



FIRST AND CENTER

Pastor's Blog

January 31, 2018

I've been thinking a lot lately about the word "neighbor." It's one of those English words that has multiple meanings. It could mean the person who lives next door to you or someone in your "neighborhood," centered on geographical location as in Robert Frost and "good fences make good neighbors." The English translators of the Bible have used the word to translate the Greek word used in the story of the Good Samaritan among others, where "neighbor" has

nothing to do with geography and everything to do with a relationship of caring. To be a "neighbor" to someone means to care for and about them, no matter where they live or anything about who they are, other than the fact they are human. "Love your neighbor as yourself," then, has nothing to do with physical proximity and everything to do with being another human being on this earth. Less like the Frost verse and more like Mister Rogers, who opened every one of his TV shows by singing to the airwaves and asking everyone watching "won't you be my neighbor?"

I was just downstairs at our Triage Warming Center. I found neighbors in need of food and shelter. I found neighbors working their cases to try to find them shelter. I found members of my church, neighbors all, cooking for those hungry neighbors. I found a neighborhood being created. Logan remembered hearing someone say that you really become a neighbor to someone, in the image of the Good Samaritan, when you are not afraid to enter into their woundedness and offer whatever you have to point them toward healing. That Samaritan was not a doctor as far as we know, but he had cloth for bandages and a beast to transport the wounded one. Those cooking tonight downstairs are not professional chefs, but they are creating a meal to give to the neighborhood with the skill and time they have, making a gift to the wounded in that room in the hopes that it contributes to healing our neighbors.

In Jesus' story, the one who turned out to be the "neighbor" was not the one you might expect. Maybe we need to look at the world and find someone we would least expect to be our neighbor and see how we might meet each other and form a neighborhood together. Maybe that's the only way the world will ever find healing. And hope.

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Pastor