

Who Is Not Here?

Scripture Reading — Luke 14:15-24

The body is not made up of one part but of many. — 1 Corinthians 12:14

Some people don't attend church because they sense they are different from everyone else there. Others don't come because people in the church do not welcome them. If a church really wants to reflect the body of Christ, which is made up of many parts, they need to ask themselves regularly, "Who is not here?"

Do people from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds attend? About 20 percent of the population has disabilities; do 20 percent of the people at your church have visible or "invisible" disabilities? Do people who have been in prison feel welcome? People from a variety of social classes? Single adults? Poor people? Rich people?

In Jesus' parable, the servants are sent out to "compel" people to come. God calls us to do the same in our churches. We must work to welcome people who feel that they don't fit. We need to consider how we might need to change our relationships, our ways of interacting, our worship, so that people who are typically excluded will find they are welcome and needed by our churches.

Every church excludes people. Whom is your church excluding, and what changes do you need to make so that they will feel welcome? How can your church actively invite people who are not attending?

Prayer

Welcoming Savior, you welcomed people who were looked down upon by society. In the same way, teach me to welcome people much different from my "own kind" into my life and my church. In your name, Amen.

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