

Peoples Church UU

Developmental Ministry Evaluation

January/February 2021

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Developmental Ministry Evaluation

January/February 2021

In the fall of 2020, Peoples Church UU embarked on assessing the success of Peoples Church meeting its Developmental Ministry goals established five years earlier. The goals had been evaluated informally by the PCUU Board of Trustees in each of the preceding years, but a more formal evaluation was needed to establish what had been accomplished and to set the direction for the remaining two years of the Developmental Ministry (DM) program. The Board issued an official charge and established a Developmental Ministry Evaluation Team consisting of Sue Davis, Scott Gay, David Miessler-Kubaneck with Kathy Juba, chair.

In January 2021, Peoples' Developmental Ministry Evaluation Team decided to use both an online survey and a person to person (phone or Zoom) interview. They asked Peoples' staff, church members and friends to complete an online survey based on the five goals. In addition, approximately 20 people including a few staff and the rest being people representative of various demographics and interests within the church were interviewed regarding what they had experienced as the effects of the church's work on the goals. What follows is the findings from those assessments.

Fifty-seven people responded to the online survey which is approximately a 44% response rate of the membership. In actuality, the rate is higher as some couples reported that they completed one survey for the two of them. Some of the respondents were staff, but because the surveys were anonymous, the team doesn't know how many, but likely no more than three. Twenty members and four staff were interviewed.

Overwhelmingly people were familiar with the idea of the Developmental Ministry and over half have been involved in working on one or more of the goals. Only one person said that they were unaware that the church was involved in a Developmental Ministry.

The DM goals that were assessed are as follows:

1. **Governance:** Establish church governance structures and practices that make the best use of church resources.
2. **Financial Stewardship:** Develop, implement and maintain a financial stewardship system based on generosity and stewardship as theological foundations understood by all members of the Peoples Church community.
3. **Communication:** Communicate positively and consistently among Peoples Church stakeholders.
4. **Membership:** Develop and maintain rich and vigorous processes for attracting and integrating members.
5. **Involvement in Broader Communities:** Develop and implement a plan for increasing Peoples Church presence and involvement in the geographical and religious communities of Cedar Rapids and beyond.

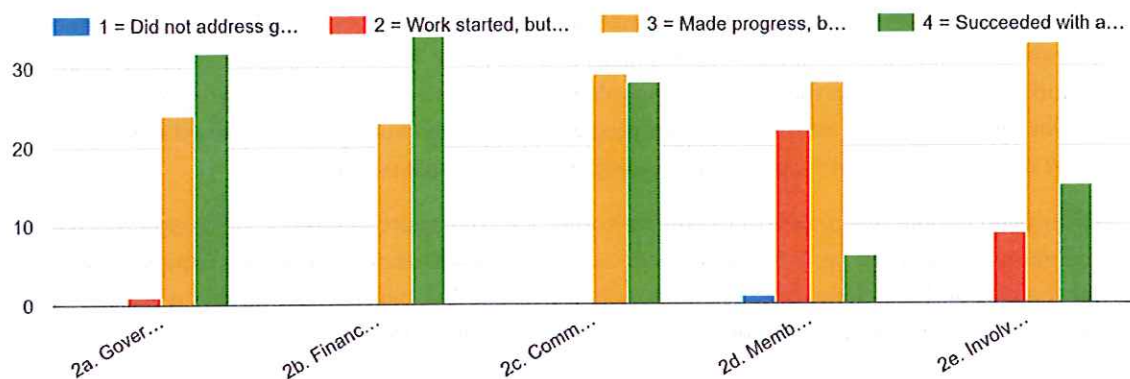
When asked to rate how successful Peoples has been with progress on each of the five goals, approximately one half or more of the respondents felt that the Finance, Governance, and Communication goals had been met. To a much lesser extent, the Involvement in Broader Communities

goal (approximately one-fourth) and least the Membership goal (about one-sixth) were marked for the goal being met. The chart below gives more exact results.

Respondents were asked to evaluate progress on the goals using the following choices:

1. Did not address goal.
2. Work started but no progress.
3. Made progress but not there yet.
4. Succeeded with a system in place for continued progress.

2. Please rate how successful you think Peoples is with progress on the following five goals:



The specific number of respondents out of 57 who said the goal had been reached are as follows:

Goal area	Number of responses	% of responses
Financial Stewardship	34	60%
Governance	32	56%
Communications	28	49%
Involvement in Broader Communities	15	26%
Membership	6	11%

GOAL SPECIFIC COMMENTS

In order of expressed degree of accomplishment, from most accomplished to least accomplished, the Developmental Ministry goals will be covered in the following order.

1. Financial Stewardship
2. Governance
3. Communication
4. Involvement in Broader Communities
5. Membership

1. FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Develop, implement and maintain a financial stewardship system based on generosity and stewardship as theological foundations understood by all members of the Peoples Church community.

According to Rev. Rebecca, during the time of the DM, the church has gone from deficit budgets to ending the last two years with surpluses. Pledging has grown about 5% every year, exceeding the pledge goal for the last two years. Endowment funds have grown immensely, allowing the church to tap into the interest earnings to fund 15% of the budget, resulting in the balanced budgets.

Survey and interview comments were overwhelmingly positive for both the church's current financial status and the communication of that status to the church community. Ninety-nine percent of respondents to the online survey said they are satisfied with the financial stewardship of Peoples and will continue to support the church in the future. Ninety-one percent said they know how healthy the finances of Peoples Church are. Sixty percent of the online survey respondents said this goal had been reached. The other 40% feel progress has been made but we still have work to do.

The current process of running the stewardship campaign received positive comments. People like the "No hassle" option and that the campaign starts in the summer and gets over early.

Several people mentioned that they felt good about the increasing growth and the current size of the endowment. When asked if the current practice of covering 15% of the annual budget with a portion of the endowment interest is reasonable and sustainable, all but 9% agreed. The amount of the church's budget that should be covered by the endowment elicited suggestions varying from none up to 40% support. (There were five comments offering differing amounts within this range.) One person stated that "it would be nice if we didn't have to use the endowment regularly."

One person commented that they are glad the church is paying full dues to the UUA.

A couple of concerns were expressed. One that multiple people shared was that the church's budget is reliant on three or four major contributors who are elderly and the church needs to be concerned with how to deal with losing those major contributors when the time comes. The other concern was that the financial commitment to RE is not back to where the respondent felt it should be.

Some of the positive comments by survey and interview respondents about financial stewardship in general follow.

- We've come a long way. We balanced budgets and we've had good growth with our pledge income and our endowment so we're in a really pretty stable situation.
- Hooray!!! Thankful for the Finance Team, Stewardship Team, Rev. Rebecca, Sesquicentennial donors, regular and sustaining donors, and our Endowment team!!
- Keep up the progress and good work that has taken place in recent years. I see a lot of improvement in this area.
- The generosity this past year is rewarding. I think the members have grown in their understanding of endowments and regular giving.
- I think Peoples has made a big improvement by just staying in the black. I think the emphasis on using endowment money more has been a good one because especially with our active pledging church population dwindling, endowment money is important to make up the shortfalls. I think Rebecca coming on has spurred people on to contribute more to the church financially. I'll have to admit that people coming of age of 70+ have also been part of the improved pledging, using required minimum distributions. Kudos to the older population. And this makes it all the more urgent that we get our membership into higher gear because it's been dwindling.
- Vastly improved. You know where we're in the black, budget-wise. At least, some people are becoming more aware of the value of the endowments and are contributing to them. The stewardship campaigns have been either very close to ambitious goals or have exceeded them so in terms of developing that culture of generosity that Rebecca talked to it seems like we're in the process.

Suggestions that were offered for improving the financial workings of the church are as follows:

- Share with our members the possibilities that generosity can provide for our programs, staff and building, to help them appreciate where the money is going.
- Have a brief quarterly report about the church's financial status posted on the church website.
- Continue to strengthen the planned giving program for the endowments.

2. GOVERNANCE

Establish church governance structures and practices that make the best use of church resources.

Fifty-six percent of respondents felt that the goal had been met with a system in place for continued progress. Forty-two percent used the rating "Made progress but not there yet." One person felt that even though work had started on the goal, no progress had been made yet.

Since embarking on the Developmental Ministry, the Board and congregation have been learning about and then implementing policy governance in an effort to meet this goal. In her interview, Rev. Rebecca explained her view on the success of the change to policy governance:

Our governance model is working, because we are getting through 2020. I'm not sure that would have happened with another governance model. We have successfully transitioned to policy governance and

this is our first year of fully implementing it. When people asked if it is working, I responded, "2020 has thrown everything at us and we have been able to be agile, responsive, and hang together as a community because we have a clear sense of who had the authority to do what and be held accountable. That is the gift of Policy Governance. There was a lot thinking on your feet. 5 years ago. There would have been a lot of "Whose responsibility is this?" It is very clear now: this is the board's job, this is the minister's job.

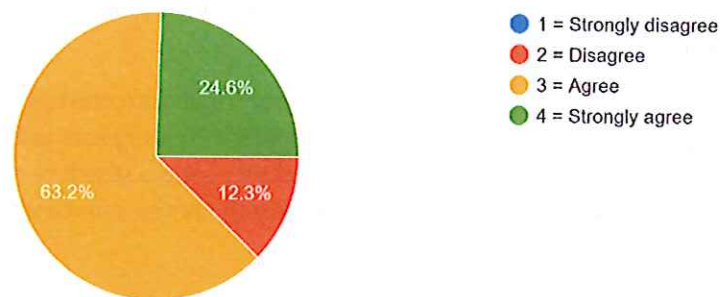
Many comments support Rev. Rebecca's opinion that policy governance is an improvement over past practice.

- I was president before the change to policy governance and it was kind of difficult to get things done. It was a challenge to say, "Who should do these things?" "How do we find people to do things?"
- When Rebecca first came, before governance policy had been worked on, there were still fuzzy lines of communication. Who do you go to: the Minister? the board? You didn't know what kind of decisions you can make independently, without even an administrator or the board so that remained fuzzy.
- In past I was on a committee and things seem to fizzle when one person went off. Now Rebecca, David and Christine help with follow up, keep things going. 150th celebrations were great. Rebecca empowers with clear expectations and boundaries which really helps get things done.

Respondents now understand much better how decisions are made. Eighty-eight percent said they either agreed or strongly agreed that they have an increased understanding of the processes for decision-making.

3b. During the time I have been at Peoples during the Developmental Ministry, I have an increased understanding of how decisions are made.

57 responses



Some of the comments supporting this improvement follow:

- I think it's come a long way. And I kind of like it.
- I think it's better. I think we've really made a lot of strides.
- There is clearer direction on how to present ideas. More autonomy in doing things. There seems to be better clarity on how to move forward. With the minister as executive head, the

respondent's team is working well. The board is no longer micromanaging and is able to work on bigger issues.

- Having an able administrator, like Rebecca, make many of the decisions, in consultation with the board if she so wishes, allows the board to deal with policy decisions and not things like who do we get to fix the heating system. I think serving on the board is not quite as joy sapping as it has been at some times. It also helps to have her in charge of hiring.

Staff (Christine, David, Brian R.) feel the procedures in place work very well for them.

Concerns and ideas for improvement related to how policy governance works at Peoples were expressed. A dominant concern is that so much of the decision-making is centered on the minister, a practice that requires an extremely competent minister in the area of governance. People are extremely happy with Rev. Rebecca's job performance but worry (1) that she will burn out at some point, and (2) if the church will always be able to find such a competent administrator. One person put it this way: "I worry that Rebecca carries a heavy burden of the work and that may be hard to sustain."

Other concerns/criticisms:

- "I am not a huge fan of policy governance."
- "We have a challenge with Board of Trustee turnover and continuity, so we may not have a critical mass of people who really "get" policy governance."
- "Still, there's always this issue of who can make decisions."
- One person is not sure that the duties of the president of the Board are "set out" very well.
- Some have said that they knew what was being done on the goal when they served on the Board but not after they were off the Board. (This would connect with the Communication goal, too.)

Suggestions for improvement:

- Put on the website who to go to.
- Put the forms that are now outside the office online on the church's website so people don't have to go to the church to pick up forms.

A second part of the Governance goal addressed the existence of a structure in place at Peoples for a person to become involved if they wanted to become a leader. This appears to be a growth area for future work. People said they were not clear on whether there was a structure or just asked, "What is the structure?" Another person said they were unaware of the process for candidate names appearing on ballots.

More on the topic of leaders and leadership in the Membership section, p.13.

3. COMMUNICATION

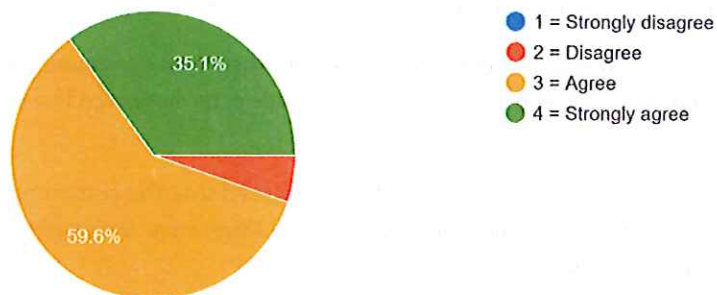
Communicate positively and consistently among Peoples Church stakeholders.

Respondents basically were split 50/50 on whether the goal had been met with a plan in place or progress had been made but there is more to do.

This goal was designed to cover both the formal communications at Peoples and the informal interactions among people. Regarding formal communications, during the time of the DM, a very large percentage (95%) of respondents feel that they have been better informed about events and activities in and around Peoples as well as those that it supports in the community.

5b. In recent years, I feel more informed about events held at Peoples, those supported by Peoples, as well as any initiatives or activities.

57 responses



Many people cited centralizing the information flow through Office Coordinator as being a positive change. "There's a coordinated flow now," according to one respondent. It is felt that Rev. Rebecca and our Office Coordinator, Christine, do much to facilitate this, as stated by another person, "I do think queries to the office or the minister never go unanswered." Questions can only be answered, however, if a person can reach the office when it is open, as explained here: "I sometimes have questions and not sure how to get answers. The office hours aren't convenient for me, although I don't think they need to be changed. I'm not sure what the best idea would be."

The Voice and eWeekly were frequently cited as positive sources of information. The church's website, Facebook page and church emails such as "Soulful Home" also were mentioned as helping to meet our congregation's needs. Videos and services over Zoom have helped others feel informed and connected.

Respondents also expressed many concerns and also suggestions for changes to make communications at Peoples even better.

- A couple of people asked if we are making optimal use of the ways the church now communicates. One person explained: To me the more important question about communication in our congregation is: Is the correct information getting to the people that need it in a timely fashion to promote healthy church function? My opinion is we need to talk about who needs to know what and look systematically where it breaks down, if it does.
- Several people mentioned about the church's webpage lacking current content, including Board minutes, and having outdated information.
- A couple people suggested we need more exposure to the community through print and TV media. One liked the Iowa Public Radio ads that several UU organizations did a few years ago.

- Some felt the information coming to them from church was overwhelming and wondered if they could pick and choose the updates they receive. Another wondered if the Voice and eWeekly could be shorter.
- A couple people stated that they do not know what the Board is doing. Here's how one person explained it, "I have little or no sense of what the Board actually does. There are the semi-annual reports, but the structure and activities are opaque – are there still board minutes? Are there still standing committees? Who is on them? I think there are, but my point is: should the workings be more visible? Or not really? Do members need to be aware of the mechanics, or not really?" Another person asked if some sort of a brief "Board Report" could be included in one of the publications to inform church people as to what the Board is doing.

A second part of the Communication Goal addresses interpersonal communications. Questions on both the survey and in interviews asked if members and friends communicated in a consistent, effective and positive way.

On the online survey, 92.9% either agreed or strongly agreed that the communications between and among members of the church community interact in positive ways. Seven percent disagreed.

Complimentary comments were:

- People are usually open to hearing my opinion on things and will express theirs. I think there's a free flow of opinions.
- I think Rebecca is kind of responsible for a lot of that. (*"that" = positive response to goal.*)
- So, my sense is that people are working more to, you know, if there's a disagreement, we disagree agreeably and getting away from character assassination and being a little more rational.
- Good and different opinions are respected and heard. We are respectful of each other.
- I think this has gotten a lot better. It was really out of control after Capo left.

The only suggestion given regarding informal interactions was that the person wondered if there could be more ways to foster casual conversations that build community connections.

Another person feels that the information flow between staff and church leaders could be improved. "Communication among the staff and church leaders still seems to still fall through the cracks at times on the day-to-day running of the church. However, intentions are good and people persevere. Programs are taking off which is a result of progress in all of these areas."

4. INVOLVEMENT IN BROADER COMMUNITIES

Develop and implement a plan for increasing Peoples Church presence and involvement in the geographical and religious communities of Cedar Rapids and beyond.

Twenty-six percent of online survey respondents felt this goal was complete with a plan in place for going forward. Fifty-eight percent feel good progress has been made but "no banana" yet. Sixteen percent feel work has begun but no progress has been made.

Because this goal specifically addresses a plan for increasing our church's presence and involvement in Cedar Rapids and beyond, that will be the first topic covered, followed by looking at whether or not people feel there has been an increased presence and involvement in various communities. Thirdly, people's sense of connection to UUs outside of Peoples will be covered.

First, the question of a plan: fifty-four percent either agreed or strongly agreed that they knew and understood the plan. Forty-six percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Even though people could cite activities that the church was involved in, many people were not sure of or not aware of a plan that had been developed and implemented. Some thought there was a plan "sort of" or a minimal plan. One person seemed to articulate what others were thinking:

I don't see a master plan-type thing – just that as UUs we feel compelled to do what we can, however we can, to participate in building a welcoming community and supporting justice in all its forms. When invited to help we do, and some are creating effective opportunities for community engagement – whether it's hosting an anti-racism forum and artist, or marching in Pridefest, or simply standing as people for justice. We are lucky to have both leaders and we have workers/supporters!

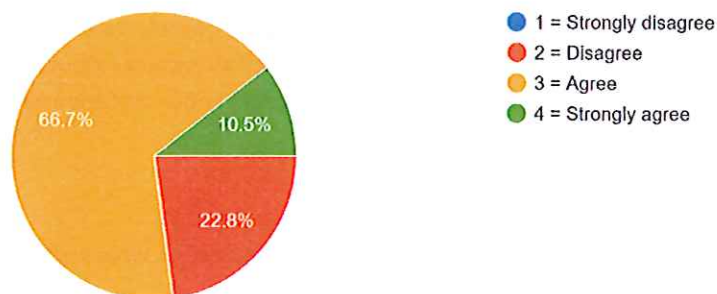
From a person who felt there was a plan and had suggestions for further involvement:

First Sunday is the most publicized part of the plan, next is our collaboration with a few churches. Would like to see support of some non-local Justice initiatives, such as the Equal Justice Initiative in Alabama and an environmental-based group such as NRDC, EDC.

Several additional people supported the idea of doing more environmental work.

As to whether or not people feel there has been an increased presence and involvement in the larger geographical area in and around Cedar Rapids, approximately three-fourths of respondents agreed with nearly a quarter disagreeing and no one strongly disagreeing.

7a. Peoples has a significant positive presence in Cedar Rapids and surrounding communities.
57 responses



Many people looked to the Social Justice Team at Peoples for the information, activities and actions taken in creating a positive presence in the area. Rev. Rebecca applauded the committee and added Jim Federer's participation on community boards as a good effort in this area:

I credit the social justice team and the work they have been doing. Part of it has been branching out working with various local groups:

- *African ministry program at St Marks and the vegetable garden on our lot.*
- *We had a Juneteenth booth. That gives the average white person an option to go to Juneteenth and feel like you can connect.*
- *Same is true with Pride.*
- *Bethel AME church to help them launch Granny's House to help teenagers who have been expelled or suspended from school and need a place to go.*
- *Lots of little quiet things going on.*
- *Jim Federer has been helpful in reminding me about the other boards he has been on.*

Other positive comments about the church's social justice work follows.

- Our social justice involvement is one area that has dramatically increased our involvement in the community. Also, our partnership with a local church that serves African immigrants and Rebecca's involvement on various boards have increased our presence in the community.

In addition to our social justice involvement outside of Peoples, the CUUPS group tried an interfaith group in Cedar Rapids but it just didn't take off so it was dropped, according to Deb Booth.

Several people commented that they would like the church to have a greater presence outside of Peoples than we currently have and also greater acknowledgement of what we do. Representative quotes follow.

- I think there is progress in this area, but likely more is needed.
- Not to the extent as in earlier years. Those members have passed on.
- I think we have a very strong, if unrecognized presence. Peoples' people continue to participate in social justice, political and cultural events, possibly more than ever. We're getting better at identifying ourselves as Peoples members first, in some cases, with our T-shirts, banners, sponsorships, festival booths, banquets and parades (well, pre-COVID) – and even now with letters in the paper, in online groups and forums and marches. I think our minister's role in community groups carries our recognition to a higher level, too.
- I never hear about Peoples Church except at Peoples Church. To be fair, I don't hear a whole lot about other churches either, but I do hear about other local religious organizations (Matthew 25, His Hands Clinic, Catherine McAuley Center), so I know that community involvement is not impossible.

Suggestions for these topics include the ones below.

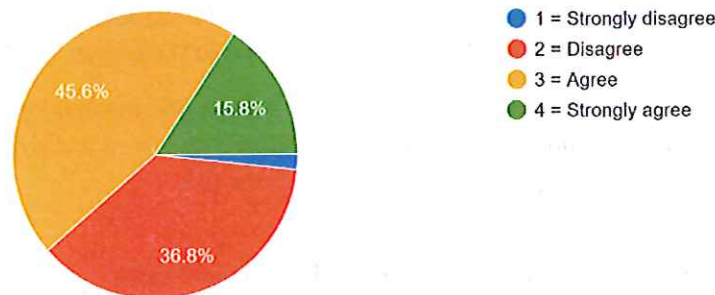
- Peoples should do a better job of letting people know as to where we are located such as simply as a sign on Johnson Ave.
- In the past, our choir met with other choirs. Maybe St. Mark's in the future?
- We may have gotten a little too centered on the BLM (Black Lives Matter) movement as there are so many other needs.

- We need other groups in the community to know about us. We need outside groups to be aware of us so they can contact us when they want something done. We will help them get things accomplished.

The last topic covered by the goal for involvement in the broader community is connecting with UUs outside of Peoples. Only 61% agreed or strongly agreed that they feel a sense of UUs outside PCUU.

7b. I feel connected to UUs outside of Peoples Church.

57 responses



This is one of the few things that it appears has been better during covid and through using Zoom for church services. A couple of comments sharing this thought follow.

- Prior to COVID I probably would've disagreed, but incorporating national/regional UUA leadership, speakers, and content into our virtual services has been helpful.
- Zoom has facilitated that, as well – I found it quite moving to see all the UUs from around the country in the service around Christmas (was it?), presenting music and readings, and for somewhat geographically-distant ministers participating in our own Zoom service. And access to the UUA convention was easy! We benefit from access to those videos, too. I do miss opportunities to meet with the IC and other Iowa congregations in person, but that could happen virtually.

Concerns about what Peoples does to connect to the larger UU community are below.

- I don't feel confident that we, as a church, put much emphasis on what's going on in the wider movement.
- I haven't been able to really make connections outside of church activities, even before the pandemic. I would really like to make more connections.
- Besides sharing the pulpit and some limited programming, I feel disconnected with other UUs in the area.
- I'm intrigued with the idea of attending a UU conference, but as I've never been in elected leadership and never been invited by anyone who was, I haven't.

MEMBERSHIP

Develop and maintain rich and vigorous processes for attracting and integrating members.

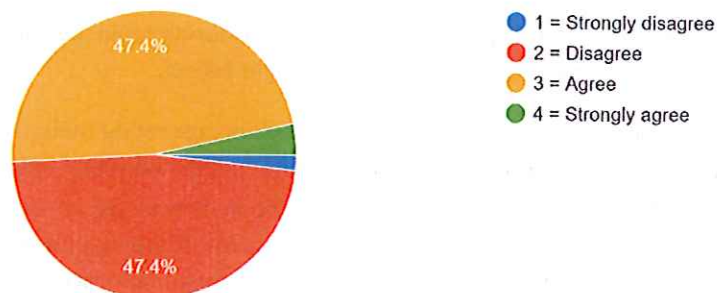
As a gentle reminder to readers, these goals were listed in order of perceived completion, from mostly done (Financial Stewardship) to least done (this one). As a result, positive agreements with the statements and questions offered are the lowest of the group. Eleven percent of respondents to the online survey agreed that this goal had been met. Nearly half, or 49% did feel good progress had been made. Thirty-nine percent said work had been done but no progress had been accomplished. One person felt that the goal had not even been addressed.

The Developmental Ministry Evaluation Team felt that the best way to determine if this goal had been met was to ask whether membership growth was apparent. Secondly, the Team wanted to know how it felt to be a part of Peoples, thinking that a positive feeling and a supportive culture would foster the attraction, integration and continued dedication of members to the church.

On the first question of people being aware of membership growth, the opinion was quite closely split between those who agreed and strongly agreed to those who disagreed and strongly disagreed. In fact, results were only one response (1.7%) different between the two.

6a. I believe that membership has visibly grown in the past 4 years.

57 responses



In looking at numbers on the membership roll, since the application for a Developmental Minister was written and at the time of this report, membership has declined approximately 10%, from 145 to approximately 130 as reported recently by our Operations Coordinator, Christine Kullander. During this time, 46 new people have become members of Peoples. However, some of those plus other members have "drifted away" as one respondent put it.

In addition to the fact that many religious institutions are having difficulty at this time attracting new members, this status is following a very tough year of the church needing to follow CDC guidelines for the coronavirus. We have not been able to gather in groups and needed to social distance when in person. Services, meetings, and most activities are streamed through Zoom. A few events have been held in the parking lot with people sitting 6 ft. or more away in chairs or in cars, but these do not appear to foster the types of communication that would bring in or keep new members.

A few of the many positive general comments about membership at Peoples follow.

- I do think we are reaching a broader community than we did before we started Developmental Ministry. They are attracted by what we are doing, and it remains to be seen whether the church is important enough to them for them to deepen their relationship with us.
- Rev. Rebecca being creative and trying different things has been positive.
- Parking lot events were high-points this year.

Positive comments on the use of Zoom:

- Using Zoom has considerably improved my interaction and my expression. The pre- and post-sermon interaction with members is the highlight of using Zoom.
- I think that the zoom worship services, although people talk about them as being best distancing, but we have those breakout rooms after church and they are really good places to meet new people, as well as to be with old people.

Comments sharing concerns and suggestions follow.

- I think we need to think outside the box if we are going to address membership growth. Can we work with other area UU churches to promote educational events in Eastern Iowa re: liberal religious thought? We are surrounded by a sea of conservatism. Fascism is on the rise. Critical thinking, civil discourse of ideas, finding common ground--these are things our faith can promote. In so doing, we may attract a wider, but possibly more conservative, congregation. Do we want to do this? Where we are now is trying to spearhead social change. Our congregation strongly supports this ideal. Can we accept that we will continue to stay small and strong with this orientation?
- I honestly don't know how many members we currently have. And, I honestly don't know how many new members have joined within the past 4 years. Maybe an update of this information could be communicated in the Voice? Without new members, I worry about the future of the church.

A second part of the membership goal that the interviews addressed is the culture at Peoples. Overall, respondents felt very good about being a part of the church community. One person expressed it this way:

I think it's a culture of acceptance and generosity and I think there's a willingness to try new things. I honestly think we're in a very good place. A lot of that comes from we've had some great leaders like Robyn M.K.

I think Rebecca has been just been wonderful in her developmental ministry and would love for her to stay because she's really demonstrated wide ranging strength, both good in the pulpit with good sermons, pastoral involvement in the community, social justice, and then the willingness to tackle financial issues by being aware and then being an effective executive director. It took a lot of courage.

Additional positive comments:

- Positive affirmative, hearing, enjoyable, Learning. A feeling of belonging.

- Overall, I think that everybody shares most of the principles. But there's a lot of difference in how they participate, that I know.
- The church is desperately trying to change and IS improving. We are more openly LGBTQ+ now. We are gaining younger families.
- Hope we can keep Rebecca at least 10 years.
- Welcoming and open to listening to others' opinions.
- One person feels like she is somewhat on the fringe of the congregation due to being earth based and Wiccan. There has been a positive movement lately and she feels more accepted now. She has been praised for doing open Wiccan based practice.
- Rev. Rebecca feels it was a little more prickly five years ago. There is a culture of unity that was not the case. Everyone is on the same team and not on their own team. When she first started, she didn't accept bad behavior. Having a Covenant of Right Relations has gone really well. When people discovered she wasn't going to tolerate bad behavior they stopped or went away.

Concerns and suggestions:

- A couple of people mentioned a lack of diversity in our congregation being a concern. One person interviewed shared this:

I've heard either on social media or people say that maybe we're not super welcoming. We're not super diverse because we do not have a lot of other than Caucasian people. I don't know that we're reaching out. I do know that it does appear that it would be nice if we were more socially and culturally diverse.

- We still have upstairs/downstairs divide. It's hard to engage people beyond their narrow interest. We're having difficulty determining what we are supposed to be doing as a church: Sunday vs. Social Justice. Feels a little fragmented among interest groups. Do we want to integrate them?
- There needs to be a lot more interaction between people. A while back I came up with an idea of changing the configuration of the pews in order to give the congregation a better way to interact. The key to this church is the interaction and the interaction causes happy members to invite other people who become members. If we stay in individual pockets, or one to one or one to four situations, we will not make much headway.

The third part of this goal addresses a person's overall experience when interacting with others at Peoples.

Each staff person that was asked had an overwhelmingly positive response. Rev. Rebecca has observed growth in kindness and generosity. Christine shared that her experience has been very pleasant working with the office staff and all members of the congregation. Brian Reeves was especially touched when he received Christmas cards from church members and David Wise shared that he feels Peoples is a very positive and open congregation and very supportive. He was overwhelmed at the support from the congregation for the Easter egg hunt.

Positive comments from people about interacting with others in the church community are as follows.

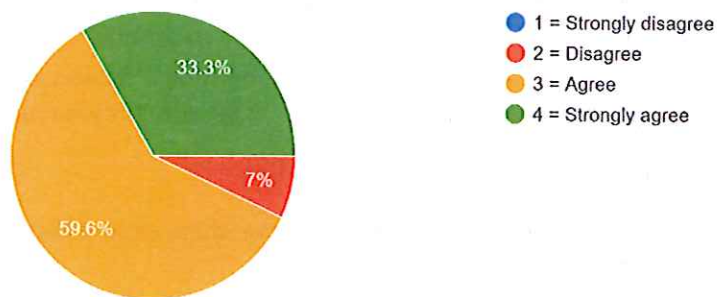
- I think it's a very friendly group, and I feel very welcomed when I'm at a church service or at a church function.
- I feel really, I mean in a selfish way, I feel really loved and supported by so many people in that church. After the derecho the people from church who came to check on me was just amazing and we said no we're fine we're doing all right, you know and I really appreciated that.
- I always feel welcomed and heard.
- All good. Met some pretty awesome people. Good place for fellowship and to meet people with like minds.

The one concern that was expressed about interacting with others at church is that some individuals felt that not enough people felt it was their responsibility to talk to visitors and new people. It was felt that if more people would engage with new faces that those people would more likely stay around longer.

A fourth area addressed in Membership was about people feeling that their knowledge and talents were respected and utilized by staff and members of peoples. 93% of the respondents agreed that they were asked to share their knowledge and skills at Peoples. Two people disagreed.

6b. I feel my knowledge and talents are respected and utilized by staff and members of Peoples.

57 responses

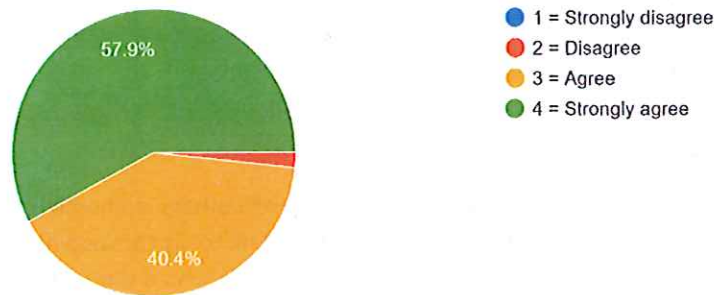


Comments to this question talked about preferring to stay on the sidelines and not involved. One person mentioned not being asked to share them.

A fifth aspect of the Membership Goal addressed was if people feel welcomed, valued, and included in the church community. Again, the responses were overwhelmingly positive; only one respondent disagreed. (See chart below.)

6d. I feel welcomed, valued, and included in the Peoples community.

57 responses



A sample of the positive comments follow:

- This starts at the top. Rev. Rebecca has done a wonderful job welcoming and valuing people in our church community.
- These are my people and I care about them and feel cared for by them. That helps me care about and do my part to care for the greater beloved community beyond the walls of Peoples.
- I think the membership team was doing a great job with the displays in the church, and the book of Peoples people! I miss that, and think the web page could include something similar.

One person left a comment for us with an issue to consider.

- I do, but it's been a long time coming. I still feel that there exists a population of "elites" that I am not, and probably never will be, a part of.

The last piece of the Membership Goal that was addressed in this evaluation asked if the church has a sufficient number of leaders to accomplish all desired tasks. Responses were basically evenly split between "agree" and "disagree." People commented that they were appreciative of those who did volunteer and do the work. For example, "We have many, passionate, competent leaders and I appreciate their service to the church immensely."

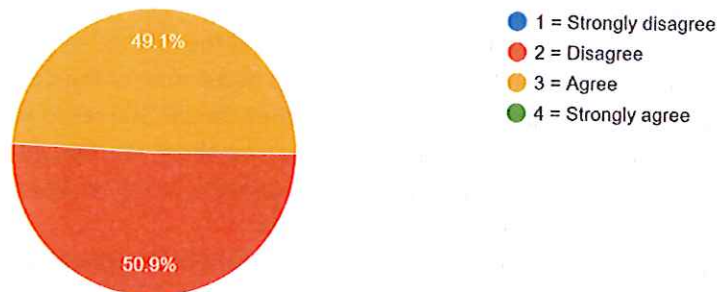
Concerns about leadership and leadership development in the church were as follows:

- The ranks of leaders could use more volunteers from younger adults in the community and who are more often male. Several people mentioned that it appeared we are a church of old people—especially old women. One person suggested we might think about "succession planning" in needing to attract younger members and then get them involved in leadership roles.
- Turnover on the Board of Trustees and the loss of institutional memory is a concern of several. "It takes considerable energy to bring new people on and train them. Why is there not a stronger "belongingness" among people who have served on the Board of Trustees? Where is the support for each other to continue to provide their gifts to the church? Instead, it seems

from this outsider, that people see it as a marathon, or some other arduous task they survived but do not want to attempt again. Some folks have done 2 terms; some are willing to pinch hit when there is a time-limited vacancy. But with each turnover, critical experience and history is lost. What are we missing that this is the continued pattern?

- A couple people stated that they didn't always know when a leader was needed.
- A supporter of Faith Formation offered that they could always use more leaders.
- "Leadership development still needs work to keep bringing fresh blood into leadership positions."

6c. Peoples has a sufficient number of congregational leaders to accomplish all desired tasks.
57 responses



MINISTER'S SECTION

The UUA suggests that congregations ask three specific questions of their Developmental Minister as part of the evaluation process. The questions and a summarized version of Rev. Rebecca's answers are below.

1. **What is your observation about the workload balance between the minister and the congregation?**

There is a strangeness because ministry never ends. Every single day I think, I could have done.... There is an endless list of things to do, part of it is me. The board helped me figure out what I should do. If it is in this lane, I should do this. If it is in this lane, it's someone else's job. That has been really helpful. I know where to focus. I don't have to do all the work. That feels good.

2. **What is your observation on how the work is shared throughout the congregation?**

Not so much. There is a core group that does most of the work. It would be better if everybody did some of the work. We need to work on this.

3. **What is your observation about the minister's practice of self-care?**

No... It is a little rough with an infant, then a toddler - new parent, I don't go to the gym, but I am okay. It has been hard with a pandemic. I will get there. I am a Minister, I am a wife, I am a mother, I am a daughter, and the last on the list is me. I should work on that.

Four other church members were asked to think about Rev. Rebecca and reflect on the three questions. Below is a summary of their responses.

1. What is your observation about the workload balance between the minister and the congregation?

These four people felt that Rev. Rebecca has healthy boundaries and the workload is balanced. One person said they didn't think she overextended herself to govern every single aspect of peoples, she could separate her responsibilities from those of the Board. People did have concerns about Rev. Rebecca being put in a place to take on more responsibility than any one person should. Policy Governance asks that she be the executive director of the organization in addition to her ministerial duties. One person thought that put her at risk for burnout. This person went on, that luckily, we have very capable staff people to support her and appear to be picking up a lot of tasks Rev. Rebecca doesn't have the time for, e.g., the technology piece for Zooming services.

Another person expressed a concern that without the church having a Property Board, the church office and Rev. Rebecca are needing to make more of the decisions regarding property improvement and maintenance issues than they should. The respondent was unsure that she or the next minister would have this as a strength for them. He thought there may be some members of the congregation who could contribute and relieve Rev. Rebecca and the office of doing the research for those types of decisions.

2. What is your observation on how the work is shared throughout the congregation?

A couple of the respondents said they thought it was balanced between Rev. Rebecca and the congregation, but any imbalance is because some members of the congregation do way more than other members. One person suggested 20% of the people do 80% of the work. Another person talked about the multiple hats some members wear. It came up here as in another section of this evaluation that people need to be asked to do tasks. They are willing and just waiting to be asked.

3. What is your observation about the minister's practice of self-care?

The people asked all said they didn't feel they had good information for answering this. They all assumed she did practice good self-care because they saw no evidence of stress or inability to handle all aspects of her very challenging job.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

For the online survey, respondents were asked, "Is there anything else you want to tell us about this church and your interaction with it?"

For the interviews, people were asked, "Anything I should have asked you?" or "Do you have any other comments?"

The largest percentage of comments were in support of Rev. Rebecca and her work at Peoples. Starting with the other staff that was surveyed, they all enjoy working at Peoples and hope Rev. Rebecca, as well as the other staff, stay until after they personally leave.

Members of the congregation are very much in support of Rev. Rebecca remaining at Peoples. Here are some of those comments.

- I would love to see Rev. Rebecca stay as long as she is willing!
- While we haven't attended regularly during the Developmental Ministry process, it is clear that Rev. Hinds has done an excellent job moving the church in the right direction.
- I want to commend Reverend Rebecca on the wonderful job that she is doing. She has been such a "breath of fresh air". I am in favor of asking Reverend Rebecca to become our settled minister. I'm very happy with the direction the church has, and continues, to take under her leadership. I've been a member since 1984. If she were to leave, I'm not sure if I would continue to feel the same way or be as involved with Peoples as I have been over the past two years. Kudos to your work, Reverend Rebecca. Looking forward to the future and continuing to build and grow our church.
- I like that the services feel a little more spiritual to me, which is hard in this tradition, as there is no spiritual writing to follow. There is no story for us to embrace and celebrate throughout the year. Yet somehow, I feel uplifted after services with Rebecca.

A couple people commented on the positive impact the Developmental Ministry has had at Peoples.

- Overall, it has been a plus for our Church, and Reverend Rebecca has worked well within its framework.
- The core of faithful members and People's strong dynamic ministry who stayed with a clear plan through thick and thin shows the decision to use developmental ministry was ideal.

One person did have a suggestion for how we go forward at Peoples.

We have to keep strategic. Where are we going in the next two years? I go back to Fort Newton. He not only was preaching sermons to Cedar Rapids; he was using newspapers with articles to connect with the liberal thinking of his time. I feel that Iowa is drifting back. It's not enough to ask, "What's good church?" We need to be looking at what's supporting us outside of us. Tanager Place's progress could be helpful for us to look at.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This is the Developmental Ministry Evaluation Team's (DMET's) report for Peoples Church Board and congregation. This report is a compilation of responses and comments from a congregation-wide survey (57 submitted) and interviews of individually selected members (over 20 completed) conducted to evaluate the church's progress toward completing the Developmental Ministry goals created five years ago.

We have presented the information in this document in a factual manner. We do not feel it is our place as an ad hoc committee to suggest priorities or make suggestions on what ideas need to be addressed or in what order. We feel that is the work for our Minister and the Board of Trustees to undertake in a strategic way after a deep dive into the original goals with their attached strategies and tactics. (See Appendix A.) We do issue a warning to not be pulled into thinking of the goals as just a topic (for example, "Governance") but the whole stated goal ("Establish church governance structures and practices that make the best use of church resources") and the stated strategies and tactics that

accompany each goal. A full understanding of the goal cannot be comprehended without including all of these pieces. Long time members will remember several forums and meetings that were held to collect ideas of what was not working at Peoples at the time. It was the breadth and depth of the issues in each of the goal areas that led to them becoming goals. The goal statements, strategies, and tactics articulate efforts that would address those stated concerns.

The DMET is not suggesting that statements written more than five years ago should still be leading us forward. We are suggesting that our minister and Board revisit these guiding statements in light of the information shared in this document. What has been accomplished should be acknowledged, celebrated and “checked off.” Other statements should be reworked to encompass where we are now, and new strategies and tactics should become part of a new strategic plan for going forward.

Our deepest gratitude goes to everyone who participated in our survey and interviews. Our very best wishes, along with a few hopes and dreams, go to our current and future minister and Boards. Our faith and trust are in you to continue to make Peoples the church where we can optimally “lead compassionate lives through spiritual growth and just action” as our mission statement says.

Members of the Developmental Ministry Team,

Sue Davis

Scott Gay

David Miessler-Kubaneck

Kathy Juba, chair

APPENDIX A

Introduction to Goals for Developmental Ministry Application

While the application suggests thinking in terms of one goal per year, the Committee agrees that some phases in all areas must be pursued concurrently. For example, work on Goal Two should not wait until we have completed developing Goal One policies, structures, and procedures.

Top 5 Goals

1. Governance
2. Financial Stewardship
3. Communication
4. Membership
5. Involvement with Broader Communities

To that end, we have created a list of proposed strategies and tactics for each goal. These proposals intend to demonstrate our commitment to addressing the challenges ahead, as well as to share with potential developmental ministry candidates some ideas that we have generated from our research. We expect the developmental minister to bring invaluable insights and expertise to the planning and execution process, and for these strategies and tactics to change as work moves forward.

See the following pages for detailed explanations of each goal area, including:

- A specific goal statement
- An explanation of its importance
- Strategies and tactics to use in pursuing the goal

1. Governance

Establish church governance structures and practices that make the best use of church resources.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Current church structure does not allow for us to meet short and long-term goals. If we can accomplish this goal, then we become more successful with our other goals.

- **Needed Strengths:**
Strategic Thinking

- **Desired Skills:**
Knowledge of church governance

Strategies

- Research church governance best practices
- Evaluate Peoples Church governance “structures” and procedures in the light of those best practices.
- Develop a plan for implementing and maintaining those structures and practices that would be optimal for Peoples Church.
- Develop and maintain a strong leadership development program.

Tactics

- Identify sources of current, research-based church governance “best practices.”
- Review current PCUU groups and their purposes to ensure they align with the new church governance structure.

2. Financial Stewardship

Develop, implement and maintain a financial stewardship system based on generosity and stewardship as theological foundations understood by all members of the Peoples Church community.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

A history of financial struggles to meet the church's needs. Because we have failed to implement successful financial strategies.

- **Needed Strengths:**
Strategic Thinking

- **Desired Skills:**
Expertise in church financial operations

Strategies

- Bring the entire membership to a clear, detailed understanding of the financial aspects of supporting the operation of Peoples Church.
- Detail the long-term financial requirements and ramifications of any physical plant, staffing, or program changes.

Tactics

- Inform potential and new members of the required minimum contribution.
- Provide new members with an orientation that includes an overview of church finances.
- Reestablish Fair Share Congregation

3. Communication

Communicate positively and consistently among Peoples Church stakeholders.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Because there is inadequate consistent communication, we want a change in our communication policies and procedures. This change will facilitate active, fulfilling membership, enable effective church organization and management, and establish an identity for Peoples Church Unitarian Universalist in the Cedar Rapids community and with the Unitarian Universalist Association.

- **Needed Strengths:**
Bridge Building,
Conflict Mediating
- **Desired Skills:**
NA

Strategies

- Identify stakeholder groups and the channels of communication that reach each stakeholder group most effectively.
- Identify a communication framework that will be used for each stakeholder group as the need arises. This will include ongoing communication of activities and Sunday topics, permanent communication of policies and procedures, as well as one-time communications.

Tactics

- Research to identify methods of communication that are most effective in reaching each stakeholder group.
- Research available avenues of communication both internal and external to Peoples including local media, newsletters and web pages of specific local groups and perhaps even setting up a phone tree for certain types of communications. Have structures in place for using these avenues as the need arises.
- Lay out communication framework that is useful to each segment of the audience for a particular communication. The "audience for a particular communication" is that some information will be intended for church leadership, some for church staff, some for members, some for the community at large, etc. Somewhat different avenues of communication will be implemented depending on the audience(s).

(Communication Tactics continued)

- Assign responsibility for disseminating specific types of communications. For example, the Board would assign someone the responsibility for making sure the meeting minutes are made available to the membership. The Membership team would have the responsibility for communicating to visitors what is involved in becoming and being a member. The Membership team could also be assigned the task of creating the Membership Handbook, which would tell members where to look for certain types of information. The RE Council would assign the responsibility for making sure that non-parent members hear about RE activities and how they can support those activities. The Board would be responsible for clearly communicating job descriptions to church staff members and to the membership as a whole, possibly through the membership handbook.

4. Membership

Develop and maintain rich and vigorous processes for attracting and integrating members.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Because we have a hard time keeping people engaged, we would like to change this in order to address retention of potential, new, and current members.

- **Needed Strengths:**

Bridge Building,
Conflict Mediating

- **Desired Skills:**

Expertise in Visitor and
Membership Engagement,
Leadership Development

Strategies

- Develop a standard process for attracting visitors and welcoming them in the early visits.
- Assimilate individual members, current and new, into activities in which they have an interest.
- Establish a clear process by which new groups and activities are established.

Tactics

- Each week collect visitor cards, record information on them, contact each visitor and invite back.
- Ensure all new visitors have visitor name tags after the first visit.
- Use membership database to identify new members who would be interested in a specific upcoming activity and contact them personally.

5. Involvement in Broader Communities

Develop and implement a plan for increasing Peoples Church presence and involvement in the geographical and religious communities of Cedar Rapids and beyond.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Because we would like to have more of an active presence in broader communities based upon our values and principles as Unitarian Universalists.

- **Needed Strengths:**
Bridge Building,
Strategic Thinking

- **Desired Skills:**
Leadership Development

Strategies

- Identify groups and community organizations that align with the ideas, values, and passions of Peoples Church.
- Identify ways of interacting with members and supporting joint initiatives.

Tactics

- Participate in short term campaigns/efforts, such as Black Lives Matter.
- Continue to share Sunday service plate collections with charity organizations that exemplify the values of Peoples Church.
- Continue to "advertise" Peoples Church social justice focus by members purchasing and then wearing "Standing on the side of love" t-shirts.