



First United Methodist Church

Pastor's Page

Hospitality: Give *and* Take

“Listen! I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into his house and eat with him, and he will eat with me.” - Rev. 3:30 TEV

At District Conference in April, Rev. Amy Wagner said something that caught my attention. She spoke on the connection between Jesus' disciples going out to preach, teach and heal and their spiritual vitality. She noted that when the disciples were focused on staying put - “resting on their laurels,” their spiritual power nosedived. When they were out in their communities, receiving hospitality while offering God's love, their spiritual power skyrocketed. That got me thinking about whatever the opposite of extending hospitality is called.

Don't get me wrong. Extending hospitality is important. I appreciate the time and attention the Church Council has been giving it when asked to think about how to make our church more hospitable. We will benefit from increasing our church's level of hospitality. There is the other side of the equation, however. And it needs our attention as well.

I'm talking about *accepting* hospitality. I don't know if there's a word for it or not but it's what the disciples did when they visited the surrounding villages. Per Jesus' instructions, they were not to take more than the bare necessities. They were to survive on the kindness of strangers, to stay where they were offered lodging and eat what was set in front of them.

That enabled the disciples to show those they were with their willingness to be vulnerable, their desire be part of their lives and their appreciation for their kindness. We don't think about being on the receiving end very often. But that is also a powerful way of demonstrating the love of God.

In the quotation from Revelation notice that Jesus did NOT say for us to knock on *his* door so *we* could come in to *him*. Jesus is knocking on *our* door so *he* can come in to *us*. There it is again! – going out and receiving hospitality from the one you're trying to reach. According to Rev. Wagner the church of the future is the church that figures out how to get outside its church building and into the community to connect with the unchurched in ways that allow them to share their lives with us and allow us to receive *their* gifts.

Thanks for letting me share this food for thought, – *Pastor Pat*