



The Weathervane

A weekly E-Newsletter

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Thinking about Welcoming

Blessings in the Season of Easter. May you meet the Risen One in your daily life.

I have been thinking a lot about our Welcome Statement. And I have been listening to what many of you think about our Welcome Statement. As I share my thoughts please know that I do not mean criticism of those who labored over it. However, I do want to reflect on it from a couple perspectives.

First, by naming specific groups we welcome we are bound to leave out some groups. As one person from the church asked me, "Does that mean you are not welcome if your group isn't listed?" It's a good question.

Second, and for me more importantly, the labels that identify people out in the world are irrelevant in the Church of Jesus Christ. By welcoming people by the group they identify with, we are perpetuating the barriers that Jesus spent his life and ministry taking down. The world may care if someone is old or young or married or single or green eyed or blue eyed, but God doesn't.

The social, political and organizational constructs the world uses to define worth, place and value in society do not matter in the church. I believe the intent of our statement was to be inclusive, so let's ask if there's another way we might extend God's radical welcome and hospitality.

That's one reason why I like the simple welcome: Who ever you are and where ever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. It says nothing about age, race, sexual orientation, gender, education or anything else. The intent is....if you are *breathing* you are welcome here.

It's a tall order and every church I know lives into it incrementally. Our humanness gets in the way, we trip over our fears and prejudices, we have blind spots (at least I do). We are (gratefully) works in progress. And even with all those lumps and warts, God welcomes us into the church and asks us to accept the costs and joys of discipleship. As recipients of that grace, we can invite others along with all their lumps and warts too.

The welcome we receive is the one we extend to others. It has nothing to do with who we are and everything to do with Whose we are. Let me know your thoughts.

Grace and Peace, Pastor Pat