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## Graphics and Audio Notes

- There **will** be a sermon starter video.
- There **will** be notes and / or scripture to show on screen during the sermon.

Text highlighted in this way have a slide prepared to be on screen.

Text highlighted in this way are a reminder for Andrew during delivery.

*Text highlighted in this way are direction for Andrew during delivery.*

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## Key Questions

### What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the power and promise of neighboring.

### Why is this sermon important?

It is important because Jesus invited us to neighbor and neighboring can transform lives.

### What is the good news?

The good news is that Christ is already at work in our neighborhoods.

### What are the next action steps?

You are invited to begin to experiment with neighboring ingredients.  
Join the neighboring practice group in the next few weeks.

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## Metadata

### Topics

- Change Lives
- Develop Leaders
- Share
- Share Christ
- Transformation of the World

### Sermon Books of the Bible

- Mark

20th Sunday after Pentecost / in Kingdomtide [Green]

October 22, 2017

The Good Neighbor Experiment - Why Neighbor?

Mark 12:28-34

First United Methodist Church of El Dorado

Preaching Target Word Count: 1,400

## **Tags**

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, neighbor, neighboring, why, practice, community

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## **Sermon Audio at 11 a.m. Worship**

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## Introduction

### Mark 12:28-34, CEB

<sup>28</sup>One of the legal experts heard their dispute and saw how well Jesus answered them. He came over and asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”

<sup>29</sup>Jesus replied, “The most important one is *Israel, listen! Our God is the one Lord*, <sup>30</sup>*and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* The second is this, *You will love your neighbor as yourself.* No other commandment is greater than these.”

<sup>32</sup>The legal expert said to him, “Well said, Teacher. You have truthfully said that God is one and there is no other besides him. <sup>33</sup>And to love God with all of the heart, a full understanding, and all of one’s strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself is much more important than all kinds of entirely burned offerings and sacrifices.”

<sup>34</sup>When Jesus saw that he had answered with wisdom, he said to him, “You aren’t far from God’s kingdom.” After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

### Mark 12:28-34, NRSV

<sup>28</sup>One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?”

<sup>29</sup>Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘*Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;*’ <sup>30</sup>*you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*’ <sup>31</sup>The second is this, ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

<sup>32</sup>Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; <sup>33</sup>and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

<sup>34</sup>When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

## Response to Scripture

One: The word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

## Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

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## Opening

### Life at 502 South Denver

We live in the best neighborhood in town.  
One block west and four blocks south - at the corner of Denver and Locust.  
It is the best, because we have the best neighbors.  
We have come back from vacation to find that our yard has been mowed.  
There have lost limbs and I have wondered how exactly we will be able to take care of it. Then, to arrive home anticipating a big job ahead, find that it has already been cleared away and cut up.  
Summer cookout and potluck meals.  
When people are intentional, your block - the place where you live - can become more than just a bunch of individuals who happen to live next to each other.  
It can be family. It can be home.  
This is why we neighbor.

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*Pause*

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### The Good Neighbor Experiment

The sermon today is part of The Good Neighbor Experiment worship series. During this series, we are focused on the simple guidance from Jesus to love our neighbor. We are part of a national neighboring movement which was started in Wichita

by colleagues in The United Methodist Church. This sermon and series have been developed using their content from [NeighboringMovement.org](http://NeighboringMovement.org)

## Goodness of Neighboring<sup>1</sup>

Most people intuitively understand that being a better neighbor is a good thing to do. Without much convincing people agree that knowing the names of their neighbors would be helpful. However, neighboring is far more than just, “helpful.”

Neighboring is a movement to reclaim community, keep isolation at bay, bolster public health, stimulate the economy, and transform community-based institutions, like the church.

### Transition

Stories not enough for you? Don’t worry, the research backs it up.

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## Social Science Research

### Isolation<sup>2</sup>

Times Magazine featured a Brigham Young University study which compiled multiple projects resulting in a dataset of over 3 million people over 30 years. They found

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*“the feeling of loneliness increases risk of death by 26%”*  
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This number is greater than risks associated with smoking and cancer!  
The New York Times reports,,

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*“Since the 1980’s, the percentage of American adults who say they’re lonely has doubled from 20 percent to 40 percent.”*  
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Combined research shows that individuals with less social connection have disrupted sleep patterns, altered immune systems, more inflammation, higher levels of stress, increases risk of heart disease, increase risk of strokes, accelerated cognitive decline, and premature death.

Yikes!!

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from The Good Neighbor Experiment Block 1.1 Why neighbor faith based Block

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from The Good Neighbor Experiment Block 1.1 Why neighbor faith based Block

## Neighboring<sup>3</sup>

State Farm commissioned research on neighboring and found that the neighborhood gathering is organized by a dedicated few:

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*58 percent of neighbors says it's important for neighbors to socialize, but only 16 percent of men and 11 percent of women have ever organized a social event.*

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Welcoming is desired but not happening.

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*The majority (75 percent) of neighbors say it is important to welcome new neighbors, but only 41 percent say they were welcomed when they moved in. Only 46 percent of those interviewed actually welcomed someone new into the neighborhood.. 6*

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The combined findings of these studies make an impressive case for why we might neighbor. However, for people of faith there is even a more compelling reason.

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## The Greatest Commandment

The neighboring movement began with Jesus.  
He told us to do it!

## Activity of Church<sup>4</sup>

Doing church these days means lots and lots of activity: committee meetings, potlucks, fundraising, mission trips, small groups, conferences, bake sales, auctions, classes, youth events, children's special music, and on and on and on...

### Most Important?

I imagine Jesus watching all our activity and having flashbacks to the scribe from Mark 12. It feels like we, the Church, are still asking the question, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

Is it the command to have a thriving youth group?

Or maybe the command to have the best worship service?

Actually, I bet it was the command to be all things to all people.

Of course not!

The commands are still the same!!

### Key Scripture: Mark 12:30-31

In Mark 12:30-31, Jesus patiently and pointedly repeats:

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from The Good Neighbor Experiment Block 1.1 Why neighbor faith based Block

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from The Good Neighbor Experiment Block 1.1 Why neighbor faith based Block



*<sup>30</sup>and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, You will love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these.”*

This command is so simple, yet church doesn't feel simple.

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## Neighbor for Real

### Love our Actual Neighbor<sup>5</sup>

Of course, all this activity is not inherently bad. In fact, one could argue that it helps the overall good and therefore helps the metaphorical neighbor.

#### ***Neighbor is Not a Metaphor***

But the minute we turn “neighbor” into a metaphor we relieve ourselves from the type of human interactions that God modeled in the incarnate Jesus.

Neighboring requires us to be incarnate with our actual neighbor.

Love your actual, literal, neighbor.

#### ***Our Neighbors***

You know, the guy on your block who plays music too loud.

The elderly person who finds a way to make a 2 minute conversation into 20.

The kid next door who keeps leaving toys in your yard.

The person down the street who always has a political sign of the opposite party.

These are your neighbors...

and somehow Jesus wants you to be devoted to their good.

*Pause*

So, how do we actually do this?

What does it look like to be a good neighbor today?

*Pause*

While it may not be helpful to think of our neighbors as a metaphor, I believe that the idea of neighboring - the action, the verb - can be helped with a metaphor.

So, here goes...

### Neighboring Soup<sup>6</sup>

Do you like making soup? It is a meal that allows you to be creative and add your own taste to the recipes. With soup you can mix and match favorite ingredients to achieve the best taste for that day. Of course, not following a recipe exactly can come

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from The Good Neighbor Experiment Leaders Guide: Session 1.1 Why Neighbor?

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from The Good Neighbor Experiment Leaders Guide: Session 1.1 Why Neighbor?

with some risk, but the risk also means you can hone your taste and skills as a chef. Neighboring is a lot like making soup.

There are several key ingredients and from day to day our Neighboring Soup will taste different depending on the flavor of life at that moment in time. The more we practice neighboring, the better we understand the ingredients and mix of the perfect Neighboring Soup.

## **Neighboring Ingredients<sup>7</sup>**

During this worship series, we will be considering these ingredients, exploring ways to introduce them into our lives, and seeking the right quantity for each ingredient where you live to find the right “taste.” With that being said, here are those key ingredients with a very brief explanation.

### ***Abundance***

#### **Abundance**

Neighbors view the world with abundance over scarcity. The markers of abundance are joy, hope, optimism, contentment. Seeing the good in people and in events is a conscious skillset.

The opposite of abundance is scarcity, which leads to fear, competition and isolation.

### ***Gifts and Assets***

#### **Abundance**

#### **Gifts and Assets**

Neighbors believe that all people have skills, talents, and assets. When we share our assets we experience wholeness and the community gets stronger. In a world that usually focuses on needs, neighbors point to assets.

When we focus on gifts, it doesn't mean we ignore or deny the needs. However, when making progress in this area, we ask questions like:

What are you good at?

What work experiences do you have?

### ***Design***

#### **Abundance**

#### **Gifts and Assets**

#### **Design**

Neighbors design their homes, calendars, and relationships to create space for other people. Neighbors adjust their routines and rhythms to make neighboring the path of least resistance.

We go through most of our lives allowing the way things are laid out to determine what we do and how we do it. This idea of design will help us “stack the deck” in our favor, fostering good neighboring more naturally.

### ***Free to Fail (Joy)***

#### **Abundance**

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from The Good Neighbor Experiment Leaders Guide: Session 1.1 Why Neighbor?

Gifts and Assets  
Design  
Free to Fail (Joy)

Neighbors approach failure with joy. Failure is informative and helps shape what comes next. Neighbors are unafraid to try new things because they are free to fail.

Good neighbor-ing is a little like exploring a lost city, it is an adventure with lots of hidden treasure, and sometimes we'll do things wrong because we haven't been here before. Doing this has helped us try some things we never thought we would.

### ***Spiritual Formation***

Abundance  
Gifts and Assets  
Design  
Free to Fail (Joy)  
Spiritual Formation

Neighbors are grounded in practices that help them reflect and become self aware. They prioritize their spiritual health so they can build healthy relationships with others.

Spiritual formation is the process of intentionally spending time with the Trinity so we start to act and behave like the Trinity. This means we operate as people who are loved unconditionally, and who love others non-coercively. It also helps us grow and adapt when we fail rather than giving up.

### ***Relationships***

Abundance  
Gifts and Assets  
Design  
Free to Fail (Joy)  
Spiritual Formation  
Relationships

Neighbors value meaningful relationships knowing that community is essential for health and happiness.

This ingredient is essential, and for some people it will be the easiest and most obvious, while for others it may feel the most awkward, particularly if we are task-oriented. Sometimes (not always)) we need to practice setting aside our task list and just form a relationship with our neighbor.

### ***Celebration***

Abundance  
Gifts and Assets  
Design  
Free to Fail (Joy)  
Spiritual Formation  
Relationships  
Celebration

Neighbors celebrate often with gratitude, inviting others to join when possible. Celebration produces joy and aids us in the ability to be free to fail. Celebration recognizes abundance and encourages future experimentation.

It is surprising, but true that celebration does not come naturally for lots of people. Therefore, we must be intentional about celebrating, even small victories.

### **Wrap Up**

You don't need to feel responsible for fully understand all of these ingredients. We will continue to elaborate on them during this worship series and, at times, will focus on just one of these ingredients.

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## **Conclusion**

### **Good News**

The good news is that Christ is already at work in our neighborhoods.

### **Call to Action<sup>8</sup>**

When you neighbor, two great things happen...

First, you become Christ in your neighborhoods.

Second, you receive Christ in the faces of your neighbors.

### **First UMC as Training Ground for Neighboring**

What if First United Methodist Church became a training ground for neighboring

Instead of the main event happening on Sunday morning, what if we focused all our energy and resources on becoming a good neighbor?

### **The Good Neighbor Lab**

In a couple weeks, we will have a practice group starting here at the church. If you would like to talk more about these ideas, get encouragement and practical tips about how to engage those who live nearby, sign up. We will have registration information available for you next week.

### **Invitation**

So, my invitation to you is to love your actual neighbor.

Begin to experiment with using these neighboring ingredients to love your actual neighbor.

Will you pray with me?

### **Closing Prayer**

Jesus, I am sorry for all the times in my life when I mess up.

.....  
*And if anything comes to mind, ask God's forgiveness.*  
.....

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from The Good Neighbor Experiment Leaders Guide: Session 1.1 Why Neighbor?

20th Sunday after Pentecost / in Kingdomtide [Green]

October 22, 2017

The Good Neighbor Experiment - Why Neighbor?

Mark 12:28-34

First United Methodist Church of El Dorado

Preaching Target Word Count: 1,400

Forgive me of my sin and all that I know is wrong.

Thank you that you died on the cross and rose for me.

I trust you with my life.

Help me receive your forgiveness.

Please fill me with your Spirit and help me to follow you.

In your holy name, Amen.

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## Promo Text / Series Introduction

Love your neighbor is a simple guide to living from Jesus, yet sometimes we struggle to live this way in our actual lives. During this worship series, you will be invited on a journey of spiritual formation, engaging your actual neighbors where you live and together we will begin to experience what it means for our congregation to be a good neighbor. Invite a friend to join you for worship at First United Methodist Church from October 22 to November 26 for The Good Neighbor Experiment.

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## Worship Planning Notes

### Hook

- Jesus invites us to love our neighbor. Let's figure out how to do it together.

### Objectives

- Spiritual formation
- Engaging our neighbors
- Being a good neighbor as a congregation

### Tie-Ins

- The Good Neighbor Experiment Practice Group
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## Sermon Titles, Scripture and Notes

Date	Sermon Title	Scripture Text	Notes
October 22, 2017	Why Neighbor?	Mark 12:28-34	
October 29, 2017	Community by Design	Acts 2:37-47	
November 5, 2017	Humble Servants	Matthew 23:1-12	Guest Preacher, Andrew Present  All Saints Day  Daylight Savings Time Ends
November 12, 2017	Asset Mapping	John 6:5-13	
November 19, 2017	Intro to Spiritual Formation	Galatians 5:22-23	
November 26, 2017	Celebrate Abundance	Luke 15:11-24	United Methodist Student Day