

# APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

## ➤ RE-FRAMING



PROBLEM <  > SOLUTION

# Understanding Appreciative Inquiry

- **A major assumption of Appreciative Inquiry is that in every community something works.**
- **Change can be managed through the identification of what works, and focus on how to build on it.**
- **Focusing on what works as opposed to what problems the community is having differentiates Appreciative Inquiry from traditional problem solving approaches.**

# Ap-pre'ci-ate, v.

1. Valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems;

2. To increase in value

Synonyms: **valuing, prizing, esteeming, and honoring.**

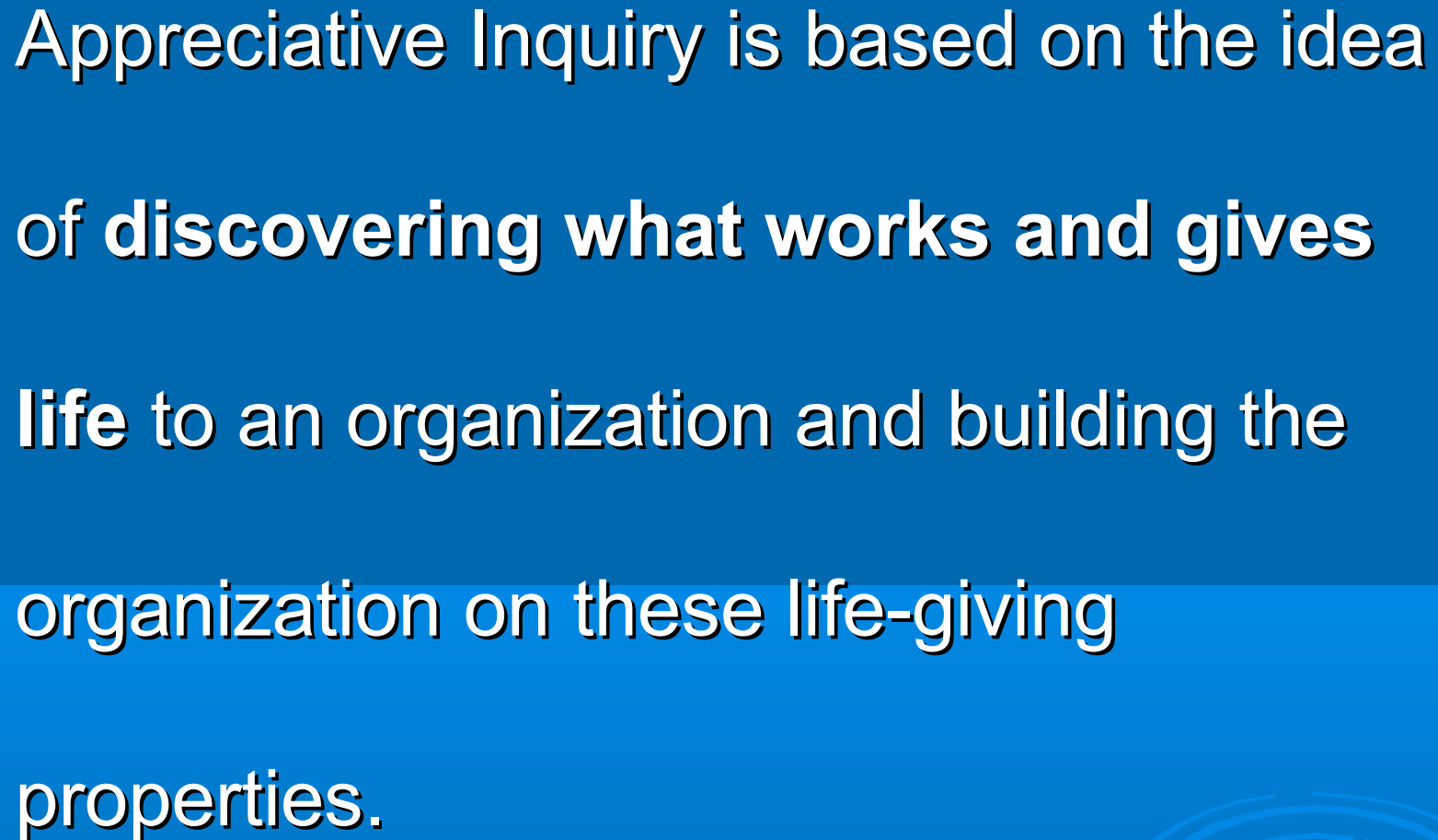
# In-quire, v.

1. The act of exploration and discovery.
2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities.

Synonyms: **discovery, search, and systematic exploration, study.**



Appreciative Inquiry is based on the idea of **discovering what works and gives life** to an organization and building the organization on these life-giving properties.



"More than a method or technique, the appreciative mode of inquiry is a means of living with, being with and directly participating in the life of a human system in a way that compels one to **inquire into the deeper life-generating essentials and potentials** of organizational existence."

— David Cooperrider, founder of Appreciative Inquiry

# Our Inquiry Must Be the Change We Want to See in the World

“There are two ways to live your life.

One is as though nothing is a miracle.

The other is as though everything is a  
miracle.


— Albert Einstein

# Biblical Foundation

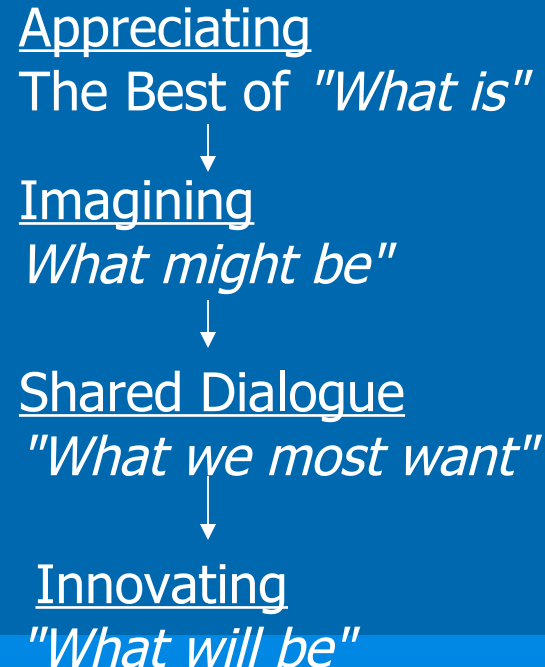
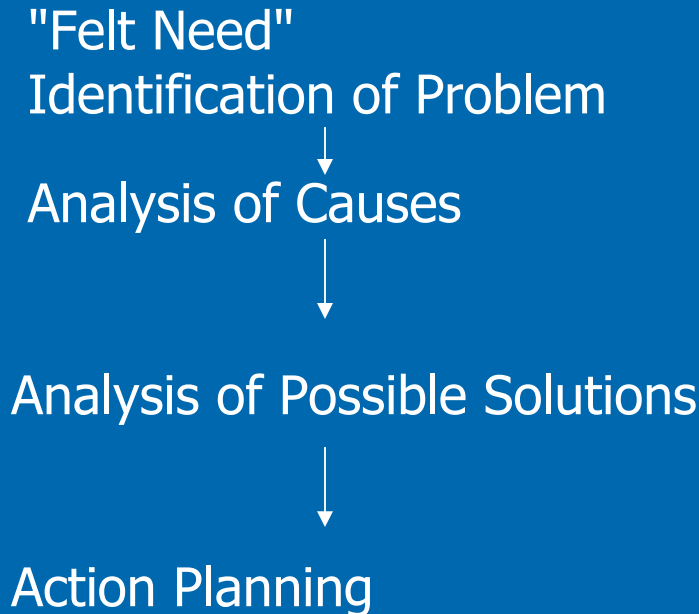
Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. — Philippians 4.8 (NRSV)

# Assumptions

- In every congregation, some things work well
- What we focus on becomes our reality
- Asking questions influences the group
- People have more confidence in the journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past

- We should carry forward what is best about the past
  - It is important to value differences
  - The language we use creates our reality
  - Organizations are heliotropic
  - Outcomes should be useful
  - All steps are collaborative
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# Problem Solving vs. Appreciative Inquiry



**BASIC ASSUMPTION:**  
*LIFE IS A PROBLEM  
TO BE SOLVED*

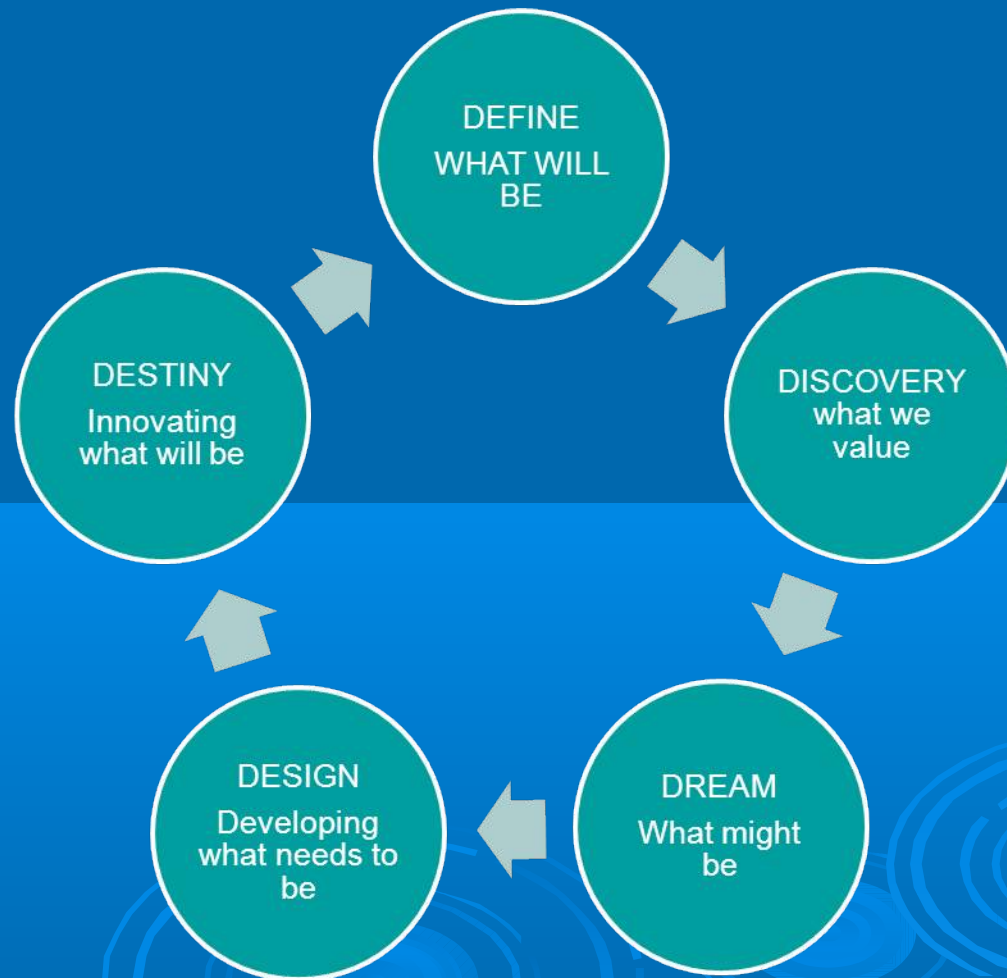
**BASIC ASSUMPTION:**  
*LIFE IS A MYSTERY  
TO BE EMBRACED*

Note: From D. L. Cooperrider and Associates (1996).  
*A constructive approach to organization development and change.*

# AI foundations

- Choose the positive as the focus of inquiry
- Inquire into the stories of life-giving forces
- Locate themes that appear in the stories and select topics for further inquiry
- Create shared images for a preferred future
- Find innovative ways to create that future

# 5D PROCESS OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY APPROACH TO CHANGE



If you want to build a ship, Then  
don't drum up men to gather  
wood, Give orders, and divide the  
work.

Rather, teach them to yearn for  
the far and endless sea.

—*Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

# Formulating the Questions

The first question connects the person to motivating and encouraging memories.



# LET US BEGIN

## Introductory Exercise

Remembering your entire experience at ....., when were you most alive, most motivated and excited about your involvement?

What made it exciting?

Who else was involved?

What happened?

What was your part? Describe what you felt?

# Introductory Exercise continued

- What do you value most about .....
- What activities or ingredients or ways of life are most important?
- What are the best features of .....
- What do you think is the core value of .....  
that is, what is it that, if it did not exist would  
make ..... totally different than  
it currently is



# The Value Questions

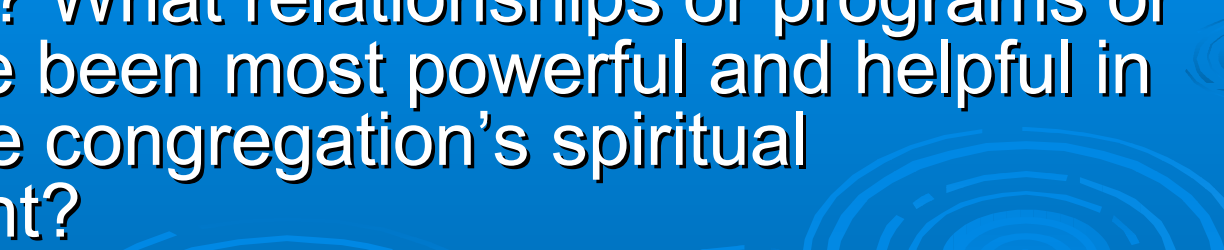
The next set of questions focus on values – the elements that the interviewee believes are important about the congregation and their involvement in it.



What are the most important contributions the congregation has made to your life? Tell me when this happened? Who made a difference? How did this affect you?

What are the most valuable ways you contribute this this congregation's ministry – your personality, your perspectives, your skills, your activities, your character? Provide some examples.

When you consider all of your experiences at our congregation, what has contributed most to your spiritual life? What relationships or programs or events have been most powerful and helpful in fostering the congregation's spiritual development?



# Exercise 2

Without being humble, tell about a time when you were at your best and you achieved something positive in a leadership capacity.

What did you do?

What specific skills did you contribute?

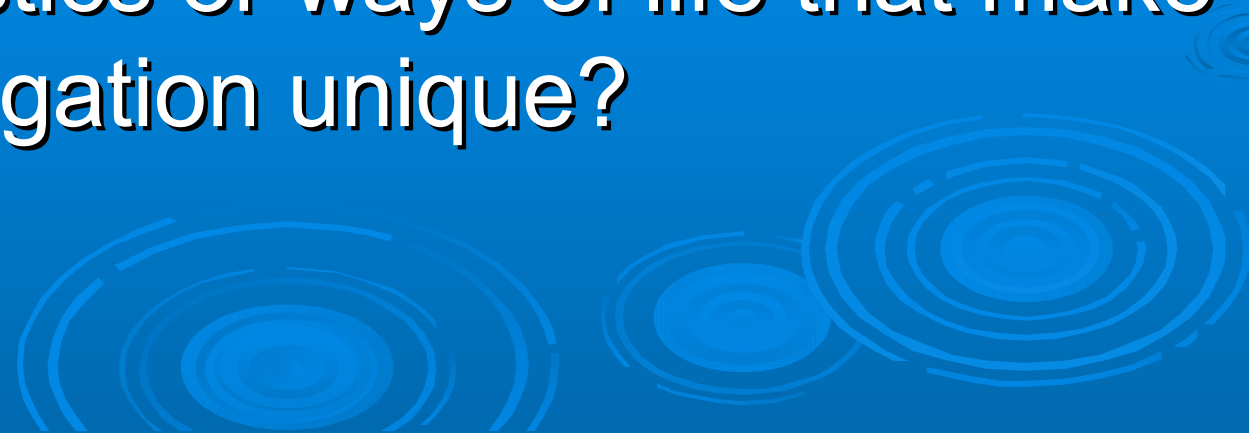
How did you feel?



# A Summary Question

A summary question tries to surface the most important core values of the congregation.

What are the essential, central characteristics or ways of life that make our congregation unique?



# Vision Question

The final question explores the future with images.



# Exercise 3

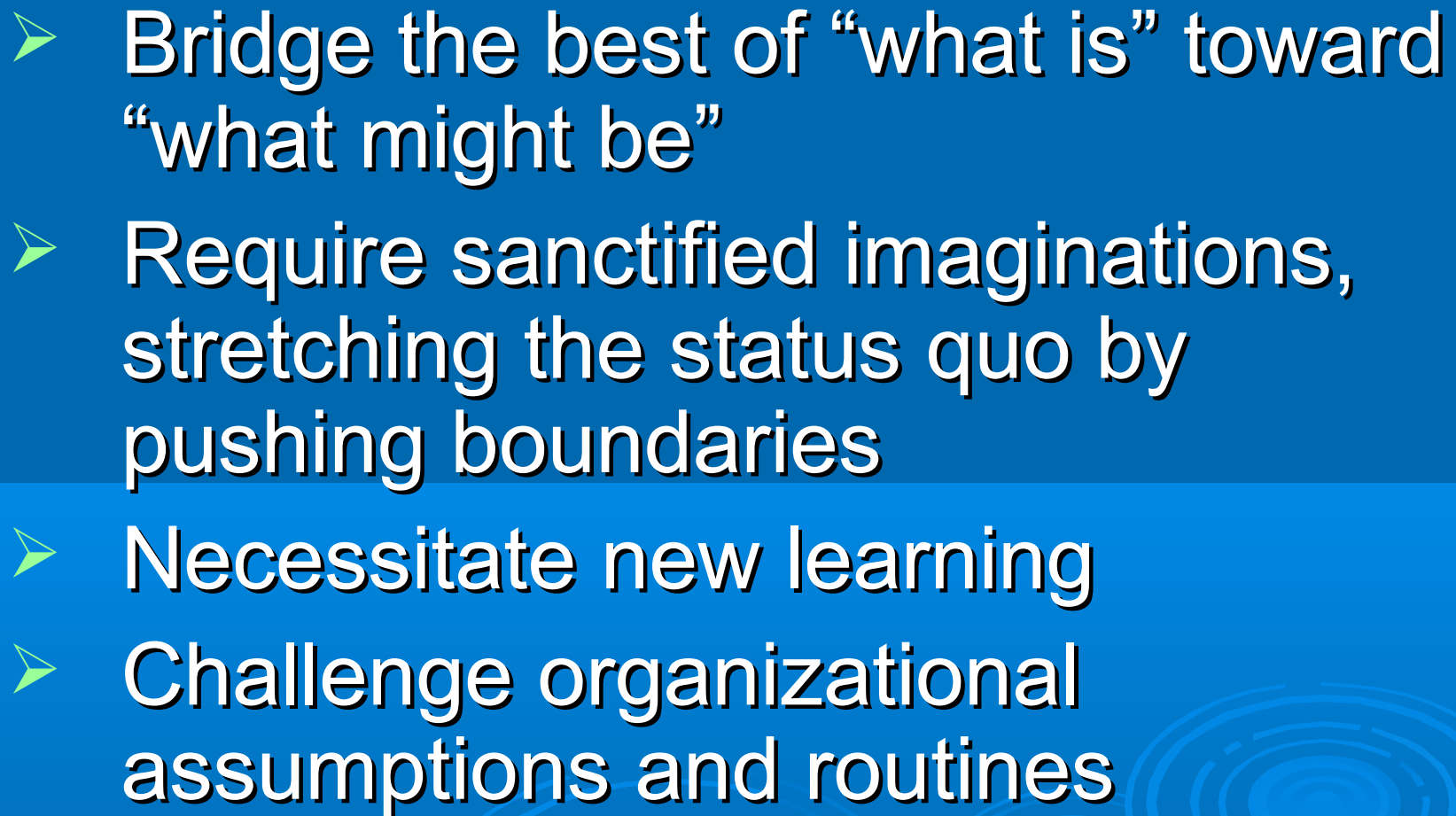
Make three wishes (hopes) for your working together as a community of faith in 2012.

“Always be ready to give an account of the hope that lies within you. . . .”

— I Peter 3.15

# Designing: developing a Provocative Proposal

- Are stated in proposals: the affirmative, as if already happening
- Point to real desired possibilities
- Are based on the data
- Create new relationships, including intergenerational partnerships

- Bridge the best of “what is” toward “what might be”
  - Require sanctified imaginations, stretching the status quo by pushing boundaries
  - Necessitate new learning
  - Challenge organizational assumptions and routines
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# SO - Why use Appreciative Inquiry

- Treats people like people, not machines
- People are social
- We create our identities and our knowledge in relation to one another
- We are curious
- We like to tell stories and listen to stories
- We pass on our values, beliefs and wisdom in stories
- We like to learn and to use what we learn to be our best
- We delight in doing well in the eyes of those we care about and respect
- Enables leaders to create natural human organizations – knowledge rich, strength based, adaptable, learning

# Resources

- *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* by Mark Lau Branson
- *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry* by Sue Annis Hammond
- *Congregations as Learning Communities: Tools for Shaping Your Future*, Dennis G. Campbell
- "AI Commons"--a worldwide portal devoted to the fullest sharing of academic resources and practical tools on Appreciative Inquiry and the rapidly growing *discipline of positive change*.  
<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>