



**OPEN**  
*the* **DOORS**  
*and* **SEE ALL**  
*the* **PEOPLE**

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*Open the Doors and See All the People* is a book of stories. It is a quick read, but it contains many ideas and questions that will keep you thinking long after you have read it. You are invited to explore the stories of particular congregations and communities and then compare them to your own situation, the places where you live and are in community with others, work and go to school, worship and serve.



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The book is organized in eight chapters:

**Where Is the Church?**

**What Is the Church?**

**All Kinds of Steeples**

**Centers of Meaning**

**How Open Are the Doors?**

**How Wide Are the Doors?**

**See the People**

**Cherish the People**



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This book was written primarily for congregation use. It might be especially helpful for congregations undergoing change or rethinking their identity in light of God's mission.

Organizations, human resources divisions, community groups, neighborhood associations, ecumenical ministries, and many other groups would also be able to use it.

It could be used to discuss how we might build partnerships with one another for learning, for collaboration, for serving the needs of the communities in which we live and the world around us.



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Each of the chapters contains several opportunities for conversation with questions for personal reflection and group discussion. Some of the questions are related to one particular congregation, others are connected to a multitude of congregations.

#### **One option for using the book:**

Take the 21 opportunities for conversation in the book and spread them out over the course of several weeks. The group could read the section relating to the questions on their own and then come together to discuss the questions.

#### **Another option:**

Have members of the group read each of the eight chapters as a whole and then look at all the questions in the chapter at the same time.



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**Adult Forums**

**Church Staffs**

**Council or Committee Meeting or Retreat**

**Congregations in a conference or cluster**

**Congregations in transition, or call process**

**Congregations worrying about their present and/or their future...** Discussing the book could provide an opportunity for those concerned about meeting the budget, yet wanting to reach out beyond their congregation to reflect on how they might live out God's call.

**New Member classes...** The questions offer one way to get to know both the congregation and the community.

**Ministerial Group...** Colleagues can use the book to think together about how they might better serve the congregations and the communities in which they are located.

**Confirmation classes...** Students could use reflection questions to interview members of the congregations and communities to learn more about the places they live and work.



Decide how you will do this study. What time and for how long will you meet? Is the space easily accessible and comfortable for all? How will the space be set-up so people can see and hear each other?



Take some time each session as you gather to check in with each other. Share names with each other (this is especially important if there are new people joining the group) and also share a thought you have been pondering since last session that relates to something going on in your congregation, your community, or your daily life. As this sharing time concludes, join together in prayer, led by a member of the group.



A few different options for getting into the material:

- Agree to read the section before you gather.
- Have someone read aloud the section that will be covered at the beginning of the session.
- Allow some time and space for people to read it silently.
- Have people pair off and share some initial thoughts with each other.
- Engage the whole group in conversation right away.

To start the conversation, ask people for their own observations of what they heard in the text.

- What resonated with their experiences?
- What was new or different?
- What questions did the reading bring to mind?
- Where are there connections with the scriptures?

Invite everyone into the conversation. Allow time for pondering. Let conversations flow back and forth among members.



After the group has had an opportunity to share their own thoughts and questions, move to the questions for reflection and discussion contained within the book for the section you read. Some of these questions will lead to more questions – that is good! Some questions will lead you beyond the group to talk with elders in the congregation or long-time residents of the neighborhood.



You have pondered the text and thought about how it relates to places in which you live, work, and worship. Now talk about what this means for how your group is involved in your community. Is there any concrete action you can take? Are there people you need to invite into the conversation? How might you partner with other people and groups in your community?



Give thanks for the conversation that has happened and for God's Spirit at work among you. Make decisions about what the group will be discussing at the next session. Close with prayer.