Summary of the 2023 H2H Report

Here is our summary of the 2023 H2H Report. If anyone thinks they have other ideas, or that we left out something that you said, please send us your comments. We found this report to be extremely important and the review very well done. SLC should be pleased with the positive responses. If we are a Mission Centric Ministry, it’s important for the Board, Staff and Ministry to take suggestions provided by the community to heart and continue to respond to suggestions. The community needs to be given clear direction on how to become involved. This provides them with an avenue to take ownership of SLC.

Section 1. Briefly Share How You Came to SLC and What Your Journey Has Been at SLC?

23% of congregants have been attending since the church was founded 25 years ago, and 57% have attended for more than five years. 18% of congregants have been here less than five years. People felt immediate peace attending SLC. Most people came to SLC because a friend recommended it to them. Responses indicate that people have had a positive experience.

Section 2: What is Your Understanding of SLC’s Mission?

 23 out of 44 interviewees knew SLC’s mission. Some were confused about what the mission statement is and what it says. Many congregants had other aspects of SLC’s core philosophies that resonated most with them. Someone said it seemed too simple. Someone thinks love is missing from the mission statement. Service and volunteering are important and should be included in the mission statement. We need to work on the wording of the mission statement, according to some people. **Many thought it does not clearly convey the message of SLC’s mission. Some people suggested a volunteer group to restructure the Mission Statement and resubmit it to the Board and Community at large.**

Section 3: How does SLC’s mission or message resonate in your personal life?

For the most part, people agreed with the mission statement, and said that they have come closer to living it out with the help of FIA SLC. Some did not know the mission statement or worry about it. They’ve learned the importance of “Love, Serve, Kindness, Diversity, Interfaith and spiritual growth” practices at SLC. FIA, other classes, and speakers are very important to people. Some **explained how they try to practice the Unity Principles in everyday life.**

Section 4: What Does Community Look Like to You?

a. We need more break-out groups and more classes. The Board/finances have become more relevant, and the members need transparency. Some people said they didn’t like the membership model. Some people are disappointed that SLC is so “white”. We need to reach out to new people and/or break out of our groups to include others. Congregants have a desire to see ministers more engaged with the congregation. The emphasis on “structure and expense” is having a negative impact on spirituality. A group of people at SLC have been there for years, and it’s kind of hard to get acquainted because they are so glad to see each other. Someone said, “a spiritual community looks like a safe and accepting group of people who nurture each other’s growth and take care of each other. That is harder to find at SLC than it should be.”

b. How Important is having a Spiritual Community to you?

“I have no living family. This is my family. It saved my life.” These were just some of the positive comments that were mentioned here.

c. What SLC Programs Promote that Sense of Community for You?

Sunday Services are most important, then, FIA, small groups, WOW, Music ministry, Luncheons, and social times together.

d. How Would You Suggest We Build Community?

* Why pay guest singers, when we can use members and the choir?
* We need more diversity, and younger people, LGBTQ, etc.
* Somebody asked about Gary. You’ll be glad to hear that the board discontinued monthly meetings with Gary. Do we really need the Q?
* We need to focus on retention and bringing in young adults and teenagers.
* It’s important to check in on people to see how they are doing, especially those who are in poor health.
* Someone said, “I’d like to see congregants step forward to start championing the groups that are important to them.”
* The logo should be in color and show nature, which would appeal to younger people.
* We should have a meet and greet for LGBTQIA+ 2 times/year.
* Keep doing cabarets and get the choir going again.
* Really engage newcomers.
* Let congregants lead their own groups without all the bureaucracy.

Section 5. Do You Currently Attend in-Person? Online? Or, Both?

Most people are sick of Zoom, and they attend in person. They get more out of it, and they get to see people.

Section 6. How Do You Get Your Information?

Services, website, newsletter, etc. People miss the bulletin.

Section 7. What Ideas or Suggestions Do You Have for SLC to Serve You Better?

* More outreach to congregants who need assistance (such as a ride to church, yard work, cooking a meal, etc.), and more personal contact by the two primary ministers with congregants in time of need (such as death of a loved one, etc.).
* We need a plan to touch base with congregants who have been absent, to offer help, rides, food, and support. More of an interfaith focus and activities.
* We need more classes and small groups.
* We need to focus on our youth education program and find ways to bring younger people into the church.
* Perhaps have a newcomers’ tea after service.
* Is Rev James available for counseling? Please, let us know.
* We do not need to read aloud so much during the Sunday service, as it seems less heartfelt. We need more transparency and openness from the board and staff.
* We need better security in the building.
* It would be nice to provide a handbook that informs members of the various services SLC provides. There should be a bulletin board for people to get help or provide services. When new people show up, assign them a buddy.
* Translations, and emergency readiness.
* Somebody wants to see metaphysics incorporated into sermons.
* Members would like classes on communication and relationships.
* Start a singles group.
* REALLY implement Mission-Centric Ministry and take ownership of our community.
* We should have more potlucks, and a new directory.
* Someone would like to see “a group of folks who help others in the church once a month (yard work, a meal, etc.). They would be willing to head that group.”
* Weekly support group.
* Someone suggested alternating messages by Rev. Deborah and Rev. James on Sundays.
* Have prayer chaplains greet attendees at the front and back gates to the courtyard and offer to pray with them or help them put a prayer in the prayer box.
* We need more volunteers in Youth Ed.
* Invite 12-step programs, such as AA, NA, Al-Anon to meet at SLC.
* Incorporate more of the Bible. Offer a Bible class, again.
* Let’s have a free-flowing drum circle.
* Someone would like to see ushers escort people with assistive devices (cane, crutch, walker, etc.) to their seats.
* Let’s have more classes/teachings about other faith traditions, and interactions with other religious groups. Let’s do Unity basics again.
* Some people don't see the two primary ministers as personally involved with the congregants, for example, helping when someone experiences the death of a loved one. They would like to see them connect with congregants more. “(Rev. Janee is great. She relates personally to people.)”
* Major events for the year should be announced at the beginning of each year.
* Deborah could offer a class about angels.
* Have James give a talk or write in his email message, explaining the “remember” part of love, serve, and remember.
* Focus on our excellent youth program - highlight it on the SLC website homepage.
* Possibly, we could advertise SLC with a small ad in a local newspaper (there’s a willingness to donate some funds toward an ad).
* Outreach to the less fortunate through volunteer opportunities.

8. Vision Questions:

a. Do you know what our vision statement is? Does it speak to you?

Most people like the vision statement, although it doesn't speak to all. Some people are wondering about the no exceptions part, because we've had to ask people to leave. Some also found it long.

b. What is Your Vision for SLC to Attract a Broader Audience, Both in-Person and Online?

* Provide activities for families with children, but NOT on weeknights, as families are too busy. Provide a social activity for adults once or twice a month, such as a game night.
* Advertising on the radio (NPR?).
* Prayer chaplains need to be more visible. The Prayer Chaplain table is in the courtyard, but it’s hard to find for some.
* More Interfaith sermons and more interfaith music on Sundays.
* Have one or 2 "Bring a friend or Family Member" Sundays.
* More variety at Sunday services, including poetry and spoken word.
* Suggest having some of our young people make a TikTok message about one of the five Unity principles, for example.
* Get Rev. Trapp out in the media for community events, offering programs, etc.
* Sending postcard invitations to neighborhood residents inviting them to church on Easter.
* Reach out to people in their 30s and 40s, who can donate more easily.
* Put photos of volunteers on the website.
* Be more visible in the community by connecting more with the public, perhaps through volunteering (e.g., with the unhoused).

c. What Vision Do You Have for SLC to Transform Lives?

* Hikes or going walking.
* Taizé prayer/chant - it would require help from Paula M.
* Acknowledgement of staff, volunteers, the SLC board, ministers, choir, etc
* We need a list of SLC's committees and names of who is in charge of the committee.
* We need to be good stewards of our money, and some do not feel that is occurring.
* Consider connecting with outside spiritual communities even more, like the American Sign Language Institute, Society for the Blind, and help people in nursing homes get connected with us online.
* Gossip does not belong at SLC on ANY level.
* Spend an hour apart in nature and then talk about what came up for you during that time.
* More guest classes and workshops in hands-on healing such as Reiki, quantum healing, energy work, healing touch.
* Gather a Group of volunteers to work at Sac Food Bank and Family Services.
* Post short, inspiring stories of congregants on the website.
* We need a group of volunteers to reach out to those who are ill or need help.
* Someone doesn't feel we are sincerely concerned with our planet. We must take action. Urgency about climate change.
* Offering an ongoing generic 12-step group would support a lot of folks in our community. We have congregants who are qualified to lead such a group.
* SLC can't transform lives unless those who attend are open to it and looking for transformation.
* Connecting with and learning about world religions.
* Find someone less expensive to do the website development.

Section 9. Is There Anything Else You Would Like Us to Know?

**a. Positive feedback:**

* SLC is doing an awesome job of getting back on track! I still get goosebumps when we sing the welcome song.
* She likes the music, meditations, and depth of Sunday's messages.
* SLC's beliefs fit my lifestyle. I dream of my great-granddaughter someday being involved in Youth Ed.I like the medium size of SLC (rather than small churches) because it offers many opportunities to serve in its classes and programs. There are enough people, so the same people don't get burned out.
* Of 3 Unity churches I've attended in CA, SLC is where we felt most comfortable. There are many people in the congregation we'd like to get to know better.
* Reverend James’ messages and Paula's music are both absolutely outstanding!
* It offers a good message every week! Uplifting music, friendly congregation, starts my week with a good feeling, and I'm always anxious to go back!
* Believe the message of oneness as a possibility, as transformation, and vision for the future we want. It is the most important message of our time.
* Course in Miracles has many foundations for growth.
* The weekly message offers a spiritual boost. There is insight in the messages.
* SLC gives me courage to move forward, even through my darkest times. In turn, I can give courage to others. Prayer chaplains remind me I am not alone. I want to share what I have learned about healing trauma (and we all have trauma). I love that we are perfectly imperfect, and I value the authenticity and humility I find at SLC. SLC is an oasis in the midst of the insanity of the world.
* I am thrilled to meet with my groups, especially the Co-dependents group. I have been attending 12-step programs for 35 years, and am so glad we can meet at SLC. It was not allowed at Christ Unity.
* The music is huge! People should come for the music and stay for the word. Keep "church" fun.
* SLC contributes to spiritual growth through James' lessons, the music, FIA, and reading and doing the art based on the book, creative opportunities such as cabaret.
* Rev James is remarkable. Love his wisdom & humor. She likes heartfelt music, and what Paula does blows her away. Ira's music video was incredible, it deserved widespread distribution. Would love to be able to share links to music on FB. Hoping Ann isn't transitioning away from us because she is stellar.

b. Concerns and Questions:

* It is important that our church does not get too pushy about fundraising.
* Who will have access to the information that H2H conversations are accumulating? What about the last one? We will share it with you in the Board Update.
* How can we grow if we can’t pay our bills?
* Rev. James has other interests and seems distant from the SLC community.
* My confidentiality has been violated by the Assistant Minister.
* I took the Q class. I don't remember it being that good.
* More transparency, less secrecy regarding financial difficulties.
* Bring back the choir with an open invitation to join and regular choir practices (maybe twice a month?). I realize this costs money, but it is an important way for congregants to create community and further their spiritual growth and ours.
* We no longer have a choir, and yet I hear people want to sing.
* Someone expressed frustration that EC activities were halted - "a lot of positive energy towards building community, and then it was halted."
* Membership model "form is off-putting, punitive and too much like a business model."
* Wants to know how many people attend via Zoom.
* Please leave politics out of sermons.
* I’m concerned about the polarization in some of the community meetings. It’s OK to complain, but be part of the solution and not the problem.
* I am/was extremely sad and disappointed with the amendment that removed Jesus from our bylaws.
* There’s a clique at SLC that seems to think they are spiritually superior to others.
* We have too much staff for our size.
* We have numerous ministers in our midst and others who have offered to do classes, but we don’t get to hear from them.
* We have no system or committee in place to tend to the needs of our congregation, which is a big problem. Chaplains and ministers could do this.
* The one-year waiting period to become a member has no benefit.
* Welcome and bless new members in a simple ceremony (e.g., with a rose and a hug) at a Sunday service (as has long been the common practice in Unity churches).
* More information about what is going on with SLC. Communication is lacking about the church’s goals for the future. She needs to feel safe, be heard and understood.
* I have not formally become a member of SLC. I long for more concepts like those taught by Science of Mind. I do not feel a sense of personal connection with the two ministers.
* Prosperity is so much more than forced positive thinking, and it isn’t telling others to shut up and leave. This group wants Sameness, not Oneness, and they spread gossip about those who have different ideas.
* It’s been my experience (and I hear the same from others) that our offers to volunteer are seldom accepted or appreciated. I want to reiterate that I LOVE this church and have no plans of making a change (though I have lost SLC friends due to some of the concerns listed).
* Keep it simple. Eliminate cumbersome processes to complete simple tasks.

In Conclusion

We are grateful for all those who participated in conducting the interviews, as well as those who spent the time to have these heart-to-heart conversations. We anticipate the content of this report will be reviewed, analyzed, and put to good use to enhance SLCs future. This is a revised summary of the long report. If you didn’t find your comment or something like it, please, get back to any member of the board. Thank you for your time and attention.