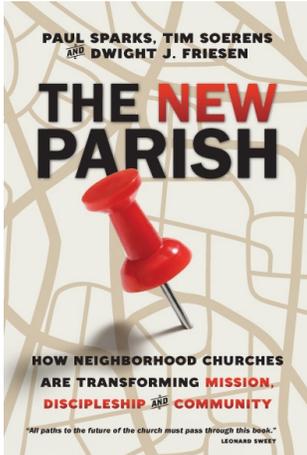




BOOK DETAILS



The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community
May 2014

\$17, 208 pages, paperback
978-0-8308-4115-8

"In a world of increasing mobility, fragmenting relationships and a loss of any real sense of covenant, we need learn again to attend to the various people and places where God has located us. This book is a much-needed antidote to the endemic alienation of our time. Missionary grow home!"

— Alan Hirsch, author,
activist, dreamer

Ever Hear of the Parish Movement?

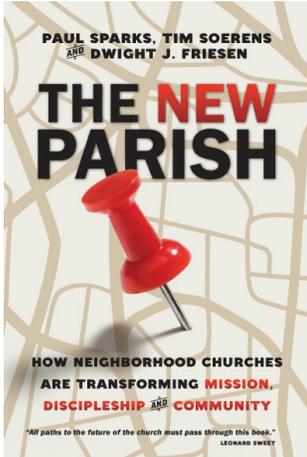
Common perception holds that the Western church is dying. But *The New Parish* describes an amazing movement of love and compassion that is springing up in the everyday life of neighborhoods all over North America. This movement is a phenomenon that has escaped traditional measurements of success. It cannot be discovered within the walls of church buildings. You don't hear about it on the news. But it is happening.

Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens and Dwight J. Friesen, authors of *The New Parish* and cofounders of the Parish Collective, have seen – in cities, suburbs and small towns all over North America – 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 idea – 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.

They write, "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."

The New Parish is filled with stories that light the imagination and offer practical insights for how each person can participate in what God is doing in the place he or she lives.

Visit newparish.org for more information.



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Cofounders of the Parish Collective

Over the years **Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens and Dwight Friesen**, coauthors of *The New Parish* and cofounders of the Parish Collective, have walked the streets and shared stories together with faith communities in hundreds of parishes. They have become trusted guides in cities, suburbs and towns all across North America. Groups transitioning toward a more tangible and compelling way of being the church have learned to count on the authors' combined experience in parish ministry, community organizing and academic research. While Paul, Tim and Dwight each have their own unique biographies, together they have partnered in the formation of the Parish Collective, the Leadership in the New Parish program at The Seattle School, and the Inhabit Conference.

Parish Collective connects and resources the people of faith in particular neighborhoods to be the church together in the place they live. This grassroots-level work weaves together neighborhood churches, missional communities and any group of Christ-followers desiring renewal in their parish. The members of these groups, called parish initiatives, develop postures and practices for becoming present in their neighborhoods and participating in what the Spirit is up to there. This means discerning, supporting, and collaborating together on projects that contribute to neighborhood reconciliation and parish renewal (renewal projects).

Parish Initiatives have started in diverse parishes across North America, from the Highland Park neighborhood in Edmonton, Canada, to the Hillside neighborhood, in Richmond, Virginia. These are local churches, missional communities and faith-based groups of all kinds that are committed to being present to the relationships in their neighborhood. They have developed the kinds of practices and postures that contribute to its reconciliation and renewal, while linking the parish across places for justice. Many have participated in renewal projects in a multitude of areas as small-scale local responses to the converging forces of fragmentation that have divided the church from community engagement for the last century.

Together these small-scale responses make up something much bigger and help show the way forward for the church at large. Really, it's the opposite of us sitting in our armchairs complaining about what's wrong. Instead, it's about getting up and doing something constructive about it alongside our neighbors and fellow townsfolk.

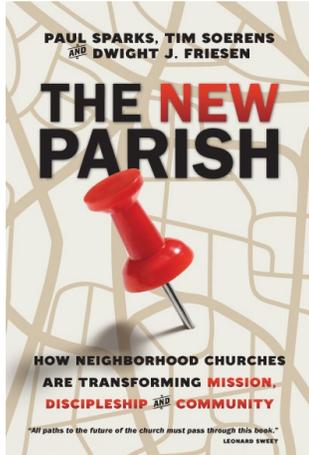
Visit parishcollective.org for more information and to see a map of parishes located throughout the country.

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The Hidden Movement of the New Parish

Popular imagination holds that North American churches are dwindling away, frozen in irrelevance and dying from divisiveness. Many books on the church in recent years highlight statistics that speak of the church's decline in the Western world. While it is certainly true that all is not well within popular Christianity, those collecting the data may be asking the wrong questions. The persistent questions regarding Sunday morning attendance, program involvement or the building budget may not be accurate measurements for discerning the health of the church.

The new parish introduces the possibility that something spectacular is brewing beneath the level of categorical definition. Indeed, there is an immense distributed population, often unrecognized by official figures, who are learning to love their neighbors in everyday ways. Within a single mile of wherever you are reading this book, it's quite likely that there are dozens upon dozens of people who are loving their neighbor as an expression of their love of God. And here's what we find most exciting: right now there are millions more migrating toward this relational way of being the church.

Over the course of the past few years we have walked the streets, eaten in the homes, and entered the shops, gardens and ghettos of over three hundred diverse neighborhoods across North America and beyond. We have been on an expedition to discover coalescing local bodies of believers sharing life together in particular places. Throughout the course of our explorations we have stumbled on a very surprising phenomenon. Contrary to all the clamor about dying churches, the closer we get to the everyday life of people in their neighborhoods, the more we find burgeoning expressions of reconciliation and renewal. . . .

A simple switch of the imagination can produce a whole new set of questions regarding the health of the church. Here are just a few that we ask our hosts when we are visiting communities. These also serve as prayers as we invite God to lead our exploration. What would you ask if you were surveying neighborhoods searching for signs of the Spirit's movement?

- Are there people who have found a way to share a life of love together here?
- Are there people leading movements toward reconciliation and renewal here?
- Are there people living on behalf of justice with the marginalized and poor here?
- Are there people entering into relational forms of civic and economic life here?
- Are there people creating reciprocal relationships of care across parishes globally here?

– Taken from chapter one, "Dislocated"