

RADICAL HOSPITALITY AND WELCOME

"Radical hospitality and welcome is an intentional all encompassing approach to making people feel valued, seen and included by going beyond standard courtesy."

In our Christian tradition, in our Scripture, examples of the importance, in deed, the necessity of practicing hospitality abound.

1, Genesis 18: 1-8 Abraham welcomes 3 strangers

2, Genesis 24: 15-25 Rebekah offers hospitality to the servant of Abraham

3, 1 Kings 17:8-16 The widow of Zarephath offers her food to Elijah

4, Luke 10: 25-37 The Parable of the Good Samaritan

5, Luke 10:38-42 Mary and Martha offer hospitality to Jesus

6, Acts 2:42-47 Hospitality in the Early Church

Paul cites the hospitality of the Maltese natives who rescued his 234 companions and himself when shipwrecked. Job declares that 'the alien has not lodged outside for I have opened my door to the traveller and the sojourner.'

The importance of hospitality in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament is clear: in story and in commandment.

In the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures two primary laws in the Torah are cited as the foundation of Yahweh's command to offer hospitality/ equal treatment to the stranger and sojourner:

Leviticus 19:33- 34: "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you

must be treated as a native born. Love them as yourselves for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

And Deuteronomy 10:18-19: " He defends the cause of the fatherless, and the widow and loves the foreigner residing among you giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt."

The person of the 'ger' the sojourner or foreigner, the resident alien is asserted in several places in the Torah. The book of Exodus requires the Israelites to 'do not wrong' to a ger or oppress them' Exodus 22:21. The foundation of the treatment or offer of welcome and equal hospitality to strangers is based on the fact of the Exodus experience: the Israelites under Joseph and other Pharaoh's were treated as accepted people with civil rights. Their experience of liberation was to live in their conduct towards all others who might come to their midst.

In the New Testament, not only does Jesus make our treatment of others one of the statements of faith, quoting from the Shema and Jewish laws but he himself relies on the hospitality of others, often strangers to live his mission and purpose out in spreading the kingdom. The disciples are sent out with no provision except the hospitality expected to be offered by strangers. The parable of the Good Samaritan defines the response to every person as a neighbor to be cared for generously and with no expectations of repayment. One of the best known verses of the Letter to the Hebrews states: 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels' – a reference to the Abrahamic story of the three strangers.

What can we discern and apply in our own radical hospitality here at Christ Church?

To offer genuine and effective hospitality to newcomers and visitors,, strangers, there are three areas of practice to be examined:

- **NEEDS: HOW ARE WE MEETING AND ANTICIPATING THE NEEDS OF VISITORS, NEWCOMERS AND CHANGING PARISHIONERS?**

What are your observations of our current practices?

- **Ushers and greeters, ADA observance, transportation, follow up to newcomers, inclusion?**

One of my 'notices' as an aging parishioner is the struggle for large print – we provide bulletins but the announcements are often in smaller print, notices are often in smaller print, signage is not always legible. The same is true for hearing impairment, I hear comments from some in the back of the sanctuary that they are unable to hear the preacher or celebrant clearly.

What about guides to our liturgy in other languages?

One big issue is the lack of readable large print name-tags.

- **CONNECTIONS:**
- **What are your observations of areas where we might offer more inclusivity, opportunities for connections?**
- **I note that we have multiple groups and 12 Step programs using our facilities but rarely any contact with them. A lack of immediate contact after services such as a coffee hour keeps those visiting from being introduced and included in our midst. The greeters, shout out to Jane and others, do a spectacular job of identifying and offering greeting, support and interest, getting names and making brief introductions but after that, there is a gap.**
- **Where are there areas of possible inclusion we are missing? Ie. The gates into parish life. Our outreach ministry works**

with several food pantries and feeding programs, how do we invite those we meet here? How are we, or could we embrace those coming here to get married, those giving birth, community members we meet? A bring your favorite teacher to church?

- **EMBRACE CHANGE AND OPEN UP TO NEW PERSPECTIVES**

I am always impressed with our 'open' communion stance, I have joyfully seen visitors of every religion participate in communion. This inclusivity is an act of gracious hospitality on our part and the affirmation of God's love of all his people.

How else can we look at our current culture and community and embrace the new realities of individuals and families?

- Ideas?? Comments? Issues?