SC2ER WEEK 5 WHO ARE MY NEIGHBORS?

This week your group will be exploring the biblical and contemporary meaning of “Who Are My Neighbors?” The focus is meant to enlarge your scope of vision of who may be culturally and ethnically different from yourself and others in your community. Think about people you include and feel comfortable with. And then think about people who are excluded, invisible, or not welcomed because their humanity is different than yours.

Sacred Scripture: Leviticus 19:16-18

New Revised Standard Version Interpretation

You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord. You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. NSRV

The Message Contemporary Interpretation

Don’t spread gossip and rumors. Don’t just stand by when your neighbor’s life is in danger. I am God. Don’t secretly hate your neighbor. If you have something against him/her, get it out into the open; otherwise you are an accomplice in his/her guilt. Don’t seek revenge or carry a grudge against any of your people. Love your neighbor as yourself. I am God. The Message

Listen to the Sacred Songs

Universal Love: Soul II Soul https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuQm2lyKJuM

Sean Felices/Happiness https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvB6lMf776Y

Sacred Lesson:

Leviticus 19:16-18 Love your Neighbor

The prime directive and core message in Leviticus 19 is justice and peace come when you love your neighbor. Conversely, a lack of love leads to a lack of justice and peace. Do the right thing in relationships and there will be right relationships in society.

Holiness is predicated upon just relationships between individuals. Justice unravels when injustices are perpetrated on the bodies, minds, spirits, and livelihoods of our neighbors.
Enacting trauma on our neighbors has a social cost. Violating our neighbors with hate messages, racism, and white supremacy, and domestic terrorism by white nationalists groups such as, the Alt-Right, and the Klu Klux Klan are violations against God. Individuals who believe in and support an anti-people of color, anti-immigrant agenda with desires to build walls along the U.S. border, deface Muslim mosques, desecrate Jewish Temples, and target, attack and harass men, women and children in traditional Arab and Muslim dress cannot claim Christianity as their faith and Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Other violations against our neighbors include segregation tactics, military-style violence by law enforcement in people of color communities, and complicit silence when people of color are denied justice in the courts. Our neighbors are violated when people who claim faith in a loving God act against the love of God when innocent women, men, and children are assaulted, violated, murdered, and then abandoned, ignored, and told to get over their pain and loss.

Our complicit silence and inaction separates us further from communion with God when hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, tornadoes, and other natural disasters leave our neighbors without food, power, and a means to secure their bodies, as they try to survive tragedy and the deaths of loved ones. The church and those who profess faith in Christ keeps violating the command to love our neighbors as ourselves. And perhaps therein lies the problem, we don’t know what love is and therefore violate our own souls with false spirituality, false piety, and slanderous worship practices.

For Jesus, love of neighbor is an essential aspect of his own theology. Love for neighbor is not optional, numerous scriptures provide Jesus’ theological understanding that love for others is most clear and illuminates one’s love for God.

When we violate love for our neighbors, we send a clear message to God that we do not love the Creator, we pay lip service to Jesus and the commandment to love, and we ignore the teachings of the Holy Spirit’s Pentecost message to be the Church.

Grace allows us to try again each day to live into a Leviticus ethic of love:

*Do not mistreat strangers and foreigners. “When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him/her (them). The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love them as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” 19:33, 34*

All persons within the household are to be treated humanely. This lesson remains the tension within the family of faith. The United States of America cannot claim Christianity as the national religion because it has
not lived up to ethical and moral responsibilities of treating neighbors with respect, dignity, and humanely. In fact the opposite is true for the Church and society. Christians in America have chosen to worship idols such as hate, money, human trafficking, enslavement, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and the mistreatment of women and girls. White skin worship and claiming dominance in faith and society does not honor God and therefore is a violation of God’s requirement for just relationships.

Photo Credit: National Museum of African American History & Culture

SlaveryandFreedom_08_Credit-AlanKarchmer.jpg from Douglas Remley (Smithsonian)
The Original Inhabitants of North America: First Nations People

The indigenous peoples of the Americas arrived in North America via the Bering Strait land bridge, which existed approximately 15,000 years ago between Siberia and Alaska, and probably also via a succession of sea migrations from Asia. Indigenous Americans do not represent a single culture, language or identity, nor are they all descendants of a single people. Thousands of ethnic groups and different languages have existed in the Americas; nearly 1,000 indigenous languages persist to this day.

Starting in the late 15th century (ignoring early medieval Norse visits), Spain, Portugal, France, England and other European countries began to colonize North and South America. In the 1490s, Christopher Columbus and other Europeans referred to all of Asia as “India.” Not knowing of the Americas and assuming they had reached Asia, they referred to the inhabitants they encountered as “Indians.” Within a few years Europeans realized that they were dealing with a new continent, but the name Indian remained common in many European languages, including English, through the 20th century. Indian, or American Indian to avoid confusion with actual Indians, remains a common and neutral term for indigenous Americans in the United States. Since the 1960s, Native American is increasingly common and increasingly preferred in academic, formal and official contexts in the US. Native American is sometimes considered more polite and respectful in the US, while Indian is more old-fashioned. Indigenous people of Alaska, however, are typically referred to as Alaska Natives in official US legal contexts such as the census and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. This is because Alaska was acquired from Russia separately after the mainland US had mostly been colonized; indigenous Alaskans represent not one but many groups, both “Native American” and Inuit.

First Nations is the most common and polite way to refer to indigenous Canadians who are not Métis or Inuit (more on them in a moment). (Status) Indian continues to exist as a legal term in Canada, as one must have “treaty status” or “Indian status” to access a variety of government benefits. The Arctic area was not covered by the Numbered Treaties, so the Inuit are considered separate from the First Nations, whom they also differ from ethnically and linguistically. The Métis are an ethnic group from Western Canada derived from a mixture of European (often French Canadian) culture and Aboriginal (often Cree, Ojibway and related groups). Their traditional language, Michif, represents a complex blend of French and Cree grammar. The First Nations, Inuit and Métis can collectively be referred to as Aboriginal or Aboriginal Canadians, or indigenous Canadians. Native Americans, while not considered offensive or old-fashioned, is not often used in Canada. Unlike in the US, Indian is usually considered offensive in Canada outside of specific legal contexts.
Note — *Eskimo* is considered offensive in Canada and Greenland; the term *Inuit* is preferred, although people in Greenland commonly refer to themselves as *Greenlanders* or *Kalaallit*, using the local Inuit term. Eskimo is still used in the US and in some anthropological contexts as an umbrella term encompassing the Yupik and other non-Inuit groups speaking languages of the Eskimo-Aleut family. Outside of the US context, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, which represents 150,000 Inuit and Yupik people of Greenland, Canada, Alaska, and Siberia, defines *Inuit* in its charter as referring collectively to all of these peoples. The term *Eskimo* is also used in linguistic or anthropological works to denote a branch of the Eskimo–Aleut language family.

In summary, *Native American* is the most common and neutral term in the US, while *First Nations* is the preferred term in Canada, although both exclude the Inuit. *Indian* is acceptable in the US, but should be avoided in Canada. *Aboriginal* is the only common umbrella term encompassing First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada, but it is not used in US English.

Of course, each indigenous American group usually prefers to be called by its own specific name, such as *Cree, Lakota, Cherokee*, etc. In the 21st century there is an increasing tendency among First Nations and Native Americans to reclaim traditional endonyms in replacement of traditional European exonyms for them (e.g. *Nuxalk* instead of *Bella Coola*, or *Tłı̨cho* instead of *Dogrib*).

**Be Very Careful!** Archaic slur words for Native Americans, such as *redskin*, *squaaw*, etc., are considered very offensive despite their use in some place names and sports team names in the US and Canada. There is a movement to remove these terms as place names and team names. Equivalent terms continue to be common, if old-fashioned, in some other European languages (e.g. Italian *pellerossa*, European French *Peau-Rouge*) where there is less understanding and discussion of Native American issues. In English they are quite a bit more offensive.

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Druide informatique inc.
1435 Saint-Alexandre street, suite 1040
Montreal (Quebec) H3A 2G4
Canada
Phone +1 514-484-4998
Toll-free North America : 1-800-537-8433; Europe : 00.800.53.70.84.33
Sacred Group Processing

1. Form a group circle and discuss what you’ve read and seen. Process together what you felt as you listened to or read the biblical text.

2. Think about moments you internally resented sharing physical space with people ethnically and culturally different from yourself. Why did you feel this way?

3. What about that moment and others made you feel [a] superior because of what you were taught about others; [b] less than or inferior because of what you were taught about yourself?

4. Process what you felt as you viewed the maps of Our Indigenous Neighbors First Nations People. Discuss what know about the land you live on based on the information you’ve read.
5. Why are Our Neighbors invisible and what should be done to correct the history concerning the original inhabitants of the land?

6. Great harm, injury and trauma impacts Indigenous, First Nations, and Aboriginal people groups. What role does the Christian Church play? Discuss how to incorporate this history into your church community.


Close: Psalm 51 and Sacred Song:

Navajo Healing Song By The Navajo & The Sioux: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1ulidwo27s

Additional Resources for the Journey:


2. Cultural Appropriation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0b33twnpqvE

3. Native American Dance and Regalia https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPjYdfA_tLU

4. Living a Circular Life https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niRs_VlgzYU
5. India – Land of Rich Culture [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsQHAGluOO4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsQHAGluOO4)

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