

Who is my neighbour?

Faith, housing and the local community

Opening prayer

Introduction

This session introduces the series by drawing on the parable of the Good Samaritan to explore the question of 'Who is my neighbour?' It also considers some of the ideas of the Year of Mercy which is being celebrated by many churches in 2016. We will consider who our neighbours are - not just those in the house next door or in the pew on a Sunday - but all those around us who are in need of love and support, mercy and justice.

We will hear about the housing crisis from the perspective of our neighbours in some of the diverse institutions who work together as part of London Citizens: Saint Gabriel's College, a Church of England Secondary School in Lambeth; Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church, Brixton; St John's Angell Town Church of England Primary School, Brixton and Hyderi Islamic Centre, Streatham.

Rounds

Share a time when you were a good neighbour or someone was a good neighbour to you.

Context

London Citizens

London Citizens is an alliance of churches, schools, and other faith and community groups, working together for justice and the common good. In the lead up to the elections for Mayor of London in May 2016, London Citizens is working with communities to tackle London's housing crisis. This series has been put together by members of London Citizens in the borough of Lambeth, exploring the issue of housing and asking what faith has to contribute to the issue.

Year of Mercy

This year Pope Francis, in *Misericordia Vultus* (MV) has invited Roman Catholics and other Christians to contemplate mercy as a defining theme of the Christian faith. Through his actions and through his parables Jesus teaches us what mercy is like, describing God as a Father who never gives up on his children, who is constantly 'overcoming rejection with compassion and mercy.' His parables also show that, "mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are... Just as God is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other." (MV par 9).

Scripture

Luke 10:25-37 (NRSV)

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took

care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Going deeper

The Samaritan was from a different place, of a different ethnicity and religion to the injured man in the parable – but he was the person who responded to him in need. When does your own community show mercy to your neighbours in this way? What are the barriers which prevent people showing such mercy?

Listening to our neighbours

Students from Saint Gabriel's College, a Church of England Secondary School in Lambeth, visited fellow members of London Citizens to find out how the housing crisis affects their neighbours in the local community. The students filmed and interviewed community leaders to find out how housing affects their institution and what their faith has to say about the housing crisis.

Watch the video: Who is my neighbour?

Share your reaction to the video with the person next to you.

Questions for discussion

1. Fr Adrian talks about those whom society calls "outsiders." Who do you think our society considers are outsiders? How should we respond as Christians?
2. The needs the Samaritan responded to were obvious. Often, though, we don't know much about our neighbours' needs – it was through asking that the students found out how significantly Marian has been affected by housing problems. How does your church find out what the needs of your neighbours are?
3. Sheikh Jaffer talks about the importance of secure housing for the flourishing of the community. How is housing affecting your local community?

Decide on an action to take this week, either individually or as a group, for example:

- a) London Citizens is about building community through relationships. One-to-one conversations (121s) are a key way of building relationships through sharing stories, listening to each other and finding out what our hopes or needs are. Find another person and spend two minutes sharing an experience or story from your community about housing.
- b) Think about your neighbours. Make time in the next week to find out about their lives and ask God to show you how you might be a good neighbour to them.

You may find the following resources useful:

- London Citizens Housing Manifesto 2016: http://www.citizensuk.org/housing_manifesto_2016
- Who is my neighbour? A letter from the Anglican House of Bishops to the people and parishes of the Church of England before the General Election 2015: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2170230/whoismyneighbour-pages.pdf>

Closing Prayer

Further resources are available at: <http://www.theology-centre.org.uk/> Follow the conversation and share photos of your discussions and actions on Twitter: #whoismyneighbour @citizensuk @theologycentre



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