

## CALL TO WORSHIP

There is a wonderful complexity to the fact that the person generally credited with creating Father's Day was a mother, and her motivation for doing so had much to do with mothering. Sonora Dodd was grieving the loss of her father, a Civil War veteran who had raised six children as a single parent after her mother died in the birth of the last of them. Inspired by a radio broadcast of a Mother's Day sermon in May, 1909, she approached local ministers in Spokane, Washington about a holiday in honor of fathers, which was officially initiated on June 19, 1910.

And there is a complexity that's much harder to call wonderful about the Father's Day that actually happened first in America, preceding the Spokane event by two years. The place was Monongah, West Virginia, and the occasion was the loss of 361 miners in the worst coal mining disaster in the history of the United States. 250 of the miners were fathers. Over a thousand children were suddenly fatherless. Grace Clayton approached her minister in nearby Lawton, West Virginia with the idea of a ceremony to honor and remember fathers. The church conducted the first Father's Day celebration on July 5, 1908. Sheaves of ripened wheat adorned the altar. There was an outpouring of grief and gratitude – the depth of gratitude that only comes with grief -- for fathers who were determined to get their job done . . . or die trying.

These spiritual roots show the holiness of this day, which cannot be given its due with greeting cards, weird neckties, and stainless steel barbeque grills that look more like F16 fighter planes with each passing year. In our worship service on May 11, Jennifer described Mother's Day as "a complicated joy." Today we celebrate another complicated joy about intimacy between parent and child.

We feel joy for the fathers who have found themselves through parenting and grief for the fathers who are lost in dark emotions deeper than the mineshaft that entombed so many one hundred summers ago – lost to their children, their partners, and themselves. Around us we see men running toward fatherhood with all their might. We shake our heads in wonder and ask, what brings them to such joy? And we see men running away from fatherhood as fast as they can – fleeing something in it that they cannot face. We shake our heads in bafflement and ask, must it be so?

Come, let us open our hearts to these joys and sorrows in all of their complexity. Come, let us worship together.