



# AUTHENTIC SPACE

## Relationships Open Doors: Discussion Guide Questions

**Searching for Space:** Prior to the gathering, instruct participants to go online to view Rev. Jake Waybright's portion of the panel discussion *"Engaging with Young Adults in Ministry"* presentation at the 2014 Susquehanna Annual Conference.

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- 1) As you watch Jake's presentation, consider how you are a witness to God's love through your treatment of others. What do your actions towards others tell people about God's love?
  - Reflect on your experience as a Christian, and try to remember any instances when you witnessed someone get hurt because of the way someone else treated their loved ones. Consider being prepared to share one of those experiences with the group.

**Find Some Space:** Start each gathering by asking everyone to share their thoughts with the group.

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- 1) As participants arrive, give each individual several bright colored sticky notes. Ask them to write on the sticky notes difficult topics that they feel the UM Church is handling well, poorly, or avoiding completely. As they complete their notes ask them to stick them to the middle of the table.
- 2) After everyone has had the opportunity to fill out a few sticky notes, read through the difficult topics that have been listed. As you read each one ask the group how they feel your church is doing at addressing these topics. Have one end of the table (or on a wall) represent avoiding the topic completely and the other end of the table (or wall) be addressing the topic well. Rank how the church is doing by placing the sticky notes along the continuum, from avoiding to addressing. Once all the topics are read and categorized on the continuum, pick one or two topics that your church is either avoiding or not addressing well and brainstorm ways to better engage those topics in your faith community.

**Open with the prayer written by your group during the first session of the series.**

**Measure The Space: Participants will receive an overview of the subject and create a baseline for discussion.**

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1) Watch Chapter 1 of "Relationships Open Doors"

- As a group create a list things that a person can belong to.
  - How does a sense of belonging impact how an individual engages in community?
  - What are some ways an individual might help others feel like they belong in your congregation?
  - *Looking at the continuum on the table*, how do non-conversations of these topics hamper the church's ability to help "outsiders" feel a sense of belonging?
  - When have you witnessed a non-conversation impact an individual's faith?

**Furnish the Space: Participants will more deeply consider the dynamics of young adult ministry, especially its variable nature.**

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1) Watch Chapter 2 of "Relationships Open Doors"

2) List the problems caused by talking past one another..

- How does it make you feel when know someone is not listening to you, but waiting for you to finish in order to get their own say?
- How can we develop better listening skills?
- How can developing better listening skills improve your ability to build relationships with a young adult?
- Why do you think people get so emotionally charged when talking about some of these topics listed on the table?

3) List some practices that you can use to relieve emotional anxiety when talking through complex topics such as:

- Immigration reform
- Tolerance
- Sexuality - including sexual orientation, marriage, and premarital sex.

**Use The Space: Participants are invited to take some form of action regarding young adult ministry.**

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1) Watch Chapter 3 of "Relationships Open Doors"

- Ask for a volunteer to read the following statement from the Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly.

**Statement of Unity from the United Methodist Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly:**

*"There has been increasing talk of schism of the United Methodist Church in recent months. Many say that the issue of homosexuality is so contentious that it will inevitably split our Church. We, as the young people of The United Methodist Church, would like to say that we do not desire a divided Church.*

*"The Church that we have taken our places in is called to a ministry that includes so much more than this one issue. There are genuine, passionate perspectives on all sides of the issue and though we disagree, we have committed ourselves to loving, faithful discussion on this subject. Part of the beauty of our Church is that there has always been room at the table for a wide range of theological diversity within our connectional church family. As Wesley said, 'May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?'*

*"We urge everyone to seek solutions that promote our global unity as the United Methodist Church of Jesus Christ, rather than focus only on the issues that divide us, so that we may faithfully live out our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."*

- What is your reaction to this statement?
- How does focusing on the issues that unite us change the relationships we are building with young adults in our congregations?
- What are the challenges of being in ministry with the “agreement generation”? How do those challenges impact other generations within our congregations?
- How can the sacraments, and especially Holy Communion, serve as an example of embracing unity in the midst of disagreement?
- How does being recipients of God’s grace shape our conversations and relationships with each other, the growth and development of the church, and ultimately the Kingdom of God?

**Share The Space: *Participants are offered a challenge to complete before the next meeting.***

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- 1) Read Ephesians 4:1-6. Remember a time when someone treated you with humility, gentleness, and patience.
  - How did your relationship change in response to the way that individual treated you?
  - How does practicing humility, gentleness, and patience promote unity and peace between people?
  - Think about ways your congregation may model for your community the virtues of humility, gentleness, and patience.
- 2) This week, be determined to approach one difficult relationship in your life with these Christian qualities. Have a difficult conversation with someone making sure that you practice humility, gentleness, and patience.
- 3) Consider being willing to report to the group the outcome of your conversation or change in your relationship.