

## Conversation: Essential to Christ's Mission

### What kind of conversational space do we wish to cultivate as leaders?

**Defining our conversation:** if conversation is a way of being in relationship that is transformational rather than transactional, what understandings about conversation would be helpful as we engage in Christ's mission? Let's consider these understandings:

Conversation is a process for understanding one another, our stories and God's story. Conversation is not so much to grasp or discover "something out there." Conversation is about what happens between people.

Understanding comes from the heart, including our interactions and being vulnerable or fully open to one another and what we are saying.

Each person has a limited understanding. In order to expand our understanding, we need to hear with our hearts (compassion) other people's stories.

The purposes of conversation are to advance understanding and human well-being. Such conversation, by its very nature affirms the worth of all persons.

**Living our values to uphold the worth of persons:** what values connected to conversation would we want to instill in our ministry and congregational life? Let's consider these values:

Concern for one another: being in conversation and engaging one another there is more going on than an exchange of stories. There is loyalty to the sacredness, interest in the well-being, and a commitment to one another.

Trust in one another and being vulnerable: sharing one's self and receiving what others are saying is a risk.

Respect for one another: regarding one another with mutual commitment to listen, to be equal to one another and not diminish one another as persons.

Appreciation and affection for one another: valuing the unique qualities that others bring and feeling with and for one another.

Hope: engaging in conversation in the belief that it holds possibility for understanding and well-being for all.

Note: Some of the definitions and values listed based on article by Smith, M. K. (2001) 'Dialogue and conversation', the encyclopedia of informal education, [www.infed.org/biblio/b-dialog.htm](http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-dialog.htm).