

## B3 Belonging

Friday and Saturday | 1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m

Joyce Berger 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*

We believe that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another (Eph. 2:11-22)...that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; ...together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity (Phil. 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; John 13:1-17; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:1-6; Eph. 3:14-20; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; Gal. 6:2; 2 Cor. 1:3-4).

-Belhar Confession

### 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.

In our world, where many journey alone,  
nameless in the bustling crowd,  
Satan and his evil forces seek whom they may scatter and isolate;  
but God, by his gracious choosing in Christ,  
gathers a new community.

In the new community all are welcome:  
the homeless come home,  
the broken find healing,  
the sinner makes a new start,  
the despised are esteemed,  
the least are honored,  
and the last are first.

The Spirit calls all members  
to embrace God's mission  
in their neighborhoods  
and in the world:  
to feed the hungry,  
bring water to the thirsty,  
welcome the stranger,  
clothe the naked,  
care for the sick,  
and free the prisoner.  
We repent of leaving this work to a few,  
for this mission is central  
to our being.

-Our World Belongs to God

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

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## Our Contact Information and Websites with Additional Resources

Reformed Worship:	<a href="http://www.reformedworship.org">www.reformedworship.org</a>	<a href="mailto:editors@ReformedWorship.org">editors@ReformedWorship.org</a>
Worship Ministries:	<a href="http://www.crcna.org/worship">www.crcna.org/worship</a>	<a href="mailto:worship@crcna.org">worship@crcna.org</a>
Faith Formation Ministries:	<a href="http://www.crcna.org/faithformation">www.crcna.org/faithformation</a>	<a href="mailto:faithformation@crcna.org">faithformation@crcna.org</a>

## 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*