

Square pegs and round holes



It's easier to remember times when we felt excluded than included, isn't it? The inside joke you didn't get. The birthday party you weren't invited to. The tight circle of conversation that left no room for you. It always leaves me feeling like I'm not good enough, that if I'd been prettier/smarter/more social/less quirky, I'd have been on the inside. If only I trimmed my square corners off, I'd have fit into that round hole. I would belong.

Of course we want church to be a place where everyone can belong, to be welcomed even with all our quirky edges. We throw our doors open wide and embrace newcomers warmly. But part of building a community is knowing one another well enough to have inside jokes. It's telling stories about how it used to be and going to one another's birthday parties. Even with the best of intentions, we sometimes leave people feeling left out.

This issue of *First Foundations* looks at what it means to belong. It's about welcoming the stranger and living into our promise that even the youngest children belong to us all. We remember our history, when a commitment to one another saved this congregation from dissolving. And we think about our future as we imagine how our space might become a place of belonging for even more people. We look at the many ways we say to the world, "This is a place where you can belong."

But most of all, I hope this issue makes you think about how you might help someone else feel a sense of belonging here. Take a page from Jamie Petty's book and send a card when someone crosses your mind. Open the circle of conversation into a horseshoe. Invite the couple you've shared a pew with for years to join you for lunch. Speak to the stranger sitting next to you in worship. Don't stop at "How are you?" Dig deeper; ask how she's *really* doing. The sense of belonging we feel at First Baptist came because someone cared enough to get to know us in all of our messy, square-cornered ways. Let's keep it going. 🌸

— Jen Foster