

April 24, 2022 — From exclusion to inclusion

“The Party that Never Ends!”

FORT COLLINS MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP

300 E. Oak Street, Ft. Collins, CO 80524

Worship: 10:00 AM

Pastor: Steve Ramer

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“Empathy is a necessary step for truth and reconciliation.” — Simon Baron-Cohen

Seeking God’s Ways

Too often we think God offers one thing (privilege), but what God really offers looks quite different (inclusion); we think the world works one way (scarcity), but really it works a different way (abundance); we think power means one thing (control), but it is really found in something else (solidarity). Lent is a time to repent—to turn from our ways and recommit ourselves to the ways of God as revealed in Jesus.

Today’s Focus: As we seek God’s way, we move from a sense that “we” and “ours” have special standing to the knowledge that all are equally part of God’s kingdom.

1. GATHERING

Musical Prelude (John)

Call to Worship (Katie)

Leader: Together we seek the way of God,

People: rejoicing that we are new creations in Christ.

Leader: From a human point of view, we demand what is ours,

People: but through Jesus we learn that all share in God’s inheritance.

Leader: Let us join God’s feast,

People: where all celebrate together.

All: Let us live out God’s way of inclusion.

Opening Song (Cathy and everyone)

Welcome and Passing of the Peace

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

All: Let us offer one another signs of peace, reconciliation, and love.

Responsive Reading (Katie and everyone)

Leader: Your ways, O God, are higher than our ways.

People: Your thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

One: We seek God's ways. (Pause)

All: *Lord, move us from our tribal thinking to your radical inclusion.*

Lenten Prayer of Confession (Katie and everyone)

Leader: Holy One,
we seek you while you may be found.

People: We call upon you while you are near.

Leader: Have mercy on us, O God, for our thoughts are not your thoughts and our ways are not your ways.

People: Forgive us for thinking we deserve special treatment. Lead us to radical inclusion.

Leader: As we walk with Christ on this Lenten journey, let us see your way more clearly

All: *and follow your way more faithfully.*

Prayer (Katie)

To the God who gathers us, we pray our lives, too, will become places of gathering, welcoming, and embracing those we thought were far off. From our wandering and alienation, we have stumbled into loving arms. From our pride and self-righteousness, we have watched and resented as others stumble into loving arms. God, bring into clear focus our distancing and embracing, our rejecting and our welcoming. Weave together the strands within us—the prodigal son, the brother, and the father—to see your work of reconciliation in our church and community. Amen.

Congregational Singing (Kathy and Congregation)

2. HEARING GOD'S WORD



Scriptures: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Sermon: *"The Party that Never Ends"* (Steve)

In Jesus' parable, the elder son is stuck in his own perspective. He thinks that his father should love only him and not his younger brother who left home. The elder son struggles to realize how blessed he is. The younger son experiences reconciliation, which can radically open our hearts to be welcomed and to understand God's welcome. The prodigal son is a new creation because he came home to receive his father's love.

Reflection Question: Who gets to enjoy God's feast today?

"The pattern of the prodigal is: rebellion, ruin, repentance, reconciliation, restoration."

— Edwin Louis Cole

Congregational Singing (Kathy and everyone)

Response (everyone)

Joys and Concerns (everyone)

Offering (everyone)

Sending (Steve): From this time and place into whatever awaits, may you follow God's way of inclusion. May you recognize your assumptions of entitlement so that you can live into God's fully inclusive love. As you go, know that our God of the wilderness remains with you on the way.

"We are all one - or at least we should be - and it is our job, our duty, and our great challenge to fight the voices of division and seek the salve of reconciliation." — Roy Barnes

