

5 Adaptive Muscles

#3 Neighboring Worship Resources

Recommended Scriptures

Luke 10:25-37

Good Samaritan

Deuteronomy 6:5/ Mark 12:30-31

The injunction to love God and neighbor is the beginning of the conversation on ‘walking with’.

Acts 1:8

The commission to the community of Jesus, when the Holy Spirit comes on them, shows a progression moving geographically and culturally outward.

John 4

The Samaritan woman encounters Jesus and becomes a witness to her community.

Acts 6:1-7

The early church chose leaders from the cultural context of the widows to take care of the food distribution.

Matthew 28:16-20

The Great Commission

John 1:1-18

Jesus became human and became part of the human community.

Jeremiah 29

God calls his people to settle into the country that they are exiled to and seek the prosperity of that place.

John 14

Jesus offers the spirit to be alongside of his followers.

Key Themes, Definitions, Theological Ideas

Neighbor – a theme in the bible that generally relates to those in proximity or those who experience marginalization

Incarnation – Jesus became human and became part of the human community

What is needed to move from “we welcome you” to “we stand with you” to “we need you?”

Key Themes, Definitions, Theological Ideas (cont.)

Can we journey with you?

What are the gifts and talents in our neighborhood?

What is God already doing in our neighborhood? How is God calling us to join in?

Worship Resources (liturgy/hymns/songs/stories/poems, etc.)

Hymns

“Servant Song” TFWS 2222

For Everyone Born, most often sung with tune of same name by Brian Mann and words by Shirley Erena Murray

“Christ Has Broken Down the Wall” W&S 3122

Sing a New Church, words by Delores Dufner OSB, tune name is familiar: NETTLETON (Come Thou Font)

“Help Us Accept Each Other” UMH 560

“I Pray for You, You Pray for Me”

Rest in God

“They’ll Know We are Christians by Our Love” TFWS 2223

Incorporate themes of Neighboring in special Sundays such as World Communion Sunday, Children’s Sabbath, Human Relations Sunday, Peace with Justice Sunday, etc.

“We Are Called” TFWS 2172

“The Summons” TFWS 2130

“Bring Forth the Kingdom” TFWS 2190

United Methodist Litany for Social Creed

(adopted by 2008 General Conference)

Leader God in the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ, calls us by grace to be renewed in the image of our Creator, that we may be one in divine love for the world.

People **And so shall we.**

Leader Today is the day God cares for the integrity of creation, wills the healing

and wholeness of all life, weeps at the plunder of earth's goodness.

People

And so shall we.

Leader

Today is the day God embraces all hues of humanity, delights in diversity and difference, favors solidarity, transforming strangers into friends.

People

And so shall we.

Leader

Today is the day God cries with the masses of starving people, despises growing disparity between rich and poor, demands justice for workers in the marketplace.

People

And so shall we.

Leader

Today is the day God deplures violence in our homes and streets, rebukes the world's warring madness, humbles the powerful and lifts up the lowly.

People

And so shall we.

Leader

Today is the day God calls for nations and peoples to live in peace, celebrates where justice and mercy embrace, exults when the wolf grazes with the lamb.

People

And so shall we.

Leader

Today is the day God brings good news to the poor, proclaims release to the captives, gives sight to the blind, and sets the oppressed free.

People

And so shall we.

All

Amen.

Worship & Song Worship Resources



Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth – Walter Brueggemann (and any of his books of prayer)



Shelley Walters took her church through C3 and adapted the work for the worshiping life of the church. All her sermons, including her one on Neighboring are available online.



Unfolding Light – Blog by Steve Garnaas-Holmes



Wild Goose Publications



John Philip Newell – any of his writings on Celtic theology are appropriate to the muscles of Walking Alongside and Distributing Power.

Practices of Neighboring

Neighborhood Walk and Asset Mapping



Lovemyhood.ca has some great resources for getting to know your neighborhood

Close Your Parking Lot for a Sunday

What if you closed your parking lot on a Sunday? This might force the congregation to park and walk in the neighborhood. What kind of interaction might you expect them to have?

Write a Letter to Your Neighborhood

Write your neighborhood a letter after spending some intentional time in the community.

- How have you approached the neighborhood in the past?
- How did it feel to walk in the neighborhood?
- What may be God's dream for the neighborhood?
- Who do you want to partner with for the neighborhood common good?

Power Mapping



This is a simple exercise. It can be as deep as the effort you can put into it. Think about and graph all of the systems and centers of power that you can think of.

Community Listening Sessions

Hold sessions to hear directly from community members about their needs and interests.

Outdoor and Public Worship

Take worship outside the church building to public spaces to reach a broader audience.

Interfaith and Ecumenical Services

Partner with other faith communities to hold joint services, fostering a spirit of unity and cooperation.

Sermon Outline

Text – Jeremiah 29

²⁹This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. ²(This was after King Jehoiachin and the queen mother, the court officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the skilled workers and the artisans had gone into exile from Jerusalem.) ³He entrusted the letter to Elasah son of Shaphan and to Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It said:

⁴This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:

⁵“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” ⁸Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. ⁹They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the Lord.

¹⁰This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹²Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

Abstract

This sermon is designed to create space for reflection on how we relate to our community. Too often church programs and rhythms can go on for years without seeing our part in the communities we live in and the community around the church building. Exercising the muscle of ‘neighboring’ may bring up good questions that some have been wanting to ask and potentially threatening questions to others who may be averse to significant change. This message will act as a catalyst for permission-giving and further conversation on our role and responsibility to life outside of the church walls.

Outline

I. Introduction

- a. Exile
 - i. They are out of their land and their culture, no longer self-governing, and looking at an unfortunate and uncertain future
 - ii. This is also where God placed them
 - 1. Disobedience, and God is using this for their good and formation
- a. If we are familiar with Jeremiah 29, it is often because of verse 11
 - i. But what if the promise of verse 11 had a very specific context
 - ii. “for I know the plans I have for you” was given to a people in exile, their worst nightmare...
- b. Verses 1-4 This is a letter to the people from Jeremiah on behalf of God to the remaining leaders meant to be a direction for the people

II. Specific instructions – verses 5-9

- a. Settle in – They are told to live lives in the place, plant, eat, raise children
- b. Pray for – their prosperity is now tied to forces they cannot control
- c. Seek the good -
- d. Who are these diviners – what are they saying
 - i. The Hebrew Scriptures and the history of Israel are filled with false prophets who tell the leaders and people what they want to hear
 - ii. Jeremiah brings an unpopular message of settling in, praying, and seeking the good
 - iii. I am sure many wanted a message from God that He would destroy Babylon and take the people back to the promise land

III. How are we doing

- a. Settle in
 - i. Plant
 - 1. How are we engaging outdoors?
 - 2. With neighbors?
 - 3. Making investments in our communities? – Where is our shopping dollars going to? Is there ways for dollars to stay in our communities?
 - ii. Eat
 - 1. How are we intentionally bumping into neighbors where we work, shop, and play?
 - 2. What places are we using our discretionary income?
 - iii. Raise children
 - 1. Are we engaging with the local schools?
 - 2. Taking our kids out of the community for school, their most formative experiences?
 - 3. What are the third spaces in the community that we can bump into others?
- b. Pray for
 - i. We need to know the needs before we can pray for them
 - ii. How do we get to know neighbors?
- c. Seek the good
 - i. Participating in local neighborhood associations
 - ii. Hosing community listening sessions

IV. God is at work – verses 10-14

- a. Verse 11 promises – It is in the settling in, praying, and seeking the good that God tells them – “for I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not harm you, give you a hope and a future”
 - i. God’s plan was for them to make a new life for themselves in this unfriendly space
 - ii. God’s plan was their co-prosperity in the place they now were
 - iii. God promised they would not be harmed while they lived in a land that made them subjects
 - iv. Finally, God had a hope for their future
- b. Verse 12-14 There is a hopeful future that is not in Babylon and returns them to their home. But right now, is not about that homecoming. It is about being faithful to where God has them in this season

V. Conclusion

- a. Settle, pray, seek good, tune out the voices
 - i. Which of these do we do well
 - ii. Which of these can we imagine new engagement
- b. Church activity – walk the community and write our own letter

Quotes and Further Study

Church Forsaken by Jonathan Brooks

Seeing Jesus in East Harlem & Ecosystems of Jubilee by Jose Humphreys

Everywhere you Look by Tim Soerens

“Human beings need recognition as much as they need food and water. No crueller punishment can be devised than to not see someone, render them unimportant or invisible. “The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them,” George Bernard Shaw wrote, “but to be indifferent to them: that’s the essence of inhumanity. To do that is to say: You don’t matter. You don’t exist.”

On the other hand, there are few things as fulfilling as that sense of being seen and understood. I often ask people to tell me about times they’ve felt seen, and with glowing eyes they tell stories about pivotal moments in their life. They talk about a time when someone perceived some talent in them that they themselves were able to see. They talk about a time when somebody understood exactly what they needed at some exhausted moment— and stepped in, in just the right way, to lighten the load.”

– **DAVID BROOKS,**
How to Know a Person

“The work of racial reconciliation requires a certain posture. If you’re White, if you come from the majority culture, you’ll need to bend low in a posture of humility. Bridges are not built with passivity or avoidance but with the deep, hard work of seeking to understand.”

- LATASHA MORRISON,
Be the Bridge

“It is more blessed to give than to receive. It’s also a whole lot easier.”

- FRED CRADDOCK

“All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ.”

- ST. BENEDICT

Every stranger we meet is carrying a story of God’s good news.

- DR. ERIC BARRETO

“Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”

- C.S. LEWIS