

Impact on the Community

Who is my neighbour? Faith, housing and the local community

Opening prayer

Introduction

The housing crisis is about more than just homes: this session is about the wider impact of housing on local communities. We will hear from Martin, Headteacher and Fran, Deputy Headteacher at St John's, Angell Town (Church of England) Primary about how housing is affecting their school and from Canon Rosemarie, the parish priest, about how faith relates to this issue. We will then look at actions we can take to help our communities to flourish.

Feedback

If you were involved in the previous session, what action have you taken on the issues raised? What has the response been?

Rounds

What are the key institutions which enable your local community to thrive? Think about schools, churches, businesses, community groups...

Context

Since July this year, thousands of people from across London Citizens' membership have been listening to one another about how London's housing crisis has affected their lives. We started in our 220 institutions, taking time to listen to one another. We met in groups to share our experiences and gathered by borough to vote on the housing injustices we want to take action on together. Through this listening campaign, London Citizens identified that "affordable" housing no longer means what most people understand by the term. Most new housing developments do not include enough affordable homes for Londoners, and many people are being priced out of London – away from their homes, their jobs and their communities – at an alarming rate.

On 28th April 2016, we will be asking the future Mayor of London to act on this issue in front of 6,000 people. You can find out more in the London Citizens Housing Manifesto 2016 (see link below).

Scripture

Jeremiah 29:4-7 (NRSV)

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.

John 14:1-3 (NRSV)

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

Going deeper

How do these passages give us hope for the future and encourage us to act in the present?



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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: Impact on the community

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

Questions for discussion

1. Martin and Fran talk about children being evicted and teachers being unable to afford to live close enough to the school. How does listening to these stories make you feel?
2. Do these stories make you think differently about the housing crisis?
3. How can we "seek the welfare of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7) in which we live?

Decide on an action to take this week, either individually or as a group, e.g.:

- a) Speak to someone from a community institution (e.g. one of the places you named in the rounds question at the start of this session) about how the housing crisis is affecting their institution.
- b) We are more effective in making change when we work together. Start making a list of all the institutions you have spoken to and how housing affects them. Record their stories - we will use these stories in a later session.
- c) Find out more about the proposals developed by London Citizens for a **London Living Rent** and **Good Development Standard** of 50 per cent affordable housing. Share these proposals and discuss with your community. Do these proposals reflect the vision for housing that we see in the Bible? How would they affect your community?

You may find the following resources useful:

- London Citizens Housing Manifesto 2016: citizensuk.org/housing_manifesto_2016

Closing Prayer

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