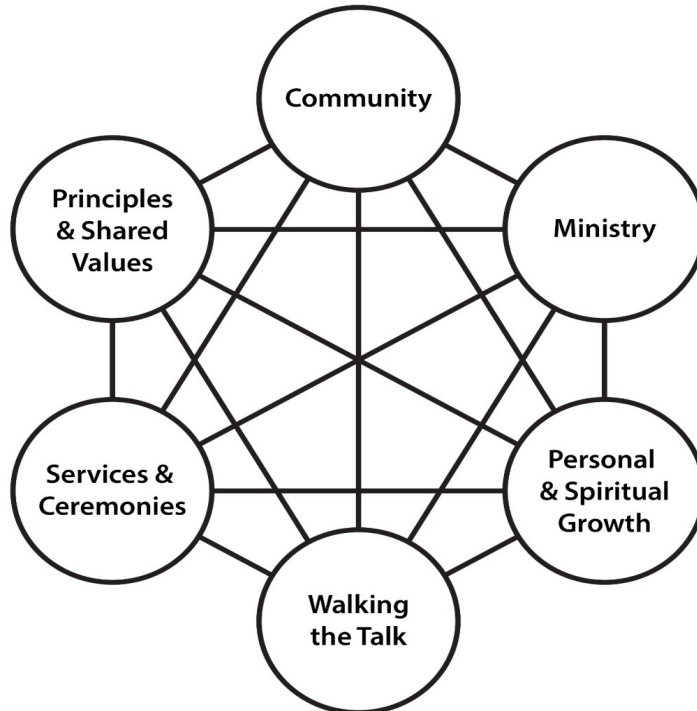


Prepare for the Congregational Retreat

Who are we? Where are we going?

Explore what we learned in the congregational identity project to clarify our unique strengths, needs, and challenges as we chart our course for the future, with our new minister.



The interdependent web of the Vancouver Unitarians

These are the 6 themes that resonated with us in 2021.

How do they fit now?

And how can they help us frame our strategic direction going forward?

**Join us in the Feb 11 Forum to discuss these questions
at 12:30 pm in the Sanctuary**

READ THE FULL REPORT HERE: tinyurl.com/Identity-Report

Who are we? Where are we going?

The Congregational Identity Team (CIT) led this congregation through the essential ministerial transition task of Rethinking our Identity – rethinking our sense of purpose, identity, and direction.

This task helped us to clarify our unique strengths, needs, and challenges, and our hopes for the future.

The CIT gathered information using an Appreciative Inquiry approach based around 9 thought-provoking questions. 133 congregants contributed to this investigation over eight months in 2021.

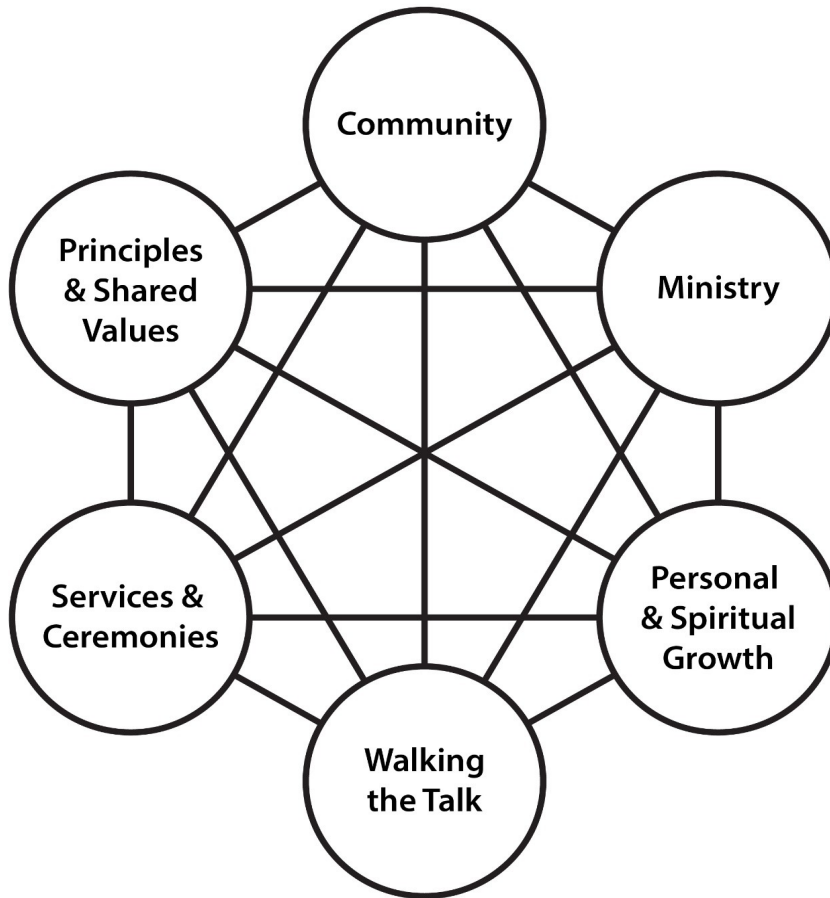
The CIT identified six overarching themes: ***Community, Principles and Shared Values, Minister, Services and Ceremonies, Personal and Spiritual Growth, and Walking the Talk.***

None of these themes stands alone. Together they make up the interdependent web of the Vancouver Unitarians.

Overall, we found deep appreciation for all dimensions of our congregational life. While there is always work to do to strengthen and build our community, there is great optimism for our future.

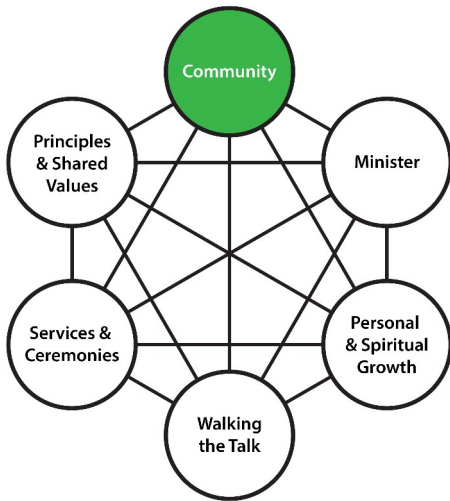
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The interdependent web of the Vancouver Unitarians



None of these 6 overarching themes stands alone. Together they are the interdependent web of the Vancouver Unitarians.

Vancouver Unitarians Cherish Our Community

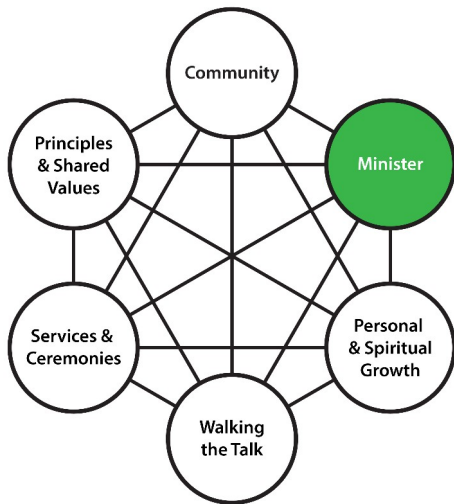


*“We create this congregation together:
it is not given from above.”*

We cherish our community – people, relationships, how we interact, and how we connect through activities both within and beyond our congregation.

Many spoke of “finding a home” at UCV, of our openness to all, and a wish to increase both our ethnic and economic diversity and younger persons and families.

Our minister is central to all parts of UCV life.

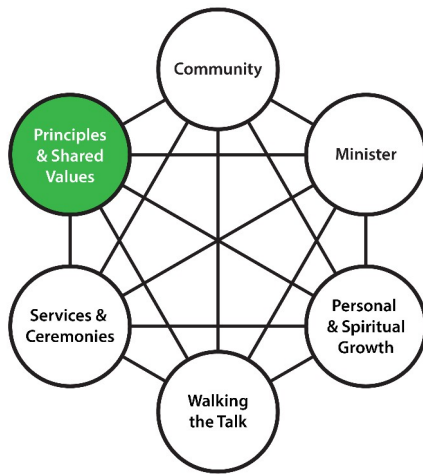


Our ministers are the source of the most engaged, alive and motivated times in many members’ lives. They are often the reason people join our community.

Their stimulating and thought-provoking homilies strongly shape the faith and worship experiences that support personal and spiritual growth, as do the varied services and ceremonies they create.

We value a minister who leads, challenges, and inspires with compassion, who helps us integrate our principles and shared values into our everyday lives, and who walks the talk with us.

Our principles and shared values are the bedrock of our congregation

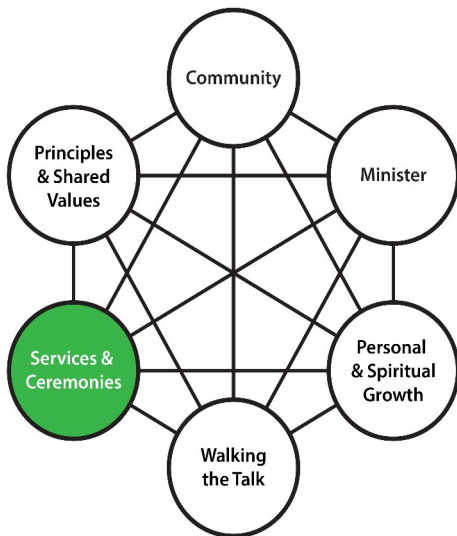


Our principles and shared values inspire and inform our personal and spiritual growth.

They lead us to engage positively with each other and with the broader community in outreach and activism.

Principles and shared values drew many of us to Unitarianism and UCV and have inspired some of our most engaged moments – listening to our minister, joining in services/ceremonies, contributing to study and discussion groups, and taking action with groups such as the Environment, Social Justice, and Refugee Teams.

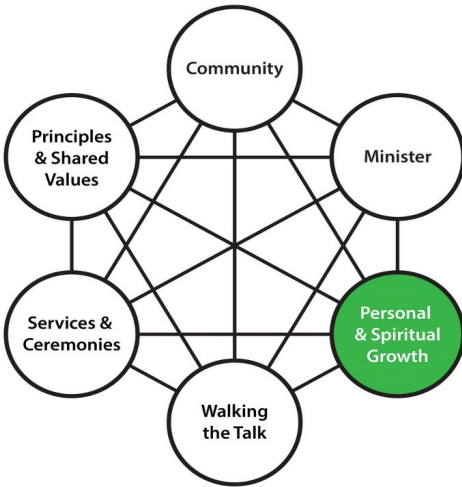
Services and Ceremonies bring people into UCV



Vancouver Unitarians’ services and ceremonies – rituals, homilies, and music in the sanctuary – bring people into UCV and help sustain them here as they deepen their connections to all aspects of UCV life.

Almost one-third of congregants who responded to the CIT identity questions felt most engaged by the special services: Candlelight service, Meeting our ancestors, pageants, the Water, Fire and Flower Communion. They also cited ritual elements of Sunday services – music, candle-lighting, meditation, and singing ‘Carry the Flame’ – as ways of grounding them in our Unitarian community.

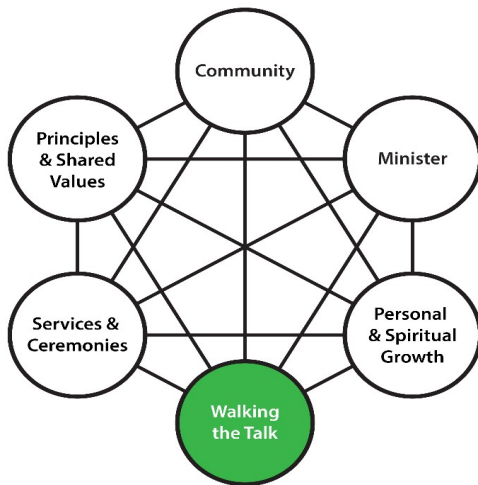
***We deeply appreciate
the personal and spiritual growth we experience at UCV***



*We are grateful for lifelong learning.
We can stretch and expand our skills, and
find paths to think out our lives.*

Personal and spiritual growth is integral to the interdependent web of the Vancouver Unitarians – guided by our **principles and shared values**, it grows from participation in our **community**, our **services and ceremonies**, and we show it by **walking the talk** – all inspired and guided by our **minister**.

Walking the Talk – Shared Values in Action



Most Vancouver Unitarians reported social activism as the most important life-giving characteristic of our community – how we walk the talk.

Walking the talk grows out of our willingness, openness, and commitment to our principles and shared values.

The personal and spiritual growth that contributes to our lives is closely bound up with the activities we choose to engage in within our congregation and in the wider community and the world.

Rethinking Our Identity

Thought-Provoking Questions

1. **Reflecting on your entire experience at UCV, remember a time when you felt most engaged, alive, and motivated.** Who was involved? What did you do? How did it feel? What happened?
2. **What are the healthiest, most life-giving aspects of the *relationships among people* at UCV?** What would you say has been most valuable about your friendships in this community? Have certain groups been valuable to you? What would you say is most important about how we relate to each other? Give some examples of how we live together at our best.
3. **What are the most valuable aspects of our congregation's worship?** In your Sunday services and other worship experiences at UCV, what contributes the most to making your worship alive and meaningful? When worship is at its best, how does it shape us? What shapes your Unitarian faith?
4. **What do you believe are the most important and meaningful elements of our congregation's engagement with the local community, the nation, and the world?** Describe one or more times when UCV was most faithful to Unitarian values and principles in how we relate to, work in, and act as witness in our community.
5. **What are the most important things our Unitarian community has contributed to your life?** Who or what made a difference?
6. **What are the most valuable ways you contribute to our congregation – your personality, your perspectives, your skills, your activities, your character?** Don't be humble – this is important information. Give some examples.
7. **What do you think is the most important, life-giving characteristic of our UCV congregation?** When we are at our best, what is the single most important value or characteristic that makes Unitarians or UCV unique?
8. **Make three wishes for the future of our Vancouver Unitarians congregation.** Describe what this religious community would look like as these wishes come true.

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