



Neighboring Sunday

A guide to planning an experience of worship and getting to know your neighborhood

*I have always wanted to have a neighbor just like you
I've always wanted to live in a neighborhood with you
So let's make the most of this beautiful day
Since we're together, we might as well say
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?
Won't you be my neighbor?*

- Mister Rogers song

The neighborhoods around our homes and our faith community gathering places are the heart of our ministries. If we are to live out the Matthew 25 vision* we should understand our communities. A variety of circumstances in our modern world have sometimes resulted in a diminished knowledge of those neighbors closest to us. This QuickSheet provides you with a template and ideas to plan an experience and worship service around your neighborhoods. Every context is unique, and you will need to adjust accordingly. The health and safety standards of these times and in your area may mean this experience will be done in the neighborhoods of church members and gathering may be online. In any case, engaging in our neighborhoods is how we begin to understand what our call is in serving our neighbors.

Overview

Neighboring Sunday can be in place of regular Sunday worship or on another day. This experience can happen around the neighborhoods of member homes or the neighborhood around the faith community gathering place.

- You will gather your faith community together online or in person for a short time of prayer, scripture and instructions for engaging in the neighborhood experience.
- Groups or households will head out to engage in the neighborhood after choosing the activity they want to engage in. Someone should be the leader of the group and take notes.
- You likely won't gather all together at the end of the experience because of the varying amounts of time each activity may take. Each household or group would end their time together with a closing prayer or blessing.
- Plan to collect notes from each group and have a time to reflect on experiences and discern how to better connect with your neighborhood.

Things to Consider

- Communicate the “why” and the “when” of this experience early and often to your faith community.
- This should be an intergenerational experience. Encourage all ages to participate and think about varying ages as you plan activities and choices.

- Have a plan for visitors. Don't forget hospitality!
- If you choose the option of having households explore their own neighborhoods, you may consider giving a week or several days to complete the activities on their own time and then use the Neighboring Sunday time to reflect on the experiences.
- Always have a choice that involves remaining stationary in one location to recognize mobility and personal comfort levels.
- Many activities will take prep time and it is recommended that there is an identified leader. Invite church leaders or elders to lead groups.
- Decide ahead of time if groups should be limited to a certain number. Some activities may have multiple groups doing the same thing. Adjust to the size of your faith community. Make sure instructions are printed out.
- Provide written instructions through email or mail to households if you are going to choose the option of member neighborhoods. Don't forget to include prayers, scripture and a closing that they can do as a household.
- Certain activities will take longer than others. Make sure participants know the possible time frame when choosing an activity. Have choices that will end when your worship service would have normally ended.
- You may choose to have small children remain at the church building with nursery caregivers. Make sure their parents know how long care will be provided. Engage these children in a related activity—sidewalk chalk art, prayer drawings or decorate boxes for a play neighborhood.
- You may wish to keep it simple. Ask members to walk the neighborhood, intentionally look around and pray in small groups. Reflect on what was noticed.
- This entire experience could be adjusted to be prayer stations with photos and community guests in an inside space.

Ideas for Engaging in the Neighborhood

- Head out into the neighborhood with trash bags and gloves to clean up the area—noticing the neighborhood and neighbors as you work.
- Have a prayer walk through the neighborhood. This can be as a group with the leader stopping at certain points and allowing verbal or silent prayer. It could also be done in solitude.
- Walk through the neighborhood with information or a guide about the different kinds of housing. Learn about the characteristics of who might live there. Make sure to greet people as you see them!
- Porch gifts! Walk through a neighborhood leaving a gift at a variety of porches. It could be a note of welcome, a small plant or flower or some treats.
- Visit a community garden site. Learn how it operates and who uses it.
- Visit a neighborhood fire station or police station and learn about how they are “helpers” in the neighborhood. Leave a gift of gratitude.
- Decorate sidewalks, driveways or parking lots as allowed with sidewalk chalk leaving messages and pictures of hope and welcome. This is a good option if there are small children staying at the church.
- Invite a community leader to share about an organization or initiative in the neighborhood to people that choose to stay in one location.

- Learn where your neighborhood gets healthy food. Are you in a food desert? Give everyone enough money to buy a meal using the allotted amount in SNAP benefits.
- Go to brunch! Talk about who is present, how they are finding community and pray for your server and the neighborhood before you eat.
- Go to a neighborhood park. You can clean up trash if necessary, note any repairs or improvements that are needed or pass out water if this is an area those experiencing homelessness are gathering.
- If your neighborhood generally has people asking for money, put together bags with necessities or water and granola bars to pass out. Engage in conversation and kindness as is safe to do so.
- Invite households to consider how their own yards, porches or entrances show that they are a good neighbor and welcoming to all. Have them put up yard signs, a message of welcome or other creative ideas. Share photos and stories with everyone.

** Matthew 25:31–46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. We recognize Christ's urgent call to be a church of action, where God's love, justice and mercy shine forth and are contagious. Find out more about what it means to be a [Matthew 25 church here](#).*

Visit www.pcusa.org/formation to learn more about the Office of Christian Formation.

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