

BECOMING A “COMMUNITY ENGAGED” CHURCH,

A “NEW PARISH” ROUND TABLE.

FLEMING ROAD UCC

QUICK REVIEW:

PARISH IS REFERENCED AS “ALL RELATIONSHIPS (INCLUDING WITH THE LAND) WHERE THE LOCAL CHURCH LIVES OUT IT’S FAITH TOGETHER.

WHAT IS THE NEW PARISH?

TAKING A WALK...

Acts 17:16-34

16 So Paul found himself alone for some time in Athens. He would walk through the city, feeling deeply frustrated about the abundance of idols there.

22 Athenians, *as I have walked your streets*, I have observed your strong and diverse religious ethos. You truly are a religious people.
23 I have stopped again and again to examine carefully the religious statues and inscriptions that fill your city. On one such altar, I read this inscription: “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.” I am not here to tell you about a strange foreign deity, but about this One whom you already worship, though without full knowledge.

26 This God made us in all our diversity from one original person, allowing each culture to have its own time to develop, giving each its own place to live and thrive in its distinct ways. 27 *His purpose in all this was that people of every culture and religion would search for this ultimate God, grope for Him in the darkness, as it were, hoping to find Him. Yet, in truth, God is not far from any of us.* 28 For you know the saying, “We live in God; we move in God; we exist in God.” And still another said, “We are indeed God’s children.”
29 *Since this is true*, since we are indeed offspring of God’s creative act, we shouldn’t think of the Deity as our own artifact, something made by our own hands—as if this great, universal, ultimate Creator were simply a combination of elements like gold, silver, and stone.



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TAKING A WALK...

Acts 17:16-34

- ▶ What did you see, hear, experience on your walk/observation?



TAKING A WALK...

Acts 17:16-34

- ▶ How does this change, if at all, your view of our church's neighborhood and its engagement with the community?



TAKING A WALK...

Acts 17:16-34

- ▶ Why was it important for you to be here tonight?



WHAT IS “ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT”? OR “ABCD”?

- ▶ A key concept in helping our church and neighborhood converge and grow.
- ▶ Asset-based community development (ABCD) is a methodology for the sustainable development of communities based on their strengths and potentials.
- ▶ “The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.” - W.B. Yeats



SO WHAT?

- ▶ Listen.
- ▶ Observe.
- ▶ Follow the example of Paul...while practicing the love of Jesus through Friendship.
- ▶ Learn and grow.
- ▶ Find ways to connect.
- ▶ Proliferate, not scale!



TAKING A WALK...

Acts 17:16-34

- ▶ Tease out the implications of learning to love your place, rather than your hopes for your place. What might happen if you choose to love your place as God loves your place? (The place being the neighborhood where our church resides, and the neighborhood where you live.)

COMMUNITY, FORMATION, MISSION = FAITHFUL PRESENCE

“THE CHURCH IS ONLY THE CHURCH WHEN IT EXISTS FOR OTHERS.”

Three practical functions of church that come out of listening and learning together our context:

- ▶ Community - we live together in this church and the neighborhood (where our church is and where we live) as authentically as we can, recognizing and encouraging each other.
- ▶ Formation - we develop practices and postures that lead towards collective and personal growth.
- ▶ Mission - we live out what it means to be a follower of Jesus and to love others, ourselves, and God well. We join God in God's actions in our neighborhood, where God is already active!

FAITHFUL PRESENCE can happen when these three converge.

WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

“There are enough flocks and herds and fish, because this is the creator God, the one who keeps on giving gifts. Prophets are those who complain about their work when God is pissed off. But the call is to vouch for enough in a world of fearful anxiety.

The world is under new governance. This is authentic regime change. Receive the kingdom of abundance and do not engage with the gods of scarcity. Serve the God of neighborly righteousness and quit worrying about all the threats and competitors. Give your life over to God’s will for the neighborhood, as an act of generosity, and all the rest comes, all the rest about which you have been anxious – your life, your food, your drink, your clothing, your house.”



HOMework & DATES!!

- Simple Experiment!
 - Find two people to interview over the next month, either in your neighborhood or in Finneytown.
- Our next New Parish Round Table is Thursday, May 3, 7 PM!
- Mark your calendars!
 - May 6, Installation Service! Congregation/Neighborhood emphasis!
 - New Parish Conversation w/ authors Tim Soerens and Paul Sparks, May 19th, 6 PM @ the Hive in Northside!