



Connect (5 to 10 minutes)

Come together to build relationships through fellowship and sharing about this week's worship.

- Take a few minutes to share your thoughts about worship this week.
 - What aspects of worship did or did not connect with you?
 - What story or illustration made an impact on you?
- What book have you read or movie have you seen recently that you loved?

Context (30 to 40 minutes)

Dig deeper into the videos and scripture for this week through questions and discussion.

Watch the Connection Group video.

- Arthur and Edlen talked about their task as preachers. They discussed the importance of saying what we need to say in a way it can be received. That's an important point for everyone – not just preachers! What are ways that we can do that in our conversations with others?
 - Edlen said that if he doesn't do that, he's not being fully present for others. How is that true?
 - Have you seen other people engage in conversations that did not encourage discussion? What was that like?
- As Arthur and Edlen noted, preachers often start with scripture and then ask how scripture interfaces with culture. Is scripture your starting point in your daily life?
 - Besides scripture, what else guides you in your conversations with others?
 - How can we enhance the importance and effect of scripture in our lives?
- Edlen mentioned that pastors and congregations have a sacred trust with one another. Do you see your relationships, whether within the church or outside the church, as sacred? Why or why not?
 - How can we participate in our relationships with our friends and family members and treat them like we have a sacred trust? What would that look like?
- How do we engage with a world that is different from us?
 - In what ways do you feel similar to the world? In what ways do you feel different?
 - Do you ever look to scripture to bridge that gap? Do you agree that scripture is a place of unity?
 - What are other ways you engage the world?

- As Arthur and Edlen discussed in the video, there are many different types of diversity in the church of God, including ethnic diversity, age differences, etc. How do you communicate with those who are different from you?
 - Arthur mentioned that he relies on God's grace. Do you focus on God's grace in your daily life?
 - How can we approach our conversations and remember that our experience is not the only experience? Have you seen examples of people doing that well?
- Edlen used a wonderful illustration of how doing math with fractions is much easier when the fractions share the same common denominator. As Christians, our common denominator is Jesus. What are some ways you see examples of that in your life?
 - Our common denominators help us to engage in conversations, partnerships, and friendships. What are some other common denominators in your life and the lives of those around you? How do they help you build and strengthen your relationships?
- Our best resource in our lives is people. How have people been a resource in your life?
- What are ways in which you have seen people treat others as people?
 - Whenever we talk to anyone, we might disagree with one another and we or the people we're talking to might get things wrong. How do we interact with each other in the midst of that?

Our sacramental focus this week is Communion. As United Methodists, we have an open table. Our Communion liturgy states, "Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another." Christ does not divide us and leave people out but invites everyone into a relationship with him. When we respond to the invitation to Christ's table, we open ourselves up to continue to receive God's grace and allow God to shape us so we can better love God and love others. During Communion, the pastor says, "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ." When we come together at Christ's table and receive Communion, we are one body in Christ. The very word "communion" means intimate fellowship and sharing. How could the Church be united if we did not have intimate fellowship and sharing?

- Read Matthew 26:26-29. In the United Methodist Church, our Communion liturgy comes directly from scripture. In this passage in Matthew, we see Jesus sharing a meal with his disciples. He extends the same invitation to us today to share in this meal. Have you had any memorable moments when either giving or receiving Communion? Share them with your group.
- How did Jesus treat others?
 - As Edlen said, when we welcome Jesus into our hearts, we get to be in a relationship with him. Do you have that relationship now? If so, what impact does that have on you?

Call (10 minutes)

We believe that God not only shows us who God is but invites us to participate in God's ministry by answering unique calls in our own lives. Join together in discovering how we can actively respond to scripture and God's presence.

- Take some time to find and focus on the common denominators in our lives. What is it that truly unites us?
- How can we strengthen our relationship with Jesus? Whether we're reading scripture, attending worship, or engaging in conversations with our friends and family members, we can deepen our relationship with Jesus and with others. What are some concrete ways we can do that?

Closing (5 minutes)

God calls us into community by sharing our joys and concerns together in prayer and supporting one another in our walks with Christ. As we share testimony and stories of our lives, let us listen to where God is working within our community and how we can build each other up in Christian love.

- Share joys and concerns with one another.
- Close in prayer, either by inviting a group member to pray or by using the prayer provided below.

Closing Prayer

God of grace and love, thank you for calling us to be in community with one another. Help us to continue to appreciate the beauty in our differences. Help us to always come together as one and to celebrate our unity. Lord be with us in our conversations with others. May we welcome Jesus into our hearts and bring his love to others. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.