

# Report: Working Group on Community and Belonging

Prepared for the Trustees of the Congregational Summer Assembly

Date: October 1, 2025

## Background

The Trustees established the Working Group in 2023 to examine diversity, inclusion, and belonging within the CSA today. During the summer of 2024, the group led a participatory process that invited the CSA community to reflect on diversity, inclusion, and belonging across the history of the CSA. During the summer of 2025, we led a participatory process to reflect on what people value about the CSA (what do we mean when we speak of *The CSA Way*) as a way to provide guidance for current and future leaders.

## Methods

In 2024, the Working Group hosted nine weekly sessions on *Community and Belonging*, reaching approximately 100 participants. These sessions provided a platform for members to share experiences and reflections on diversity and inclusion within the CSA community. Additionally, the Working Group conducted in-depth interviews and research in the CSA Archives.

In 2025, the Working Group convened two structured conversations called, *Values and Vision*. Each meeting was open to the community and announced through the Assembly News, CSA social media, newsletter, white board postings, and CSA 411. Forty-two people participated.

Both years the conversations were facilitated through a combination of small and large group discussions. In 2024 we broke off into small groups and responded to a series of prompts to promote discussion. In 2025, we used small and group exercises to elicit shared values that have been important, are important now, or may be important to future generations. Participants worked together to develop a prioritized list of values.

## **Shared Values that Emerged from the 2025 Conversations** (in order of importance as determined by participant votes)

- Sense of Community
- Multi-generational learning, fun and connection
- Stewardship
- Respect for the Natural World
- Hospitality
- Acceptance
- Well-being for ourselves and our families/ Renewal/Retreat
- Spiritual Growth
- Participation in the Arts
- Kindness
- Volunteerism
- Respect

## **Questions that emerged from the 2025 Conversations:**

- How can the Trustees use these values to guide their leadership and decision-making?
- How can Committees and staff use these values as a compass for their work?
- Is there benefit in periodic reflection on our shared values? If so, should the CSA develop a plan to repeat the 2025 community conversations going forward?

## **Questions that emerged from the 2024 Conversations:**

- Given our diversity, how can we support the spiritual growth of all of our members as we strengthen our capacity to build genuine affirming relationships across our membership?
- How can we engage younger generations in conversations that both mentor and value their unique experiences and visions to help the CSA innovate and evolve?
- Can we develop and establish a new way of verifying membership that is both consistent and considerate (especially at the beach)?
- How can we build relationships with newcomers and new family members, fostering engagement so they are truly connected to and welcomed in the CSA community?