

Reasons why survey takers believed their church grew or didn't grow in the last five years.

1. Focus on hospitality Minimizing insular, small-congregation messages to newcomers Integrating new members
2. Unclear focus, vision, expectations about membership. Introverted, low key minister. Responsibility for growing membership belongs to everyone and no one.
3. Our increase in numbers is primarily due to the fine minister we have, XXX.. In addition, and under XXX's leadership, we are both a Welcoming Congregation and a welcoming congregation. Our fine RE program for children under the direction of YYY is also helping us to attract young couples with children.
4. New people are moving into the area and are looking for a liberal religious home at a period in time when our government seems to be going in the opposite direction. We are a welcoming congregation for GLBTs
5. We don't know what our purpose is. We have a mission statement and when its been reviewed, people like it as is. But we seem to be floundering financially, spiritually and with regard to volunteerism and attendance. Our minister of 14 years will retire at the end of 2007. The congregation isn't clear about our identity sans our outgoing minister
6. We have experienced a wave in growth - membership has increased, decreased, increased. Part of this is because our minister is getting ready to retire and has withdrawn his active support of the congregation.
7. Our congregation was experiencing growth until a few years ago. I think it was because we were at a point of standing room only and then there were many disagreements as to what should be done. We lost several long time members during this process due to disagreement. One of the big points of disagreement was actual candles of sharing! We are still bringing in new members but we seem to lose members at the same rate. I think this is because we have many things going on and a small pool of people to pull from to get these things done. We burn people out.
8. Too complex to be amenable to data collection
9. Religious liberals in a conservative part of the country seeking like-minded souls; members of the congregation encouraging friends and neighbors to visit.
10. We deceased during our interim but have increased with a new called Sr. minister. People see a new positive energy.
11. religious education for the children
12. Increase in members -- we have a great minister; we're one of the few liberal religious organizations in our area
13. Increase is steady but relatively slow, there being some constraints to being in a "college town"--fewer young families, more transient members.
14. Healthy founding members 41 years ago Growth accompanied modeling by minister of spiritual practice. Joys and Concerns were main vehicle for the community seeing and hearing itself with depth and compassion
15. I believe that good worship and an openness to change make <church name> a good candidate for growth. We also have a hospitality task force that is helping to change the culture around welcoming new people to the church.
16. Active and caring welcoming system. A new member orientation/training with the minister. Balanced opportunities for all members to share in fellowship activities.
17. -excellent minister -word of mouth -need for this kind of fellowship in our conservative area
18. 2 years half time and full-time minstry for this year (only) Increased visibility in community per social justice issues Consistent quality of Sunday worship service Good Membership Chair who mails letter to all visitors and gets them on newsletter list Forums have always been a good draw 2 New to UU

- classes a year and new member ceremonies
19. slow growth because this is a (religious, political, etc.) conservative, rural area
 20. Increase in young adults with children Increased visibility in local community Deliberate plans to be a welcoming congregation
 21. We are experiencing a resurgence of growth in our first year with a new Lead Minister following two years of interim ministry which followed a twenty plus year Senior ministry. I think the transition in ministry was partially responsible for a flattening of growth.
 22. After the end of a 16-year co-ministry, two of us Interim Ministers have served the congregation, one per year. Some congregants chose to "sit out" the interim period, and attendance shows this, especially in the religious education program. Additionally, here in the downtown, we have been afflicted with a torn-up street in front of the church all fall and winter -- from little parking to no parking. A 24-storey condo under construction next door makes us less visible than ever. Deferred maintenance, because of financial instability, also makes us look a little run-down to a passer-by.
 23. *extremely rural *declining demographics *unresolved conflict *lay led in 2004-05, otherwise only 1/2 time prior to 2006 *congregation unwilling to evangelize
 24. Developing conflict with previous ministry; longterm antipathy to growth past existing size.
 25. Small space, limited parking, not enough social events
 26. Quality, formal worship and strong RE have kept membership steady despite difficult transitions.
 27. we have great "ask me" people, a lovely new sanctuary, a fabulous minister (me) and a friendly engaged congregation who behave in healthy ways a good bit of the time.
 28. Increase in members: More outreach to the community, marketing efforts, ministerial efforts, larger building
 29. We experienced growth from 211 to 271 in first two years of a new minister. The past five years we have grown only 10% to 301. The plateau is attributable to our delay in moving from a pastoral style congregation to a program size congregation. We have recently improved our care committee, membership committee and Social action Council and are starting to see growth again in 2006 we lost a net of 9 members in 2007 we had a net gain of 11.
 30. overall community is growing; variety of congregational programs to meet needs of different people; critical mass in religious education program, so more families are drawn to the program; minister and board promoting the benefits of growth
 31. we have been allocating for child care and hence, have more families with young children. We have had dynamic worship services and used dvd's and visual and other sensory components. The lay leaders have offered adult RE during second service and last year, started what they call an alternative worship or meditation service. We just started Chalice Circles, our covenant group program, and that has had enormous participation, partly because of the cottage gatherings we used to introduce the concept.
 32. Strength of minister over the last three years Strength of congregational leadership Strong UU experience of older members
 33. We have had surges of growth and not anything that can be sustained. There is a reluctance to establish systems / policy / agreements / expectations for fear that it will bureaucratize the community and reduce the freedoms of existing members and friends. However, new people often don't understand how things work or how to become part of the system and so often don't integrate very deeply into the community. People come wanting a sense of intimacy but aren't able to integrate very deeply and thus don't always feel satisfied with the intimacy they are able to achieve. There is also a message I believe comes through in congregational life that a good deal of focus is placed inwardly - caring much more about existing members and member's issues rather than on the community beyond the church and the issues of the people in live in that larger community.
 34. world events critical mass of 20-30 somethings critical mass of GLBTQ
 35. Strong RE & Youth Program Strong Music Program Good Adult Education Strong attendance at worship
 36. Interim ministry; improved communication and record-keeping has made our count more accurate and

up-to-date

37. We are a growing congregation in spite of a few things. But I think it helps that we have a candle-lighting opportunity that does not include speaking.
38. strong worship; strong RE; warm and friendly greeting of guests; good follow-up
39. increase has been steady since calling minister and since building campaign. Have increased both children's and adult RE, and increased lay participation. Also, please note, because it does have a bearing on this and on the effectiveness of joys and concerns -- the minister is 60% time, not a category you provide, but the added time helps maintain the continuity.
40. As a new congregation without a list serve policy where anyone could be on the list and use was like a chat room it caused damage to growth. Now policy in place growth resumes.
41. A change in style of ministry (new ministry) not preceded by supportive work. Inadequate behavioral policy (policy, rather than covenant); unwillingness on part of leadership to enforce acceptable behavior. Elements of worship (such as joys and sorrows) that communicate that the congregation is a small group. Failure to adequately integrate new members and visitors (lack of sufficient adult RE and fellowship opportunities). Previous insufficient clarity about meaning/commitment of membership, including commitment to financial giving (membership lite). Governance style (consensus) which is used throughout congregational decision-making and which seems to have contributed to disagreement going underground. Location: regional church in rural area near suburban area -- with many people not having time to come regularly or during week. Worn-out leadership (previous failure to intentionally develop new leadership). Two services with too-small attendance at one service, leading to discouragement at both services.
42. Ministerial outreach and a redeveloped membership committee; warmth of congregation to visitors; meaningfulness of UUism
43. Young, energetic, caring minister; strong RE program; outreach programs; long-term planning; move to a second service
44. MANY ways to get involved and to connect including covenant groups, ARE classes designed to facilitate deep sharing; weekly vespers followed by community dinner; pastoral visitors program etc.
45. WE are a caring community. We are in a university community. We are THE liberal congregation in a conservative area of the country. We are a friendly congregation. We have many, many activities that folks can get involved in. We welcome gay and lesbian families. We have a stable and talented staff. We have many wonderful volunteers who include new folks. We welcome new ideas.
46. stronger staff stronger lay leadership stronger programming
47. Visibility in the larger community. Word of mouth. Website. Welcoming atmosphere. Multiple programs and activities. Minister's involvement in broader community.
48. Population of geographic location growing rapidly. New, attractive sanctuary.
49. <Name of Town> is a transient town. We bring in new members, but others leave. When new minister came, some left, more came in. Numbers are growing now, more than in the recent past.
50. By the way to clarify my answer to the 5% question above, I think we are growing, but I have no idea of the percentage. We have a number of people move away as well as a larger number of new members. Many new members say they found us through our web site. We recently hired a part time membership coordinator. I think that has improved the number of visitors who become members and the level of involvement of new members. Our minister and are music program are both big factors as well.
51. We called a new minister in 2005, which generated a lot of energy. In addition, we hired a part-time membership coordinator, who has done a great job with potential new members and new members. Finally, we have a renowned music director and an incredible music program that attracts visitors and new members.
52. The building is full.
53. we have experienced growth partly because we have just settled in our newly built center. People have started to attend coming from a different area. The fact that we now have a full time minister has a lot to do with the new interest which we hope will resolve itself in a growth of membership.

54. We went through a difficult period in the 1990s and hired an AIM for two years, 2001-3, then got a really good settled minister. The AIM did the heavy lifting to move us towards a better place.
55. New building, new minister and enough members who actually talk to and welcome newcomers
56. We have encouraged healthy behavior, and discouraged dysfunction. We have removed barriers to growth (e.g., by adding a second service). We have taken an active role in the wider community, and we have installed a new lit message-board sign on the main turnpike, outside our church.
57. New building and location, increased advertising, and a new interest in attracting members. All this was based on a 5-year strategic plan.
58. Strong worship/music, strong sense of community, healthy membership, great web presence, intentionality around membership and stewardship
59. The commitment to building a first home and calling the first full-time minister.
60. 1) Four years ago we built a prominent, attractive sanctuary building on our busy street. 2) We are in a region with a fast-growing population, many in the UU demographic. 3) We offer a variety of program and fellowship opportunities. 4) In the South, we are a refuge from fundamentalism and political conservatism. 5) We offer a number of vehicles for personal spiritual growth.
61. We're located in a small college town and many of our members are associated with the University. This is a fairly transient population and so we lose some and we gain some, but somehow always remain right around 100 members.
62. I think we are on a plateau for several reasons. Main reason may be we have reached 80% of comfortable seating capacity.
63. The congregation has been in the process (with its new minister) changing over to policy governance & putting in place other new operating programs. Also, our sanctuary is close to maxed out which makes significant growth difficult
64. We have no growth, due to no leadership, and too many people with critical opinions. Little moves forward without a struggle. It's very frustrating. We also have a regular member who periodically has emotional outbursts at fellowship meetings. He is coddled and forgiven. My sympathy for him runs thin; this is my family's sanctuary.
65. I feel our congregation is hard to "break into." That is, once you've been around quite awhile you are welcomed as part of the group, but that process is long, and we (inadvertently) are exclusionary to new folks by our use of shorthand or not explaining who we are or what we're doing or why we're doing what we do.
66. Resort community ... Not enough P.R...serious parking problems
67. 1. A good quality worship service. 2. A good RE program. 3. The ability of members to find their ministry.
68. I don't have any data, but I suspect that most of our growth is a result of an increase in population in our area.
69. This year we had an interim minister, which was controversial. We had been lay-led until this time. Some people leave because they want a minister, some have left this year because they don't want a minister. There are many who don't find our programs worshipful enough or are simply looking for something else
70. Fellowship does not actively encourage visitors to become more active.
71. Very small congregation in isolated, rural setting and unusual demographics. No long-range plan with intentional, focused steps. Changing demographic and economic downturn.
72. stagnation with a modicum of growth and a growth pattern that seems to favor new people coming into the community.
73. increase - new minister same - no minister decrease - natural ebb and flow of community
74. Increase in Adult Members: In 2001, calling a part-time minister who was very people oriented Sense of community with our congregants unusually friendly Decrease in Families with Small Children: Lack of religious education classes for all ages

75. Increase comes with our wide diversity of programs and recent revitalization of RE due to a wonderful new 1/2 time minister. However, being in a resort community, we have a constant ebb and flow of people who leave when there's an economic bad turn as now or if ready to retire a second time when become too elderly to live well totally independently. Many of our high pledgers. We do then get new younger retirees, often UU's from <Area of City> but it's quite a turn over. We have many "friends", probably 20-25 over our "membership" category of 45-50. We also have pledging members who have moved to <name of city> etc. but still give us some support. It's an interesting congregation.
76. There is turnover every year because we live in a university town. We have lost a two families who began attending the liberal Baptist church here. A few left because of personality differences with our minister.
77. -lack of "advertising" -- folks don't know we exist -lack of regular pastoral leadership, although with our current consulting minister this seems to be turning around -lack of spiritualness in sunday services, although again this seems to be changing with our consulting minister
78. <Name of City> is a very transient community due to the University, so we have families moving because they leave the University. However, we have new people coming in at about the same rate.
79. I think the primary reason our membership hovers around 100 members is because we are in a college town and as increase for several years, we will then come to a year when a number of people move. For instance, two years ago we lost 13 members who moved out of the community. It's taken us two years to recover from this loss.
80. Generally increases have occurred as I understand when there is professional leadership (this 20 year old congregation started as a fellowship and has had ministers off and on over the years.)
81. I've only been with the congregation six months so answers from lay leaders would be more valuable. However I know that we lost a number of members three years ago because of a conflict in the congregation over the music director, who subsequently left. A further loss took place a couple of times because the religious education program didn't have enough 3rd grade and up children to keep a class going and families went to <name of church> to get their children's program.
82. good location, good minister, good re
83. transient metro population space limitations increase in number of congregations in the area requirements for membership
84. We've grown because of a new building and an active RE program -- though we're currently experiencing a slowdown in growth.
85. 1. Attractive worship experience. 2. Build the RE program and they will come. 3. Good welcoming attitude. 4. Only liberal church in town.
86. This is the first year our congregation has had a called minister. I lead worship two Sundays each month. This continuity has helped, I believe. Plus good programming breeds more good programming. Additionally, we've become involved in some service activities (i.e. Habitat) and have had some excellent adult RE courses.