



Commitment #6: Be the Best Neighbors

“Instead of condemning the world outside your walls, enable young people to neighbor well locally and globally.”

From the Fuller Youth Institute:

Churches [Growing Together] recognize the careful dance that values both fidelity to Scripture’s commands for holiness and knowing and graciously loving their neighbors. This dance affects how they serve, pursue social justice, help teenagers and emerging adults find their calling, interact with popular culture, and respond to heated cultural issues.

Neighboring Well

While offering people a thoughtful path to neighbor well is anything but easy, we’ve discovered several postures common in churches that neighbor well.

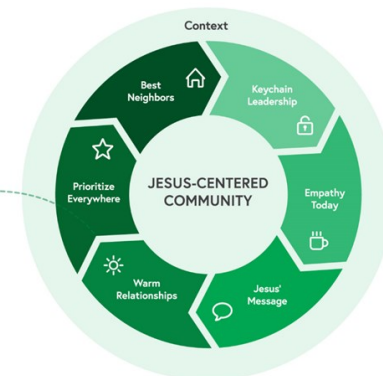
The Best Neighbors Ask, “Who is My Neighbor?” Churches striving to be the best neighbors reflect the selfless mercy [of the Good Samaritan] toward the people outside their congregations – whether those neighbors are friends, strangers, or enemies. They practice this mercy in a myriad of forms - in their service and social justice efforts, in their political engagement, in discussions about race and ethnic identity, and in response to pop culture.

Hospitable Neighbors Honor What’s Good. While churches that grow [together] don’t deny the problems of the world, they consistently look to emphasize the good and to embody that good in faithful living. They understand young people are tired of congregations that define themselves by what they are against rather than what they are for.

Compassionate Neighbors Make Their World Better. They also focus on *doing* good, both in their neighborhood and around the world. We can’t say strongly enough how vital it is for churches to engage in service, acts of compassion, missions, and social justice.

Patient Neighbors Respect the Journey, Not Just the Destination. While the churches in our study are anything but theological lightweights, they often demonstrate a generous spirit when it comes to differing opinions. No matter where churches growing [together] fall on the theological spectrum, they place emphasis on essential beliefs that can be shared rather than exaggerating various differences.

Courageous Neighbors Embrace Ethnic Diversity. Young people nationwide are often confused and frustrated when they look around their school or their favorite coffeehouse and see others who look different but then show up to a church service where everyone looks the same.



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Equitable Neighbors Seek Socioeconomic Diversity. While the 12 congregations we visited in person each pursued economic diversity in different ways, it was a demonstrated value in nearly every church. Churches that want to be the best neighbors seem especially aware of their ministry to, and inclusion of, the poor.

Wise Neighbors Help Young People Discover Their Calling. Many of the 200 Christian young people we interviewed in our church visits highlighted how the Christian story is giving shape and context to their biggest questions and dreams. It helps them step away from hyperindividualism and consumerism and toward participating in what God is doing in our world.

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