



## Reflecting on Our Relationships in Light of God's Love - Neighbors

*The very act of the incarnation is God showing us a new way of living and being in relationship powered by love that is revealed in revolutionary relationship.\* -Rozella Haydée White*

**Before we begin:** Because God wishes to be in close relationship with us, let's use this Advent, this new year of the church, to examine and mend our relationships. Let's spend time rejoicing and repairing our relationships with neighbor, family, self, and God. When we focus on these relationships, we see that they can be life-giving and risk-taking. They can be vulnerable and forgiving; gracious, diverse, and accountable. Advent – the season of preparing for a relationship with Christ – is truly all about this.

Today let's think about our relationships with our neighbors and coworkers.

### Invocation

In our deep and unshakeable belief that you are with us always, God, please open our hearts and minds and souls to the love that you wish to pour into us. Give us joy in the knowledge that you are always in relationship with us, and accompany us as we explore our relationships.

### Confession

**God, you know us through and through. You already know that we can be catty, jealous, impatient, and snarky with the people in our lives. It is sometimes easy to dismiss those who are not like us. We really want to change. We really want to love others as you love us. But sometimes it is so hard! Be patient with us, please, God, and teach us. We promise to try to listen. Amen**

### Isaiah 2:2-5

In the last days, the mountain of YHWH's temple will be established as the most important mountain and raised above all other hills – all nations will stream toward it. Many people will come and say: "Come, let us climb YHWH's mountain to the Temple of the God of Jacob, that we may be instructed in God's ways and walk in God's paths." Instruction will be given from Zion and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem. God will judge between the nations and render decisions for many countries. They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation will not raise the sword against another, and never again will they train for war. (The Inclusive Bible)

## **Psalm 122:1 and 8**

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you." (NRSV)

### **Prayer**

Leader: God, when all nations stream toward you, inspire us to be among them and to greet them all with open arms and open hearts.

**All: I will say, "Peace be within you."**

Leader: Jesus, when nations beat swords and spears and guns into tools, help us to be a part of the work; shoulder to shoulder, in a good relationship with all.

**All: I will say, "Peace be within you."**

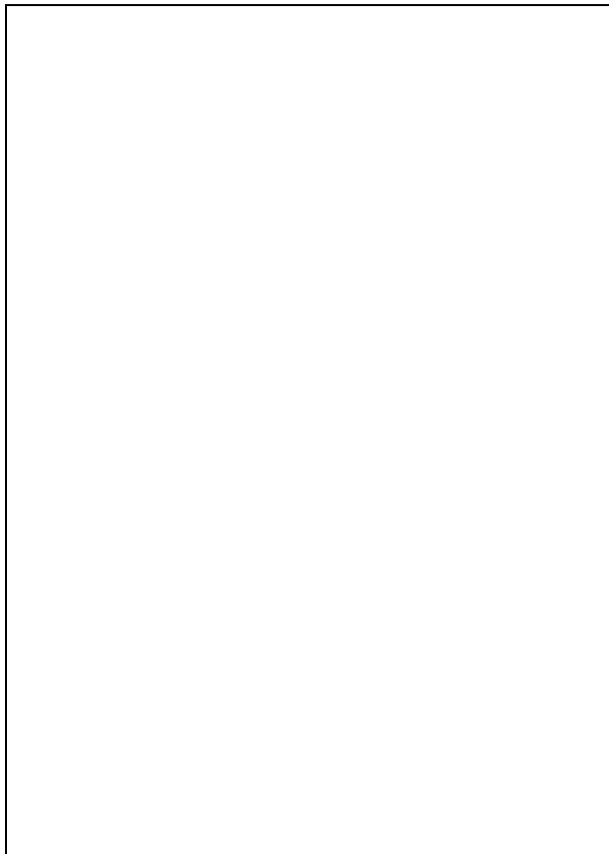
Leader: Spirit, guide and inspire us to help bring about the day when nations study peace and not war any more.

**All: I will say, "Peace be within you." Amen**

### **A time of silence**

You are invited into a time of silence. Take a deep breath and exhale slowly. Listen for God.

This year we are writing about our relationships as our spiritual practice. We are reflecting on our relationships in light of God's love. Look at the collage of faces. Find a face that makes you think about a neighbor or co-worker. Sit quietly as you think about that person. How is that relationship? How would you like it to be? Pray for that person. Now write a short note (like a postcard or a tweet) to that person.



### **A blessing**

May we love God, our neighbors, and ourselves  
with all the creativity of our minds,  
the strength of our hearts,  
the power of our bodies,  
and the resilience of the Spirit. Amen

### **Sending: An invitation to go deeper**

Jesus came as a stranger to the world. How do I currently treat the strangers in my midst? Would I reach out to befriend him?

One of the questions that Jesus invited us to consider was, 'Who is my neighbor?' In answering this question, Jesus leads us to consider that sometimes our view of neighbor is limiting.

How might I broaden who I include in the answer to the question, who is my neighbor? Who is outside of my little circle of neighbors? What might a relationship with these folks look like?

# **LEAD**

**Advent 2019 Week 1**  
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