B3 Belonging

Friday and Saturday | 1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m
Joyce Borger and Chris Schoon

We hear from researchers about the importance of belonging and the epidemic of loneliness. What role can worship play for communicating that children, youth, and adults of all ages and stages belong not just to the community, but also to God? Join us as we discuss this from the perspective of faith formation, missions, and worship practice.

The Loneliness Epidemic

“All the lonely people, where do they all come from? All the lonely people, where do they all belong?” — The Beatles

Some Stats

- 20% of people over 60 frequently feel intensely lonely - Psychology Today
- 40% of 16-24 year olds are lonely - Psychology Today
- 54% of Americans say they always or sometimes feel that no one knows them well. - Forbes
- 50% of Britons over 65: main companion is a pet or the TV - Forbes
- +500,000 Japanese under 40 haven’t left their home or interacted with people for 6 months or more - Forbes

“A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong. When those needs are not met, we don't function as we were meant to. We break. We fall apart. We numb. We ache. We hurt others. We get sick.”

-Brené Brown

Consequences of Loneliness

What’s concerning about this is that research shows there are medical and psychological consequences of loneliness, including the following:

- Emotional fallout: depression and increased risk of suicide
- Poor sleep and the consequences of sleep deprivation: cognitive impairment, inattention, emotional blunting, decreased productivity
- Inability to self-regulate: emotional overeating, excessive drinking, smoking, or drug misuse behaviors, which may serve as a means to soothe unbearable feelings of isolation. These have medical consequences, such as obesity, high cholesterol, known consequences of tobacco use (e.g., high blood pressure, cancer risk), and possible addiction.
- Greater risk of medical issues: problems with the immune system, leading to viral and other infections and inflammatory illness

-Psychology Today
Worship Practices that Say “You Belong”

Stronger correlation between our written theology and practice

1. BAPTISMAL THEOLOGY
   a. **Identity**: We are children of God (Galatians 3:26), and given a new identity “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession” (1 Peter 2:9)
      - *Do they* *know* *my* *name*?
      - *Do they* *know* *me*?

   b. **Belonging**: Being baptized “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” declares that we have a new name because we have been adopted through the Son into the family of God, at the heart of which is the Trinity itself. We are a part of a new community. (Matt. 3:13-17, 28:19, Eph. 1:5)
      - *Am I missed when I don’t come?*
      - *Does this church care about the things that I care about?*
      - *Are there people leading worship that look and sound like me?*

"The legal enforcement of inclusion gets people in the room, but it doesn't mean people have to love them."

- John Swinton

**Building Blocks of Faith**

I Belong
I belong to Jesus and thus to his body, the church.

I Know and Understand
I know the story of God’s faithfulness of which I am a part.

I Have Hope
I have confidence, through Christ, in all of God’s promises. God is making all things new, and he is using us to accomplish that.

I Am Called and Equipped
I am called to work in God’s kingdom, and I am equipped to do that work.

- Belhar Confession
c. **Worthiness:** Baptism signifies the washing away of our sins (Acts 2:38, 1 Cor. 6:11), not because of what we are able to do but because of God’s mercy. But it also calls us to continue to die to self. Baptism is a kind of drowning, in which we are brought into a new community, the body of Christ, which lives by the norms of the kingdom of God. (Gal. 3:27-29)

  - Can I bring my whole self with all my joys, sorrows, my past, present and future, and still be accepted?

d. **Purpose:** In baptism we are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38) In a sense we are ordained into a life of service, to expand God’s kingdom, to shine his light wherever we are called to live and work.

  - Are there places for me to serve?
  - Are there places for me to grow and learn?
  - Are there opportunities for me to meet and develop relationships with people who are like me? (affinity groups)
  - Are there opportunities to meet and develop relationships with people different than myself?

e. **Hope:** Baptism unites us to Christ in his death and resurrection, the old self dies, and a new self in Christ comes to life. (Rom. 6:1-11). Just as sure as Christ rose from the dead so we can be sure of our own resurrection. Despite our current circumstances we know that one day there will be no more tears or dying.

  - Is this really for me? Is doubting and struggling ok?

2. **GOD WHO SENDS AND GATHERS**

God called and blessed Abraham and the Israelites in order that they might be a blessing to others. Jesus went out of his way to be present in places where members of the organized religion of the day wouldn’t go.

  - Is there an expectation that we welcome others?
  - How are not-yet-believers spoken about?
  - Is there an assumption that you need to act a certain way, be of a certain background, socio-economic group, attend certain schools, etc. before people really belong?

"Our job is not to try to transform a person into someone who looks like "us," whoever "we" may be, but to actually think differently"

- John Swinton
Resources


Carle, Jessica Bratt, and John Swinton. “To Belong, We Need To Be Missed.” Church Health Reader, 30 Apr. 2016, chreader.org/to-belong-we-need-to-be-missed/.


Our Contact Information and Websites with Additional Resources

Reformed Worship: www.reformedworship.org editors@ReformedWorship.org
Worship Ministries: www.crcna.org/worship worship@crcna.org
Faith Formation Ministries: www.crcna.org/faithformation faithformation@crcna.org
A Blessing to Leave With You

God go before you to lead you,
God go behind you to protect you,
God go beneath you to support you,
God go beside you to befriend you.

Do not be afraid.

May the blessing of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you.
Do not be afraid.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

- Unknown