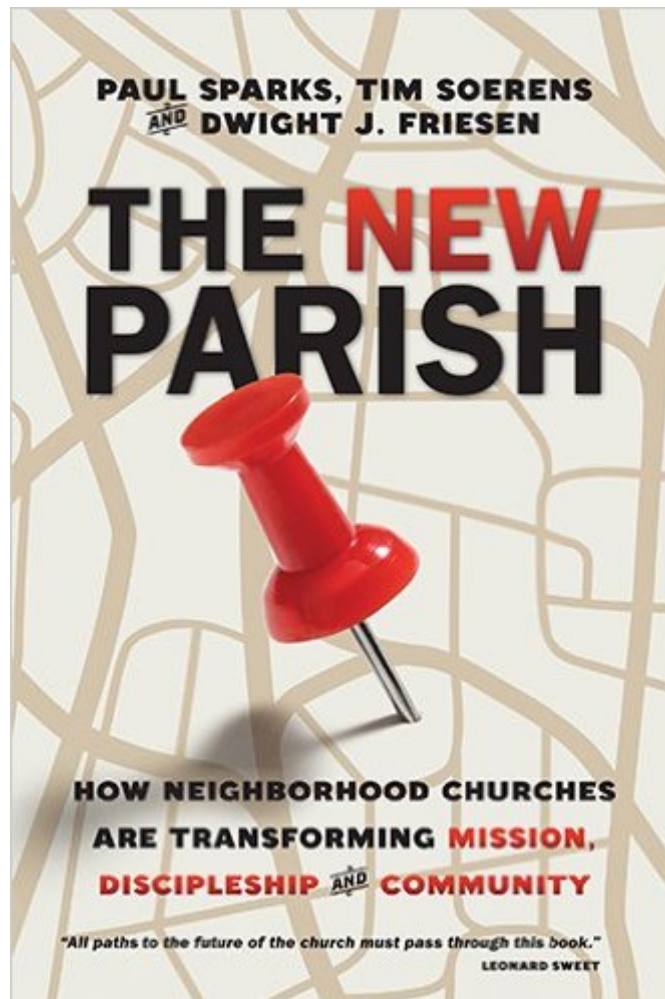


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The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship And Community



Synopsis

2015 Christianity Today Award of Merit (The Church/Pastoral Leadership) 2014 Readers' Choice Awards Honorable Mention 2014 Best Books About the Church from Byron Berger, Hearts and Minds Bookstore "When . . . faith communities begin connecting together, in and for the neighborhood, they learn to depend on God for strength to love, forgive and show grace like never before. . . . The gospel becomes so much more tangible and compelling when the local church is actually a part of the community, connected to the struggles of the people, and even the land itself." Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens and Dwight J. Friesen have seenâ•in cities, suburbs and small towns all over North Americaâ•how powerful the gospel can be when it takes root in the context of a place, at the intersection of geography, demography, economy and culture. This is not a new ideaâ•the concept of a parish is as old as Paul's letters to the various communities of the ancient church. But in an age of dislocation and disengagement, the notion of a church that knows its place and gives itself to where it finds itself is like a breath of fresh air, like a sign of new life.

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Customer Reviews

Lots of us have theories on where the Holy Spirit is leading the church in North America in the 21st century. Lots of angsty people hope the church will reach Millennials. Lots of doomsayers believe the Spirit is letting the church die. I'm putting my money on one basic idea: The Spirit is leading churches to re-root in their communities, in their local neighborhoods. Many churches do this already, natively. But surprisingly a lot less do than could. It's not uncommon for people living in a

neighborhood to have little or no contact with the community of people who worship together in a church building right on their block. Anecdotally, there are at least five churches I can walk to in my own neighborhood where I don't know a single person who attends there. I don't know where their members live. I've never met anyone who attends these churches. Also anecdotally, when I tell people I am the pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, even if they live right next door to the church, more than once I have had them ask, "Where is that church?" Or: "Is that the church there on Rolling Hills somewhere?" There are perhaps many reasons why individual churches are in the neighborhood while not being in the neighborhood. If they are a church like ours with a denominational affiliation that tends to attract members from across the region rather than in the specific neighborhood, the church may not have as part of its identity the notion that it is a part of the neighborhood. It is, on the other hand, surprising to me that congregations don't take the injunction from Jesus, "Love your neighbor," as a practical and geographical suggestion.

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