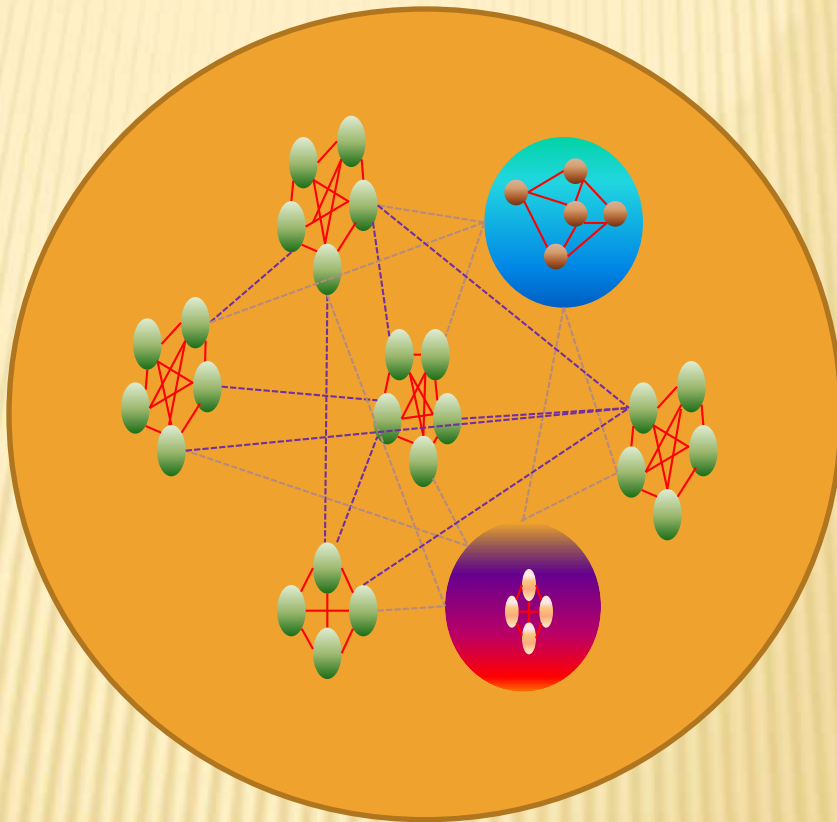


# The World is a Neighborhood



Becoming a neighbor,  
Changing the World

# PURPOSE

## ✕ BECOMING NEIGHBORS

We want to become neighbors. A neighbor is more than someone who lives close by. As the parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates, a neighbor is simply someone you care about and/or who cares about you. The parable also teaches us the irrelevance of the fact that our neighbor might not share our culture, religion, race, or political views. Being a neighbor also includes a concern for the health of our environment. Becoming a neighbor requires a change in ourselves involving awareness, intention, and practice – or, an open mind, an open heart, and an open will. The corresponding barriers that need to be overcome in order to change are prejudice, distrust, and fear. Our ultimate goal is to change the world.

*"It is our task - our essential, central, crucial task - to transform ourselves from mere social creatures into community creatures. It is the only way that human evolution will be able to proceed." - M. Scott Peck*

## ✕ INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

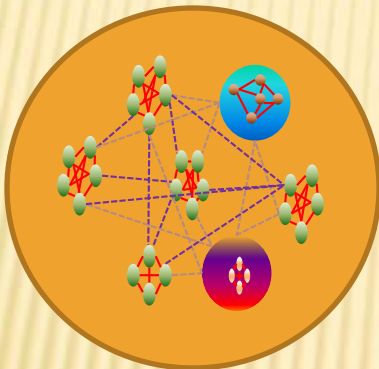
Community is generally created in one of two ways: through a crisis when we discover that we need one another, or by intention because we become aware of our interdependence. Community is not created simply by gathering with others, rather, it is pre-existent and there is never a time when we are not in community. An intentional community is a social group which practices neighborliness.

*"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead*

# INTENTION

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Our intention is to create a network of small group gatherings (intentional communities) and linking with other organizations which share similar ideals. As a network, the organizational structure will be non-hierarchical, diverse, and organic.



Organizational Structure

Each small group is self-governing and might meet in homes (ideally), offices, parks, or change locations, perhaps on a rotating basis. Each group decides how often it wants to meet, but we recommend at least monthly (weekly is the ideal). If a gathering is held in homes, the hosts do not necessarily need to be the facilitators. The groups can develop their own projects, and/or coordinate resources and planning with other groups.

Groups might have a strong link with other groups (face-to-face contact) or a weak link using the internet. Several groups might combine efforts to produce a local neighborhood newsletter. Network hubs can be formed through churches or other organizations.



# STRUCTURE OF GATHERINGS

## ✕ CHECK-IN

As we sit in a circle, each person is given an opportunity to answer the unspoken question, “How ya doin’?” The question can be interpreted several ways:

- What have you been doing?
- How are you feeling?
- What are you thinking about?

It can be assumed that during this time, good neighbors will listen empathetically, refrain from side conversations, offer encouragement, and suspend judgment.

## ✕ CENTERING SILENCE/PRESENCING/EMPTINESS

This is a time of silence. It’s purpose may depend upon one’s understanding of spirituality or worldview. It may be considered to be an empty container in which our anxieties and fears can be disposed of. It may be where we can consciously be in touch with our Source. It may be a shift in focus from thinking to feeling. It may simply be a time to relax or let go of the stress we brought with us. It may be the most important and valuable time that we spend together.

## ✕ CONVERSATION/DIALOG

The content of this time can vary. It can be used to plan a neighborhood project, discuss a planned topic, or be a free-form time of sharing.

The group may move in and out of several levels of conversation:

- 1) Polite Exchange – superficial or trivial phrases with little content.
- 2) Debate – competition of ideas, awareness of different perspectives.
- 3) Dialog – seeking to understand one another.
- 4) Communion – experiencing a deep connection after understanding has been reached.

Moving toward our purpose will result in more conversation at levels 3 & 4.

## ✕ CHECK-OUT

Each person is now given an opportunity to share a brief word or phrase expressing their feelings about the Gathering as it comes to an end.

# VALUE

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Below is a partial list of possible values which may be realized as we work toward our purpose. We need to make and keep a distinction between value and purpose. For instance, a possible and probable result of these gatherings may be the development of a safer neighborhood. However developing a safer neighborhood is not our purpose. If it becomes our purpose, most of the other values on this list will not be realized. We need gatherings such that every neighbor will find value in them and want to participate, but not everyone will share the same values.

- Friendship.
- Safety and Security.
  - Neighborhood watch.
  - "Safe Houses" for children.
- Recreation and enjoyment of life.
- Discovering local resources.
  - Borrow a wheelbarrow, lawn mower, chain saw, cup of sugar, etc...
- Accessing wisdom gained through the experiences of elders.
- Improving the environment.
  - Thinking "green" - using local resources, i.e., neighborhood garden, reduce dependence upon autos, etc...
- Forming an extended family.
- Overcoming loneliness.
- Finding acceptance.
- Personal improvement.
  - Rise to new levels of social, physical, spiritual development.
- Networking
- Political power.
  - Groups have greater political power than individuals.
- Self-esteem.
- Adding greater meaning and purpose to our life.
- Enriching marriages.
- A tribal environment for raising children (it takes a tribe).
- Improving Schools.
- Raising property values.
- Mentoring for children & adults.
  - Access to neighbors willing to share experience and education.
- Sharing an ethic of love & trust.

# LIST OF IDEAS

- ❑ Online Group (Google, Facebook, My Space?)
- ❑ Neighborhood Web Page
- ❑ Good Neighbor Project
- ❑ Monthly Pot Luck Dinners
- ❑ Neighbor Resource List
- ❑ Newsletter
- ❑ Parents & children play-togethers
- ❑ Neighborhood bike rides and walks.
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑



# INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

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Which of the following definitions or descriptions of an intentional community do you like the most?

...a group of people who come together deliberately in a residential situation around a specific vision, agenda or shared values. Certainly there are communities that adhere to the latter criteria whose members do not live together; however, when we think of intentional communities, it seems to imply being residential.

Pasted from <<http://www.ic.org/pnp/cdir/1995/05quest.php>>

...Community is not something that is created when people come together and live together, rather it is something that is preexistent and we can awaken to it. There is never a time when we are not in community, and our practice is to awaken to that experience of communion.

Pasted from <http://www.ic.org/pnp/cdir/1995/05quest.php>

This may seem like a frivolous answer, but I think it works as a definition. When I try to think what all "communities" -- intentional, traditional, tribal, neighborhood...have in common, the only one I can put a finger on is gossip -- in a positive sense ....Communities are groups of people who care enough about each other to constantly monitor each other's lives, find them interesting, want to know and help and support.

Pasted from <<http://www.ic.org/pnp/cdir/1995/05quest.php>>

Community isn't a place. It is a feeling among people of wanting to be together.

Pasted from <<http://www.ic.org/pnp/cdir/1995/05quest.php>>

Communities are replacements for extended families for people who have lost touch with their biological extended families or whose families cannot offer a loving environment.

Pasted from <<http://www.ic.org/pnp/cdir/1995/05quest.php>>

# THE PROBLEM OF THE SELF

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- ✖ “The deep-seated individualism in our culture ... reflects a misguided and dangerously outmoded understanding of the human self. We cannot adequately satisfy our longing for community until we learn to embrace a different view of the self. The importance of balancing the needs of the individual and the community will always be there. But the balance we strike, indeed our attitudes toward community itself, is affected by our self-understanding. We don’t need simply to shift the balance between the individual and the community; we need to come to a different notion of what it means to be an individual. We will not make much progress toward reclaiming the community we seek unless we grasp this.
- ✖ The modern individualistic understanding of the self, though still widely held, is no longer tenable. It is rooted in an outdated philosophical paradigm and inconsistent with contemporary developments in the natural and social sciences. This idea is itself the product of a particular culture. In many ways, it is a historical anomaly. In other words, our modern understanding of ourselves as autonomous individuals is an illusion. The truth is that we don’t first exist as individuals who form social groups. The group always comes first. As individuals, our identities are always formed in relation to a particular social context. We are social beings through and through.”
- ✖ – Paul Razor, *Faith Without Certainty*, pp. 88-89