

# Connecting

*Connecting to deepened wisdom and deepened relationship*

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2024 Sept

## Radical Hospitality

### Chalice Lighting

Words of Thomas G. Long: “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. This is not our house, our table, our food, our lodging; this is God’s [Life’s; Love’s] house and table and food and lodging.”

### Check In Questions

Who or what have you found yourself hosting in the last month? Of what or whom have you been the guest?

### Defining Moment

**hospitality** (n.) late 14c., “act of being hospitable;” from Old French *ospitalité* “hospitality, hospital;” from Latin *hospitalitem* “friendliness to guests” – from the roots *\*ghos-ti-* “stranger, guest, host” and *\*poti-* “powerful; lord” (compare Old Church Slavonic *gospodi* literally “lord of strangers”).

**\*ghos-ti-** Proto-Indo-European root meaning “stranger, guest, host,” properly “someone with whom one has reciprocal duties of hospitality,” representing “a mutual exchange relationship highly important to ancient Indo-European society” [Calvert Watkins]. But as strangers are potential enemies as well as guests, the word has a forked path. It is the hypothetical source of Greek *xenos* “guest, host, stranger;” Latin *hostis* “a stranger” or “an enemy;” *hospes* “host;” Old Church Slavonic *gosti* “guest, friend;” Old English *gæst* “chance comer, a stranger.”

**For individual journaling and group discussion:** In “hospitality,” the first syllable indicates host or guest. The second syllable indicates power. Hence: hospitality is “host-guest power.” What is “powerful” about offering hospitality? How does “lord of strangers” strike you?

## Ancient Stories of Hospitality

**Baucis and Philemon** (Greek Mythology). Zeus and Hermes, disguised as peasants, visited a town and began asking for a place to sleep that night. Everyone rejected them, until they came to the simple rustic cottage of the poor couple, Baucis and Philemon, who hospitably offered all they could. The guests were served food and wine. Baucis refilled their wooden cups many times with wine, when she noticed that the pitcher was still full. Realizing that the guests were gods, Baucis and Philemon begged indulgence for their simple home and fare. Philemon went to kill their goose to prepare a better meal, but Zeus protected the animal in his lap. Zeus then told the couple to leave the town because he would destroy it and all the wicked people who had turned him away. The couple went up a mountain outside of town, and when they returned the town was destroyed and their cottage had been transformed into an ornate temple. Baucis and Philemon were granted their wishes: to be guardians of the temple, and to die together.

**Abraham and Sarah** (Genesis 18:1-8) ‘The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.’ (The couple is rewarded for their hospitality with a child, despite Sarah being 90 years old.)

**Lot** (Genesis 19:1-3). ‘The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. He said, “Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way.” They said, “No; we will spend the night in the square.” But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.’ (Because of his hospitality, Lot is saved from the destruction of Sodom which, as in the Baucis and Philemon myth, is wickedly inhospitable.)

**Wu and the Yellow Dragon** (Chinese Folktale). The youth, Wu, and his father, Yin, show hospitality to a weary stranger passing through. The stranger rewarded Wu with a piece of armor. When a great storm and flood then came, the home of Wu and Yin was protected from the general destruction by the yellow dragon, which, in disguise, had been the weary stranger.

***For individual journaling and group discussion:*** What moral do you draw from these stories – individually and collectively? Is there a moral that resonates with your life? How?

## Strangers

from Christine Robinson & Alicia Hawkins, *Listening Hearts*, adapted

From scripture and folk tales of strangers who reward hospitality with unexpected gifts we learn about the ethos, if not the history, of times past. These tales speak of our deep obligation to extend hospitality to the stranger, born not only out of the needs of human community but out of our own need to experience something or someone new. They speak of the gifts that strangers bring. They tell us something about our inner life, about how we help those around us and experience growth. And they speak of the conditions of hospitality, which are not wealth, fine food, or sumptuous furnishings, but an open heart to the stranger and an open mind to a new idea.

**It's More Natural to be Inhospitable.** We're programmed to be wary of strangers, some of us more strongly than others. No sooner does a baby's maturing brain figure out that she is a separate creature from others than she develops stranger anxiety. One of the first things that happens to a frightened community is that they turn on the strangers among them. After 9/11 America was not a good place to be – or even seem to be – a stranger. Perhaps because fear of strangers and the tendency to mistreat strangers is so strong in us, one of the common messages of the world's religions is to do just the opposite – to welcome the stranger, to offer hospitality to the traveler, to think of strangers not as threatening but as interesting, and to consider that opportunity to know them as enriching. This is hard work for most of us. The care of strangers is one of those biblical values that makes some people feel nervous rather than warm and fuzzy.

**Where We Encounter the Stranger.** Most of us are not confronted by wayfarers at our doors, but many of us regularly confront strangers asking us for money on the streets or people who don't look or act or sound like us and who require extra energy to understand or even be kind to. This cost is both the price and the blessing of community, and in our ever-larger and more diverse communities, we confront strangers ever more often. When diversity comes with a human face, we are more likely to be able to open our minds and hearts to all that is new to us. It's an important spiritual and intellectual discipline.

**How "the Gods" Reward Hospitality.** One of the interesting things about congregations, especially the larger ones, is that they are one of the few places for most people where we regularly, and happily, greet, shake hands with, and smile at perfect strangers. Why does this feel good? Perhaps because it is rare in our lives. It feels good to be reassured that the world's strangers are okay.

A community disaster brings out something of that same benefit. The needs of the moment mean that strangers work together and help each other and it feels good to see this in action – even from our TV sets. It makes us feel uplifted. But these are fleeting moments in our lives, unless we take the trouble to practice what is really a spiritual discipline as well as the advice of the world's faiths: to be kind to strangers, curious rather than condemning, and therefore able to receive their gifts.

**"The Stranger" Might Be a Strange Idea – or an Unwelcome Experience or Feeling.** Taken metaphorically, stories about hospitality to strangers refer not just to people we don't know

but to all new things in our lives. The stranger you are most in need of greeting in your life could be a new idea, a dream, a risk. Perhaps the stranger at your door is a transgender bathroom down the hall or that nagging feeling that you need to re-think what you have always believed about God or immigration or tax policy or your retirement. The stranger in your life could be a grief, a depression, an unwelcome development. Will you slam the door? Can you be curious? Is there anything to learn?

Keeping our hearts and minds open to the new is one of the two basics of religious liberalism. Conservative religion looks to truth in old books, established wisdom, time-honored doctrines. Religious liberals find those things interesting and often instructive but tend to treat them as a starting place for our thinking, adding human wisdom and our own intuition to the mix.

**Self-Hospitality: The Stranger Within.** Then there is the strangest stranger of all, the one inside of us, whose strength saves us, whose slips embarrass us, whose misdeeds can bring us down. That's a stranger worth knowing – and when we do, we're less likely to be hijacked by its frantic bids for attention.

According to Carl Jung, the stranger inside, whom he called our shadow, is born of necessity, when we need or choose a trait or talent as a focus for our personality and repress the mirror trait. A child who is not permitted to express anger may have an unconscious angry streak. A person who has decided to develop her musical ability may have a disappointed mathematician as a shadow. These traits tend to pop out when we are not paying attention, causing so-called Freudian slips. Sometimes we say, "I just don't know what got into me . . ." Actually, something got out of you: one of your strangers within.

While it is delightful to discover an inner artist who was discouraged in grade school, most of the strangers inside us are a little more challenging. The sullen child who didn't get what she needed, the angry adolescent, or the resentful spouse can be difficult and embarrassing. However, the more we know them, the less trouble they are likely to cause us.

We get to know those strangers within through self-reflection, by asking ourselves why we feel the way we do, why we keep making the same mistakes, where our strengths and weaknesses come from. We get to know the stranger inside through meditation, therapy, dream work, and other adventures in self-knowledge. We get to know the stranger inside when we ask ourselves what it is about the strangers and strange ideas in our lives that bothers us so much. Indeed, some of the greatest gifts strangers can give us are these clues to unknown parts of ourselves. And the habit of being kind to strangers and open-minded to new ideas can help us take a fearless and kind look at the parts of ourselves that we'd rather not see but which are often important parts of our lives.

We offer hospitality to the stranger inside by compassionate recognition. If our childhood has left us with an inner class clown, or a traumatic experience has given us an inner hurt child, this character primarily wants our recognition and perhaps a little protection, or a chance to get out and play in a safe way.

**How to be Hospitable.** Whether the stranger at our door is a challenging person, a new-fangled idea, or the inner class clown who just made a fool of us, both folk wisdom and religious wisdom have similar recommendations for dealing with strangers.

First, let the stranger in the door. That means firmly setting aside our natural tendency to turn our backs on difference and bringing forward our kind self for a new person, our open-minded self for a new idea, and our compassionate self for the stranger inside.

Second, suspend judgment long enough to learn a little more about the stranger, to wonder about what has confronted us, and to muster our curiosity about what the good points of this experience might be.

Third, keep a reserve of energy in our lives so that we are able to cope with the inevitable strangers who are going to come through and disrupt things. It is so hard to remember to be hospitable when we're in the thick of our challenges and miseries, when we have just enough in our lives and not really quite enough more for the unwelcome visitor. And there is little in our cultural wisdom right now to remind us to make room. We have to remember the old stories, the foreign poems, and the ancient scriptures that advise us to invite strangers in, offer them food – even if it means sharing our crumbs – and let them stay a bit.

To give hospitality, the stories say, we must be poor: maybe not poor in material things but living with enough space in our lives, minds, and hearts for others. If I am utterly “full of myself,” distracted by own worries, tensions, and issues, or even distracted by my decorations and fancy cooking, I cannot attend to others. When I am restless, have too much to do, am too driven by thousands of different stimuli, there is no room in my psychic home for a guest, and even the most welcome cannot enter without feeling a bit like an intruder.

On a physical level we understand this; when we are planning a party we clear out the hall closet so that there will be room for the guests' coats. At church, we put out more chairs than we expect to need so that the visitors will have a choice of seats and latecomers will feel welcome. We even build whole new buildings so that all who want to come in can be welcomed! These are all issues of making space so that we can be hospitable.

The same thing is true of making psychic space. If we are consumed with our own needs, in a rush to get everything done, we will not have psychic space to share with others, to entertain new ideas, to ponder the new feelings welling up in us.

Our lives are often so full that there is no room for others, sometimes not even room for ourselves. If our lives are planned and orchestrated too completely, there is no space for the unexpected, the strange, the wonderful. Have faith! Leave some space for a stranger.

***For individual journaling and group discussion:*** What do you learn from Robinson and Hawkins' discussion? How would you assess yourself on their three instructions for how to be hospitable?

## Listening and Hospitality

Henri J.M. Nouwen (Dutch theologian)

Listening is much more than allowing another to talk while waiting for a chance to respond. Listening is paying full attention to others and welcoming them into our very beings. The beauty of listening is that, those who are listened to start feeling accepted, start taking their words more seriously and discovering their own true selves. 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...

Hospitality means primarily the creation of 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 offers a freedom where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free -- not a subtle invitation to adopt the life style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own.

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### Review of Homan & Pratt, *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love*

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, adapted

“Hospitality is a lively, courageous, and convivial way of living that challenges our compulsion either to turn away or to turn inward and disconnect ourselves from others,” write Father Daniel Homan, a Benedictine monk, and Lonni Collins Pratt, a journalist and retreat leader. In these fearful times, more and more people are consciously closing down in the face of strangers. Terrorism and the war against it have made everyone feel more insecure and unprotected. The media keeps upping the ante of fear with stories about possible calamities on the horizon. That is why the spiritual practice of hospitality is now more important than ever. It is an antidote to paranoia. As the authors note: “Fear is a thief. It will steal our peace of mind and that's a lot to lose. But it also hijacks relationships, keeping us sealed up in our plastic world with a fragile sense of security.”

The Rule of St. Benedict has brought wisdom and comfort to believers for over 1,500 years. One of its main practices is listening, being really present for other human beings. This leads naturally into hospitality, which in monasteries has meant giving guests the space to pray and to rest, to enter silence or to speak in intimate terms about their journey of faith. Homan and Pratt show how this can become a part of anyone's daily life.

Every week we meet strangers and are challenged to come to terms with them. If we have accepted the “other” within ourselves, it is a lot easier to accept that which is alien in strangers. The authors also discuss the ways in which boundaries can be useful: “Boundaries allow us to give more to others, not less. Boundaries do not exclude the other; in fact, if you become a person with actual boundaries, you are better able to give to other people because you do not feel diminished by them. Giving is a joy because you want to give, and not because someone has manipulated you and you gave in.” Homan and Pratt are convinced that gratitude opens up a space in us to greet others. Just think about the times in which your heart was overflowing with thanksgiving for the world's grace. It is during those times that we are most hospitable to others.

The hurdles to hospitality are fear, suspicion, and self-centeredness. They can all be overcome by an open heart. Don't give in to the fear mongers among us; put aside all illusions of safety and you won't be so suspicious of others; put the needs of strangers above your own and you'll feel the kin-dom of Love making new inroads in your life.

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from "A Recklessly Generous Heart"

Lynda McDaniel, adapted

"Go with me from airline counter to airline counter, and you will see that airline clerks are brutalized if there is a winter storm, as if they had any control over the weather," says Joan Chittister, a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and author of many books on the subject, including *Wisdom Distilled From the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*. "That is not hospitality, because it is not treating the other with respect."

But, Chittister adds, hospitality is not about being a doormat. She recently wrote a letter to an airline about a problem during such a situation, beginning her letter by gently explaining that she was offeeflering this information in order to keep the company informed. "They need to know what is going on," she adds. "but they don't deserve to be kicked." Hospitality is not a flurry of sentimental acts or occasional gestures. It is a sustained commitment to the belief that the way we treat one another day by day matters deeply.

"Too often when somebody's having a hard day, we just run away from them rather than inviting them in," says Paul Wilkes, author of *Beyond the Walls: Monastic Wisdom for Everyday Life*. "Anyone that you know in pain -- invite them into the comfort of your arms and say, 'Hey, what's going on? You look as though things are tough today.' That's not unlike putting a cloak on somebody's back as you go or giving them food or water."

***For individual journaling and group discussion:*** Considering the three pieces above (from Nouwen, the Brussats' review, and from McDaniel): what seems valuable in what they say? What, if any, reservations do you have about the approach to hospitality they describe?

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The Radically Hospitable Church

Yvonne Gentile and Debi Nixon<sup>1</sup>

Friendliness is nice, but it doesn't really create a feeling that people will remember. As Maya Angelou is often attributed with saying: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." The difference between friendliness and radical hospitality is intentionality. To be truly, consistently hospitable, we have to be very intentional about following these three principles:

**1. Notice.** There is tremendous power in noticing. We cannot provide radical hospitality until we first notice. Everything that follows — all our hospitality efforts — depend on us first noticing. To notice we must be aware of our surroundings (both the physical space and the people around us) and be present in the moment. Noticing includes:

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: [churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/3-principles-of-radical-hospitality/](http://churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/3-principles-of-radical-hospitality/)

- Offering a warm greeting to each guest you encounter
- Being on the lookout for people and environmental issues that need special attention
- Developing a dependable system for noticing and acknowledging guests

**2. Offer personal attention.** When guests receive personal attention, it’s memorable. It doesn’t happen often in these days of self-service and screens. As our world gets more and more connected online, it seems we are also more isolated interpersonally. Leonard Berry notes: “You need the element of pleasant surprise. And that comes when human beings interact.” It comes when we take the time to make them feel seen and heard as individuals. You show personal attention in many ways, including:

- Introducing yourself and learning people’s names
- Wearing name tags and other identifying markers
- Practicing the 10-foot rule (take responsibility for greeting those seated or standing within 10 feet of you); and the 3-minute rule (spend at least 3 minutes before and after any other church activity talking to someone you don’t know very well.)
- Introducing the people you meet to others
- Looking for opportunities to go the extra mile
- Anticipating and fulfilling guests’ needs

These are simple practices, but they have the power to make guests feel noticed and seen through personal attentions.

**3. Provide excellent follow-through.** First, establish a reliable method to identify who your guests are and how many times they have visited, if you don’t have one already. When you have collected a guest’s contact information, you can reach out to them for follow-up. Determine what your milestones will be and the goal for each contact. With what frequency and for what duration of time will you follow-up with guests? What is your desired outcome for each contact? Will you reach out every time they visit until they become members, only on their first three visits, or with some other frequency. For how long a time span?

When we live into the principles of radical hospitality, we give people a taste of “The UU Good News.” When hospitality is done well, it changes lives – our own, as well as our guests’.

***For individual journaling and group discussion:*** How does hospitality transform the guest? How does it transform the host? How would you rate yourself at these principles, particularly the first two? How do these principles apply to your life generally, apart from church?

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## Hospitality Quotations

“When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” — Leviticus 19:33

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”  
— Hebrews 13:2, NRSV

“There is no hospitality like understanding.” — Vanna Bonta

“Hospitality is the practice of God's welcome by reaching across difference to participate in God's actions bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis.”  
— Letty M. Russell

“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’ — not because these people thought they could trace something of someone they loved in the stranger who used it, not because the man or woman to whom they gave shelter reminded them of Christ, but because, plain and simple and stupendous fact, he or she *was* Christ.” — Dorothy Day

“A soul of hospitality and a heart of humanity is a house of love, peace, freedom, liberty and justice.” — Auliq Ice

“You’re busy. You don’t have the skill set. Their problems are too much. Their life is a mess. Your life is a mess. You’re too impatient. You’re not kind enough. You don’t even like them. You have nothing to offer. What does it really matter? Turns out, in the end, it’s all that really matters.”  
— Edie D. Wadsworth

“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. This is not our house, our table, our food, our lodging; this is God's house and table and food and lodging.” — Thomas G. Long

“Hospitality seeks to minister. Hospitality does not try to impress, but to serve. Secular entertaining is a terrible bondage. Its source is human pride. Demanding perfection, fostering the urge to impress, it is a rigorous taskmaster which enslaves. In contrast, Scriptural hospitality is a freedom which liberates.”  
— Karen Burton Mains

“A compassionate open home is part of Christian responsibility, and should be practiced up to the level of capacity.”  
— Francis A. Schaeffer

“Each human soul has in a sense to enact for itself the gigantic humility of the Incarnation. Every man must descend into the flesh to meet mankind.”  
— G.K. Chesterton

“We are all wanderers, passing through, guests of the universe, and our job as a religious clan is to share earth’s bounty and to set a warm, inviting place for one another.” — Carolyn and Tom Owen-Towle

“Being listened to is so close to being loved that most people cannot tell the difference.” — David Oxberg

“Practicing hospitality expresses our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of each person. Through our actions of hospitality we move toward creating a world in which we are all treated with justice, equality, and compassion.” — David Rynick

## Our Spiritual Exercise

Reflect and journal about the place of hospitality to the stranger in your life – including hospitality to such strangers as unfamiliar people, ideas, experiences, and parts of yourself that you may have sought to exile. Use these questions as your prompts.

- Warm up by listing some words, phrases, or metaphors that describe some of the strangers – whether human, experiential, or inner – that you have become aware of in your life. Provide four or five words or phrases that complete this sentence: “Strangers in my life recently are...”
- When was the last time you experienced a stranger in your daily work or life? What kind of hospitality was called for from you? How did you do?
- When was the last time you encountered a stranger in the form of an idea, dream, or risk that felt uncomfortable? In what way were you hospitable/inhospitable to this “stranger”?
- Recall a time that a “stranger from within” popped out in an embarrassing overreaction or slip of the tongue? What hospitality could you show to your inner strangers?
- What unwelcome visitors in the form of a grief, depression, or unwelcome development has come into your life recently. What would hospitality to such “visitors” look like? Does it seem like a good idea to be hospitable to these?
- How do you practice hospitality to strangers? To new ideas? To parts of yourself?
- Describe a time when you experienced the joy of solidarity with lots of different kinds of people, such as working together after a disaster.
- To get a sense of an inner stranger, try this. Name three or four people you don’t like and list the reasons you don’t like them. Later, cross out the names of the people and insert your own name. Re-read the list and consider whether you may have stumbled on parts of your inner stranger.

## Suggested Reading for Further Exploration

Pratt, Lonni Collins, and Homan, Daniel. *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love*.

Gibson, Robert. *A Companion Guide to [Pratt and Homan's] Radical Hospitality*.

Gentile, Yvonne, and Nixon, Debi Nixon. *The Art of Hospitality: A Practical Guide for a Ministry of Radical Welcome*.

Kearney, Richard, and Fitzpatrick, Melissa. *Radical Hospitality: From Thought to Action*

Fischer, Sara. *Open: Adventures in Radical Hospitality*.

Guidara, Will. *Unreasonable Hospitality: The Remarkable Power of Giving People More than They Expect*

Guevara, Michele C. *Radical Hospitality: The Incredible Influence of Surpassing People's Anticipations and Leaving a Lasting Impression*.

Schnase, Richard. *Five Practices - Radical Hospitality (Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations Program Resources)*

Anderson, David. *Unleashing Radical Hospitality: A Journey to Make the Safety of Children and Support of Parents a Priority for Us All*.

## Further Questions

For journaling, group discussion, or both

1. Has your understanding of hospitality evolved? If so, how?
2. How would you assess your family-of-origin at hospitality?
3. When has engagement with our faith community taught you something new about what it means to be hospitable? When has it challenged you to embody “hospitality” or “openness” or “welcoming” in a more meaningful or needed way?
4. What kinds of people do you find it most difficult to be hospitable toward?
5. How can our congregation become more hospitable than it is?
6. Are there prudent limits to hospitality?
7. “Listening is a form of spiritual hospitality. . . . The beauty of listening is that, those who are listened to start feeling accepted, start taking their words more seriously and discovering their own true selves” (Nouwen). Have you experienced this, either in listening to someone else or in being listened to?
8. Dorothy Day speaks of welcoming the stranger “not because the man or woman to whom they gave shelter reminded them of Christ, but because—plain and simple and stupendous fact— he or she was Christ.” Does this speak to you? How do you understand her?
9. What thoughts limit your hospitality? (Edie Wadsworth offers some examples of limiting thoughts: “You’re busy. You don’t have the skill set. Their problems are too much. Their life is a mess. Your life is a mess. You’re too impatient. You’re not kind enough. You don’t even like them. You have nothing to offer. What does it really matter?”)
10. What situations have made you not want to be hospitable?
11. Karin Burton Mains speaks of full-hearted hospitality as “a freedom which liberates.” In what ways have you felt this to be true?
12. Do you want to practice “radical hospitality”? What would be “radical” about it?
13. Is there a different question about hospitality that is niggling at you? What is it?

Faithyna's Family Page  
Embracing Radical Hospitality: Going Beyond the Golden Rule  
Faithyna Leonard

The idea of Radical Hospitality challenges us to go beyond the conventional norms of kindness, calls for a deeper commitment to understanding, accepting, and loving one another. Many of us grew up learning the Golden Rule: *Treat others the way you want to be treated*. This simple, yet powerful, principle was our first introduction to the concept of empathy, a cornerstone of kindness and respect. However, as we grow and encounter the rich diversity of human experience - spanning cultures, professions, ages, genders, and orientations, we realize that the Golden Rule, while well-intentioned, has its limitations.

Treating others as we want to be treated assumes that our preferences, needs, and desires are universal. It can inadvertently lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication because it does not fully account for the unique perspectives and experiences of others. This is where the **Platinum Rule** comes into play: *Treat others as they would like to be treated*.

The Platinum Rule requires us to step out of our own shoes and into those of others. It asks us to listen actively, to seek understanding, and to approach each person with genuine curiosity and respect for their individual experiences. It's a small shift in perspective but one that can make a profound difference in how we connect with one another.

**Radical Hospitality** is the embodiment of the Platinum Rule. It goes beyond a simple smile or a polite greeting. It is an intentional practice of creating space in our hearts, our homes, and our community for everyone, especially those who may feel marginalized or excluded. It challenges us to be comfortable with discomfort, to reach out to those who are different from us, and to build bridges of understanding and compassion.

As we move forward together, I encourage each of us to embrace this mindset. Let us commit to treating others not as we wish to be treated, but as they wish to be treated. Let us be a community that practices Radical Hospitality, where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.

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**Check Out.** What overall message stands out for you?

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**Chalice Extinguishing.** Words of Thom Schultz: "It's likely that every day presents an opportunity for you to practice radical hospitality to someone with whom you cross paths. There is no shortage of people who could use the fit of a caring, welcoming person in their life. If you expect to be that person, you'll be surprised at how often the opportunities come along for you to show love through radical hospitality."

*Connecting* is produced by the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines for use in small groups. Each month (ten months a year) explores a different theological or spiritual theme. Next issue: 2024 Oct: Fear.