

Goal of the Appreciative Inquiry Focus Groups = To evaluate the health of the congregation and how well we are living out our goals.

I. What we heard from the appreciative inquiry process: A number of themes came out fairly strongly in the focus groups (in order of strength)

A. INTIMACY (with God and human relationships)

1. Support, care and generosity toward one another in times of stress
2. Sense of community, family, friendship, intergenerational relationships
3. Appreciation for worship, prayer, anointing, lighting candles, sermons
4. Emphasis on spiritual life and growth in faith
5. A good place for our kids, youth group, Sunday school

B. INVITATION (within our congregation and in the community)

1. Welcoming, inclusive atmosphere, feeling at home, diversity and acceptance
2. Use of gifts for many people, involvement in music, activities, commissions
3. Outreach to community and service as individuals

II. What does this mean?

- A. We do really well with the intimacy factors of building human relationships within our congregation. People overwhelmingly affirm how well cared for they feel here and how important this community is for their lives. They find worship services meaningful for their spiritual growth and relationship with God. They appreciate a place where their kids are nurtured.
- B. There is appreciation for the invitational ways that we have reached out to bring in new people, young families, a diversity of people. But this is an area where we might grow. There is a sense that we don't do enough in the community and are focused on ourselves.

III. Where are we headed? Where do we want to grow?

A. Invitation for more diverse people to come to our congregation

1. Class diversity
2. Sexual orientation
3. Non-Mennonite or Non-Churched
4. Racial or ethnic diversity

B. Invitation to get new people involved in the activities of congregational life

1. Serve on commissions
2. Teach or lead worship, activities

C. Invitation to serve as a body in the community, to meet local needs

1. Service and mission outreach in the community
2. Start our own or be part of another organization, more than IHN
3. Partnership with international organizations

D. Desire to keep strong the deep sense of intimacy that we now feel

1. More people to take up the burden of caring for others
2. More intergenerational activities
3. Build up our spiritual life

IV. Are we hearing the congregation right? What are your ideas for setting new goals?

- A. What would it mean for us to invite more diversity into our congregation? How would we need to change to make this happen?
- B. How can we invite new people to get involved in the work of the church and in forming deeper relationships?
- C. What kind of ministry in the community might we be called to as a congregation?
- D. How can we keep and continue to nurture the deep sense of intimacy that we now feel together?