

# IMAGINE A VITAL AND SUSTAINABLE VERMONT CONFERENCE...



*Imagine a Conference of Congregations where people are still listening and hearing the God who is still speaking to the deepest longings of human hearts...*

*Imagine a Conference of Congregations whose members courageously witness to justice and dignity for all...*

*Imagine a Conference of Congregations where God is discovered in unexpected places...*

*Imagine a Conference of Congregations where God's people gather in community to welcome, accept, and love one another...*

*Come, let us remember who we are, whose we are, and what in God's name is going on in Vermont, and imagine together how we can join God in doing more of that...*



**Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ**

*Where God is Still Speaking*

## Appreciative Interview Guide For The Conference of Vermont

**Instructions:** In pairs, take 30 minutes per person to interview one another using the following questions.

**Be a generous listener.** Take turns to actually conduct an interview rather than discuss the questions. If you need more information or clarification ask additional follow-up questions. Use this sheet to record the results of your interview. When your interviews are completed you will use the information to introduce the person you interviewed to a wider group.

- 1a. Best Experience of Your Congregation:** Reflect on your experience of your current congregation and remember a time when you were surprised by God appearing in an unexpected place or in an unexpected way. Tell me about this memorable experience that you have had of being surprised by God.
  
  - 1b. Best Experience of Collaborating within Our Conference:** Reflect on your best experience of collaborating with others to engage in mission, either within your congregation, or Conference, that left you feeling purposeful and connected to something greater than yourself. Tell me about this memorable experience of collaborating. What did you do together and what did you all accomplish?
  
  - 2. Values:** What are the things that are really important and that you value deeply?
    - (a) What Do You Love to Do:** Beyond being with your family what do you love to do?
  
    - (b) Your Congregation:** What is it about your community of faith that you value? What is the single most important thing that your congregation has contributed to your life?
  
    - (c) Our Conference:** What is it about our Conference that you value? How does being a member of our Conference help you live and your congregation engage in the mission of Jesus Christ?
  
    - (d) Being a member of a UCC Congregation:** What do you value about the UCC community of faith.
  
    - (e) Vermont:** What do you value about living in Vermont? How does the geography and experience of living in Vermont inform your understanding of the nature of God?
  
  - 3. Hopes and Dreams For The Future:** Remember Dr. King did not begin, "we have a problem" or "I have a plan," he began: "I have a dream." Take a moment and think of what your personal dream is...
    - (a)** What is your deepest dream and longing for the world you would like to live in and that you would like your children's children (*or future generation*) to live in?
  
    - (b)** What is your dream for how our Conference could be part of helping you manifest your dream for the world?
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## Appreciative Interview Summary Sheet

**Instructions:** In groups gather with the person you interviewed and take turns to introduce them to the group using the information from their stories. Share all of the person's responses to the questions before moving to the next person. Pay particular attention to any common themes and stories that catch your imagination and make you go "wow." Use this sheet to keep some brief notes of these themes and exemplar stories.

**1a. Best Experience of being surprised by God:**

**1b. Best Experience of Collaborating within Our Conference:**

**2. Values:** What are the things that are really important and that you value deeply?

**(a) What Do People in Your Group Love to Do:**

**(b) Value About Your Congregation:**

**(c) Value About Our Conference:**

**(d) Value Within the UCC Community of Faith:**

**(e) Value About Vermont:**

**3. Hopes and Dreams For The Future:**

**(a) Our Group Dreams of a World...**

**(b) Our Conference could help us achieve our dreams become reality?**

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## Interview Synthesis Sheet

**Instructions:** Use this sheet to synthesize the stories, themes, values, and dreams.

1. **Core Essence of Our Congregations, Ministries and Conference.** What does your group think is the core essence of our Conference that is revealed when we are at our best, manifesting our values in the world, and joining with the God who is still speaking and surprising us.

2. **Stories:** What is an exemplar story of our Conference at our best?

3. **Values:** What does your group love to do. How could you combine what you love to do to help achieve your shared dream?

What does your group value about our Conference?

What does your group value about the UCC community?

What does your group value about living in Vermont?

4. **Hopes for the Future:** What hopes do your group have for our Conference?

5. **What is your table's dream.** Give your table a name and then describe your dream. Who are you and what would come to be if you lived your values and fully manifested your best.

We are:

and we have a dream:

6. **Metaphors and Images:** What is a metaphor or image for our Conference when we are at our best? On the sheet of newsprint create an image of the core essence of our Conference.

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