

# FOCUS GROUP INSTRUCTIONS

## EXPLANATION –

INVITING AND CONFIRMING – You want 12 or 14 people to promise to be there, so that you can get at least 8, ideally 10. You can have a couple observers but they need to keep their mouths shut and just take notes.

WHO? Get at least half from outside your church entirely. Stand on the street or at the mall if you must in order to get your people. Get your children's friends. Invite work friends or neighbors – tell them they are not committing to anything except helping your church in an advisory capacity for an hour. Vary the group by age, gender, ethnicity, etc. Ask: "Is the group we are gathering going to reflect ideas and values that are present in our parish area beyond our church membership?"

FEED THE GROUP FIRST – Get catered food from a popular restaurant. These folks are doing research for you. A good meal is a way of both attracting them to give you this time and thanking them. It also enhances the environment for sharing.

USE A FACILITATOR WHO IS NOT A PASTOR OR STAFF MEMBER – It could be a staff member from another church, or someone either in your church or circle of friends who does focus groups.

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## SAMPLE AGENDA:

### WELCOME

Our church wants to launch a new weekly worship community. It will be a time for anyone seeking a meaningful encounter with God. Our vision is to create a weekly event that is a unique melding of old traditions and spirituality with relevance to today's life issues and music tastes.

We appreciate you giving of your time to help us this morning.

### HAVE ANY OF YOU EVER BEEN PART OF A FOCUS GROUP BEFORE?

- There are no right or wrong answers, and nothing is off limits to talk about.
- Let's try to share the airtime so that everyone can get a chance to talk.
- This is not like a soft drink taste test where the goal is to find any kind of drink that you like – our church has values that are not up for debate – but at the same time we also want to know how we can better serve our community and attend to the life issues that you find most important.

## QUESTIONS

OUR FIRST BATCH OF QUESTIONS DEALS WITH OUR COMMUNITY.

1. What do you see as some of the really great things about our community? Why is this a preferable place to live to some other places you might think of?
2. What do you see as some of the big challenges to living in this community – where does our community struggle?
3. How do you find a sense of community in your life? Where do you find your closest friends and relationships?
4. Do you see churches doing anything to help people form a sense of community?
5. Where do you see gaps in the sense of community we experience here?
6. What are some factors that keep people from making friends or from working to help the community grow stronger?
7. Is there an issue or a community challenge where you think churches could be doing more to help?
8. Who in this community needs some TLC from somebody that is not sexual or strings-attached? Any particular group of persons who are really living with a lot of stress or pain?

SECOND BATCH OF QUESTIONS – DEALING WITH THE WORSHIP SERVICE THAT WE ARE PROPOSING.

1. The service we are considering may be at a time other than Sunday morning. Of the following times, which seem to fit best into your life and other activities. Note what times work for you and people you know and what times are not good.  
**Sunday morning at 11:30 am**, Sunday night, Monday night,  
**Wednesday night at 6:30**, Thursday night, Saturday night.
2. If we had a service on a weeknight, think about your life after work. What has to be done between work and bedtime?
3. What time would another activity best fit into your after-work schedule? What would be issues that you would take into account in deciding to attend?
4. Any things about your past experiences of worship services that are not good, that we might take into account as we plan?

5. Is there anything you would really like to see us do in our new service that would make the worship service more interesting to you and more worth your time?
6. What could one accomplish with others that you probably would not accomplish reading a good book at home?
7. What does it take for something to be worth an evening of your time?
8. Based on what you know about our church, including anything you have heard in this conversation, what would you expect to find if you walked in to this new service?
9. How long is too long? How long is too short?
10. What is your worst fear in such a service as this?
11. Tell us about the kinds of live music that you listen to?
12. Would you want to see any of that kind of music in a church setting – or do you want music at church to be different in style?

#### THIRD BATCH OF QUESTIONS - PR

1. Does the denomination or the brand of the church matter to you?
2. What does United Church of Christ mean to you as a brand?
3. If you were to look for a church or want to check out a church, how would you go about it?
4. What are some ways that we could get out word to people that we are doing this new thing?
5. What is the main message we need to get out in order to overcome people's natural suspicions or to get people's attention?