

San Pablo/St. Paul's Lutheran Church site visit

By Jen Dresser

St. Paul's was originally a Swedish Lutheran Church. As the community around them has shifted, they have become primarily Spanish speaking, with many community of faith members being undocumented. They have made the shift to claim their Spanish identity and welcome and include English speakers and still honour their Swedish roots. They host a free medical clinic for the community staffed by student volunteers with no questions asked. They created the first mural in their neighbourhood.

They developed the belonging project. Community members were asked, "When was a time you felt a sense of belonging?" Photos were taken along with a quote in either Spanish or English. These photos and quotes were blown up and placed around their sanctuary. <https://www.sanpablostpaul.org/belongingproject.html>

Christian Nationalism

There are so many parallels between Christian Nationalism in the United States and what's happening in Canada. I found it helpful to identify that there are four attitudes towards Christian Nationalism: Rejecters (no connection between church and state), Resisters (suspicious of "Christian Nation" but okay with Christian language and symbols in public space), Accommodators (Christianity should speak to politics but not be directly involved), or Ambassadors (Christianity will save the country for white, straight, Christians). You can only reason with and have conversations about issues with resisters and accommodators. When you do have to be in a relationship with or interact with rejecters or ambassadors a common value (even if it means different things) might be the only way to hold the connection. An example I've been thinking about lately is the new legislation in Saskatchewan around parental permission being required for pronoun and name changes at school. The supporters whether Christian or not, want to save and protect the children by requiring parental consent and limiting access to information. Those of us working in the queer community also want to protect children by having open conversations

and making sure children have access to the support they need. So the common ground becomes the safety of children.

Joe Davis:

One of my favorite takeaway phrases: You have to move at the pace of relationship, rather than the pace of trauma.