

## Season 4 Episode 3: Placemaking

**Speaker 1** [00:00:05] Welcome to the Embedded Church podcast, where we share stories about reweaving the connections between place, the built environment and the mission of God.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:15] Season four of the Embedded Church podcast is produced in partnership with the Ormond Center at Duke Divinity School. The mission of Ormond Center is to foster the imagination, will and ability of congregations and communities to be agents of thriving.

**Speaker 1** [00:00:28] I'm Eric Jacobsen.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:30] And I'm Sarah Joy and will be your host on today's episode of the Embedded Church podcast.

**Speaker 1** [00:00:41] Hey, Sarah,

**Speaker 3** [00:00:43] how's it going? It's going good,

**Speaker 1** [00:00:45] but you know what I've been thinking about lately.

**Speaker 3** [00:00:47] Let me guess, you're going to tell me that placemaking is also a dirty word?

**Speaker 1** [00:00:53] Actually, no, but I was going to tell you that I think placemaking is a confusing word.

**Speaker 3** [00:00:58] OK, well, I'm glad we're off the dirty word train. So tell me how placemaking a confusing word.

**Speaker 1** [00:01:05] Well, once people, I think, figure out what place is it's kind of the distinctive characteristics of your geography that you're living or working or interacting with. Once we understand what place is I suspect that most people think the place is a given. The particular characteristics of your neighborhood are just given you like them or you don't like them. But that's not something that you actually make that you actively involved in contributing to. It's just something you enjoy and experience. So it's it's confusing when we say placemaking as if you could make place as opposed to just deal with it.

**Speaker 3** [00:01:38] But I think you make a good point. I'm also thinking we've set up this whole season based on Wendell Berry's bucket analogy, which is this idea that when you put a bucket out and you allow it to collect the materials of the local place, so leaves and animal excrement and debris that these things will over time begin to make soil. And so we've been using this analogy to talk about the characteristics or the components of our local place and how they make soil. Yeah, but with Wendell Berry's bucket, it's kind of a passive process. Right. And now you're introducing this idea that it should be an active process. So we might need to take that bucket analogy a step further or expand on that a little bit more to think of it. More of a compost heap.

**Speaker 1** [00:02:30] Yes. Yes. And since you're the gardener of this team, maybe you could explain how a compost heap is a better picture of placemaking than Wendell's bucket.

**Speaker 3** [00:02:39] Well, you it's a lot more active because you are actively contributing things to the heap and taking again last time it is local materials, but you have to go out there and turn it. You have to make sure you're adding the correct amounts of green versus brown, nitrogen based, all these types of things, because there is a method to the madness to make good soil. And so it is an active process. So I think that composting might be a better analogy at this point.

**Speaker 1** [00:03:06] OK, so both Barry's bucket and your compost heap, you're making soil or dirt. Right? And various bucket helps us understand place, but the compost probably helps us better understand place making, right?

**Speaker 3** [00:03:18] Yeah, yeah, I think so.

**Speaker 1** [00:03:19] So I guess in that context, placemaking is also a dirty word.

**Speaker 3** [00:03:26] Eric, why do we always end up back here? Come on.

**Speaker 1** [00:03:29] OK, let's get back to maybe a more serious conversation about what it means that big place makers found good. I'm here with Sarah Joy, and surgery is back from Texas and she is in St. Paul surgery you have lived in how many places in your adult life since college?

**Speaker 3** [00:03:54] I have lived in six different places.

**Speaker 1** [00:03:57] That's a lot of moving around.

**Speaker 3** [00:03:58] I know it's kind of painful for me to admit when I'm somebody who loves the idea of being rooted.

**Speaker 1** [00:04:04] Yeah, well, sometimes we can control things and sometimes we can't. Yeah. So tell me, since we're on the topic of placemaking today, what are some things that you have done when you've moved to a place to help it feel like a home, like your place?

**Speaker 3** [00:04:21] I like to explore where I live. And so oftentimes that involves taking a lot of walks when I initially get to places and understanding the businesses that are around me, hopefully getting to know some neighbors and recognizing some faces over time on those blocks. Another thing I would do is I get involved with the local community garden, OK, I'm an avid gardener and so that's always really important for me to find where there's opportunities to garden. And that's been a really great way to meet people in the community. So I love that element as well. I also really love the local grocery store. I love food and cooking. And so finding a big grocery store like the co-op or the little bodega is hopefully something that's more locally owned is always something that I really enjoy as well. So those are some of the things that I do. Getting back country going I mean, going to the neighborhood association meetings. My neighborhood here has a progressive dinner that they do twice a year, and I've been a very active participant in that. And that's been a great way to get to know people and to develop some rhythms in the neighborhood as well.

**Speaker 1** [00:05:35] That's awesome.

**Speaker 3** [00:05:36] Yeah. What about you, Eric?

**Speaker 1** [00:05:38] Yeah, similar things. I love walking the neighborhood and getting a feel for things. I'm a little less food oriented. I'm a big poster reader.

**Speaker 3** [00:05:47] Oh yeah. You talked

**Speaker 1** [00:05:48] about that. Yeah. Like what bands playing or what even what guitar lessons are offered. I just read it all and I love that. One of the things that really sticks out to me is when we lived in Missoula, which is a great town, there was a farmer's market and we loved going on Saturday at the farmer's market. So Saturday morning downtown, like everyone would show up to that. It was primarily to buy food, but it was really kind of a time to run into people. And my wife and I would have this competition of like who got greeted by name more in it around at the farmer's market and yeah, what our stock value was in the community. It was a great place to help us feel rooted and like we belong in that community. So, yeah, very cool. Yeah. So I think what we're both describing and this doesn't exhaust the concept, but we're both really describing placemaking in large and small ways. Right? Yeah. So the little rituals that we do individually to help us feel connected to a place is part of our personal placemaking to build those bonds of connection. And some of the like the progressive dinner that you were part of is a kind of placemaking with a little more of a social aspect of your community gardens. But even the farmer's market. I want to take you on that one, because I don't know the date, but there was a time when there wasn't a downtown Missoula farmer's market and then some folks figured out that we needed one and. Yeah, and they figured out this would be good and they set the rules up. And those folks also engaged in the kind of communal place making. I think placemaking is a great concept. I've kind of hinted around at it. But how would you define placemaking if you were to think about it as a general concept?

**Speaker 3** [00:07:31] Right. There are so many definitions for placemaking that we can't fit it into one particular thing, but I think we can give a variety of definitions to it and orient people to what it means. And one of the things I would say, in short, really, it's making places that people want to be. So it's finding ways to develop places that connect people to their local neighborhood. And part of that really involves creating shared public spaces. I tend to think of placemaking as a public form of action and thinking about how we develop those spaces between buildings, even that we've talked about before, placing park benches or Hockett Gardens.

**Speaker 1** [00:08:16] I think you're dead on. I wonder if our contrasting concept is homemaking in the private sphere.

**Speaker 3** [00:08:22] Oh, yeah, that's interesting.

**Speaker 1** [00:08:23] Yeah. Like we in that people understand what that is and that's a great practice too. But when you move, as you make it your home by setting up things in you, you make it a place that you care about. And what we're talking about placemaking is a little bit more in the public realm. Right. How do you make a city or a neighborhood or a town feel like your place, a place worth? Caring about a

**Speaker 3** [00:08:41] totally. Yeah, no, I really like that. Yeah, and then in that regard, too, I would say that as you develop those shared public spaces, then it really is what we do to create meaning and shared understanding of places. It creates that civic space for us to really engage with one another, getting to know our neighbors and caring for one another.

**Speaker 1** [00:09:09] We've been chatting just opening this up to get placemaking on the table and we've been talking about things we do as individuals to do, placemaking things we do with groups of friends that are kind of placemaking and maybe things the community as a whole does is placemaking. But one area that we have gotten into is how the church can get involved in placemaking. And so it'd be cool if there was some kind of tool available that would help churches figure out how to get involved in placemaking. Do you have any tools that they might want to think about using?

**Speaker 3** [00:09:41] Are you lobbying a softball team right now? Well, thank you. I'm going to knock this one out of the park. But I actually just came out with the redemptive placemaking toolkit for churches.

**Speaker 1** [00:10:00] I love that tool kit. It's very cool.

**Speaker 3** [00:10:02] That's a vision I've had for many years of how can I help churches be engaged in this idea of placemaking with their properties? Because churches have a lot of resources, particularly when it comes to their lands and their buildings and their location and their people. But I think there's been a disconnect for churches to really discern what it means to connect with their place and how that could intersect with their resources and how they could really leverage these things to to seek this love of their neighborhood. And so the redemptive placemaking toolkit is an attempt to orient churches, this idea of placemaking and help them take a street view of their properties and really start to discern what are some opportunities to do some of that fun and creative work in the local community, whether it be putting in some public art murals or a community garden, or it can take shape so many different ways, even just like playful trash cans. I mean, some of these urban churches, you know, we struggle with there being litter on the streets and just even putting in playful trash cans can be a way to to make a space more engaging and to help contribute to the flourishing and the cleanliness of your community.

**Speaker 1** [00:11:13] Yeah, I love that. Know, it's kind of interesting about this. Not that I think about it was that was a softball is actually a question that I have, because now that we've been talking about this, I want to try out a conclusion. One of the placemaking is a kind of natural activity for us to do as individuals and as families. We want to care about the place. So we start doing little rituals that bind us to a place. And small informal groups of friends engage in this kind of placemaking. But it seems to me that churches don't naturally think about placemaking as an activity where they kind of take their place as a given. Yeah. That, oh, we happen to be in the place that has these assets and these liabilities and but they don't really give much thought to how could we be involved in placemaking how could we mess up in your experience when you say that churches don't naturally think about placemaking as something they could impact?

**Speaker 3** [00:12:07] Oh, I think so. I think there's such a focus on programing and that's a good and right thing for churches to have a focus on. But it really is a new way of doing ministry and expanding that vision to thinking more outside the box and literally outside the box of their four walls, too. Right. And so I think it opens up a new space for them to engage. That's actually a very fun and tangible, creative place to engage.

**Speaker 1** [00:12:36] That's kind of a bold title for your book. It's called Redemptive Placemaking Placemaking. You know, we're getting a handle on as we've been talking. But why did you add the adverb redemptive? Why is it redemptive for churches to make places worth caring about?

**Speaker 3** [00:12:52] That's a really good question. One thing that I think that the church is so well positioned to do, and Josh really alluded to this in our first interview in terms of Christianity, surprise. Right. The way that the church really, I do believe has the answers of what is true hope found through Jesus. And so when a church seeks to do placemaking, they have that lens of creating the space for people to develop stories with one another, to really share the good news of the gospel with one another, with their neighbors. And so I think that placemaking is done through that lens of expanding people story into that redemption story and being able to kind of retell the story of where our cities are broken. Right. And so that's so much of what the redemptive story of the Bible is, that the the second attempt found through Jesus and the ways that all of the earth is being redeemed and we haven't seen that in fullness yet. So to me, placemaking done by the church is done with that lens of making things new and bringing them to their fullest place in Jesus while we await. Redemption here on Earth, and so that's why I put that on there. Yeah, and I love it.

**Speaker 1** [00:14:08] But just to be devil's advocate, literally, so I could see a church taking that idea and making it an internal project, we're going to do something just on the inside of our walls that's going to be really redemptive and then leave the outside. Who cares what happens on the outside? Because they're that's the godless territory that we don't care about. Is that biblical for a church to justify placemaking inside? OK. Why would you say that

**Speaker 3** [00:14:38] that's a problem? Because we are called to love our neighbors. And I do not believe that loving your neighbor means focusing only on the interior of your property. I believe it means expanding to the exterior. We have focused this season on the Jeremiah twenty nine calling, that is, seek the welfare of the city. And I think if you're focused on the interior of your property, you're neglecting the welfare of the city in many ways.

**Speaker 1** [00:15:04] I didn't say circle the wagons.

**Speaker 3** [00:15:06] Right, right. And build a fortress. Right. And in fact, the first part of that verse, twenty nine five, he actually gives the command to build houses and live and then to plant gardens and to eat their produce. And as our placemaking acts, they're very physical acts that are rooted in the community and investing in the neighborhood. And so I think that that's an important part of the culture of the church to be invested in the neighborhood in these ways.

**Speaker 1** [00:15:34] I mean, I think this is a really important concept and one that doesn't come naturally. Two churches and church leaders, I think the primary thing we got to put on a worship service, we got to meet the needs of our young parents and our elderly population. And it's very easy for a pastor and church leaders to think really internally and to take their place. The neighborhood around the church is kind of given. There's disadvantages. There might be good places to go to brunch. There might be parking or a lack of parking. Do you think about your neighborhood in terms of how it benefits or detracts from what we're trying to do? But I think what you're describing here is a more biblical in some ways more challenging idea. How do we make our neighborhood better for the people who may or may not ever come to our church? Right. Right. What's interesting is when we set that as our goal, the wonderful surprises, it does often become a more enjoyable place for ourselves as well. But that. Right. I don't think that should be our goal.

**Speaker 3** [00:16:32] Right. Right. Well, I'm curious that you're a pastor and you are doing that balancing act constantly, I'm sure, as caring about the internal workings of your church and the programming and all of that. But yet you're also a pastor who has a strong heart for the place where you are and placemaking. And so how have you walked that line in your own ministry and worked there? And how have you incorporated placemaking into your ministry of vision and what you do?

**Speaker 1** [00:16:59] And it's something that's kind of a work in progress. You know, on the one hand, there can be a little bit of suspicion in the neighborhood about what you're really after. Yeah. When you engage the neighborhood. And so one thing I've done is, is channeled some of my involvement through the Neighborhood Business Association. I've been involved on the board. And so through the Neighborhood Business Association, we get involved and I would say primarily placemaking activities. You know, the business owners want a place worth caring about because that helps support their business. They've got maybe different goals thereafter, but we can align on those goals. And so we put up Christmas lights during Christmas and we have a Dickens festival and we have a Halloween trick or treat kind of thing for the kids. And we set up all sorts of events for the neighborhood. And I'm involved with that. I've tried to get my congregation to just get out into the neighborhood more. Yeah, you want to be careful not to be too directional in your place making efforts. It needs to be collaborative and it needs to be a dialog. You can't assume as a church body that you know what is needed for this place. Right? Right. You need to be in conversation with the local residents and and they need to be a part of that or they're going to feel put upon it. And it's not going to usually succeed if you just have an idea. One of the perpetual problems that we have in our neighborhood is flowers. And we've got all sorts of beds scattered throughout our neighborhood and nobody is responsible for tending those beds. We're not super wealthy neighborhood that can hire a service to landscape all the public areas. And so it's all on the local businesses and they don't have the time and energy to do that. In the past, we have as a church, take it on some of that burden and try to help with the planting. And we've partnered with the neighborhood to do that and we've helped them with the watering and such. But we're going to make another attempt at this year. In fact, we're going to try to kind of market it to the neighborhood as opposed to covid thing. So the church is going to, I think, give another attempt to partner with our neighborhood to get those flowers planted, attended.

**Speaker 3** [00:19:01] Have you found there are particular ways that you have equipped your congregation to understand, placemaking and be excited about doing some of these things in the local community?

**Speaker 1** [00:19:13] Again, work in progress. I'm trying to model it, but just helping people connect the dots between my wife placemaking is important. I actually have to use that term very much. But we've talked about wanting to be an inside out church. We want to be externally focused. We want to care about our neighborhood. You know, we've even our churches, we're evangelical church. And so we care about communicating the good news of the gospel to our neighbors. But we've also been really aware of the fact that in a postmodern context, we can't just knock on a neighbor's door, start talking about Jesus. Right. They're not going to really care that much. And so we've been following Don Evertz and he's written some books on evangelism and he talks about there's a number of steps that a person would need to go through before they would be interested in becoming a Christian. In our current context, in the first one is just trusting a Christian. A lot of people don't know any Christians. And the ones what they know about Christians, they read in the media. And so they don't like Christians very much or they think they don't. And we're in the northwest, which we're with. That context is really strong. And so a lot of the work we

need to do is just build relationships with our neighbors. We don't need to throw Bibles at them. We don't need to preach the gospel explicit ways. But just building trust and building relationships and placemaking is a great way to get involved with that. I think our neighbors understand the value of placemaking. And if we also value that, then we can be operative. We can be side by side, kind of. Doing things that helped make this place more livable and more beautiful and the kind of place we want to be. And so just trying to help my congregation understand how this connects with our gospel work is a big part of the equipping.

**Speaker 3** [00:20:52] Yeah, that's awesome.

**Speaker 1** [00:20:54] And we've been talking about seeking the Shalom from Jeremiah Twenty nine and Shalom as a multidimensional concept. I think a lot of churches, a lot of church leaders, when they think about seeking the shalom, they think about some of the more problems that need to be solved, like feeding the hungry or clothing the naked or all those kinds of things, helping to deal with acute crises. How can we. Think about placemaking as valid as an activity for churches to do is about feeding the hungry or sheltering the homeless,

**Speaker 3** [00:21:28] placemaking really is a sustained effort that you do over time and really contributes to the flourishing of the entire community in its fullness. I would say. And so by the time these programs like feeding the hungry, they're very important because, yes, we do need those services at the same time. I always raise the question of why are people hungry in the first place? And a lot of times that goes back to the way that the cities are designed and the gaps that exist in certain communities in terms of access to grocery stores. And so when you start to understand that there's some of these systemic issues within a community, then these gaps that are contributing to some of these crises. And if you can take a step back and really understand your place and more of its fullness, I think you start to understand where those gaps are and you start to better understand how you can meet the systemic need rather than addressed a Band-Aid solution.

**Speaker 1** [00:22:28] And I think it kind of reminds me a little bit of the conversation we had last season about Eric Klinenberg work on social infrastructure and his palaces for the people. He really demonstrated that place and the quality of place can have a strong public health component. In his inaugural work was on the Chicago heat waves, but he was showing the neighborhoods that did a lot of similar characteristics in terms of housing and income levels. And all those things survived or didn't survive the heat wave very, very differently based on some of those things that we're talking about, sort of the gathering places and the infrastructure that's required for these kind of social networks, because when they people knew each other through their community garden, they were able to get the help they needed. When the heat wave came, they knew how to ask for help or they knew how to get resources they needed. And so I do think placemaking can do as much as it's not just about helping us survive heat waves. It's also about delight and enjoying and feeling connected to the places it can have a really important health component as well.

**Speaker 3** [00:23:32] And I think we've seen that in covid times, too, right? Absolutely. Just the ability of neighbors to help one another out, the more that they know each other, the more they've been able to work together with getting people groceries who are vulnerable.

**Speaker 1** [00:23:46] And what about some more concrete examples of placemaking? What are some of the things they could do?

**Speaker 3** [00:23:52] Yeah, well, it could take so many different shapes. And that's part of the fun of my toolkit as I try to give people a lot of different ideas to think about and their context. It can be macro in terms of putting in a little plaza at your property or thinking about putting in sidewalks and street lamps and street trees. But it can also take smaller forms in terms of putting in a community garden we've talked about or as small as putting out a water bowl for dogs. I mean, that's the kind of thing putting up creative trash cans. And then you can also even be some of these nonmaterial ideas of walking tours or holiday events. You talked about your church did a lot of those type of things, but it really just depends on your local context. But start small is what I tell people, take the smallest level of risk so that actually you can push against any concerns or worries that people have. So when the risk is low, people are more willing to engage in trying out ideas, though I always say start small, spend the least amount of money that if it totally fails, nobody's going to be mad at you and go from there just encouraging people to really see what's around them and to really look even for the smallest of opportunities to create a better environment is where you start.

**Speaker 1** [00:25:15] That's awesome. Really become more pronounced than are covered. Anything we can do to get our people out? Interacting with one another in a somewhat positive way. I mean, you have to have deep conversations, but just silly things that get them out can contribute to the health of the environment. I often will take a walk from my office to do some dumb errand, to go deposit a check at the bank or to go pick up something. I go to the grocery store almost every day just to get one or two items. And a lot of it is I love to kind of make my rounds. I love to like. Yeah, great people. And it creates that good friction of connecting with people. And I don't know who I'm going to run into. And I always get a little news or say something. And that's all placemaking. Right. And that's yeah. That's Yeah. Developing the soil.

**Speaker 3** [00:25:57] So very cool anyway. Well, Chris Eleazar joined us on the last episode to talk about his love of place. And I know he made a couple allusions to placemaking on that episode as well. So I think we should bring him back on.

**Speaker 1** [00:26:11] I'm super excited here

**Speaker 3** [00:26:13] and have him expound a little bit more on his ideas of placemaking and the ways that he's been involved with that.

**Speaker 2** [00:26:20] If you are interested in the redemptive placemaking toolkit, you can download a free sample or purchase a full digital copy at Proximity Project's website at [www.proximityproject.com](http://www.proximityproject.com) and see Dotcom as a valued listener. Enter the promo code embedded church at checkout to receive 15 percent off the purchase price.

**Speaker 1** [00:26:42] All right, we got Chris Elisara here with us on the second half of this podcast. And Chris, welcome back to our show. In the introduction, we were talking about placemaking as a confusing concept and the idea being that although people might recognize place and the distinctiveness of place and all the things we love or don't love about our places, we often think about places given like it's not something that we can impact in any significant way. So placemaking as a term can be confusing. Do you think people that you interact with tend to start with the notion that placemaking is confusing, that it's given you can't in fact place too much?



**Speaker 4** [00:27:22] But my experience, I think people ignore place, OK? I didn't even see it. And I think for the most part it is maybe what you're saying is true. It's a given. In other words, it's in the background. It's the stage that the drama happens on and it's kind of there. But we don't give it attention. Because the most important things that happen in a congregation's life when our life and our family's life is the interaction between the people. But remember, that all happens in a context and place on a stage. And so I think what I try to do is try to bring the stage or the place into the foreground. Do people understand the interaction between the human drama and the place? And that they're connected and that there is a really strong impact on place for the human drama that is happening, and so they go hand in hand. And I think that's how God made the world. We're embodied people and we live in a world that we can't step out of that embodiment and we can't step away from place. And so we have to take place, I think, more seriously than we currently do get to design a place more seriously than we currently do. And we need to work on making those places for all the community more conducive to the flourishing and for it for everybody. That makes sense.

**Speaker 3** [00:29:01] Oh, definitely. I'm curious your job title at the Ormond Center, but are you director of placemaking something like that? Remind us. Yeah.

**Speaker 4** [00:29:12] Yeah. We call ourselves Lead the lead for

**Speaker 1** [00:29:15] lead for nice lead for very very hipster. Lead for stream lead for placemaking.

**Speaker 4** [00:29:24] Yeah. Don't you have to do that. We don't call it center, we call it a studio place now

**Speaker 3** [00:29:31] in the studio lead for placemaking

**Speaker 1** [00:29:34] Bella placemaking experience that's

**Speaker 3** [00:29:39] getting better and better

**Speaker 1** [00:29:41] and better. Yeah. Give it the real one job title,

**Speaker 4** [00:29:46] the lead or the studio for placement.

**Speaker 3** [00:29:49] Leave for the studio for placemaking. I like it. Read your elevator speech and placemaking. How do you tell its people

**Speaker 4** [00:29:58] we work with and interact with and relate to a variety of people, those that are in the placemaking space, those that are architects, planners, designers, developers. You don't have to explain them. Right. But for the other folks that we want to be in relationship with and communicate to put into place to, we do have to say a little something. I borrowed the parish collective understanding of what what the parish collective is doing. That is, they're saying there's a community of people in a place and they're called to love and care for all the people, all the creation, all the economic relationships, all the social relationships in a geographical area. So they kind of bound a community of people, those that are in the church and those that are outside the church in a bounded geographical area and say, you know, we're called to love those people there as the church, as Jesus would call us to love them. And I translate that same to

peacemaking means that we are to love people, to caring. And promoting the best of housing, the best of streets, the commercial district or the public parks and public spaces and the public buildings for the community in that geographical area. So that's what placemaking is doing. It's focusing on loving people in the community. In a geographical area, through loving all the pieces of the place, the houses, the parks, the commercial areas, the public buildings, the street, and making those the best they can possibly be for people.

**Speaker 1** [00:31:47] Can I follow up on that real quickly? Because I think I'm getting a picture in my mind of at least some aspects of placemaking. But you had mentioned architects and developers and maybe public works officials of a city being that the agents of placemaking. Do you see a role for other kinds of folks that don't have that kind of professional training? Can pastors who don't have the skill set to build a park, for instance, can they be place makers as well?

**Speaker 4** [00:32:13] Absolutely, because a place is where we live. And so people in your congregation. Our stakeholders in the places that they live in as a stakeholder, they know some of the things that are missing in that place. And they know when a place is working, the best it possibly could be, so they can see if there is, for example, parks that are missing or the stores that are missing. Or other types of amenities that are missing and they could say, hey, you know, we need this for our community. And they can start to ask for this and think about this and how to achieve those things. So I think places. Boys need to connect to the people who use them and who they serve. We're stakeholders, and so we can lead with that kind of understanding of what's missing. The second thing is. For the church were also long term residents in the neighborhood, and I think that makes it even more imperative that churches are there with a long term vision for a particular place. Because I would say they're got their noses to the ground in the community, no, no, what's needed, what's missing. And secondly, there was this long term vision. They can. Kind of have that long term view and see that. The quick thing is maybe not the best thing for this community in the long run, and that's always important. Remember the story I told you about last time about this park that was in jeopardy in Julian, right? Yeah, that is a great example of this, because the park was, first of all, donated by a Christian man who had the understanding that in our small town there wasn't a park that everybody could use. Only those folks in the backyard had space to go to or throw a ball or run the dog around. So the community actually needed a park in this Christian family, donated all this acreage for a park. No one. That's long term vision. Yeah, only when the park couldn't quite maintain itself. Over time, there was a decision like to turn the park over from local maintenance to county. Now, this is where a community debate erupted. Should we turn it over? And if we turn it over, we're giving up some control and so on and so forth, but the bottom line is, if we could really maintain this, we had to. To do this, some of us felt, but if it went away, then we lost this public amenity, right? And in the short term, it could have been OK for some people's pocketbooks not to be affected by the attacks of about a year to maintain that. But the long term view is of the community is going to be worse off, is going to be no place for baseball, soccer families to enjoy a barbecue in a public space. So the long term view is more important in the short term view in the end where we kick it around. We voted as a community to save the park, but this is the way that I think the church looks at a place with a long term perspective for the common good. Right. And that's really important because other folks could have a short term perspective and that can cost a community in the long term. And the church's view should be the for the long term good of a community.

**Speaker 3** [00:36:14] Right. Does it help? Yeah, definitely. And I think that goes back to what Eric has talked about throughout this season thus far of helping churches and

pastors ask those better questions. So framing things more in terms of that long view that you're talking about, Chris, and challenging pastors and churches to ask the questions of how does this affect the community 30 years down the road, not how does this affect our program over the next year? And sometimes it's not going to be a quick and easy sell. And yet for the long term health, some of those. Investments and the longer vision are better, right?

**Speaker 4** [00:36:54] And also say. With that perspective. When you make a mistake. That mistake lasts for a long time, right? And I think, again, getting back to this, how do you not make long term mistakes, we have the use of them. We will tackle urbanism trying something and seeing that actually does. Have the community benefits that you think it's going to have and then trying it out and then seeing if that little small intervention is actually working and if it's working, then implement. I think that that helps a lot, too, so you don't have an expert, you can be an experimenter with some of your ideas and see how the opportunity to respond.

**Speaker 1** [00:37:42] I love the Texas Ergotism as a as a kind of experiment. Yeah, you don't have to be an expert. You got some orange cones, you got some chalk or paint, and you just try something out.

**Speaker 3** [00:37:53] A couple of things in that regard. I just wanted to clarify what tactical urbanism is for our listeners, because a lot of people are probably not familiar with that term. And that's this idea of taking some temporary things like paint or orange cones, letting them out on the street, putting in a temporary crosswalk, maybe in a location where it's been dangerous for people to cross or putting in a temporary park in a parking space that allows people to be outdoors and enjoy the sidewalk lights, doing some of these creative do it yourself type projects that allow us to test ideas. And I would say, Chris, going back to the placemaking work that we're encouraging people to be involved with, we kind of got down that path of talking about the long view and how important that is. But I also don't want that to scare people in terms of doing some of these temporary placemaking endeavors to test out ideas. That's why I always encourage people with placemaking to actually start really small and trying some simple things just to understand how the little things they can do will really shape a place and a space and then grow that into that long view of where we go from here and think about how do we carry this down the road to the next 50 years

**Speaker 1** [00:39:09] that maybe just to clarify and just to protect ourselves, legally tactful urbanism has legal and illegal forms through. We're endorsing the legal forms and not so much the illegal forms, but it's all kind of interesting to watch what happens there, that people do paint crosswalks that they're not supposed to do. And oftentimes the city notices that and does a real legitimate one as a follow up so they can have good effects.

**Speaker 4** [00:39:35] I think one of the biggest examples of. ATAT Columbanus. Experiment by. That led to a huge change was Times Square, right?

**Speaker 3** [00:39:49] Yeah, that's a good example.

**Speaker 1** [00:39:51] Yeah.

**Speaker 4** [00:39:51] So what happened in Times Square? And they tried it out, first of all, with deckchairs, just vectors that you would sit out in the sun with and plop them down in

Times Square and saw how people were responding to making that congested space a public space. And that led to the change we see today.

**Speaker 1** [00:40:20] I was going to ask Chris, do you think placemaking is a biblical concept or is it just something, you know, that we think is cool and so we endorse it

**Speaker 3** [00:40:29] because we're nerdy urbanize.

**Speaker 1** [00:40:34] That's got to care about placement?

**Speaker 4** [00:40:37] Well, no, absolutely. I think this is the only reason. We're talking about this as Christians and trying to bring awareness, bring it from the background, as we've been talking about it, because I've been talking about in the foreground. So it's a part of our Christian consciousness and our Christian work in the world for Shalom. And, you know, we talk over these last couple of conversations about the Genesis story. And we've talked about Jeremiah, obviously, and talked about other verses, scripture. So I won't go into those in detail, but I'll just mention one that. Keeps me unanimated from scripture. Well, actually, too, I'm always thinking about the golden rule, I'm always thinking that everybody deserves a good place to live. If it's if it's good enough for me, then it's good enough for my neighbor. And I think that's the way we operate and understand our faith to be. And I think that's definitely scriptural and that's the number one thing that Jesus taught, I believe. So that's the first thing I've been thinking about in Europe. You know, the places that you love and you respond to, why can't other folks have that? And I just think the gospels about sharing all that goodness with everybody.

**Speaker 1** [00:42:02] So that's the other thing. That's awesome. Can I just break in there for a second? Second thing? But I think that we do have a huge problem with homelessness in this country. But sometimes our focus on homelessness obscures the fact that people need more than homes. They need neighborhoods. They need public parks. They need places of dignity outside of their homes. And some of our solutions to homelessness have such horrible public realms in the immediate vicinity that it really doesn't help improve the lives of the folks who live in those apartments. I think that's really important to think about loving our neighbors in terms of placemaking in public realm kind of stuff. So we are going to your second.

**Speaker 4** [00:42:42] And the second thing is, is the bookend to the Bible. We talk a lot about revelation in the city where John writes in his vision is the place where humans and God live together in a city. But what I pick up in that particular story is, as God designed the place for us in Genesis, the city is also designed for us in a way that is particular. It's lovingly done. So the story goes from a garden to a city. But the city has described these can be designed with trees and a river flowing through the city and got to humanity dwell together in that particular well designed place for relationship, place for creation of nature. And again, God is with us like he was in the garden. When people think of placemaking and think of how this may translate to saying, you know, we're going to be making cities, I don't like cities. Well, I say, yeah, I don't like cities that are badly designed either. But God is not a bad designer. And there is principles of design for cities or towns and for rural communities that are beautiful and really well designed. And they are the types of places that we want to live in. And I'm all about that type of design. And we really do know how to do that if we understand the spaces and invest in those.

**Speaker 3** [00:44:24] Yeah, that leads me to ask you, when people come to the Ormond center and they're like, hey, you know, you're leading the studio on placemaking, how do we even start with placemaking? How do you advise them?

**Speaker 4** [00:44:38] Well, we're just starting off, right. So hopefully we'll have a whole bunch of resources, materials and events and. For the Ormond Center, we start with a proposition that you start with, I believe, and that there's a gap or a blind spot in the modern church. That is overlooking how vital places to human, thriving in God's economy, and we're going to respond uniquely as the Ormond Center, and our vision is to help equip and catalyze the church to rediscover itself as a primary stakeholder for the common good of cities, towns, villages and rural communities. And to accelerate this fate, animated Christian placemaking movement, drawing on the strength of the divinity school at the university. We want to advance the interdisciplinary fields of placemaking theory. Theology and practice three research. To teaching and training for convening and storytelling. And we're starting off with storytelling. By collaborating with you in this podcast, which is so vital because this is a place where you're reaching the hearts and minds of the Christian community, of pastors, in addition to that, you have resources yourselves that we want to promote. Sujoy, you've got great materials for churches that they can learn how to do placemaking as a congregation. So we don't want to say, hey. Pick these up and use those, and you've got books that contribute to the theological intellectual resources that the church needs to be able to do this. But as I said, we have plans for research and we'll get the research agenda through our relationship with the community, conversing with him and say what we're about is mindset's tool sets and skill sets. And this whole placemaking field, well, we will do research that help inform their minds about placemaking, but then we're going to do some teaching training. That's where you get the skill sets. And we're also going to develop tools. And those tools are going to come from the research. They're going to come through collaboration. They're going to come through things that we design and we design with others.

**Speaker 1** [00:47:07] But, Chris, thanks for joining us this conversation. It's exciting to see you in your new role at Ormond Center and see so much potential for keeping this conversation, something that could be put into practice in context, neighborhoods all around the place. So excited to see how that develops.

**Speaker 5** [00:47:34] Good metaphors don't lose their potency over time, in fact, over time, though, poetically open up deeper layers of truth. This is what was happening for me during the opening conversation about dirt and compost. Sarah Joy and Eric didn't explicitly say this, but it takes time to make soil. Dirt really is a slow, precious and a loving gift from God's hand. Why am I talking about dirt again? Because it's a deep metaphor for the church's long term view towards placemaking God's church is committed to people flourishing in a place doesn't have fleeting or fanciful way, but for the long haul. This week, Ormond Center is co hosting an event at the Duke Divinity School for the National Timbales Association because they have a vision and a plan for a whole community and set about building a complete town with everything it needs for the whole community to thrive. That sounds bland, but the truth is folks are radical. As a culture, we used to know how to build towns, but after World War Two, the development plan shifted in the United States to building suburban sprawl. The first town after World War Two was not built until nineteen eighty one when Robert and our Davis decided to build the town of Seaside. This past March, Seaside celebrated its 30th anniversary, but the vision and plan for the town is still being built out. It's taken 30 years so far. For your homework, look up a short video I produced a while back called Seaside City of Ideas and watch that to learn more and to ignite your imagination. Here's my point, I pray that pastors and congregations develop the

same kind of long term holistic vision for the places where they are embedded, after all, the church is going to be embedded in its community for a long time. So we have an opportunity as God's people to faithfully build our place based vision for the common good over the long haul, develop visions and plans with our neighbors and city leaders in the set of hands to building. Making great places is akin to dirt. It's a process that takes time, but putting time and commitment to good use only happens if we have a vision and a good plan for what needs to be built by human flourishing.

**Speaker 2** [00:50:03] Thanks for tuning in to another episode of the embedded church podcast. Be sure to check out the episode show notes for links to resources and other helpful information related to this episode. If you'd like to connect with us to share comments or ideas about the work we're doing. We'd love to hear from you. You can send us an email at [info@embeddedchurch.com](mailto:info@embeddedchurch.com) or leave a voice message on our feedback line by dialing seven six zero five to seven three to six zero followers on Instagram and Better Church podcast or visit our website [www.thatembeddedchurch.com](http://www.thatembeddedchurch.com). Finally, thank you to our Stephen Moore, partners at Ormond Center and to all of our faithful listeners and supporters who have helped us make it to Season four. We are honored and encouraged until next time. Be well.