



**2015-16 Reflective Conversations:
A Report to the Board of Trustees and Ministries
of the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation
of Ann Arbor**

June 2016

Committee Members:

Rev. Fran Dew
Dixie Hibner, Chair
Becky Hoort
Jim Lee
Carolyn Madden
Tricia Mooney, Board Liaison
Catherine Olson
Ginny Preuss
Theresa Rohlck
Erik Stalhandske, Author 2015-16 Report



Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
1 – Introduction	3
2 – Summary of the 2015-2016 Reflective Conversations	4
2.1 150th Celebrations Reflective Conversations	5
2.2 Sunday Worship Reflective Conversations	8
2.3 Chalice Circle Reflective Conversations	12
2.4 Chalice Singers Reflective Conversation.....	16
2.5 Input from Board President and Senior Minister	18
2.6 Incorporating Reflective Conversation results into our Ministries	19
3. – Reflective Conversations Description and Purpose	24
3.1 Program Description	24
3.2 Program Goals and Purpose	24
Appendix A – Reflective Conversation Questions	25



Executive Summary

The Reflective Conversations (RC) process was created at the behest of the Board of Trustees in order to:

- Gather reflective feedback regarding Sunday Worship and Program Ministries for the ministers or lay program leaders to use in reflection and consideration of ways to improve their respective offerings.
- Give members of the Congregation an opportunity to be heard in a safe environment.
- Model healthy communication within the Congregation.
- Affect the culture of the Congregation using reflection and listening as a model.

This past year, the Reflective Conversations Team facilitated seven sessions – one on the 150th anniversary celebrations, three on Sunday Worship, one on Chalice Singers, one on Chalice Circle Facilitators, and one on Chalice Circle Participants. There were seventy-eight (78) total congregant participants. Questions from each session were developed by the RC team with input from the leaders of the respective ministries. Overall, the program and process have been successful in the goals as elucidated above. We have solicited from the ministries how they have used the results of the Reflective Conversations (RC) reports and suggestions for improving the process. In addition, feedback from both the Senior Minister and Board President was sought and is included.

1 – Introduction

This report presents a summary of the process and sessions gathered in the 2015-2016 Reflective Conversations. In 2013, The RC Team was established by the UUAA Board of Trustees to assess UUAA's ministries, including program ministries and Sunday Worship based on the book *Completing the Circle* by David R. McMahill. We are concluding our third full year of gathering feedback from the members of the Congregation.

This report serves to summarize the work of the RC program for the Board of Trustees and for the Senior Minister/CEO. A separate oral report will be given to the Congregation at a Congregational Meeting. The findings are offered to refine and improve our ministries and to serve as a model of meaningful and effective conversations.

The RC Team facilitated seven Reflective Conversations during the 2015-16 congregational year – one on the 150th Anniversary Celebration, three on Sunday Worship, one on Chalice Singers, one on Chalice Circle Facilitators, and one on Chalice Circle Participants.

This report communicates high-level observations regarding the conversations and process. Detailed notes from each facilitated session are available upon request from



Rev. Geisenhainer or Dixie Hibner, the Program Chair. Section 2 addresses the seven Reflective Conversations and Section 3 provides a description of the RC process and the purposes for which it was created.

2 – Summary of the 2015-2016 Reflective Conversations

For the 2015-16 congregational calendar year, the RC Team facilitated seven Reflective Conversations as summarized in the table below. The conversations are summarized in separate reports. The number of participants for each session is noted as (n=X).

Reflective Conversation	Date	Facilitator	Note Taker
150th Celebration (n=7)	July 16, 2015	Becky Hoort	Theresa Rohlck
Sunday Worship (n=13)	17 Jan 2016	Jim Lee	Ginny Preuss
(n=12)	14 Feb 2016	Ginny Preuss	Jim Lee
(n=9)	20 Mar 2016	Becky Hoort	Theresa Rohlck
Chalice Circle			
Facilitators (n=13)	27 Jan 2016	Carolyn Madden	Erik Stalhandske
Participants (n=7)	23 Mar 2016	Dixie Hibner	Tricia Mooney
Chalice Singers (n=17)	25 Feb 2016	Dixie Hibner	Theresa Rohlck



2.1 150th Celebrations Reflective Conversations

In the 2014-2015 church year, UUA celebrated the 150th anniversary since our founding. There were multiple events and activities scheduled throughout the year. On July 15th, 2015 an RC session was scheduled on these activities. The session had seven (7) participants: three have attended for more than 25 years, three have attended for six to twenty years, and one has attended for five years. Becky Hoort facilitated and Theresa Rohlck took notes. Program Leaders Terence (Terry) Madden and Sandy Simon attended. Questions and captured comments follow.

2.1.A Questions for a Reflective Conversation about UUA's 150th Anniversary Programs and Activities

1. ***Looking back at your own experience of the 150th anniversary programs and activities, in the vein of Goldilocks, do you feel there were too few, too many, or just the right amount of activities for you?***

Two people specifically addressed; both commented that it was a thorough program and perhaps too many activities.

2. ***Were you able to participate as fully as you would have liked in these activities?***

Two people specifically commented; one mostly able to participate and one not.

3. ***Regarding advertising/communications for 150th anniversary events, how do you feel about the level of information/awareness you had at the time?***

Two of three appreciated the advertising and specifically mentioned the poster and flyer version. One commented at first overwhelming.

4. ***Were there particular 150th activities, either during or outside worship services, that strongly resonated with you? Were there others you didn't like so much? Either way, which ones and why?***

Four provided positive comments; no negative comments provided. The following include the number (n) of respondents that provided that answer.

- Big sing very inspirational (n=3)



- Klein lecture very good (n=2)
- Congregational photo (n=2)
- Candlelight service (n=2)
- Guest ministers (n=1)
- Dawning future panel (n=1)
- Historic building tours (n=1)

5. Do you recall particular 150th activities that afforded you new insights into our congregation and its history or about Unitarian Universalism in general? Which ones and why?

Four provided comments. Mini histories appreciated, and good to hear in the voice of the congregation members. “History moments brought new insights...” As a result of the events, experienced a shift in thinking of the congregation as an entity with impact separate from the minister. “I was overwhelmed at how wonderful it was...challenged me and gave me hope for the future...the final service with Vanessa I was blown away...” . The Sankofa project was not mentioned and should have been included.

6. Did any of the 150th activities make you feel a stronger connection to the UUAA congregation or a sense of greater unity within the congregation as a whole? Please elaborate.

Three provided comments. “I felt a stronger connection because of so many events...sanctuary family story moving.” “ Felt connection through the big photo.... “. “We are an intellectual community...what connects me is stepping out of my brain and stepping into my heart....singing for our lives and Big Sing did that for me....”

7. Are there activities associated with the 150th celebration year which you found so meaningful that you would like to see them carried into the future? Which ones and why?

Four provided comments. Keep having story sundays; mindful eating very impactful globally and not mentioned much; panel of ministers stimulating conversation; think about continuing; Big Sing should continue.

8. If you were actively involved in planning/carrying out 150th programs/activities, what did you have to do at work or home to participate at that level? What were the rewards for you? What problems did you encounter?

No participants in the planning commented.



9. What else would you like to say about your experience of the 150th programs and activities?

One provided comments. Grateful and proud to a part of this and feel connected....I like that about this church—the process is explained..”

General comments from the open forum at the end of the session were captured; some themes below.

Several connected with the purposeful smaller discussions/meetings (e.g., after speakers, after services, and the interweave retreat) and hoped that this could be continued. Several found the speakers and forums powerful and hoped we could do more of this in the future. One mentioned : “...the feelings evoked this past year have shifted my intention and activity outside of this building...”



2.2 Sunday Worship Reflective Conversations

In the 2015-16 church year, three Sunday Worship service were reviewed on the dates of January 17, February 14, and March 20th. January 17th session had thirteen (13) participants; Jim Lee Facilitated and Ginny Preuss took notes. Also attending was Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout from the ministerial team, and Tricia Mooney as an observer.

The February 14th session had twelve (12) attendees; Ginny Preuss facilitated and Jim Lee took notes. Also attending was Rev. Lindasusan Ulrich from the ministerial team.

The March 20th session had nine (9) attendees; Becky Hoort facilitated, and Theresa Rohlck took notes. Also attending was Senior Minister Rev. Gail Geisenhainer. Of the attendees, two have been coming for six years or less; four have been attending for twenty-five years or more, and three fall between six and twenty-five years of attending.

The same questions were considered at each session. The answers are grouped under each question as session 1 (S1) , session 2 (S2), and session 3 (S3).

2.2.A Sunday Worship Session Questions and Comments

1. *What was it like for you preparing to come to the service this morning?*

S1: A number of people commented that it is hectic; new puppy, old dog, family of night owls. Work to get everyone going in the AM takes energy.

S2: A couple mentioned that with choir it makes for a long day.

S3: Few comments; one did not come for service due to another commitment, one had been at Coming of Age mentor meeting.

2. *Did you come with any particular aches of the spirit, or any particular joys or reasons for gratitude? If so, was there any place or time when the service connected with your aches or your joys?*

S1: Several did come with aches; music, quiet time, and reflection were of help.

S2: Several appreciated Gail's discussion of gravitational waves and our embracing of science in this faith. Meditation and music mentioned.

S3: One mentioned currently hearing stories from the YRUU and their cohesiveness was a comfort.

3. *Was there a part of the service that made you fall in love with Unitarian Universalism all over again (or for the first time)?*



S1: Several mentioned the quality of the music and the choir. Several mentioned the readings and sermon as thought provoking and connecting.

S2: Participants mentioned: noting our connections to our past (Bill Albright), UU principles in general, and the great music.

S3: This was the youth-led service; several commented on how impressed they were with their work.

4. *Did you feel welcomed at the service? Did you feel connected with the UUAA congregation and/or the larger community of Unitarian Universalism during the spoken parts of the service and/or through the music? Did you find insights, challenges, comfort? During which part/s? Please elaborate.*

S1: Everyone that commented felt welcomed. Some mentioned connecting with people they had not seen in awhile. Others mentioned the strength of the MLK story. "I always feel welcomed. I relax when I am here."

S2: Those that commented feel welcomed; place where they can be themselves. Good to have reminder and examples of white privilege.

S3: Several made positive comments about the greeting time built into the service. Stories make the connections and are motivating. Suggestion that for introverts offer a question that they can use for the greeting.

5. *Our Sunday services are now led by a worship team. Thinking back on the various spoken parts of the service (e.g., opening words, reading/s, Words of Affirmation, time of reflection/prayer, offering, sermon/homily, benediction), did the components fit together well for you or were there parts that seemed out of sync with the overall theme or meaning of the service? Were there parts where you wondered, "Why in the world do we do this?"*

S1: Many noted the organic fit of the different elements of the service. Call to service, covenant, all fit. A couple commented that support and appreciate the change to a ministerial team; one noted preferred two in pulpit to three. One commented meditation a bit long and too much talking during that time.

S2: Many commented on this question; their recurring message was well-integrated service, very good team, appreciate the work in developing the services. One had not been to church in awhile, and felt lost with the worship team model.

S3: General theme of components fitting well, and noticing increased cohesion in the past several months. Service was well-crafted; they had their act together. One comment of valuing when we include a couple minutes of silence during



meditation.

6. Did the musical components of the service fit well with and add to the theme of the service? Did they enhance the worship experience for you and, if so, in what ways? Does the music inspire your participation in the service and in the community?

S1: Comments mentioned repeatedly; the quality, and integration with the service. One mentioned covering the three M's: message, music, and meditation. One wanted to hear more about MLK's work on economic injustice.

S2: Music is exceptional, music is great, music completely fits with the service.

S3: Repeated themes of increased appreciation for the work of Glen Thomas and enhancing all aspects of the music; the choir, choice and integration of hymns into the service, and singing by the congregation as a valued and consistent part of our ministry. "It opens me to emotional and spiritual aspects....its important for building community."

7. Did the length and pacing of the service work comfortably for you or were there times when you wished it would move faster or when you found yourself two steps behind?

S1: All but one felt the timing and pacing was good. Several mentioned never looking at the time, and surprised when over. One mentioned meditation too long and one mentioned overall too long.

S2: Five out of seven respondents felt overall service too long; several specifically mentioned sermon as being too much time. Suggestions to break sermon up into components throughout service by one member; another suggested not singing all verses.

S3: Only two commented; both reflected awkward and challenging for introverts when have the greetings. What do I do or say after the handshake.

8. Did any part of the service stir you to change or action? Which part and why?

S1: Several mentioned the MLK sermon humanizing the man as someone who made mistakes, and working to improve things. One mentioned the call to action was getting family to come back to church. A couple mentioned given permission to be who they are.

S2: One mentioned that the discussion helped attune him to his own subliminal racist thoughts.

S3: Nothing captured specific to the question.



8.5 Regarding storytelling, did it fit into the flow of the service for you? What internal response did you experience?

S1: Universal appreciation for story telling in general, and the effectiveness of weaving them into the service. Several praised the inter-generational stories, and connecting with kids.

S2: Not applicable to session 2.

S3: Not applicable to session 3.

9. What else would you like to add about your experience of worship today?

S1: Several people mentioned not knowing all people in pulpit and not familiar with Lindasusan. One mentioned wanting to hear more about social justice activities.

S2: Several comments on children in service: couple of those providing comments wondered about value and connection for the kids. One spoke specifically in favor of inclusion of kids in the service as now occurs. One noted less outside musicians and missed this aspect. Positive notes about the RC process and participating. Positive comments on the worship team. Lindasusan appreciated comments as ministerial team continuing to work on worship service.

S3: One person commented: "I'm engaged from beginning to end and so keep coming back. These services provide spiritual nourishment." One question about youth service and Rev. Gail shared that there are three youth-focused services: March YRUU service, Credo service, and the bridging service. Discussion on value of having the services recorded and accessible, as people like to go back and research something or hear if they missed a service. Suggestion that you can search on name, date, title. Currently this work is all done by a volunteer. One commented on value of hearing different voices in the service and and the personal stories.



2.3 Chalice Circle Reflective Conversations

In the 2015-16 church year, there were two Reflective Conversation sessions on Chalice Circles; one with participants, and one with facilitators. The session with the facilitators occurred January 27, 2016 at 7 PM at the UUAA. Carolyn Madden facilitated the session and Erik Stalhandske took notes. Steve Kuzma and Anne Ramsey (program leaders) also attended the session. There were thirteen (13) participants.

The session with the participants occurred March 23, 2016 at 7 PM at the UUAA ; Dixie Hibner facilitated and Tricia Mooney took notes. Steve Kuzma, Program lead, attended this session as well. There were seven (7) participants ranging from not a church member, to a 27 year member. Five had participated in one Chalice Circle; two had participated in five or more.

The following comments are organized around the questions that guided the conversation, starting with the session with the facilitators.

2.3.A Chalice Circle Facilitators Session

Question 1 – Preparing to Lead—*What do you have to do at home or work to be able to lead a Chalice Circle gathering? How do you prepare for the session so that the participants can fully engage?*

Since a satellite session, have to cover logistics (table, snacks, copies). Read and review materials.

Question 2 – Preparing to Lead— *When you arrive what helps you engaged fully with the session?*

Arrive early, make sure room is organized so that I can relax and greet people. One person invited members to come early and share lunch prior to their sessions. Opening moment of silence and centering—remembering to exhale.

Question 3 – Satisfaction – *What things about this role bring you satisfaction?*

Seeing the group form and individuals open up and express themselves and share. Enjoy when sessions have some intensity as a result of the discussion. Honored and blessed to participate and at openness and sharing. Really enjoy the monthly meeting of the facilitators.

Question 4 – Challenges— *What challenges or hard issues have you experienced in your role as a Chalice Circle facilitator and how did you work through them? Do you feel you had the resources to address those issues?*



Time issues—making sure all share. Some participants chafed at the format as found too structured. Concerned that I'll say something insensitive. Being paired with experienced facilitator a big help—served as mentor.

Question 5 – Personal Growth – *How has being a facilitator fostered your personal growth? How has it affected your life?*

Helped me develop skill of listening and not passing judgment. Thought I was a good listener—found out I was just a good non-talker! Developing active listening skills.

Question 6 – Connection to UU and UUA – *How has being a facilitator affected your connection to the congregation or Unitarian Universalism as a whole?*

I get more out of Chalice Circle than anything else. Sacred space created—experience of spirituality occurs. Has helped as an introvert who now has connections in social hall—not so daunting. Gateway to the UUA. Being facilitator really develops leadership skills—congregation leadership should draw upon this.

Question 7 – Why facilitate? – *What made you want to be a facilitator? What are your thoughts about supporting the Chalice Circle program by serving on the Steering Team or Writing Committee?*

Honored that asked to facilitate—being an introvert I would not have volunteered. Said yes because well-organized and format would let me be successful.

Question 8 – What else – *What else would you like to say about your experience as a Chalice Circle facilitator?*

Feel Chalice Circle is so valuable—leadership should support more people participating in the circles. Monthly facilitator meeting is very important—hear same issues that I struggle with and the opportunity to learn from them, and good generation of solutions.

Ending Discussion

Several mentioned the value of the Chalice Circles in connecting people with the congregation and with a small group of individuals. Encouraged a greater support from the pulpit for the circles. Make sessions more visible on the website. Participating in the writing circle after the chalice circle very helpful. Suggest reach out to new congregants to get them engaged in Chalice Circle and make bonds.



2.3.B Chalice Circle Participants Session

Question 1 – Preparing—*How do you prepare for a Chalice Circle?*

I read the readings and think on questions before sessions.

Question 2 – Fully engage— *When you arrive what helps you engaged fully with the experience?*

Lighting of the chalice gets us engaged and centered.

Question 3 – Difficulties – *Do you experience anything that makes it difficult to prepare for and attend your Chalice Circle regularly? If so, what?*

Travel schedule—snowbird session helped. Missed other social events because of CC commitment. Had a hard time preparing. Given memory issue, can't always remember what someone else has said on the question.

Question 4 – Satisfaction— *What in your Chalice Circle experience brings you satisfaction?*

Cherish hearing different perspectives and interpretations. Finds small groups very meaningful, more so than Sunday services. Hearings others backgrounds and struggles—knowing there is a group there to help in a crisis. Other members willing to be vulnerable and trustworthy.

Question 5 – Personal growth— *How has being in a Chalice Circle fostered your personal growth? How has it affected your life?*

Meeting new people—willingness to be open with strangers. Learned to be better listener. Learning the UU spirituality having come recently from different church background,

Question 6 – Connection to UU and UUAA – *How has being in a Chalice Circle affected your connection to the congregation or Unitarian Universalism as a whole?*

Broadened perspective of UU, feel more connected.

Question 7 – Why participate? – *What made you want to try Chalice Circles for the first time?*

Wanted to meet other congregants and deepen understanding of UU. Now retired, have time to participate.

Question 8 – More than once – *If you have participated for more than one year, what brought you back or keeps you coming? Or if you have decided not to continue with Chalice Circles, what shaped your decision?*



Several in group have decided not to participate again, or are leaning that way. Reasons varied: hoped topics would have had more religion and spirituality; now retired and finds the CC commitments compete with other activities; had a couple of weak sessions and have now filled CC time slot with other commitment; want a break from the topics.

Question 9 – What else – *What else would you like to say about your Chalice Circle experience?*

Two mentioned that would have preferred a bigger group. Difficult since an introvert. Format took some getting used to. Experience very positive—most meaningful at UUAA.



2.4 Chalice Singers Reflective Conversation

In the 2015-16 church year, there was one Reflective Conversation session on Chalice Singers on February 25, 2016 at 5 PM at the UUAA. Dixie Hibner facilitated the session and Theresa Rohlck took notes. Tricia Mooney observed (board member and RC committee member) as did Director of Worship and Music, Dr. Glen Thomas Rideout. There were seventeen (17) participants.

The following comments are organized around the questions that guided the conversation, starting with the session with the facilitators.

2.4.A Chalice Singers Questions and Responses

Question 1- Preparation - *What does it take for you to prepare to come to a Thursday night Chalice Singer rehearsal?*

Practice! Review the music throughout the week. Warm up on way to practice. Trust the rehearsals. Feel exhausted when arrive at practice and energized when leave.

Question 2 -Connecting to UU and UUAA *Is there a part of the Chalice Singer experience that connects you to Unitarian Universalism? Or connects you to this particular congregation?*

Choir has connected me to the UUAA; every new member should join! Now have 60 friends in social hall. Appreciate chalice lighting, the silence, variety of music. Love the Big Sing—living our principles.

Question 3- Sacred and Spiritual - *Is there something about the Chalice Singer experience that connects you personally to something you define as sacred or spiritual? If so, what is it?*

Singing is spiritual; I get goosebumps. Rehearsals and Sundays are part of my spiritual practice. Feeling of part of a larger entity with the choir.

Question 4-Singing Sundays Experience *Talk about how you feel/what you experience as a member of the Chalice Singers during worship on “Singing Sundays.” (OR ... as a member of the choir as you help lead worship on Singing Sundays)*

Many commented on the profound experience —gratifying, spiritual, and moving. Many commented on the physical and emotional demands of singing both services and the commitment this requires. Several suggested alternatives to reduce the load. Several commented on how well integrated the music now is with the service.



Question 5 - Rehearsal prep - *What do you do to get ready for a Chalice Singer rehearsal from one week to the next?*

Practice and review.

Question 6 Practice structure - *How do you feel about the structure of a Chalice Singer rehearsal? How about the pacing and flow of the rehearsal? Do the parts weave together for you? Can you keep up comfortably with the flow? Do you wish it would move along faster? Do you find yourself two steps behind? Are there any things that happen that make you wonder, "Why in the world do we do/are we doing THIS?"*

Several commented they appreciated the meditation, quiet, and chalice lighting to begin the practice. Several mentioned practice pace is good, and demanding. Several complimented Dr. Rideout on his effectiveness.

Question 7- Rehearsals Style - *How do rehearsals meet your own personal learning style? What, if anything, is confusing, or supporting, your own learning during a rehearsal? Have you experienced moments of clarity in the rehearsals? Have you felt your progress has been encumbered/hindered by anything? Provide examples of what, how, when.*

Several commented on Dr. Rideout's use of varied teaching techniques and eating the elephant one bite at a time. Appreciate the challenging nature of the repertoire. One commented on using the scores available on line for accessing.

What else would you like to add about your experience as a Chalice Singer?

A number of singular comments provided. Glen Thomas gets the congregation to sing wonderfully. Folk song jam allows one member to explore harmonies. A few mentioned difficulty in hearing all comments at choir. At closing a number expressed appreciation for the RC process and feel more connected; nicely structured and safe space.



2.5 Input from Board President and Senior Minister

In an effort to gauge the value of the work of the Reflective Conversations Committee, the Senior Minister and the Board President were approached. The chair requested comments on our process, focus, and the impact of our work. In addition, The Chair solicited recommendations for improvements and areas of focus for this next year.

The **Board President** offered the following comments. The RC process is a valuable way for participants to be able to share views and opinions on a given ministry. The real value is reflected not from the review by the Board of Trustees, but from those in attendance of that particular ministry. When the comments, compliments and concerns can be shared with those who lead that ministry and they can think about it reflectively and make changes accordingly, then mission accomplished. The RC may have a role to play this next year in facilitating small group discussions as an adjunct and support to the Search Committee for our new minister.

The **Senior Minister's** comments were not captured separately. However, based upon the feedback from the reviews of the Sunday worship, several themes were touched upon by the Senior Minister. The RC process can be improved by greater flexibility in structure and allowing more dialogue with the program leaders present. The questions as formulated view the Sunday worship as a commodity and adopt a consumer mentality. The RC value is diminished by including people in the discussions that do not attend the services. The RC team can continue to grow and dig deeper and take a longer term view of where the RC should be in five years.



2.6 Incorporating Reflective Conversation results into our Ministries

To gauge our impact and value, the RC committee solicited comments from the program leads for each of the areas addressed through reflective conversations. We asked the following questions of each:

1. *Did you find the feedback from the Reflective Conversations on your program useful to you? If yes, in what way? If no, what would have been more helpful?*
2. *Were there insights that you gained as a result of the Reflective Conversation? Did you decide to do anything different based on the feedback you received? If yes, what was it?*
3. *Can you suggest something the Reflective Conversations team might do to make the experience more helpful for you?*

2.6.A Comments from the Chalice Circle Program Leadership

Both Program leaders provided feedback; they are identified as leader 1 (L1) and leader 2 (L2)

1. *Did you find the feedback from the Reflective Conversations on your program useful to you? If yes, in what way? If no, what would have been more helpful?*
 - (L1) The feedback is useful. It offered insight into ways to improve things both for facilitators and cc participants.
 - (L2) Yes found helpful. “It made me aware of broad range of opinions of what was happening. RC challenged my perceptions of my beliefs of what the chalice circle is all about. I realized that not everybody believed the same.” Made me think about how can the program better serve all. As a Servant leader—how can I best serve the facilitators.
2. *Were there insights that you gained as a result of the Reflective Conversation? Did you decide to do anything different based on the feedback you received? If yes, what was it?*
 - (L1) I’m going to try to make things easier for the facilitators who support our satellite and snowbird circles.
 - (L1) The feedback from participants about topics was quite mixed but seemed more positive than negative but will try to remain sensitive to ways to have core topics not become boring.



- (L1) I have a plan help someone with memory problems by offering small notepads and pencils so that someone could jot down a thought triggered by someone else's sharing.
 -
 - (L2) Will review the topics and the structure of chalice circles—how to shape the topics to be more effective. Looking for questions that lead to conversations that have depth, meaning, and address spirituality. When receive feedback on topics that are great how do we use that to choose new effective questions. As a program (Chalice Circles) it is constantly in flux, constantly examining the questions; RC helps with this process.
3. *Can you suggest something the Reflective Conversations team might do to make the experience more helpful for you?*
- (L1) I thought you all did a great job! I can't think of a way to make it more helpful.
 - (L2) Being present for the discussions was really good. The transcript is a priceless tool—what was said and how to shape the program and be able to reflect on the discussions afterwards. Think what you did and how you did it was very effective. Don't have suggestions for how to make it more effective. Found whole process to be helpful.



2.6.B Comments from the Sunday Worship Program Ministry Leadership

1. *Did you find the feedback from the Reflective Conversations on your program useful to you? If yes, in what way? If no, what would have been more helpful?*
 - Marginally useful; the reflection of frequent attendees (those active in the congregation and those regular in attending services) was insightful and informative. However, the reflection of those who had not attended the service held on the day of the RC, or don't attend regularly, or haven't attended for years, that feedback is distracting and destructive of the process for the whole group. "I find misuse of the democratic process when we offer equal voice and value to every person in the room regardless of their level of engagement in the event (or the ministry) at hand."
 - The questions as they were formulated encouraged a consumer mentality, as opposed to an engagement mentality. The questions seem to encourage answers that reflect a view of worship as something you have been given, versus the idea of how do you engage with it. It also assumes that worship is created only by those "up front" when in fact it's co-created in the moment by all participating.
 - The questions seem to reflect worship as a commodity. Can't engage if you weren't at the service. Two of the team noted the RC session(s) left them wanting a deeper conversation. The team appreciates that we have started a process of reflection, but it needs to grow.
 - Comments were provided regarding what would be more helpful. There were two things that were disheartening. They noted that one was "unchecked data" and the other was the naming of one party as a silent listener (i.e. the program leader). It perpetuates the notion that if that person/leader weren't silent, there would be no candor in the conversation/reflections.
 - We can do better. We can push for deeper trust and reflection and conversation.

2. *Were there insights that you gained as a result of the Reflective Conversation? Did you decide to do anything different based on the feedback you received? If yes, what was it?*
 - Yes, there were some things suggested that were reasonable and useful. One example: the observation that it is helpful if the worship leaders introduce themselves, or introduce any guest, when speaking from the pulpit.



3. *Can you suggest something the Reflective Conversations team might do to make the experience more helpful for you?*

- Don't give up. Keep drilling into what reflection, covenant and co-creation means. There are no consumers in ministry; we are collaborators. We have to learn the season of mutual reflection in the life cycle of any ministry.
- One noted that after a "wobbly start," the RC process needs to see the bigger picture/the long term goal - where can this be in five years? Reference was made to the Chalice Singers' post rehearsal reflections that have been going on for almost four years now. The engagement in their reflection now is so much further along that it was 4 years ago. It takes time, and a building of trust to engage in ways that are beneficial to all - the participants and the program leader(s).
- One suggested that in the future, the RC team could be more flexible in the approach to the actual conversation/reflection, and not be afraid to diverge from the structure offered in the book (*Completing the Circle*, Mahill).



2.6.C Comments from the Chalice Singers Ministry Program Leadership

1. *Did you find the feedback from the Reflective Conversations on your program useful to you? If yes, in what way? If no, what would have been more helpful?*

Yes. It's gratifying to get positive responses; I appreciate that the responses were detailed. Our CS are accustomed to reflecting at deeper levels of detail and it was helpful to hear specifics. It was helpful also because we worked on the questions so the answers addressed useful things. It would have been more helpful if I could have participated in the discussion, to be able to clarify, or ask for clarity, and to be able to provide accurate data for the conversation.

2. *Were there insights that you gained as a result of the Reflective Conversation? Did you decide to do anything different based on the feedback you received? If yes, what was it?*

Yes, the insights were mostly a deeper understanding of individuals' experiences *during* our rehearsals and as part of the ensemble; in rehearsal it can be tough to gauge or understand how each individual singer experiences the choir. Having a forum for individuals to speak helps a great deal in knowing how my work affects any particular singer.

In terms of doing anything different, no, but not because the feedback wasn't helpful. With the CS's particular schedule, data of experience tends to be incomplete until the year/season is completed. I felt more informed at the CS's year-end review (our final reflection time) because of the information I learned at the RC. My reflections and decisions on what changes or doesn't change happens over the summer. The RC responses were a companion to the conversation we had at the end of the year reflection, all of which is taken into consideration in planning over the summer.

3. *Can you suggest something the Reflective Conversations team might do to make the experience more helpful for you?*

Continue to engage the program leader in the forming of the questions. Allow the program leaders to in some way to contribute to the conversation more freely. Experiment with a less rigid format of receiving responses/engaging conversation.

With a large group like the Chalice Singers, perhaps there would be some way to engage more singers in the RC, but in smaller groups (the group size expanded beyond the RSVPs on that evening).



3. – Reflective Conversations Description and Purpose

A brief description of the Reflective Conversations process follows along with the goals that we are striving to achieve by giving members an opportunity to reflect about our programs and ministries in a safe environment.

3.1 Program Description

Members of the Congregation are randomly selected to participate in a small group of approximately 10 – 12 members to discuss a specified ministry. The group is given a set of questions and five to seven minutes to reflect and take notes for their comments. Each member of the group takes a time to speak about their personal experiences within the designated ministry. While speaking, they are not interrupted. The other group members listen for understanding, knowing they will have a chance to speak.

After each person has a turn to speak, there is a brief discussion period during which clarifying questions may be asked or additional personal experiences shared. Program leaders are present to hear the expressions of personal experiences described.

3.2 Program Goals and Purpose

The Reflective Conversations process was created in order to:

- Gather reflective feedback regarding Sunday Worship and Program Ministries for the ministers or lay program leaders to use in reflection and consideration of ways to improve their respective offerings.
- Give members of the Congregation an opportunity to be heard in a safe environment.
- Model healthy communication within the Congregation.
- Affect the culture of the Congregation using reflection and listening as a model.



Appendix A – Reflective Conversation Questions

Appendix A.1 Questions for a Reflective Conversation about UUAA's 150th Anniversary Programs and Activities

1. Looking back at your own experience of the 150th anniversary programs and activities, in the vein of Goldilocks, do you feel there were too few, too many, or just the right amount of activities for you?
2. Were you able to participate as fully as you would have liked in these activities?
3. Regarding advertising/communications for 150th anniversary events, how do you feel about the level of information/awareness you had at the time?
4. Were there particular 150th activities, either during or outside worship services, that strongly resonated with you? Were there others you didn't like so much? Either way, which ones and why?
5. Do you recall particular 150th activities that afforded you new insights into our congregation and its history or about Unitarian Universalism in general? Which ones and why?
6. Did any of the 150th activities make you feel a stronger connection to the UUAA congregation or a sense of greater unity within the congregation as a whole? Please elaborate.
7. Are there activities associated with the 150th celebration year which you found so meaningful that you would like to see them carried into the future? Which ones and why?
8. If you were actively involved in planning/carrying out 150th programs/activities, what did you have to do at work or home to participate at that level? What were the rewards for you? What problems did you encounter?
9. What else would you like to say about your experience of the 150th programs and activities?



Appendix A. 2 Questions for a Reflective Conversation about Sunday Worship

1. What was it like for you preparing to come to the service this morning?
2. If you came with any particular aches of the spirit, or any particular joys or reasons for gratitude, was there any place or time when the service connected with these feelings? Please describe.
3. Was there a part of the service that made you fall in love with Unitarian Universalism all over again (or for the first time)? Which part and why?
4. Did you feel welcomed at the service? Did you feel connected with the UUA congregation and/or the larger community of Unitarian Universalism during the spoken parts of the service and/or through the music? Did you find insights, challenges, comfort? During which part/s? Please elaborate.
5. Our Sunday services are now led by a worship team. Thinking back on the various spoken parts of the service (e.g., opening words, reading/s, Words of Affirmation, time of reflection/prayer, offering, sermon/homily, benediction), did the components fit together well for you or were there parts that seemed out of sync with the overall theme or meaning of the service? Were there parts where you wondered, “Why in the world do we do this?”
6. Did the musical components of the service fit well with and add to the theme of the service? Did they enhance the worship experience for you and, if so, in what ways? Does the music inspire your participation in the service and in the community?
7. Did the length and pacing of the service work comfortably for you or were there times when you wished it would move faster or when you found yourself two steps behind?
8. Did any part of the service stir you to change or action? Which part and why?
9. The _____ was a special part of today’s service. Did it fit into the flow of the service for you? What internal response did this part of the service illicit in you?

As part of the discussion following the sharing about 1-9:

10. What else would you like to add about your experience of worship today?



Appendix A. 3 Questions for a Reflective Conversation with Chalice Circle Participants

1. How do you prepare for a Chalice Circle session?
2. When you arrive at the session what helps you engage fully with the experience?
3. Do you experience anything that makes it difficult to prepare for and attend your Chalice Circle regularly? If so, what?
4. What in your Chalice Circle experience brings you satisfaction?
5. How has being in a Chalice Circle fostered your personal growth? How has it affected your life?
6. How has being in a Chalice Circle affected your connection to the congregation or Unitarian Universalism as a whole?
7. What made you want to try Chalice Circles for the first time?
8. If you have participated in the program for more than one year, what brought you back or keeps you coming? Or if you have decided not to continue with Chalice Circles, what shaped your decision?
9. What else would you like to say about your Chalice Circle experience?



Appendix A. 4 Questions for a Reflective Conversation with Chalice Circle Facilitators

1. What do you have to do at home or work to be able to lead a Chalice Circle gathering? How do

you prepare for the session so that the participants can fully engage?

2. When you arrive what helps you engage fully with the session?

3. What things about this role bring you satisfaction?

4. What challenges or hard issues have you experienced in your role as a Chalice Circle facilitator

and how did you work through them? Do you feel you had the resources to address those

issues?

5. How has being a facilitator fostered your personal growth? How has it affected your life?

6. How has being a facilitator affected your connection to the congregation or Unitarian Universalism as a whole?

7. What made you want to be a facilitator? What are your thoughts about supporting the Chalice

Circle program by serving on the Steering Team or Writing Committee?

8. What else would you like to say about your experience as a Chalice Circle facilitator?



Appendix A.5 Reflective Conversations on Our Ministries – Questions Related to the Chalice Singers

1. What does it take for you to prepare to come to a Thursday night Chalice Singer rehearsal?
2. Is there a part of the Chalice Singer experience that connects you to Unitarian Universalism? Or connects you to this particular congregation?
3. Is there something about the Chalice Singer experience that connects you personally to something you define as sacred or spiritual? If so, what is it?
4. Talk about how you feel/what you experience as a member of the Chalice Singers during worship on “Singing Sundays.” (OR ... as a member of the choir as you help lead worship on Singing Sundays)
5. What do you do to get ready for a Chalice Singer rehearsal from one week to the next?
6. How do you feel about the structure of a Chalice Singer rehearsal?

How about the pacing and flow of the rehearsal? Do the parts weave together for you? Can you keep up comfortably with the flow? Do you wish it would move along faster? Do you find yourself two steps behind? Are there any things that happen that make you wonder, “Why in the world do we do/are we doing THIS?”

7. How do rehearsals meet your own personal learning style?

What, if anything, is confusing, or supporting, your own learning during a rehearsal? Have you experienced moments of clarity in the rehearsals? Have you felt your progress has been encumbered/hindered by anything? Provide examples of what, how, when.

After the individual responses to questions 1- 7, there is time for a more open-ended discussion.

As part of this discussion we would like to ask:

What else would you like to add about your experience as a Chalice Singer?