



THE FPC JOURNEY

**Walking in Freedom,
Wholeness, and
Intimacy**

February 2026

www.ReachingTheValley.org

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF SANTA
CLARA

OR



A Question Worth Sitting With

By; Chrys Sahgal

JI was out on my daily run recently, heading down Homestead before turning onto Winchester toward El Camino. As I waited at the crosswalk, I noticed a sticker on the signal box (pictured). It asked a simple but unsettling question:

“What are they talking about in church these days? Because they sure aren’t talking about loving thy neighbor.”

I stood there longer than the light required, pondering the question and just letting the weight of it sink in. Not because it was clever necessarily, but because it felt convicting. Not to me alone, as an individual, but to us as the Church. To the community of people who claim citizenship in the Kingdom of God.



“Love thy neighbor” is one of the most familiar teachings of Jesus. We know the words well. We quote them easily. But familiarity has a way of dulling the edge of something that was meant to cut straight to the heart. So perhaps the more important question is not whether we talk about loving our neighbor, but how we interpret it, and whether our lives actually bear witness to it.

A Question...(Cont)

If we're honest, as citizens of the Kingdom, collectively we have not always done a very good job of showing the world what loving our neighbor truly looks like. That's not to say we haven't offered beautiful glimpses. Throughout history, Christians have fed the hungry, sheltered the vulnerable, stood against injustice, and loved sacrificially in ways that have both changed the world and individual lives. Those moments matter, and they matter deeply.

But yet, if loving our neighbor were truly the defining mark of who we are, wouldn't the world feel more "seasoned" by our presence? Jesus called his followers the "salt of the earth", a people whose lives bring preservation, flavor, and healing to what might otherwise decay. If we were consistently living that calling, wouldn't the world taste it more clearly?

Instead, so often, we find ourselves fighting and arguing over the very things that divide us. Sometimes we cling so tightly to those divisions, whether they are political, theological, or cultural, etc., that we forget where our true citizenship lies. Our primary allegiance is not to any ideology or earthly identity, but to the Kingdom of God, under Christ's rule and reign.

So what does it actually look like to love our neighbor?

If we are serious about having a real impact on the world, I believe it begins here: we must learn to love like Jesus. Not as an abstract ideal, but as a lived practice. Jesus is not only our Savior, but he is our model.

He loved all the way to the cross. He loved even when it cost him everything. He loved even as he was being mocked, beaten, and crucified. And in one of the most clear examples of how a citizen of the Kingdom acts in all of Scripture (in my opinion), He prayed for the forgiveness of those who were tormenting Him, and He meant it.

That kind of love is not polite. It is not safe. And it is most definitely not convenient. It is a love so complete, so rooted in God, that it makes room even for grief over one's enemy. A love that can mourn, weep, and pray for those we are tempted to oppose or dismiss.

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A Question... (Cont)

Now, some of you may be reading this and wondering if I am speaking to a particular group of people, a particular viewpoint, or a particular issue. If so, you would be both right and deeply mistaken.

The people I am speaking to are the same people I belong to. I am speaking to those who claim citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Those who fall under Christ's rule and reign. All of us.

Every one of us carries something that separates us from God and thereby our neighbor. It could be fear, pride, anger, certainty, hurt, allegiance, or exhaustion, etc. Perhaps this month's invitation is not to pick those things up and defend them more fiercely, but to gently set them down and trust God's plan.

What might it look like, even in small ways, to love as Jesus loved? And if we did, what might change within us? What might change beyond us?



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

By: Karen Grether

Jesus taught us about how to love. It is a character attribute we need to use in our everyday life. A question about what Jesus was teaching came up. A lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29-37) (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus gave us this command: You shall love the Lord Your God with all Your heart, with all Your soul, and all Your strength. The second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as Yourself. He also told the story (parable) of the Good Samaritan. This Samaritan went out of His way to help an injured man who was robbed and paid for his lodging until he was well.

In my experience, loving Your neighbor is about giving and receiving. Our hearts are softened when we put the love of God into practice. There is a transformation for the neighbor and yourself. Loving Your neighbor demonstrates the love in the Kingdom of God and is an opportunity for witness. I have been on the receiving end of loving Your neighbor as well as aiding them in their times of need. Being a loving neighbor can be encouraging, praying, supporting, physical, spiritual, giving hope, monetary, providing food, and providing shelter. It can be sacrificial.



A stranger gave my family a ride home after an outing when my father's car broke down. I was given a cell phone to use when my car broke down while trying to get my children to school. We gave a homeless man a bottle of water on a hot day, and he praised God for it. We opened our doors to a homeless person and her infant son. We have given money to people in need without expecting payment back. As a church, we have visited parishioners, sent gifts to children far away, and served meals to our neighbors. Before Covid, Love, INC (in the name of Christ) organized churches to help neighbors with rides, visits, and work that was needed. Prophetic heart healing and SOZO help our neighbors know the healing power of Christ. We have missions in San Bartolo, Armenia, and West Africa. Loving Your neighbor doesn't have to be familiarity or the location proximal.

All this begins with knowing and loving God first. He provides all we need to have an impact in our communities and around the world. The Holy Spirit can guide us in loving our neighbor. We have an identity and purpose in Christ. We give honor to God in our actions. When demonstrated, love, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control, goodness, faithfulness, and joy abound. We are God's faithful people in this broken world for His kingdom and glory. We were born for this!



"WHAT DOES 'LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR' MEAN TO YOU?"

BY JUAN MAYA

As a Christian, the phrase "love your neighbor" immediately takes me to Matthew 22:36-40, and then to Joshua 6:1-27.

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I lift my eyes to heaven, and a tear falls inevitably as I can barely whisper, "How many wars could have been avoided if, as Christians, when repenting of our sins, we had also embraced this commandment as an ethical foundation of our faith?"

"Love your neighbor as yourself" calls me to rethink what love, neighbor, and self truly mean—and to allow that reflection to transform daily life.

What kind of love do I have for myself if I eat poorly, if priorities like money, work, my own will, or personal comfort take first place in my life?



What kind of love do I have for myself if I eat poorly, if priorities like money, work, my own will, or personal comfort take first place in my life?

Could it be that I love myself so poorly that I end up loving my neighbor just as poorly?

So then, what should I be doing as I wait for my Lord's return?

At that moment, Matthew 24:44-46 comes to mind.

In a world shaken and confused in its values, far from the ethics of the Kingdom of Heaven, I feel a pressing call to be a faithful and wise servant—to serve the table of my neighbor wherever God allows us to serve. And there, too, is joy, just as our brothers and sisters in Santa Clara shared in the January newsletter.

May God grant that our neighbors in Ukraine or Gaza may also experience the joy of being faithful and wise servants.

Mini True Story of “Loving Thy Neighbor” (As told to me by a first-hand witness)

By: Sui Lim

During World War II, many people hovered on the verge of starvation. The villagers who did not have fields or holdings had to work to get food, but even the work was scarce. But one woman in the village kept her neighbors from starving. She had fields (not a lot, but enough), and she always handed out rice whenever someone asked for help with food. Technically, she did not have to do so - she could have extracted IOU's or terms of servitude in exchange for the food, as many people might have taken advantage of similar situations. But what is legal may not always be what is right. This woman did what was right. To this day, her descendants are honored by the descendants of her neighbors in remembrance of her generous love.



"Loving Thy Neighbor" Goes All Ways

By: Sui Lim

As Pastor Dennis preaches, loving my neighbor means I want their highest good that God intends for them. I want them to be safe, healthy, whole in body and mind and spirit, at peace, filled with joy, surrounded by family and friends, treated with respect, participating in work that builds up people, the planet, and the Kingdom. This command from God is given to each believer.

In Scripture, God did not distinguish between different types of neighbors. Anyone who is in my vicinity is a neighbor. Anyone whose well-being I could affect by my words or actions (or inactions) is a neighbor. The next person who uses the parking lot at my local Target and has a parking space obstructed by my carelessly abandoned shopping cart is my neighbor. The person who just cut in front of me in traffic because they forgot to change lanes until the last minute is my neighbor. The person who sees my "like" (or "dislike") on a Facebook post is my neighbor also. So is the person asking for spare change on the corner.

We can certainly rationalize our words and actions - humans excel at rationalization, especially when we want to take the easier or more self-centered road. Let's take the shopping cart example. There are situations where something urgent (life-or-limb safety, etc.) comes up and one needs to abandon the shopping cart willy-nilly wherever, but most times, I venture to suggest that the following thoughts are more common: "I'm leaving the cart out here because I'm in a hurry for lunch with my friend!", or "That cart return corral is too far away!", or "Target has employees to retrieve the carts - that's their job anyway!" All these might sound familiar to us in one form or another in various scenarios.



Oftentimes, I see a cart blocking an otherwise good parking space that I could have used, and I think about the reasons that caused the user to do so. I also watched last weekend a grocery store employee pushing a long line of shopping carts from the parking lot to the store entrance corral - it did not look easy. He did not have any automated equipment to help him, and those shopping carts are heavy, not to mention having recalcitrant wheels. I imagine that having to walk extra far to retrieve carts scattered around the site would be an extra burden, especially if the weather were inclement, or the sun scorching hot, or the employee tired from working multiple shifts.

So, to love my neighbor, I try to push my empty shopping cart back to the designated area each time I'm done - so that it doesn't block traffic or other cars' use of parking spaces, and so that the store employee cart herder gets a bit of a break. It's tempting to leave the cart among other "wild" carts ("hey, other people left their carts under the tree - I can too!"), But it is a daily discipline to do what is right, to build up the habit of loving one's neighbor.

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Closig Letter

By: Rev. Dennis Woodsmall

This month, we look at. Loving your neighbor., This is one of the foundational theological truths that we find not only in the New Testament but also in the Old Testament. So, what does loving your neighbor really mean? In a time when “love” is often reduced to sentiment, Scripture gives it weight and definition. When Jesus was asked to name the greatest commandment, He joined two texts together: love God with all you are and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40). Then He made a stunning claim: “On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” In other words, loving your neighbor is not a side theme—it is a summary of faithful living. So who is my neighbor?

In Luke 10, Jesus answers the question “Who is my neighbor?” with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The point is unmistakable: your neighbor is not merely the person next door, or the person in your social circle, or someone who shares your values. In Jesus’ story, the “neighbor” turns out to be the one you least would expect—a Samaritan—who shows mercy to a wounded Jewish man left for dead. The neighbor is the one God places in your path, especially when need is involved.

So, loving your neighbor means crossing boundaries: ethnic, political, generational, economic, and even personal inconvenience. The gospel refuses to let love remain tribal. The Samaritan does not “feel compassion” and move on; he stops, bandages, lifts, pays, and follows up. Biblical love is embodied love. It shows up in time, attention, and tangible help. John says it plainly: “Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). This is where discipleship becomes visible. Love is not proven by our opinions, our posts, or our theology alone, but by our willingness to become a blessing to someone else.

When Scripture says, “as yourself,” it does not mean self-centeredness—it means recognition: you know how you want to be treated when you’re anxious, overlooked, exhausted, or hurting. Loving your neighbor is to extend that same seriousness, dignity, patience, and care to them. It is to ask: What would I hope someone would do for me if I were in their situation?

Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is to be present—to listen without rushing, to pray with someone rather than merely promising to pray, to check in again next week, not just today. But this compassion and love are different.

Closig Letter (Cont)

Biblical love is never mere flattery. Love is not enabling what destroys; love seeks the good—deep good—of another person. That means we practice honesty with humility, correction without contempt, and conviction without cruelty. Truth without love becomes harsh; love without truth becomes hollow. The way of Christ holds them together. It is easy to love humanity in the abstract; it is harder to love the person who interrupts your schedule, disagrees with you, irritates you, or needs more than a quick solution. My bible college professor used to say, "I love humanity, it's people I can't stand." Yet Jesus repeatedly directs love into ordinary places: homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, and churches. The "neighbor" is often the person you keep encountering.

Here are simple practices that turn the command into a way of life:

- Notice: Ask God to open your eyes to the overlooked.
- Listen: Give someone the gift of being heard.
- Serve: Do one concrete act of help each week.
- Forgive: Release the debt; refuse bitterness.
- Include: Invite someone into the community who feels alone.
- Pray: Not as a substitute for action, but as its power.
- Always remember we are here for the last, the lost, and the least as Jesus was.
- Finally, When Jesus says, "Go and do likewise," He is not giving us an inspirational story—He is giving us a kingdom ethic. Loving your neighbor is how the church becomes a living sign of God's reign: mercy moves toward suffering, compassion crosses the road, and holiness shows up as love in public.

May the Lord make us the kind of people who do not pass by on the other side.

-Dennis



Call for Submissions: Share Your Stories with Us!

We'd love to hear from you! The FPC Journey is now accepting story submissions from members of our congregation. This is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the lives, actions, and experiences of the people around us. However, please note that submissions should focus on stories about others — not about yourself. Think of it as an opportunity to highlight the good deeds, inspiring moments, and heartfelt connections that make our church community so special.

Please submit your stories to Chrys Sahgal : sahgalchrys@gmail.com . We can't wait to read your contributions and continue celebrating the amazing people in our congregation!

While we truly appreciate every submission, please understand that not all stories may be included in the newsletter due to space limitations. If your story isn't featured, please know it's not a reflection of its value — we simply strive to include a diverse range of voices and experiences in each issue. Thank you for your understanding and continued contributions!



What's Happening...

Ash Wednesday : Wed, Feb 18, 2026 Soup Supper: at 6:30 in our Social Hall for a Soup Supper

Please join us on Ash Wednesday, Feb 18. at 6:30 pm, for a Soup Supper and worship as we begin the season of Lent together. A simple meal will be shared, followed by the Imposition of Ashes.

- All are welcome to this meaningful evening of fellowship, prayer, and reflection as we enter the Lenten season.
- If you're interested in making a soup please let Sandra Sahgal know.

The table : Friday, Feb 27, 2026 Communal Dinner at 6:30 in our Social Hall

You're Invited to the table: Join us for the table (with a little t)—a time to gather, eat, and enjoy one another's company. While the Big T Table is where we share Communion, the table is about fellowship: sharing a meal, building relationships, and simply being together.

- All are welcome! Bring friends, family, neighbors—anyone who could use good food and good company.
- Just bring yourself. Board games, card games, and other low-key activities are welcome, too.

Let's share a meal, linger in conversation, laugh a little, and enjoy the gift of community. There's a seat for everyone at the table.

Tahoe Trip - Memorial Day Weekend, May 22-25, 2026!

Plan ahead for the whole weekend getaway—details coming soon!