ centered, establish our identity as Christians.
- M. Based upon scripture while teaching context.

- N. Not highlighted or adequately mentioned here is the specific issue of linking Social Justice issue with a specific political platform (ie: Democrat) to the extent that those not of that particular political party (i.e. Republicans) feel alienated and unwelcome. The key point made was that Social Justice issues and concerns can be embraced by everyone – but that does not mean that a specific political party associated with that agenda is. (added by one of the group participants after the original notes were submitted)

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- A. We are Called to motivate members to envision, develop and lead in serving others. This is a wide spectrum of services that we have demonstrated in the past, new challenges that we may not even envision at this time.
- B. Illustrate that service is not limited to generosity, but a significant component is Justice. Generosity and Justice are integrally connected. We need to support efforts to change systems, support the ongoing need to help others, and create new attitudes in supporting those who are struggling to survive, to revise systems and reverse behaviors that affect our environment.
- C. We need to continue to listen to and understand the appropriate response to the hurt and pain in the lives of others and our environment. This involves a deep understanding of the needs of the other to enable their integrity and growth to reach their potential.
- D. Make an awareness of LGTQ and other contemporary issues while realizing that these are not political issues.
- E. Call to serve each other, sustaining our community. This can be done via small groups, studies, or a range of efforts. Provide help to those that are experiencing hardship.
- F. Welcome others.
- G. Exposure/opportunities to be part of this great experiment (Tri-Faith campus).
- H. Environmental awareness (no Styrofoam is a good example). Our old variety of coffee mugs was an excellent metaphor of our diversity, would like to see that come back.
- I. Okay to stand with difference and similarities.
- J. Creation Justice designation.
- K. Religious pluralism
- L. Social justice, systemic racism, understand how we are to proceed.
- M. Serve one another.
- N. Grounded on Biblical principles.
- O. Know/understand who we are via doctrine.
- P. All meetings should start with a prayer.
- Q. Understand what it means to be UCC.

R. Understand that the Phoenix Affirmations were created by a group of theologians.

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- A. Recognize and affirm the significance of Countryside Community Church UCC within Christendom. We need to understand and live out affirm the power and significance of our commitment to the Tri-Faith Initiative. We need to engage much of Christendom in the conversation concerning the significant beliefs of other faith traditions, but more importantly confront the exclusive, superior and dominate nature developed over time that some of Christendom affirms. We root ourselves in solid Biblical Theology and the teachings of Jesus affirming inclusivity, love and health of the other, and the importance of servanthood in all relationships. One of the most damaging positions of Christianity, not only in relationship with other faith traditions, but within the different interpretations within Christianity is the attitude of superiority, arrogance, and exclusion of those who do not believe as “we” do!
- B. Focus attention upon STOPPING the cycles of violence, prejudice, hatred directed towards our Tri-Faith Partners. We are in a significant position and need to be more willing to risk alienating some in Christianity by speaking our convictions and demonstrating ways to intervene and STOP THE CYCLES.
- C. Learn more about the beliefs, the difficulties faced, the trauma experienced as members of their faith tradition and learn ways to express our affirmation of the beliefs, understand our role in the difficulties, and work to heal the trauma. Learn how to celebrate their joys and expectations.
- D. Our role is not to convert, but to educate and share.
- E. Participate in programs and volunteer for activities.
- F. Most important is to serve together, such as in the Tri-Faith Garden or orchard, or helping other faith communities.
- G. Engaged and active participants.
- H. Bibles back in the pews.
- I. Understand who we are and celebrate who we are.
- J. Engage other Christians to challenge exclusivity.
- K. Embrace the concept of the love of God known must fully to us.
- L. New Testament theologian.
- M. Don't dilute our Christian beliefs
- N. Represent Christianity fully.

GROUP 21

Question #1: How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?

- An accepting leader to challenge non-accepting people
- More discussions
- A leader who challenges existing interpretations of biblical stories
- Speaks to be understood by all audience
- Introduction of more spiritual practices in services
- A leader who does not act like they are the only person in relationship with God
- Someone who doesn't judge past beliefs
- Acknowledge other beliefs
- Making sure they show "our service"
- Bring in people who can speak on a lot of different things
- Create space where all are equally welcomed
- Being forward thinking and leading the change for Christianity
- Making basic level changes to be more welcoming/safe
- Fully being open to ALL How are we called to serve?

Question #2: What is our call to serve? (What do we value?)

- Identifying how we serve now
- Large acts – the box, taking care of and advocating for the environment, prioritizing composting over convenience, MASKS
- Small acts – sidewalk chalk, etc.

- Lead by example
- Student representation in services
- Educate about the misuse and weaponization of Christianity
- Identify struggles and solutions
- Create and hold space for different interpretations of scripture
- Challenge existing world views

Question #3: What does it mean to be the Christian partner on the Tri-Faith Commons?

- All are welcome
- Open and affirming
- Take people in that are different, accept, and invite
- We want to live fully into affirmation 1
- Support system
 - Get informed about individual practices
 - Advocacy- use our voices
 - Predict each other's need

