



REACHING OVER WALLS: Mr. Roger's Neighborhood Story

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In 1968, When Mr. Roger's Neighborhood aired its first week, the land of make-believe was in a distressing state. The puppet-filled neighborhood, ruled by King Friday XIII was experiencing change. Lady Aberlain had moved around all the houses in the neighborhood! In response, King Friday declared a war on change and erected a wall to keep out the people who wanted to change the neighborhood of make-believe. The tension mounts throughout the week. King Friday posts guards and makes people check in and out of the neighborhood. During the second to last episode of the week, Daniel Tiger sings

a song about fences, wrestling with their meaning in the world:

Fences, fences

The world is full of fences

And some I like

And some I don't

Like the kind that keep me out

The kind that keep me out

Are the kind that make me pout

They're the kind that have no gate at all

They're the kind that go up much too tall

In the week's final episode, Daniel and his friends send balloons over the wall with messages of peace. Words like "tenderness," "peaceful coexistence," and "love" end up reaching the King. His heart is changed and the wall comes down.

Written for kids who were struggling through the Vietnam War in 1968, this story mirrors a similar struggle we are facing in 2020. Embroiled in our own years-long national debate about a southern border wall, we are asking very similar questions that the land of make-believe asked then. Should we try to keep out those who we fear will bring change?

Or, should we sing with Mr. Rogers saying, "Won't you be my neighbor?"

THIS INSTALLATION

It is in the spirit of Reverend Rogers that the Arts Committee has constructed a wall in our sanctuary this Lent. We are calling ours a prayer wall. Modeled after walls like the Western Wall in Jerusalem, these walls hold in them a complexity. At one time, the wall meant to divide, but now it is a place that gathers people from all around the world to participate in a quiet unity of prayer. We will use our wall throughout Lent to be a similar monument of prayer. As we mourn and wrestle with the division of our current world, this wall will be a place to bring forward the prayers, thoughts, or feelings that are on your heart.

The prayers will be anonymous — only you and God will know them. At our Maundy Thursday service, we will collect all the prayers and bury them in the ground: a symbol of the buried Christ and our decomposing prayers that will eventually become the soil that nourishes life.

As we bring our prayers and stick them in the cracks of this wall, we will be participating in the same quiet act of unity that Daniel Tiger demonstrated to the kids that week in 1968, sending notes of love can transcend walls and reach fearful kings. May our prayers lead each of us toward lives full of powerful, world-changing love for each of God's creation.













