

ART OF NEIGHBORING LETTER

This letter was given to pastors 6 months before the series in order to invite them to a meeting and give them an overview of the Art of Neighboring Initiative.



ART OF NEIGHBORING LETTER

Background

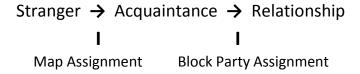
All over the United States, churches are coming together to challenge and equip the people in our congregations to build relationships with those who live near them. This initial effort was a response to a comment made by a civic official in the Denver area who pointed out that; "the majority of the issues that our city is facing could be drastically impacted if we could just become a community of great neighbors." Since that point, leaders all over the country have been agreeing with his observation and joining the neighboring movement. Overall, the initiative has been a success as it has united local churches around a common cause and sparked a rise in block parties and neighborhood gatherings in cities throughout the country. The response from civic officials was affirming and was best summed up by a Police Chief, who said, "There are a lot of people who come to us with great ideas but don't end up doing anything. What is exciting about what you guys are up to, is that you are actually getting your people to take action."

Looking Ahead

We will come together, and with one voice encourage our people to make a commitment to taking the Great Commandment literally. We hope to see some real, measurable change in our city and connect the people in our congregations with one another.

Series Overview

Our goal is to encourage and equip the people we lead to "Rediscover the Art of Neighboring." Some congregations may choose to make this a two week series. We are thinking it might be best to do this in late Spring because it directly precedes the summer months that tend to provide natural opportunities for neighboring. We will be providing a number of resources for you to use if you wish to do so (video interviews, sermons from other cities and/or previous years, Illustrations, outlines, etc.). You can use these resources as you wish and to shape this series to fit your congregation. The Block Map and Block Party assignments proved to be effective tools to help people move from strangers to acquaintances, and from acquaintances to relationship. The common thread among participating churches is that they will ask their people to commit learning the names of their neighbors and to partner with others to organize a block gathering of some sort.



Resources

Block Map Refrigerator Magnets – We will be providing a 5X7 magnet that each household can use as a visual reminder of their commit to neighboring. The magnet will be a tool that will help our people learn and retain the names of their literal neighbors. you might want to begin the series by handing out the block map magnets and asking your people if they can fill in more information than they could a year ago. We need to know the approximate number of households that attend your church over a 3-week time span so we can order magnets for everyone soon.

Art of Neighboring Web Presence – We will be directing people to a website that will allow the people in our congregations to identify others who live in their neighborhoods and who are also part of this movement. This has the potential to be an incredible resource that will help our people to work together to build relationships in their neighborhoods. *The only way that this will work is if we as pastors are relentless in asking our people to simply mark their house on this site*. An added benefit of this site is that it will create an amazing visual of "The Body of Christ" in our communities.

Who is involved?

All of the churches who are involved in this effort will need to affirm the Apostles Creed and believe in the centrality and supremacy of Jesus Christ. This includes churches that are part of the Evangelical, Catholic, and Mainline streams. The goal of our church network is to live out Jesus' prayer in John Chapter 17, in which he prays, "May they (believers) be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." God's promise is that unity among believers will draw those who do not know God into relationship with Him. Our hope is that this effort will be a step towards uniting the Body and making the Kingdom tangible for those who live in our community.