

Summer 2023 *What is a Neighbor?*

Leviticus 19:18 is often quoted “*Love your neighbor as yourself,*” but what does that mean? Are neighbors the same as friends? Or are we more of the Robert Frost mindset: “*Good fences make good neighbors*”? Many of us find interactions limited with our neighbors in the cold months. Bundled up, we come and go from our warm homes. Summertime offers us more possibilities to interact with our neighbors. But what do we experience when we do?

Irish poet John O'Donohue describes our milieu: “In post-modern culture there is a deep hunger to belong. An increasing majority of people feel isolated and marginalized. Experience is haunted by fragmentation... Society is losing the art of fostering community. Consumerism is now propelling life towards the lonely isolation of individualism. Technology pretends to unite us, yet more often than not all it delivers are simulated images. [...] It seems that we are in the midst of a huge crisis of belonging. When the outer cultural shelters are in ruins, we need to explore and reawaken the depths of belonging in the human mind and soul; perhaps, the recognition of the depth of our hunger to belong may gradually assist us in awakening new and unexpected possibilities of community and friendship.”

In a time when our culture has drawn lines, how might we make connections? In an age of loneliness and isolation, how might we give and receive with our neighbors? Can we learn from our many varied experiences with our neighbors? The Bible speaks out of cultures markedly different from our own. In addition to Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, are there any texts that speak to how we interact with our neighbors?

Local writer Shannan Martin has been very intentional in developing neighborly relationships. Her *Neighbor's Blessing* has inspired the Summer Worship Committee, and we have made copies for all Assembly households. Look for the green cards in your mailbox or on the literature table. We are delighted that Shannan will be with us in worship on June 25.

A Neighbor's Blessing
By Shannan Martin

*May you go out into this bewildering world
Warmed by the fire of possibility.
May you come to see walking shoes, soup spoons,
Minivans and wrinkled hands as
Worthy tools for connection.
May your heart stay tender, your hands stay open,
And your door stay easy on its hinges.
May you find comfort in the moon, art in the clouds,
And goodness in the faces around you.
May you gather, listen, and hope relentlessly.
And may you never give up on the living light
Of belonging, right where you are.
Grace and peace and gumption be with you.*

Each week in June and July we will hear stories of neighbors. Assembly folks will be invited to speak with Shannan's *Blessing* in hand as well the sometimes quirky wisdom of the Proverbs and other biblical texts.

Adults as well as children will be provided with **Neighbor Challenges** each week, inviting you to try some new way of interacting with your neighbors. Each Sunday during the Offering, you will be invited to put into the basket a few words about your experience as an offering to God.

- Invite your neighbor for a meal
- Baked goods for your neighbor
- Talk to your neighbor about their trees
- Meet a neighbor at the playground
- Find a way to help someone. (Open a door, help carry groceries)
- Pick up litter on your street
- Financially support a neighbor or agency that helps your neighbors
- Say thank you and give a small treat to someone working in the community (construction worker, trash truck, UPS truck, mail person)
- Go for a walk, saying hello to those you pass (find a path with neighbors on it!)

Storytellers as of June 1

June 4 Maynard Miller

June 11 Jerry Lapp

June 18 Adam Graber Roth

June 25 Shannan Martin

July 2 Johanna Sutter

July 9 Isaya and Tobias Magatti

July 16 MYFers reporting from MennoCon

July 23 Jenna Liechty Martin at Camp Friedenswald

July 30 Jenna Martin

As you come and go on family vacations and summer travels, come and worship at Assembly when you are home. And take the summertime to bless and be blessed by your neighbors.