

Scriptures:

I Corinthians 1:18-25

John 2:13-22

Matthew 5:14-16

Neighbouring Motives

Let's do a bit of moving together

In a moment I am going to ask everyone to stand up and I am going to ask you to greet one another.

1. I would like you to greet as many people as you can in thirty seconds but I want you to greet them as if you have someone much more important to meet. 30 seconds - go.
2. Now I would like you to greet as many people as you can in thirty seconds but I want you to greet them as if they are a long lost friend that you are so excited to see. Go.

This lent we are doing a series on "The Art of Neighbouring" The first week we talked about the Call to Love God and Love neighbour. We recognize that we have all heard that scripture and many of us have even embraced it but we have been challenged to really think it through and ponder What if it is more than a metaphorical neighbour. What if loving your neighbour actually meant loving the people who live right around here in such a way that we actually engage with them, notice them, offer them love and support and care. What if we actually got to know the neighbours that live around us and if that is too hard then what if we got to know the people who we sit next to in the coffee shop every day or. This call to love neighbour does not have a formula, it is a command from God. What if we did what ever we could to combat the individualist, isolationist, polarized world view in which we and our neighbours live.

John 1:14 "The word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one of a kind glory, like Father, like Son generous inside and out, true from start to finish." That is the call for our life.

Last week we talked about the **Time Barrier** and were reminded that it's not about adding more to your life's schedule.. But finding margin in your life. The best part of this for me and for any of us probably is it is not about adding more to your life's schedule but reconfiguring your priorities. What are you doing that can be stopped so that you can start neighbouring. What might you need to say no to so that you can practice following Jesus. In the Course I am taking we were all asked to sit down and write the things we would like to add so that we can be a more faithful presence in our neighbourhoods and then the hard question came. What are you going to let go of. What is not serving God, others and yourself well. I went back and looked at my notes and I remembered that I had let go of somethings that I have picked back up again. It is such a faith act to pause from time to time and examine what you are doing that can be stopped... and then start another behaviour that is going to be life-giving to you and ultimately your neighbourhood. We noted last week to excel at something it takes practice. This lent is about the Practice following Jesus. What can you say no to so that you can say yes to abundant life?

Remember the fear factor? We all battle hidden judgements and fears. The Scary neighbours.. Are they really scary? Have we created scary people out of our neighbours because... that is what our society has taught us to do? With all this gun talk in the US we are getting even more fear ingrained in us. As our sense of fear is elevated... we retreat, hide and Loose hope. This isolation leads to more of a cycle of fear and retreat. Most of the time.. Fear is unfounded.

Perhaps. They have fears of us. We're the scary ones.

One of my practices and I have asked the rest of the staff and some of our leadership to practice this as well here at Centrepoint to help break the cycle of fear. I asked us to model sharing and kindness. Take time to meet the staff and find out their story. Perhaps there is a reason for their isolation or mystery about them? There might be a reason they fear church or faith groups. As we settled into a shared community building there were a lot of fear based activities going on. You know this first hand in some ways. Look at our security system. It is so tight that I cannot even program the doors to lock and unlock (we are working on that by the way). I was given some pretty firm boundaries when we started our work and living here. Places I could and could not go, ways I was to be in a room, how I could leave a room and how I was to contact certain staff. Month by month those have started to loosen. Why? Because I have chosen to not react but to embrace the people. Listen to their stories. Learning to work with them more closely and

discover their world. The difference has been profound. On Saturday when the new cleaners set off the alarm in the Sea to Sky portion of the building I actually had the ability to go in and turn it off. We have come a long way. There is more to do but as we practice love above fear we will do well.

I've come to understand and believe that it is all about being a Faithful presence. That is God's dream for us and the world that we live in. First and foremost we are called to love. But why do we love? Why do we want to neighbour? What is our purpose? Kayla and I have been talking a lot about this lately. I want to take a moment and watch a clip together. When you watch this you might find yourself starting to think "Oh we are United Church we are not like those Christians" but as soon as you start to think that I want you to ponder how we really can be or are just like that.

<https://vimeo.com/117428370>

What jumped out at you? How are we guilty of this act?

☆Have any of you had that experience? Thinking you have a friend and soon learning or feeling like they really just want your business? I had a dear friend who started to sell a product and suddenly that is all it became about. Our friendship over the years faded because I couldn't afford to buy her product and she no longer has use for me. Recently I was asked to join a focus group on health and wellness I was told it was not about the product but if I wanted I could purchase it. I was told it was all about loving yourself and getting healthier through a group of supported people.

I decided I could not spend money on the product at this time but I still wanted to do the work with the group. I let them know that and as far as I was told that was an option. I told the organizer I would use a similar product I already had. The response was something to the effect of "Oh I used to use that product but this one is better quality I would never put that garbage into my body or pollute my children with it but I respect your decision."

You respect my decision to pollute my family? Hmmm.... The next thing I knew was that the very next day without conversation I was removed from the group - never to receive another email or facebook notification. The next week this 'friend' was sick and because she respected

me so much she wanted me to pick her child up and take her to school. I did that but that 'friendship' is pretty faded.

☆Our Motives Matter. Kayla and I are really enjoying the Tuesday morning music drop ins. The class runs for about a half hour but we are finding families are staying for an hour or two even. The moms sit and talk. The kids play in the corner. One particularly tired very pregnant mom this week expressed her appreciation of a place she could just sit and watch her child play in a warm dry, welcoming place. Friends that is enough. That is all we need to do - just allow them to be. No agenda, no ulterior motive. Just loving our neighbours.

☆We don't love our neighbours to convert them, we love them because we are converted.

This week Instead of sharing your story first, try asking others about their story. Focus on listening and create a safe place for honest two-way sharing. What kind of questions help people share their story at a deeper level? What's the deepest moment you've ever had hearing another person's story?

Many people don't share their story because

- a) it never comes up,
- b) they don't know where to start, or
- c) they are afraid they don't know all the right Christian answers and verses.

Sometimes fear comes because we are too focused on sharing and not enough on listening. If we would simply ask someone to tell us their story or spiritual journey, they are likely to tell us. If we are a safe friend, they are also likely to ask us about our story. This is not manipulation; it is simply how normal conversation happens in real relationships. We are interested in the other person and what we can learn from them and vice versa.

It is time for us to be the light - so that people can experience the love.

I have left the handouts of the last two weeks at the back

- A guide to neighbouring
- A grid to fill out the names of your neighbours
- Today is a bit of a game - Neighbouring Bingo!

You have until April 15th to fill out your bingo card. At the AGM we will draw a prize from the bingo cards that have been submitted. You can do as many cards as you can in the next month. Have a little fun with it. Get healthy in your neighbourhood. The more bingo cards you fill the more possibility of winning the prize basket! Have fun!.

Take a walk or tour around the church neighbourhood What do you notice?	Take a walk or tour around your home neighbourhood What do you notice?	Learn a new name	Do a new activity in your neighbourhood
Invite someone new out to something	notice something you didn't know was there	say hello to 3 strangers	pray for someone you see struggling
Do a random act of kindness	Go for a walk someplace new	Call someone you love to catch up	tell someone you have never told that you appreciate them
take a day off of social media to free up time	List 4 things you like about where you live	List 4 things you like about your church	go to a different place in your neighbourhood