

We ran a survey for two weeks that asked about congregant's understanding of and feelings about the UUA. We received 41 responses. The board intentionally did not participate, so the results would be reflective of the wider congregation. Overall, congregants mostly felt confident in their understanding, with over 65% saying that they are pretty clear about what the UUA is and does and how it relates to congregations:

How familiar are you with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)

41 responses



How people described its role included (the answer's reported feelings about the UUA are provided following the statement):

*Umbrella organization that provides guidance, support and resources to congregations. (Neutral or ambivalent)*

*The UUA is an association of congregations, a membership organization. It is democratically run, with member congregations voting on officers, and statements of faith, etc. It sets standards and credentialing requirements for religious professionals. Member congregations can access national and regional support, utilize curricula, music, etc. Member dues support staff, and the development of communal resources, the annual meeting, etc. As an association the UUA takes policy and social justice stands, and on a national level voices UU values. Member congregations have congregational polity and autonomy -- i.e. the UUA doesn't tell us what to do or mandate behavior or even that our minister be a UU credentialed minister. (Somewhat positive)*

*The UUA is the face of Unitarian Universalism at the national level. Congregational dues support multiple programs and services aligned with our principles. Staffing exists centrally and regionally. A board sets policies, establishes priorities, hires staff, manages a budget and holds an annual conference, called General Assembly, where congregational delegates contribute to policy and priority setting. The UUA influences congregations mostly through indirect means - ministerial training or professional staff standards, RE curricula, recommending or offering programs or services aligned with UUA priorities, grants, etc. (Very negative)*

*It is the national organization of UU congregations that provides support to congregations, coordinates minister placement through a prescribed process, and a venue to speak and take positions or actions at the national level either through general assembly or by leadership elected through GA. It is an association rather than a hierarchy. (Very negative)*

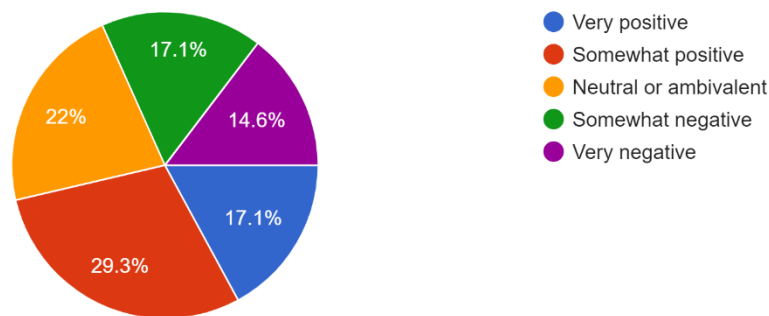
*It's the national UU organization. Individual congregations (including CLF and BLUU) are members, we send them money and they support us in many ways. The UUA also passes resolutions and other action items at annual GA. I could go on, but don't have time. :)(very positive)*

*It should be an umbrella organization providing guidance and support to member congregations. (Somewhat negative)*

It is supportive of congregations; providing structures for them as needed and allowing for congregations to be connected nationwide. (very positive)

My feelings about the UUA are:

41 responses



There was significant diversity of sentiment when it came to how congregants are feeling about the UUA, with 14.6% feeling very negative, 17.1% feeling somewhat negative, 22% feeling neutral or ambivalent, 29.3% feeling somewhat positive and another 17.1% feeling very positive. The reasons people cited for those feelings also varied widely, and positives and negatives were often mixed together in individual answers.

For those who voiced positive feelings, there were some common themes: gratitude for support that we've received in the past, especially the support that allowed us to buy our building; gratitude for the ongoing information and resources provided; enjoyment of GA and other UUA hosted events; and appreciation for the anti-racism work that the UUA is engaged in:

*I've had positive interactions. After going to GA and feeling fully respected and seen, I thought about how this is what I want our ideals to live up to. It was powerful. I appreciate the resources they offer but wish we had more interaction with those resources on an ongoing basis or knew how to access the. (Very positive)*

*I especially appreciated the UUA hosted events related to the racial and social justice uprisings this summer. (Very positive)*

*I feel positive about the UUA because congregations should start from a place of strength. Let's not reinvent the wheel with every single congregation. A central organization can bring in good people who can give direction and resources to member congregations. (Very positive)*

*After attending GA last year and embracing Widening the Circle and facing racism and colonialism (Very positive)*

*My positive feelings relate to all of the resources provided by the UUA, such as RE curriculum, the Beloved Conversations program, music, and financial assistance for our home purchase. (Neutral or ambivalent)*

*I'm supportive of the UUA's leadership on dismantling white supremacy culture in our congregations. (Somewhat positive)*

For those who voiced negative feelings, there were a couple different reasons. One was a lack of consistent or effective support when it was needed, both historically and particularly around our congregation's many challenges through the interim and ministerial search processes. The other was discomfort with the direction of the racial justice work of the UUA and/or the perception that the UUA has begun to dictate or require conformity among congregations, ministers, or members:

*The UUA has become ideologically fundamentalist with respect to racial justice, promoting legitimate concerns but wrapped in a penitential framework that embraces "white supremacy culture" rhetoric. The passionate adherents to this framework are sowing division within UU communities and needlessly pushing away people who are natural allies in a struggle every UU supports. (Very negative)*

*It is my understanding that the UUA is dictating to its member congregations what they will stand for and what their priorities will be. This is not what the UUA should be doing. (Somewhat negative)*

*I know (vaguely) that there is some controversy over the direction the UUA is taking in terms of teaching equity in congregations. And that there are assumptions the UUA is, or has, become a top-down organization. (Neutral or ambivalent)*

*I don't feel the interim ministry program is run in a way that puts congregations first. I base this on what I know of our own Congregation's work with the UUA with our own multiple interim minister searches over the past five years. (Somewhat negative)*

*The ministerial search process and placement of interim ministers was extremely damaging to the congregation. It will take years to repair the damage. We would have been better off to not have an interim and to have done a search independent of the UUA. The interims we did have were not sufficiently supported by the UUA in handling difficult situations especially personnel matters. The UUA does not represent the congregations in this process rather the ministers. (Very negative)*

*I feel that they bungled the help they gave to both Search teams which caused extra work or disappointment. They obviously did not have their act together. (Somewhat negative)*

It's clear that our congregation holds diversity of understandings and feelings regarding the UUA and its work. There will be opportunities to engage across these differences that will hopefully provide a container for meaningful exchange and the potential to move forward together with care for one another.