



"Gates and Gardens: Tending our Spaces and Letting Others In"

(January 14th - February 4th)

It is the tradition at Assembly to begin the New Year with a worship series on Stewardship. This year we will be exploring the question of stewardship with the theme of "Gates and Gardens."

This year given the obvious changes in our church we will be focused on the opportunity to steward our resources of space. As we shape the spaces in our lives, those spaces shape us. This sentiment expresses one of the tensions near the center of being humans following Christ's way. We both need to create, protect and steward distinctive spaces that shape our identity, and are also called to share those spaces and the resources therein freely with those around us. Without the former, we are too easily influenced by forces of dispersion, distraction and discontent. But without the latter we are too easily tempted to hoard our wealth of all types for only ourselves and those closest to us.

In this season where we see our new church building begin to take shape around us, we will encourage each other to strike this balance in our lives as individuals, as families, as a church and as part of our broader community. With intentionality towards the interplay between the **distinctive and open-hearted** parts of our identity, we are better equipped to journey outwards from a place of rootedness in our hearts.

We will explore together questions including:

How should we as Christ-followers be helping to shape the type of community that we live in here in Goshen and Elkhart County?

What unique opportunities does being a church together provide us to care for the world around us, and how does that show itself during a season of renovation?

How can we shepherd our home and family relationships towards good health and encouragement?

What are some of the markers of our hearts being firmly rooted in Christ in the way that we live in the world?

Traditionally this is a season of focus on stewardship in our day-to-day lives, and as such, during these coming weeks of worship, there is something for both the hard-headed pragmatist and the wide-eyed idealist within each of us. We'll wrestle with both fundamental (e.g. What's the best way to speak as a church into local societal issues?) and more abstract (e.g. How can I maintain a personal identity that is strong and clear but also very open to change?) questions together, and begin preparing for a Lenten season that will move from this "calm center" out into rougher waters.

The four weeks of this "Gates and Gardens" series will be organized as follows:

Week #1 - January 14th

First hour focus - Tending **the gates and gardens of Goshen**

Storytellers: Patrick Coonan, Marshall King

Second hour: Sermon discussion and response

Week #2 - January 21st

First hour focus - **Tending the gates and gardens of our church**

Preacher: Lora Nafziger

Second hour: Building updates

Week #3 - January 28th

First hour focus - **Tending the gates and gardens of our homes**

Preacher: Bethany Swope

Second hour: Sermon discussion and response

Week #4 - February 4th

First hour focus - **Tending the gates and gardens of our hearts**

Preacher: Carmen Horst

Second hour: Sermon discussion and response



Where we're headed next:

February 11th - Carnival Sunday (theme: "A journey into space")

February 18 - April 1 - Lent (tentative theme: "Strangers in a strange land")