

LIFE TOGETHER

Group Discussion Questions
Session One – May 22, 2022

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Danbury, CT

1. “In Germany, they first came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up, because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the communists, and I didn’t speak up, because I wasn’t a communist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up, because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by then no one was left to speak up.” Pastor Martin Niemoller

What haunts you about the above statement? When have you been challenged to “speak up, but remained silent?

2. Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor in a “Lutheran country.” As an enemy of Hitler’s Nazi movement, he was imprisoned and ultimately executed for his opposition. How do you think this served as an impetus toward his concern with Christian community?
3. One of the most frequently cited quotes from Bonhoeffer is, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” This is not necessarily death in the literal sense, but it may be. What sorts of “deaths” do you need to die to continue in your Christian walk? Does your congregation need to “die certain deaths?” If so, what might they be?
4. Bonhoeffer, while always affirming Christian community, insisted that a Christian must accept his responsibility as a citizen of *this* world where God has placed him. How do you cope, and how do fellow Christians help you cope, when you wish to leave *this* world for the *other-worldly*?
5. Bonhoeffer insists on God’s *objective* presence through His Word (scriptural or spoken). That is, God is present with His people whether or not we discern His presence. “The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the Word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother’s is sure” (p 23). When you do not *feel* God’s presence, do you still have the *confidence* of that presence?
6. According to Bonhoeffer, how do fellow Christians become “brothers” (“sisters”) to one another? How has it happened in your own experience?
7. What might it mean to say, “God is not a God of the emotion, but the God of truth?” (p 27)
8. Some “church growth” writers tell us that in order for a congregation to be intentional about its numerical growth, it is necessary to appeal to a “homogeneous” group (i.e. similar people in terms of class, economics, education, etc.). Read the paragraph which ends on the top of page 38. What would be Bonhoeffer’s response?