



# Won't You Be My Neighbor?

Intergenerational Sessions based on *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*

## Preparing for the Session

### Basic Supplies:

- Plates, cups, and napkins
- Name tags
- Markers
- Mural paper
- Craft supplies, such as white paper, construction paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glue (sticks or liquid), decorations (such as ribbons, stickers, sequins, papers, and buttons)
- index cards

### Special Supplies:

- Cookies and beverage
- Neighborhood pictures
- Song sheets or projection of songs: "Christ, You Offer Us Your Welcome" ([bit.ly/WelcomeSong](http://bit.ly/WelcomeSong))
- Internet-connected device
- Soft ball for each table
- Copies of Resource 1 for each table
- Copies of *Glory to God* or *The Presbyterian Hymnal*

### Before the Session:

- Read through the session and determine which activities you will use and how much time to spend on each.
- Set up tables and chairs for eight to ten people.
- Gather a picture of a neighborhood for each table. Look for a variety of neighborhoods showing homes, multifamily dwellings, retirement communities, urban, rural, suburban, and so on. Place each picture on a different color background. Or use one graphic of a neighborhood in different colors, one color for each table. Place a picture of a neighborhood on each table.
- Make color-coded blank name tags to match neighborhood table colors
- Place markers on tables.
- Provide a plate of cookies and pitchers of water (or other beverages) for each table, but don't put them on tables yet.
- Recruit helpers.



## 1. Gathering and Welcome

### Welcome to the Neighborhood

- As people enter the space, hand out color-coded name tags. Invite them to find the table with the same color. Note: Try to hand out name tags randomly, mixing families at different tables, but honor if it is important to a parent or child that they be together.
- Greet people with the following words:

Welcome to the neighborhood,  
where strangers become friends  
and friends know and love you  
just the way you are.

At the beginning of each episode, Mr. Rogers would enter his television home singing a song: "It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood, a beautiful day for a neighbor." As he sang, he would change from his sport coat to a sweater and his workday shoes to a pair of comfortable sneakers, asking, "Won't you be my neighbor?"

- Ask: "What happens when someone is new to the neighborhood?" Acknowledge that one thing we may do is to take them a plate of cookies and say, "Welcome!" We introduce ourselves.

- Invite helpers to distribute the cookies and beverage to each table.
- Invite everyone at the table to introduce themselves and tell what they see when they look outside their front door.
- As people are sharing at their tables, have helpers distribute craft supplies and mural paper to each table.

### **Making Our Neighborhood**

- Invite people to use the supplies at their tables to make a representation of their home. Have them cut it out (if necessary) and glue it to the mural paper to create your table's neighborhood. Set aside this neighborhood for use later.

### **Singing Together**

Sing "Christ, You Offer Us Your Welcome," verses 1 and 2 to the tune of BEACH SPRING.

## **2. Stories of Our Neighbors**

### **A Story of the Hebrew People**

*A story from Deuteronomy 10:17–21 of the Hebrew people after they have left slavery in Egypt and before they have entered the Promised Land*

- Teach participants the following response to be used in the Scripture reading: "We will love the stranger because we were once strangers."
- Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to lead the reading and prompt the participants' response.

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who doesn't play favorites.

**We will love the stranger  
because we were once strangers.**

God creates justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing.

**We will love the stranger  
because we were once strangers.**

You shall also love the stranger for you were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

**We will love the stranger  
because we were once strangers.**

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

- Distribute copies of Resource 1 to each table. Explain that they will use this resource for a few activities. Direct attention to the "Stories of Our Neighbors" section and read aloud Deuteronomy 10:17–21. Invite tables to spend a few minutes discussing the questions under "A Story of the Hebrew People."
- Provide each table with a soft ball. Suggest that people take turns responding to questions using the ball. Have one person start with the ball, and after speaking, roll the ball to someone else at the table. Everyone gets a turn, and anyone has an option to pass.

### **Singing Together**

Sing "Christ, You Offer Us Your Welcome," verses 4 and 5 to the tune of BEACH SPRING.

### **A Story of a New Believer**

*A story of a new believer, Lydia of Thyatira, and her offer of hospitality to Paul, Silas, and Timothy*

- Read, or have a volunteer read, Acts 16:11–15 to the group. At the end, say:

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

- Have participants return to Resource 1 and engage in conversation about Lydia's invitation of hospitality found in the section "A Story of a New Believer."

### **A Mr. Rogers Exercise**

- Tell the group that Mr. Rogers would often invite people to do an exercise with him.

Explain that he did this exercise with the whole audience at the Emmys in 1997 when he received his Lifetime Achievement award. *In a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood,* the movie shows a scene where he does this exercise with the journalist who is interviewing him in the middle of a restaurant. Mr. Rogers would ask people to be silent for thirty seconds or a minute and think about people who have loved them into being. As Mr. Rogers marks the time, the whole restaurant is shown with people deep in thought, and the movie is absolutely silent during this minute as well.

- Lead the group in taking one minute to think about people who welcomed us and made us feel like neighbors.

### 3. Praying Together

- Have the participants return to Resource 1 and engage in a time of prayer at their neighborhood tables using the instructions offered.
- Close with the following prayer, or one of your own:

God of Welcome, we come before you with our prayers. Thank you for arms open wide to include all of us in your embrace. Amen.

### 4. Neighborhood Offering

- Hand out index cards to the participants. Invite them to wonder together at their tables what neighbor or neighbors they will pray for. Have them write or draw a picture on the index card.
- Encourage everyone to take their index card home with them and put it somewhere they will see it every day—perhaps as a bookmark in a book they are reading, on the refrigerator, in the car, or on their bedside table.

- Invite participants to repeat the following prayer after you, using the slash (/) as breaking points.

God, we offer to you our prayers /  
for our neighbors, /  
whether they are far around the world  
from us, /  
in our community, /  
or right next door. /  
And the neighborhood says, "Amen." /

## 5. Going Out into the Neighborhood

### Welcome to the Neighborhood

- Watch the YouTube video "Mister Roger's Neighborhood: Opening Theme" ([bit.ly/NeighborhoodOpening](http://bit.ly/NeighborhoodOpening))
- Invite participants to take their neighborhood murals and join them together into one big neighborhood. This may be possible along a wall or on the backs of a row of chairs. Have everyone stand in front of the neighborhood mural.

### Singing Together

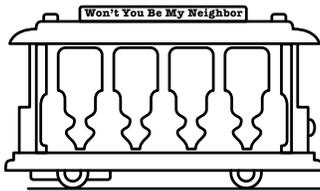
Sing "I Come with Joy," verses 3 and 4, *Glory to God* #515 or *The Presbyterian Hymnal* #507.

### Going Out into the Neighborhood

- Invite everyone to join you in the closing litany on Resource 1.  
Leader: Once we were strangers,  
**People: now we are friends.**  
Leader: Once we were strangers,  
**People: now we are neighbors.**

- Charge and bless the people, saying:  
Go out into the world in peace.  
Have courage!  
Hold fast to what is good.  
Return no one evil for evil.  
Strengthen the fainthearted,  
support the weak,  
help the suffering.  
Honor all people.  
Love and serve the Lord your God,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>  
May the love of God,  
the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with you and all our neighbors  
everywhere.  
Amen.

1. Adapted from *Book of Common Worship*  
(Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 30.



# Resource 1

## Won't You Be My Neighbor?

When answering questions at your table, take turns speaking using the ball. Have one person start with the ball, and after speaking, roll the ball to someone else at the table. Everyone gets a turn, and anyone has an option to pass by rolling the ball to someone who has not yet spoken.



### Stories of Our Neighbors

#### A Story of the Hebrew People

*A story from Deuteronomy 10:17–21 of the Hebrew people after they have left slavery in Egypt and before they have entered the Promised Land*

At your table, share a time you were new in a place. It could be a new home in a new location or a new school or workplace. It may be being new in an activity or class or team.

- How did it feel?
- What would have made you feel welcome?

#### A Story of a New Believer

*A story of a new believer, Lydia of Thyatira, and her offer of hospitality to Paul, Silas, and Timothy*

At your table, engage in conversation using the following questions:

- Who was a neighbor in the story?
- How did Lydia welcome Paul, Silas, and Timothy?
- Imagine you were a member of Lydia's family. Tell us what happened.

### Praying Together

Have four volunteers each ask one of the prayer questions below. Share your prayers aloud, as you feel comfortable.

- Praising God—How would you like to praise God today?
- Praying for others—Who would you like to pray for today?
- Praying on your own—What would you like to talk with God about today? *Take a few moments for silent prayer.*
- Giving thanks—What would you like to give thanks for today?

### Going Out into the Neighborhood

#### Closing Litany

Leader: Once we were strangers,

**People: now we are friends.**

Leader: Once we were strangers,

**People: now we are neighbors.**



# Peace in the Neighborhood

Intergenerational Sessions based on *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*

## Preparing for the Session

### Basic Supplies:

- Bible
- Plates, cups, and napkins
- Name tags
- Markers
- Craft supplies, such as white paper, construction paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glue (sticks or liquid), decorations (such as ribbons, stickers, sequins, papers, and buttons)

### Special Supplies:

- Neighborhood murals from “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” session
- Variety of boxes (cereal, moving, copy paper, shoe) enough so that each table can make a wall of boxes
- Sticky notepad for each table
- Song sheets or projection of songs: “God, with Joy We Look around Us” ([bit.ly/GodWithJoy](http://bit.ly/GodWithJoy))
- Internet-connected device
- Small soft ball for each table

- Six copies of Resource 1
- Copies of Resource 2 for each person
- Copies of pictures suggested in Resource 3
- Copies of *Glory to God* hymnal
- Snack items (enough for the whole group, but a different item for each table), such as cheese cubes, crackers, grapes, sliced meats (such as salami or ham), apple slices, small wrapped candies, cookies, graham crackers

### Before the Session:

- Set up tables and chairs for eight to ten people. Cover tables with white paper tablecloths or mural paper. Provide markers, crayons, and pencils.
- Place boxes and sticky notepads on tables.
- Make color-coded blank name tags.
- Display the neighborhood mural from “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” session.
- Print pictures suggested in Resource 3.



## 1. Gathering and Welcome

### Welcome to the Neighborhood

- As people enter the space, hand out color-coded name tags. Invite them to find the table with the same color. Note: Try to hand out name tags randomly, mixing families at different tables, but honor if it is important to a parent or child that they be together.
- Greet people with the following words:  
Welcome to the neighborhood,  
where strangers become friends  
and friends know and love you  
just the way you are.

- Invite participants to write, draw, or doodle on the paper covering the table as they wish during the session.

### Peace in the Neighborhood?

- Ask: “What makes a neighborhood not peaceful?” Invite people to write or draw pictures on sticky notes. Encourage participants to make a wall at their table using the boxes provided and place their sticky notes on the wall.

### Singing Together

Sing “God, with Joy We Look around Us,” verse 1 to the tune of CWM RHONDDA.

*Note:* The CWM RHONDDA tune is used for “God of Grace and God of Glory.” The suggested tune on

the website is to a different tune. If you use CWM RHONDDA you will need to repeat the last line of the verse, “All are people whom you love!”

### **Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood video clip**

- Cue the video “Mister Rogers Neighborhood Conflict 1524” ([bit.ly/MrRogersConflict](http://bit.ly/MrRogersConflict)) to 18:30.
- Set up the video clip by explaining that *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood* explored the concept of conflict between neighbors, in this case neighboring lands of the Neighborhood of Make-Believe and Southwood, in a five-episode arc.
  - King Friday begins to imagine that the people of Southwood are making bombs because they have purchased a million parts that could be made into bombs.
  - He creates fear in the people of Make-Believe and even encourages them to make bombs.
  - Lady Elaine and Lady Aberlin believe Southwood is a peaceful place and go there to find out. Bob Dog, who had been recruited as a spy, joins them.
  - They find out something altogether different is happening!
- Watch the video clip, ending at 20:26. Wonder together at tables:
  - What might sometimes cause conflict between people?
  - What might help resolve conflict?

## **2. Stories of Our Neighbors**

### **A Story of Two Brothers**

*A story from Genesis 33:1–11 of two brothers, twin brothers, who had a conflict*

- Set up the Scripture passage by explaining that Esau and Jacob were twins, but Esau was born first and therefore the one who would inherit everything from his father, Isaac. Jacob tricked Isaac to receive his blessing—which meant Jacob would get everything from his father. Esau was left with nothing. Many years have gone by, and Jacob and Esau are going to meet. Jacob is afraid of his brother’s anger.

- Invite four volunteers to read aloud scenes 1–4 on Resource 1 and ask the participants to imagine the scenes as they are read.

- Read aloud Genesis 33:1–11. When you are finished, say:

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

- Have two more volunteers read aloud scenes 5 and 6 on Resource 1 and ask the participants to imagine the scenes again as they are read.
- Hand out copies of Resource 2 to each table. Read the questions to the group and then invite participants to take a few moments to think. Suggest that they write, draw, or doodle on the paper covering the table as they ponder the questions.
- Provide each table with a soft ball. Suggest that people take turns responding to questions using the ball. Have one person start with the ball, and after speaking, roll the ball to someone else at the table. Everyone gets a turn, and anyone has an option to pass.
- Invite participants to have conversation about Jacob and Esau and about forgiveness and reconciliation using the questions on Resource 2.

### **Singing Together**

Sing “God, with Joy We Look around Us,” verse 2 to the tune of CWM RHONDDA.

*Note:* The CWM RHONDDA tune is used for “God of Grace and God of Glory.” The suggested tune on the website is to a different tune. If you use CWM RHONDDA you will need to repeat the last line of the verse, “All are people whom you love!”

### **An Excerpt from a Letter**

*An excerpt from a Letter to the Colossians:*

- Read, or have a volunteer read, Colossians 3:12–15 to the group. At the end, say:  
Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.  
**People: Thanks be to God.**
- Place pictures suggested on Resource 3 on the tables. Invite participants to walk among the tables and find the picture that speaks most strongly to them. Ask them to stay at that table and then share with others what the picture means to them.

### **3. Praying Together**

Invite participants to turn to Resource 2 again and lead them in a time of prayer.

#### **Call to Confession**

Mr. Rogers once said, “Listening is where love begins, listening to ourselves and then to our neighbors.” It is time to listen to that voice within us that names our mistakes, the ways in which we have disregarded or hurt others. It is time to listen to the voices of our neighbors when we have ignored needs or done things that damage our community or our world neighbors. Love blossoms and flourishes when we can forgive and be forgiven. Let us pray together and then silently.

### **4. Neighborhood Offering**

- Ask helpers to bring a plate of food to each table. Tell the participants that one way people come together is at the table sharing food together. Comment that each table has a different snack item. Invite participants to come up with a way that everyone gets to enjoy the food.
- Offer the following prayer, or one of your own choosing:

God of peace, thank you for the gift of sharing food at tables, which makes neighbors out of strangers. May we model in our lives extending the peace of Christ through fellowship. Amen.

- While people are enjoying their snack, invite them to talk together about how we might take away walls and build peace between people in our community and around the world.

### **5. Going Out into the Neighborhood**

#### **Building Anew**

- Invite participants to use the boxes that were walls to recreate something that represents peace in the neighborhood.
- Cue the video “Mister Rogers Neighborhood Conflict 1524” ([bit.ly/MrRogersConflict](http://bit.ly/MrRogersConflict)) to 2:45 and watch until 4:42.

#### **Singing Together**

Sing “God, with Joy We Look around Us,” verse 3 to the tune of CWM RHONDDA.

*Note:* The CWM RHONDDA tune is used for “God of Grace and God of Glory.” The suggested tune on the website is to a different tune. If you use CWM RHONDDA you will need to repeat the last line of the verse, “All are people whom you love!”

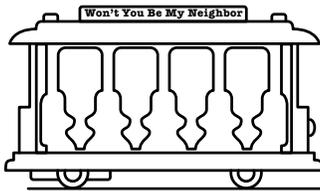
#### **Going Out into the Neighborhood**

- Invite everyone to join you in the closing litany on Resource 2.  
Leader: Once we were strangers,  
**People: now we are friends.**  
Leader: Once we were strangers,  
**People: now we are neighbors.**

- Charge and bless the people, saying:

Go out into the world in peace  
and meet your neighbors.  
Have courage!  
Hold fast to what is good.  
Return no one evil for evil.  
Strengthen the fainthearted,  
support the weak,  
help the suffering.  
Honor all people.  
Love and serve the Lord your God,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>  
May the love of God,  
the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with you and all our neighbors  
everywhere.  
Amen.

1. Adapted from *Book of Common Worship*  
(Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 30.



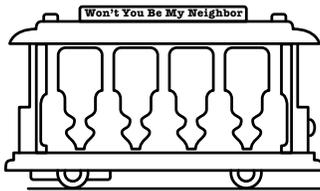
# Resource 1

## Peace in the Neighborhood

### Jacob and Esau: Scenes of Two Brothers Meeting Again



1. When dawn broke that morning, Jacob was afraid. He was weary and hurting and afraid. He'd wrestled all night with some kind of messenger from God—wrestled and prevailed, and come away with a limp, and given a new name, Israel.
2. It was time to face up—face his fears, face the facts, face his brother. When you know you've cheated someone, it's not easy to look that person in the eye. When you know you've been cruel or careless with someone, it's not easy to let them look you in the eye.
3. When you are afraid of what someone might do, it's not easy to come hobbling into their presence, obviously unable to run if they decide to attack you. Jacob was afraid not only for himself but also for his family, especially his wife Rachel and her son Joseph. He had lots of children, and another wife, but it was Rachel and Joseph that he loved the most.
4. Having had experience in taking from others what they most loved and having had practice in stealing the best of another's life, Jacob worried that it might now happen to him. Every time he thought about Esau he was flooded with feelings: feelings of shame and sorrow, the loss of a brother's love, but also a sense of triumph of having won that unspoken competition between brothers.
5. Esau came toward him in a rush, his arms out, and Jacob steeled himself for the blow of fist or spear or sword. But the blows did not fall. Instead, the arms of his brother encircled him, and Esau fell on his neck and kissed him and wept. The tears leapt to Jacob's eyes, even as his emotions swirled within him.
6. Night after sleepless night Jacob had played scenes of reunion in his head—picturing himself brashly justifying his actions to his angry brother, imagining himself bravely fighting back his brother's violent blows, and fearing himself cowardly enough to turn and run. But he had never imagined this, never expected this, never thought he would receive forgiveness.



# Resource 2

## Peace in the Neighborhood

When answering questions at your table, take turns speaking using the ball. Have one person start with the ball, and after speaking, roll the ball to someone else at the table. Everyone gets a turn, and anyone has an option to pass by rolling the ball to someone who has not yet spoken.



### Stories of Our Neighbors

#### A Story of Two Brothers

A story from Genesis 33:1–11 of two brothers, twin brothers, who had a conflict

Have conversation about Jacob and Esau and about forgiveness and reconciliation:

- When have you been Jacob facing up to something you had done wrong?
- When have you been Esau offering forgiveness?
- When have you been Jacob receiving forgiveness?
- Where are there places in our lives or in the world that are broken and need reconciliation or to be brought together in peace?

### Praying Together

#### Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, we are listening, and yearning for love, from you and with those closest to us and neighbors far away. Forgive us when we build walls around our hearts, keeping you and others at a distance. We build those walls because we are afraid to show our need or we have been hurt and want to protect ourselves. We turn away from the needs of our neighbors because they will take our time. We act in ways that hurt the earth. We dominate or discredit the lives of others because we care more about our own comforts.

Help us build bridges of connection, gardens of peace, and playgrounds of joy and laughter where love and understanding can thrive.

Hear now the prayers, deep from our hearts (*pray aloud or silently*). Amen.

#### Assurance of Pardon

Leader: Friends and neighbors, hear the good news: We are living stones being built into a spiritual house. We are God's own people so that we may proclaim the mighty acts of God who called us out of darkness into light.

**People: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!  
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

#### Sung Response

Sing "Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me," *Glory to God* #582.

#### Passing the Peace

Leader: Friends and neighbors, Christ is our peace; he has brought together those who are near and those who are far. Christ has made two groups into one and has broken down the walls of division between us. (Ephesians 2:14)

Take down a piece of the wall that was created earlier, then share signs of peace of Christ with one another.

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.  
**People: And also with you.**

### Going Out into the Neighborhood

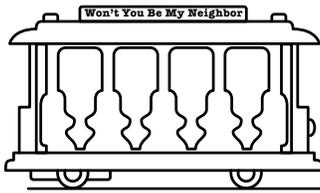
#### Closing Litany

Leader: Once we were strangers,

**People: now we are friends.**

Leader: Once we were strangers,

**People: now we are neighbors.**



# Resource 3

## Peace in the Neighborhood

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Suggested pictures of Jacob and Esau, forgiveness and reconciliation:

Print the following pictures:

- “Let It Go” written in sand on the beach:  
[bit.ly/SandLetItGo](http://bit.ly/SandLetItGo)
- Hands of different colors gripping each other:  
[bit.ly/HandsOfColor](http://bit.ly/HandsOfColor)
- Two people reaching out across a gap:  
[bit.ly/TwoPeopleGap](http://bit.ly/TwoPeopleGap)
- Two people on a bridge with help underneath:  
[bit.ly/BridgeHelpers](http://bit.ly/BridgeHelpers)
- Sculpture of two people embracing:  
[bit.ly/ReconciliationSculpture](http://bit.ly/ReconciliationSculpture)
- Graphic colors of two people embracing:  
[bit.ly/TwoPeopleEmbrace](http://bit.ly/TwoPeopleEmbrace)
- Jacob and Esau embrace:  
[bit.ly/JacobEsauEmbrace](http://bit.ly/JacobEsauEmbrace)
- Jacob and Esau embrace full body:  
[bit.ly/JacobEsauWoodcut](http://bit.ly/JacobEsauWoodcut)



# Just the Way You Are

Intergenerational Sessions based on *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*

## Preparing for the Session

### Basic Supplies:

- Bible
- Plates, cups, and napkins
- Snacks and beverages
- Name tags
- Craft supplies, such as white paper, construction paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glue (sticks or liquid), decorations (such as ribbons, stickers, sequins, papers, and buttons)

### Special Supplies:

- Neighborhood murals from “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” session
- Neighborhood table pictures from “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” session
- Song sheets or projection of song: “Dazzling Bouquet” ([bit.ly/DazzlingBouquet](http://bit.ly/DazzlingBouquet))
- Internet-connected device

- Small soft ball for each table
- Copies of Resource 1 for each person
- Copies of Resource 2 for each person
- Copies of *Glory to God* or *The Presbyterian Hymnal*

### Before the Session:

- Set up tables and chairs for eight to ten people. Cover tables with white paper tablecloths or mural paper. Put neighborhood table picture on each table. Provide copies of Resource 1, markers, crayons, and pencils. Place snacks and beverages on the tables.
- Make color-coded blank name tags to match neighborhood table colors.
- Display the neighborhood mural from “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” session.



## 1. Gathering and Welcome

### Welcome to the Neighborhood

- As people enter the space, hand out color-coded name tags. Invite them to find the table with the same color. Note: Try to hand out name tags randomly, mixing families at different tables, but honor if it is important to a parent or child that they be together.
- Invite each person to follow the directions on Resource 1 and circle ten words to describe themselves, at least five must be positive. Encourage people to assist younger children filling out their paper.
- Enjoy snack and beverages together.

- Greet people with the following words: Welcome to the neighborhood, where strangers become friends and friends know and love you just the way you are.

### Mr. Rogers Neighborhood video clip

- Scroll down to watch the first video clip on *The Messages* web page about “He helped us feel good about who we are.” ([bit.ly/MrRWhoWeAre](http://bit.ly/MrRWhoWeAre))
- Tell participants that sometimes we may feel like there are too many words that describe us that aren’t too good. We feel like a mistake. But we aren’t! We are loved just the way we are.
- Ask participants to pass their papers around the table and let others star words that they would use to describe that person.

## **Singing Together**

Sing “Help Us Accept Each Other,” verses 1 and 2 to the tune of BARONITA, *Glory to God* #754 or *The Presbyterian Hymnal* #358.

## **2. Stories of Our Neighbors**

### **A Story of Peter and Jesus**

*A story of Peter and Jesus from John 21:15–17*

- Set up the Scripture passage by explaining that Peter was one of the people Jesus called to be his disciple. Peter did not always do or say the right things. Sometimes he spoke without thinking. Sometimes he didn't understand what Jesus meant. Sometimes he was stubborn, and sometimes he made the wrong choices. Peter was just like us. But Jesus accepted Peter as he was and saw that he was lovable. Jesus told Peter that he was like a rock and that he would be a leader.

- Read, or have a volunteer read, John 21:15–17 to the group. At the end, say:

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

- Share what Mr. Rogers said in the 2003 television documentary *Fred Rogers: America's Favorite Neighbor*.

*You know, I think everybody longs to be loved, and longs to know that he or she is lovable. And, consequently, the greatest thing that we can do is to help somebody know that they're loved and capable of loving.*

- Ask people to think about who we are. Invite them to imagine themselves as Peter:

I do not always do or say the right things.  
Sometimes I speak without thinking.  
Sometimes I don't understand what  
Jesus meant.  
Sometimes I am stubborn.  
Sometimes I make the wrong choices.

- Distribute copies of Resource 2. As a group, read aloud the adapted Scripture passage, imagining Jesus talking to each one of us by inserting our names.
- Tell participants that just as Jesus wanted Peter to take care of and love all the people Jesus loved, Jesus sees that we, too, are capable and lovable. He asks us to take care of and love all the people Jesus loves, to love others into being.

### **Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood video clip**

- Explain that Mr. Rogers speaks about loving each other, even with our differences, even with the things we don't think are lovable. Watch the YouTube video “Mister Rogers—Yet We Can Still Love Each Other” ([bit.ly /MrRLoveEachOther](https://bit.ly/MrRLoveEachOther)).
- Ask participants to return to Resource 2 and to wonder together at their tables using the small soft ball, taking turns talking about the questions provided.

## **Singing Together**

Sing “Jesus Loves Me!” to the tune of JESUS LOVES ME, *Glory to God* #188 or *The Presbyterian Hymnal* #304.

- Sing the traditional verse and then sing a new second verse on Resource 2.

### **A Story about Peter**

*A story about Peter and what he did next from Acts 10:28–29a, 34–36*

- Ask the participants to think about what Peter did after he was accepted and seen for who he was, after he was loved into being by Jesus. Tell them that after the Holy Spirit blew through the upper room at Pentecost and ignited his spirit, he turned around and told others about Jesus. He wanted them to know about God's love and about this man Jesus, who sees who you are and loves you with no reservations and who loves you into being. Comment that, at first, Peter was just telling folks like him, other Jewish people, about Jesus, but then one day he had a vision

to visit a man named Cornelius, who was not Jewish. Explain that today this doesn't seem like a big deal, but back in those days, it was. In Peter's dream, God made it clear that Peter and Cornelius were both accepted and loved by God.

- Read, or have a volunteer read, Acts 10:28–29a, 34–36 from Resource 2 to the group. At the end say:

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

- Share what Mr. Rogers said in his commencement address at Middlebury College May in 2001:

*I believe that appreciation is a holy thing, that when we look for what's best in the person we happen to be with at the moment, we're doing what God does; so in appreciating our neighbor, we're participating in something truly sacred.*

### Seeing and Being Seen:

#### The Mirroring Game

- Invite people to form pairs, encouraging older and younger people to pair together. Ask each pair to pick who is person A and who is person B.
- Give these instructions: Person A, you are looking in the mirror. Person B, you are the mirror. Person A, move very, very slowly, and person B, follow A as if you are the mirror. A, you can move your body or make faces, but you can't make any sound. After one minute, switch roles.

### 3. Praying Together and Neighborhood Offering

#### A Dazzling Bouquet

- Hand out colored pieces of construction paper and invite everyone to tear a flower petal shape out of their piece of paper. Have them choose one of the attributes from Resource 1 and write it on their flower petals.

- Invite each table to tear out a few stems and leaves from green construction paper.
- Encourage people to speak what is written on their petal as an offering to God when prompted. Pray:

God, the Great Appreciator. We are your beloved people. We know that we do not always see ourselves as you see us. We do not always see others as you see them. Help us to know that we are loved just the way we are. Here are some of the qualities that we see in ourselves and others: *(people may name qualities on petals)*.

- Invite people to glue their petals, stems, and leaves to form flowers on the neighborhood mural.

Leader: Now let all God's beloved people say AMEN!

**People: AMEN!**

#### Singing Together

Sing "Dazzling Bouquet" ([bit.ly/DazzlingBouquet](http://bit.ly/DazzlingBouquet)), verses 1 and 2, with refrains.

### 4. Going Out into the Neighborhood

#### Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood video clip

- Cue the YouTube video "Mr. Rogers—It's You I Like" ([bit.ly/MrRitsYouLike](http://bit.ly/MrRitsYouLike)) to 4:09 and watch until 5:38.

#### Singing Together

Sing "Help Us Accept Each Other," verses 3 and 4 to the tune of BARONITA, *Glory to God* #754 or *The Presbyterian Hymnal* #358.

#### Going Out into the Neighborhood

- Invite everyone to join you in the closing litany on Resource 2.

Leader: Once we were strangers,

**People: now we are friends.**

Leader: Once we were strangers,

**People: now we are neighbors.**

- Charge and bless the people, saying:

Go out into the world just as you are and  
meet your neighbors.

Have courage!

Hold fast to what is good.

Return no one evil for evil.

Strengthen the fainthearted,

support the weak,

help the suffering.

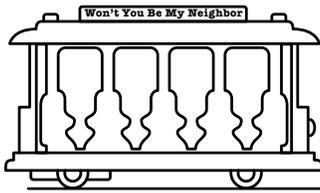
Honor all people.

Love and serve the Lord your God,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

May the love of God,  
the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with you and all our neighbors  
everywhere.

Amen.

1. Adapted from *Book of Common Worship*  
(Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 30.



# Resource 1

Just the Way You Are

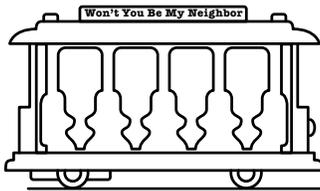
## Who Are You?



Circle ten words (at least five have to be positive).

\*Read aloud the list to younger participants so that they may circle words that describe them.

Active	Family oriented	Kind	Responsible
Adventurous	Fearful	Lazy	Serious
Angry	Friendly	Leader	Shy
Anxious	Funny	Lighthearted	Social
Appreciative	Generous	Mindful	Stressed
Artistic	Genuine	Motivated	Strong
Bossy	Goal setter	Negative	Talkative
Brave	Grumpy	Optimistic	Trustworthy
Considerate	Happy	Organized	Truthful
Creative	Hardworking	Outgoing	Understanding
Curious	Helpful	Patient	Unhappy
Dependable	Honest	Pessimistic	Unsure
Determined	Imaginative	Playful	Warm
Encouraging	Impatient	Positive	Wise
Energetic	Inquisitive	Procrastinator	Witty
Enthusiastic	Joyful	Quiet	Worrier



# Resource 2

## Just the Way You Are

When answering questions at your table, take turns speaking using the ball. Have one person start with the ball, and after speaking, roll the ball to someone else at the table. Everyone gets a turn, and anyone has an option to pass by rolling the ball to someone who has not yet spoken.



## Stories of Our Neighbors

### A Story of Peter and Jesus

A story of Peter and Jesus from John 21:15–17

- Imagine Jesus talking to you by inserting your name:

Jesus says to me, “(My Name), do you love me more than these?”  
I say to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”  
Jesus says to me, “Feed my lambs.”  
A second time Jesus says to me, “(My Name), do you love me?”  
I say to Jesus, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”  
Jesus says to me, “Tend my sheep.”  
Jesus says to me the third time, “(My Name), do you love me?”  
I feel hurt because he says to me the third time, “Do you love me?”  
And I say to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”  
Jesus says to me, “Feed my sheep.”

### Questions about Mr. Rogers’ Video Clip

- How can we be Jesus to one another, seeing that they are lovable and capable?
- How can we love others into being?

### Singing Together

Sing “Jesus Loves Me!” to the tune of JESUS LOVES ME, *Glory to God* #188 or *The Presbyterian Hymnal* #304.

- Sing the traditional verse and then sing a new second verse.

Jesus loves me! This I know,  
for the Bible tells me so.  
Little ones to him belong.  
They are weak, but he is strong.  
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves us as we are  
whether we are near or far.  
Teaching us to love and care,  
accepting neighbors everywhere.  
Yes, Jesus loves us! Yes, Jesus loves us!  
Yes, Jesus loves us, exactly as we are.

### A Story about Peter

A story about Peter and what he did next from Acts 10:28–29a, 3–36

Acts 10:28–29a (CEB)

He said to them, “You all realize that it is forbidden for a Jew to associate or visit with outsiders. However, God has shown me that I should never call a person impure or unclean. For this reason, when you sent for me, I came without objection.

Acts 10: 34–36 (CEB)

Peter said, “I really am learning that God doesn’t show partiality to one group of people over another. Rather, in every nation, whoever worships him and does what is right is acceptable to him. This is the message of peace he sent to the Israelites by proclaiming the good news through Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all!

## Going Out into the Neighborhood

### Closing Litany

Leader: Once we were strangers,  
**People: now we are friends.**  
Leader: Once we were strangers,  
**People: now we are neighbors.**



# “Neighboring”

Intergenerational Sessions based on *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*

## Preparing for the Session

### Basic Supplies:

- Plates, cups, and napkins
- Snacks and beverages
- Name tags
- Craft supplies, such as white paper, construction paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glue (sticks or liquid), decorations (such as ribbons, stickers, sequins, papers, and buttons)

### Special Supplies:

- Neighborhood murals from “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” session
- Neighborhood table pictures from “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” session
- large bowl of water and a pile of small stones or pebbles
- Song sheets or projection of songs: “Christ, You Offer Us Your Welcome” ([bit.ly/WelcomeSong](http://bit.ly/WelcomeSong)) (optional) and “There Are Many Ways of Sharing” ([bit.ly/ManyWaysSong](http://bit.ly/ManyWaysSong)) (optional)
- Internet-connected device
- Person with a smartphone at each table to take video

- [Who Is My Neighbor?](#) by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Flyaway Books, 2018)
- Copies of Resource 1 for each person
- Play dough, aluminum foil
- Small soft ball for each table
- Copies of *Glory to God* or *The Presbyterian Hymnal*

### Before the Session:

- Set up tables and chairs for eight to ten people. Cover tables with white paper tablecloths or mural paper. Put neighborhood table picture on each table. Place a large bowl of water and a pile of small stones or pebbles, one for each person, on each table. Place snacks and beverages on the tables.
- Make color-coded blank name tags to match neighborhood table colors.
- Display the neighborhood mural from “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” session.
- Practice reading *Who Is My Neighbor?* and showing the pictures in the book.



## 1. Gathering and Welcome

### Welcome to the Neighborhood

- As people enter the space, hand out color-coded name tags. Invite them to find the table with the same color. Note: Try to hand out name tags randomly, mixing families at different tables, but honor if it is important to a parent or child that they be together.
- Invite people to serve one another snacks and beverages at their tables.
- Greet people with the following words:  
Welcome to the neighborhood,  
where strangers become friends  
and friends help friends,  
and no one is a stranger in need.

### The Ripple Effect

- Watch the YouTube video “Inspirational Video – Pay It Forward” ([bit.ly/PayItForwardVideo](http://bit.ly/PayItForwardVideo)).
- Ask the participants if they have ever noticed that if you smile for someone, they start smiling and the smile gets passed on to others. Or, have they noticed that when you hold the door open for someone, they hold it open for the next person? Suggest that it’s a ripple effect, such as when you drop a stone into water, the impact makes ripples that spread out to the entire pool. The act of being a neighbor has a ripple effect; each act of kindness you do spreads beyond where you are into the world.

- Invite each table to create their own “ripple effect” scenes. Have one person at each table video the scenes. Send videos to the internet-connected device to watch all together. If it is not possible to record and project videos, have each table act out their scenarios for the whole group.
- Hand out copies of Resource 1 and invite participants to respond to the story in one of the ways listed below, considering the story for today or what it means to “go and do likewise,” as Jesus said. Provide craft supplies.
  - o Gather others and act it out.
  - o Sculpt with play dough or aluminum foil, or gather others and sculpt one another into a scene.
  - o Paint with watercolors.
  - o Write a poem. Choose a word or phrase and write about what it looks like, feels like, smells like, tastes like, and sounds like.
  - o Make up a song using a familiar tune. It could be something like Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, or a hymn tune.

### **Singing Together**

Sing “The Servant Song” to the tune of THE SERVANT SONG, *Glory to God* #727 or “Christ, You Offer Us Your Welcome,” verses 3 and 5 to the tune of BEACH SPRING.

## **2. Stories of Our Neighbors**

### **A Story of a Traveler and a Helper**

*A story of a traveler and a helper from Luke 10:25–37*

- Set up the Scripture passage by explaining that an expert in religious laws approaches Jesus in order to test him, probably to see if Jesus really knows the religious laws. This man asks a question, but Jesus does not answer him directly. He turns the question around with his own question, “What is written in the law?” The expert, being an expert in the laws, of course correctly answers Jesus’ question about the law. Jesus affirms him, but then the man thinks he will catch Jesus with one more question that is not so easy to answer. Or maybe it is an honest question that the expert has been pondering. Nonetheless, he asks, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus tells a story.
- Gather people in a large semicircle and read *Who Is My Neighbor?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso to the group. Show the pictures on each page. When you have finished, say:

Leader: This story shares God’s Word with us.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

- Save skits, sculptures, pictures, poems, and/or songs for Neighborhood Offering time.
- Share what Mr. Rogers has said about helpers:
 

*The purpose of life is to listen—to yourself, to your neighbor, to your world and to God and, when the time comes, to respond in as helpful a way as you can find . . . from within and without.*
- Comment that Mr. Rogers believed that life was for service and the best way we showed our love for others was by being in service to them. When considering your place in the community, be a helper.

### **Singing Together**

Sing “What Does the Lord Require of You” to the tune of MOON, *Glory to God* #70 or “There Are Many Ways of Sharing” ([bit.ly/ManyWaysSong](http://bit.ly/ManyWaysSong)).

## **A Story about an Act of Kindness**

*A story about Peter, John, and an act of kindness in Acts 3:1–10*

- Read, or ask a volunteer to read, Acts 3:1–10 to the group. At the end, say:

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## **Singing Together**

- Play the YouTube video “Walking and Leaping and Praising God” ([bit.ly /WalkingAndLeaping](https://bit.ly/WalkingAndLeaping)), and invite people to sing along to the simple words and tune. As the song repeats a number of times, encourage participants to join in the fun the people in the video are having by walking and leaping and praising God. You could even form two lines of people facing one another and invite others to walk, leap, and praise God down the center space between the lines of people.
- Comment that Peter and John offered the man who could not walk an act of kindness. In response, the man not only leaped and walked but also praised God, and all who saw him were astonished. Imagine how one act of kindness passed on from the man to others. Imagine how kindness becomes exponential: it grows and grows because it is passed on to others.

## **Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood video clip**

- Tell the group that they will watch a video clip of Mr. Rogers offering an act of kindness to Officer Clemmons. Share a bit of the background to this scene. Tell the participants that in 1969, swimming pools were still segregated, meaning that people of color could not swim in pools where white people were. Mr. Rogers invited Officer Clemmons to put his feet in Mr. Rogers’ wading pool. It was a simple act of kindness to a friend on a hot day, but it also said much more to those watching.

- Watch the third video clip on “The Messages” web page about “He helped us with our relationships with others.” ([bit.ly/MrRWhoWeAre](https://bit.ly/MrRWhoWeAre))

- Share this quotation from Mr. Rogers:

*Imagine what our real neighborhoods would be like if each of us offered, as a matter of course, just one kind word to another person. There have been so many stories about the lack of courtesy, the impatience of today’s world, road rage and even restaurant rage. Sometimes, all it takes is one kind word to nourish another person. Think of the ripple effect that can be created when we nourish someone. One kind empathetic word has a wonderful way of turning into many.*

- Invite participants to turn again to Resource 1 and wonder together at their tables what they can do to offer kindness in their neighborhood.

## **3. Praying Together**

- Invite participants to go to the neighborhood mural, choose a word or phrase of how they would like to offer acts of kindness to their neighbors—remembering that neighbors are far and wide, as well as next door—and write on the neighborhood mural as their prayer.
- Close by praying the Prayer of St. Francis together on Resource 1.

## **4. Neighborhood Offering**

- Tell the participants that “neighboring” is now a verb, a new one! It is the act of being a neighbor, of loving others, of doing acts of kindness, and of accepting one another just as we are.
- Invite people to share their skirts, sculptures, pictures, poems, and songs.

- After each person or group has shared, use the following call and response:  
 Leader: God calls us to neighbor.  
 People: **May we go and do likewise.**

## 5. Going Out into the Neighborhood

### Singing Together

Sing “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” to the tune of CHEREPONI, *Glory to God* #203 or *The Presbyterian Hymnal* #367.

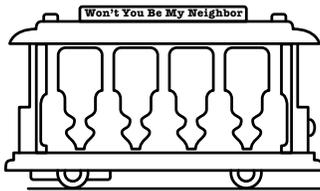
### Going Out into the Neighborhood

- Invite everyone to join you in the closing litany on Resource 1.  
 Leader: Once we were strangers,  
 People: **now we are friends.**  
 Leader: Once we were strangers,  
 People: **now we are neighbors.**
- Charge and bless the people, saying:

Go out into the world and

“neighbor” one another!  
 Have courage!  
 Hold fast to what is good.  
 Return no one evil for evil.  
 Strengthen the fainthearted,  
 support the weak,  
 help the suffering.  
 Honor all people.  
 Love and serve the Lord your God,  
 rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>  
 May the love of God,  
 the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
 be with you and all our neighbors  
 everywhere.  
 Amen.

1. Adapted from *Book of Common Worship* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 30.



# Resource 1

“Neighboring”

Take turns speaking using the ball. Have one person start with the ball, and after speaking, roll the ball to someone else at the table. Everyone gets a turn, and anyone has an option to pass.



## Stories of Our Neighbors

### A Story of a Traveler and a Helper

A story of a traveler and a helper from Luke 10:25–37

- Respond to the story in one of the ways listed below, considering the story for today or what it means to “go and do likewise,” as Jesus said.
  - o Gather others and act it out.
  - o Sculpt with play dough or aluminum foil, or gather others and sculpt one another into a scene.
  - o Paint with watercolors.
  - o Write a poem. Choose a word or phrase and write about what it looks like, feels like, smells like, tastes like, and sounds like.
  - o Make up a song using a familiar tune. It could be something like “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” or a hymn tune.
- Save skits, sculptures, pictures, poems, and/or songs for Neighborhood Offering.

### A Story of an Act of Kindness

A story of Peter, John, and an act of kindness from Acts 3:1–10

- Wonder together at their tables what they can do to offer kindness in their neighborhood.
  - o What can you do?
  - o What can you give?

## Praying Together

- Go to the neighborhood mural, choose a word or phrase of how you would like to offer acts of kindness to your neighbors, remembering that neighbors are far and wide, as well as next door, and write on the mural.
- Close by praying the Prayer of St. Francis:
  - All:** Lord make me an instrument of your peace.
  - Right side: Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
  - Left side: Where there is injury, pardon.
  - Right side: Where there is doubt, faith.
  - Left side: Where there is despair, hope.
  - Right side: Where there is darkness, light.
  - Left side: And where there is sadness, joy.
  - All:** O divine master grant that I may
  - Right side: not so much seek to be consoled as to console,
  - Left side: to be understood as to understand,
  - All:** to be loved as to love.
  - Right side: For it is in giving that we receive,
  - Left side: it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
  - All:** and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

## Neighborhood Offering

- After each person or group has shared, use the following call and response:
  - Leader: God calls us to neighbor.
  - People: May we go and do likewise.

## Going Out into the Neighborhood

### Closing Litany

- Leader: Once we were strangers,
- People: now we are friends.
- Leader: Once we were strangers,
- People: now we are neighbors.

# THE COUNTERCULTURAL FRED ROGERS

Discover one of the most radical pacifists  
in contemporary history

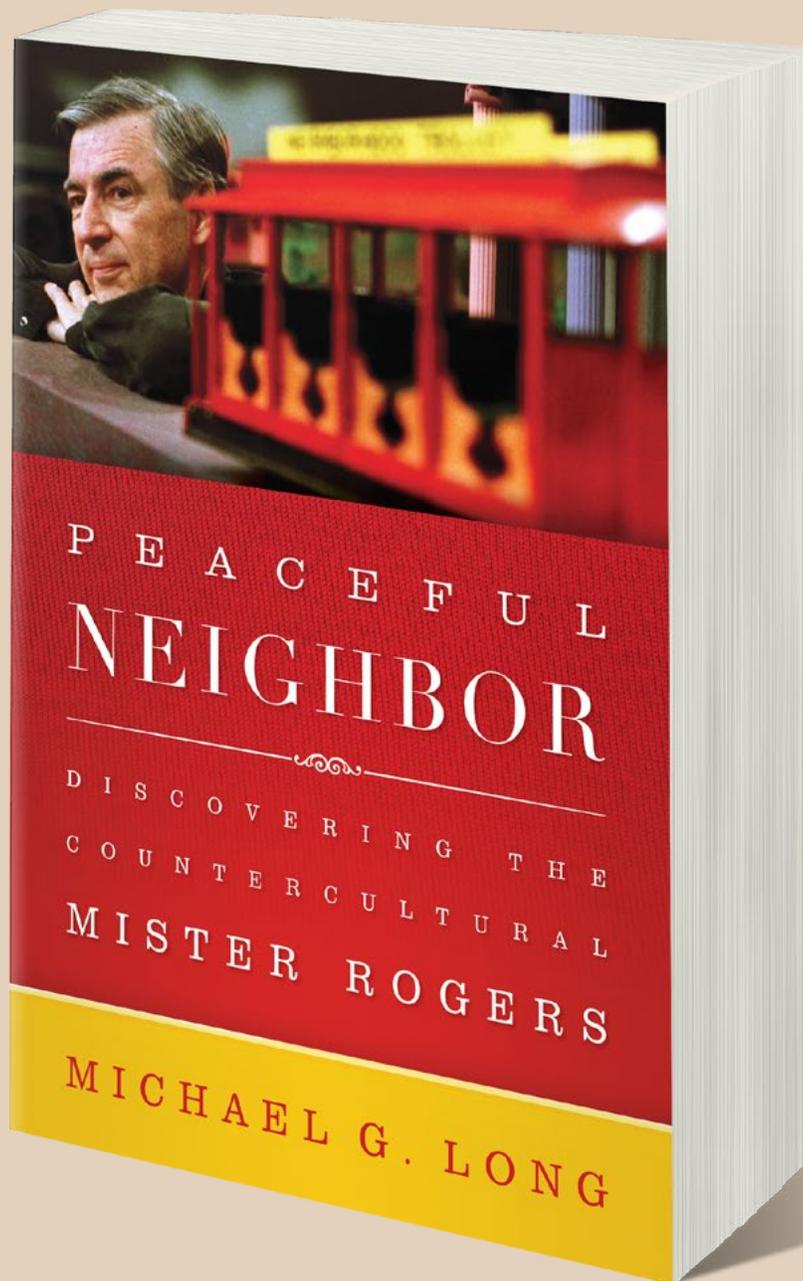
We do not usually think of Fred Rogers as radical, partly because he wore colorful, soft sweaters made by his mother. Nor do we usually imagine him as a pacifist; that adjective seems way too political to describe the host of a children's program known for its focus on feelings. We have restricted Fred Rogers to the realm of entertainment, children, and feelings, and we've ripped him out of his political and religious context. Rogers was an ordained Presbyterian minister, and although he rarely shared his religious convictions on his program, he fervently believed in a God who accepts us as we are and who desires a world marked by peace and wholeness. With this progressive spirituality as his inspiration, Rogers used his children's program as a platform for sharing countercultural beliefs about caring nonviolently for one another, animals, and the earth.

To critics who dared call him "namby-pamby," Rogers said, "Only people who take the time to see our work can begin to understand the depth of it." This is the invitation of *Peaceful Neighbor*, to see and understand Rogers's convictions and their expression through his program. *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, it turns out, was far from sappy, sentimental, and shallow; it was a sharp political response to a civil and political society poised to kill.

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