

“CONNECT: BUILDING UP OUR LIFE TOGETHER”
“Connecting Through Service”

This week, we continue the sermon series, “Connect: Building up our Life Together.” We are focusing and examining our life together and what connects us to one another and to God. To help with our focus and our prayer, each week we will be given a “building block” in a particular color. This week our color of building block is red. The color red represents action and strength and is the color of the Holy Spirit. This Sunday is the 75th anniversary of Heifer Project International and also our “mission reveal.” Each year at the end of September, our Director of Missions and their teams share the mission trips and projects for the next year. It is a joy to look toward what we will be sharing through mission and ministry next year. As our building blocks represent how we connect through our work, our relationships, through scripture, through creation and our animals’ friends and through mission, may we find new ways to stay connected one to another and to the God who loves us.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Connecting Through Service”**

Daily prayer: *God of all our connections and colors, thank you for the adventure of our work; for the stability and support of our family and friends; for the gift of Your Word and the time to study; for the renewal and depth of love we have with our animal companions; for the opportunity to share Your Love in mission and outreach; for the time at Your table that connects us with all the world. Thank you, O God, in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen*

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, September 30, 2019 2 Corinthians 3: 1-3

This letter of Paul in some ways is one of the most personal. Paul's affection for the Corinthians, his weakness and spiritual strength are all seen in this letter. It also, according to most scholars, contains fragments of at least two other letters to this church. Paul, in this chapter, refers to letters of recommendation. We still do that today, but in Paul's day, they were often carried as a way to introduce a person to a committee, or an institution or to a group of people. Paul feels such letters are unnecessary as the Corinthians themselves are the letter, written by the Spirit. Mission is often about how the love of Christ is made real, not in words, but by actions and love. Often, we use the words "*hands and feet of Christ*" that this is the witness we share. *Taking your red building block, place it loosely with the other colors and see how the different aspects of our life together create diversity and promise.*

Tuesday, October 1, 2019 2 Corinthians 3: 4-6

Here Paul is clear that it is the Spirit that gives life to the living letters. It isn't what others say or do, but what God does. Paul defends his ministry and his calling. As you think about your relationship with Christ, what is it that the Spirit is writing on your heart and how does that become real in your words, your actions and your life? *Taking your red building block, say a prayer and ask for the Spirit to be writing the words of life and faith and love on your heart.*

Wednesday October 2, 2019 John 4: 1-11

In this wonderful story in John, we see Jesus outside his home country. Jesus, like Paul, often generated controversy with his ministry. Here he meets a Samaritan woman. This story is well known, but reading it again, reminds us of the assumptions we make because of people's background, ethnicity, gender and nationality among other things. This woman assumed things about Jesus and perhaps, Jesus did the same. As we will see later in the story, however, he treats her with respect and as an equal. Here, Jesus offers her living water. What does living water look like for you? Is this something you would accept or expect from someone whom your people considered an enemy or at least an antagonist? *Today, take your red block and attach it to your orange block. Pray about your ministry, your work and the call of Christ to go beyond what is comfortable for you.*

Thursday October 3, 2019 John 4: 12-20

Jesus and the Samaritan women enter into a theological conversation. Jesus names this woman's reality but doesn't judge her or send her away. He is offering her living water without discrimination or without patronizing her. It is powerful to see the dialogue and the trust that Jesus has for her and for her reality. When looking at outreach and mission, it is often easy to see what "we" might be offering, rather than relating to what is before us and honoring the conversation and the relationship without judgement. *Adding the brown building block to the red and orange, ask God to bless your relationships. Say a prayer that whatever mission and outreach we do as individuals and as the church might be ones of mutual respect and honor.*

Friday October 4, 2019 John 4: 21-30, 39-42

Finally, we get to the promise that Jesus represents and offers: God's Spirit available to all. Jesus reveals that he is the Christ of God. This woman becomes an amazing evangelist, not only does she convince her community of the truth of Jesus, they move on into a deeper faith. This mission and outreach truly changes lives and transforms communities. *Take your building blocks, create something with all five colors and ask God to help you change lives and transform communities through your work, your relationships, your contemplation of scripture, your renewing of your spirit through creation and pets and through your mission and ministry.*