

Rooted and Linked



Finding Our Way into the Neighbourhood

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The People

This workshop—on how individuals, families, and small faith communities might become more present in their neighbourhoods—has been designed for the neighbourhood hub facilitators of Hillside Church.

The Situation

At Hillside Church, there is a deep conviction that the church is called to be fully present in the neighbourhoods that it inhabits. That said, the neighbourhood hubs of Hillside—which are small communities of people who are attempting to be more creative, hospitable, and collaborate in the places that they call home—are commonly asking the following question: What does it practically look like to become more present in the places that we live?

This workshop is designed to equip Hillside’s hub facilitators with tools that will empower them to lead their hub members into a deeper presence in the particularity of their neighbourhoods.

As a result of this workshop, it is expected that Hillside’s hub facilitators will be able to do the following:

- ❖ Verbalize a theology of place and neighbourliness
- ❖ Facilitate a neighbourhood mapping exercise with their hubs
- ❖ Help their hubs to discern how they—as individuals, families, and friends—might become more present and collaborative in their neighbourhoods

The Time and Place

The workshop will be five hours in length (with two short breaks and lunch). It will run from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm on Saturday, May 19. The workshop will take place in UnLondon’s co-working space in the old Novac’s Building—211 King Street. This is an open space that is filled with natural light, exposed brick, and old, wood beams. The aesthetic—paired with the roundtables, chairs, and coffee—should inspire creative thinking and robust conversations.

The Content	The Achievement-Based Objectives
A Theology of Neighbourliness	Reflected on passages of Scriptures to discover how Christian thinking and practice intersect with the places that we live in and the people that we dwell among
Sensory-Based Exploration and Attachment	Experienced a neighbourhood in a holistic way—paying special attention to the ways that our senses are engaged
Mapping a Neighbourhood	Outlined the distinct resources that exist in each represented neighbourhood
Presence through Collaboration and Placemaking	Defined placemaking, identified the distinct characteristics of our neighbourhoods, and generated a list of tentative, place-based ideas for both the present and the future of our neighbourhoods

PART 1: SENSORY-BASED EXPLORATION AND ATTACHMENT

Warm Up Activity (Part 1):

- ❖ On your own, reflect on an experience where you felt particularly connected to the place that you live in and/or the people that you share it with. Describe the experience in the text box below.

Warm Up Activity (Part 2):

- ❖ In groups of 2-3, share the experience that you outlined above and explain why you think that you felt the level of connection that you did.

A Scripture to Ponder:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (Jeremiah 29:4-7 NRSV)

Discussion Question (groups of 2-3):

- ❖ Why do you think that God called them to build houses, plant gardens, and seek the welfare of the city?
- ❖ What are some of the factors that impede us from experiencing the places that we live in with all of our senses? Write your answers onto the post-it notes in front of you, and then stick them onto the flipchart at the front of the room. As you stick them onto the flipchart, state what you wrote down out loud.

Observation:

One of the reasons that we often feel disconnected from the places that we live in is because we aren't consistently experiencing them with all our senses. We learn—and foster attachment—when we experience something with our whole selves. The design, functionality, and characteristics of a neighbourhood will impact how easy or how difficult it will be to utilize all our senses. If we don't attach ourselves to our neighbourhoods and our neighbours, we will always dream of being somewhere else, and it will become difficult to practice presence—and to discern God's activity and invitation—in the context of our neighbourhoods.



Neighbourhood Walk

Task Description:

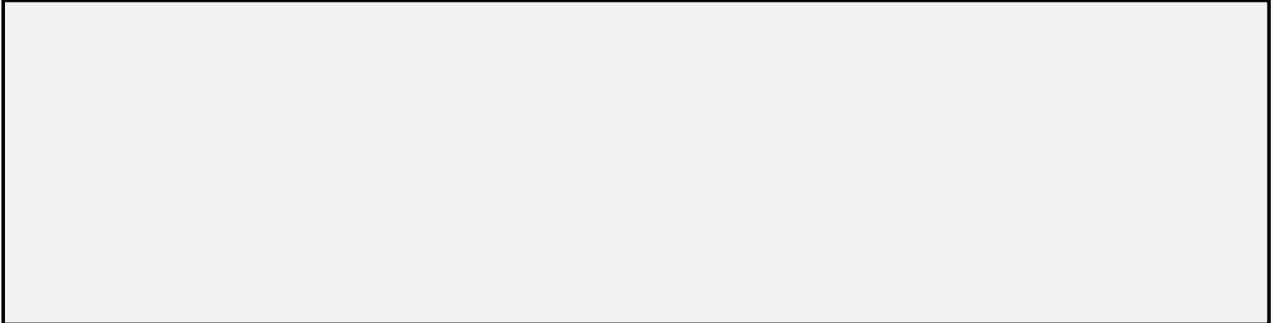
For the next 25 minutes, we are going to go outside and attempt to experience this neighbourhood with all five of our senses. Throughout this solo experience, be intentionally attentive, engage all your surroundings as fully as you can, and jot down what you notice and experience in your notebook. Use the questions below to guide your time, and we will discuss them together when we get back.

Personal Reflection

1. What did you touch, smell, see, hear, and taste? Be as detailed as possible.

2. How did the design and functionality of this neighbourhood impact your senses? Did it hinder you from using them, or did it welcome your senses and enhance your experience?

3. What might it look like for you and your hub to experience your neighbourhood—with all your senses—in the coming weeks? Think about practical, attainable steps.



PART 2: MAPPING OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

Observation: To be rooted and linked in the places that we inhabit, we need to have a good sense of the resources, skills, and experiences that exist all around us. When these gifts are shared, cultivated, and leveraged between neighbours, they can help us to work toward the common good in our neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood Mapping Exercise:

In groups (based on geography), we are going to map out the assets that already exist in our neighbourhoods. This exercise will help us to recognize the valuable resources that we possess, identify the resources that are missing, and discuss how we might leverage them for the common good. The mapping exercise instructions are found on the next page.



Mapping Exercise Instructions

1. Using coloured sticky notes, you will identify and map the following assets onto the large map of your neighbourhood that has been provided:
 - **INDIVIDUALS** (their knowledge, networks, interests, capacities, and skills)
 - **PHYSICAL/SOCIAL SPACES** (parks, gardens, vacant land, cafes, libraries, playgrounds, public spaces, and natural environments)
 - **ASSOCIATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS** (community, voluntary, social, special-interest, and faith groups)
2. If connections exist between the assets that you map, draw lines—and a brief text description—between them.
3. Once these resources are mapped out and connected to one another (where possible), take an inventory of your own individual assets—your relationships, connections, skills, and capacities—and then add them to the map.

Group Reflection

- In light of the mapping exercise, are we making good use of the assets and connections that exist in our neighbourhood?
- Are there any clear gaps in resources, skills, and experiences?
- What would be a small step that we could take—as individuals, as families, and/or as hubs—toward leveraging these resources and connections in a faithful way that seeks the common good of our neighbourhood?

PART 3: PRESENCE THROUGH COLLABORATION AND PLACEMAKING

Passages to Ponder:

- *“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”* (John 1:14 in The Message)
- *“...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”* (Mark 12:30-31 NRSV)

Observation:

In Christ, God moved intimately close to us. The maker of all things chose a deep, abiding presence instead of an impersonal distance. When we are present in our neighbourhoods, we encounter a vantage point where we can observe and hear the needs, hopes, and longings of our neighbours. We are invited to be present listeners who take up space in the places that we live out our lives—trusting that the Spirit is at work, wooing our neighbours and ourselves to Christ.

Part of the reason that neighborhood-centric collaboration makes sense is because the neighborhood is one of the few things that we share with others; it is the common source material that will inspire creativity in the context of our places. This collaboration starts with an awareness of the design, functionality, and social capacity of our neighbourhoods, for it is this awareness that will help us to cultivate a contextual imagination for the places that we inhabit.

Analyzing our Neighbourhoods Exercise

We are going to split up our group based on the neighbourhoods that we live in. Once you are around a table with your neighbours, use the below diagram to identify some of the distinct characteristics of your neighbourhood. On a scale of 1-10 (one represents the lowest score), how would you rank your neighbourhood in each of the four sections?



This image comes from a booklet entitled, “Placemaking: What if we built our cities around places.” This booklet was issued by The Project for Public Spaces and is available for download on their website: <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>.

Group Discussion:

1. In light of the diagram, what does your neighbourhood possess in abundance, and what does it lack?
2. How might these characteristics impact the way that you and your hub are present in your neighbourhood?
3. If you could make one change to the physical design of your neighbourhood, what would it be? Feel free to add, alter, or take away from the current design of your place.



A Working Definition for Placemaking

“Placemaking is the process through which we work together to shape our public spaces. Rooted in community-based participation, Placemaking involves the planning, design, management and programming of shared use spaces. More than just designing spaces, Placemaking brings together diverse people (including professionals, elected officials, residents, and businesses) to improve a community’s cultural, economic, social and ecological situation.” – Rethink Urban

Placemaking is for Everyone:

- Watch the following TED Talk, by Cara Courage, entitled, [*Placemaking and Community*](#)

On your own, answer the following three question

1. What becomes possible when we create space in our lives—practically and creatively—for placemaking? Think in terms of community, culture-making, and mission.

2. What are some ways that you—and the individuals/families that make up your hubs—are experimenting with placemaking?

3. With the distinctness—and resources—of your neighbourhood in mind, what are some place-based ideas that could cultivate community, enhance a sense of place, and inspire collaboration with your neighbours?
 - a. First, think in terms of small, simple action items that could be implemented immediately and with minimal effort
 - b. Secondly, think of large, lofty, long-term dreams.

Group Discussion:

- Once you have answered these questions, discuss some of your ideas with the people that you executed the mapping exercise with and then jot the ideas down—on your neighbourhood map—under two columns: “Simple” and “Long-Term”.

Local Examples of Placemaking:

- ❖ Together, we will view a slideshow that highlights different placemaking projects that are currently going on in London—including the neighbourhoods that we live in. Let these examples inspire you!



A local porch concert series in Woodfield

Placemaking Tips

- Start small
- Leverage your skills and passions
- Find partners
- Favour temporary over permanent (at the beginning)
- Listen to your community
- Search out funding
- Share stories to inspire more placemaking

In Conclusion

1. Invite your neighbourhood hub members to add to the asset map of resources, skills, and experiences that you've generated
2. Keeping in mind your time, your interests, your skills, and your context, consider the ways that you might want to pursue a place-based project in the coming weeks/months—trusting that when we are present and collaborative, we create space for God's presence and activity to be discerned
3. Start conversing with your hub about a theology of neighbourliness, and find holistic ways to experience the neighbourhood that you share in common
4. Pray for your neighbours and your neighbourhoods, and ask God to inspire collaboration, safe spaces for belonging and connection, and the opportunity to proclaim Jesus in both word and deed