

Appreciative Inquiry

Major Upcoming Events:

DISCOVERY DAY

Saturday, October 17th: 9:00 am — 3:00 pm

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY SUMMIT

Friday, June 4th: 7:00 pm — 9:00 pm

Saturday, June 5th: 9:00 am — 3:00 pm

The entire congregation is encouraged to participate in these sessions. There will be other activities planned in-between Discovery Day and the AI Summit and following the Summit, which will be announced in upcoming communications.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Appreciative Inquiry?

A: Appreciative Inquiry is a positive approach to planning our future. Its principles include:

- **Valuing** our history
- **Discovering** what gives our church life and vibrancy today
- **Envisioning** how to create a sustainable future for our church

Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative search for the best in our congregation, our church and the world around us. It is a discovery of what gives life to the UU Area Church of Sherborn. It is a process that utilizes a positive approach to planning a sustainable future for our church. The basic idea of Appreciative Inquiry is to build our future on what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't work.

Appreciative Inquiry is an invitation to tell your story about the church. On **Discovery Day** in October, we will launch our Appreciative Inquiry process. We will ask everyone to tell about experiences of what gives life and strength to the UU Area Church of Sherborn. We will discover and appreciate the best of what is. On this day we will work in small groups, and everyone will have a voice.

Q: What is the Appreciative Inquiry four stage process?

A: Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a positive approach to planning our future. Its principles include: valuing our strengths, discovering what gives our church life and vibrancy today, and envisioning how to create a sustainable future for our church. AI's focus is to acknowledge what the church does well and build our future on our strengths. The process is a cooperative search for the best in our congregation and our church and the world around us. It is a discovery of what gives "life" to the UU Area Church of Sherborn.

Appreciative Inquiry is a particular way of asking questions and envisioning our future. Appreciative Inquiry utilizes a 4-stage process focusing on:

- **DISCOVER:** The identification of organizational processes that work well.
- **DREAM:** The envisioning of processes that would work well in the future.
- **DESIGN:** Planning and prioritizing processes that would work well.
- **DELIVER:** The implementation (execution) of the proposed design.

Appreciative Inquiry was first developed by David Cooperrider at Case Western Reserve University. Since then, multitudes of organizations, educational institutions, religious organizations, and government entities have engaged Appreciative Inquiry into their planning process, including the U.S. Navy, American Express, United Nations, Harvard, and many churches nationwide.

Q: How does Appreciative Inquiry differ from other strategic planning processes?

A: The traditional approach to strategic planning is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution. The primary focus is on what is wrong or broken; since we look for problems, we find them. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them.

Appreciative Inquiry suggests that we look for what works in an organization. The tangible result of the inquiry process is a series of statements that describe where we want to be, based on the high moments of where we have been. Because the statements are grounded in real experience and history, we can better know how to repeat our successes.

Q: What will happen at Discovery Day on October 17th?

A: We will launch our Appreciative Inquiry process on Discovery Day. We will ask everyone to tell about experiences of what gives life and strength to the UU Area Church of Sherborn. We will Discover and appreciate the best of what is. We will work in small groups with facilitators, and everyone will have a voice. We will compile all the stories and discover common themes.

Q: What will happen at the Dream and Design Summit on June 4-5th?

A: The Dream and Design Summit builds upon the Discovery Day by bringing together the congregation to create a common ground and vision of the future based on our experiences and the best of who we are and what we can become.

Q: Why is the UU Area Church of Sherborn doing the Appreciative Inquiry process?

A: The church is planning for our future. We want to focus on the things that we do best and that work well. We want to clarify our identity and how we live out our faith. The church provides many opportunities for personal and spiritual growth and we want to discover how we, as a congregation, can do this when we are at our best. Through Appreciative Inquiry, we will find out what gives life to the church.

Q: Do I need to attend both Discovery Day and the Summit?

A: The Appreciative Inquiry process works best when the entire congregation participates as a faith community. We strongly encourage you to attend both sessions.

Q: I attend the UU Area Church of Sherborn, but I'm not a member and I'm not really

“active” outside of worship services. Can I still participate?

A: Yes! We encourage you to participate. Your stories, ideas, and comments are integral in visioning our future.

Q: Can just one member of my family attend Discovery Day and the Dream and Design Summit?

A: We encourage every member and friend of the UU Area Church of Sherborn to attend Discovery Day and the AI Summit. Your individual experiences are very important. We will offer childcare during Discovery Day and the AI Summit.

Q: I want more information about the Appreciative Inquiry process. What information can you give me?

A: You can read a comprehensive overview of Appreciative Inquiry at Case Western Reserve University's site at <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/> (note there is no “www”). You can ask a member of the Steering Committee or the church staff for more information. We are Rev Nathan Detering, Sandra Goodin, Alice Clattenburg, Abby Perreault, Darryl Bryans, Pat Manley, and Maureen Gormley.