

FOH Anniversary: Sunday Sharing

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”
(Lk.12:32)

I was asked to share how FOH is loving God and loving our neighbors today—and the next 50 years! I want to do that, but I begin with the prior reality that God is loving us and our neighbors. God is giving us the Kingdom, or the *Kindom*, God’s family and God’s self, the starting point of everything. We acknowledge this great mercy first.

The mandate to love God with all that we are, and our neighbors as ourselves is an overwhelming call. How do we do it, how will we to do it?

When I picture FOH in the days ahead, I see a little flock, resilient yes, but also vulnerable. I see a vibrant and beloved community committed to what some have called the neighborly covenant¹: abundance, fallibility, reconciliation and mystery.

Abundance is the story of Sabbath and Jubilee. (These have been major themes for FOH for the past several years.) This is the story, the commitment to, God’s provision and our response in trust and redistribution. We are a manna-based people; we know the limits of self-sufficiency. And we learn to trust the mysterious means by which we always have enough, means that keep redistributing not only within the little flock, but beyond it as well. We give to those in need and we welcome those who knock on our doors. Abundance.

FOH is a fallible community. We live on a wounded planet filled with broken people. Life is hard, we are going to die, we are not in control, we are not that important, and our life is not our own.² In other words, we have failed to be God. But knowing that, we are free: free to grieve yet not driven to despair, free to lament and free to dance. We are free to enter the high schools and encourage young people to see military service for what it is. And we are free to visit those in jail and to welcome returning citizens from prison. And we are free not to demand punishment, but restoration; we are free to pardon. Fallibility.

I see FOH as a community of reconciliation: the walls between us broken down by the cross of Jesus. We love our neighbors by exercising the “Rule of Christ”; that means we engage our neighbors, starting with our near-neighbors—those in our house, our families, our fellowship. We lay down our self-justification, we practice listening, and we encourage the fearful to speak. We repent, we forgive, we mess up, we forgive; we weep and we embrace.

We will love our neighbors and God in our neighbors by recognizing our whiteness, our barely conscious standards of wholeness and wholesomeness. We will make ourselves vulnerable by engaging African American, Hispanic, Muslim, and Native neighbors with an openness that welcomes challenge of our white presuppositions and privilege. I see FOH continuing to accompany and be accompanied by El Shaddai, Pilgrim Rest, Church Without Walls, New Foundation Fellowship, and other churches, especially in South Central Elkhart. We will seek justice; we will care for the earth. Reconciliation.

And finally Mystery. We love God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind, and yet we hardly know God. We know God is love, but God is also unknowable. In that we rejoice.

If God is mystery, God will not be manipulated. If God is mystery, God is Surprise. Yes, God reveals God's self: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of slavery." God does not like slavery. We rejoice in what we know and we ponder what we do not know.

I see FOH as a little flock, before a watching and wary world, passionately in love with Yahweh and Yahweh's creation. And so we will worship this God of mercy and mystery—with full voice, with tenderness, with fierce lament, with utter silence. We will listen intently for God's voice in the speech of Scripture, sister/brother, preacher, child, the arts, the trees, the bees, the storms, together and alone. We will doubt, we will yearn, we will hope.

And so I close with a prayer to this God in whom we trust and know as "YOU".

O Yahweh—

Where we wander—You!

Where we ponder—You!

Only You, You again, always You!

You! You! You!

When we are gladdened—You!

When we are saddened—You!

Only You, You again, always You!

You! You! You!

Sky is You! Earth is You!

You above! You below!

In every bend, at every end,

Only You, You again, always You!

You! You! You!³

—Keith K. 25 Oct. 2020

¹ Block, Brueggemann, McKnight, An Other Kingdom, pp.xxii & 9.

² Richard Rohr, Adam's Return

³ Martin Buber, Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters (Text modified from singular voice to plural.)