



# MCC

**Memorial Congregational Church**

*An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ*



## APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY RESULTS 2016

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*“In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

*1 Thessalonians 5:18*

In the summer of 2015, members and friends of MCC began exploring their understanding of the church's identity and vision through a technique called Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry begins as the search for what works and has been good and life-giving in a congregation. The responses that are collected then allow the congregation's vision for the future to be grounded in its own positive experience and history. This creates goals that are more likely to be able to be successfully achieved.

We started by having a team interview church members and friends. The team's hope was to reach as many individuals as possible who wanted to share positive experiences of MCC. Over 92 interviews were done representing close to half of the congregation and is considered a very good number of responses.

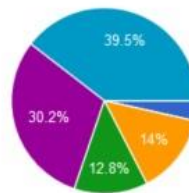
Each interview consisted of questions about which ministries and experiences make MCC special, unique, and have been most life affecting. Respondents were then asked about what they thought MCC should and could do in the future. The result was pages and pages of wonderful and moving responses full of emotion, thoughts, and ideas.

Fern Chertok, a research scientist at the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, generously helped Gail Wright and Dan Pettingill develop a way to count the types of responses so that they could be analyzed. On Sunday, March 6 Gail and Bobbi Fisher presented the results of this analysis at a celebration lunch. The following pages summarize those results while keeping them anonymous.

The presentation of these results is just the beginning. Over the next year there will be many opportunities for groups in the church to use them: The Church Council will use these results to plan a path forward; Gail Wright has offered to meet with committees to share more details; and anyone who is impassioned may take ideas presented here and make them a reality.

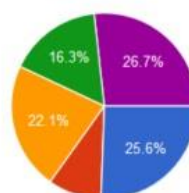
Thank you for your participation in this endeavor of love and appreciation for our church!

**Age**



18-24	3	3.5%
25-34	0	0%
35-44	12	14%
45-54	11	12.8%
55-64	26	30.2%
65+	34	39.5%

**Length of membership or attendance (in years)**



1-5	22	25.6%
6-10	8	9.3%
11-20	19	22.1%
21-30	14	16.3%
30+	23	26.7%

# Feelings

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Rank Order	<i>These are the feelings that people said they have while at MCC. They are listed in the order of how often they were mentioned.</i>
	<i>The top three feelings stand out as defining characteristics of MCC. Most of the people who responded said they had one of these three feelings.</i>
1	Connected - to individuals and to the wider congregation
2	Welcomed
3	Accepted and affirmed as I am – myself and/or my children
4	Strengthened and developed in faith
5	Supported, cared for, helped
6	Inspired/uplifted/joyful [often in the context of “worship” but very, very often mentioned in other contexts]
7	Appreciative of the flexible, non-hierarchical, casual environment
8	Like I make a difference
9	Encouraged and empowered to do good
10	Recharged/enlivened/energized [often in the context of “worship” but very, very often mentioned in other contexts]
10	Changed for the better
11	Guided in living
12	Safe
13	Invited
14	Peaceful/comforted
15	Hopeful

# Ministries/Experiences

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Rank order	<b>The Ministries and Experiences that Make MCC Special/Unique and Have Most Affected People.</b> <b>They are the source of the positive feelings.</b>
	<p><i>These are the Ministries and Experiences that people named as most affecting them and their family and that make MCC special or unique. These ministries and experiences are the source of the positive feelings that people named. They are listed in order of how often they were mentioned with the most frequently mentioned listed first and the least frequently mentioned listed last.</i></p> <p><i>Those with the same ranking number were tied in responses.</i></p>
	<p><i>The first 4 are very close in how often they were mentioned.</i></p>
1	Children and Family [including: education, VBS, youth groups, worship led by or focused on children (children’s times, pageants, plays) special events, intergenerational connections and experiences, and staff]
2	Community connections [connections/interactions with individuals, connection with the people of the congregation]
2	Involvement [doing things for the church including: leadership, committee work including Search Committees, help with Fair and Rummage Sale, building and finance work, visiting, in worship, fundraising, organizing/leading events, teaching, and working with youth]
3	Music [in and out of worship including: adult choir, bells, hymn singing, Messiah Sing, concerts, instrument playing, and staff]
4	Worship [Sunday and other including: Christmas Eve, Baptisms, new member services, Communion, weddings, funerals, <b>The Well</b> (in bold because it is mentioned so often), and individual parts of the Sunday service: preaching, <b>Joys and Concerns</b> (in bold because it is mentioned so often), welcoming litany]
5	Pastor [Senior Pastor current and past] <i>This category is separate because the Pastor is involved with so many parts of the church including but not limited to worship. if someone said "The Pastor’s sermons get me thinking" worship and pastor got credit. If they said "The Pastor helped when my mother died" pastor and care got credit.</i>
6	Experiencing beliefs. These are beliefs experienced not just in the context of worship including: The Trinity, diverse images of God, God who is loving, accepting, and caring, progressive theology, and God who is accepting of our wrestling with our faith.
7	Care and support from the congregation and the Pastors including: pastoral care, cards, words, assistance with life things, food, etc.
7	Social and fellowship events and activities big and small including: Trivia Night, Chili fest, Women’s Fellowship, Women’s Night Out, retreats, auctions.
8	Individual and Congregational times of difficulty, challenge, struggle, transition, or conflict including: deaths and life issues such as health and job issues, staff transitions, ONA discussions, and staff and congregation conflicts. <i>There was a clear sense that MCC shines and that faith and individual growth happen during these difficult times. Many positive feelings were reported for these times.</i>

9	ONA – The whole experience of being Open and Affirming including simply having the statement.
9	Service/outreach and Social Justice actions including: volunteer/service such as Rosie’s Place, Family Promise, Open Table, and food packaging; taking a stand on, learning about, and doing something for issues; and raising money such as CROP Walk and giving to causes in the Parlor.
10	Spiritual development and practice including: Bible Study, Labyrinth, and prayer groups.

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## What are the most valuable ways that you have contributed to the church?

Music activities	Running Women's Night Out	helping when asked
Helping with organization	Participating in the ways of an introvert	greeting.
Landscape design	Trying to encourage people to make music an important part of their faith journeys.	Women's Fellowship.
Deacons.	Church Council	Help with pledging
Stewardship	Growth and Development Committee	Bringing items for food pantry
Search committee.	Feeding people.	Worshiping on Sundays
teach Sunday School	recycling.	Work on the sound system I correct it
youth programs support.	Treasurer	encouraging people to talk about God and their spirituality.
Choir member.	baking	Shop at the Rummage Sale
Rosie's Place	Crafting for the Fair,	Sharing a new person's perspective
helping the trustees.	Budget and Finance work	ushering
Financial work	church videographer	Clerk..
Treasurer support	Leadership	Supporting the Wednesday services
Coming up with good ideas	Take care of the Bylaws	prison ministry
Play instruments	Mission Trip to Biloxi	Being supportive in positive ways.
Chairing a committee	strawberry social	Sharing the perspective of having young children
Creating and supporting music programs	Praying	Spiritual leadership
Welcoming new people	Help with pastor transitions	helping groups synthesize info and move toward a goal
Giving money	helping to offer people an opportunity to give	Being there for people who need someone to talk to
Inspired by MCC volunteering outside the church	Visiting people	providing organizational skills.
rummage sale	Worship leading	getting along with everybody
Outreach committee	4th of July parade	speaking up
Lay leader	Expressing thoughts lovingly.	helping in conflict situations
helping out when needed.	Showing up.	Being friendly

Children's choirs	One-on-one conversations and relationships with people.	delegating effectively and appropriately.
Educating and encouraging about service and social issues	Contributing to the intellectual fabric of the church	making coffee
Moderator	Doing all my Amazon buying thru MCC	Thanking people for their efforts.
piano committee	Christian Education Committee	empowering lay leadership
Sending card to people in accidents or sick	Delegate from MCC to Metropolitan Boston Association	Sharing thoughts
Organizing special events/activities	worshipping at the Well	Coffee hour
helping with children and youth programs	Singing	Providing new ideas
Sending Cards	Reaching out to people don't know	photography
Set up the event signs on the front lawn	Leading Church Council	performing
Helping to solve problems	personnel committee	filling in where needed,
organizing events	Crop Walk	Pastor Parish Relations Committee
paying attention to MCC's history	women's fellowship	fixing up/repairing the building
Offering opinions and ideas from my unique perspective	Helping others get to church	pot luck suppers
Sharing my appreciation of other members and the work they do	keeping a positive spirit	flower committee
Fundraising	Open Table at the Methodist Church	Bell Ringing
getting to know people	Teaching Parish Committee – Student Pastors	cooking for Family Promise
working hard and following through to end	Helping out in the office.	VBS
Speaking in front of the congregation	Counting the collection plate	doing what is needed
Sharing time generously	bringing food to events	Pledging
thinking about broader goals of the church	prayer group	Music Committee..
listening to the senior members of the church	Fall fair/ Twelve Shops.	
Caring about what is best for the church as a whole	Trustees	
leading by example		

# What could/should MCC do in the future?

Rank	What Could/Should MCC Do in the Future
	<i>Here are the hopes, dreams, and goals that people came up with for MCC. A positive quality of all thriving organizations is the ability to look to the future and set goals. Some of the Appreciative Inquiry responses for MCC are goals for continuing and/or strengthening what is good and strong already. Some responses ask for changes or additions. This list of goals/hopes/dreams is listed with those getting the most responses first and those getting mentioned the least at the end. Goals were ranked the same if they got the same number of responses.</i>
	<i>The first 8 Goals were decisively more important to people than the rest.</i>
1	Strong and stronger children and youth/teen programs [some suggestions included: mission trips, service activities, maintaining a vibrant community for children, support for and events for children and families]
2	Keep doing what we have been doing recently including: living out our covenant and being theologically progressive.
3	Financial stability including through: having a balanced budget, better giving, more fundraising opportunities, running the church like a business, more rentals, and planned giving.
4	Keep or Increase the current staff and/or increase the hours of the current staff.
5	More outreach/ service involvement opportunities including: large group events (like food packaging), small groups for adults that work on projects, intergenerational service, and having both a local and a more distant focus.
6	Grow including in numbers and in diversity.
6	Continue to focus and expand efforts on social justice issues including by being open to what comes up and to possible activities, by being a model for the world, and by exploring and taking a stand on issues such as prison, refugees, poverty, racial issues, environment issues, gun violence, terrorism, and domestic violence.
7	Fix the church building making it a secure, safe, and functional building including making improvements, making it more attractive, and improving accessibility.
	<i>The next five goals/hopes were very close in how often they were mentioned. They all speak about continuing current strengths and making them stronger.</i>
8	Keep Worship strong and add variety including: more services, different types of services, new ways to worship, and variety on Sundays.
9	Keep and improve being accepting and welcoming. Own this characteristic and live into it fully
10	Keep music strong and provide more options and/or grow it in numbers of participants including: bringing back the Covenant Band and having more events.
10	Increased involvement and involvement opportunities in the work of the church including: more volunteer opportunities at diverse times, helping new people to be involved, offering more leadership opportunities, and more lay involvement in worship.



11	More social, fellowship, and community building events including: big events and smaller groups, increased personal connections, and creative new ideas.
	<b><i>This next goal/hope reflects desires for change in how we act as a church so that we will be more effective.</i></b>
11	Improve the way we are as a church including: building stronger relationships, having better and more respectful communication, listening effectively to diverse views, keeping the Covenant of Respect, streamlining committees, improving communication between committees, having more teamwork and coordination, and combining the new and the old effectively.
	<b><i>The next 5 sets of hopes/goals were virtually tied in number of responses.</i></b>
12	Expand ONA expansion and offer opportunities for action including: participating in the Gay Pride parade and more exploration of trans issues.
13	Have and be guided in decision making by our mission or vision including: by listening to God, following the Gospel, listening to the Pope, paying attention to the Holy Spirit, and following our Covenant.
13	Focus more outwardly including on town issues and on the wider UCC.
13	More Interfaith and ecumenical (other Christian churches) events, education, and collaboration.
14	More reaching out to the outside including: better “advertising,” better sharing of what makes us special, more social media presence, digital access to services, and focusing beyond Sudbury.
	<b><i>The next 3 are also virtually tied in numbers.</i></b>
15	More intergenerational experiences including: worship, connecting experiences, and events.
16	More spiritual and life development opportunities including: Bible Study, workshops on death, dying, coping with loss, and suicide prevention; and small groups.
17	Keep care and support strong and improve it especially for the elderly including: help with transportation, specific communication, and celebrating 90 <sup>th</sup> birthdays.
	<b><i>The next 3 hopes/goals received 5 or fewer responses – less than half what the previous hopes/goal categories received.</i></b>
18	Return to programs, events, and/or traditions that we used to do including in worship.
19	Do something drastic about building and/or financial issues including: downsize, move to smaller or newer building, move to another church’s building, and merge with First Parish.
20	Stay away from controversial issues and anything that is political.
	<b><i>The following category is for responses that only came up 1 or 2 times and didn’t fit into other categories.</i></b>
21	Other: archive our history, less hymn singing, better coffee, large print hymnals, create a scholarship fund, more tenants who are doing service, slower pace, more opportunities to not be involved, and staff changes.