

Session II- Good News For The Poor

Bible Verses of Focus: Luke 4:17-30

Resources Needed:

- The National Association of Realtors video from the website:
<https://youtu.be/94TVHAJtang>
- Copies of the next lesson's notes either printed or sent out in advance by email to each participant.
- A digital projector or large monitor and computer to view the video as a group.
- Bibles, pencils, paper

Gathering Exercise

At the appointed beginning and /or ending times, the group leader(s) may want to lead the group in brief devotions or a prayer or to arrange for a group member to do so.

As each member of the group does a self-introduction, each is invited to tell very briefly about a time and place when they were treated as an outsider and to relate how that felt (anger, embarrassment, confusion?).

Bible Study- Luke 4:17- 30 NRSV

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." 20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." 22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. 23 Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'" 24 "Truly I tell you," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 25 I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy[g] in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian." 28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. 30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

There is a lot going on in this text. Perhaps we can set the stage for the reading by imagining that Jesus is being treated like a University of Iowa football or basketball star (or perhaps a

newly graduated seminarian) returning to a home congregation in a small Iowa town and being asked to read Scripture on Sunday morning. Luke uses Jesus' visit to his hometown earlier in his Gospel than Matthew and Mark, perhaps to announce the purpose and scope of Jesus' ministry which will be played out in the remainder of Luke's Gospel. Jesus, the hometown boy adored for bringing notoriety to the locals, probably chooses to read from Isaiah 61:1-2 and takes some liberties with the literal text to emphasize good news to the poor and soften "the day of vengeance." It is important to notice that Jesus claims a ministry that is both deeply spiritual ("The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...") and socially and economically tangible (freedom, sight, and the restorations of the economic balance and justice promised by the Jubilee year in Isaiah). The Jubilee year is described in Leviticus 10 as the 49th year of a cycle, when slaves would be freed to return home and land that had been consolidated in the hands of the wealthy would be returned to descendants of those who had formerly owned and occupied it. In Luke 11:4, Jesus teaches us to pray in the fiscal language of Jubilee that we will be forgiven our debts even as we have forgiven those in debt to us: words that may also refer to the more spiritual act of forgiving our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. Of the Gospels, Luke is most concerned about issues of poverty, wealth, and justice. When the congregation in first-century Nazareth hears the words announcing the Jubilee it is likely that they think first of the peasant farmers in their own Galilean countryside whose land has been taken from them by conquest and sold to the wealthy, or whose land was sold to pay taxes to the occupiers, making the peasants virtual or actual slaves. It is no wonder that Jesus's choice of Isaiah 61 was well-received.

As is so often the case, it isn't the preacher's choice of text that gets Jesus in trouble, but the content and context of his sermon. At a seminary in Kentucky there is an old joke which continuously circulates about how the new seminarian goes out to the same rural congregation on three consecutive Sundays to preach against alcohol, gambling, and smoking in a state that is economically dependent on distilleries, horse racing, and tobacco. He meets an angry congregation after each sermon until he (wisely or out of cowardice) decides to preach against the killing of baby seals off the coast of Nova Scotia on the fourth Sunday. The two stories Jesus uses in the sermon are very familiar and recognizable passages from the congregation's own Hebrew scriptures. However, the heroes of the stories and the people to whom God showed favor in those stories were foreigners. The message is that God comes to people outside of the circles we identify as being "us" and may even show greater deference to the poor we identify as "them." God's Jubilee is not merely a succulent spiritual gift for us insiders, but also to people outside of our race, class, gender, sex, country and religion. When the hometowners hear this message of inclusion, they are enraged enough to try to kill Jesus. They take him outside of town to a hill (perhaps a not-so-subtle reference to the hill of Golgotha where Jesus would be executed?) with the intent of killing him by throwing him over a precipice. Only by some miracle does Jesus pass through the midst of them and escape.

+ Are we surprised about the vehemence and violence of Nazareth's response to Jesus' preaching? Have you ever been in a public meeting or demonstration where anger toward some outside group was expressed?

+ The stories Jesus used in his sermon were familiar "Sunday School" stories. Are there stories in our own religious tradition that we really do not want to hear because they make us uncomfortable or because we feel judged by them?

+ Is the Good News/ Gospel which Luke proclaims good news to rich and poor, Gentile and Jew, conservative and liberal alike? If it is indeed good news, then why is it sometimes so difficult to see and hear it?

Living Our Faith

In this portion of our group session we are examining the implications that the Biblical text has for how we live in housing in Johnson County. In particular, we will look at how some groups of persons may be more or less segregated from other groups by where they are housed. We will ask ourselves who are “in” groups are and who our “outside” groups are in light of the Gospel.

At this point in the session, you may want to view together the 6 minute video produced by the National Association of Realtors: *An Overview of The Fair Housing Act* found at- <https://youtu.be/94TVHAJtang>

The materials below are presented to provide some basic facts about housing segregation so we all have a common basis for discussion:

In January of 2019 a judge in Missouri ruled that a retirement facility was not required to allow a GLBTQ couple who are legally married (since 2009) to move into the retirement facility because they were not discriminated against because of their sex: Missouri does not have a law protecting GLBTQ persons from discrimination in housing. (January 18, 2019, Witchita Eagle, Josh Magnus, <https://www.kansas.com/news/nation-world/national/article224749810.html#storylink=cpy>)

Protected Classes in Housing

Fair Housing Act (Federal) Iowa Code, § 216.8

Race

(State)

Color

All Fair Housing Act bases

National origin

plus:

Religion

- Sexual orientation

Sex

- Gender identity

Physical or mental disability

- Creed

Familial status

Iowa City Ordinance

- Adds even more bases:
 - Public assistance source of income
 - Including Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8)
 - Marital status
 - Presence or absence of dependents
 - Age

From: The Daily Iowan, February 27, 2015, by Carly Matthew

Iowa City ranked 14th In Segregation

Of the United States' approximately 350 metropolitan areas included in a new study, Ames and Iowa City were ranked eighth and 14th among metro areas in which the poor were most segregated from more affluent populations, a new study says.

Martin Prosperity Institute, based at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, conducted the study in order to examine how people are "sorting not just between cities and metro areas but within them as well."

"There is definitely a growing income divide across the country, and Johnson County is no exception to that phenomena," Johnson County Director of Social Services Lynette Jacoby said.

"Poor people live in Lakeside and on Broadway, too — the rent's cheaper," Iowa City resident Steven Anderson, 56, said.

Ames and Iowa City were not the only college town-based metros on the list — others ranked high in terms of poverty segregation.

Of the 10 most geographically segregated metros, four were well-known college towns. State College, Pennsylvania, home of Penn State, was No. 1. Ann Arbor, Michigan, home of the University of Michigan, was fifth. Ames was eighth. And New Haven, Connecticut was 10th.

Iowa City's poverty segregation index was slightly less significant, the 14th most segregated by poverty metro.

The analysis also looked at other ways communities were split, such as by income, education, and occupation. With these and other factors considered, the city was the 83rd highest and Ames trailed at 146th in overall economic segregation, according to the study.

Poverty segregation, however, affects college towns especially for a number of reasons.

The study cites "the classic town-gown split" as the main reason. This means as university students, staff, and faculty make campus their hub, while the remainder of the city is left to service workers.

Jacoby said, in the case of Iowa City, for example, the university's presence creates a supply-and-demand issue that makes affordable housing hard to find.

Limited affordable housing and low apartment vacancy rates can lead to an increased concentration of people living in poverty in certain areas of the city, Jacoby said.

"[In Iowa City,] I think there's a huge divide between the haves and the have-nots," Jacoby said.

The study found that the growing income gap between the rich and the poor wasn't the main factor creating cities segregated by poverty. Instead, the wealthy were effectively able to seal off neighborhoods to the poor, segregating themselves in the more affluent parts of a city.

“It is not so much the size of the gap between the rich and poor that drives segregation as the ability of the super-wealthy to isolate and wall themselves off from the less well-to-do,” the analysis from the study said.

Though metros including major college towns had some of the highest poverty segregation, report researcher Karen King said, they weren't the study's focus.

King said researchers used the U.S. census definition of metros and the American Community Survey to compile data....

Segregated City: The Geography of Economic Segregation in America's Metros, Richard Florida and Charlotte Mellander, Toronto, Martin Prosperity Institute

Racial Segregation in Iowa's Metro Areas, 1990 - 2010

Emily Seiple, Ashley Zitzner, Jerry Anthony, Ryan Dusil, Kirk Lehman, Gabriel Martin

School of Urban & Regional Planning, University of Iowa January 2017

Page 18 - Iowa City Metro

The Iowa City Metro consists of Johnson and Washington counties. Between 1990 and 2010, it experienced population growth each decade, as shown in Table 11. Like the rest of the state, the Iowa City Metro has become increasingly diverse. In 1990, 94.2% of the population was White, 1.8% was Black, and 0.5% was Hispanic. By 2010, the White population had decreased to 87.1%, while Black and Hispanic populations increased to 4.2% and 2.2%, respectively. In raw numbers, the Black population tripled between 1990 and 2010, increasing by over 4,000 people. The Hispanic population grew by almost 3,000 in the same, increasing more than six-fold.

Table 11. Iowa City Metro population statistics for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics in 1990, 2000, and 2010

Demographics	1990		2000		2010	
White	109,052	94.2%	120,110	91.2%	132,879	87.1%
Black	2,069	1.8%	3,283	2.5%	6,451	4.2%
Hispanic	541	0.5%	1,692	1.3%	3,340	2.2%
Total Population	115,731		131,676		152,586	

Source: U.S. Census; Hispanic denotes non-white Hispanic population

Table 12. Iowa City Metro segregation trends from 1990 to 2010

Dissimilarity	1990	2000	2010
Black/White	40.6	43.0	45.6
Hispanic/White	36.2	33.7	43.6

Source: U.S. Census; Hispanic denotes non-white Hispanic population

Increasing diversity in the Iowa City Metro has come with rising levels of segregation. It is the only metro of the seven in the state to show increasing levels of *both* Black-White and Hispanic-White segregation. This must be addressed, especially in light of the significant growth in both Black and Hispanic populations.

In 1990, the Black-White IoD score was 40.6. This score rose to 43.0 in 2000 and to 45.6 in 2010 (see Table 12). Taken at face value, these scores indicate the lowest level of Black-White segregation among all seven metros in 1990, 2000, and 2010. Yet examined over time, the IoD scores give cause for concern: in contrast with statewide trends showing decreasing levels in Black-White segregation, the Iowa City Metro showed an increase of 5 points in its dissimilarity index. It is the only metro to show an increase in Black-White segregation between 1990 and 2010. As of 2010, block groups northwest and southwest of the metro center, as well as to the southeast, show a concentrated Black population (Figure 10).

Hispanic-White segregation decreased between 1990 and 2000, and then increased from 2000 to 2010. In 1990, the Hispanic-White dissimilarity score was 36.2; it fell to a low of 33.7 in 2000, concurrent with a large increase in the Hispanic population over that decade. The IoD then rose dramatically by 9.9 points to 43.6 in 2010, resulting in an overall increase of 7.4 points between 1990 and 2010.

The Hispanic population, like the Black population, is becoming increasingly segregated from the White population in the Iowa City Metro. Figure 11 (below) shows an increasing concentration of the Hispanic population in census block groups directly north, south, and east of the central metro area.

Figure 10. Iowa City Metro spatial trends for Black population

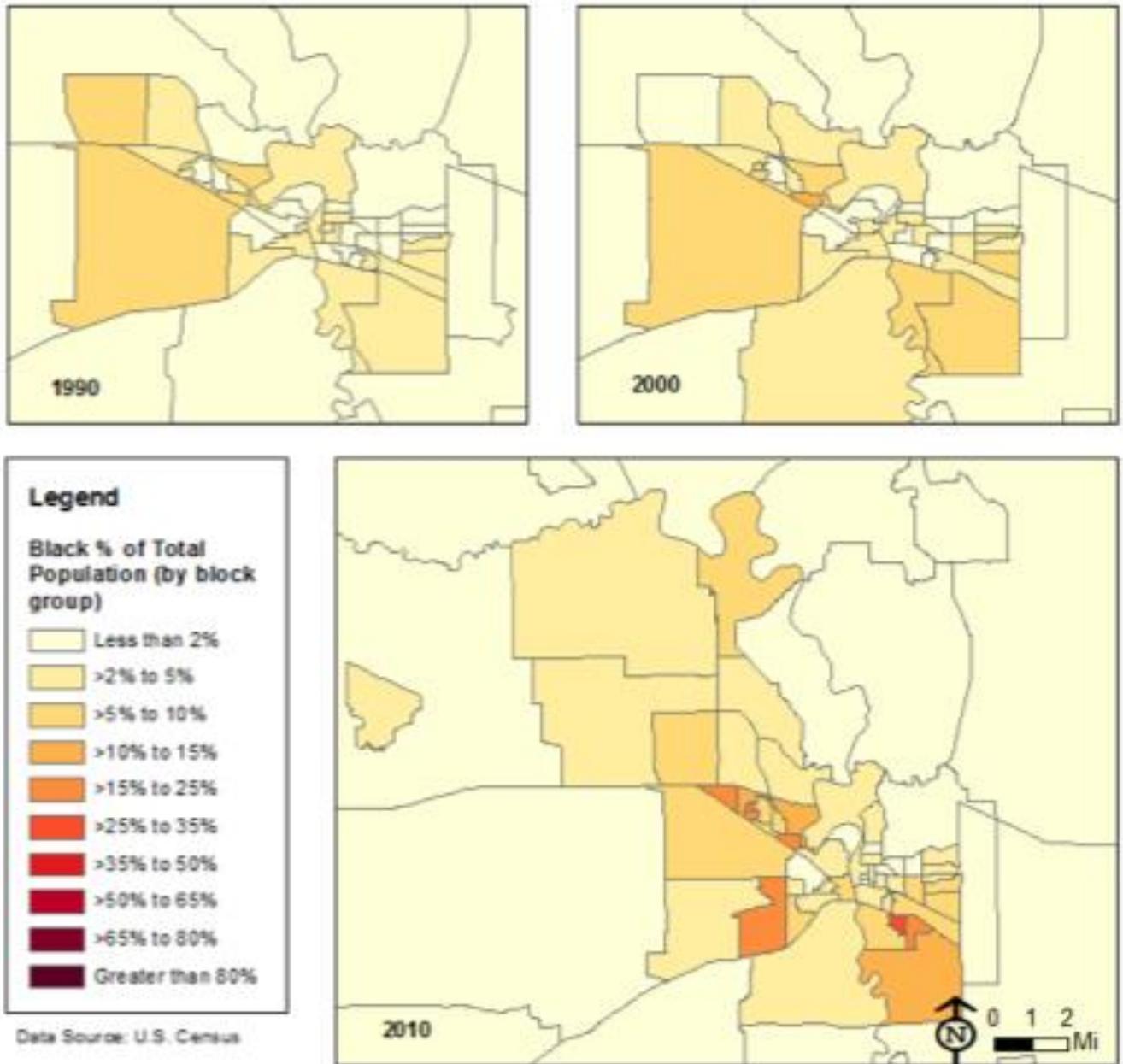
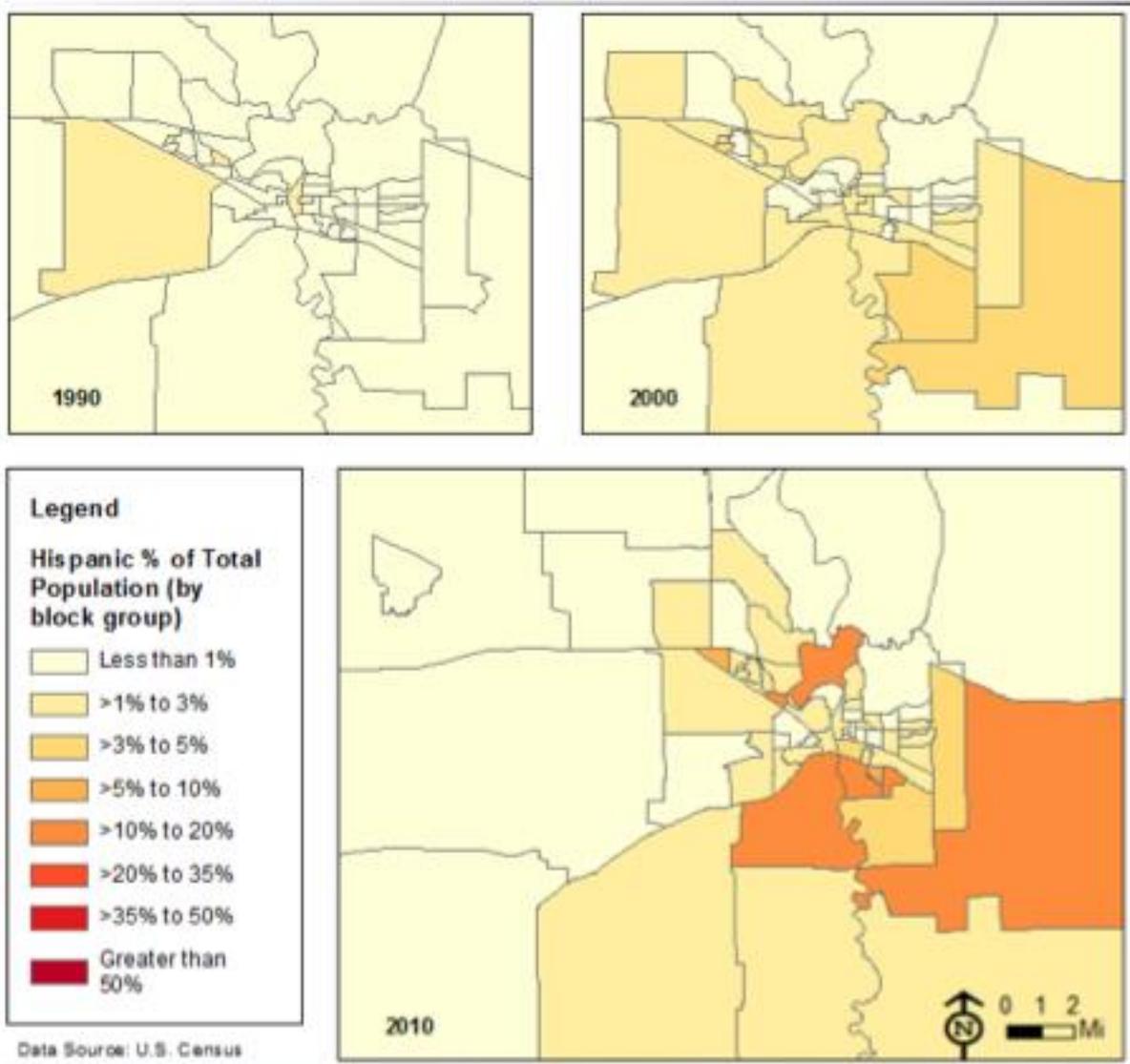


Figure 11. Iowa City Metro spatial trends for Hispanic population



The following is the publisher's summary of The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America, Liveright Publishing, New York, 2017, book jacket:

In this groundbreaking history of the modern American metropolis, Richard Rothstein, a leading authority on housing policy, explodes the myth that America's cities came to be racially divided through de facto segregation—that is, through individual prejudices, income differences, or the actions of private institutions like banks and real estate agencies. Rather, *The Color of Law* incontrovertibly makes clear that it was de jure segregation—the laws and policy decisions passed by local, state, and federal governments—that actually promoted the discriminatory patterns that continue to this day. Through extraordinary revelations and extensive research that Ta-Nehisi Coates has lauded as "brilliant" (*The Atlantic*), Rothstein comes to chronicle nothing less than an untold story that begins in the 1920s, showing how this process of de jure segregation began with explicit racial zoning, as millions of African Americans moved in a great historical migration from the south to the north. As Jane Jacobs established in her classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, it was the deeply flawed urban planning of the 1950s that created many of the impoverished neighborhoods we know. Now, Rothstein expands our understanding of this history, showing how government policies led to the creation of officially segregated public housing and the demolition of previously integrated neighborhoods. While urban areas rapidly deteriorated, the great American suburbanization of the post-World War II years was spurred on by federal subsidies for builders on the condition that no homes be sold to African Americans. Finally, Rothstein shows how police and prosecutors brutally upheld these standards by supporting violent resistance to black families in white neighborhoods. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited future discrimination but did nothing to reverse residential patterns that had become deeply embedded. Yet recent outbursts of violence in cities like Baltimore, Ferguson, and Minneapolis show us precisely how the legacy of these earlier eras contributes to persistent racial unrest. "The American landscape will never look the same to readers of this important book" (Sherrilyn Ifill, president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund), as Rothstein's invaluable examination shows that only by relearning this history can we finally pave the way for the nation to remedy its unconstitutional past.

Discussion

- +What surprises were there for you in the background material or video presented above? What of the information provided are congruent with your own experiences of housing in Johnson County?
- + There has been increasing diversity in the population of Johnson County. How great is the diversity of the population in the neighborhood where you live? In the neighborhood where your church has its building? Within your congregation?
- + How are schools, school boundaries, and educational opportunities impacted by segregation and diversity?
- + Is diversity a blessing or a difficulty? Is there such a thing as spiritual diversity within the unity of the church?
- + As new neighborhoods are being developed and old neighborhoods are being redeveloped, how important is it that communities plan for a wide variety of housing forms and price points to be included in every neighborhood?
- + How do we preach "good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and an end to oppression in this time and place?"

+ At the time of this writing, the proposed redevelopment of the Forest View mobile home park seemed to provide an affordable place to live for all if the residents displaced by redevelopment, and a possible path to home ownership for many of them. Discuss what participants know about this project, and whether it should be supported for the benefit of all of Johnson County.

Closing

Announce the scriptures passages and topics for the next session and distribute on paper or via email the notes and meeting details for that session.

The group may want to re-read aloud the Scriptural texts for this session, to pray together, to sing a song of blessing and benediction, or participate in some other closing activity.