

God's foreign service (Isaiah 56: 1, 6-8)

God builds “a house of prayer for all peoples.” All means all.

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God leads a foreign service. It is not a governmental agency; it is fueled by divine agency. God welcomes “all peoples.” God doesn’t build walls between difference. God builds “a house of prayer for all peoples.” And all means all, not some.

There are those who desire God to be exclusive to the chosen people of Israel or the citizens of the United States. But God so loved the world. God expands the borders of God’s holy mountain to include foreigners. God accepts their offerings and sacrifices at the altar and establishes a world communion house. World Communion Sunday is one day on the calendar, but really it’s every day in the Lord’s house on the earth. When God’s deliverance comes, it will be the demise of the evil human ways of excluding the other—and the beginning of an inclusive covenantal community in which foreigners and foes become friends in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Martin Luther King Jr., in his Nobel Peace Prize lecture at the University of Oslo in 1964, called this communal vision of God “the world house.” This talk was published as the final chapter of his book *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* The “world house” is the human community or family across ethnic, national, class, and religious divides. It embodies a wholly integrated world. Natives and foreigners are brothers and sisters, children of the same God who gathers all to be at home in the house of God.

Is your house of prayer, your congregation, a house for all peoples? Who is missing? Who serves in leadership, and what does that say about your house? How does your local community deal with whomever is other to you? How might you and your community work toward Dr. King's "world house" ideal?