



EXCERPT



## *Who Moved My Neighborhood?*

Leading Congregations Through Gentrification and Economic Change

March 8, 2022 | \$18, 176 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0238-4

Neighborhoods are moving. While offering opportunities for some, gentrification can be a vastly different experience for longtime residents and neighborhood churches. As a pastor who led his church through its own moved neighborhood in Portland, Mark Strong gives insight to churches that need to heal from the wounds of gentrification and revamp their mission amid an uncertain future.

## Redemptive Reengagement

Throughout our nation many neighborhoods are moving. These shifts can result from economic growth or decline, gentrification, or other geographical changes. These changes bring with them a mixed bag of emotions, perspectives, and opportunities. For some, the changing neighborhood becomes the new “promised land,” the turf of fresh opportunity—an old space made new, filled with chic, artsy, and trendy hotspots. They become the electric place with the “buzz,” where people come from across the state and the nation to “vibe.” They are the compelling new oases where a whole new demographic wants to live and be.

But for the longtime residents of those neighborhoods, the sentiments are vastly different. With the rapid emergence of new developments, businesses, and residences, they lament as they watch the fingerprints left by past generations on their beloved community vanish as neighborhood revitalization progresses. As their semblance disappears, they feel unwanted, powerless, and insignificant in a neighborhood which for years has been their home.

The church is not exempt from these difficult neighborhood shifts. When a local church has loved and served its community for years and, suddenly, becomes strangers in its own neighborhood, the challenges are great. Its new reality forces it to change internally and externally. How the church navigates these changes determines if it will live, die, or be reduced to a tragic existence on life support.

Navigating a new neighborhood is complex. It requires the church to deliberately take the time to process the new changes, to grieve, and to heal. It also requires a revamping, where the church must courageously look at itself in the mirror and ask difficult, heart-probing questions that will cause some discomfort—transformational questions that will require hard work to answer. Enmeshed in the process as well is the task of discerning God’s will, a reconciling of sorts that suggests that in the unwanted (or maybe wanted) changes our neighborhoods have undergone, God may be up to something new. This process also involves coming to grips with the truth that the newness may require our churches to change in order to reengage our neighborhoods in a redemptive manner—or perhaps choose another option.

My purpose in writing this book is to compassionately help pastors, leaders, and churches *faithfully* navigate the treacherous terrain of a changing neighborhood—a moved neighborhood. This is not a book about gentrification per se, but it will show you how our church has navigated some of the difficulties inevitably brought on by gentrification in our city in order to share what we’ve learned so far in our process. And, for the record, by no means have we arrived! I’m not writing as an expert or a guru who has it figured all out but as a fellow sojourner serving Christ and his church in a moved neighborhood.

Regardless of what’s transpiring in the changing community around you, God still has a great purpose for your church. With his divine assistance you can help navigate your church into an exciting future in an old but new neighborhood.

—Adapted from the preface



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"Mark Strong is without a doubt one of the most respected, trusted leaders here in Portland. He's a deep well of wisdom and insight into the changing dynamics of urban ministry. This book will be an extraordinary help to many."

—John Mark Comer, author of *Live No Lies* and *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*

## **Pastor and Change Agent**

"Dr. Mark Strong is an example of strength and leadership to me and my church community, even serving on our board of directors, and as is his bent, he's produced a book to help strengthen and lead pastors and churches through significant changes. *Who Moved My Neighborhood?* acknowledges the pain and sorrow that can come with a changing neighborhood, provides keys for processing through it, and offers incredible guidance and practical steps for trusting God for the future. Any faith-based community facing the impacts of gentrification or economic change will be inspired, encouraged, and energized by the wisdom and shared journey present in *Who Moved My Neighborhood?*"

—Judah Smith, lead pastor of Churchome, Kirkland, Washington

Dr. Mark Strong is senior pastor of Life Change Church, a diverse congregation located in the heart of inner-city Portland, Oregon. He is also the author of *Church for the Fatherless*, and he serves on the Board of Regents at George Fox Seminary. He is a gifted communicator who has preached and taught the Bible throughout the United States and the world. His passion is to build the church and help people find freedom and grow in their relationship with Christ. He and his wife, Marla, have four children.



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