

Our Happy Place (6) - Outreach and Mission Yesterday's Sermon Summary

1. The sixth and final core value for KirkWood reads as follows: "Core Value #6 Outreach and Mission – 'Go, Proclaim, Do.' Following the example and teachings of Jesus, we make our world bigger, not smaller. We share the message of Jesus and show love and care for those that are struggling (the poor, lonely, homeless, hungry, sick, elderly, and others in need). We prioritize partnerships with other organizations because we can do more of God's work together than we can on our own.



2. We took a close look at one of the most important passages in the writings of the apostle Paul about mission and outreach on Sunday - [2nd Corinthians 5.17-20](#).

3. The key, repeated term in this passage is "reconciliation," which means "peace between hostile parties."

4. For Paul, reconciliation stands at the heart of the Christian message and mission. It is our better story. As Chris Rice and Emmanuel Katongole, professors at Duke Divinity School, write in their book *Reconciling All Things*, "What we need is a story that helps us remember that another world is possible. We do not lose heart because we look beyond the visible, beyond the now, and remember the story of God. Without that story, we would be overwhelmed, crushed, even destroyed."

5. Our denomination, the PCUSA, agrees with and expands on Paul's central theme of reconciliation: check out [The Confession of 1967, 9.31 and 9.44-9.46](#), in which God's work of reconciliation is to extend far enough to resolve racism, bring peace between nations, and eradicate poverty. This is God's ultimate goal, in the Old Testament called "shalom," God's peace, vitality, wholeness, and connection brought to each and every part of creation.

6. God's reconciling work starts with each and every one of us individually, and then works its way outward, because you cannot give to others what you yourself do not possess. To make peace, you must first be at peace.

7. And note in the passage that God is the protagonist of this story of reconciliation, not us; we are merely His supporting players. It is God's responsibility primarily, not ours. "The world is not ours to save," as writes Anglican priest Tyler Wigg-Stevenson.

8. Our roles or tasks as described in 2 Cor. 5.17-20 are twofold: first, we are "servants of reconciliation." That is, it is through how we serve that we join God in His unfolding story of reconciliation.

9. Richard Foster says that truly Christian service is distinguished by a) faith to believe in the impact that we can't always see, b) a determination to not differentiate between big and small acts of service, and c) a lifestyle committed to service, thus not defining service as a mere event or accomplishment

10. If being a "servant of reconciliation" is about doing, then being "an ambassador for Christ" is about speaking. An "ambassador" in the ancient Greco-Roman world was a trustworthy, reliable, loyal spokesperson for a dignitary or ruler. Thus, we have been entrusted with the better story of what God is doing in the world and His ultimate goal of reconciliation, and it is our glad duty to speak that into every life and community.

11. To summarize our own role in God's reconciliation, let's cite the book *All Things Reconciled* once more: "Here and now, we take the time to live reconciliation well. We go into the gaps and lay down our lives. We choose to go far and not fast...We do what we can by giving what we have...We give with love and excellence, even if our best is given to those things that seem small, for, like Jesus, we have learned the significance of washing the feet of the one who will betray us, and of going out of our way for the stranger by the side of the road. We go into the gaps because we should. But we keep going because we have come to know Jesus more intimately by doing so. What we learn in all of this, and proclaim with our voices and through our living, is that what matters...is not the moment or the big splash but who we become, with whom we connect, and what we leave behind over the long haul. All we can do is leave a footprint in the sand of our broken world that declares, 'The way things are is not the way things have to be.' This, and this alone, is success."

A Prayer for the Week

Adapted from Rev. Terri Pelarski (Episcopal; Dearborn, MI):

Holy God, before time You knew me, and in time You redeem me and call me precious in Your sight. May I love as You love.

Faithful One, Your hands hold steady those in turbulent waters and make strong the fragile and the weak. May I love as You love.

Gracious God, may my life be food for the hungry, friendship to the lonely, and encouragement to the broken. May I love as You love.

God of justice, remove the indifference that keep me from speaking up and speaking out, even if I'm the only one to do so. May I love as You love.

Loving God, may my attentiveness outweigh my fear, may my compassion overwhelm my anxiety, and may my resolve outlast my many distractions. May I love as you love, amen.

Explore More This Week

- A 2 min. encouraging us to remember that our mission really isn't about our nice buildings or programs, but the personal impact we have on others during the course of our normal lives: [The Missional Church... simple](#)

- Revisit what we learned about outreach and mission in our congregational book reading from the summer of 2021, "Surprise the World!"...here's a 7 min. video with its author, Michael Frost: [The Mission of the Church - Michael Frost](#)

- A short piece on our role in "mission" vs. God's role in "mission": [Renovaré | Our Role and God's Role in Missions - Mekdes Haddis](#)

- We reach out and do mission work because God by His very character and nature is a reaching out, missionary kind of God. This is called the "missio dei," that is, "God's mission" or even "God who is on mission." These two short and impactful videos will walk you through this crucial idea (the first is 1 minute, the second is 2.5 minutes): [The Missio Dei](#) and [Missio Dei](#)

- We used a part of this PCUSA curriculum during the 11:00 discussion group yesterday. It's free and downloadable. Peruse it as you'd like. Use it over a few weeks in your own devotional life: [turn-to-the-living-god.pdf](#)

- 9 simple habits to create an "outreach culture" in any church: [9 habits to develop an outreach culture](#)