



TOUCHSTONES

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Hospitality

Wisdom Story



Introduction to the Theme

Rev. Kirk Loadman-Copeland

In the poem, *The Death of the Hired Man* by Robert Frost, the farm couple, Mary and Warren, deal with the fact that a farm hand, Silas, has come back to die despite the fact that he had quit the farm after the last haying. As they disagree about how to treat Silas, Warren says, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, / They have to take you in." Mary responds, "I should have called it, / Something you somehow haven't to deserve." We may respond to these words as a prodigal son or daughter returning to our own home, but this is not Silas's home. He is less than a

Hospitality & the Common Good

David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons in their book, *Good Faith*, suggest that the American church become “counterculture for the common good.” A key to this is the practice of what they call a “confident pluralism.” While we may disagree with some of their conservative suggestions, they are correct in proposing that this counterculture approach must include the practice of hospitality.

Clarke Cochran writes, "Policy in the [area of the] common good preserves what communion and hospitality already exist, attempts to make them better wherever possible, and strives to extend them to those not yet or only imperfectly included." He continues, "...While the political order itself cannot be fully hospitable, it can provide spaces and occasions for the encounter of hospitality."

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The Good Samaritan

A Parable by Jesus of Nazareth, Luke 10:25-37

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test

Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"



²⁷ He answered, 
“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any

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Reimagining the Common Good

Go and Do Likewise!

(Continued from page 1) Wisdom Story

extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Commentary

I've Been to the Mountain-top is the popular name of the last speech delivered by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 3, 1968, at the Mason Temple (Church of God in Christ Headquarters) in Memphis, Tennessee. The next day, King was assassinated. This is an excerpt.

"I remember when Mrs. King and I were first in Jerusalem. We rented a car and drove from Jerusalem down to Jericho. And as soon as we got on that road I said to my wife, 'I can see why Jesus used this as the setting for his parable.' It's a winding, meandering road. It's really conducive for ambushing. You start out in Jerusalem, which is about 1200 miles, or rather, 1200 feet above sea level [actually 2,100 feet]. And by the time you get down to Jericho fifteen or twenty minutes later, you're about twenty-two feet below sea level [actually 846 feet]. That's a dangerous road. In the days of Jesus it came to be known as the *Bloody Pass*. And you know, it's possible that the priest and the Levite looked over that man on the ground and wondered if the robbers were still around. Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking, and he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt in order to seize them over there, lure them there for quick and easy seizure. And so the first question that the priest asked, the first question that the Levite asked was, 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'" **Note:** We may also ask, "If I don't stop to help this man, what will happen to me."

Hearth & Hospitality

Home, Hospitality, and Community

Sam Keen



The time is ripe to create ...a new type of community.... [Consider]...this family of words: *hearth* (a nuclear area, a vital or creative center), *hospitality* (the cordial and generous reception and entertainment of guests and strangers), *charity* (the kindly and sympathetic disposition to aid the needy or suffering), *celebration* (to honor by engaging in religious, commemorative or other ceremonies...), and *community* (a body of individuals organized into a unit with awareness of some unifying trait).

....The kinds of institutions that have evolved in modern, urban centers are too anonymous to satisfy our need for belonging and recognition. ...To gain that sense of worth that comes only when our name and story is known, we require a small group of people, perhaps no more than a hundred, that greets us and takes an ongoing interest in our lives. Something larger than a nuclear family, but less constricting than a tribe.

We might begin by re-creating the old sense of hearth and hospitality. A hearth is not a house with a fireplace, or a home shared only by members of the same family. ...A hearth is a place of gathering, a center where friends and family talk about what is important; feast, laugh, and weep together; celebrates the rites of passage that punctuate their days; ... and care for strangers in their midst.



There is nothing more urgent that ... [we] rediscover the enduring satisfactions that are inseparable from common meals, the communion of friends, and the gathering of community.

Source: Keen, Sam. *Fire in the Belly*. Bantam Publishing, New York. 1991 (pp 229-230)

Hospitality

(Continued from page 1) Intro to Theme

Irina Aristarkhova offers a summary of the characteristics of hospitality by Emmanuel Levinas, a French philosopher who was profoundly influenced by his Jewish tradition.

1: "Welcome: ...Hospitality ...is about welcoming. It can be a word of welcome, a ...smile, openness to the other, a smile at the threshold of the house, unconditional acceptance of the other.

2. "Receptivity: ...hospitality is about receptivity and vulnerability... to receive all, to be responsible for all.

3. "Discretion: ...hospitality demands discretion, ...[which] defines hospitality through focusing ...on the guest. ... discreetness in rendering hospitality is about emphasizing You and not Me....

4. "Intimacy: ...hospitality is ...intimate. [It] .. is about comfort; ...the serenity of being at home with oneself.

5. "Recollection: ...hospitality is about memory as recollection ...recalling the first act of hospitality toward oneself.

6. "Habitation: ...hospitality is about habitation. ...being hosted is about being inside [the host's home] but also about being wanted, welcomed."

Hospitality is a complex issue. There is one's individual responsibility to extend hospitality, but what of the responsibility of society? How do we / how should we respond to the immigrant, the refugee, those mired in poverty, the homeless person, the disenfranchised, or those who are discriminated against? It is not enough to be a Good Samaritan again and again and again. We are also obligated to work to eliminate the causes, to go beyond band aids to systemic solutions. Clearly, the quality and extent of hospitality is crucial to the common good. Hospitality is an act of love. It cannot exist in hate's shadow.

Our seven principles all call us to radical hospitality. Rev. William Schulz wrote that part of our mission is "to teach the fragile art of hospitality." Churches have always been part of the hospitality landscape. It is, perhaps, a church's most important role. Churches that fail to practice the "fragile art of

Readings from the Common Bowl



loved. It's about declaring your table a safe zone, a place of warmth and nourishment." Shauna Niequist

Day 2: "True hospitality is marked by an open response to the dignity of each and every person." Kathleen Norris

Day 3: "Hospitality does not try to impress, but to serve." Karen Burton Mains

Day 4: "There is nothing that makes me happier than sitting around the dinner table and talking until the candles are burned down." Madeleine L'Engle

Day 5: "Listening is a form of spiritual hospitality by which you invite strangers to become friends, to get to know their inner selves more fully, and even to dare to be silent with you." Henri Nouwen

Day 6: "Hospitality is the practice of ... welcome by reaching across difference to participate in ...actions bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis."

Letty Russell

Day 7: "Worship, then, needs to be characterized by hospitality; it needs to be inviting." James Smith

Day 8: "We show hospitality to strangers not merely because they need it, but because we need it, too. The stranger at the door is the living symbol and memory that we are all strangers here."

Thomas Long

Day 9: "A custom existed among the first generations of Christians.... In every house ...a room was kept ready for any stranger who might ask for shelter; it was even called 'the stranger's room.'" Dorothy Day

Day 10: "Hospitality doesn't have to be perfect, just heartfelt." Susan Karas

Day 11: "There is no hospitality like understanding." Vanna Bonta

Day 12: "One impulse—holiness and purity—erects boundaries, while the other

Day 1: "The heart of hospitality is about creating space for someone to feel seen and heard and

impulse—mercy and hospitality—crosses and ignores those boundaries."

Richard Beck

Day 13: "In the end we are always rewarded for our good will, our patience, fairmindedness, and gentleness with what is strange; gradually, it sheds its veil and turns out to be a new and indescribable beauty:—that is its thanks for our hospitality." Friedrich Nietzsche

Day 14: "Our very lives depend on the ethics of strangers, and most of us are always strangers to other people."

Bill Moyers

Day 15: "Give thanks to the earth for the hospitality and generosity. Show gratitude for life, light, and every little beauty."

Debasish Mridha

Day 16: "Once the guest has eaten and drunk at your table, the guest becomes kin... beggar or enemy, friend or chief, if they knock on your door, it will open; if they seek your shelter, it will be given, and if they ask for hospitality, give them your bread and wine... for who knows when you may need the help of a fellow human?" Keri Hulme

Day 17: "When people turn from the table where bread is broken and candles glow, be sure you have invited them not to your house, but to their own, and offered not your wisdom, but your love." Ray Baughan



Day 18: "Only the exceptional blend of love, humility, hospitality, and persistence can overcome ...barriers, and not enough people make the effort." Nabeel Qureshi

Day 19: "How shall we live? Welcoming to all." Mechtild of Magdeburg

Day 20: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13:2

Day 21: "Hospitality is the way we come

out of ourselves. It is the first step to dismantling the barriers of the world. Hospitality is the way we turn a prejudiced world around one heart at a time. Hospitality binds the world together."

Joan Chittister

Day 22: "Here is the core of hospitality: May I know you better? Will you come closer, please? No it will not be easy, but make no mistake about it, your life depends on this saving stranger coming to you and stretching your tight little heart."

Daniel Homan & Lonni Collins Pratt

Day 23: "To be hospitable, you need to accept pluralism as a natural condition of the world." Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Day 24: "Hospitality toward strangers is greater than reverence for the name of God." Hebrew proverb

Day 25: What I know about being inclusive, crossing from culture to culture, learning the language of diversity, is that it's the work of a lifetime."

Rosemary Bray McNatt

Day 26: "The German word for hospitality is *Gastfreundschaft*, which means friendship for the guest.... It means the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy."

Henri Nouwen

Day 27: "We are called to create holy communities where strangers are not only welcome, but where all are enjoined to do the work of healing and transformation by wrestling with strangers within themselves."

Abhi Janamanchi

Day 28: "I had crossed the line. I was free; but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land." Harriet Tubman

Day 29: "Hospitality should have no other nature than love." Henrietta Mears

Day 30: "This being human is a guest house. / Every morning is a new arrival. / A joy, a depression, a meanness, / some momentary awareness comes / as an unexpected visitor. / Welcome and entertain them all!" Rumi

Day 31: "The places in which we are seen and heard are holy places. They remind us of our value as human beings."

Rachel Naomi Remen



The Company of Strangers

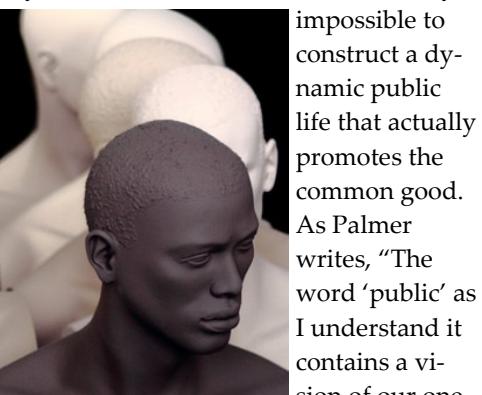
Rev. Kirk Loadman-Copeland

In a sense, the people in the world divide neatly into two parts, those we know and everyone else. The second group represents the category we call strangers and symbolizes the unknown. The Greek word that means foreigner or stranger is *xenos*. It was used first in the works of Homer and included a range of nuanced meanings from "enemy stranger" to "ritual friend."

Xenos is also the root of the Greek word *xenia*, which means hospitality and specifically refers to the generosity and courtesy shown to those who are far

from home. *Xenia* was also used to indicate a "guest-friendship." The theme of *xenia*, of hospitality, appears many times in *The Odyssey*. Like Blanche Dubois in a *Streetcar Named Desire*, Odysseus depended time and again on the kindness of strangers as he made the long journey home from Troy.

The complexity of *xenia* is due to the fact that *xenos* can mean "guest" or "host," as well as "stranger" or "friend." These dual meanings underlined the reciprocity of relationship that was expressed in the role of hospitality in ancient Greece. Richard Ritenbaugh writes, "Xenia, or obligatory hospitality, was practiced all over the ancient world. It seems to have been quite a serious matter in the Middle East and Mediterranean areas. A person was obligated, if he found out that a person did not have a place to sleep or was hungry, to ask that person into his own home. The Hebrews, Arabs, Greeks, and the Romans all practiced some form of *xenia*."



means both "guest" and "host." The reciprocity is inescapable linguistically, but not in terms of how we treat others. We teach our children to fear strangers, those adults that they do not know. Perhaps this is a wise teaching to try to keep our children safe, but the teaching becomes problematic when it persists into adulthood. Such fear makes it difficult to build robust communities or to see diversity as an asset to be celebrated instead of a reality to be avoided. It also makes it nearly

impossible to construct a dynamic public life that actually promotes the common good. As Palmer writes, "The word 'public' as I understand it contains a vision of our one-

ness, our unity, our interdependence upon one another. Despite the fact that we are strangers to one another...we occupy a common space, share common resources, have common opportunities, and must somehow learn to live together. To acknowledge that one is a member of the public is to recognize that we are members of one another."

The practice of hospitality is essential if our congregations are going to flourish. There are some who regard a church as a private space. With such an attitude, a church would tend not to be welcoming of newcomers since they are strangers. Churches, including liberal churches, that are growing do so because of many different things. One surely is their practice of radical hospitality by which they welcome the stranger.

Parker writes, "Hospitality means letting the stranger remain a stranger while offering acceptance nonetheless. It means honoring the fact that strangers already have a relationship—rooted in our common humanity—with having

In his book *The Company of Strangers*, Parker Palmer reminds us that the root of the word hospitality is *hospes*, which

to build on intimate interpersonal knowledge, without having to become friends. It means valuing the strangeness of the stranger—even letting the stranger speak a language you cannot speak or sing a song you cannot join with—resisting the temptation to reduce the relation to some lowest common denominator, since all language and all music is already human. It means meeting the stranger's needs while allowing him or her simply to be, without attempting to make the stranger over into a modified version of ourselves."

A Unitarian Universalist church has a spiritual center and a civic circumference, which is to say that it occupies both private and public space. In terms of hospitality, we welcome the stranger into our midst. In terms of justice, we make common cause with those in the public square who care about the issues that we care about. This requires working with different groups of strangers over time because our allies in the public square will change as the issues we are working on change. As the Englishman Lord Palmerston said of England, "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies." This observation is at the heart of community organizing and requires that we be hospitable to all.

Parker Palmer writes that in a vibrant and compassionate public life "strangers come into daily contact, grow accustomed to each other, learn to solve problems which the common life poses, [and] enrich and expand each other's lives." The challenge in our time are those who promote fear and hate, disparage diversity, spurn the common good, and turn stranger against stranger. Parker believes that the church has a special role in America in renewing our public life. It can only happen if we are prepared to enter into the company of strangers. William Schulz, former president of the Unitarian Universalist Association was correct when he wrote, "This is the mission of our faith: to teach the fragile art of hospitality; to revere both the critical mind and the generous heart; to prove that diversity need not mean divisiveness; and to witness to all that we must hold the whole world in our hands."

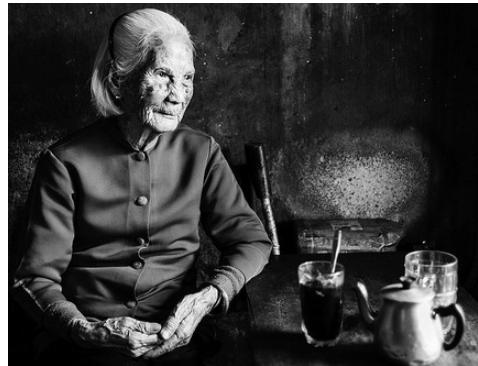
The Un-Welcome Table

The Brothers Grimm, adapted

Once ...a feeble old woman's ...husband died ...so she went to live with her son and his wife and their own little daughter. ...The old woman's sight dimmed and her hearing grew worse, and sometimes at dinner her hands trembled so badly the peas rolled off her spoon or the soup ran from her cup. The son and his wife [were] ...annoyed.... And one day, after she knocked over a glass..., they told each other that enough is enough.



They set up a small table for her in the corner next to the broom closet and made the old woman eat her meals there. She sat all alone, looking with tear-filled eyes across the room at the others. Sometimes



they spoke to her while they ate, but usually it was to scold her for dropping a bowl or a fork.

One evening ...the little girl was busy playing on the floor with her building blocks, and her father asked her what she was making. "I'm building a little table for you and mother," she smiled, "so you can eat by yourselves in the corner someday when I get big."

Her parents sat staring at her for some time and then suddenly both began to cry. That night they led the old woman back to her place at the big table. From then on she ate with the rest of the family, and her son and his wife never seemed to mind a bit when she spilled something....

Source: from *Grandmother's Table*, adapted from the Brothers Grimm, Bennett, William J., editor. *The Book of Virtues*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993. pp. 143-144.

I Am Because You Are

Rev. Kirk Loadman-Copeland

The word, *Ubuntu*, is derived from the *Nguni* languages of *Xhosa* and *Zulu*. Arising in South Africa, the word appeared in print in 1846, but it's origin was much older given the role of oral tradition in Africa. Jason van Niekerk said, "Ubuntu is a feature we take on by interacting with others like ourselves. It is about showing empathy and putting effort into building relationships." Hospitality is a central feature of Ubuntu. As Nelson Mandela explained, "In the old days when we were young, a traveler through a country would stop at a village, and he didn't have to ask for food or water; once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu...."

Ubuntu came to prominence through Desmond Tutu's 1999 memoir, *No Future without Forgiveness*. As chair of *South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, he regarded Ubuntu as being central to reconciliation.

Tutu writes, "Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, u no-buntu,' 'Hey, so-and-so has ubuntu.' Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.' We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'A person is a person through other persons.' It is not, 'I think therefore I am.' It says rather: 'I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.' A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are."

Hospitality: Encouraging Words

One day, Pooh Bear is about to go for a walk in the Hundred Acre Wood. It's about 11:30 in the morning. It's a fine time to go calling—just before lunch. So Pooh steps out across the stream, stepping on the stones, and when he gets right in the middle of the stream he sits down on a warm stone and thinks about just where would be the best place of all to make a call.

He says to himself, "I think I'll go see Tigger." No, he dismissed that. Then he says, "Owl!" Then, "No, Owl uses big, hard-to-understand words." At last he brightens up! "I know! I think I'll go see Rabbit. I like Rabbit. Rabbit uses encouraging words like, 'How's about lunch?' And, 'Help yourself, Pooh!' Yes, I think I'll go see Rabbit."

Family Activity: Zoo Hospitality

The story *Good Night, Gorilla* by Peggy Rathman is a charming story about the hospitality of an inventive gorilla, who invites all of his friends for a sleep-over in the Zookeepers bedroom. Share the story (or show the video at <https://vimeo.com/31572493>) and then ask, "What would we have to do if we invited a gorilla to our house to make him or her feel at home?" Then as interest and imagination and energy allow, wonder together about what being hospitable to the other animals in the story would require: a mouse, elephant, lion, giraffe, hyena, and armadillo.

In talking about the origins of the book Rathman wrote, "I wanted to teach sign language to gorillas, but after taking a class in signing, I realized what I'd rather do was draw pictures of gorillas."

Family Activity: Care Packages

Involve your children in thinking about what to include in care packages for the homeless. Have them shop with you for the materials and help in assembling the care packages. An excellent resource for guidance by Melissa French can be found at <http://www.morewithlessmom.com/index.php/2015/11/18/real-deal-care-packages-for-homeless/>



Open Hands & Eyes

A Theology of Hospitality

Rev. Tom Owen-Towle

Our conviction about the inherent worth of every person is the cornerstone upon which everything else in our theology is built. ...We believe that none of us can be valued for long unless all of us are considered of worth. We live and conduct our lives on that proposition.

The theological theme at stake is hospitality.

Hospitality is rooted in a sense of radical openness. We're called to live with open hands that both hold those near and serve those afar and to live with open eyes, or as the Buddhists phrase it, to see life with "unfurnished" eyes, that is, eyes empty of mental clutter and inherited furniture.

Hospitality isn't a mere social grace; it's a spiritual vocation with an inescapable moral cost. It evokes our most basic religious need to know and be known, to embrace and be embraced. In truth our spiritual sanity and international safety bank on hospitality. If we don't practice it, locally and globally, we'll grow increasingly aloof, alienated, then hostile.

...The scope of authentic hospitality is far-ranging, as expansive as the entire Cosmos, starting at home, beginning with our own very selves. Far too many of us need to grow better acquainted with our inner beings... before we die. We suffer from severe self-estrangement. The paradox of human existence remains: we'll never achieve any better relationship with others than we've mustered with ourselves.

Hospitality doesn't stop with self-exploration. As religious travelers, we must enter ever-widening circles of respectful, loving engagement.

Source: Owen-Towle, Tom. *Theology Ablaze*. San Diego: Flaming Chalice Press, 2011. pp. 275-284.



The Living Room

Hospitality Begins at Home

Deborah Gans

This article is a commentary on Maya Zack's exhibit, *The Living Room* (see photo & info at <http://thejewishmuseum.org/exhibitions/maya-zack-living-room#about>).



Hospitality begins at home—but it also describes our relation to each other as peoples, territories and nations. In his 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, ...the basis for the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights, Kant argues that the stranger's right to hospitality is... derived both from the

right to self-preservation, which emerges from the law of nature (*gesellschaft*), and from the right of association, which is part of the law of society (*gemeinschaft*). For Kant, society might not be natural, pleasant or desirable; but it is a real condition of a populated world. Humans by nature are strangers who travel from an original solitary or familial place and are confronted by association. The only alternative to hospitality or exchange is aggression or war.

This right of hospitality exists only between equals; for the stranger must be capable of returning to his own house, where he would then preside as host. How then does the rule of hospitality extend to those who cannot claim their reciprocal right, such as the refugee, who is not a guest because he is not also a host [or the homeless person]? Without the wherewithal to reciprocate..., the refugee must present himself as merely human, or rely on a third party ...to demand the rights of hospitality for him.

...Perhaps hospitality offers us language ...to describe our emerging geopolitical spaces and the aspirations we have for them.

Source: full article at <https://placesjournal.org/article/hospitality-begins-at-home/>

Enlightened Hospitality

Sujātā's Hospitality

The hospitality of strangers in this traditional story showed Buddha a way to live that led to enlightenment. It is said that Sujātā became the Buddha's first female lay disciple.

Siddhartha practiced various forms of asceticism for six years. He reduced his eating more and more until he ate nothing at all. ...One day, while meditating alone he fainted, exhausted by the ascetic practices. A shepherd boy with a goat walked by, saw Siddhartha, and realized that without any food Siddhartha would die very soon. So he quickly fed him some warm goat's milk. Soon Siddhartha regained consciousness and began to feel better. He realized that without the boy's help, he would have died before attaining enlightenment.



...One morning, a girl named Sujātā offered Siddhartha some delicious milk-rice porridge and said to him: "May you be successful in obtaining your wishes!" On the same day, Siddhartha accepted an offering of straw from a straw-peddler, made a seat from it and sat down to meditate under a large bodhi tree, facing east. ...As he meditated, Siddhartha let go of all outside disturbances, and memories of pleasures from the past. ...He asked himself: ..."How can one be free from suffering?" At first many distracting images appeared in his mind. But finally his mind became very calm, like a pond of still water.

...He saw that good deeds lead the way, from suffering to peace. Then he saw that the origin of suffering is being greedy, which arises from thinking that we are more important than everybody else.

...at the age of 35, Siddhartha became the Buddha....

Source: <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/030bio.htm>



Hostis to Hospes

Creating Space for Strangers

Henri J.M. Nouwen

In our world full of strangers, estranged from their own past, culture and country, from their neighbors, friends and family, from their deepest self..., we witness a painful search for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found.

Our society seems to be increasingly full of ...people ...expecting an enemy to suddenly appear, intrude, and do harm. But still ...our vocation [is] to convert the *hostis* into a *hospes*, the enemy into a guest....

...When hostility is converted into hospitality then fearful strangers can become guests revealing to their hosts the promise they are carrying with them. ...The distinction between host and guest proves to be artificial....

Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. ... The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not ...to adopt the life of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own.

Source: <https://scottemerry.wordpress.com/2013/01/29/henri-nouwen-and-hospitality/>



Home Is Where...

A Sense of Home

Rev. Kenneth Phifer

There are at least three important elements in developing and maintaining a sense of home. The first of these ...is being at home in space.

...In the wider sense we must come to terms with nature. We are a part of the universe not apart from it. ...In Carl Sagan's phrase, "We are the stuff of stars."

...The narrow aspect of feeling at home in space has to do with our attachment to certain places—or perhaps just one place—where we do not feel alien. Here more than somewhere else we know deep in our bones that we belong.

...The second is to be at home in time. To do this requires first of all that we



know history.... The past is always a part of us, shaping us in visible and in unseen ways. To ignore these influences is folly. To develop a sense of home in time [also] requires ...that we live in the present.

...The relational element is the third aspect of a sense of home. Two things are involved: our relation with our own self and our relation with others. The self is the point at which space and time intersect.... Knowing and trusting ourselves ...is a requirement for the development of a sense of home.

...Being at home with ourselves enables us ...to relate well with people in the broad, neighborly sense.

...Our is not an age in which ...being at home in the world is easy.

Source: Phifer, Kenneth. *Becoming at Home in the World*. The Castellio Press, Ann Arbor, MI. 1992 pp. 4-6.



The pineapple is a symbol of hospitality

The Moral Life

Hospitality and Justice

Christine Pohl

The centrality of hospitality to the social practices of many societies attests to its almost universal importance. Necessary to human well-being, hospitality offers protection, provision, and respect to strangers while it also sustains fundamental moral bonds among family, friends, and acquaintances.

...Hospitality depends on a disposition of love; it has more to do with the resources of a generous and grateful heart than with availability of food or space.

... Especially in relation to strangers, hospitality was a basic category for dealing with the importance of transcending social differences and breaking social boundaries that excluded certain kinds of persons. Hospitality provided a context for recognizing the worth of persons who seemed to have little to offer when assessed by worldly standards. This rich moral tradition can help to shape a theological framework for contemporary concerns about inclusion and difference.

...The ability to continue to welcome strangers in the midst of an unjust world comes from putting our efforts into the larger context of ...justice and healing.

Hospitality reminds us that justice and friendship belong together. ... Our efforts must be grounded in the wisdom that comes from living alongside those whose lives have been overlooked or undervalued by the larger society.

Finally, hospitality helps us see that moral practices are shaped over a lifetime. We learn the skills of hospitality in small increments of daily faithfulness. The moral life is much less about dramatic gestures than it is about steady work....



Source: *Sojourners Magazine*, July-August 1999

Small Group Discussion Guide

Theme for Discussion Hospitality

Preparation prior to Gathering: (Read this issue of *Touchstones* and the questions.)

Business: Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

Opening Words: "We are all visitors—even when we are home. Our time in any relationship or place is ultimately limited. We are passing through; nobody stays forever. How might we act if we consider ourselves guests in the lives of friends and family?"

Jeffery Lockwood

Chalice Lighting (James Vila Blake, adapted)
(In unison) *Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.*

Check-In: How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

Claim Time for Deeper Listening: This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

Read the Wisdom Story: Take turns reading aloud parts of the wisdom story on page 1.

Readings from the Common Bowl: Group Members read selections from Readings from the Common Bowl (page 3). Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

Sitting In Silence: Sit in silence together, allowing the *Readings from the Common Bowl* to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (*Living the Questions*).

Reading: "Being a good guest is rather simple in principle but occasionally challenging in practice. One begins by demanding nothing more than the bare elements of life and dignity, which every host is more than delighted to exceed. The good guest then simply allows the other person to be a good host—to share his gifts, to play her music, to tell his stories, to show her places, and to serve his foods. Finally, a guest should cultivate and express genuine gratitude. It need not be effusive or exorbitant, only sincere.

8 ...Ask little, accept what is offered, and give thanks." *Jeffrey Lockwood*

Living the Questions

Explore as many of these questions as time allows. Fully explore one question before moving to the next.

1. What were the customs and rituals of hospitality practiced in your home when you were a child? How have those influenced you?
2. What has been the meaning of the hospitality that you have experienced? How has that informed your hospitality?
3. When have you been a stranger? What was that experience like? Were you befriended or rebuffed? How did that feel? How did you respond?
4. Who have been the strangers that you have encountered? What were those experiences like? Were there instances when the "strangeness" involved language, culture, or socio-economic differences? How did that influence the encounter?
5. What do you think about the characters in the parable of the Good Samaritan? Does Martin Luther King, Jr.'s explanation (page 2) about the concerns of the priest and the Levite seem plausible. Have you known a Good Samaritan? Have you been one?
6. What is the role of a UU congregation in terms of extending hospitality to the newcomer, to the stranger? How well do we do this? How could we improve? The facilitator or group members are invited to propose additional questions that they would like to explore.

Deeper Listening: If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person for the time claimed. Using a timer allows the facilitator to also listen fully.

Checking-Out: One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together and the experience of exploring the theme.

Extinguishing Chalice (Elizabeth Selle Jones)
We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Closing Words

Rev. Philip R. Giles, Minister Emeritus

(In unison) *May the quality of our lives be our benediction and a blessing to all we touch.*

Hospitality

(Continued from page 2) **Intro to Theme**

hospitality," will not flourish.

Universalist minister Ray Baughan wrote, "When people turn from the table where bread is broken and candles glow, be sure you have invited them not to your house, but to their own, and offered not your wisdom, but your love." What he left unsaid was this: Through the practice of hospitality, people will find not only a seat at your table, but a seat at your heart. And you will find that your half-empty glass, or your half-empty life, will be filled to overflowing with loving kindness because your gift of hospitality will return to you again and again.

Let us heed the council of 13th century mystic Mechtilde of Magdeburg: "How shall we live? Welcoming to all."

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