Week 3-Radical Inclusion

Vision and Objective:

Our community should be one of welcome, where all can be seen, heard, and honored in the fullness of who God has made them to be.

Opening Prayer

Our Father, we come this evening to study and learn from your word for as the Psalmist said, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”. Please use this time that we have together as that lamp and help us to keep to the path that you have put before us. In the name of Jesus, your son, amen.

Scripture Passage: Acts 15:1-35 NRSV

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+15%3A1-35&version=NRSV>

Context & Background

The early church grows despite persecution, and the good news of Jesus is reaching Gentiles (Acts 10-11). Jewish believers disagree on whether Gentiles should be circumcised, an outward sign of their identity as the chosen people of God (Genesis 17).

Questions to Discuss:

What is the conflict, and what is at stake?

Circumcision; membership of Gentiles

Growth of Christianity, is following law required, lack of acceptance, issue of leadership

What are God’s actions in the passage? How does that compare/contrast to the various leaders’ actions and assertions?

God was inclusive, leaders exclusive

issue of leadership---disciples vs apostles

What stands out to you about Peter and James’ comments? What key words or phrases get at the heart of their message?

“Yoke on the neck”-The law is not doable, can’t be saved that way. Only through Jesus

Peter:Holy Spirit with Gentiles---->Christians

James: Quoted the prophets

“Old-Testament” Christians

What do you learn about God’s intent for his people from this passage?

To be open-minded; bring others in, understanding of other people’s culture and background.

Tolerance. Not putting ourselves above other just because we’ve been here longer.

What are the unspoken expectations of your community that might be barriers for new people or those exploring faith? Indian example-painted face for church; many churches did not accept. Is why many turned orthodox because they were accepted there.

Body piercings/Tattoos/Hair color

What would help community members from different cultural backgrounds feel welcomed and included at your church? Simply talk to the people. i.e. ask why the Indians painted their face. 

Prayer Book can be confusing to follow during the service; having applicable sessions in bulletin (having it printed out)

Expand ministry---> Hispanics, African Americans

Closing Prayer

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.  
  
*Old Gaelic blessing found at: https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/times/closing\_prayer.html*