



**FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA &
FIRST UNITED CHURCH OWEN SOUND**



In the 85th anniversary of the United Church of Canada, and in our own 165th anniversary year, we'd like you to tell us what you think the future holds for the church. Please help by thinking about these and other questions.

This questionnaire is provided for those who prefer to respond in writing or in the privacy of their home. Please use the attached envelope and return your questionnaire by dropping it in the mailbox at the church Secretary's office.

❶ What are the 2 or 3 most important things the congregation does?

* come to church (5)	* Kristal's messages
* bring their offering/supports the work of the church (6)	* involve members in a wide variety of activities, interests, clubs, etc.
* be positive, show strength (3)	* great volunteers (2)
* have some fun	* welcoming, friendly & accepting (6)
* Christian outreach, local & abroad (5)	* relaxed atmosphere (2)
* exceptional musical program & choir (5)	* good Sunday school & its leaders (2)
* coffee hour/meet & greet/fellowship (3)	* provide leadership (2)
* support to each other & community, a sense of family (7)	* facility is a great community resource
* lots of week-day activities	* people come together in spiritual growth
* interactive services, especially children's time	

❷ If you could improve two things about our church community and/or our worship life, what would they be?

* every service should include a specific prayer for peace in the world	* more exciting, interactive, innovative worship (2)
* should have a Men's Program (2)	* formal & informal bible study
* be more open and welcoming to people of different cultural & ethnic backgrounds	* we need to organize our reception of those who are visiting or who are new. They must be met and accompanied throughout their time, including sitting with them in the pews, introductions, coffee time, and a tour of the facility
* less focus on financial burdens & fundraising, be positive about what we have (4)	* concentrate congregation in sanctuary to bring us closer
* contemporary music program, participation by members (3)	* push for PAR (3)

* focus on one project rather than a bunch of small ones (referring to outreach activity), a big project to get people involved (i.e. (Habitat for Humanity) (2)	* increase membership/attendance (6)
* invitations to the wider community for specific events/services	* create a place and programs for youth (incl Guides, Scouts, etc) (2)
* small group ministries	* time for our minister to move on.
* cushions (more) in the pews	* increase visitations by minister, not associate
* balance the budget	* more outreach into the community (2)
* incorporate world events in sermon	* share a vision
*better communication & coordination	*

- ⑤ How do you picture our church community 5 years from now in terms of:
- ministry and programs in which you would participate;
 - activity of existing church groups; and,
 - overall composition of the congregation (i.e., multiple generations, visible minorities, etc).

* hope that ministry, programs & groups still active, maybe expand (2)	*church will continue to reflect seniors & retirement, aging demographic (3)
* smaller membership/congregation (5)	* more minorities/ethnically diverse members & outreach (4)
* diminished UCW	* more cooperation with other churches
* needs rejuvenation, more young people & families. Bleak, without young families & increased attendance (11)	* maintain positive experience @ First
* more non-religious activities...sports, family day, etc.	* make positive use of facility
* better messages from the pulpit	* greater financial burden on fewer members
* alternative worship opportunities	* increased need for volunteers
* future is scary, 4 churches to 2, one on each side of the city	* young people not getting married

④ What are the barriers that exist preventing people from joining us at First United?

* working on Sundays, time constraints, competition of other activities (3)	* public have no experience of a faith community
* people are not aware of what our church does. Their perception may not be accurate, but it is what drives them or keeps them away from church (see note in Miscellaneous Comments below)	* loss of independence & mobility of seniors
* lack of commitment to regular attendance, less revenue	* not youth-friendly, need contemporary service, lack of youth appeal (3)
* fear of unknown & not being welcome (2)	* negative attitude of some members
* communication problem and/or poor location (3)	* dependence on church protocol
* we need to have person to person invitations	* people do not know how to join
* our mission/vision does not include bringing people into our congregation	* people do not feel comfortable in church

⑤ What can we do to be financially viable in the long term?

* reduce staff/salaries (2)	* rent facilities to generate revenue & encourage community groups (5)
* amalgamate with rural churches (1)	* reduce spending (4)
* amalgamation w/churches in OS (6)	* maintain/increase stewardship efforts (4)
* planned giving in wills	* remain positive, spread the word
* increase attendance (7)	* more activities/programs=more attendance=increased givings (2)
* 5 year financial plan with an effective fundraising model, clearly articulated to members.	* if we care about our ministry & programs, we must give more.
* ministry to seniors and shut-ins	* increase rents
* ask for exactly what we need financially	* attract members from community "through the back door" – through non-Sunday events & activities

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

If you would like to be contacted regarding your response, please provide your name and telephone number in the space below. Otherwise, leave this portion blank.

NAME	TELEPHONE NUMBER

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS:

* having an elevator is a bonus because many other United Churches do not.

* church has to become more about what happens and what we do outside the 90 minutes we are together on Sundays. What is it that we offer the other 6 days of the week? The qualities and programs that we need to become known for and that will attract people to our church are the programs that happen outside Sunday worship. Sunday worship is not enough.

* dream about the future...the only thing we know is today.

* need for group discussions about theological diversity, what do Christians believe today, meditation prayer group

* we cannot be all things to all people

* “no” simply means “not yet”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

1. 20 surveys completed – a good rate of response. Five round table groups participated on June 6th. Responses cover the full spectrum...specific to general.
2. Broad, positive affirmation of programs and ministry. Some specific or pointed criticism/praise, tends to be one-off or unsupported by others.
3. Broad recognition that financial environment is working against our desire to continue to deliver programs and ministry, with a variety of suggested courses of action including reduction of staff levels, increased fundraising, increased rental of our facility & amalgamation.
4. Significant recognition that solutions such as amalgamation must be explored (generally on an east/west basis), but no specific suggestion that First United offer to close its doors.
5. Fairly even split of opinion: pursue fundraising/stop aggressive demands for financial support.

Recommend and move that Council authorize the representatives to share the survey results & feedback with the combined Future Directions Group.