

# NEIGHBORLINESS

**IN YOUR CHURCH**

DAVID DOCUSEN



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*A special thanks to Kate Dyksterhouse and Tori Thacher for your brilliance and courage. Your voices shine through every page of this resource.*

# INTRODUCTION

What can we do as the body of Christ to bring healing in our relationships and to our communities? *Neighborliness in Your Church* will help you and your community find practical ways to embody the love, understanding, curiosity, kindness, and care of Jesus.

As followers of Christ, we live in the tension of the *already and not yet* — knowing that we can experience the beauty of heaven on earth, but we cannot escape the brokenness of this world. One of the most beautiful expressions of the already is when we worship—when we look beyond the reality of this world and prophetically imagine the kingdom of God established in our neighborhoods as it is in heaven.

The six-week exploration of *Neighborliness* in your church family will be an experience of worship and discipleship as you will learn to pursue the beautiful expression of God found in Revelation 7:9: *a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.*

This experience will include a church-wide book study of *Neighborliness*, a corresponding sermon series, intentional prayer gatherings, and community engagement initiatives. The framework provided in this document will give you step-by-step ideas to walk your team through the development of this journey. Feel free to make it your own and adjust accordingly to fit the vibe and culture of your church family.

To bridge the dividing lines in your community, sometimes all it takes is simply starting a conversation. Our entire team at The Neighborliness Center is praying alongside you as you walk through this journey, and we are here to help you along the way. Your commitment to biblical justice matches the heart of God and will shine the light of Jesus in your community.

Let's go!



**DR. DAVID DOCUSEN**

**Founder & Director**

*The Neighborliness Center*

[www.neighborliness.com](http://www.neighborliness.com)



# CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

The goal of the Neighborliness campaign will be to infuse your church family with the ethos of neighborliness — the behavior of Christians who seek to embody the love, understanding, curiosity, kindness, and care of Jesus.

Neighborliness is about loving people across dividing lines. The more we understand our neighbors, the better we can share the beautiful message of Jesus. The entire process of the Neighborliness campaign is rooted in discipleship with the goal of continuing to be formed into the image of Jesus.

## THE NEIGHBORLINESS CAMPAIGN CONSISTS OF:

A six-week, churchwide book study of *Neighborliness* by Dr. David Docusen

A corresponding six-week sermon series

Corporate prayer gatherings

Community engagement events



# BENEFITS

You will experience many benefits in addition to establishing a spirit of neighborliness in your community. These include:

**ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF BIBLICAL JUSTICE.** This campaign will assist you as you intentionally guide your church members into a greater understanding of the meaning and practical expression of biblical justice.

**CULTIVATING DIVERSITY.** Diverse groups will make room for deeper levels of curiosity and understanding among your church members and ensure that all feel welcome.

**FORMING DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS.** These conversations will invite existing church members to go deeper as they seek to understand one another, which will strengthen and add perspective to your church family.

# COMMON CONCERNS

Every church that we have worked with has experienced some amount of hesitancy or resistance from church members. Addressing these concerns up front helps to show a level of intentionality and preparedness from your leadership team. Common concerns include:

Hesitancy to change upcoming small group plans.

Added volunteer needs.

Concerns about leading discussion about racial or economic justice.

Resistance to biblical teaching on racial awareness due to cultural opposition to and misunderstanding of cultural terms that have been used divisively.

When you are presented with concerns about biblical teaching on race, it is important to remember that neighborliness is a discipleship journey that is rooted in Scriptures that point people to the behaviors and teaching of Jesus.

# RESOURCES

The following tools and resources to help you bring the spirit of neighborliness to your church can be found within this guide and at [neighborliness.com/resources](https://neighborliness.com/resources):

A week-by-week breakdown of topics covered in the Neighborliness campaign

Standard task list for implementation

Group study questions for the *Neighborliness* book study

Sermon elements for teaching on the message of neighborliness

Community Prayer Guide and corresponding scriptures

A marketing plan for launching the campaign in your church

Practical ideas for community engagement

The work of neighborliness is not a destination for your church, but an ongoing journey. The message of neighborliness should be considered in each ministry as you set yearly goals and programs. At the end of this campaign, your congregants will be on this journey with your church and be acquainted with the spirit of neighborliness as you begin to weave it into the fabric of your congregation.



# CONGREGATIONAL BOOK STUDY

*Neighborliness* by Dr. David Docusen is a practical guide to bridging dividing lines and learning to recognize and amplify the beauty of God in our communities. The congregational book study of *Neighborliness* will be a foundational aspect to your church family's reflection and growth during this time period. The book study will consist of a 75-minute meeting each week for six weeks. Please visit [neighborliness.com](http://neighborliness.com) to purchase books at a discounted rate.

Here is a suggested framework for the groups:

**10 minutes for arrival, greeting and childcare drop off (if offered)**

**50 minutes for facilitated group discussion**

**10 minutes for prayer**

**5 minutes for dismissal and childcare pick up (if offered)**

During the planning period for this campaign your leadership team will set a participation goal which will help determine the optimal number of leaders. We recommend that each group is approximately ten people or less. During the sign-up period there should be a consideration for new members or those who are not part of an existing group. One thing to take into account is the size of existing small groups. There may be groups that would require two or more facilitators to ensure that the discussion groups are around ten people.

There are two different approaches for how to run these meetings: **independent meetings** or **centralized meetings**. The decision on which approach would work best for your church depends on many factors and one that is best made within your church leadership. The information found within this guide is applicable to either approach and both produce great fruit when implemented in the right context.

## **APPROACH #1 INDEPENDENT MEETINGS**

The implementation of this book study largely depends on your church's existing structures and rate of congregant participation. You can use your existing small group structure to implement the book study. The small group leaders would lead their groups through the six-week study at their existing location—whether that be at a member's home or at the church.

### **BENEFITS OF THIS APPROACH:**

This approach allows the church to utilize all of the existing support structures in place for small groups such as the established groups' times, members, childcare, and refreshment preferences.

## **APPROACH #2 CENTRALIZED MEETING**

The other option is to hold all discussion groups at your church building, asking your existing small group leaders to facilitate a discussion at a table group. With this approach, your church would set a number of weekly times to conduct the weekly discussion groups, and your church members would commit to one of the weekly meeting times. This approach would centralize childcare, refreshments, and material distribution.

### **BENEFITS OF THIS APPROACH:**

A benefit to this approach would be people at your church would have the opportunity to form relationships with those outside of their existing small group and those new to small groups would be able to meet in a known and comfortable location. At times, conversations about crossing dividing lines can be difficult, and meeting in a comfortable, neutral location can ease this discomfort.

Another benefit to this approach is that it would allow pastoral and ministerial staff to be present and involved with a variety of table groups.

Both approaches provide an opportunity to engage and equip leaders within your congregation. Below you will find a suggested list of volunteer opportunities to consider as you build your Neighborliness Team.

# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

## PROJECT MANAGER

The project manager will be responsible for tracking tasks related to all areas of the campaign (book study, sermon series, prayer guide, marketing, etc.). The responsibilities of the project manager include:

- Act as liaison to church elders
- Create and maintain project budget and plan
- Lead the prayer team
- Work with key project leaders to ensure project is executed on time

## HOSPITALITY COORDINATOR

The hospitality coordinator will foster a welcoming environment during the group study times. The responsibilities of the hospitality coordinator include:

- Build a team to ensure group study locations are a welcoming and hospitable environment
- Coordinate refreshments for the group study times

## MEETING COORDINATOR

The meeting coordinator will ensure that the locations needed to host the weekly study groups and associated childcare are prepared. The responsibilities of the meeting coordinator include:

- Work with staff to confirm that meeting spaces (church room, home, etc.) are finalized
- Work with facilitators to confirm that necessary equipment is available

## MATERIALS COORDINATOR

The materials coordinator will be responsible for procuring the needed materials for the weekly book study times (i.e. pens, clipboards, study guide booklets, books, etc.). The responsibilities of the materials coordinator include:

- Maintain and manage a budget
- Purchase books via neighborliness.com (use CHURCH code)
- Coordinate handing out books and discussion guides

Procure additional necessary supplies for weekly book study times

## CHILDCARE COORDINATOR

The childcare coordinator will work with the children's ministry team to recruit and plan the use of a team of childcare workers. The responsibilities of the childcare coordinator include:

- Recruit childcare workers
- Assign childcare staff to a specific weekly time and location
- Support childcare staff with schedule changes as necessary
- Ensure childcare staff have the necessary materials to be successful
- Communicate and follow health and safety protocols

## CHILDCARE WORKER

A childcare worker will be responsible for the safety and well-being of the children in their classroom during the weekly group study times. The responsibilities of a childcare worker include:

- Commit to a weekly 1.5-hour time block during the *Neighborliness* congregational study
- Lovingly care for the children in your classroom during your designated weekly time
- Communicate any pertinent information with parents
- Clean and prepare room for future use
- Follow health and safety protocols

## PRAYER TEAM MEMBER

A member of the prayer team will intentionally pray for their church's members, leadership, and staff during the campaign. Responsibilities of a prayer team member are:

- Intentionally pray for church family, church leadership, and church staff during the six-week campaign
- Reach out to designated leaders and/or staff to ask for specific prayer requests
- Provide prayer and spiritual support to leaders or staff as needed

## FACILITATOR COORDINATOR

The facilitator coordinator will support the discussion facilitators. The responsibilities of the facilitator coordinator include:

- Commit to attending training on guiding discussion on *Neighborliness* by Dr. David Docusen
- Resolve any scheduling conflicts with facilitators by offering a substitute leader
- Mitigate any issues with materials or childcare with appropriate leaders to allow the facilitators to focus on weekly preparation
- Support and pray for the facilitators as they navigate group discussions

## DISCUSSION FACILITATOR

The discussion facilitator will guide the weekly conversation on *Neighborliness* by Dr. David Docusen. The responsibilities of a discussion facilitator include:

- Commit to attending training on guiding discussion on *Neighborliness* by Dr. David Docusen
- Commit to a weekly group study time during the congregational study on *Neighborliness*
- Prepare for weekly study by reading the assigned chapters and reviewing and reflecting on the study questions as well as key scriptures
- Guide the conversation among their group of 7-10 group members
- Steer conversation towards an ethos of neighborliness
- Follow up with group members through the week to encourage reflection and growth

The book study discussions serve as a way for congregants to process and synthesize what they are learning in the sermon series to their own lived experience. The information provided above is a great starting point for your church as you prepare to weave neighborliness in your church culture.



# SERMON SERIES

A well-designed sermon series will reinforce the biblical concept of neighborliness that your congregants will be learning together through the book study. You will lead and disciple your congregation to an ethos of neighborliness through this sermon series.

Sermon elements are available at [www.neighborliness.com/resources](http://www.neighborliness.com/resources).

# PRAYER GATHERINGS

Loving our neighbor includes looking inwards. We ask God to reveal areas of our heart that inhibit us from crossing dividing lines. In Psalm 139:23-24, David writes, *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.”* Notice the psalmist, David, is not repenting of a specific sin in the passage above. He is asking the Lord to search his heart and illuminate things that may be hiding in the dark.

Prayer is an absolutely crucial part of embodying the love of Jesus to our neighbors. You will find suggested prayer prompts and corresponding Scriptures in the campaign framework found on pages 21-22 of this guide. Prayer can be done both individually through the Community Prayer Guide and corporately through focused prayer gatherings.

In addition to congregational prayer, we suggest forming an intercessory prayer team during the rollout of the campaign. A dedicated team should be praying for the campaign to be fruitful, for grace and perseverance of leaders, and for open hearts of members. Ideas include:

Weekly prayer gatherings at the church or in homes.

Intercessory prayer during weekend services.

Churchwide prayer during services that are led by trusted leaders in the church.

# MARKETING CAMPAIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The timing of the marketing campaign will need to be customized to your specific congregation. If the subject of racial and economic injustice is a new conversation for your church, you may want to promote the campaign earlier than if your church has been accustomed to these topics.

Dr. Jemar Tisby, a leading scholar on racial justice and Christianity, recommends, “Letting people know weeks or even months in advance that you will be talking about the tender subject of race [to give] them plenty of time to mentally and emotionally prepare.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tisby, Jemar, *How to Fight Racism*, Michigan: Zondervan, 2021

# CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORK

Below you will find a framework for your church to use as you plan for your Neighborliness campaign.

## THEME FOR WEEK 1: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

- **Book Study:** Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2
- **Prayer Prompt:** Father, open my heart so I can see my neighbor as a beautiful image bearer with immeasurable dignity and worth.
- **Scripture Focus:** Genesis 1:27, Mark 12:28-34, John 15:12, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 4:11

## THEME FOR WEEK 2: COMMIT TO CURIOSITY

- **Book Study:** Chapter 3 and Chapter 4
- **Prayer Prompt:** Father God, search my heart and reveal to me the beliefs I must release to love my neighbor well.
- **Scripture Focus:** Psalm 139:23-24, Proverbs 4:5-9, John 15:1-4, 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

## THEME FOR WEEK 3: LEARN TO REFLECT

- **Book Study:** Chapter 5 and Chapter 6
- **Prayer Prompt:** I trust you God—help me let go of anything that distracts me from seeing and entering the pain of my neighbor.
- **Scripture Focus:** Psalm 63:3-4, Psalm 145:4, Matthew 12:33, John 11:35, John 13:14, Hebrews 13:3, Romans 12:1-2

## THEME FOR WEEK 4: ENGAGE IN RELATIONSHIP

- **Book Study:** Chapter 7 and Chapter 8
- **Prayer Prompt:** Heavenly Father, please give me the grace and humility that I need to form genuine relationships with my brothers and sisters across dividing lines. We belong to you and each other, and our family has been fractured for too long. Lord, help me be a part of the healing.
- **Scripture Focus:** Matthew 6:1-4, Matthew 25:35-40, Romans 12:9-16, 1 Peter 5:5, 1 Corinthians 3:16

## THEME FOR WEEK 5: EVERYBODY HAS A PART TO PLAY

- **Book Study:** Chapter 9, Chapter 10, and Chapter 11
- **Prayer Prompt:** Lord God, help me practice humility when I serve my neighbors and please take away any arrogant or conceited motives.
- **Scripture Focus:** 2 Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 6:1-10, Matthew 20:1-16, John 4:1-30, Luke 2:8-12, Ephesians 4:11-16, Philippians 2:3-4

## THEME FOR WEEK 6: EMBODY NEIGHBORLINESS

- **Book Study:** Chapter 12, Chapter 13, and Chapter 14
- **Prayer Prompt:** Lord God, please teach me how to embody your love and care to those around me. Guide my steps and humble my heart.
- **Scripture Focus:** Proverbs 14:3, Isaiah 1:16-17, Isaiah 58:6-12, Jeremiah 29:4-9, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Matthew 6:24, Revelation 21:1-4

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# **SUGGESTED MARKETING PLAN**



The following marketing plan is a template that can be adapted to fit the context of your congregation. All of the marketing resources in this plan can be found at [www.neighborliness.com/resources](http://www.neighborliness.com/resources).

## 8-6 WEEKS OUT FROM CAMPAIGN START DATE

- Video of Dr. David Docusen inviting your church into the conversation of neighborliness
- *Neighborliness* quote graphics for promotion on social media

## 6-4 WEEKS OUT FROM CAMPAIGN START DATE

- Video clips of Dr. David Docusen preaching on the topic of neighborliness
- *Neighborliness* quote graphics for promotion on social media

## 4 WEEKS OUT FROM CAMPAIGN START

- Lead pastor/staff promotes the campaign via video on social media and from the stage
- Personal testimonies via video (30-45 seconds) from church staff and members who have read and been impacted by *Neighborliness* by Dr. David Docusen
- *Neighborliness* quote graphics for promotion on social media

## 3 WEEKS OUT FROM CAMPAIGN START

- Staff members promote the campaign via video on social media and from the stage
- Campaign is promoted from stage during service
- If applicable, share a video from a location that has a historical significance to put this work into context of your community
- *Neighborliness* quote graphics for promotion on social media

## 2 WEEKS OUT FROM CAMPAIGN START

- Campaign is promoted from stage during service
- Video montage of church members or leaders sharing what they are most excited to learn about during this campaign
- *Neighborliness* quote graphics for promotion on social media

## 1 WEEK OUT FROM CAMPAIGN START

- Campaign is promoted from stage during service
- Lead pastor promotes campaign in a video that can be shared on social media
- *Neighborliness* quote graphics for promotion on social media

## DURING THE CAMPAIGN

- Social media graphics that promote the weekly prayer prompt and scriptures
- Video clips from sermon series
- Video montage of how this campaign is impacting church members
- Pictures of meetings on social media
- Educational information to be shared via social media (i.e. information specific to your church's area and explanation of historical events with anniversaries occurring during your campaign)

## AFTER THE CAMPAIGN

- Celebrate your church's commitment to neighborliness from the stage
- Create a video montage including personal testimonies, pictures from weekly meetings, video clips from sermons, etc.





# A FINAL THOUGHT: THE REMNANT

The Lord has always used a small number of unexpected people from the margins to administer justice and bring healing to a larger group of people. The biblical word for this group of people is *remnant*.

A remnant remains in the midst of heartache, pain, cultural division, injustice, and oppression. We in the body of Christ have everything needed to bring healing to our communities, our cities, our nation, and our world. There has to be a small group of people willing to engage in learning and conversations about racial and economic injustice. We need to awaken and empower the remnant.

Through this campaign your church is taking a courageous step to be a part of this remnant. You have made a choice to care and see your brothers and sisters with intrigue and as beautiful image-bearers. Your church will see cities rebuilt, repaired, and restored (Isaiah 58:12). You just need to say *Lord, here I am, send me* and remember that in moments of resistance and discouragement that the Lord is with you and with your church family (Joshua 1:9).

Neighborliness moves us toward the beauty of God. We believe that your church will benefit from this season of prayer, worship, teaching, and honest exploration of God's heart for everyone in your community. Additional resources for ongoing engagement in and through your church family are available at [www.neighborliness.com/resources](http://www.neighborliness.com/resources).

Our team is cheering you on and we are praying that you are able to love like Jesus, cross dividing lines, and transform your community.



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