

1. What is the actual plan? What steps for change should be taken?
2. What specific objectives do you have? How will you measure success?
3. Who might be responsible for or initiate that change?
4. What steps, in sequence would you recommend?
5. What are the financial impacts?
6. What are the impacts on volunteer resources?

How to foster more “spiritual experiences” at Beacon: Recommendations

Definitions

We recognized that “spirituality” has at least two meanings:

- A good feeling (eg. Feeling inspired and optimistic and energized, feeling valued and seen, feeling love for others and self, feeling empowered to support others, feeling grateful to be alive)
- A feeling of expansion and insight (which might be preceded by uncomfortable feelings, for example: having to let go of your (limited) version of “what is and how things are/should be”.

Pre-Service Activities

Rationale: Enhance good-feeling spirituality by bringing the energy up before the service starts.

- 10:30 coffee upstairs (service to start at 11 am)
- Pre-service activities (to go with coffee):
 - One or two tables set up. Some art and writing supplies. Some prompts or questions: either on the theme of that day’s service; or general ones (eg. Why are you here? Where is the joy in your life? What do you willingly give your life to? What do you believe about life and death, the divine, spirituality and religious experience, ethical living?)
 - Possibly need a table facilitator to invite people to sit down, make introductions, make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. When a table is filled, invite half to move to another table so that newcomers can find a spot.
- Segue to the front of the hall for group singing. Song leader goes around to each table singing, “Come, come whoever you are, the music is starting and we bid you welcome, Ours is no caravan of despair, come, yet again come.”

“Praise and Grace” singing time, prelude to the service

- Gets energy up
- Focus on positive themes/subjects: gratitude, nature, love, forgiveness, one of our 8 principles,
- Use uplifting music
- Use lively music
- Include gospel music as an option, but provide context for the song, the environment from which it arose and honour the place where it came from, and at the same time how we can enjoy the songs on other levels. (Songs were created to bring black people through hard times, what we might hear is their singing with their hearts.)
- The aim of the “Praise and Grace” singing time is not to sound professional, but to build some energy, learn some new songs, fun. Some of the songs are very complicated (see 2nd sample below) so we don’t want anyone stressing about getting them right.
- Community-choir style, song leaders might be Rev. Meg, Ming-Xuan, Faith, other choir members who feel comfortable in this role, for example Marylke, Glenn, Laura, Peggy?
- Have a request box or email address: submit a request for a song that you would love to introduce to Beacon
- Example songs:
 - Holy Now by Peter Mayer (coming up in a service by Meg)
 - Live like were dying, Kris Allen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRh6kUZ6GK8>

Use of space in hall

- Seating
 - Use a semi-circle. This allows us to see each other. The row seating tends to feel like school and doesn’t foster connection
- Dance floor:
 - Provide a dance area where people can move freely to the music on offer. This is another way of being highly engaged in the service, of deep listening and embodying. Allows another level of freedom to participants, the freedom to move.
 - Question: where do we want the dance floor – at the front or the back of the audience?
 - How about, once in a while, having a song that we just dance to, not a song for singing? To give people permission to experiment, where everyone can feel “vulnerable” together, so we can expand our repertoire of expression together. Also give the option to “dance with your hands”.

Small group breakouts during services

- Allows participants to be engaged by recalling and telling of their own experiences
- Also provide, as an option, a place for art, and a table for writing.
- At the end of the breakouts, ask if someone heard something that particularly moved them or informed them, and if they would like to share it with the entire congregation. This allows for more cohesion with the group as a whole.

- Delving deeply into any topic that takes one away from the mundane and into a concentration that expands knowledge.

Small group discussions after the service

- Tables with art materials, journaling supplies, prompts/questions as jumping off points. To try: using the display of other participant's work/ideas as a discussion point
- Delving deeply into any topic that takes one away from the mundane and into a concentration that expands knowledge.

Offer more opportunities for "Being in the Flow"(High engagement activities)

- Being "in the flow" most effective when personally being creative by engaging in an engrossing activity such as art, music, writing, dancing, but also possible when experiencing the results of other peoples' efforts. Use uplifting music. Have a dance floor and an art table during the service, and a quiet writing table after [or during and after?]. Possibly pin art and writing on a board for all to see.

Variety in the service format (see Meg and her experience with Courtenay church)

Small group ministry outside of Sunday service that encourage "spiritual risk-taking"

- eg. Build your Theology or other courses that are already organized (see Meg's resources)
- From "Converting to UUism in 4 simple steps" by Rev. D.S. O'Connell, West Redding, Connecticut
 - 2. Articulate your theology. We never finish the process, but too many of us never really get started: Why are you here? Where is the joy in your life? What do you willingly give your life to? What do you believe about life and death, the divine, spirituality and religious experience, ethical living?
 - 3. Take some spiritual risks. If you don't believe in God, try prayer anyway. If you're afraid of death, volunteer in a hospital. If you're not creative, write poetry. Use your spiritual fear like a Geiger counter—not to stay away, but to run headlong toward. Risk-taking will help you grow spiritually, modify your theology, suggesting new spiritual risk-taking.
- Combine ritual sharing with Building your own Theology: Participants can tell about personal spiritual rituals, and how it relates to their theology.

Meditation

- Meditation, possibly guided, that lasts long enough to deepen.
- Nursery room could be used for a group meditation group before or after the service.

Use lively inspired speakers

- Potential resource: North Shore Unitarians lay people, \$100/speaker (from Franci)
- Delving deeply into any topic that takes one away from the mundane and into a concentration that expands knowledge. Homilies with depth.

- A theme talk with inspiring lively music, that fits in with homily
 - More lively music, and have it move through the service.

Timeline: up to worship service, when and what, but we recommend trying out each idea at least three times.

Impact on volunteer time:

- Table facilitators: Table facilitators who are taught some basics and make sure that everyone gets a chance to share/pass (eg. Explaining that we'll go around in a circle and ask each person for their thoughts/stories and that people can pass if they want.)
- Coffee upstairs for 10:30 am (and after the service as well)
- Lay song leaders/teachers