

Theology of Place #1: Live Where You Are Planted (Genesis 1-2)

A Request from the Community: Can We Rent Your Space?

- a logistical question is also a theological question: what is our building for?

Theology of Place: What it is and Why it Matters

- What is a “theology of place” and why does it matter?
- Whenever we are doing theology — and we all are all the time whether we realize it or not — we are asking, “Does God have anything to say about this aspect of our reality, and how does knowing him shape this reality for us as his people?”
- A “theology of place” recognizes that we are embodied people embedded in particular places and locations. And we are asking, “What does God teach us about our embodied and embedded lives? What does it mean that we have bodies in time and space and are located in a particular place?”

“Theology of Place” defined: **A theology of place describes how God calls his people to be a faithful presence in the particular places he puts them. What we are acknowledging is that wherever we are located, God has called us and placed us there.**

- The LORD: “All the earth is mine” (Exodus 19:5; cf. 9:29; Deuteronomy 10:14; Job 41:11; Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 1 Corinthians 10:26). Planting and plucking up (Ecclesiastes 3:2; Jeremiah 1:10)
- Compare and contrast Genesis 1:26-28 (cultural mandate in *general*) with Genesis 2:8-15 (garden context in *particular*).

- ➔ Genesis 1:26-28 is God’s call to be his faithful presence in general (in every place with everyone). He does this through establishing foundational institutions for humanity.
 1. *Wedlock* — Genesis 1:28; 2:24-25.
 2. *Work* — Genesis 1:28; 2:15.
 3. *Wisdom* — Proverbs 8:22-36; Isaiah 28:23-29.
 4. *Worship* — Revelation 4:11; 14:7; Nehemiah 9:6.

- ➔ Genesis 2:8-15 is God’s call to be his faithful presence in the particular (in *this* place with *these* people). He does this through putting us in a limited, local reality in order to express his foundational institutions for humanity within the confines of a particular place.
 1. *“Formed”* — Genesis 2:8.
Formed not in the abstract but from earth and made for places & relationships.
 2. *“Planted” & “Placed”* — Genesis 2:8; 1 Chronicles 17:7-15; Acts 17:26-27.
i.e. paradise, permanence.
 3. *“Garden of Eden”* — Genesis 2:8, 10, 15; 4:16; Revelation 2:7.
i.e. storied place
 4. *“Work it and Keep it”* — Genesis 2:15.
i.e. stewardship (cultivate + protect), faithful presence

Live Where You Are Planted: Application for Midtown

“The gospel...constrains and empowers us to put the needs and interests of our neighbors above our own (Phil. 2:1-4). May we sacrificially devote our possessions and property, even our buildings, toward the benefit of our neighborhoods” (Duke Kwon).

- If our church was removed from this community tomorrow, would it be a source of grief, joy, or indifference for our neighbors?

- To whom are we sent? As those formed by God, and planted and placed by him in this community, how is this place in our city a storied place for God — a place where, because of our placement among them, people are encountering the goodness, the grace, and the gospel of God in tangible ways through the way we cultivate and steward what we have?

- What is our building's capacity and capability? How might it be stewarded for the good of others?
- Do you see our church as integral to the local city neighborhood and its surrounding areas? In what ways have been vital to our locality?
- Do you think of Midtown — the people, place, and property — as rooted and planted in 46220 for the sake of being God's faithful presence there? If not, what hinders thinking this way?
- Do you believe the placement of our church is an act of God to establish us as a kingdom outpost in this place such that God is pointing our neighbors and city to himself by evidencing his kingdom reign through us? What are some ways you believe Midtown's immediate neighbors have seen the reign of Christ through our presence in this place?
- How are we returning the gift this building has been to us into a gift to our neighbors? How does our building play a role in us becoming a people who work for the common good of our local community?
- How might our concrete, tangible assets not be for us but for others? (i.e. get creative! but not by trying to think of everything we could do or new programs we could start, per se, but considering our particular placement on the corner of 56th & Broadway, with this particular building and ministry house and parking lot and plot of land, within this particular neighborhood — how might we use what we actually already have in ways that announce to the community the grace, truth, love, welcome, and challenge of God's kingdom?)
- How might our particular building and property be used in such a way that God's institutions of wedlock, work, wisdom, and worship are on display in our local community and come across as good news to those watching?