

MAY MONTHLY THEME:
COMMUNITY—NURTURING THE 3RD SPACE

The “third space” refers to a space that is neither “home” or “work” in which people cultivate a sense of communal identity. In other words, “third spaces” are places that can foster a sense of community—places like libraries, coffee shops, and, yes, congregations like ours. During this time of social distancing, staying home, and worshiping online, we may be feeling the absence of such third spaces as well as the experience of being in community. How might this time help us to reflect upon the gifts of these spaces and of community? Even as we practice social distancing, in many ways we continue to foster community. Here in this moment when we could far more easily create distance from one another, why reach out? What do we find in community that we do not find when on our own? Our theme and these questions call us this month to consider the meaning of community for each of us and for all of us together.

Which question is calling to you? Where is it leading you?

1. How do you define community?
2. To which communities do you belong?
3. What “third spaces” do you frequent and/or find community within?
4. What “third spaces” do you miss most during this time of social distancing? Why?
5. What aspects of community do you find enriching? Challenging?
6. In what ways do you intentionally foster and/or sustain community?

Wise Words:

My life means nothing, either theoretically or practically, unless I am a member of a community. *Josiah Royce, 1913*

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community. *Dorothy Day*

The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members. *Coretta Scott King*

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. *George Bernard Shaw*

Teaching kids how to feed themselves and how to live in a community responsibly is the center of an education. *Alice Waters*

We are not our brother's keeper we are our brother and we are our sister. We must look past complexion and see community. *Maya Angelou*

One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn't as individuals. *Jean Vanier*

What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured. *Kurt Vonnegut*

Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives. *Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world. *bell hooks*

A few years ago, Robert Randall wrote a little book about why people come to religious communities. He says the "yearnings" which bring us to religious congregations fall into four major groups. We come to church or temple or mosque, looking: 1) to be Understood, 2) to Understand, 3) to Belong, and 4) to find Hope. *Linda Hoddy*

The central task of religious community is to unveil the bonds that bind each to all. There is a connectedness, a relationship discovered amid the particulars of each of our individual lives. Once felt, it inspires us to act for justice {and with compassion}. The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see that all must be seen, and our strength too limited to do all that must be done. Together, our vision widens and our strength is renewed. *Mark Morrison-Reed*

Creating sustainable community is like moving into a home with unique, lovely features and regularly maintaining that home. The home has certain features that attracted us. Rather than allowing those features to deteriorate, we polish them. We prevent them from getting damaged. We repair our home on a regular maintenance schedule. Our home, though, is our town, our nation, or the planet Earth. *Pamela D. Couture*

There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about. *Margaret J. Wheatley*

Books:

- *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*, Ray Oldenburg (1999)
- *Celebrating the Third Place: Inspirit Stories about the "Great Good Places" at the Heart of Our Communities*, Ray Oldenburg (2009)

Articles:

- ["Why we Long for Cafes, Barber Shops, and other 'Third Places' to Reopen,"](#) by Setha Low, *Chicago Sun Times*, May 4, 2020.
- ["Where is Your 'Third Place'?"](#) by Chayenne Polimédo, *New America Weekly*, Nov. 2, 2017.

Families/Kids:

- *Look Where We Live!: A First Book of Community Building*, Scot Ritchie (2015)
- *The Curious Garden*, Peter Brown (2009)

- *Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed* by Emily Pearson
- *A Bus Called Heaven* by Bob Graham