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HOSPITALITY – ENVISIONED AND PRACTICED:  
THE REALITY OF PRACTICED HOSPITALITY  
AT ST. MATTHEW’S UNITED  
CHURCH OF CHRIST

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA  
MAY 14, 2005

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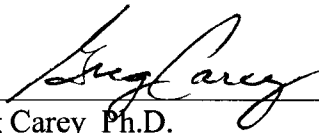
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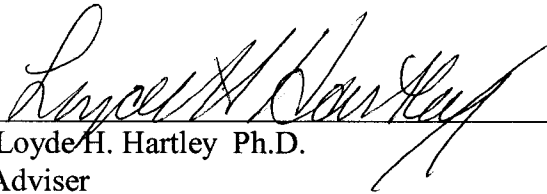
Darrel Richard Justh Sr.  
Hospitality – Envisioned and Practiced:  
The Reality of Practiced Hospitality  
at St. Matthew's United Church of Christ  
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Abstract of

**HOSPITALITY- ENVISIONED AND PRACTICED:  
THE REALITY OF PRACTICED HOSPITALITY AT ST. MATTHEW'S  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST.**

by

Darrel R. Justh Sr.

This project explores the vision and practice of hospitality as performed by the congregation of St. Matthew's United Church of Christ, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. By determining the congregations' common opinions concerning hospitality and comparing those views with remembered experiences, the project focused on understand the true nature of hospitality as practiced by the congregation of St. Matthew's. Through the use of questionnaires and discussion groups, the congregation's practice of hospitality was compared to five research congregations. The questionnaire and the discussion groups focused on the concrete and abstract occurrences of hospitality experienced by members and visitors of St. Matthew's.

The data analyzed was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The questionnaire and discussion groups provided quantitative information, which was interfaced with the qualitative information taken from the scenario section of the questionnaire. This collected information was used to compare the congregation's implied practice of hospitality with tangible experiences. The acquired results were compared to five sample churches to see how St. Matthew's equates with their practice of hospitality.

This study of hospitality deals with both the "private and public" dimensions of St. Matthew's practice of hospitality. The private aspect deals with the "family" or

“intimate” practice within the congregation while the “public” aspect deals with the congregations attitude concerning hospitality within the working world and mission trip experiences.

This study enabled the congregation of St. Matthew’s gain a better understanding of their actual practice of hospitality and the impact this practice has on the congregation and community. Future learning at St. Matthew’s will focus on the limits within the practice of hospitality and the experience of polar reversals between the host and guest. The acquired information in this dissertation may be useful to any congregation wishing to expand their practice of hospitality.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was undertaken to develop a method of expanding the practice of hospitality within the congregation of St. Matthew's United Church of Christ. The congregation is deeply involved in local mission projects and takes yearly mission trips to out of state locations. They continue to demonstrate Christ's love through gracious hospitality to both visitors and members. I am exceedingly grateful to the congregation of St. Matthew's and the Consistory for their willingness to grant me the time and finances to engage in this academic quest. I have been blessed to minister to such a hospitable and loving congregation.

I thank Loyde H. Hartley, Ph.D., my faculty advisor, for challenging my opinion and teaching me to think outside the box. I also thank Greg Carey, Ph.D., who assisted me in staying focused as I completed my dissertation and Rev. Dr. Karen Elizabeth King for her willingness to serve on my doctoral committee.

I am grateful for my colleagues in the Doctor of Ministry program at Lancaster Theological Seminary. They gave me a platform to vent my frustrations as well as my joys and helped me realize that hospitality is practiced in many different ways.

Gratitude is extended to the churches who were willing to complete the questionnaire, to the members and visitors who responded to the questionnaire, and to the discussion groups. Their input was an important part of this dissertation.

I also wish to thank three members of my congregation; Jill Harmon for her willingness to take the time for long discussions that assisted me with the project, to



William Chronister and the Consistory who supported my quest for a Doctorate, and to Mary Cay Hess who spent hours reading and correcting my many preliminary drafts.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife Mary and my grandson Aaron for allowing me the time and space needed to complete this project. I now hope to have the time to return some of the hospitality received from all those who assisted me in this project.

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vii
Chapter	
1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND	
<i>The practice of Hospitality</i>	1
<i>Background of Hospitality as an Idea</i>	3
<i>A definition of Hospitality</i>	4
<i>Background information on the community         and congregation of St. Matthew's United Church of Christ</i>	7
<i>Hospitable attributes of the congregation</i>	10
<i>Placing limits on the practice of hospitality</i>	13
<i>The role of diversity in the practice of hospitality</i>	17
2. MYTHS OF HOSPITALITY	19
3. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS	
<i>Old Testament stories of hospitality</i>	25
<i>Stories of hospitality within the New Testament</i>	32
<i>The practice of hospitality within the early church</i>	47
<i>New Testament teachings on establishing limits to the         practice of hospitality</i>	48
<i>Theological perspectives of Hospitality</i>	51
<i>Hospitality and Holy Communion</i>	54
4. SECULAR AND SACRED ASPECTS OF HOSPITALITY	60
5. METHODOLOGY	
<i>A plan for investigation the practice of hospitality</i>	64
6. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	
<i>Patterns of Hospitality</i>	69
<i>Charting the patterns</i>	
<i>Comparison of the questionnaire results from             St. Matthew's Congregation with the five             research churches</i>	72
<i>Response to various fictitious situations</i>	78
<i>Scenarios and St. Matthew's response by age groups</i>	95
<i>Scenarios</i>	97
<i>Response to situations comparing mission trip participants         And the congregation of St. Matthew's</i>	111

7. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	
<i>Establishing limits to the practice of Hospitality</i>	126
APPENDIX	
A. Practitioners of Hospitality	139
B. Questionnaire on Hospitality	141
C. Written Comments from the Questionnaire	154
D. Preliminary Congregational Discussions	158
E. Interview Responses	159
F. Worship Service Lacking Hospitality	178
G. Worship Service with Hospitality	183
H. Skits on Hospitality	188
I. Story Patterns	190
BIBLIOGRAPHY	192

## TABLES

Table	Page
1. Comparison of the questionnaire results from St. Matthew's congregation with the five research churches.....	71
2. How do you rate your churches practice of hospitality in the following items? .....	73
3. Based on your overall experience with your church how would you rate your congregation as a place where the stranger is made to feel welcomed? .....	76
4. When you think of the congregation and building called St. Matthew's (or sample church), how do you feel? .....	77
5. Homeless man .....	78
6. Unwed mother .....	80
7. K.K.K. member .....	83
8. Gay couple .....	85
9. Inter-racial married couple .....	87
10. Teenagers .....	89
11. Professional woman .....	91
12. Former Inmate .....	93
13. Overall impressions by age groups .....	95
14. St. Matthew's response by age groups. Unwed mother .....	98
15. St. Matthew's response by age groups. Teenagers .....	99
16. St. Matthew's response by age groups. Inter-racial married couple ..	101
17. St. Matthew's response by age groups. Professional woman .....	103
18. St. Matthew's response by age groups. Homeless man .....	105

19. St. Matthew's response by age groups. Gay couple .....	106
20. St. Matthew's response by age groups. Former inmate .....	108
21. St. Matthew's response by age groups. Former K.K.K. member ...	110
22. Comparing Mission Trip Participants with Congregation. Homeless man	112
23. Comparing Mission Trip Participants with Congregation. Unwed mother	114
24. Comparing Mission Trip Participants with Congregation. Former K.K.K.	116
25. Comparing Mission Trip Participants with Congregation. Gay couple	117
26. Comparing Mission Trip Participants with Congregation. Inter-racial	119
27. Comparing Mission Trip Participants with Congregation. Teenagers	120
28. Comparing Mission Trip Participants with Congregation. Woman	122
29. Comparing Mission Trip Participants with Congregation. Former inmate	124

## CHAPTER 1

### CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

#### **The Practice of Hospitality**

Substantial literature exists dealing with hospitality, but a majority of it focuses on hospitality found in the service industry rather than the practice of hospitality within the Christian church. The literature dealing with Christian hospitality arranges it into two camps. The first deals with hospitality as a way to recruit new members while the second deals with the spiritual aspects of service-oriented hospitality. Practicing hospitality may result in evangelism even if the practitioner does not intend to evangelize. With that in mind, the focus of this dissertation will be on the practice of hospitality, not for the purpose of evangelism but because hospitality is a service to the stranger as well as a need that the provider of hospitality is asked to fulfill.

Christine Pohl states, “Hospitality combines the most earthy and earthly tasks and concerns with the most extraordinary supernatural” (*Hospitality: Mysterious and Mundane*, Oakbrook Conference on Ministry, October 2002). She states that the earthly tasks may be serving soup in a soup kitchen and the supernatural may be seeing Christ in the eyes of a stranger or discovering a reversal of roles where the stranger becomes the host and the host becomes the guest. Pohl’s statement challenges us to investigate the true ramifications of hospitality when practiced not as a self-improvement goal to be achieved, but practiced so that the results cause the practitioners to want to share that which they have received. Hospitality provides a bridge, which connects our theology with daily life and concerns. Father Daniel Homan states, “You cannot take seriously the spiritual practice of hospitality and remain as you are. If you are serious about it, nothing

will ever be the same again” (37). Thus, taking the step of faith by welcoming the stranger may involve a shift from the fear of strangers to opening our doors and hearts to them. The desire to practice hospitality, which may lay dormant in many Christians, may be awakened through the practice of missions, community projects, and inter congregational activities. With this awakening, the mundane and supernatural will unite in the giving and receiving that is hospitality.

The practice of hospitality in today’s culture presents Christians with a dilemma. Children are taught from birth to beware of the stranger and yet Christ tells us to welcome the stranger. Parker Palmer writes, “We lose our sense of relatedness to those strangers with whom we must share the earth, we lose our sense of comfort and at-homeness in the world” (21). Palmer is saying that those who do not practice hospitality tend to draw within themselves and thus miss the opportunity to allow strangers the opportunity to reveal their gifts and become our friends. If one practices Christian hospitality, one must be willing to go beyond viewing the stranger as a threat. Henri Nouwen states, “No real dialogue is possible between somebody and a nobody” (70). We must view the stranger as someone of value before we may attempt to practice hospitality. “When our heart is filled with prejudices, worries, jealousies, there is little room for a stranger” (75). The greatest challenge many Christians face regarding the practice of hospitality is to look beyond our prejudices and fears and allow God to work through us. The practitioner of hospitality may discover that hospitality combines the most menial tasks and concerns with the supernatural.

## **Background of Hospitality as an Idea**

The twenty-first century has introduced many changes within our society and religious organizations. Many of the terrorist claim they are involved in a religious jihad, thus these incidents that encircle the world have placed all organized religion into the limelight. Homan states, “On September 10, it was considered spiritually enlightened to say, ‘I’m a spiritual person but I’m not into organized religion.’ But when Americans needed an anchor, something to hold onto, they headed for the staying power of tradition” (xxi). Because of these events, the church has willingly or unwillingly been cast into the role as mediator between those who use religion for personal gain and those who use religion to make the world a better place.

Because of the events on September 11, 2001, and the continued “war on terrorism,” our society has become wary of the “stranger.” These continuing events have had a profound effect on the congregation of St. Matthew’s. The congregation has been involved in small group discussions on how these events have changed the community. We have had several members, who are in the military; participate in the Iraqi and Afghanistan conflicts. Since several of our members work at the Carlisle War College, we have had several presentations by students at the College. A Colonel, from Korea, offered one presentation that was especially insightful because he was able to relate, from first hand experience, the situation on that peninsula and the effect it has in the world community. The terrorist activity has made our congregation realize the conflict is of a global nature and we have become immersed in a worldwide struggle. Perhaps it was divine providence that I chose the topic of hospitality as my study before the tragic incidents involving terrorism occurred.



Over the past eight years St. Matthew's has been fortunate to have a continued increase in their membership. Looking at the decline in membership within many mainline churches, one could argue that hospitality is one of the more important practices a congregation should undertake. Hospitality enables the stranger to feel accepted and eventually leads to a path of numerical stability within the church. Church growth is important to the future of any congregation but more importantly is whether the hospitality the congregation practices is sincere or simply show. If a congregation's practice of hospitality is not sincere, the visitor will soon discover the authenticity of the practice.

The questions this dissertation will answer are as follows: How does the congregation of St. Matthew's view the practice of hospitality? What are their limits to the practice of hospitality? Did experiences with previous ministers affect their practice of hospitality? Does St. Matthew's practice of hospitality differ from other churches within Penn Central Conference?

### **A Definition of Hospitality**

According to Harper's Bible Dictionary, "hospitality" is defined as "the act of friendship shown a visitor" (408). This simplified definition seems to concur with the general populace in contemporary society in that they see hospitality as being friendly, welcoming, and helping others when needed. However, the practice of hospitality is much more than a simple act of friendship in that the practice may have extenuating and even life changing results. Homan states, "When we speak of the depth of hospitality, we are proposing something scary and radical. But it's worth the risk. Unless we find a way

to open ourselves to others, we will grow even more isolated and frightened. If we do not find and practice ways of hospitality, we will grow increasingly hostile. Hospitality is the answer to hostility. Jesus said to love your neighbor; hospitality is how” (xxii). The practitioner of hospitality should realize that change may not be intended but it may occur non-the less. Perhaps the greatest fear we have of hospitality is that through the practice we may be forced to view our own world from a new perspective. Homan states, “We need a transforming, shake-you-to-the- soles-of-your-feet kind of remedy. We need transforming Love. 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” (36).

Hospitality provides the stranger with a safe place where his or her life may be lived without fear and where true community may be found. The practice of hospitality is not intended to change people; rather it should offer both the host and the guest the freedom to be individuals. The host must welcome the guests into his or her space or turf, which may be represented by his or her home, church or any area that surrounds. The offering of space to the stranger is an important aspect of hospitality. If space is not offered then the practice becomes generosity rather than hospitality. Generosity may be extended to strangers without inviting them into the hosts’ space. Blankets, food, clothing and other necessities to alleviate the strangers’ problem may be provided, without any visual or physical contact, but the hosts do not have the opportunity to personally welcome the strangers nor can they discover the gifts they possess.

The practitioners of hospitality should realize the term “stranger” might pertain to those they do not know as well as those they know. Our relationship with God shows us

that to God we are the strangers because we are in human form; while to us, God is the stranger because God is in divine form. Elie Wiesel points out how precarious our relationship is with the world in the statement, “Man, by definition, is born a stranger: coming from nowhere, he is thrust into an alien world which existed before him – a world which didn’t need him, and which will survive him” (53). This statement may be disconcerting to those who read it; but it points out the importance of trying to make the world a better place because even if the world will survive us, we still have the ability to change its direction.

Homan states, “A moral issue can become bogged down in legalisms, and hospitality is no legalistic ethical issue. It is instead a spiritual practice, a way of becoming more human, a way of understanding yourself. Hospitality is both the answer to modern alienation and injustice and a path to a deeper spirituality. Hospitality has an inescapable moral dimension to it. It is not a mere social grace; it is a spiritual and ethical issue. It is an issue involving what it means to be human” (5). For most practitioners of hospitality the practice begins as a desire to assist another person. What begins as an earthly task soon develops into supernatural spirituality and the practitioner suddenly realizes that if he or she takes the practice seriously nothing will ever be the same again.

Try as we might, we cannot teach other humans to be hospitable. They may be taught to be polite socially, but true hospitality involves a love for human kind that only God can give. Most people believe that humans were created by a Superior Being and have some value; therefore, those practicing hospitality have to find the God given quality in every person we meet.

Hospitality is a state of mind or a way of thinking that combines the physical with the spiritual. Through the physical sharing of our talents and the acceptance of the risks that come with the practice of hospitality, we grow spiritually. As our faith increases we are more willing to open our hearts and doors to the stranger, and hospitality becomes a way of life rather than a duty or a task. God does not give us more than we can handle. Perhaps God gives out the capacity for hospitality proportionately to our propensity for dispersing it.

The most important learning we receive from practicing hospitality is the realization that it is a lifelong struggle to overcome the walls of security we build to protect ourselves. The practice of hospitality takes away our precious time and causes the stranger to get in the way of our plans for our future. Hospitality is the struggle to live God's will, to abandon our own will, and to welcome the stranger who enters our life because God put him/her there.

Thus, hospitality is a life-transforming act of kindness that offers strangers a place of comfort where they are able to share their gifts and where community is formed. By combining the ordinary act of hospitality with the supernatural act of God's grace, the host and the guest's spirituality and daily life concerns become connected.

### **Background Information on the Community and Congregation of St. Matthew's United Church of Christ**

Carlisle Springs is located approximately five miles north of Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The area was originally settled by German speaking immigrants and the small village of Carlisle Sulphur Springs grew up around a series of sulphur springs.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a large hotel was built near the springs so visitors could partake of the fresh country air and drink the sulphur water. This water was thought to provide relief from many types of illnesses. The hotel was destroyed in a fire and the community eventually became merely a “bottle neck” for those traveling on route 34. The area has not changed a great deal over the past fifty years. Currently, Carlisle Springs is home to a Bison ranch, several horse ranches, many farms, a Lutheran Church, and a United Church of Christ church. Developers have begun to purchase land in the area with the goal of building new developments once a sewer line is placed through the area.

Carlisle Springs, greatest claim to fame is the monument that marks the actual spot that is considered to be the northern most point in Pennsylvania where Confederate soldiers traveled during the Civil War.

In 1828, St. Mathias German Reformed Church, “otherwise known as St. Matthew’s Reformed Church,” and St. Mathias Lutheran Church, “otherwise known as St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church,” were organized as a union church in a village known as Carlisle Sulphur Springs. The congregation celebrated worship with a Reformed minister one Sunday and a Lutheran minister the next Sunday.

On October 30, 1955, the Joint Council and Consistory voted on the possibility of uniting the two congregations. The Consistory records note the Joint Council and Consistory were unanimous in their vote to unite. On January 29, 1956, a “Congregation Reaction Ballot” was presented to the congregations to determine their attitude and feeling for the merger. No clear plan emerged from this vote. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, the joint council and Consistory decided to delay the merger discussions. Subsequently, both congregations called pastors.

At their annual congregation dinner meeting held on January 4, 1958, at First United Church of Christ, Carlisle, the members of St. Matthew's United Church of Christ voted to "dissolve the union and build a new church in the vicinity of Carlisle Springs." The official dissolution of the union occurred on February 2, 1958. Actual transfer of property and money took place on February 8, 1958. On February 9, 1958 and with 48 members, St. Matthew's United Church of Christ held its first worship service. The first services and church school were held in the basement of the H. R. Gutshall and Sons' Implement Store in Carlisle.

A tract of land was purchased from Mrs. Mary Wagner on which to build St. Matthew's United Church of Christ (this name was adopted as a result of our denomination's merger with the Congregational Christian Churches in June, 1957). The congregation on May 11, 1958, approved plans for a new church building. A Ground-Breaking Ceremony was held at the site on May 25, 1958, and the Cornerstone was placed at a service on September 7, 1958. In 1965, a parsonage was completed. In 1979, the sanctuary was enlarged, and office space and classrooms were added. In 1997 an elevator was installed, the restrooms were made handicap accessible, and the parking lot was blacktopped.

From 1958 until 1991, the congregation shared ministers with Salem Stone United Church of Christ. Salem Stone is located approximately 8 miles from St. Matthews. In 1991, St. Matthew's separated from Salem Stone and called their own minister. The first full time minister served for three years. During this time, the church experienced growth but was constantly besieged with financial problems. In 1993, a serious incident occurred between the minister and the congregation. Those within the congregation that supported

the minister began a verbal confrontation with the members who wanted the minister removed. Both groups looked to the Mercersburg Association and Penn Central Conference for assistance. Both groups were disillusioned because the Association and Conference could not come up with an amicable solution. The congregation released the minister by paying him three months severance pay and then used interim ministers for two years. Because of these conflicts, the church experienced a rapid decline in membership and struggled to meet the budget. During this time, the congregation almost voted to remove themselves from the United Church of Christ, but fortunately, the interim minister convinced them to delay the vote until they hired a new minister.

I began my ministry at St. Matthew's on April 14, 1996, and was confronted with a Consistory who was not sure if they could afford a full time minister and a Congregation that was not sure if they wanted to remain part of the United Church of Christ.

### **Hospitable Attributes of the Congregation**

The first characteristic I noticed about the congregation of St. Matthew's was their willingness to welcome the visitor into their midst. Originally, I felt this was merely show because they realized that they would need new members if they intended to continue their existence. During the past eight years of serving the congregation, I have discovered that the congregation extends hospitality to the stranger not because of any hidden agenda but because they want to exhibit the teachings of Christ through their actions. One opportunity to see the sincerity of their hospitality is demonstrated through the way they treat visitors once they become members of St. Matthew's. Many

congregations will go out of their way to greet the visitor but when that visitor becomes part of the group and wants to make changes that same hospitable group may turn on those they welcomed. At St. Matthew's, the new member is welcomed into the fold and given every opportunity to serve on committees and Consistory. Over half of our members have joined within the last eight years. The transition, from a one or two family church to a diverse family church, has been smooth and all the organizations within the church continue to work together for the good of the church.

Because St. Matthew's is located in a semi-rural area, it does not have an influx of homeless people or transients. Other than a Korean family, no minority groups are represented. Because the congregation is able to select those they help, some may feel their practice of hospitality already exceeds that which is expected of them as Christians. St. Matthew's has been involved in practicing hospitality through many venues during the past eight years. Members of the congregation have taken eight mission trips to various areas within the United States. The mission experiences introduced the participants to one of the most important aspects of genuine hospitality. That aspect is the polar reversal that occurs between those extending hospitality and the ones receiving hospitality. This reversal, where the host becomes the guest of the stranger, has been a defining moment with many of the participants in our church's mission trips. St. Matthew's has increased its participation in the local Food Bank, Project S.H.A.R.E., and Safe Harbour Shelter. The congregation is also involved in providing various forms of physical and monetary assistance with the residents of Thornwald and Sarah Todd Nursing Homes. Many guest speakers representing various charitable organizations are given the opportunity to present the benefits of their organization during worship



services. Our youth developed a gift-giving program with Claremont Farms, which is a county operated nursing home in the area.

Because of several high profile incidents with the previous minister, I was concerned how the congregation would react to the liberal stances put forth by various organizations within the United Church of Christ. It was beneficial to see the congregation's acceptance or refusal of hospitality to certain groups of people because of the previous minister's actions.

Craig Dykstra states, "People come to faith and grow in faith and in the life of faith by participating in the practices of the Christian community" (44). Within the congregation of St. Matthew's, we have two basic types of members: those who participate in the total Christian community and those who participate only in Sunday worship. As more members of the congregation discover the importance of the "total Christian community," they also realize that to fully appreciate this experience, they must learn to fellowship with others who may be different. When thinking of the definition of a "stranger," we discover that the stranger may be someone we have known for many years. The congregation of St. Matthew's is beginning to realize that the hospitality they extend moves beyond the walls of the church and extends into the community.

Many members of St. Matthew's congregation avoid anything that has to do with evangelism, yet they willingly practice service-oriented hospitality. They have discovered the truth in the idea that their actions, more so than their words, have the greatest impact on how others view them. Bass states, "Just taking a full and earnest part in them (practices) is somehow good in itself, even when purposes that are visible to the human eye are not achieved" (7). Hospitality is not always a practice that has easily identifiable

or immediate results. The congregation is beginning to realize that those who practice hospitality may never know the full ramifications of their actions, but that does not make the practice less important.

### **Placing Limits on the Practice of Hospitality**

Legend states that Caesar had an often-quoted motto for his legions, “Shorten your swords and lengthen your boundaries.” This quote could refer to the concept that the shorter swords worked better in close conflict, thus more wars were won and the realm’s boundaries were expanded. If, on the other hand, the shorter swords represented acts of kindness rather than aggression, the quote could mean that even someone with Caesar’s power realized that compassion gained more land than did hostility. Whether this quote is fact or fiction is not important. The statement demonstrates to those Christians who practice hospitality the consequence of shortening their swords, (prejudices, fears and the defenses) when confronting a stranger. To work toward a productive practice of hospitality, the practitioner must first understand his or her establish boundaries and limits and then work at extending these limits. Christine D. Pohl captures the tension exhibited in the practice of hospitality when she quotes Edith Schaeffer of L’Abri Fellowship, “Because there are more people than we have time or strength to see personally and care for, it is imperative to remember that it is not sinful to be finite and limited” (132). Congregational boundaries may be found in the subtle ways the visitor is oriented into the proper way to worship to the boundaries that encompass the various issues of sexual orientation. Westerhoff believes that hospitality without boundaries is spiritual suicide and Homan states that, “one way to nurture a healthy sense

of the self is to keep strong boundaries. . . . 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 it” (179). Westerhoff points out the importance of boundaries when she states, “There are different perspectives on either side of every line we draw and every boundary we encounter. Boundaries define us, even separate us, so that we can be together” (54). A person’s name is a boundary because it establishes a line of separation with other names. God exemplified the importance of individual names when God said in Isaiah 43:1b, “I have called you by name, you are mine.” God also demonstrated the importance of expanding one’s boundaries when characters in the Bible had their names changed. Abram became Abraham, Sarai became Sarah, Simon became Peter, and Saul became Paul. These name changes were the result of God’s desire to give the person more responsibility and so they would better understand how it feels to be a stranger. Through a name or status change, the person involved is forced to associate with strangers who are not just “those people we do not yet know.” “Strangers must include those I have no intention of knowing, for all kinds of reasons that I deem sound and good” (38). Barbara Brown Taylor, in an article entitled “Birth Pangs” (*Christian Century*, December 13, 2003) tells of an incident when she was raising guinea hens. She took the egg from a nest inside so a fox would not kill them. When the keets (guinea peeps) hatched she saw one was having trouble getting out of its shell. She was about to assist it but she had second thoughts and decided to let it go and see what happened. The other keets came over and assisted it. She states, “My job, as it turned out, was not to crack shells, extract keets, dry feathers or pour mash into mouths. My job was simply to make a safe place,

keep the predators away, and let the community do what it knew how to do” (43). When pondering the limits we place on our practice of hospitality, perhaps it would be wise to do as Taylor suggests and not feel that we are responsible for every aspect of hospitality to the stranger. The church community may be able to provide the necessities the stranger may need while the individual provides what he or she can without going beyond his or her established limits.

The practitioners of hospitality may find it difficult to extend hospitality if they have preconceived notions or self-imposed limits toward the practice. These limits may be in place because of the practitioner’s background. Homan states, “Hospitality comes easily for those who have known mostly acceptance and love. For other people, it will come harder” (17). Nouwen supports the latter section of that statement when he says, “Our heart might desire to help others: to feed the hungry, visit the prisoners, and offer a shelter to travelers; but meanwhile we have surrounded ourselves with a wall of fear and hostile feelings, instinctively avoiding people and places where we might be reminded of our good intentions” (49). Thus, some of our reluctance to practice hospitality may stem from our upbringing while others may be reluctant to practice hospitality because of fear of the unknown.

One-way of overcoming the trepidation of practicing hospitality is by first discovering a universal starting point between the practitioner and the stranger. Once this starting point is formulated, the participants should have free reign to practice as they please until they reach the limits of their comfort zone.

When I first began my teaching career, I decided it was important to implement rules and regulations for all the high school band members. I made a chart listing all the

rules and ended the list with these words, “There will be no exception to these rules!” I quickly discovered that there are exceptions to every rule, and, within a year, I disposed of the rule chart and solved problems through dialogue. This change did not cause the band members to run amuck; rather they began to work together to see that everyone abided by the “unwritten rules.”

If members of the United Church of Christ are willing to practice what they preach, then all members must realize that “God is still speaking” and rules that were followed centuries ago may not work in today’s society. In the Twenty-first Century, the rules have been changed and religion in America is changing. As Martin E. Marty succinctly states, “The problem is that the civil people are not committed and the committed people aren’t civil” (Buursma, Bruce. “Religions’ Turn to Right Nothing New.” Chicago Tribune 5 Jan. 1981: A4). We appear to be confronting a society where violence is commonplace and the practice of hospitality places us among people who may present a physical or psychological threat. Practices that once were considered intolerable have now become commonplace. The congregation of St. Matthew’s continues to struggle with the many changes in society and they find it difficult to practice hospitality when they are aware of the pitfalls that may arise when extending hospitality. Just as I had pre-established rules for the band, sometimes it is necessary for a congregation to have pre-established limits before they attempt to practice hospitality. Through continued effort, those pre-established limits may be expanded as the practitioners become more comfortable with the practice.

Because we are all unique, we bring various gifts and abilities to the practice of hospitality. We need to understand the importance of our limits as well as the limits

others place on extending hospitality. Limits are established not only by the host but also by the guest. To remove these limits both parties must be willing to discover a common thread, which will serve as a conduit to a life giving combination of the ordinary, and supernatural that makes up hospitality.

### **The Role of Diversity in the Practice of Hospitality**

Robert Jewett states that some Christian communities extend hospitality only to those who are like-minded and from the same social class. By avoiding pluralism or doctrinal diversity, these communities practice hospitality without worrying about limits because the stranger is compatible in belief and social class. Some communities attempt to extend a form of hospitality that ignores controversial issues and establishes non-controversial members in leadership roles. Still, other communities attempt to offer hospitality, but with the idea that once that hospitality is received the recipient is expected to change and conform to the communities beliefs. Finally, many communities believe a doctrine or belief of their community must be held at all costs. Hospitality is extended only after force is used to convince or convict those who disagree. Taking sides and fighting it out eliminates pluralism and the loser is forced to leave the community.

What makes the practice of hospitality so radical is the idea that once practiced the host and the guest may discover a common bond between them. Homan states, “There is a value in the unknowing between people. Extending hospitality to the people we know means that we allow them freedom to make mistakes. It means we give them room to be who they are, rather than who we want them to be” (51). Jean Bodin, in his *Colloquium* (1593), takes this theology a step further as he depicts extensive dialogues

between, “a Calvinist, a Lutheran, an Italian Catholic, a Jew, a follower of Islam, a rationalist, and a naturalist. They discuss their differences and then part, having agreed to disagree. They hear the words, ‘Lo, how good and pleasing it is for brothers to live in unity, arranged not in common diatonics or chromatics, but in enharmonics, with a certain or divine modulation” (126). This style of hospitality would be most useful in today’s society as the Christian community continues its struggle to find common ground with other religious groups.

## CHAPTER 2

### MYTHS OF HOSPITALITY

Through the telling of myths a stage is created where the listeners are able to see themselves, not as others see them, but as the “others.” Wendy O’Flaherty points out that the telling of a myth enables the listener to better understand the society in which the myth originated, but it also forces the listener to, “face up to their assumptions about many others within our supposedly democratic society (not only strangers, children, and animals, but the insane, criminals, the poor, people with cancer, people with AIDS, gay people, black people, women, old people...). However many removes we may be from anything like a direct encounter with reality, this cannot but be a humanizing experience” (141). Thus, the myth is an important part of social growth and the practice of hospitality has been an important part of social development between communities and individuals. Eric Law states that, “most of the ancient world regarded hospitality as a fundamental moral practice” (17).

In ancient mythology, a common theme of hospitality is the divinity of the guest. Harry Murray relates the Greco-Roman myth about Jove and Mercury who traveled in human form into Phrygia. “There, presenting themselves as weary travelers, they were repeatedly refused hospitality until they came to the door of an elderly couple, Philemon and Baucis, who invited them in and provided the best meal their poverty could afford. When the wine ran out, it was miraculously replenished, revealing the visitors as gods” (26). This myth is replayed in the New Testament book of Acts, chapter 14. Paul tells a man, who had been crippled from birth, to stand up. When the man stands up the crowd sees the miracle and shouts, “The gods have come down to us in human form.”



Murray points to a similar story found in I Kings 17:10-15. God tells Elijah to travel to Wadi Cherith, which is a river east of the Jordan River. There he drank from the Wadi and was fed by ravens. After a while, the river dries and the Lord instructs Elijah to travel to Zarephath where he will find a widow who will feed him. Even though the widow had little to share, she listens to Elijah and makes him some bread and gives him water. After this display of hospitality the widow's oil jug and jar of meal is always full, even after her family eats their fill. Both the widow in I Kings and Philemon and Baucis were rewarded for their unselfish generosity and their poverty was ended.

Another example of hospitality may be found in Homer's *Odyssey*. In this scene Telemachos, who is the son of Odysseus and Penelope, greets Athena, the goddess of wisdom. Athena is disguised as Mentos, who is the leader of the Cicones in the Trojan War.

With such thoughts, sitting amongst the suitors, he saw Athene  
and went straight to the forecourt, the heart within him scandalized  
that a guest should still be standing at the doors. He stood beside her  
and took her by the right hand, and relieved her of the bronze spear,  
and spoke to her and addressed her in winged words: 'Welcome, stranger.  
You shall be entertained as a guest among us. Afterward,  
when you have tasted dinner, you shall tell us what your need is'.  
(*Odyssey*, Trans. Samuel Butler. 3 Dec. 2004 <<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~joelja/odyssey.html>>).

This scene portrays the practice of hospitality as providing the stranger with food, a comfortable place to sit, company and acceptance into the day's activities. Fear of the unknown had a great influence over those who lived in ancient times, thus they

may have extended hospitality out of a sense of fear rather than a sense of justice. They never knew if the beggar knocking at the door was simply a beggar or a god who would pass judgment on them if they did not extend hospitality. Through honorably behavior, they would receive their reward from the gods.

Harry Murray states that, “Hospitality in ancient Greece was an important social institution, flourishing in both personal and corporate forms” (29). One social practice was reciprocal hospitality where the guest would be expected to be the host on another occasion. The practice of extra-political hospitality had the hosts attempting to extend their influence by welcoming strangers from other countries. Thus, they would hope for repayment when they traveled outside their own borders. Another practice was hereditary hospitality. In this case, the parents’ practice would be inherited by their children so that the tradition of hospitality would be continued. The practice of hospitality was inaugurated through the exchange of gifts and, at times, the exchange of half a token. The token could then be used to gain hospitality in another place. Murray states that, “Hospitality was offered to strangers, usually with the expectation that a hospitality partnership would be established”(29).

T.W. Doane relates an African tale of two daughters that demonstrates the importance of practiced hospitality to those who are on the fringe of society. The tale, *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters*, recounts how two sisters discovered the king was searching for a wife. While they traveled to the king’s palace, Manyara sneaked away from her sister Nyasha and her father so that she could be the first one to greet the king in the morning. While traveling, she showed no respect for the animals or persons she met. When Nyasha began her travels, she took the time to stop and care for those she

encountered. The conclusion of the story tells us that the king was each of the animals and persons that the sisters passed and the king selects Nyasha as his bride because of her hospitality. This tale is similar to the statement Jesus made in Mathew 25:40b, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (NRSV).

Doane points to further teachings on the practice of hospitality that are found in writings from India. “Extracts from Manu and the *Maha-bharata*, an Indian epic poem, written many centuries before the time of Christ Jesus, compared with similar sentiment contained in the books of the New Testament, are very striking. ‘Even to foes who visit us as guests due hospitality should be displayed; the tree screens with its leaves, the man who fells it’” (415). A similar view of hospitality may be found in Romans 12:20-21. “No, ‘if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (NRSV).

These similar views depict the reality that evil will persist and those who wish to do good will not be exempt from its painful intrusion. The poem and scripture tell the readers their response to evil attacks must differ from humankind’s natural response of “getting even.” Limits may be placed on the practice of hospitality to our foes, but the practitioners should practice hospitality to the best of their ability with the realization that God will also have a hand in the results of that practice. The poem tells the readers that it may be impossible to know their foes because their true nature may be difficult to recognize. Romans demonstrates how the readers may not recognize the enemy until hospitality is offered. If the recipients of extended hospitality consider themselves

enemies of the hosts, they may respond to the hospitality in violent manner and the host, when realizing that the guest was actually his foe might react in the same manner as if hot coals placed were placed on his heads. The practitioners of hospitality must be prepared for any reaction the guests exhibit toward the extended hospitality realizing that God is at work in all acts of hospitality.

An example of rejected hospitality is found in the history of the Trojan War. This war had its roots in the marriage between Peleus and Thetis, a sea-goddess. Eris, the goddess of discord, was outraged that she was not invited to the wedding and stormed into the wedding banquet. Once there she placed a golden apple on the table and said the apple belonged to the fairest woman. Paris, the prince of Troy, was selected as the judge. He chose Aphrodite, who had before the selection, promised him Helen, wife of Menelaus, as his wife. Paris then prepared to set off for Sparta to capture Helen. While in Sparta, Menelaus, husband of Helen, treated Paris as a royal guest. However, when Menelaus left Sparta to go to a funeral, Paris abducted Helen and carried off much of Menelaus' wealth. Menelaus was outraged to find that Paris had spurned his hospitality and had taken his wife, so he went to Troy to defend her honor. Thus, the Trojan War began because of Paris' refusal of Menelaus' hospitality compounded by the loss of his wife (<http://www.stanford.edu/~plomio/history.html>).

Through the telling of myths that pertain to the practice of hospitality, the audience is able to discover the life changing experiences the practice provides without having to become involved. Because the audience does not have to confront their fears concerning hospitality, they are better able to weigh the pros and cons of practicing

hospitality. The ancient Greece myth portrays the practice of hospitality as a reciprocal, political, or hereditary practice, with the practitioner expecting rewards. Myths are an important source of illustrations for both the positive results of accepted hospitality as well as the negative consequences of rejected hospitality.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF HOSPITALITY

#### Old Testament Stories of Hospitality

The practice of hospitality within the Old Testament reflects the traditions of the Bedouins who were inhabitants of the desert. These traditions placed obligations on the residents to care for the needs of those who were traveling through their land. The tradition of reciprocity was important within the Bedouin tradition as it was in ancient society. In Genesis 18, we find the story of three strangers who appear to Abraham. He greets them and offers them food and shade. His willingness to help the stranger leads to him being told his wife will bear him a son. Because of limited travel outside their area, the stranger from a distant land became a vital source of information as well as entertainment. Nouwen is aware of the importance of this reciprocity as it continues in today's society when he states, "...the biblical stories help us to realize not just that hospitality is an important virtue, but even more that in the context of hospitality guest and host can reveal their most precious gifts and bring new life to each other" (67).

In Genesis 24, we read of Abraham sending his servant into another land to find Isaac a wife. The servant travels to the city of Nahor and visits the city's well, where he asks God to grant him success in finding a wife for Abraham's son. The sign he chooses was an act of hospitality by one of the women coming to the well. Rebekah arrives and offers him hospitality by providing water for him and his camels. He then goes to Rebekah's home and, after eating a meal, reveals his identity. This story also points out the importance a shared meal held in the practice of hospitality. Nouwen writes,

In whatever country or culture we find ourselves, having a drink together is a sign of friendship, intimacy, and peace. We drink to 'break the ice,' to enter into a conversation, to show good intentions, to express friendship and goodwill, to set the stage for a romantic moment, to be open, vulnerable, accessible. Refusing a drink is avoiding intimacy. At worst, drinking together is saying, "We trust each other enough that we don't want to poison each other." At best, it is saying, "I want to get close to you and celebrate life with you." Drinking together can be a true spiritual event, affirming our unity as children of one God (80).

Nouwen points out the importance of extending hospitality through the offering of food because the meal provides a means of establishing a level playing field for all participants.

John Koenig uses the Psalms as an example of the possibility of betrayal when practicing hospitality. In the forty-first Psalm, the psalmist is lamenting how his enemies were using the occasion of his illness to attack him. He saw his friend turn against him, even though he trusted him and shared his meal with him. Koenig writes,

The ancient psalmist was smarting from a hospitality betrayed when he wrote:

"Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." According to this tradition, which has virtually disappeared from contemporary western culture, hospitality is seen as one of the pillars of morality upon which the universe stands (2).

The idea that the stranger is a messenger sent from God should outweigh the risks involved in hospitality. According to Koenig, the practice of hospitality will "enlarge our total well-being rather than diminish it" (5). Through committed relationships between

hosts and guests, we discover unexpected levels of mutual hospitality and we discover a fluid and inclusive covenantal connection between the guest and the host. In verse 10 the author states that God has saved him from his illness so that he may repay those who attack him. Not fully knowing what the “repayment” might be, one would like to think that they would be repaid with kindness and hospitality, but the reality of a typical human response seems to point to a more sinister repayment! Within stories of the Bible, the host and the guest enter the relationship not knowing what surprise awaits them. In today’s society, we tend to enter into a hospitable relationship with the results already anticipated, thus allowing little room for God to work through the host and the guest. If we take the time to read the stories of hospitality within the Bible, we soon discover that when we practice hospitality we are treading on holy ground. As Homan states, “Holy ground is dangerous. It is the region of thundering mountains and burning bushes; it is the domain of men and women bellowing prophesy with fire in their wings and the winds of change in their voices” (Xxxiii-Xxxiv). Scripture not only points us in the right direction to practice hospitality but it also tells us what may occur if we abuse the gift of hospitality.

A previously mentioned story concerning Elijah and a widow as found in I Kings 17, tells of the widow’s hospitality toward Elijah. This act of hospitality was rewarded with a miracle, which caused the widow’s oil and meal to never go empty. A similar story with differing results is found in 2 Kings 4. Elisha is provided a special room by a wealthy Shunammite woman for his use when he passed through Shunem and for this hospitality she was promised a son. When the son was young, he became ill while in the fields with his father. He was taken into his home where he died. Elisha was told of the



boy's death by his mother and followed her to her home. There he brought her son back to life.

Throughout the Old Testament book of Job, many examples of the practice of hospitality as well as how one places limits on that practice exist. The story of Job reflects the Hebrew's conception that God, being a benevolent deity, created humans in God's image, and thus said humans had the ability to use this benevolence to gain insight into God's desires. Richard Sewall states, "Throughout their history as it is unfolded in the Old testament, the Hebrews showed a strong critical sense, a tendency to test all their beliefs, even Jehovah Himself, against their individual experience and sense of values" (22).

Because Job is a man of God and achieved success in his worldly practices, God and Satan discuss the sincerity of his faith. Satan desires a chance to test his theory that Job is merely putting on a front, and God allows Satan to have his way with him. This incident is reminiscent of the Old Testament story in the book of Genesis where Lot attempts to offer his daughters to his neighbors who wanted to "know" his guests.

As the test began, Job is told that most of his servants have been killed. His animals are killed by "fire from heaven" and his children are killed by a "great wind." Sewall points to the fact that Job's world has collapsed and his "inherited values had been discredited" (27). Job sits on a pile of ashes for seven days and nights and considers his options. One option came from his wife who told him to "Curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). This avenue would provide a merciful death. His Counselors gave him another option when they told him to accept his fate, whether he deserved it or not. The Counselors ignored Job's needs and attempted to extend their own variety of hospitality. Job asked of

them, “neither material aid nor deliverance ‘from the enemy’s hand.’ What he wanted was instruction. ‘Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred’” (28). It is important to realize the need of the guest when extending hospitality but the Counselors did not see Job’s need; rather, they extended their personal idea of hospitality by telling Job that he had somehow defied God and was receiving his just reward. To their credit, the Counselors did meet Job on his turf or a level playing field, which was the ash pile, and they sat with him through the traditional seven-day ritual of mourning. Thus they were willing to share Job’s space with him and gave him his own space by not being overly critical.

As in many acts of hospitality, a polar reverse occurred when the Counselors, whose arguments were meant to berate Job, discovered that they had assisted Job in the process of re-evaluating his life and accepting the challenges he faced. Job realized he could not defend himself from the pain inflicted upon him by Satan so he called out to God for answers. Realizing that God did not respond, he, as David Clines states, “summons God to a lawsuit”(xliv)! By chapter 28 Job had achieved a complete polar reversal and as Clines states the “Counselors who came to teach him are now being taught by him — and on the subject of Wisdom” (31).

Once the “contest” ended between God and Satan, Job received blessings from God. Just as one who practices hospitality receives “gifts” from the stranger, so Job receives gifts from God. The conclusion may be best represented as “less elevated than Divine Comedy” (34). Job receives twice the original property, has the perfectly balanced family of seven sons and three daughters, and lives to be a hundred and forty years old,

which is twice the allotted span as noted in Psalms 90:10: “The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong,” (NRSV)

The epilogue also portrays acts of hospitality as Job’s three friends are pardoned for sins that were undefined because Job prayed for them. Thus, Job, who was the original focus of the extended hospitality, became the host and the Counselors became the guests.

An important aspect of the story of Job that pertains to the practice of hospitality is the question as to why humans must suffer. Job’s experience demonstrates that sin is not the only cause of human suffering. This insight is important to those who attempt to practice hospitality. Helping the stranger is difficult without wondering how the stranger arrived at his or her predicament. The book of Job shows us that we should not judge, as did the Counselors, nor should we curse God, as would Job’s wife. Rather we should, through the practice of hospitality, seek to right a wrong rather than to cast blame on those who suffer. Whereas, Job challenges divine justice, Christians should be willing to challenge social injustice. Homan states, “Hospitality has an inescapable moral dimension to it. It is not a mere social grace; it is a spiritual and ethical issue. It is an issue involving what it means to be human. A moral issue can become bogged down in legalisms, and hospitality is no legalistic ethical issue. It is instead a spiritual practice, a way of becoming more human, and a way of understanding yourself. Hospitality is both the answer to modern alienation and injustice and a path to a deeper spirituality” (5). Because Job’s friends were willing to ignore many of the ethical issues that surrounded Job, they demonstrated a willingness to extend hospitality to Job as he struggled with his conceived alienation from God and the community. His friends were able to confront

and overcome one of the greatest obstacles to true hospitality, which was the state of their minds and hearts.

The practice of hospitality was instilled within the Hebrew community through their experience in the wilderness. During the forty year Exodus, God was their host and cared for their needs while providing water, food and protection. The image of God as the provider continues throughout the Old Testament as demonstrated through the writings of the prophets. Many of the prophets encouraged the people to return to their God and in return, God would provide an endless feast. In Isaiah 25:6-8 we read, “On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear” (NRSV).

The Old Testament also illustrates the anger God portrays when the practitioner of hospitality abuses his or her role as the host. In Genesis 19, God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah because the male inhabitants try to force Lot to surrender his guests so that they “may know them” (NRSV). Lot attempts to offer a safe place for the strangers by refusing to allow the crowd to remove them from his home. Instead, he offers his daughters to the crowd. Christine Pohl points out that, “Lot’s story demonstrates that when hospitality is contrary to the intentions of the larger group, it can be dangerous - an act of defiance, a challenge to the unity and expectations of the community” (25). Even though we may view Lot’s actions as appalling, he is commended in second Peter 2:7-8. Peter portrays Lot as a “righteous man greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the lawless” (NRSV). Perhaps Lot offers his daughters rather than the strangers because he wants to shame the crowd into realizing the foolishness of their ways. Because Lot’s

neighbors refuse to follow society's code of protecting guests, especially when the guests turned out to be angels, God destroys their city.

In Judges 20, we find another example of God's wrath toward those who abused the practice of hospitality. A Levite was traveling through Israel and spent the night in Gibeah. He was offered a place to stay for the night and had a similar experience, as did the strangers who stayed with Lot. The Levite's Concubine was raped until she died. He presented his grievance to the chiefs of the tribes of Israel and they attacked the offending tribe of Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin was defeated after a three-day battle and their cities destroyed. Both stories show the importance of accepting the host's offer of hospitality.

These Old Testament stories demonstrate how the practice of hospitality was considered to be the proper response to a stranger. This response usually resulted in a special blessing from the stranger who was thought to be an angel or God in disguise. The stories not only portray God's positive response to extended hospitality but they also portray God's negative response to those who refuse to practice or abuse the practice of hospitality.

### **Stories of Hospitality Within the New Testament**

The practice of hospitality continues with Jesus' teachings in the New Testament. John Koenig writes, "The Synoptic Gospels show Jesus challenging exclusivism wherever it was officially sanctioned or accepted as normal" (20). By eating with tax collectors and other marginal people, Jesus, who was the guest, demonstrates the importance of welcoming the stranger within our midst. Those within Jesus' circle of

followers found it difficult to practice hospitality because, as Koenig states, “In most respects the closest followers of Jesus are well-described by Parker Palmer’s phrase *‘the company of strangers.’* Because the groups (tax collectors, fishermen) did not mix easily, it would have been a major effort for them to welcome one another” (31). As the disciples struggled to comprehend Jesus’ teachings, they engaged in debate over the logic of eating and drinking with sinners and tax collectors. One of the most important traits Christ taught was the value of humbling oneself so an honest dialogue could transpire between the practitioner and the recipient of hospitality.

Through parables, Christ demonstrated the importance of hospitality. One such parable was The Great Banquet as found in Luke 14:15-24. I chose Luke’s account rather than the similar account in Matthew because Matthew adds the wearing of the wedding garments to the original parable. This addition seems to go against the hospitality the host offered because, as John Dominic Crossan states, “The host had just gathered the guests off the streets without any warning in 22:9-10 and yet he now expects instant wedding garments and sartorial elegance in 22:11-13” (69). Matthew allegorized the parable into an image of the history of salvation and applied it to the in-house tensions within his community. Luke’s portrayal of the parable is more demonstrative of hospitality.

Luke used a dramatic writing style that Willi Braun describes as characterizing the “Hellenistic style of tragic-pathetic historiography, that is, the production of historical narratives to influence and guide life in the present” (12). Luke used a series of independent episodes to pique the reader’s interest and provide a foundation for the practice of hospitality that is relevant in today’s society.

An important aspect of the banquet was the symbolic weight it carried within the community. Richard Longenecker writes, “in Early Judaism and in antiquity in general, ... the sharing of a common table was a basic mechanism for initiating or maintaining sociability and the bonds of a common identity, as well as for marking one group or society off from another” (202). By going against tradition, using literary hooks and establishing polar reversals, Jesus was able to get the listeners attention and keep their interest.

This parable presents some conflicting views when it opens with the host inviting his friends or those who were probably on an equal social level with him. Jesus previously stated in Luke 14:12-14, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (NRSV). Because the rich were the first ones to be invited, Jesus seemed to be setting up a polar reversal within the opening of the parable. A polar reversal occurs when the expected outcome of a social situation or venture is inverted. When practicing hospitality, a polar reversal occurs when the host discovers he or she is actually the guest and the guest becomes the host. The author of Luke sets up the audience with a powerful polar reversal by drawing a comparison with a socially accepted practice to a practice that goes against all that was considered socially sacred. According to Braun, Luke opened the parable by confronting the Greco-Roman tradition that, “the dominant etiquette of issuing and accepting dinner invitations adhered to a strict sense of social graduation and segregation; dinner

invitations were currency in a sympotic culture where ‘snobbery, sycophancy, and humiliation...lurk menacingly in the background’ (55).

The first polar reversal occurs when the taken-for-granted pattern of hospitality is reversed. Hospitality is denied to those who expect it and offered to those who do not expect it. The first reversal occurs when the host is told to go against the social norm and invite not those who are able to repay the host in kind; rather, the host is to invite those who have no means for repayment. In many situations, the practice of hospitality is dependent on reversal situations, which causes the participant to discover new ways to practice God’s love. Role reversals also enable those practicing hospitality to better understand their limitations within the practice. The host, because of a reversed situation, discovered that hospitality could only be extended to those who accepted the invitation.

Lockyer points out that people in Jesus’ era that were considered members of the elite would usually send out two calls to a planned feast. “The first was a preliminary one conveying the invitation and a hint to make all necessary preparations for accepting the invitation; the second call came later and stated that the feast was now ready and that the invited should give up what they were engaged with and act upon the host’s grace” (275).

We see in the opening that there are three basic groups of people involved in the parable. The story assumes that the first group lived in the city and held rank and influence within the populace. Because they were able to live in the city and still tend to their agri-business through the purchase of land and animals, they were obviously wealthy. Lockyer points out that the third man “is an anomaly in Luke’s pattern of accentuating the business-minded character and wealth of the original guests” (75). The



third man deals not with the purchase of business related items, rather his dealings through marriage “regulate the flow of wealth” (77). Thus, the third man claimed he was closing a deal in a similar vein as the first two men who were purchasing land and animals.

The second group represented those who were so poor that they had nothing “at stake in life. ... were unable to work even at the most menial tasks and thus lacking the three necessary life provisions of food, clothing and shelter” (86). One would think that it would be difficult to find people who were considered to be of a lower class than the second group, but Luke continues to increase the social gap between the groups by adding a third group to the parable.

The third group may represent two differing groups of people. The first possibility suggests that the third group lives in the country. The host tells his servant to “go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in” (NRSV). Whereas the host previously told the servant to go into the “streets and lanes of the town,” he now takes his invitation into the country. Luke may have relied on the readers’ understanding of the association between the urban aristocracy and the rural peasantry. Braun states, “The peasant was felt to be an unmannerly, ignorant being, in bondage to sordid and wretched labor, and so uncivilized that he could not be called on for the full duties of a citizen” (92). At the time of the writing of the parable there existed a deep cultural split and “open hostility between urban aristocracy and the rural peasantry” (91). This attitude further enhances the parable’s focus on the practice of hospitality to the “least.”

The other option concerning the social standing of the third group focuses on the concept that this group lived close to the city and was employed in an occupation that

was considered suspect. Falling into this category were the undertakers, tanners, butchers, refugee aliens, beggars and those who were shunned from the city. Braun quotes Ramsay MacMullen, who places “the folks beyond the gates’ within a constellation of values where social prejudices are aligned with matching places of residence. The closer to the heart of the city, the more respectable; the farther away, the more scorned” (94). Whether the third group was peasants or those employed in an unsavory occupation is not as important as the statement Luke makes by using these outcasts in the parable. As Braun states, “the bridging of the distance between the urban well-placed and displaced requires nothing less than a ‘conversion’ of his (one who held rank and authority and lived within a town) moral and social values and conduct” (97). A conversion must take place in the thinking of all who undertake the practice of hospitality.

The hearers of the parable were able to place themselves within these contrasting groups. One group were those who were accustomed to receiving invitations to such occasions and have little conception of the importance of the invitation. On the other hand, the other group was those who were utterly astonished to receive such an invitation because they were not accustomed to attending these banquets. Members of the first group offered excuses as to why they could not attend the banquet. These excuses all had some religious and cultural support. George Shillington writes about the parallels between the excuses the guests gave and the reasons for exemption from Israel’s holy war as found in Deuteronomy 20:5. “The guests...echo the same reasons why male Israelites were exempt from responding to the call to holy war. Build a new house; plant a vineyard, engaged to a woman. The first excuse is property, the second work and the

third marital” (184). Even though their excuses may have been legitimate, they embarrassed the host because the banquet was a more important social function than were the reasons for their absence.

Shillington also points out the similarities this parable has with today’s society. He writes, “Western cultural people who have the Christian tradition and have received the invitation to the kingdom banquet are going after money and family security and are making and dodging wars, while the so-called second and third world peoples are coming to the feast” (189).

After his guests rejected him, the host could have canceled the banquet or he could have tried to ruin the reputation of those who refused his invitation. Instead, he sent his slaves into the streets and told them to bring back whoever they might find. His former friends probably had a good laugh at this feeble response to their rejection of his hospitality. The call to the second group was unexpected and demonstrated hospitality with an incursion of grace. This parable demonstrates the reality that heaven may be found on this earth, but it is not found in the lives of the “rich and famous”. Rather, it is found in the daily drudgery of the poor and afflicted. Koenig writes, “Some people perceive this divine outpouring, offer their thanks to God for it, and act with equivalent generosity toward their sisters and brothers. Others see only scarcity and dog-eat-dog competition, or they turn away from the vision of God’s open hand” (29). Because those who were invited first refused the invitation, a polar reversal was completed; and the banquet was opened to the outcasts of society while those who “have it all” never experience the messianic banquet. Since the host had experienced a sense of alienation from his “friends,” he was more able to offer true hospitality. As Christine Pohl states,

“Transformative hospitality still finds its most effective location on the edges of society, where it is offered by hosts who have a sense of their own alien status” (124). The experience of marginality is normative for the people of God. The Israelites and early Christians saw themselves as aliens and sojourners. They recognized the legitimacy in God’s claim as found in Leviticus 25:23, “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine: with me you are but aliens and tenants” (NRSV). This idea is reinforced in Psalm 39:12b, “For I am your passing guest, an alien, like all my forebears.” After the Exodus the Israelites kept the memories of their travels and of their beneficent host alive through the following declarations as found in Deuteronomy 26:5b-10a.

A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.

This scripture was a constant reminder of Israel’s dependence on God and provided a basis for gratitude and obedience.

Through the parable of the feast, Jesus demonstrated the importance for the host to understand the needs of those who are outcasts. The host first followed the socially accepted way of inviting those who had the means to return the favor. Because those first

invited refused to participate, the host experienced a social polar reversal when he extended hospitality to those who were unable to reciprocate. If we have never experienced need or marginality or are uncomfortable with our own vulnerability, we often find it easier to ‘play’ the role of the authoritarian host rather than extend true hospitality. Jesus demonstrates the concept that God is unclean, for if the listener places God in the role of the host, then the conclusion of the parable has God eating with the outcasts of society. Jesus also demonstrates that heaven on earth is possible if we are willing to open our “banquets” (hearts, lives, churches) to those in need. Christ is telling the listener that they should not ignore the plight of those who are suffering around them in the hope that things will be better when Christ returns. The banquet reveals that once we lower our protective security we will see Christ in the present time and place.

The most important issue presented within this parable is not the idea of Jesus opening the kingdom of God to the Gentiles or the needy; rather it is the concept that God welcomes all to the feast. Pohl states, “When the expected guests turn down the invitation, God’s universal welcome is displayed. No one would be excluded except those who rejected the host’s invitation because they were too busy to recognize its significance” (21). Byrne reiterates this statement when he notes, “The ‘banquet’ image accurately conveys what the ‘kingdom of God’ is all about – not power and domination, like the kingdoms of this world – but gifting and honoring human beings with the super-abundant hospitality of God” (124).

To reciprocate for God’s hospitality earthly hosts should open their tables to those in need who cannot repay the kindness. Jesus challenges narrow definitions and dimensions of hospitality and extends them outward to make us aware that hospitality

must also include those with whom we least desire to have connections. If we look at this parable in this light it makes its reading much more difficult because Jesus is requiring much more of us than we may want to give. John Koenig relates a story in Frederick Buechner's novel *Love Feast*. We hear Leo Bebb, who is a traveling evangelist and had invited a strange combination of local residents to a Thanksgiving dinner, state,

There's strangers everywhere you can think of. There's strangers was born out of the same womb. There's strangers was raised together in the same town and worked side by side all their life through...And Jesus, it's like most of the time he's a stranger too. Even when he's near as the end of your nose, people make like he's nowhere around...but here in this place there's no strangers, and Jesus, he isn't a stranger either. The kingdom of Heaven's like this (90).

An important point is that when Jesus told the parable of the feast he was a dinner guest in the home of a leader of the Pharisees. In the parable of the feast the host discovered that his friends were strangers and those he thought were strangers, because of their social status, were willing to accept his hospitality. This parable demonstrates how the Bible makes the experience of marginality normative for the people of God. Pohl states that it also demonstrates the importance of "Hosts who recognize the 'woundedness' in themselves ... but continue to care for others .... Like Jesus, the best hosts are not completely 'at home' themselves, but still make a place of welcome for others" (118-119).

What better way to describe the situation with the rejected host. He was not completely at home with inviting society's lower echelon, but he still extended the invitation. The role reversals within this parable clearly demonstrate the importance of

the marginalization of the host as a learning source to better understand the practice of hospitality. It also gives the church a clear direction if they intend to practice hospitality.

In the parable of the Great Feast, the host was forced to practice hospitality and through alienation and rejection true hospitality is discovered. Hospitality reveals a gracious welcome to those with significant needs and vulnerabilities and may feature material and physical help, inclusion in community, and respect for those who live on the fringe of society. The host of the Feast, after his peers rejected him, welcomed those who had significant needs and vulnerabilities. They received material help through the offer of free food and were not expected to pledge any allegiance to the host in return.

All of those who extended hospitality discovered a need within their own community. The hospitality they provided helped establish a sense of community and comfort for all participants. Pohl points out that all listeners of this parable soon realize that the “hospitality we give to strangers is an extension of the welcome we offer the members of our households and churches” (101-102).

Jesus uses the feast as a metaphor to represent the Kingdom of Heaven and the hospitality found there. He reinforces this through the miracle feeding of the five thousand. Jesus showed concern not only for the spiritual needs of those in attendance but also for their physical needs. Hospitality is a spiritual practice and when combined with providing a physical need it will make a change or adjustment in the participant. In the case of this miracle, Jesus used meditation and food to demonstrate the importance of feeding the soul as well as the body. Homan states, “people marvel at a little bit of food feeding a whole bunch of people and miss a whole other point. Jesus wanted them to eat together. If they did this, it would change everything, they would be joining the revolution” (116).

The revolution began and the effect must have been awe-inspiring since this is the only miracle to be mentioned in all four gospels.

Christ continued the theme of hospitality and the feast when He celebrated His final meal with the disciples. Koenig states, “It seems clear that Jesus’ persistent attention to food, drink, and hospitality is intended to convey something important about the reciprocal relationship between God and human beings” (28-29). The history of the church has shown that hospitality has been most vibrant when the hosts were marginal to their larger society. Koenig sees hospitality as a movable feast that represents the Kingdom of God in which the participants, “find reconciliation with one another, as well as a true home and a plenty that fills them up and propels them toward sharing relationships with their neighbors” (44).

Jesus tells another story concerning hospitality in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. Within this parable, Jesus portrays himself as the end-time judge who separated, as would a shepherd, the sheep from the goats. The sheep are told in verse 34, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you...”(NRSV). Jesus then goes on to state why these “sheep” inherited the kingdom. In verse 35 we read, “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” The sheep represent those who ministered to strangers, thus unknowingly ministered to Christ. The goats represent those who did not extend hospitality to the stranger and Jesus tells them in verse 40, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to none of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”



The New Testament contains many examples of hospitality. In John 12, the story is told of Martha serving a meal to Jesus and Mary anointing His feet with perfume. Within this story, Martha, by serving the meal, becomes the host and Jesus, who accepts her hospitality, becomes the guest. At the same time, Mary, who is anointing Jesus' feet with oil, which Jesus said she has kept for his burial, symbolically serves as a host for death, which was an uninvited guest. Judas Iscariot, who is more concerned about the cost of the oil Mary was using, rejects her extended hospitality by showing concern for the poor rather than Jesus' fate. In Luke 11:37, a Pharisee invites Jesus to dine with him, but his hospitality is based on the impression that Jesus would abide by the Pharisees' rules and regulations. Hospitality was extended but with it came conditions. In Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus, a tax collector, accepts Jesus' invitation to provide a meal. Zacchaeus exemplifies true hospitality as defined by Homan's statement; "Hospitality is born in us when we are well loved by God and by others. Hospitality is the overflowing of a heart that has to share what it has received. It takes a whole person to open up, it takes a secure person to be available, it takes a strong person to give yourself away" (20). Zacchaeus portrayed the secure person and the strong person who gave himself to others. He accomplished this by giving half his goods to the poor and restoring to anyone he falsely accused four times that which he originally took.

In Acts 10, Simon, who was a tanner, provided lodging for Peter and Peter then offered lodging for the men sent by Cornelius. Interestingly Peter offered lodging even though he was a guest in the home. Fortunately, Simon did not place limits on his hospitality. In Acts 16:15; Lydia invited Paul and Silas into her home. Lydia, who is honored to have them as guests, is concerned over how they view her faith. The story

represents a polar reversal where Paul and Silas, who were the guests, became the host. They hosted Lydia's concerns and assured her that she was faithful in God's eyes.

The practice of hospitality was at the forefront of Paul's ministry. Koenig states, "In the realm of hospitality Paul had much in common with Jesus his Lord. For him as well as Jesus, meals were times of special sanctity during which diverse sorts of people could find their true humanity together in the presence of God. It was central to Paul's gospel that at meals and other social occasions believers should welcome one another as Christ had welcomed them (Rom 15:7). Indeed, this mutual welcoming was for him the formation of what humans were meant to be within the "home" of Christ's body, the church. Like Jesus, Paul thought of this restored community in terms of a partnership with strangers which carried economic overtones" (52). Throughout his letters to the churches, Paul discusses the importance of hospitality, especially its importance to the growth of the church.

In Acts 28:7; Paul is entertained for three days by Publius. Another role reversal occurs in this story when Publius becomes ill and Paul heals him. Paul becomes the host in that he uses the power of God to heal Publius and Publius is the guest who receives God's healing power. In Romans 16:2, Paul asks that the Romans welcome Phoebe and give her anything she may need and in 2 Timothy 1:16, he thanks Onesiphorus for offering him hospitality. In the Third Letter of John, Paul thanks Gaius for the hospitality he extends to Paul's friends even though they are strangers to Gaius.

Revelation 3:20 depicts Jesus as standing at a door and knocking. If the person on the other side of the door hears his voice and opens the door, Jesus will break bread with them. In this scripture Jesus is knocking on the door, yet he expects the person on the

other side of the door to open the door, not because he knocks but because of his voice. He states, “if you hear my voice and open the door” (NRSV). This may be a reference to the Song of Solomon 5:2 where the author dreams, “my beloved is knocking,” or it may relate to the watchful slaves who await their masters return in Luke 12:36b, “so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks.” Jesus may be telling the listener that one does not know who stands behind the door but their voice may tell us if it is friend or foe. Listening is a very important aspect of practiced hospitality. Homan states, “Emulating someone is a good way to learn hospitality. Find a hospitable person and spend time with them. Listen to them. Do not look for methods or tips from them. Just be together and you will be astonished at what happens” (132). We all can learn more about hospitality if we just take time to listen to the voice of Christ or the guest. As mentioned previously many Greco-Roman myths had the host offering the divine guest a meal, but Jesus changes the perception because He serves not only as the guest who stands outside the door and knocks, but He also serves as the host who offers lasting life to the person behind the door. Within this scripture, Jesus presents a polar reversal in that He is first represented as the guest, who becomes the host, while the host becomes the guest.

Just as the host welcomed the stranger to a feast originally intended for his friends, who were no doubt wealthy, so we as Christians must refrain from offering hospitality for the purpose of personal gain. Being a person of hospitality involves letting go of oneself for long enough so that the practitioner can hear other people, and pay attention to what they might need at that moment in their life. Through Christ-like

hospitality, we learn to listen and recognize God through the stranger and be open to the blessings they may share.

### **The Practice of Hospitality within the Early Church**

The Christian practice of hospitality was not established to overcome problems within the early Christian community; rather it was viewed as a concrete expression of Christian love. Different authors in the New Testament portrayed hospitality as an extension of their love for each other. Romans 13:10 states, “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law” (NRSV), Hebrews 13:2 states, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it,” and in I Peter 4:8-9 we read, “Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining...serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.” Luke showed a great interest in the implications to the practice of hospitality. In the book of Acts, he tells of the conversion of Cornelius. Because the disciples do not understand the importance of hospitality and its relationship to the meal, they confront Luke, not with joy over Cornelius’ conversion, but with the concern over why Peter ate with Cornelius. In Acts 16:15 Luke tells of the interaction between Paul and Lydia. When Lydia is baptized, she used hospitality to test the validity of Paul’s preaching when she asks Paul, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.”

The apostle Paul expected those who called themselves Christians to practice hospitality, pay for his traveling expenses, and provide a place for him to stay as he traveled through their area. In Philemon 22, he writes his friend “to prepare a guest room

for me,” and in 3:13, he asks that Titus “Make every effort to send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, and see that they lack nothing.” When dealing with a troublesome church, he challenges their true Christian character by telling them he will visit them and perhaps stay with them over the winter. In I Corinthians 16:6 he writes, “...perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way, wherever I go.” Paul not only expected the church to provide food and lodging for himself but also for his co-workers. In I Corinthians 16:11 he tells the church to welcome Timothy and “send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me..”

### **New Testament teachings on establishing limits to the practice of hospitality**

Pauline teachings face the issue of placing limits on the practice of hospitality as demonstrated in Romans 12:9, “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good.” Robert Jewett states that Paul believed love was a “natural expression of the faith that its presence was guaranteed as part of the ‘gifts’ marking all members of the ‘one body in Christ’” (94). The expression of love, as described by Paul, is limitless and yet Paul places limits on that expression. Paul was dealing with attacks from missionaries who boasted of their “charismatic abilities, their powerful, even overbearing personalities, and their authority as demonstrated by letters of authentication from other churches and early Christian authorities” (94). Paul believed that the love they demonstrated was not authentic and served only as a tool to gain more power and recognition. Thus the exhibited love was not genuine and the disciples should be aware of those who practice un-genuine love and limit their hospitality toward them until they

are able to prove their motives are the will of God, as described in Romans 12:2, “that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” In I Thessalonians 5:21-22 Paul tells the disciples to “test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil” (NRSV). Paul places limits on the practice of hospitality by telling the disciples the “test of authenticity is never final” (96), thus those extending hospitality should always limit their hospitality until they discover if the stranger has been sent from God or if they represent something or someone more sinister. Paul tells the disciples in Romans 12:9 that once they find the true purpose of the stranger they should, “...hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good.” Paul established limits within the Pauline Christian community using a common language within the community. Wayne Meeks states that Paul used a “language of belonging” (85) by pointing out how special the Christians were as illustrated through the spoken and written word. “Very often the addressees of the (Pauline) letters are called ‘saints’ or ‘holy ones,’” and they are “loved by God” (Rom.1:7; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4) (85). This use of language enabled the individuals to form a group identity and followed the “melt it in” attitude where the minority groups were expected to blend in with the majority. Paul called members of the community brothers and sisters, which created an image of “the initiate being adopted as God’s child and thus receiving a new family of human brothers and sisters” (88). This created a new family for the Christian and a new set of relationships.

Paul not only used language that separated the Christians from those who did not believe, but he also differentiated between those who were part of the Christian community and those who were “the outsiders” (94). Paul portrayed the Christians as

ones who would suffer because of the hostile outside world and in Romans 14:1-23 he depicted a distinction between those whom he considered strong in the Lord or weak. One method Paul used to determine who was strong was if they spoke in tongues. In Acts 19, Paul visits Ephesus where he meets some disciples. When the disciples tell him that they had not heard of the Holy Spirit, Paul tells them, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus” (NRSV). When the disciples heard this they were baptized in the name of Jesus and they began to speak in tongues and prophesied. It should be noted that it is not stated that everyone spoke in tongues or that everyone began to prophesy. The inclusive term "they" is used which makes it difficult to know exactly whether there were more than twelve within the group. Perhaps Paul ignores those disciples who did not speak in tongues because they demonstrated a weak faith. Meeks states that the strong “adopt a weak boundary position: they need no taboos against idolatry in order to protect their Christian faith, because they know that the idols are not real. The weak...are accustomed to associate the eating of meat with participation in the cults of pagan gods; for them, ‘idolatry’ is real and dangerous” (98).

Even though Paul established boundaries, he placed gates within those boundaries so the early Christians could continue to live among the unbelievers. An example of this is found in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, where Paul encouraged the preservation of existing marriages with pagan spouses and offered hospitality without expecting a change in the attitude or belief of the stranger. Homan states, “You can be accepting with people without trying to make everyone your best friend. For now, keep in mind that hospitality requires a healthy set of personal boundaries you do not allow others to violate” (49.)

Paul emphasized the idea that boundaries enabled the early Christians to be in as well as of the world. As the Christian communities developed, they established limits to their hospitality as a means of protection from those who are not sincere in their belief. This practice continues in today's Christian communities.

### **Theological Perspectives of Hospitality**

The importance of practicing hospitality within the Christian community is exemplified by the understanding that the experience of living within a hospitable community cannot be done in isolation. Communities cease to exist if strangers are not invited into their midst. Once the stranger is invited into the community, the members of said community decide to either accept or reject that stranger. Not only does the community grow when the stranger is welcomed, the community may benefit from the gifts the stranger brings with them. The early church believed they had been called to a higher quality of life than the rest of their society, so they took measures to safeguard their community. These regulations put pressure on the community to withdraw from society so they would not be tempted, but the early church leaders realized that the church community would cease to exist if strangers were not invited into their midst. Thus, the practice of hospitality was established as an important part of church growth.

In his book, *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis tells of a city that is encompassed in a permanent evening. He calls it Twilight City because the sun never sets or rises. The inhabitants of Twilight City are very inhospitable and refuse to associate with each other. As the town grows, the residents move further out from its center leaving an uninhabited



city in their wake. This scene of grayness and nothingness is a vivid portrayal of how life might be if the practice of hospitality never takes place.

A difficult realization many people have is the concept that we all are strangers at various times in our lives. We may find ourselves in a strange land or community. We may experience an unexpected situation with our health that may cause a permanent handicap. We may experience a community that does not welcome us. To walk in the shoes of a stranger enables the victim to better understand the importance of hospitality.

The church has taken those who serve and placed them in a position of importance. Hoekendijk states, "Very strange that the deacon, the waiter, was removed from the backs of our seats and in the second century he was placed next to the bishop at the head of the table. And he is still sitting there, in the front pew of our churches, as a displaced person" (31). Thus, the stranger may be in the midst of the congregation and the congregation may not realize it. Because the deacon was moved from the street to the church, the deacon experiences less connection to the stranger in the street. This move by the church has turned the practice of hospitality into a practice of philanthropy. Philanthropy is like generosity in that they are both, "charity without solidarity, compassion without taking sides, almsgiving without direct and concrete political action" (31). A congregation might find it less difficult to be generous than hospitable because generosity may be practiced in a long distant relationship and it does not require getting to know the stranger.

Stanley Hauerwas makes an argument that contemporary churches tend to fall into three categories when it comes to their theological expectations. The first church is called the Activist Church and is "more concerned with the building of a better society

than with the reformation of the church” (44). The second style of congregation is the Conversionist Church. This church “argues that no amount of tinkering with the structures of society will counter the effects of human sin. The promises of secular optimism are therefore false because they attempt to bypass the biblical call to admit personal guilt and to experience reconciliation to God and neighbor” (45). The third style of congregation is a radical alternative to the first two styles. This style is known as the Confessing Church. This church rejects “both the individualism of the conversionists and the secularism of the activists and their common equation of what works with what is faithful” (45). The Confessing Church finds its main political task in the “congregation’s determination to worship Christ in all things” (45). Hauerwas goes on to say, “The confessing church seeks the visible church...in which people are faithful to their promises, love their enemies, tell the truth, honor the poor, suffer for righteousness, and thereby testify to the amazing community-creating power of God” (46). The Confessing Church demonstrates a shift of orientation so that the congregation has the opportunity to decide as to how they wish to live together as a congregation. If, through the practice of authentic hospitality, the congregation is persuaded that hospitality is life giving then they will take the risk to open their doors and hearts to others. The church community must realize that those within the community and outside the community might differ in their understanding of hospitality.

Hospitality marked the Gospel as authentic and the Early Christians quickly realized that they must invite the stranger into their midst if they intended to follow the teachings of Christ and the disciples. If the practitioner of hospitality worships God in all things, they discover that hospitality is not something one achieves; rather, it is

something one enters. The community building practice of hospitality is, as Homan states, “an adventure that takes you where you never dreamed of going. It is not something you do, as much as it is someone you become. You try and you fail. You try again. You make room for one person at a time, you give one chance at a time, and each of these choices of the heart stretches your ability to receive others” (38). If Christians are willing to “love their enemies, tell the truth, honor the poor, suffer for righteousness” (46) then they must face the reality that they cannot assist the poor without asking the hard questions about why there is poverty. This kind of hospitality will strip the Christian of their pleasant illusions concerning hospitality and force them to struggle with people, ideas, and happenings that are strange and intimidating. Only when they are willing to forgo their passionately rehearsed imagery of hospitality and realize that the practice of hospitality is a common struggle will they be able to worship and see Christ in all things.

### **Hospitality and Holy Communion**

The practice of hospitality takes many forms and one of the most important is that of the common meal and its relation to Holy Communion. In this sacrament, all participants play both guest and host and Christ serves not only as the host and guest but also as the meal. God invites us to God’s table; we invite God into our hearts: God receives us; we receive God.

Jesus, through the offering of food and wine at the last supper, introduced the disciples to a hospitality that enabled the early church to thrive. Koenig states, “It seems clear that Jesus’ persistent attention to food, drink, and hospitality is intended to convey

something important about the reciprocal relationship between God and human beings” (28-29). In the portrayal of the final meal with the disciples, Jesus demonstrated the importance of a fluid relationship between the host and guest. He was born in a manger and was the son of no human. Therefore, He fit the profile of an alien visitor and was consequently a stranger in a strange land, and yet He became the ultimate host. Before the last supper occurred, there were several transfers of the position of host. First, Christ sent Peter and John to find a host who would provide a room and then they became the hosts as they prepared for the meal. Jesus then became the host as he washed the disciples feet; broke the bread, and served the wine. Jesus, as the host, gave the gift of a kingdom as read in Luke 22:29-30, “and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (NRSV). During this meal, the disciples discovered more about hospitality as they faced the stranger within themselves. Peter pledged that he would go to prison or even die for Christ, but Jesus knew that he was not ready to make that commitment. Hosting the disciples for the Passover meal also reminded them of their heritage and how their ancestors were strangers in a foreign land and remained aliens as they wandered in the wilderness.

The Gospel of Luke reveals the significance of the common meal and the Eucharistic allusions within those meals. Consider ten meals portrayed in Luke: a great feast at the home of Levi (5:27-39); a dinner at the home of Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50); the breaking of bread in the city of Bethsaida (9:10-17); hospitality at the home of Martha (10:38-42); a noon meal at the home of a Pharisee (11:37-54); a Sabbath dinner at the home of a leading Pharisee (14:1-24); hospitality at the home of Zacchaeus (19:1-10);

a Passover meal, the Last Supper (22:7-13, 14-38); the breaking of the bread at Emmaus (24:13-35); a community meal in Jerusalem (24:36-53). Because of this complete concentration and centrality of hospitality in Luke's Gospel, the reader discovers the concept that Luke felt hospitality through the common meal was a mainstay of the fledgling church.

Through the practice of hospitality the local church is able to become one with the universal church and extend hospitality to those who may not fit within the professed belief of said church. The church may struggle with the concept of helping the poor, crippled, and lame because they may feel this practice of hospitality is beyond their ability. Yet, as Brendan Byrne points out, "they have an emptiness, a capacity that God can fill" (124). Thus, the church may merely serve as a vessel in which the stranger may receive God's grace.

The apostle Paul in I Corinthians 11:17-22 points out the importance of practicing hospitality when sharing a common meal. Michele Hershberger states that Paul "believed that if hospitality was not practiced and community not nurtured, their gathering with the bread and wine was not the Lord's Supper at all" (223). Paul taught the Corinthians that the Lord's Supper was more than a symbolic form of ritual. When the Lord's Supper encompasses the meal and hospitality is practiced, "socioeconomic barriers came tumbling down, discernment about the true nature of the believers took place, and Christ came as a guest bringing either grace or judgment" (223).

One of the difficulties the early church had was the concept of community between the differing classes of Christians. During the community meals, the wealthy usually provided most of the food. Paul noticed that those who were first at the table

were usually those who had more wealth. He felt this group was not practicing true hospitality because they would begin to eat and drink before the lowliest arrived. Paul said in I Corinthians 11:33-34, “So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation” (NRSV). Therefore, all who participated in the community meals should be treated as equals. If the host and guest treated each other with equality and dignity then the barriers of class and wealth would be removed. Perhaps, if all the participants of the meal waited for everyone to arrive before they began, they could use that time to reflect on the issue of “What does it mean to be part of this body?” and “Who comes to (the) table late and why” (227)? Then and now, participants in Communion should realize the connectivity within the community. As Hershberger states, “What could be worse than trying to love God without loving the brothers and sisters in our midst” (227)?

Even though the sacrament of Holy Communion should be made available to every believer, some Christian communities refuse to welcome certain guests to the table. The policy of closed communion may be in place because the congregation or denomination places limits on who may or may not partake in the sacrament, but it defeats the intention of communion and the hospitality that is extended through participation. It may be of value to examine the various denominational views of Holy Communion so the reasoning behind limiting communion participants is understood. The Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church believe in transubstantiation, which involves the physical presence of the flesh and blood of Christ in the bread and wine. They believe that the bread and wine are changed into the substance of the body

and blood of Christ, but the external qualities such as color, weight, and taste remain the same. The Lutheran Church believes in consubstantiation, which follows the thinking that Christ is present in, with, and under the elements but the elements remain unchanged. The United Church of Christ follows the idea of symbolic commemoration where the presence of Christ is not tied to the elements; rather, Christ's presence is tied to the faith of the participants. The Presbyterians believe that there is a spiritual reception of the body and blood of Christ and the sacrament is a means of grace and a true communion with Christ. Because of these differences, many denominations struggle with offering communion to all who wish to participate. The Lutheran (ELCA) church offers communion to all baptized believers in Christ. It is up to the members if they wish to take communion in another church. The Lutheran Missouri Synod offers communion only to those members who belong to a church that has entered into a covenant with the Missouri Synod. The Methodist denomination offers communion to anyone of any age who believes in Christ. The Episcopalian Church offers communion to all baptized Christians. By listing just a few of the various denominations it becomes evident that many factors determine who is able to receive communion. When adding to this mix the various beliefs and opinions of individual congregations and ministers, one begins to sense the many variances that arise over the sacrament of Holy Communion. Many denominations continue to work toward an ecumenical partnership, which will allow their members to participate in communion in any of the participating denominations.

Celebrating Holy Communion or a meal with the stranger diminishes the asymmetry between the host and guest. Both the host and the guest have their hunger satisfied with the same food, which is offered around the same table. Yet, this equal

semblance is counter-balanced by the immediacy between the host and the guest.

Miroslav Volf states, “Since food and the customs surrounding eating are so heavily laden with culture, the proximity highlights differences between the giver and the receiver” (Christian Century, Nov 11, 1998).

Congregations must realize that they may practice their Christian responsibilities in a manner suitable to local circumstances and needs, but their ultimate responsibility is to the Church universal. Holy Communion is a universal practice among Christian churches, and as Hickinbotham states, “All these means of grace, the Scriptures, the apostolic testimony to Christ, baptism, the Lord’s supper, were God’s gracious gift not to this congregation or that but to the whole people of the Messiah” (24). When Holy Communion is celebrated, the participants are rehearsing God’s story without words. Just as when we view a work of art, our words take a back seat and the art speaks for itself. As a representation of hospitality, communion sidesteps ecumenical differences and allows God to speak through the actions of the host and guest. This act is the ultimate act of hospitality. To extend true hospitality, the church must be willing to allow, not only the stranger, but also God, a safe place to accomplish the task of grace.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE SECULAR AND SACRED ASPECTS OF HOSPITALITY

Hospitality seems to flourish when the host is able to identify with the guest and relates to the guest on equal terms. Christine Pohl states, “The periods in church history when hospitality has been most vibrantly practiced have been times when the hosts were themselves marginal to their larger society” (106). Marginalization occurred through the persecution of the early Christians; but when the church ceased being persecuted, Christians began to move from the fringes of society to places of prominence. With these changes in their social status, they began to reinforce the social dissimilarity that occurred between the marginalized and those who were considered of higher status. Because of this newfound status and wealth, Christians began to establish hospitals, hospices, and orphanages, and through these institutions, Christians were able to perform their duty of hospitality. Thus, over the years, hospitality has been moved from the home to the church and finally to the institution. The results of this change are evident today in the reality that churches practice generosity to the stranger through the giving of monies and other necessities but do not practice hospitality because there is no need to offer a safe place or turf to the stranger.

Marginalization may occur through social or economic changes but marginality may be re-created through the practice of an ascetic and monastic way of life. This tradition, as found within the Amish and Mennonite communities, has the participants forgoing many modern conveniences so that they might construct a marginal identity.

Because of their daily practices and rituals and their separation from the world, they have been able to create a distinct way of life. The Mennonite community is deeply involved in the practice of hospitality and justice through the Mennonite Central Committee. In 2003-2004 this committee responded to “those crying out for peace, justice and hope with 1,400 workers in 55 countries, supported by \$69 million in funds and material aid” (<http://www.mcc.org/respub/annualreport.html>. June 28, 2004). The Salvation Army is another organization that took on a marginal identity. The Army was a derivative of the Methodist revival and the organization expected its workers to work and live among the poor. They adopted distinctive uniforms, strict discipline, and rules restricting marriage and private property. Through these efforts, they were able to remove symbols of social distinctions while retaining a minimal identity.

In many situations, the contemporary practice of hospitality has continued to move away from the early church’s genuine welcoming. In some organizations, the guest is provided with just enough commodities to arrive at the point where the guest feels guilty. Through that guilt, the host is able to convince the guest that they should extend their own hospitality to the host in the form of praise, letters of appreciation, or participation in one of the organizations’ activities. An example of this practice is found in the methods practiced by a local congregation. They seek recipients for their Christmas donations. To receive these gifts the family is asked to participate in a church service where they would receive the gifts. The congregation feels they offer true hospitality because they offer their “space,” represented by the church building and the congregation, to the guest. The guest is sufficiently humbled and lavishes praise on the congregation for their good works. The congregation will leave the service feeling good,

while the recipients leave feeling humiliated. John Koenig points to these problematic side effects of hospitality when he states, “Indeed, even when welcoming does happen, we sometimes allow it to degenerate into a trading of polite formalities, or worse, a time of mutual abuse on the part of guests and hosts” (2).

Some contemporary communities have excelled in the practice of hospitality by distancing themselves from “contemporary emphases on efficiency, measurable results, and bureaucratic organization” (112). Through this intentional life style, the hosts are able to communicate and respond to those who are marginalized because those in need do not consider them a threat.

Today the practitioners of hospitality seem to fall into two camps. The first are those who practice hospitality because they are attempting to follow Christ’s teachings, and the second are those who practice hospitality, not because of any religious conviction, but because they simply want to make a difference in the world. Dorothy Day addresses these conflicts of loyalties when she states,

I don’t draw that distinction in my mind- between secular idealism and an idealism in the service of God. I do not think God is so jealous about our worship of Him that He will want to separate those who serve His purposes, serve His goodness, because they have read a book, even one written by an atheist, and have been moved, or because they have wanted to be fair all their lives, but have never stepped in a church, from those who have heard God’s words in church or read His words in the Bible and have become convinced by them (25).

Many practitioners of hospitality discover its spiritual aspect only after they first become involved in the social aspect. Whether the practitioner of hospitality changes the

way they live by creating marginality by practicing an ascetic way of life or they simply see the practice as a duty or a task they must realize that forming community with the stranger is forming community with Christ. The formation of this community, through hospitality, proves that love is possible in a broken and fragmented world.

## CHAPTER 5

### METHODOLOGY

#### **A plan for investigation the practice of hospitality**

To measure and evaluate St. Matthew's understanding of hospitality, the congregation was introduced to the importance of hospitality through the presentation of two differing styles of worship. The bulletins used during these services are located in the appendix. The service lacking hospitality is located in section F, page 170. The service with hospitality is located in section G, page 176. The congregation was made aware of the changes in the services through the monthly newsletter and the bulletin. The first service featured the absence of hospitality and the second featured the presence of hospitality. During the first service, visual and physical aspects of hospitality were removed from the service. Through this role playing the congregation was able to better understand how it feels to be in a new or sometimes threatening environment. During the second service, hospitality was reinstated throughout the service and the service concluded with Holy Communion.

Following each service, ten different members of the congregation were selected to discuss their impressions and thoughts about the service. The results of the discussions are found in the appendix under Preliminary Congregation Discussions, Section I, page 183. Participants in the worship service received questionnaires before worship with the understanding that they would fill them out and return them following the service. The results from the meetings and questionnaires provided a structured direction for the final congregational questionnaire.

This teaching/guiding method was helpful in opening a common dialogue between the congregation and minister. A measure of the level of increased or lack of interest in the practice of hospitality was gained through a simple response form given to the congregation. The response form may be found in the appendix section D listed under, Preliminary Congregation Discussion. After these training services, the congregation seemed more receptive to study the practice of hospitality and many members expressed an interest in continued study on how they may improve their personal practice of hospitality within the church and community.

Our mission trips have provided a wealth of information on the results of practiced hospitality. This information may be found in the findings and analysis portion of this dissertation. The participants have not only been in dialogue with the stranger but have provided written records of their experiences. These records were most useful in the development of the questionnaire.

The focus study was a workshop at annual conference, which was used as a tool to consider the motives of those who practice hospitality. The workshop was originally intended to discover if people practiced hospitality because of a sense of guilt or compassion. After further investigation, I realized that it would be difficult to gain any quality feedback on this issue in a 45-minute workshop. I then began to work on a questionnaire that would enable the gathering of information on the participant's practice of hospitality within their church community. After a preliminary trial run, within my congregation, I realized that it would be unwise to present this lengthy questionnaire to the participants in the workshop, because the participants would expect to learn something, rather than to fill out information that would be of no value to them. I then

focused on presenting the various aspects of hospitality and how the practice of hospitality can be threatening to the practitioner.

During the workshop various pictures, Bible stories, and symbols were used to represent examples of hospitality. The participants were introduced to the difficulty of practicing hospitality when social diversity and biblical interpretation was factored into the practice. Through this workshop, I gained insight as to how one could present information on hospitality within a workshop or training context. I also discovered that many “new” practitioners of hospitality withdraw from future hospitable events because they are unprepared for the positive or negative results that may arise. Mission trips, soup kitchens, and visits to food banks may be an unsettling experience for someone who does not understand the consequences of hospitality.

Every member of St. Matthew’s received a questionnaire. To insure fair representation and to increase the responses the questionnaires were given to the following people:

- A mailing was sent to those people who have visited St. Matthew’s during the past three years and who have not become members of the church. This list contained seventeen (17) names.
- A mailing was sent to those who had been members of St. Matthew’s during the past three years but for some reason terminated their involvement. This list contained six (6) names.
- A mailing was sent to those who are current members of the congregation. This list contained one hundred seventy-three (173) names.

The results of the response by the St. Matthew's recipients are as follows:

- One hundred ninety-six (196) questionnaires were mailed. Of the total, one hundred seventy-three (173) were mailed to members and twenty-three (23) were mailed to non-members.
- Of the members questionnaires mailed ninety-four (94) were returned for a 54% return rate. Of the non-members questionnaires mailed twelve (12) were returned for a 52% return rate. The overall return rate for St. Matthew's was 54%.

Five United Church of Christ churches were selected to serve as a comparison to the results obtained from St. Matthew's. The sample churches were: #1 Trinity United Church of Christ, Mt. Penn; #2 Zion United Church of Christ, Chambersburg; #3 St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Mechanicsburg; #4 Harambee United Church of Christ, Harrisburg; #5 First United Church of Christ, Carlisle.

The results of the response by the sample churches' recipients are as follows:

- Churches number 2, 4, and 5 were urban congregations while churches number 1 and 3 were suburban. Church #3 recently became an Open and Affirming congregation.
- Each congregation was given ten (10) questionnaires and the minister of said congregation was asked to distribute the questionnaires to a variety of respondents.



- The results from the sample churches are as follows:

Church #1 70% return

Church #2 70% return

Church #3 90% return

Church #4 50% return

Church #5 70% return

The return for the sample churches was 74%.

The questionnaire provided quantitative material that made available a supplementary body of information that corroborated or contradicted the general thoughts the congregation has toward hospitality. The questionnaire gathered information from the respondents concerning their beliefs and experiences concerning the practice of hospitality at St. Matthew's. The acquired results enabled a comparison of the practice of hospitality between St. Matthew's and the sample churches.

## CHAPTER 6

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

#### **Patterns of Hospitality**

Throughout the ancient stories of hospitality and the stories found in the Old and New Testament, a similar reason to practice hospitality seems to emerge. The reason is thus: The need of the stranger. Understanding the strangers' need is imperative before the practitioner extends hospitality. The need may be discovered by providing a safe place for the stranger. This safe place may be represented by a meal, a time together, or offering the stranger a place to stay. After discovering the need or lack of need from the stranger, the host has the opportunity to extend or refuse hospitality. Also, the stranger must make the decision to accept or reject the host's offer of hospitality. After this decision is made, the results reveal the consequences of hospitality to the host and the stranger. By analyzing the myths, Bible stories and even children's stories, this pattern becomes prominent, as seen in the pattern chart found in the appendix under I. Story Pattern, page 189.

Another pattern that emerges within the practice of hospitality and how the church community views the stranger is found in the observation of Patrick Keifert. He places the stranger into three distinct camps. The first group is the "outside stranger"; while the second group is labeled, "inside strangers"; and the third group is labeled, "the stranger". The outsiders are those who, "dress and speak differently from the congregational members; they may well be of a different class, race, age, or life situation than the so-called insiders. The inside strangers are those who fill in the gap between the intimate core group of the congregation and the outsiders. Keifert feels this group is

recognized as part of the community but may be kept at a distance through social dynamics. The insiders are more passive than active in participation within the church community. The third group is made up of those who realize “irreducible differences between two persons that exist in any encounter” (9). This group could also be labeled as the “we agree to disagree” group. Since the three groups are in existence within the congregation of St. Matthew’s, the patterns of hospitality will be incorporated in the results of the questionnaire.

A final pattern that arises when extending hospitality is the respondents and recipient’s attitude toward pluralism. Robert Jewett states that there are “at least five distinctive attitudes toward pluralism within Christian communities” (122). These five attitudes will be incorporated in the evaluation of St. Matthew’s attitude toward the fictitious situations. The attitudes are as follows:

1. “Avoid pluralism or doctrinal diversity of any kind” (122). This attitude is prevalent in those groups who stress church growth through recruitment of like-minded people. Those who have alternative viewpoints to the established doctrines are not welcomed into the community. Pluralism is to be avoided at all costs.
2. “Tone it down” (123). This attitude takes the stance that conflict and controversial issues should be avoided. “When the results of genuine pluralism manifest themselves, they should be toned down”(123). This attitude lends itself toward a dominant leader who is in charge of all committees and organizations.

3. “Melt it in” (124). This view attempts to incorporate minority groups into the community but only if the groups are willing to blend in with the majority. Any pluralistic opinion is either absorbed into the community or eliminated.
4. “Fight it out” (124). This view has the churches taking the initiative to make others conform to their doctrinal beliefs. This conformity is instituted through a democratic process where the majority rules and pluralism is eliminated.
5. “Let it flourish” (125). Jewett feels that this attitude is similar to that which the apostle Paul followed. “If Christians of both conservative and liberal perspectives are to ‘welcome one another’ in the Roman congregation, this clearly means that the differences between groups are to be allowed to stand” (125-126). Christian pluralism is allowed to flourish when the differing parties agree to disagree.

The listed patterns of hospitality and reaction to hospitality will be used to decipher the results from the questionnaire.

### **Charting the Patterns**

#### **Table 1**

Comparison of the questionnaire results from St. Matthew’s congregation with the five research churches. (Questionnaire is found in the appendix, section B.)

## SEARCH FOR A CHURCH

3 = Very important 2 = Important 1 = Not important 0 = Makes me feel uncomfortable

	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
1. I had no problem finding a parking space (St. Matt)	<b>14.2</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>.9</b>
(Sample churches)	35.1	43.2	21.6	
2. I had no difficulty entering the building	<b>31.1</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>18.9</b>	
	32.4	59.5	8.1	
3. I was welcomed by a church greeter	<b>42.5</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>	
	51.4	37.8	8.1	
4. The Order of worship was easy to follow	<b>56.6</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>2.8</b>	
	37.8	54.1	8.1	
5. Someone in the pew greeted me	<b>24.5</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>25.5</b>	
	27	51.4	21.6	
6. I was invited to Sunday School or other activities	<b>20.8</b>	<b>51.9</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>.9</b>
	29.7	59.5	8.1	2.7
7. I was left alone with my own thoughts	<b>9.4</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>8.5</b>
	8.1	43.2	35.1	13.5
8. I was able to sense God's presence	<b>60.4</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>
	78.4	21.6		
9. The pastor's message used Biblical support	<b>42.5</b>	<b>52.8</b>	<b>4.7</b>	
	56.8	37.8	5.4	
10. The Children's message was enlightening	<b>32.1</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>.9</b>
	29.7	59.5	10.8	
11. The pastor greeted me following worship	<b>59.4</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>	
	45.9	45.9	8.1	
12. The people dressed up for worship	<b>4.7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>79.2</b>	
	2.7	10.8	81.1	5.4
13. The people dressed casually	<b>2.8</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>77.4</b>	<b>5.7</b>
		21.6	75.7	2.7
14. The hymns were familiar	<b>9.4</b>	<b>61.3</b>	<b>29.2</b>	
	13.5	54.1	32.4	
15. The sanctuary was neat and clean	<b>33</b>	<b>61.3</b>	<b>4.7</b>	
	45.9	54.1		
16. The sanctuary reflected a comfortable feeling	<b>47.2</b>	<b>50.9</b>	<b>1.9</b>	
	48.6	45.9	5.4	
17. The system for the hearing impaired was useful	<b>21.7</b>	<b>52.8</b>	<b>25.5</b>	
	13.5	40.5	45.9	
18. I received a monthly newsletter	<b>17</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>16</b>	
	5.4	73	21.6	
19. I noticed the Bulletin board display	<b>10.4</b>	<b>64.2</b>	<b>25.5</b>	
	8.1	54.1	37.8	
20. There were pictures and displays in the church	<b>8.5</b>	<b>58.5</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>.9</b>
	8.1	56.8	35.1	

Table 1 continued

21. They took time to greet each other during worship	<b>39.6</b>	<b>52.8</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>.9</b>
	16.2	48.6	35.1	
22. I was invited to a time of fellowship after worship	<b>23.6</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>.9</b>
	16.2	37.8	43.2	2.7
23. I was introduced during the service	<b>2.8</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>54.7</b>	<b>35.8</b>
		10.8	51.4	37.8
24. I was asked to wear a badge with my name on it	<b>.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>51.9</b>
	2.7	2.7	40.5	54.1
25. I was visited by a member(s) or minister	<b>16</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>2.8</b>
	13.5	35.1	35.1	16.2

Table 2

How do you rate your churches practice of hospitality in the following items?

(Questionnaire is found in the appendix, section B.)

### RATING YOUR CHURCH

3 = Very important 2 = Important 1 = Not important 0 = Makes me feel uncomfortable

	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
1. Ease of finding a parking space (St. Matthew's)	<b>46.2</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>35.8</b>	
(Sample churches)	48.6	21.6	18.9	10.8
2. Using steps or elevator to enter building	<b>41.5</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>34.9</b>	
	29.7	16.2	54.1	
3. Church member greeting you at the door	<b>74.5</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>.9</b>
	62.2	18.9	18.9	
4. Order of Worship does not change	<b>31.1</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>33</b>	
	21.6	27	45.9	5.4
5. Pastor's announcements before worship	<b>65.1</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>8.5</b>	
	24.3	32.4	37.8	5.4
6. Use of lay readers for scripture	<b>42.5</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>3.8</b>
	43.2	32.4	24.3	
7. The pastor's uses Biblical support in sermons	<b>60.4</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>8.5</b>	
	67.6	27	5.4	
8. The Children's message	<b>60.4</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>.9</b>
	54.1	35.1	10.8	
9. The pastor's greeting following worship	<b>.9</b>	<b>81.1</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>5.7</b>
	62.2	21.6	16.2	
10. The congregation's casual dress for worship	<b>39.6</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>
	27	29.7	37.8	5.4
11. The familiarity of the hymns	<b>49.1</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>14.2</b>	
	40.5	35.1	21.6	2.7

Table 5-2 continued.

12. The condition of the sanctuary	<b>59.4</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>4.7</b>	
	67.6	29.7	2.7	
13. Receiving a monthly newsletter	<b>64.2</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>11.3</b>	
	45.9	24.3	29.7	
14. The Bulletin board display	<b>32.1</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>.9</b>
	16.2	35.1	48.6	
15. The picture displays	<b>34.9</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>.9</b>
	18.9	35.1	45.9	
16. The Right Hand of Fellowship	<b>77.4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>.9</b>
	48.6	24.3	24.3	2.7
17. The time of fellowship after worship	<b>59.4</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1.9</b>
	40.5	21.6	35.1	2.7
18. Church sponsored family activities	<b>61.3</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>11.3</b>	
	51.4	27	21.6	
19. Mission trips and activities	<b>48.1</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>25.5</b>	
	21.6	35.1	40.5	2.7
20. Visits by the pastor	<b>66</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>14.2</b>	
	27	43.2	29.7	

In Table 1, we find that both St. Matthew's and the sample churches felt it was important (50% - 43.2%) to easily find a parking space at the church they visited. When they rated their own church, the parking space situation rose to very important, as seen in Table 2 (46.2% – 48.6%). The respondents may feel having parking available at their home church since they attend there more often than at the visited church is more important. A majority of the answers in this section of the questionnaire was similar in percentage results. A few discrepancies were discovered in the question that pertained to the pastor's greeting following worship. Both St. Matthew's and the sample churches rated that question very important in the visited church, (1=59.4% - 45.9%); but when the question moves to the home church, St. Matthew's moves to important (2=81.1%) while the sample churches increases their percentage (2=62.2%) in the very important category. This phenomenon may be the result of St. Matthew's family ties. Many of the members remain in the sanctuary following worship to talk with one another. Unless the minister

makes it a point to enter the sanctuary to greet them, these members leave the church or go to Sunday School without greeting the pastor.

An interesting discrepancy between St. Matthew's and the sample churches occurs in the question concerning the Right Hand of Fellowship. In Table 1 both churches felt it was important to greet each other during worship when visiting a church, (52.8% - 48.6%); but when the question was asked in relation to their home church, the results differed in that St. Matthew's felt it was very important (2 =77.4%) while the sample churches remained at the same percentage (2=48.6%) as when they visited a church. St. Matthew's enjoys greeting each other and this form of fellowship occurs before, during and after worship. The concept of fellowship through food and conversation is important to St. Matthew's as demonstrated by their answering that it is very important (2=59.4%) in comparison to the sample churches' response (1= 40.5%). Two of the least favorable responses were to the questions pertaining to visiting a church. The response to wearing a badge was as follows: Table 1 St. Matthew's not important 44.3% and makes me feel uncomfortable 51.9%. The sample churches not important 40.5% and makes me feel uncomfortable 54.1%. A similar result was obtained when the visitor was introduced during the service (Table 1): St. Matthew's not important 54.7% and makes me feel uncomfortable 37.8%. The sample churches not important 51.4% and makes me feel uncomfortable 37.8%. These results seem to conflict with those churches who use badges to separate the members from the visitors. In the United Church of Christ's *God is Still Speaking* initiative, a church is portrayed as exemplifying evangelism and hospitality using name cards. This concept, even though it has merits,



may be in conflict with the idea of hospitality at the surveyed churches. Prior training may be a necessity.

**Table 3**

Based on your overall experience with your church how would you rate your congregation as a place where the stranger is made to feel welcomed.

(Questionnaire is found in the appendix, section B.

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**RATING OF HOME CHURCH HOSPITALITY**

	Very Welcoming +3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	Very Unwelcoming
<b>St. Matthew's</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>.9</b>				
Sample Churches	35.1	45.9	10.8	8.1				
Age 15 & under	57.1	28.6	14.3					St. Matthew's response per age group
16 to 25	66.7	33.3						
26 to 35	62.5	37.5						
36 to 45	61.1	33.3	5.6					
46 to 55	66.7	26.7		6.7				
56 to 65	71.4	28.6						
66 to 75	75	25						
75+	72.7	9.1	18.2					

In Table 3, the overall welcoming to the stranger within the churches differed slightly. St. Matthew's felt they were very welcoming +3 at 67% while the sample churches plurality (45.9%) felt their church was in the +2 category. None of the respondents felt their church was unwelcoming. When asked how welcoming they felt their church was to the individual, the response rose in St. Matthew's to 74.5% and the sample churches to 59.5%. When viewing the age category results of how the respondent felt, the overall welcome was in the +3 range and was all above the 57 percentile. The highest percentage (75%) of +3 positive response was found in the 66 to 75 age group.

**Table 4**

When you think of the congregation and building called St. Matthew's (or sample church), how do you feel?

<b>CHURCH COMPARISONS</b>								
Results: <b>Bold</b> = St. Matthew's    Light = Sample Churches								
	<b>Very</b>	<b>Rather</b>	<b>A Little</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>A Little</b>	<b>Rather</b>	<b>Very</b>	
<b>Pleasant</b>	<b>72.6</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>.9</b>					<b>Unpleasant</b>
	62.2	29.7	5.4	2.7				
<b>Welcoming</b>	<b>74.5</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>1.9</b>			<b>.9</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Unwelcoming</b>
	59.5	35.1	5.4					
<b>Indifferent</b>		<b>6.6</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>Interested</b>
	2.7	8.1	10.8	16.2	13.5	10.8	37.8	
<b>Important</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>8.5</b>				<b>Unimportant</b>
	43.2	43.2	8.1	2.7			2.7	
<b>I Fit in</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>.9</b>			<b>I Do not fit in</b>
	62.2	29.7	5.4	2.7				
<b>Risky</b>		<b>.9</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>Safe</b>
	2.7	2.7	10.8	18.9	8.1	13.5	43.2	
<b>Familiar</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>				<b>Unfamiliar</b>
	54.1	37.8	2.7	2.7			2.7	
<b>Like</b>	<b>64.2</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>				<b>Dislike</b>
	54.1	43.2	2.7	2.7				
<b>Simple</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>			<b>Complex</b>
	27	27	18.9	13.5	8.1	5.4		

In Table 4 when comparing St. Matthew's with the five sample congregation's view of their home church, the results were similar in most responses. St. Matthew's ranked higher than the sample churches in the Welcoming aspect of the church (74.5 – 59.5). The test congregations ranked higher in the I fit in aspect (62.2 – 42.5). Overall, both groups' responses were within 10 percentage points of each other. The results from the test churches was similar to St. Matthew's in that they tended to cover a broader response to the questions when the negative and positive metaphors were reversed in the respondents answers.

## Response to Various Fictitious Situations

Using the patterns of hospitality previously outlined will provide a foundation from which to formulate an instructional method to increase the practice of hospitality within the congregation. The response to each situation is ranked by using a numerical order from one to six. The number one portrays a very positive response while the number six portrays a very negative response. The respondents saw pictures of various fictitious “strangers” that may seek to worship at St. Matthew’s. They were asked to check one of the six boxes that best describes how they felt the congregation of St. Matthew’s would react or feel toward the visitor. A brief “quote” from the individuals was beside the picture. The complete questionnaire is found in the appendix, section B.

### Table 5

Scenario: “I owned my own business and had a wonderful family but I was unable to keep pace with modern technology and lost my company to a large corporation. I felt lost and did not know what to do. Unfortunately, I turned to alcohol. Now my family has turned their backs on me and I have nothing to live for.”

#### HOMELESS MAN

Results: **Bold** = St. Matthew’s    Light = Sample Churches  
**Most Hospitable** -----**Least Hospitable**

	Enthusiastic	Moderate	Restrained	Uncaring	Cold	No	
<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	<b>27.4</b> 21.6	<b>44.3</b> 51.4	<b>27.4</b> 24.3	<b>.9</b>		2.7	<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>23.6</b> 32.4	<b>53.8</b> 51.4	<b>17</b> 13.5	<b>5.7</b>	Passing	No 2.7	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>

Table 5-5 continued

<b>Would be invited to join</b>	Visit <b>43.4</b> 37.8	Mail <b>12.3</b> 24.3	Asked <b>38.7</b> 32.4	No <b>3.8</b> 2.7	Ignore <b>.9</b> 2.7	Reject <b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	Much <b>7.5</b> 13.5	Some <b>50</b> 48.6	Few <b>22.6</b> 13.5	May Fit <b>17</b> 18.9	Work <b>2.8</b> 5.4	Different	<b>Would not fit in</b>
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	Comfortable <b>32.1</b> 24.3	One-one <b>8.5</b> 16.2	Work <b>33</b> 24.3	Assist <b>21.7</b> 24.3	Control <b>3.8</b> 10.8	No <b>.9</b>	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
<b>Would find help</b>	Help <b>38.7</b> 35.1	Call Care <b>29.2</b> 16.2	Ask <b>13.2</b> 24.3	Outside <b>12.3</b> 18.9	List <b>6.6</b> 2.7	Busy 2.7	<b>Would not find help</b>
<b>May become a leader</b>	Leader <b>24.5</b> 40.5	Prove <b>24.5</b> 16.2	Time <b>25.5</b> 24.3	Assist <b>14.2</b> 16.2	Conform <b>7.5</b> 2.7	No <b>3.8</b>	<b>Would not become a leader</b>
<b>Simple solution</b>	Not Difficult <b>25.5</b> 56.8	Minor <b>50</b> 18.9	Time <b>14.2</b> 5.4	Minister <b>1.9</b> 16.2	Difficult <b>3.8</b>	Soul <b>4.7</b> 2.7	<b>Difficult solution</b>

St. Matthew's response to Table 5, suggests a homeless man would be welcomed but the majority response rated the welcome as a two or three. This result was similar to the results from the sample congregations. In the would be invited to join category the homeless person rated a plurality in the number one classification (43.4%); yet, at the same time, they received a low percentage (7.5) in the would fit in easily. This result tends to illustrate the congregations, perception of the difficulty of accepting someone who does not conform into their midst. This brings up the question as to how far a congregation goes to make the stranger feel welcomed. Where does one draw the line when extending hospitality?

St. Matthew's was less willing to allow the homeless man to become a church leader (left to right: #1 – 24.5%, #2 – 24.5%, #3 - 25.5%, #4 – 14.2%) while the sample congregations were more accepting of the homeless person as a leader (Left to right: #1 – 40.5%, #2 – 16.2%, #3 – 24.3%, #4 – 16.2%). The sample congregations also felt the

solution to welcoming the homeless person would be simple (#1 - 56.8%) while St. Matthew's felt it would be less simple (#2 – 50%). This difference may lie in the fact that the sample congregations were mostly urban congregations who may deal with the homeless on a regular basis while St. Matthew's, because of their location, sees few homeless people.

The need of the homeless man would be a meal, perhaps a place to stay, and someone to assist them in finding a permanent home or employment. The congregation would have the opportunity to extend or refuse hospitality to the homeless man. The results as to whether the hospitality was extended or refused would either enable the congregation to practice more hospitality or cause them to refuse hospitality. The general attitude of St. Matthew's in this scenario tends to follow the *Melt it in* category. This category as defined by Jewett, “attempts to incorporate minority groups into the community but only if the groups are willing to blend in with the majority” (124). The respondents were willing to invite the homeless man into their worship (43.4%) but were less willing to place him in a leadership position (24.5%). If the homeless person were able to blend in with the rest of the congregation, they would have a better chance at achieving a leadership position.

**Table 6**

Scenario: “I was young and foolish and never thought it would happen to me. My boy friend said that if I really loved him then I would do anything for him. As soon as I discovered I was pregnant, he took off. My family kicked me out and I am living at Safe Harbour. However, I can only stay there for 3 months and then I have to find an

apartment. I'm not afraid to work and I want to get a good job so I can raise my son in a loving surrounding."

**UNWED MOTHER**

Results: **Bold** = St. Matthew's    **Light** = Sample Churches  
**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Be welcome to worship with us</b>	Enthusiastic <b>52.8</b> 59.5	Moderate <b>42.5</b> 35.1	Restrain <b>4.7</b> 5.4	Uncaring	Cold	Not	<b>Would not be welcome to worship with us</b>
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	Enthusiastic <b>44.3</b> 56.8	Moderate <b>49.1</b> 40.5	Restrain <b>6.6</b> 2.7	Little	Pass	No	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
<b>Would be invited to join the church</b>	Visit <b>57.5</b> 51.4	Letter <b>15.1</b> 29.7	Asked <b>27.4</b> 18.9	No invite	Ignore	Reject	<b>Would not be invited to join the church</b>
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	Much <b>25.5</b> 21.6	Some <b>61.3</b> 64.9	Few <b>9.4</b> 10.8	May Fit <b>2.8</b>	Work <b>.9</b> 2.7	Different	<b>Would not fit in</b>
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	Comfortable <b>57.5</b> 62.2	One-one <b>15.1</b> 16.2	Work <b>15.1</b> 16.2	Assist <b>11.3</b> 2.7	Control <b>.9</b> 2.7	No	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
<b>Would find help</b>	Help <b>57.5</b> 51.4	Call Care <b>19.8</b> 27	Ask <b>13.2</b> 8.1	Outside <b>7.5</b> 10.8	List <b>1.9</b> 2.7	Busy	<b>Would not find help</b>
<b>May become a leader in the church</b>	Leader <b>39.6</b> 48.6	Prove <b>24.5</b> 21.6	Time <b>22.6</b> 10.8	Assist <b>10.4</b> 18.9	Conform <b>1.9</b>	No <b>.9</b>	<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
<b>Simple solution</b>	Not Difficult <b>73.6</b> 81.1	Minor <b>15.1</b> 16.2	Time <b>6.6</b> 2.7	Minister <b>1.9</b>	Difficult <b>1.9</b>	Soul <b>.9</b>	<b>Difficult solution</b>

St. Matthew's was very welcoming to the unwed mother in Table 6 as demonstrated in a high positive ranking for a welcoming response. Their response

mirrored the response of the sample churches. The only difficulty within this scenario may be with the congregations concern that the unwed mother might have some difficulty fitting in. The unwed mother may believe the congregation is judgmental concerning her promiscuous life style and it may be easier for her to reject the extended hospitality than to subject herself to the expected negative comments. This attitude may not reflect the attitude of the congregation. St. Matthew's has been very open to situations such as the one represented and always is willing to assist the parent in any way possible. Several years ago, we began a nursery for small children during worship. This program lasted one year but was discontinued because the congregation wanted the children in the sanctuary during the service. Even though this arrangement sometimes causes distractions, the congregation seems to enjoy the sense of anticipation the children create. St. Matthew's saw the hospitality extended as a simple solution (73.6%), which was similar to the sample churches (81.1%).

To discover the need of the unwed mother the congregation would have to listen to her plight and assist her and the child in a way that strengthens the relationship between the woman, child and congregation. The congregation of St. Matthew's has been involved in similar situations and has provided food, clothing, housing assistance as well as someone to listen. The consequences of this practice of hospitality caused the Women's Guild to search for other persons in need and attempt to discover new ways to assist those in need.

The congregation may view this person as an *inside stranger* in that they welcome her into their community, but a wall is constructed between the parties through social dynamics. The unwed mother drew the most positive response of all the scenarios and

St. Matthew's attitude seems to reflect the *let it flourish* attitude. The congregation still had some trouble accepting the woman in a leadership role (39.6%), but they were very positive in their openness to accommodate the woman. Even though a majority of our congregation would frown upon the woman's lifestyle, they still are willing to agree to disagree and work with the mother and child.

**Table 7**

Scenario: "Yes I used to be a member of the Klu Klux Klan but I saw the error of my ways. Now I am trying to become part of a congregation that is willing to overlook my many faults and help me overcome my racism. I also have friends who are searching for a community of believers."

**KKK MEMBER**

Results: **Bold** = St. Matthew's    Light = Sample Churches  
**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	Enthusiastic <b>23.6</b> 21.6	Moderate <b>42.5</b> 35.1	Restrained <b>28.3</b> 43.2	Uncaring <b>.9</b>	Cold <b>3.8</b>	No <b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be welcome</b>
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	Enthusiastic <b>17</b> 21.6	Moderate <b>53.8</b> 48.6	Restrained <b>22.6</b> 27	Little <b>2.8</b> 2.7	Passing <b>2.8</b>	No <b>.9</b>	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	Visit <b>29.2</b> 29.7	Mail <b>21.7</b> 35.1	Asked <b>43.4</b> 29.7	No <b>1.9</b> 5.4	Ignore	Reject <b>3.8</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	Much <b>12.3</b> 10.8	Some <b>37.7</b> 27	Few <b>17</b> 27	May Fit <b>25.5</b> 21.6	Work <b>4.7</b> 13.5	Too Different <b>2.8</b>	<b>Would not fit in</b>
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	Comfortable <b>17.9</b> 21.6	One-one <b>16</b> 16.2	Work <b>31.1</b> 27	Comm. <b>19.8</b> 21.6	Control <b>12.3</b> 5.4	No <b>2.8</b> 8.1	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>



Table 5-7 continued

<b>Would find help</b>	Help <b>32.1</b> 29.7	Call Care <b>22.6</b> 13.5	Ask <b>27.4</b> 18.9	Outside <b>8.5</b> 27	List <b>7.5</b> 8.1	Busy <b>1.9</b> 2.7	<b>Would not find help</b>
<b>May become a leader in the church</b>	Leader <b>19.8</b> 18.9	Prove <b>31.1</b> 29.7	Time <b>18.9</b> 16.2	Assist <b>7.5</b> 10.8	Conform <b>16</b> 13.5	No <b>6.6</b> 10.8	<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
<b>Simple solution</b>	Not Difficult <b>20.8</b> 27	Minor <b>42.5</b> 27	Time <b>16</b> 18.9	Minister <b>3.8</b> 10.8	Difficult <b>8.5</b> 5.4	Time <b>8.5</b> 10.8	<b>Difficult solution</b>

A less hospitable attitude became prevalent within both St. Matthew's and the sample churches when this scenario was presented. In Table 7, the KKK member received the lowest number of positive responses in all categories. St. Matthew's ranked them in the least hospitable placement in every category. The highest #1 response was in the would find help category (32.1). The results between St. Matthew's and the sample churches were similar in all categories with the results being within 7 points. The greatest negative responses were found in the would fit in easily, would not make me feel uncomfortable, and would find help categories. Using the #5 category, St. Matthew's ranked the KKK member the lowest of all scenarios in the would not make me feel uncomfortable (12.3%) and in may become a church leader (16%).

The needs of the former member of the K.K.K. may be very intricate. The person may just want to talk with someone concerning his past experiences or he may want approval for his actions. It would probably take extended conversation between the stranger and the congregation before either would be willing to extend true hospitality. Once the true nature of the stranger is discovered, the congregation would decide whether

to extend hospitality or refuse it. The final consequences of the extension or refusal of hospitality would only be realized after an extended period.

The congregation would view this person as an *outside stranger* because of his life situation. The attitude of St. Matthew's toward this person fits the *avoid pluralism or doctrinal diversity of any kind* attitude. The mostly negative response across the chart demonstrates the idea that the congregation would not be willing to expend their energy and hospitality to this person. Because this person has an alternate viewpoint, which seems to go against the established doctrines of St. Matthew's, they would find a lukewarm welcome into the community. Perhaps the community of St. Matthew's would better serve the stranger if they could spend time with the congregation before St. Matthew's discovered his or her past. This attitude, or cautious suspicion, may represent the congregation ascertaining limits to their hospitality.

**Table 8**

Scenario: "We have been living together for four years. I used to attend a very conservative church but was asked to leave when I started bringing my partner to church. He is not interested in being part of any church that treats us as sinners. We both are seeking a church that is willing to accept us as children of God and treat us as family."

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**GAY COUPLE**

Results: **Bold** = St. Matthew's    **Light** = Sample Churches  
**Most Hospitable** -----**Least Hospitable**

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<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	Enthusiastic <b>22.6</b> 29.1	Moderate <b>41.5</b> 35.1	Restrained <b>27.4</b> 29.7	Uncaring <b>.9</b> 5.4	Cold <b>6.6</b>	No <b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	Enthusiastic <b>19.8</b> 27	Moderate <b>40.6</b> 43.2	Restrained <b>31.1</b> 18.9	Little <b>5.7</b> 10.8	Passing <b>2.8</b>	No	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	Visit <b>30.2</b> 43.2	Mail <b>16</b> 21.6	Asked <b>43.4</b> 29.7	No <b>5.7</b> 5.4	Ignore <b>2.8</b>	Reject <b>1.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	Much <b>13.2</b> 24.3	Some <b>39.6</b> 35.1	Few <b>25.5</b> 10.8	May Fit <b>13.2</b> 16.2	Work <b>7.5</b> 8.1	Too Different <b>.9</b> 5.4	<b>Would not fit in</b>
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	Comfortable <b>43.4</b> 51.4	One-one <b>9.4</b> 10.8	Work <b>25.5</b> 21.6	Comm. <b>13.2</b> 10.8	Control <b>7.5</b> 2.7	No <b>.9</b> 2.7	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
<b>Would find help</b>	Help <b>27.4</b> 51.4	Call Care <b>17.9</b> 10.8	Ask <b>40.6</b> 13.5	Outside <b>6.6</b> 18.9	List <b>6.6</b> 2.7	Busy <b>.9</b> 2.7	<b>Would not find help</b>
<b>May become a leader in the church</b>	Leader <b>25.5</b> 45.9	Prove <b>13.2</b> 8.1	Time <b>20.8</b> 8.1	Assist <b>21.7</b> 18.9	Conform <b>9.4</b> 13.5	No <b>9.4</b> 5.4	<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
<b>Simple solution</b>	Not Difficult <b>32.1</b> 51.4	Minor <b>30.2</b> 18.9	Time <b>11.3</b> 13.5	Minister <b>8.5</b> 5.4	Difficult <b>11.3</b> 5.4	Time <b>6.6</b> 5.4	<b>Difficult solution</b>

The results from Table 8 showed St. Matthew's less hospitable in all categories than the sample churches. St. Matthew's differed greatly in the would find help and simple solution categories. St. Matthew's ranked would find help (27.4%) below the sample churches (51.4%) and was less willing to invite the gay couple to join their congregation (30.2% to 43.2%). These results may be a consequence of a previous situation within the church, which divided the congregation over the issue of homosexuality.

Because of past conflicts within the congregation they may view this couple as *outside* strangers, but they may change their view once they get to better understand the couple and overlook their differences thus becoming *the stranger* where all parties agree

to disagree. The congregation of St. Matthew's depicts the *tone it down* attitude with the gay couple scenario. They feel the couple would not make me feel uncomfortable (51.4%), but struggle with whether they would be willing to listen to them (19.8%) and welcome them as a leader (25.5%). Because of past experiences, the congregation appears to take the stance that this issue may be too controversial and should be avoided. The attitude may change after the congregation gets to know the couple and observes how they relate to each other and the community. Even though the results depict a *tone it down* attitude, past experience with the congregation regarding issues such as homosexuality seems to place the community in the *let it flourish* attitude. A majority of the congregation is willing to agree to disagree on many controversial issues and supports those who differ with their beliefs as long as all parties are willing to listen to both sides of the issue.

**Table 9**

Scenario: "We have been married for five years and recently moved into the area. In our previous church, we were accepted by most of the church members but would hear negative remarks concerning our inter-racial marriage. We want to be part of a community of faith that treats us like any married couple."

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**INTER-RACIAL MARRIED COUPLE**

Results: **Bold** = St. Matthew's    Light = Sample Churches  
**Most Hospitable** -----**Least Hospitable**

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<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	Enthusiastic <b>37.7</b> 56.8	Moderate <b>45.3</b> 32.4	Restrained <b>11.3</b> 10.8	Uncaring <b>2.8</b>	Cold <b>2.8</b>	No	<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	Enthusiastic <b>34.9</b> 54.1	Moderate <b>46.2</b> 37.8	Restrained <b>12.3</b> 8.1	Little <b>2.8</b>	Passing <b>3.8</b>	No	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	Visit <b>46.2</b> 51.4	Mail <b>10.4</b> 21.6	Asked <b>38.7</b> 24.3	No <b>1.9</b> 2.7	Ignore <b>1.9</b>	Reject <b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	Much <b>33</b> 45.9	Some <b>49.1</b> 43.2	Few <b>11.3</b> 8.1	May Fit <b>2.8</b>	Work <b>1.9</b>	Too Different <b>1.8</b> 2.7	<b>Would not fit in</b>
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	Comfortable <b>57.5</b> 73	One-one <b>15.1</b> 8.1	Work <b>17</b> 13.5	Comm. <b>6.6</b> 2.7	Control <b>2.8</b>	No <b>.9</b> 2.7	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
<b>Would find help</b>	Help <b>49.1</b> 75.7	Call Care <b>28.3</b> 5.4	Ask <b>11.3</b> 2.7	Outside <b>11.3</b> 13.5	List <b>3.8</b> 2.7	Busy <b>.9</b>	<b>Would not find help</b>
<b>May become a leader</b>	Leader <b>44.3</b> 75.7	Prove <b>28.3</b> 10.8	Time <b>11.3</b> 5.4	Assist <b>11.3</b> 5.4	Conform <b>3.8</b>	No <b>.9</b> 2.7	<b>Would not become a leader</b>
<b>Simple solution</b>	Not Difficult <b>56.6</b> 78.4	Minor <b>28.3</b> 13.5	Time <b>7.5</b>	Minister <b>1.9</b> 2.7	Difficult <b>5.7</b> 2.7	Time <b>2.7</b>	<b>Difficult solution</b>

Even though the overall positive ranking of the inter-racial married couple was third out of the eight scenarios, St. Matthew's was less hospitable to the couple in Table 9, than the sample churches as demonstrated by the lower percentages in the most hospitable categories. Even though a majority of the respondents (57.5%) felt the couple would not make them feel uncomfortable when compared to the sample churches, St. Matthew's had more difficulty in accepting the couple. These results were interesting in that a similar situation occurred in St. Matthew's several years ago and the congregation seemed to accept the couple without any reservations. Perhaps the congregation is able to put on a positive face when confronted with situations they disagree with.

The inter-racial married couple would tend to fall into the *inside stranger* placement. The congregation would welcome them as part of their community but may

relegate them to a passive role within the congregation. The prevalent attitude toward the couple seems to fall into the *let it flourish* category. The congregation realizes that there may be differences between their thoughts on inter-racial marriage, but they are willing to accept those differences and agree to disagree with the situation. As in other divisive situations that have occurred at St. Matthew's, the response of the congregation always seems to be an attempt to better understand the situation through dialogue. One of the most important church organizations that address divisive issues is the adult Sunday School. Increase or decrease in attendance within the organization tends to serve as a barometer to the concerns of the congregation.

**Table 10**

Scenario: "We enjoy being in each others company and church is a great place to meet on Sunday. Even though we do not always seem like we are paying attention during the service, we do pick up a lot of Christian attitudes from the congregation. We are still struggling with our faith and sometimes demonstrate our frustration by being rude. Will you continue to love us and overlook our actions?"

**TEENAGERS**

Results: **Bold** = St. Matthew's    Light = Sample Churches  
**Most Hospitable** -----**Least Hospitable**

	Enthusiastic	Moderate	Restrained	Uncaring	Cold	No	Would not be welcome to worship
<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	<b>51.9</b> 56.8	<b>34.9</b> 35.1	<b>9.4</b> 8.1	<b>2.8</b>	<b>.9</b>		
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>50</b> 64.9	<b>38.7</b> 27	<b>9.4</b> 2.7	<b>1.9</b> 5.4	Passing	No	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>

Table 5-10 continued

<b>Would be invited to join</b>	Visit <b>49.1</b> 54.1	Mail <b>16</b> 24.3	Asked <b>30.2</b> 21.6	No <b>1.9</b>	Ignore <b>1.9</b>	Reject <b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	Much <b>31.1</b> 51.4	Some <b>47.2</b> 27	Few <b>7.5</b> 10.8	May Fit <b>12.3</b> 5.4	Work <b>1.9</b> 5.4	Too Different	<b>Would not fit in</b>
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	Comfortable <b>57.5</b> 59.5	One-one <b>17</b> 13.5	Work <b>15.1</b> 16.2	Comm. <b>7.5</b> 5.4	Control <b>1.9</b>	No <b>.9</b> 5.4	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
<b>Would find help</b>	Help <b>58.5</b> 70.3	Call Care <b>18.9</b> 10.8	Ask <b>17</b> 2.7	Outside <b>3.8</b> 8.1	List <b>1.9</b> 2.7	Busy <b>5.4</b>	<b>Would not find help</b>
<b>May become a leader</b>	Leader <b>28.3</b> 48.6	Prove <b>27.4</b> 27	Time <b>21.7</b> 10.8	Assist <b>13.2</b> 5.4	Conform <b>5.7</b> 2.7	No <b>3.8</b> 5.4	<b>Would not become a leader</b>
<b>Simple solution</b>	Not Difficult <b>59.4</b> 67.6	Minor <b>23.6</b> 24.3	Time <b>7.5</b>	Minister <b>3.8</b> 2.7	Difficult <b>3.8</b>	Time <b>1.9</b> 5.4	<b>Difficult solution</b>

In Table 10, St. Matthew's rated this situation of hospitality the second highest of all scenarios. The greatest difference between St. Matthew's and the sample churches occurs in the would find help (58.5% to 70.3%) and may become a leader (28.3% to 48.6%). A few years ago, St. Matthew's welcomed a non-voting youth to the consistory. This program lasted three years but was discontinued in part because the youth were too busy with school activities to attend the meetings. The youth were accepted into the discussions, but their opinions were often overlooked in the final deliberations.

The teenagers tend to be viewed as *inside strangers* within the congregation. They are accepted and are able to bridge the gap between the intimate core of the congregation but would be expected to take a passive role in church leadership. The position of the congregation toward the teens appears to combine the *melt it in* and *let it flourish* attitudes. The respondents had a low percentage in the would fit in (31.1) category and were even less willing to accept the youth as leaders (28.3). This attitude

seems to reflect the position that the youth would be welcomed to worship (51.9%) and would find help (58.5%) but they would have to blend in with the congregation before they would be accepted into leadership roles. Perhaps the blending would occur as the youth grow into adults. Even though the congregation struggles with the concept of the youth fitting in (31.1%), they have always demonstrated a willingness to assist the youth in their many projects. The youth have an adopted grandparent program, host a yearly senior citizen dinner, and have inter-generational Sunday School during the summer. The response to these activities is very positive and, on the surface, there appears to be no conflict between the young and older age groups.

**Table 11**

Scenario: “I am a high paid professional woman. I have had to work very hard to make it to the top. I have been involved in many churches in the past but always seem to discover that the members do not want change. Since I know how to make organizations function, I feel I would be an asset to any congregation to which I belong. I expect co-operation from those in the congregation who do not have the expertise I possess. If you are willing to do it “my way,” then the church will succeed in this high tech world.”

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**PROFESSIONAL WOMAN**

Results: **Bold** = St. Matthew’s    Light = Sample Churches  
**Most Hospitable** ----- **Least Hospitable**

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<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
	48.6	45.9	5.4				<b>Would not find someone to listen</b>
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>4.7</b>			
	35.1	45.9	18.9				



Table 5-11 continued

<b>Would be invited to join</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>39.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>		<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
	43.2	29.7	27				
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5.7</b>		<b>Would not fit in</b>
	24.3	43.2	18.9	10.8	2.7		
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
	32.4	18.9	32.4	2.7	8.1	5.4	
<b>Would find help</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not find help</b>
	48.6	10.8	10.8	24.3	2.7	2.7	
<b>May become a leader in the church</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
	51.4	10.8	16.2	8.1	2.7	10.8	
<b>Simple solution</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Difficult solution</b>
	37.8	37.8	5.4	5.4	5.4	8.1	

St. Matthew's ranked the professional woman lower in all areas when compared to the sample churches. Overall, in table 11, she ranked fourth out of the eight scenarios. The greatest inhospitality was shown in the would be invited to join and would find help. These categories received 39.6% and 40.6% respectively in the #3 ranking. The sample churches rated the same #3 categories as 27% and 10.8%. The congregation and consistory has taken steps to make sure that an individual does not control the management of the churches resources and finances. This scenario developed during the building of the church. One family provided a meeting place for the congregation until the church structure was completed. This led to several control issues between a few families and the rest of the congregation. When the original family left the church, the consistory took steps to make sure a similar power struggle did not occur in the future. This past situation may have influenced those who ranked the professional woman in the less hospitable category. The results of this scenario may have been similar if a professional man had been substituted for the woman. The congregation tends to look negatively upon "take charge" types and strives for a more co-operative form of governing where everyone has a chance to voice their opinion.

The professional woman would be considered a *inside stranger* in that she would be welcomed into the community but would be denigrated to perform menial tasks rather than offered a position of authority. The congregations' attitude toward the professional woman appears to fit the *fight it out* category. The congregation gave a low percentage (17%) in the would fit in easily category and a similar percentage (17.9%) in the would find someone to listen to them category. Because of past control issues the congregation is less willing to give unlimited power to any one individual. With the Adult Sunday School serving as a barometer to church discourse so also does the kitchen in fellowship hall serve as a barometer to individual power struggles. With the death of several pillars of the kitchen and the recent renovation of the kitchen, much of the power base was taken away from the original workers. The current participants are less willing to *let it flourish* when it comes to innovative ideas from new members because of a fear the new members may attempt a coup d'état within the kitchen. The Women's Guild continues to *fight it out* as they work toward a compromise that would enable all involved a chance to *melt it in*. It has been interesting watching the transition within the kitchen as the congregation continues to struggle with a hospitable attitude toward all new members while attempting to retain some past traditions.

**Table 12**

Scenario: "I served 10 years for armed robbery. I was in a gang and we decided to rob a local store. I had a gun and I was the only one who got caught. I never squealed on my accomplices. Now I am trying to turn my life around. While in prison I earned my

General Education Diploma and have taken some college courses. I would like to be part of a Christian church family that is willing to help me grow in my new found faith.”

**FORMER INMATE**

Results: **Bold** = St. Matthew’s    Light = Sample Churches  
**Most Hospitable** -----**Least Hospitable**

<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	Enthusiastic <b>17</b> 29.7	Moderate <b>53.8</b> 43.2	Restrained <b>27.4</b> 24.3	Uncaring <b>1.9</b>	Cold 2.7	No	<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	Enthusiastic <b>21.7</b> 40.5	Moderate <b>54.7</b> 35.1	Restrained <b>20.8</b> 24.3	Little <b>2.8</b>	Passing	No	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	Visit <b>37.7</b> 32.4	Mail <b>15.1</b> 32.4	Asked <b>41.5</b> 32.4	No <b>1.9</b> 2.7	Ignore <b>2.8</b>	Reject .9	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	Much <b>6.6</b> 16.2	Some <b>48.1</b> 43.2	Few <b>25.5</b> 16.2	May Fit <b>14.2</b> 13.5	Work <b>5.7</b> 10.8	Too Different	<b>Would not fit in</b>
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	Comfortable <b>17.9</b> 27	One-one <b>14.2</b> 18.9	Work <b>38.7</b> 21.6	Comm. <b>19.8</b> 13.5	Control <b>8.5</b> 13.5	No .9 5.4	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
<b>Would find help</b>	Help <b>43.4</b> 32.4	Call Care <b>17</b> 21.6	Ask <b>25.5</b> 16.2	Outside <b>9.4</b> 21.6	List <b>4.7</b> 5.4	Busy 2.7	<b>Would not find help</b>
<b>May become a leader in the church</b>	Leader <b>14.2</b> 35.1	Prove <b>27.4</b> 13.5	Time <b>23.6</b> 18.9	Assist <b>17.9</b> 13.5	Conform <b>13.2</b> 10.8	No <b>3.8</b> 8.1	<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
<b>Simple solution</b>	Not Difficult <b>18.9</b> 32.4	Minor <b>44.3</b> 32.4	Time <b>22.6</b> 8.1	Minister <b>3.8</b> 13.5	Difficult <b>5.7</b> 10.8	Time <b>4.7</b> 2.7	<b>Difficult solution</b>

As shown in Table 12, St. Matthew’s ranked this person below the sample churches in most categories. The members felt the inmate would find help (43.4%) at St. Matthew’s but only 17% of the members felt the inmate would be welcome to worship with the congregation. Overall, the inmate received a less hospitable ranking by placing seventh out of the eight scenarios. Many members showed concern over how hospitable

they would be when confronted by this person. Within the would work with this person to learn more about them the inmate received a total of 38.7% which demonstrated the low level of comfort-ability the congregation would feel toward this person.

The congregation would treat the convict as an *outside stranger* because of their past life experience. The attitude of the congregation falls within the *avoid pluralism or doctrinal diversity of any kind* category. The congregation feels the convict would not fit in and struggles with extending a welcome to worship (17%) and making them a leader in the church (14.2%). This attitude seems to demonstrate the congregation's reluctance to be hospitable to those who have lived an alternative life style or have alternative views concerning the established doctrines of the community. One reason for this attitude may lie in the relationship of the church to a local prison. Members of the church are constantly in contact with work release prisoners through their work place and local businesses. This contact may have a negative effect on the reaction of the congregation.

## SCENARIOS AND ST. MATTHEW'S RESPONSE BY AGE GROUPS

### Overall Impressions

#### Table 13

Results of respondent's opinion of the hospitality extended and practiced at St.

Matthew's United Church of Christ.

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**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**  
Age groups: 12-15, 16-25, 26-

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<b>Pleasant</b>	<b>72.6</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>.9</b>						<b>Unpleasant</b>
12 to 25	50	40	10						
26 to 35	87.5	23.5							
36 to 45	61.6	38.9							
46 to 55	73.3	26.7							
56 to 65	82.1	17.9							
65 and above	66.2	33.8							
<b>Welcoming</b>	<b>74.6</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>.9</b>				<b>Unwelcoming</b>
12 to 25	80	10	10						
26 to 35	87.5	12.5							
36 to 45	81.1	38.9							
46 to 55	80	20							
56 to 65	75	21.4							
65 and above	68.2	21.2				5.3	5.3		
<b>Indifferent</b>		<b>6.6</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>34.9</b>		<b>Interested</b>
12 to 25		20	20	10	10	20	30		
26 to 35				18.8	18.8	31.3	31.3		
36 to 45		5.6	11.1	11.1	5.6	44.4	22.2		
46 to 55		6.7	13.3	20		33.3	26.7		
56 to 65			7.1	10.7	10.7	21.4	50		
65 and above		15.9	15.9	10.6		21.5	36.1		
<b>Important</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>6.5</b>					<b>Unimportant</b>
12 to 25	60	10	30						
26 to 35	43.8	50	6.3						
36 to 45	38.9	22.2	22.2	16.7					
46 to 55	33.3	26.7	20	20					
56 to 65	50	35.7	7.1	7.1					
65 and above	51	43		6					
<b>I Fit in</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>.9</b>				<b>I Do not fit in</b>
12 to 25	60	30			10				
26 to 35	43.8	43.8	12.5						
36 to 45	22.2	44.4	27.8						
46 to 55	26.7	60	13.3						
56 to 65	53.6	39.3	7.1	5.6					
65 and above	51	42.4	9.8						
<b>Risky</b>		<b>.9</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>45.3</b>		<b>Safe</b>
12 to 25				20		40	40		
26 to 35				12.5	6.3	37.5	43.8		
36 to 45			11.1	16.7		27.8	44.4		
46 to 55				33.3	13.3	13.3	40		
56 to 65		3.6		21.4	7.1	17.9	50		
65 and above			16	16	5.4	16	46.6		
<b>Familiar</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>					<b>Unfamiliar</b>
12 to 25	70	20	10						
26 to 35	62.5	37.5							
36 to 45	44.4	33.3	11.1	11.1					
46 to 55	53.3	33.3	13.3						
56 to 65	71.4	17.9	10.7						
65 and above	73.6	26.4							
<b>Like</b>	<b>64.2</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>					<b>Dislike</b>
12 to 25	60	30		10					
26 to 35	68.8	31.3							
36 to 45	50	27.8	16.7	5.6					
46 to 55	68.7	20	6.7	6.7					
56 to 65	71.4	25		3.6					
65 and above	63	37							
<b>Simple</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>				<b>Complex</b>
12 to 25	40	40	20	40					
26 to 35	31.3	50		18.8					
36 to 45	22.2	33.3	16.7	22.2	5.6				
46 to 55	13.3	26.7	28.7	33.3					
56 to 65	57.1	21.4	7.1	7.1	7.1				
65 and above	37	52.4	5.3	5.3					

Table 13 shows a comparison of the various age groups within St. Matthew's and their overall impression of St. Matthew's. These results tend to point toward a lower percentage result in all positive metaphors with the 15 and under age group. These results were, at the most, 20 percentage points below the next age group. However, in all situations the 15 and under group increased their percentage in the second category. If both category one and category two were combined, the results from all age groups would be very similar. Interestingly the 15 and under and under 25 age groups (57.1 - 66.7) ranked the highest in how important the church was to them. Both groups also ranked the highest in the I fit in category (57.1 - 66.7). When comparing the results, a

majority of the responses falls into the first two categories, which reflects a positive response. The only change is noted in those questions where the positive and negative words were reversed. This probably occurred because the respondents became use to having the positive language on the left and the negative language on the right.

## **Scenarios**

Following are the results of the scenarios presented to the congregation through the questionnaire. The scenarios are placed in order of acceptance by the congregation of St. Matthew's, with the order being the highest in acceptance to the lowest. To better enable a more accurate rating the age groups 15 and under and 25 and under were combined, as were the 65 and 70+ age groups. The final six groups contained the following number of participants: 12-25 = 10; 26-35 = 16; 36-45 = 18; 46-55 = 15; 56-65 = 28; 65+ = 19. Within a majority of the scenarios the age group twenty-five and under had the highest percentage in the hospitality category in the following questions: welcome, someone to listen, invited to join, would find help, and simple solution. The areas where this group's percentage dropped were: fit in easily, invited to join, not make me feel uncomfortable, and may become a leader. This information points to the perception that the younger members realize the stranger may cause problems by challenging their comfort level, but they were willing to welcome the stranger into their midst to see what happens next.

**Table 14**

Scenario: "I was young and foolish and never thought it would happen to me. My boy friend said that if I really loved him then I would do anything for him. As soon as I discovered I was pregnant, he took off. My family kicked me out and I am living at Safe Harbour. However, I can only stay there for 3 months and then I have to find an apartment. I'm not afraid to work and I want to get a good job so I can raise my son in a loving surrounding."

**UNWED MOTHER**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Be welcome to worship with us</b>	<b>Enthusiastic</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Restrained</b>			<b>Would not be welcome to worship with us</b>
12 to 25	<b>42.8</b>	<b>42.6</b>	<b>4.7</b>			
26 to 35	<b>70</b>	<b>30</b>				
36 to 45	<b>58.3</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>12.5</b>			
46 to 55	<b>44.4</b>	<b>55.8</b>				
56 to 65	<b>60</b>	<b>40</b>				
65 and above	<b>50</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>3.6</b>			
	<b>48</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>9</b>			
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>Enthusiastic</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Restrained</b>			<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
12 to 25	<b>44.3</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>6.6</b>			
26 to 35	<b>80</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>			
36 to 45	<b>58.3</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>			
46 to 55	<b>33.3</b>	<b>88.7</b>				
56 to 65	<b>26.7</b>	<b>88.7</b>	<b>6.7</b>			
65 and above	<b>57.1</b>	<b>42.9</b>				
	<b>40</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>12</b>			
<b>Would be invited to join the church</b>	<b>Visit</b>	<b>Mail</b>	<b>Asked</b>			<b>Would not be invited to join the church</b>
12 to 25	<b>67.5</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>27.4</b>			
26 to 35	<b>50</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>			
36 to 45	<b>62.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>25</b>			
46 to 55	<b>61.1</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>18.7</b>			
56 to 65	<b>53.3</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>33.3</b>			
65 and above	<b>71.4</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>21.4</b>			
	<b>37</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>47</b>			
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	<b>Much</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Few</b>	<b>May Fit</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Would not fit in</b>
12 to 25	<b>25.5</b>	<b>61.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	
26 to 35	<b>30</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>20</b>			
36 to 45	<b>37.5</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>12.5</b>			
46 to 55	<b>16.7</b>	<b>72.2</b>	<b>11.1</b>			
56 to 65	<b>35.7</b>	<b>57.1</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>6.7</b>		
65 and above	<b>27</b>	<b>57.7</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>5.3</b>	
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	<b>Comfortable</b>	<b>One-one</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Comm.</b>	<b>Control</b>	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
12 to 25	<b>67.5</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>.9</b>	
26 to 35	<b>80</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>10</b>			
36 to 45	<b>75</b>	<b>25</b>				
46 to 55	<b>55.6</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>22.2</b>		
56 to 65	<b>46.7</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>6.7</b>		
65 and above	<b>80.7</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>10.7</b>		
	<b>48</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>		
<b>Would find help</b>	<b>Help</b>	<b>Call Care</b>	<b>Ask</b>	<b>Outside</b>	<b>List</b>	<b>Would not find help</b>
12 to 25	<b>67.5</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>	
26 to 35	<b>80</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>			
36 to 45	<b>75</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>12.5</b>		
46 to 55	<b>44.4</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>5.6</b>	
56 to 65	<b>80</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>			
65 and above	<b>57.1</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>14.3</b>		
	<b>53</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.3</b>	

Table 5-14 continued

May become a leader in the church	Leader	Prove	Time	Assist	Conform	No	Would not become a leader in the church
	39.6	24.5	22.6	10.4	1.9	.9	
12 to 25	40	30	20	10			
26 to 35	50	25	12.5	6.3	6.3		
36 to 45	38.9	27.8	33.3				
46 to 55	40	13.3	40	6.7			
56 to 65	39.3	17.9	21.4	17.9		3.6	
65 and above	32	36	11	16	5.3		
Simple solution	Not Difficult	Minor	Time	Minister	Difficult	Time	Difficult solution
	73.6	15.1	6.6	1.9	1.9	.9	
12 to 25	70	20	10				
26 to 35	75	12.5	12.5				
36 to 45	77.8	16.7	5.6				
46 to 55	73.3	13.3	13.3				
56 to 65	71.4	14.3	3.6	7.1		3.6	
65 and above	73	18			11		

As shown in Table 14, the congregation seems to have the least trouble welcoming the unwed mother into their midst. Out of all the scenarios, this one had the fewest negative responses. All age groups were very accepting of this stranger with the least positive assessment falling in the would fit in easily category. The congregation experienced this scenario and demonstrated a willingness to help the person in need. The greatest challenge was trying to offer the assistance without humiliating the recipient. The respondents may feel the stranger may not fit in easily because of discomfort by the recipient rather than the congregation. In most categories the 26 to 35 age group portrayed a positive response. This response was followed closely by the 25 and under age group. This response may point out the realization by the younger members that society has changed and unwed mothers are commonplace. Even though the older members did not display as much hospitality as the younger members, their overall ratings were very positive, especially in the simple solution (73+%). Thus, they demonstrated that they may disagree with the scenario, but they would still be willing to accept the woman and extend hospitality to her.

**Table 15**

Scenario: “We enjoy being in each others company and church is a great place to meet on Sunday. Even though we do not always seem like we are paying attention during the



service, we do pick up a lot of Christian attitudes from the congregation. We are still struggling with our faith and sometimes demonstrate our frustration by being rude. Will you continue to love us and overlook our actions??"

## TEENAGERS

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	<b>51.9</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>.9</b>		<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
12 to 25	50	10	30	10			
26 to 35	75	18.8					
36 to 45	33.3	55.6	11.1	6.3			
46 to 55	33.3	53.3			6.7		
56 to 65	64.3	25	10.7	6.7			
65 and above	47.2	42.1	10.7				
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>			<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
12 to 25	40	20	40				
26 to 35	87.5	6.3		6.3			
36 to 45	27.8	61.1	11.1				
46 to 55	46.7	40	13.3				
56 to 65	57.1	39.3	3.6				
65 and above	37.4	53	5.3	5.3			
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
12 to 25	42.9	14.3	28.6	14.3			
26 to 35	66.7			33.3			
36 to 45	68.8	18.8	6.3		6.3		
46 to 55	38.9	27.8	33.3			3.6	
56 to 65	40	13.3	46.7				
65 and above	64.3	7.1	25		3.6		
	25	12.5	62.5				
	35.4	27.3	36.4				
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>48.1</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>1.9</b>		<b>Would not fit in</b>
12 to 25	50	10		30	10		
26 to 35	50	31.3	12.5	6.3			
36 to 45	33.3	50	5.6	11.1			
46 to 55	26.7	40	20	6.7	6.7		
56 to 65	14.3	64.3	3.6	17.9			
65 and above	27	62.4	5.3	5.3			
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	<b>57.5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
12 to 25	40	30	20	10			
26 to 35	87.5	12.5					
36 to 45	55.6	16.7	11.1	16.7			
46 to 55	53.3	20	20	6.7			
56 to 65	64.3	21.4	16.4	7.1	3.6	3.6	
65 and above	37	37	16.4	5.3	5.3		
<b>Would find help</b>	<b>69.4</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>		<b>Would not find help</b>
12 to 25	50		50				
26 to 35	81.3	6.3	6.3		6.3		
36 to 45	61.1	16.7	22.2				
46 to 55	66.7	6.7	20	6.7			
56 to 65	64.3	21.4	7.1	7.1			
65 and above	31.3	42.1	16	5.3	5.3		
<b>May become a leader</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>Would not become a leader</b>
12 to 25	20	40		10	10	20	
26 to 35	43.8	12.5	12.5	18.8	12.5		
36 to 45	16.7	33.3	38.9	11.1			
46 to 55	33.3	20	20	13.3	6.7	6.7	
56 to 65	32.1	21.4	28.6	7.1	7.1	3.6	
65 and above	16	47	16	21			
<b>Simple solution</b>	<b>69.4</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>Difficult solution</b>
12 to 25	50	10	20		10		
26 to 35	81.3	12.5			6.3		
36 to 45	66.7	22.2	11.1				
46 to 55	60	20	6.7		6.7	6.7	
56 to 65	57.1	21.4	10.7		3.6	3.6	
65 and above	42.3	47		10.7			

Table 15 shows that the 26 to 35 age group was the most hospitable to the teenagers. These results may be, in part, because most of the respondents had teenagers living in their homes or had recently parented teens. Those who were middle aged were the least positive in their hospitality but they were the most positive in helping the teens (66+%). The group that had the least positive response to the teens was those in the 65+ range. This group rated the teens the lowest in may become a leader (16%), would find help (31.3%), and would not make me feel uncomfortable (37%). This group recovered much of the positive response in the second ranking. The congregation interacts with the teenagers in a positive manner and always responds to their requests for assistance when they are completing projects. St. Matthew's takes pride in their inter-generational activities and co-operation.

**Table 16**

Scenario: "We have been married for five years and recently moved into the area. In our previous church, we were accepted by most of the church members but would hear negative remarks concerning our inter-racial marriage. We want to be part of a community of faith that treats us like any married couple."

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**INTER-RACIAL MARRIED COUPLE**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

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<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>		<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
12 to 25	90		10				
26 to 35	56.3	6.3	16.6	6.3	12.5		
36 to 45	22.2	77.8					
46 to 55	26.7	66.7	6.7				
56 to 65	42.9	39.3	10.7	3.6	3.6		
65 and above	10.7	62	22	5.3			
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>		<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
12 to 25	80	20					
26 to 35	43.8	25	18.8	6.3	6.3		
36 to 45	33.3	66.7					
46 to 55	13.3	66.7	6.7	6.7			
56 to 65	39.3	42.9	14.3		3.6		
65 and above	16	46.8	26	5.3	5.3		
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
12 to 25	90	10					
26 to 35	43.8		43.8	6.3	6.3		
36 to 45	50	22.2	27.8				
46 to 55	48.7	6.7	48.7				
56 to 65	50	14.3	28.6	3.6	3.6	5.3	
65 and above	16	5.3	73.4				
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>Would not fit in</b>
12 to 25	80	10	10				
26 to 35	37.5	31.3	12.5	6.3	12.5		
36 to 45	33.3	61.1	5.6				
46 to 55	6.7	80	13.3				
56 to 65	32.1	53.6	10.7			3.6	
65 and above	28	42	18	10.7	5.3		
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	<b>57.8</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
12 to 25	100						
26 to 35	68.8	12.5		12.5	6.3		
36 to 45	50	22.2	16.7				
46 to 55	53.3	6.7	40				
56 to 65	57.1	17.9	14.3	7.1		3.6	
65 and above	36	22	28	5.3	10.7		
<b>Would find help</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>		<b>Would not find help</b>
12 to 25	90		10				
26 to 35	56.3		25	6.3	12.5		
36 to 45	38.9	16.7	44.4				
46 to 55	40	26.7	33.3				
56 to 65	53.6	14.3	28.6	3.6			
65 and above	31.3	42.1	16	5.3	5.3		
<b>May become a leader</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not become a leader</b>
12 to 25	70	30					
26 to 35	43.8	18.8	6.3	18.8	12.5		
36 to 45	44.4	38.9	16.7				
46 to 55	48.7	26.7	13.3	13.3			
56 to 65	53.6	17.9	17.9	7.1		3.6	
65 and above	16	42.1	5.3	28	10.7		
<b>Simple solution</b>	<b>56.6</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>6.7</b>		<b>Difficult solution</b>
12 to 25	90	10					
26 to 35	62.5	6.3	25		6.3		
36 to 45	66.7	27.8	5.6				
46 to 55	60	33.3	6.7				
56 to 65	50	42.9		3.6	3.6		
65 and above	31	31	10.7	5.3	22		

The married couple received the highest percentage of positive reaction from the 25 and under group. In Table 16, the couple received the highest percentage of all the scenarios and achieved the only 100% result in the questionnaire in the would not make me feel uncomfortable category. The overall results tended to move from a positive response to a less positive response as the age groups increased in age. For example, the highest percentage in the 65+ age group was in the would not make me feel uncomfortable (36%) category. The lowest response was 16% as found in would be invited to join and may become a leader. As with many of the other scenarios, the positive response percentage increased as the ratings decreased.

**Table 17**

Scenario: "I am a high paid professional woman. I have had to work very hard to make it to the top. I have been involved in many churches in the past but always seem to discover that the members do not want change. Since I know how to make organizations function, I feel I would be an asset to any congregation to which I belong. I expect co-operation from those in the congregation who do not have the expertise I possess. If you are willing to do it "my way," then the church will succeed in this high tech world."

**PROFESSIONAL WOMAN**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
12 to 25	40	20	30	10			
26 to 35	43.8	31.3	18.8		6.3		
36 to 45	16.7	66.7	11.1	5.6			
46 to 55	20	80	20				
56 to 65	25	42.9	25	3.6		3.6	
65 and above	31.3	52.7	10.7		5.3		
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>56.7</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>4.7</b>			<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
12 to 25	30	40	20	10			
26 to 35	37.5	43.8	18.8				
36 to 45	16.7	55.6	22.2	5.6			
46 to 55	20	66.7	13.3				
56 to 65	3.6	64.3	26.6	3.6			
65 and above	16.3	52	21	10.7			
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>39.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>		<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
12 to 25	40	40	10	10			
26 to 35	43.8	18.8	37.5				
36 to 45	50	11.1	38.9				
46 to 55	46.7	13.3	33.3	6.7			
56 to 65	35.7	17.9	42.9			3.6	
65 and above	21.5	21.5	57				
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6.7</b>		<b>Would not fit in</b>
12 to 25	30	40	10	20			
26 to 35	12.5	56.3	25	6.3			
36 to 45	11.1	33.3	22.2	33.3			
46 to 55	26.7	40	13.3	13.3	6.7		
56 to 65	7.1	53.6	14.3	17.9	7.1		
65 and above	26	36	10.7	10.7	16.6		
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
12 to 25	40	20	30		10		
26 to 35	37.5	25	31.3		6.3		
36 to 45	16.7	22.2	33.3	16.7	11.1		
46 to 55	33.3	20	33.3	6.7		6.7	
56 to 65	17.9	21.4	42.9	17.9			
65 and above	16.4	26.2	16.4	20.5	20.5		
<b>Would find help</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not find help</b>
12 to 25	70	10	20				
26 to 35	43.8		50	6.3			
36 to 45	22.2	22.2	55.6				
46 to 55	33.3	6.7	40	6.7	13.3		
56 to 65	35.7	14.3	42.9		7.1		
65 and above	26	16.4	25.9	10	16.4	5.3	
<b>May become a leader in the church</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
12 to 25	40	20	20	10	10		
26 to 35	43.8	12.5		18.8	25		
36 to 45	27.8	11.1	44.4	11.1	5.6		
46 to 55	40	26.7	26.7	6.7			
56 to 65	28.8	21.4	28.6	7.1	7.1	7.1	
65 and above	36	16.3	10.7	21	10.7	5.3	

Table 5-17 Continued

	Simple solution	32.1	38.7	11.3	13.2	3.8	.9	Difficult solution
12 to 25	70	20		10				
26 to 35	31.3	43.8	6.3	12.5	6.3			
36 to 45	27.8	38.9	22.2	11.1				
46 to 55	48.7	40	13.3					
56 to 65	14.3	57.1	7.1	14.3	3.6	3.6		
65 and above	31.3	18	18	28	10.7			

Most of the respondents seemed to have concerns over the extension of hospitality towards the professional woman in Table 17. Some of this concern may have resulted in the way the scenario was written while other concerns may be a result of past attempts for control within the congregation. The members continue to address the control issue through various styles of interaction. Several examples of the attempt to keep control of the church amongst the general membership are found in various organizations within the church. The Women's Guild has three presidents rather than one; the Sunday School has two directors; the memorial committee is in charge of all memorial contributions and has control as to how the funds are used. This policy enables the committee the opportunity to make sure no memorials are used to benefit a particular family as occurred in the past, when a family installed a eternal light in the church without Consistory's approval. When the election for Consistory is held there must be two participants running for each available office. This gives the congregation a choice in the election of the Consistory and prevents a take over by one group.

The under 25 age group rated the professional woman very high in the would find help and simple solution categories and both this group and the 16 to 35 group seemed to be more willing to offer hospitality than the older groups. The 56 to 65 age group portrayed the least hospitable attitude especially in the find someone to listen (3.6%), would fit in easily (7.1%), would not make me feel uncomfortable (17.9%), and simple solution (14.3%). This attitude may be a result of previous conflicts with "take charge"

members. This age group best represents those members who helped hold the church together during their time of struggle. Many of these members were on Consistory and were confronted with having to choose sides between those who founded the church and felt it was “their church”, and those who just wanted to be part of a community of believers and saw no reason for control of power within the congregation.

**Table 18**

Scenario: “I owned my own business and had a wonderful family but I was unable to keep pace with modern technology and lost my company to a large corporation. I felt lost and did not know what to do. Unfortunately, I turned to alcohol. Now my family has turned their backs on me and I have nothing to live for.”

**HOMELESS MAN**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>.9</b>			<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
12 to 25	40	20	40				
26 to 35	37.5	37.5	25				
36 to 45	11.1	44.4	44.4				
46 to 55	28.7	40	33.3				
56 to 65	28.6	57.1	14.3				
65 and above	27	46.7	21	5.3			
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5.7</b>			<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
12 to 25	60	10	30				
26 to 35	43.8	43.8		12.5			
36 to 45	16.7	44.4	38.9				
46 to 55	6.7	80	6.7	6.7			
56 to 65	17.9	78.6	3.6				
65 and above	14.5	39	32	17.5			
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
12 to 25	60	10	30				
26 to 35	50	12.5	25				
36 to 45	33.3	11.1	55.6	12.5			
46 to 55	53.3	6.7	26.7				
56 to 65	46.4	14.3	39.3	13.3			
65 and above	24.2	12.5	52.7		5.3	5.3	
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2.8</b>		<b>Would not fit in</b>
12 to 25		50	40	10			
26 to 35	12.5	25	31.3	25	6.3		
36 to 45		55.6	27.8	16.7			
46 to 55		60	20	13.3	6.7		
56 to 65	7.1	67.9	7.1	17.9			
65 and above	21.2	32.8	26.5	14.2	5.3		
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
12 to 25	50	10	20	10		10	
26 to 35	43.8	6.3	31.3	18.8			
36 to 45	27.8	5.6	38.9	27.8			
46 to 55	33.3	13.3	26.7	13.3	13.3		
56 to 65	28.6	7.1	39.3	25			
65 and above	21	10.5	32	26	10.5		

Table 5-18 continued

<b>Would find help</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>6.6</b>		<b>Would not find help</b>
12 to 25	80	10	20	10			
26 to 35	50	25	18.8	6.3			
36 to 45	44.4	22.2	11.1	22.2			
46 to 55	28.7	28.7	20	20	6.7		
56 to 65	32.1	46.4	3.6	10.7	7.1		
65 and above	32	28	16	5.3	21.7		
<b>May become a leader</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>Would not become a leader</b>
12 to 25	40	10	40	10			
26 to 35	43.8		6.3	12.5	18.8		
36 to 45	16.7	22.2	44.4	11.1		5.6	
46 to 55	28.7	13.3	20	33.3		6.7	
56 to 65	14.3	48.4	17.9	10.7	7.1	3.8	
65 and above	21	16	31.7	16	10	5.3	
<b>Simple solution</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>Difficult solution</b>
12 to 25	40	50	10				
26 to 35	25	56.3	12.5			6.3	
36 to 45	22.2	55.8	11.1	5.8		5.8	
46 to 55	33.3	40	13.3		6.7	6.7	
56 to 65	17.9	57.1	17.9		7.1		
65 and above	27	35.7	16.1	5.3	5.3	10.6	

The homeless man was most accepted by the under 25 age grouping Table 18. This group's level of hospitality was the highest of all the age groups in the welcome to worship (40%), find someone to listen (60%), invited to join (60%), would not make me feel uncomfortable (50%), and simple solution (40%). It is interesting to note this same group had no response in the number one column in the would fit in easily category. Perhaps they realize that the congregation may have difficulty extending hospitality to this person. When transients happen to stop at St. Matthew's, many of the members who were witness to the interaction between the transient and the minister expressed a sense of relief when the person received food or money and was sent on their way. This attitude may have originated from a previous experience between a minister and a transient. Because St. Matthew's is located in the country it is unusual to have transients pass through the community and this may be part of the reasoning behind the less than enthusiastic response from the congregation.

### Table 19

Scenario: "We have been living together for four years. I used to attend a very conservative church but was asked to leave when I started bringing my partner to church."

He is not interested in being part of any church that treats us as sinners. We both are seeking a church that is willing to accept us as children of God and treat us as family.”

**GAY COUPLE**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
12 to 25	40	30	20		10		
26 to 35	25	25	31.3	6.3	6.3		
36 to 45	16.7	38.9	33.3		11.1	6.3	
46 to 55	6.7	53.3	40				
56 to 65	32.1	48.4	17.9		3.6		
65 and above	16	48	26.6		9.4		
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>		<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
12 to 25	50	20	20	33.3			
26 to 35	31.3	25	25	6.3	12.5		
36 to 45	11.1	33.3	44.4	5.6	5.6		
46 to 55	6.7	53.3	33.3	6.7			
56 to 65	21.4	57.1	17.9	3.6			
65 and above	10.7	37	47	5.3			
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
12 to 25	40	20	40				
26 to 35	37.5		37.5	18.8	6.3		
36 to 45	28.7	22.2	44.4		5.6		
46 to 55	33.3	13.3	48.7	6.7			
56 to 65	32.1	21.4	42.9		3.6		
65 and above	18	16	46.6	10.7		10.7	
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>39.6</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not fit in</b>
12 to 25	30	30	10	20	10		
26 to 35	12.5	37.5	15	18.8	6.3		
36 to 45	11.1	38.9	33.3	11.1	5.6		
46 to 55		53.3	33.3		13.3		
56 to 65	17.9	42.9	28.6	7.1	3.6		
65 and above	10.7	31.3	16	26	10.7	5.3	
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
12 to 25	60		30			10	
26 to 35	62.5		12.5	12.5	12.5		
36 to 45	33.3	11.1	38.9	5.6	11.1		
46 to 55	48.7	6.7	33.3	13.3			
56 to 65	48.4	10.7	25	17.9			
65 and above	20	20	14.7	20	20	5.3	
<b>Would find help</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not find help</b>
12 to 25	60	10	10		20		
26 to 35	31.3		50	6.3	6.3	6.3	
36 to 45	27.8	16.7	44.4	11.1			
46 to 55	20	20	53.3		6.7		
56 to 65	25	21.4	50		2.6		
65 and above	16	31.3	21	21	10.7		
<b>May become a leader in the church</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
12 to 25	50		20	10	20		
26 to 35	31.3	6.3	18.8	18.8	18.8	11.9	
36 to 45	16.7	16.7	38.9	11.1	5.6	5.6	
46 to 55	33.3	20	6.7	20	13.3	6.7	
56 to 65	21.4	10.7	21.4	32.2	7.1	7.1	
65 and above	16	21	16	26	21	21	
<b>Simple solution</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>Difficult solution</b>
12 to 25	50	30	20				
26 to 35	31.3	43.8		6.3	12.5	6.3	
36 to 45	33.3	22.2	22.2		11.1	11.1	
46 to 55	33.3	13.3	20	6.7	26.7		
56 to 65	35.7	32.1	14.3	7.1	3.6	7.1	
65 and above	16	36	5.3	16	16	10.7	

Table 19 again shows the different views between differing age groups within the congregation. As with most of the other scenarios, the younger members are more responsive to the stranger. With a few exceptions, the response became more negative as



the age of the members increased. This attitude may indicate a willingness to accept same sex unions among the younger generation while the older generation still struggles with the ramifications of said union. The chart shows the struggle many members have with this scenario. A majority of members placed the couple in the third column (43.4%) in the would be invited to join category and there was not a strong consensus to become a church leader from the congregation. The congregation seems to be willing to talk about this issue but there is a vocal minority who attempts to influence those who are straddling the fence.

**Table 20**

Scenario: "I served 10 years for armed robbery. I was in a gang and we decided to rob a local store. I had a gun and I was the only one who got caught. I never squealed on my accomplices. Now I am trying to turn my life around. While in prison I earned my General Education Diploma and have taken some college courses. I would like to be part of a Christian church family that is willing to help me grow in my new found faith."

**FORMER INMATE**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>			<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
12 to 25	10	50	30	10			
26 to 35	12.5	58.3	31.3				
36 to 45	5.6	44.4	50				
46 to 55	20	73.3	6.7				
56 to 65	28.6	48.4	21.4	3.6			
65 and above	18.4	58.6	27				
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>54.7</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>			<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
12 to 25	30	40	20	10			
26 to 35	18.8	62.5	18.8				
36 to 45	27.8	38.9	33.3				
46 to 55	13.3	86.7	13.3	6.7			
56 to 65	21.4	67.9	10.7				
65 and above	21.3	42.1	31.3	5.3			
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
12 to 25	50	20	20		10		
26 to 35	37.5	18.8	37.5	6.3			
36 to 45	33.3	16.7	50				
46 to 55	40	6.7	40	6.7	6.7		
56 to 65	42.9	17.9	35.7		3.8		
65 and above	27	10.7	57			5.3	

Table 5-19 continued

<b>Would fit in easily</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>48.1</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>5.7</b>		<b>Would not fit in</b>
12 to 25		60	20	10	10		
26 to 35		56.3	37.5	6.3			
36 to 45	11.1	27.8	38.9	16.7	5.6		
46 to 55	6.7	33.3	26.7	26.7	6.7		
56 to 65	7.1	57.1	10.7	21.4	3.6		
65 and above	10	53	27		10		
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
12 to 25		30	20	30	10	10	
26 to 35	12.5	18.8	50	12.5	6.3		
36 to 45	11.1	11.1	44.4	22.2	11.1		
46 to 55	26.7		26.7	33.3	13.3		
56 to 65	32.1	14.3	28.6	21.4	3.6		
65 and above	10.7	16.3	57	5.3	10.7		
<b>Would find help</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>4.7</b>		<b>Would not find help</b>
12 to 25	40	10	40	10			
26 to 35	50	37.5	6.3		6.3		
36 to 45	27.8	11.1	50				
46 to 55	40	13.3	20	11.1	6.7		
56 to 65	60.7	10.7	14.3	20	3.6		
65 and above	31.3	21.4	31.3	5.3	10.7		
<b>May become a leader in the church</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
12 to 25	30	30	20	10		10	
26 to 35	12.5	37.5	12.5	18.8	18.8		
36 to 45	11.1	16.7	44.4	11.1	16.7		
46 to 55	26.7	26.7	13.3	20	6.7	6.7	
56 to 65	7.1	28.6	32.1	14.3	14.3	3.6	
65 and above	10.7	26	10.3	31.3	16.4	5.3	
<b>Simple solution</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>Difficult solution</b>
12 to 25	30	40	10		10	10	
26 to 35	12.5	43.8	37.5		6.3		
36 to 45	11.1	38.9	50				
46 to 55	26.7	33.3	6.7	6.7	20	6.7	
56 to 65	21.4	53.6	14.3	3.6		7.1	
65 and above	16.4	46	16.4	10.6	5.3	5.3	

The inmate was another scenario that demonstrated the congregations'

unwillingness to extend hospitality without limits. Table 20 shows that most of the responses between age groups were similar with the highest percentage (43.4%) falling in the would find help category. The congregation seems willing to assist this person, but they seem less willing to accept him into community without proving himself.

Interestingly in several categories the inmate received a higher rating from the older members than the younger members. This may be in part because of the older members' idea that everyone should receive a second chance while the younger members may have the "they got what they deserved" attitude. This attitude may be in part to the fact that many of our members have struggled through difficult personal situations and use the church as a sounding board and a source of spiritual renewal. Because the church has had a positive role in strengthening family ties, the older members of the congregation are less critical than the younger members of those who go astray.

**Table 21**

Scenario: "Yes I used to be a member of the Klu Klux Klan but I saw the error of my ways. Now I am trying to become part of a congregation that is willing to overlook my many faults and help me overcome my racism. I also have friends who are searching for a community of believers."

**K.K.K. MEMBER**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Be welcome to worship</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not be welcome</b>
12 to 25	40	20	40				
26 to 35	31.3	18.8	50				
36 to 45	22.2	33.3	33.3	5.8		5.8	
46 to 55	13.3	60	20		6.7		
56 to 65	25	42.9	25		7.1		
65 and above	16	67	10.7		5.3		
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
12 to 25	20	40	30	10			
26 to 35	18.8	50	31.3				
36 to 45	22.2	27.8	38.9	5.8		5.8	
46 to 55	6.7	66.7	26.7				
56 to 65	14.3	71.4	3.6	3.8	7.1		
65 and above	21	53	20.7		5.3		
<b>Would be invited to join</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>		<b>3.8</b>	<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
12 to 25	20	30	50				
26 to 35	56.3	12.5	25	6.3			
36 to 45	33.3	22.2	38.9			5.8	
46 to 55	33.3	20	46.7				
56 to 65	17.9	28.6	42.9	3.6		7.1	
65 and above	21	16	57.7			5.3	
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>Would not fit in</b>
12 to 25	10	30	10	50			
26 to 35	18.8	18.8	25	31.3	6.3		
36 to 45	16.7	27.8	11.1	36.9		5.8	
46 to 55		46.7	20	26.7	6.7		
56 to 65	10.7	57.1	10.7	10.7	3.6	7.1	
65 and above	16	32	28.5	15.5	10		
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
12 to 25	20		30	20	20	10	
26 to 35	25	6.3	45.8	18.8	6.3		
36 to 45	5.8	16.7	27.8	27.8	16.7	5.8	
46 to 55	20	6.7	33.3	33.3	6.7		
56 to 65	21.4	28.6	21.4	10.7	14.3	3.6	
65 and above	16	21	36	15.4	11.6		
<b>Would find help</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>Would not find help</b>
12 to 25	50		40			10	
26 to 35	43.8	12.5	25	18.8			
36 to 45	22.2	11.1	44.4	11.1	5.8		
46 to 55	26.7	26.7	33.3		13.3	5.8	
56 to 65	32.1	35.7	10.7	10.7	10.7		
65 and above	26	31.1	26	5.3	11.6		
<b>May become a leader in the church</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
12 to 25	20	30	20	10	10	10	
26 to 35	31.3	25	12.5		31.3		
36 to 45	16.7	33.3	22.2	11.1	11.1	5.8	
46 to 55	26.7	33.3	6.7	13.3	13.3	6.7	
56 to 65	14.3	16.6	28.6	3.6	17.9	7.1	
65 and above	16	37	16	11.6	12.8	11.6	
<b>Simple solution</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.6</b>	
12 to 25	20	50	20			10	
26 to 35	25	31.3	18.8	12.5	12.5		
36 to 45	5.8	61.1	22.2	5.8	5.8		
46 to 55	26.7	40	6.7		6.7	20	
56 to 65	25	42.9	7.1		10.7	14.3	
65 and above	21	32	27	5.3	9.4	5.3	

The congregation had the greatest difficulty dealing with the K.K.K. member. In Table 21 we find that other than the would find help (32.1%) category this person received the lowest overall hospitality rating of all the scenarios. The congregation has learned to “agree to disagree” on many subjects and strives to exhibit a united front through our mission work and community projects. The K.K.K. member may represent all that is inhospitable, thus the congregation is less willing to extend hospitality for fear the stranger’s attitude may erode the base of all St. Matthew’s beliefs. The response from all age groups is similar in that no one group stands out as extending more hospitality than another group. The congregation’s response to most of the scenarios focused on subtle differences between themselves and the stranger. In the K.K.K. scenario the congregation seems to see the stranger as evil personified and is less willing to take that step in faith to demonstrate hospitality.

### **Response to Situations Comparing Mission Trip Participants and the Congregation of St. Matthew’s United Church of Christ**

A noticeable difference occurred in the percentages when comparing the results of the congregation with those who participated in the mission trips. I would have thought that those who participate in the mission trips would exhibit an overwhelming positive response to the practice of hospitality. After viewing the results, I discovered that most of the responses from those who participated in the mission trips were lower than the congregational average. This difference may be because those involved in the mission trips view the hospitality level of the congregation as an untested event. Because a vast majority of the congregation has never participated in a mission trip, they have few

opportunities to extend hospitality with a stranger other than the controlled situations that arise when working at Project S.H.A.R.E. or the Salvation Army. Those who participated in the mission trips have actual experience with extending hospitality to strangers and they know how they would react. The members of the congregation who have never taken a mission trip may see the strangers in the scenario as figments of their imagination, thus they might believe they would be hospitable, but when confronted with the actual event, they may display an inhospitable attitude.

In the following charts, the first bold number is the congregation's results. The second bold number is mission trip participant's results. The third lighter numbers are the sample churches. The results used to gather the information were selected from the first column. The questionnaire was designed so that the respondents could rate their attitudes from a positive to a negative response going from left to right across the chart. I used the first column, for discussion, because the most dramatic differences were found in this column. The remaining columns portrayed a similar response to the first column.

**Table 22**

Scenario: "I owned my own business and had a wonderful family but I was unable to keep pace with modern technology and lost my company to a large corporation. I felt lost and did not know what to do. Unfortunately, I turned to alcohol. Now my family has turned their backs on me and I have nothing to live for."

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**HOMELESS MAN**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

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<b>Welcome</b>							<b>Not welcome</b>
St. Matthew's	27.4	44.3	27.4	.9			
Mission participants	15.15	57.58	27.27				
Sample churches	21.6	51.4	24.3		2.7		
<b>Someone to listen</b>							<b>No one to listen</b>
St. Matthew's	23.6	53.8	17	5.7			
Mission participants	18.18	63.64	18.18				
Sample churches	32.4	51.4	13.5			2.7	
<b>Invited to join</b>							<b>Not be invited to join</b>
St. Matthew's	43.4	12.3	38.7	3.8	.9	.9	
Mission participants	39.39	9.09	45.45	3.03		3.03	
Sample churches	37.8	24.3	32.4	2.7	2.7		
<b>Would fit in easily</b>							<b>Would not fit in</b>
St. Matthew's	7.5	50	22.6	17	2.8		
Mission participants	3.03	57.58	9.09	27.27	3.03		
Sample churches	13.5	48.6	13.5	18.9	5.4		
<b>Not uncomfortable</b>							<b>Feel uncomfortable</b>
St. Matthew's	32.1	8.5	33	21.7	3.8	.9	
Mission participants	21.21	9.09	36.36	27.27	3.03	3.03	
Sample churches	24.3	16.2	24.3	24.3	10.8		
<b>Would find help</b>							<b>Would not find help</b>
St. Matthew's	38.7	29.2	13.2	12.3	6.6		
Mission participants	36.36	27.27	12.12	18.18	6.06		
Sample churches	35.1	16.2	24.3	18.9	2.7	2.7	
<b>May become a leader</b>							<b>Would not become a leader</b>
St. Matthew's	24.5	24.5	25.5	14.2	7.5	3.8	
Mission participants	18.18	33.33	21.21	12.12	12.12	3.03	
Sample churches	40.5	16.2	24.3	16.2	2.7		
<b>Simple solution</b>							<b>Difficult solution</b>
St. Matthew's	25.5	50	14.2	1.9	3.8	4.7	
Mission participants	18.18	51.52	18.18		9.09		
Sample churches	56.8	18.9	5.4	16.2		2.7	

In Table 22, using the first column, we find the mission trip participants scored lower than the congregation in every category. As stated previously, St. Matthew's has little experience dealing with homeless people because of the church's location. The experience of those participating on the mission trips has been enlightening in that all the participants who traveled to Maine and worked at H.O.M.E., which is affiliated with the Emmaus Organization, have had the opportunity to work with transients. Having this experience may give them better insight as to how the congregation would react if the stranger at the church door were a transient. Because they had first hand experience with transients, they had a better understanding of the pros and cons of extending hospitality to one who is a complete stranger. One of the more memorable experiences the mission

participants had was the year we met a Native American who was staying at the center. He requested an opportunity to speak with the group. Following his message he asked the group for money. The group was ready to take up an offering until he stated that he usually gets \$80 for each speaking engagement. The group suddenly got up in mass and exited the facilities. They were receptive to the notion of helping the man until he started making demands. As a group, they established their limits without speaking one word to each other.

**Table 23**

Scenario: "I was young and foolish and never thought it would happen to me. My boy friend said that if I really loved him then I would do anything for him. As soon as I discovered I was pregnant, he took off. My family kicked me out and I am living at Safe Harbour. However, I can only stay there for 3 months and then I have to find an apartment. I'm not afraid to work and I want to get a good job so I can raise my son in a loving surrounding."

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**UNWED MOTHER**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

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<b>Invited to join</b>				
St. Matthew's	<b>52.8</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>Would not be welcome to worship with us</b>
Mission participants	<b>45.45</b>	<b>51.52</b>	<b>3.03</b>	
Sample churches	59.5	35.1	5.4	
<b>Would fit in easily</b>				<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>44.3</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>6.6</b>	
Mission participants	<b>66.67</b>	<b>9.09</b>	<b>24.24</b>	
Sample churches	56.8	40.5	2.7	
<b>Not uncomfortable</b>				<b>Would not be invited to join the church</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>57.5</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>27.4</b>	
Mission participants	<b>24.24</b>	<b>66.67</b>	<b>9.09</b>	
Sample churches	51.4	29.7	18.9	

Table 5-23 continued

<b>Would find help</b>							<b>Would not fit in</b>
St. Matthew's	25.5	61.3	9.4	2.8	.9		
Mission participants	24.24	66.67	6.06	3.03			
Sample churches	21.6	64.9	10.8		2.7		
<b>May become a leader</b>							<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
St. Matthew's	57.5	15.1	15.1	11.3	.9		
Mission participants	48.48	12.12	24.24	15.15			
Sample churches	62.2	16.2	16.2	2.7	2.7		
<b>Simple solution</b>							<b>Would not find help</b>
St. Matthew's	57.5	19.8	13.2	7.5	1.9		
Mission participants	54.55	24.24	12.12	6.06	3.03		
Sample churches	51.4	27	8.1	10.8	2.7		
<b>Invited to join</b>							<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
St. Matthew's	39.6	24.5	22.6	10.4	1.9	.9	
Mission participants	36.36	27.27	21.21	12.12	3.03		
Sample churches	48.6	21.6	10.8	18.9			
<b>Would fit in easily</b>							<b>Difficult solution</b>
St. Matthew's	73.6	15.1	6.6	1.9	1.9	.9	
Mission participants	72.73	18.18	3.03		3.03	3.03	
Sample churches	81.1	16.2	2.7				

The only area where the mission participants scored higher was in the find someone to listen to them category in Table 23. One of the most important learning experiences the mission participants had was realizing that those they helped may not necessarily need physical help as much as emotional help. Over that past eight years of mission trips, many of the participants have learned to take time to sit down with the stranger and listen to them. Some of the most dramatic polar reversals have occurred when the practitioners of hospitality took the time to get to know those they were helping. During our most recent mission trip, several of our participants had the opportunity to learn more about one of the residents of H.O.M.E. They discovered that he was going to go to Guatemala to work with the poor. He shared his dreams with the whole group and the group gave him one hundred dollars to help with his plane fare. Everyone involved experienced a polar reversal because of the realization that the person they thought they were helping was actually helping them understand true hospitality. Even though this



man had no material possessions, he still felt there were others whom he could help.

Several of our members continue to be in contact with him.

**Table 24**

Scenario: "Yes I used to be a member of the Klu Klux Klan but I saw the error of my ways. Now I am trying to become part of a congregation that is willing to overlook my many faults and help me overcome my racism. I also have friends who are searching for a community of believers."

**K.K.K. MEMBER**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Invited to join</b>								<b>Would not be welcome</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>23.6</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>3.8</b>		<b>.9</b>	
Mission participants	<b>21.21</b>	<b>33.33</b>	<b>33.33</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>9.09</b>			
Sample churches	21.6	35.1	43.2					
<b>Would fit in easily</b>								<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>17</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>		<b>.9</b>	
Mission participants	<b>15.15</b>	<b>51.52</b>	<b>18.18</b>	<b>6.06</b>	<b>9.09</b>			
Sample churches	21.6	48.6	27	2.7				
<b>Not uncomfortable</b>								<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>29.2</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>			<b>3.8</b>	
Mission participants	<b>18.18</b>	<b>30.30</b>	<b>36.36</b>	<b>6.06</b>			<b>9.09</b>	
Sample churches	29.7	35.1	29.7	5.4				
<b>Would find help</b>								<b>Would not fit in</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>12.3</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>4.7</b>		<b>2.8</b>	
Mission participants	<b>6.06</b>	<b>42.42</b>	<b>6.06</b>	<b>30.30</b>	<b>9.09</b>		<b>6.06</b>	
Sample churches	10.8	27	27	21.6	13.5			
<b>May become a leader</b>								<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>17.9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>12.3</b>		<b>2.8</b>	
Mission participants	<b>9.09</b>	<b>18.18</b>	<b>30.30</b>	<b>18.18</b>	<b>18.18</b>		<b>6.06</b>	
Sample churches	21.6	16.2	27	21.6	5.4		8.1	
<b>Simple solution</b>								<b>Would not find help</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>32.1</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>7.5</b>		<b>1.9</b>	
Mission participants	<b>27.27</b>	<b>27.27</b>	<b>24.24</b>	<b>9.09</b>	<b>9.09</b>		<b>3.03</b>	
Sample churches	29.7	13.5	18.9	27	8.1		2.7	
<b>Invited to join</b>								<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>19.8</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>6.6</b>	
Mission participants	<b>9.09</b>	<b>33.33</b>	<b>18.18</b>	<b>6.06</b>	<b>24.24</b>		<b>9.09</b>	
Sample churches	18.9	29.7	16.2	10.8	13.5		10.8	
<b>Would fit in easily</b>								
St. Matthew's	<b>20.8</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>8.5</b>		<b>8.5</b>	
Mission participants	<b>9.09</b>	<b>48.48</b>	<b>12.12</b>		<b>9.09</b>		<b>21.21</b>	
Sample churches	27	27	18.9	10.8	5.4		10.8	

Table 24 shows that the mission participants scored this person lower in all categories. They especially felt that the person would make me feel uncomfortable, was not a simple solution and would not fit in easily. These results may be a result of previous mission trips. A trip to West Virginia was enlightening to the participants in that they confronted greed and insensitivity. During one work project, several of the participants entered the home where we were working. When they exited, they informed the rest of the group that a confederate flag was displayed on a wall of the home. Several comments from the homeowner provided further proof of his bigotry. The interesting aspect of this mission trip was the different experiences of the various work groups. One group experienced bigotry and greed while the other group experienced true southern hospitality. When the participants talk of the trip there are two opposite views presented.

**Table 25**

Scenario: “We have been living together for four years. I used to attend a very conservative church but was asked to leave when I started bringing my partner to church. He is not interested in being part of any church that treats us as sinners. We both are seeking a church that is willing to accept us as children of God and treat us as family.”

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**GAY COUPLE**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

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Invited to join								
St. Matthew's	<b>22.6</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>.9</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>.9</b>		<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
Mission participants	<b>24.24</b>	<b>48.48</b>	<b>24.24</b>		<b>3.03</b>			
Sample churches	29.1	35.1	29.7	5.4				

Table 5-25 continued

<b>Would fit in easily</b>							<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
St. Matthew's	19.8	40.6	31.1	5.7	2.8		
Mission participants	24.24	33.33	36.36	3.03	3.03		
Sample churches	27	43.2	18.9	10.8			
<b>Not uncomfortable</b>							<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
St. Matthew's	30.2	16	43.4	5.7	2.8	1.9	
Mission participants	33.33	15.15	42.42	3.03	3.03	3.03	
Sample churches	43.2	21.6	29.7	5.4			
<b>Would find help</b>							<b>Would not fit in</b>
St. Matthew's	13.2	39.6	25.5	13.2	7.5	.9	
Mission participants	18.18	39.39	21.21	12.12	6.06	3.03	
Sample churches	24.3	35.1	10.8	16.2	8.1	5.4	
<b>May become a leader</b>							<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
St. Matthew's	43.4	9.4	25.5	13.2	7.5	.9	
Mission participants	39.39	6.06	3.03	9.09	9.09		
Sample churches	51.4	10.8	21.6	10.8	2.7	2.7	
<b>Simple solution</b>							<b>Would not find help</b>
St. Matthew's	27.4	17.9	40.6	6.6	6.6	.9	
Mission participants	30.30	18.18	39.39	3.03	9.09		
Sample churches	51.4	10.8	13.5	18.9	2.7	2.7	
<b>Invited to join</b>							<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
St. Matthew's	25.5	13.2	20.8	21.7	9.4	9.4	
Mission participants	24.24	12.12	21.21	24.24	6.06	12.12	
Sample churches	45.9	8.1	8.1	18.9	13.5	5.4	
<b>Would fit in easily</b>							<b>Difficult solution</b>
St. Matthew's	32.1	30.2	11.3	8.5	11.3	6.6	
Mission participants	33.33	39.39	6.06	3.03	3.03	15.15	
Sample churches	51.4	18.9	13.5	5.4	5.4	5.4	

Table 25 is the only scenario that gives the mission participants a higher percentage in all but two categories. As discussed earlier, the church went through a difficult time because of an inappropriate incident that occurred within the confines of the church. Because of this incident, the congregation continues to struggle with their giving to the United Church of Christ. They want to know exactly where their money is going so they designate what organizations will be the recipient. While on our mission trips we have evening vespers and the issue of giving to the wider church has been discussed. The participants have come to realize that when they volunteer to work on a project they do not know, nor do they need to know the sexual preference of those they are helping. They also have discovered that another's sexual preference does not make them less of a person. One of the most important aspects of our mission experience is discovering that

the hospitality the participants extend is returned two-fold and there is no place for a judgmental attitude.

**Table 26**

Scenario: “We have been married for five years and recently moved into the area. In our previous church, we were accepted by most of the church members but would hear negative remarks concerning our inter-racial marriage. We want to be part of a community of faith that treats us like any married couple.”

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**INTER-RACIAL MARRIED COUPLE**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

---

<b>Invited to join</b>							<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>37.7</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>		
Mission participants	<b>30.30</b>	<b>51.52</b>	<b>9.09</b>	6.06	3.03		
Sample churches	56.8	32.4	10.8				
<b>Would fit in easily</b>							<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>34.9</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>		
Mission participants	<b>36.36</b>	<b>45.45</b>	<b>12.12</b>		6.06		
Sample churches	54.1	37.8	8.1				
<b>Not uncomfortable</b>							<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>46.2</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>.9</b>	
Mission participants	<b>57.58</b>	<b>6.06</b>	<b>27.27</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.03</b>	
Sample churches	51.4	21.6	24.3	2.7			
<b>Would find help</b>							<b>Would not fit in</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>33</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>	
Mission participants	<b>30.30</b>	<b>48.48</b>	<b>12.12</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.03</b>	
Sample churches	45.9	43.2	8.1			2.7	
<b>May become a leader</b>							<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>57.5</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	
Mission participants	<b>51.52</b>	<b>24.24</b>	<b>15.15</b>	<b>6.06</b>		<b>3.03</b>	
Sample churches	73	8.1	13.5	2.7		2.7	
<b>Simple solution</b>							<b>Would not find help</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>49.1</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>.9</b>	
Mission participants	<b>54.55</b>	<b>18.18</b>	<b>24.24</b>		<b>3.03</b>		
Sample churches	75.7	5.4	2.7	13.5	2.7		

Table 5-26 continued

<b>Invited to join</b>								<b>Would not become a leader</b>
St. Matthew's	44.3	28.3	11.3	11.3	3.8	.9		
Mission participants	51.52	24.24	12.12		3.03			
Sample churches	75.7	10.8	5.4	5.4		2.7		
<b>Would fit in easily</b>								<b>Difficult solution</b>
St. Matthew's	56.6	28.3	7.5	1.9	5.7			
Mission participants	54.55	33.33	3.03		9.09			
Sample churches	78.4	13.5		2.7	2.7	2.7		

The results of this scenario show results that are equally divided between the mission participants and the congregation. In table 26, the congregation seems to be willing to extend hospitality to the couple in the categories of comfortability and welcome. The mission participants were more disposed to assist the couple and offer them a leadership role in the church. The mission participants had no experiences with inter-racial couples on any of the mission trips. The only memorable experience concerning any couples involved a local man and woman who were living together. Several of the volunteers befriended the man and when the group returned the following year the man told the group that he had gotten married. He said that he was so impressed over the way our group treated each other and how well the spouses got along that he would try marriage.

### Table 27

Scenario: "We enjoy being in each others company and church is a great place to meet on Sunday. Even though we do not always seem like we are paying attention during the service, we do pick up a lot of Christian attitudes from the congregation. We are still struggling with our faith and sometimes demonstrate our frustration by being rude. Will you continue to love us and overlook our actions?"

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## TEENAGERS

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Invited to join</b>								<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>51.9</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>.9</b>			
Mission participants	<b>51.52</b>	<b>39.39</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>6.06</b>				
Sample churches	56.8	35.1	8.1					
<b>Would fit in easily</b>								<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>50</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>				
Mission participants	<b>45.45</b>	<b>42.42</b>	<b>9.09</b>	<b>3.03</b>				
Sample churches	64.9	27	2.7	5.4				
<b>Not uncomfortable</b>								<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>49.1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>.9</b>		
Mission participants	<b>48.48</b>	<b>18.18</b>	<b>24.24</b>		<b>6.06</b>			
Sample churches	54.1	24.3	21.6					
<b>Would find help</b>								<b>Would not fit in</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>31.1</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>1.9</b>			
Mission participants	<b>27.27</b>	<b>54.55</b>		<b>18.18</b>				
Sample churches	51.4	27	10.8	5.4	5.4			
<b>May become a leader</b>								<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>57.5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>.9</b>		
Mission participants	<b>48.48</b>	<b>27.27</b>	<b>15.15</b>	<b>6.06</b>				
Sample churches	59.5	13.5	16.2	5.4		5.4		
<b>Simple solution</b>								<b>Would not find help</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>58.5</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>			
Mission participants	<b>66.67</b>	<b>15.15</b>	<b>12.12</b>	<b>6.06</b>				
Sample churches	70.3	10.8	2.7	8.1	2.7	5.4		
<b>Invited to join</b>								<b>Would not become a leader</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>28.3</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>		
Mission participants	<b>27.27</b>	<b>33.33</b>	<b>24.24</b>	<b>6.06</b>	<b>9.09</b>			
Sample churches	48.6	27	10.8	5.4	2.7	5.4		
<b>Would fit in easily</b>								<b>Difficult solution</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>59.4</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>		
Mission participants	<b>60.61</b>	<b>27.27</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>6.06</b>		<b>3.03</b>		
Sample churches	67.6	24.3		2.7		5.4		

This results of this situation were the most similar of all the scenarios. The greatest difference in percentages in Table 27, occurs in the would not make me feel uncomfortable, and would find help categories. The mission participants had more of a problem with the comfort level when around teens. This may stem from the difference in work ethics between those teens who went on the mission trips and the adults. As with most teens, they are willing to do most any kind of work but it is sometimes difficult to

keep them on track for several hours or days. The adults usually work on a project until it is completed while the teens put in a half a day and then look for something more exciting to accomplish. In the find help category, the mission participants were more willing to help the teens than the congregation was. This has been demonstrated many times during our mission experiences. The adults are always willing to take the teens under their tutelage and show them how to accomplish the task. The teens have learned many skills including using power tools, installing siding, roofing, and painting because the adults take the time to assist them.

**Table 28**

Scenario: “I am a high paid professional woman. I have had to work very hard to make it to the top. I have been involved in many churches in the past but always seem to discover that the members do not want change. Since I know how to make organizations function, I feel I would be an asset to any congregation to which I belong. I expect co-operation from those in the congregation who do not have the expertise I possess. If you are willing to do it “my way,” then the church will succeed in this high tech world.”

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**PROFESSIONAL WOMAN**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

---

<b>Invited to join</b>									
St. Matthew's	<b>28.3</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>	1.9	.9			<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
Mission participants	<b>21.21</b>	<b>51.52</b>	<b>24.24</b>						
Sample churches	48.6	45.9	5.4						
<b>Would fit in easily</b>									<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
St. Matthew's	<b>17.9</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>4.7</b>					
Mission participants	<b>6.06</b>	<b>57.58</b>	<b>33.33</b>	<b>3.03</b>					
Sample churches	35.1	45.9	18.9						

Table 5-28 continued

<b>Not uncomfortable</b>							<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
St. Matthew's	38.7	18.9	39.6	1.9		.9	
Mission participants	39.39	24.24	33.33			3.03	
Sample churches	43.2	29.7	27				
<b>Would find help</b>							<b>Would not fit in</b>
St. Matthew's	17	44.3	16	17	5.7		
Mission participants	9.09	36.36	12.12	27.27	15.15		
Sample churches	24.3	43.2	18.9	10.8	2.7		
<b>May become a leader</b>							<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
St. Matthew's	24.5	22.6	32.1	12.3	7.5	.9	
Mission participants	18.18	15.15	36.36	21.21	9.09	5.4	
Sample churches	32.4	18.9	32.4	2.7	8.1		
<b>Simple solution</b>							<b>Would not find help</b>
St. Matthew's	35.8	12.3	40.6	3.8	6.6	.9	
Mission participants	30.30	9.09	48.48	3.03	9.09		
Sample churches	48.6	10.8	10.8	24.3	2.7	2.7	
<b>Invited to join</b>							<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
St. Matthew's	34.9	17.9	22.6	12.3	9.4	2.8	
Mission participants	27.27	51.52	9.09	3.03	12.12	3.03	
Sample churches	51.4	10.8	16.2	8.1	2.7	10.8	
<b>Would fit in easily</b>							<b>Difficult solution</b>
St. Matthew's	32.1	38.7	11.3	13.2	3.8	.9	
Mission participants	21.21	51.52	9.09	3.03	12.12	3.03	
Sample churches	37.8	37.8	5.4	5.4	5.4	8.1	

The two categories, in Table 28, that seem to be the most challenging for the mission participants are the find someone to listen, and fit in easily categories. The mission participants are usually a diverse group but they always put any differences aside to work for a common goal. After their first mission experiences, the participants decided that each work group should have a leader. The participants decided the pastor would select the leaders and the work groups. Even though I requested a volunteer to take this responsibility, the participants seem content with this arrangement. Because I know the attitudes, quirks, and abilities of a majority of the participants, the groups are arranged so conflicting personalities are in different groups. As the chart for the professional woman demonstrates, the congregation is not very hospitable to a person who has their personal agenda and uses any means to advance that agenda. If the respondents assumed the woman was single, that could be a positive or negative factor in



the results. If there is a mission participant that demonstrates these characteristics, I usually attempt to place them in an individual work site or a small group site. This has enabled our mission experiences to be a very positive experience. Because of the nature of mission trips, most of the participants have learned to accept change in the work schedule and daily schedule. Those participants who cannot accept change usually only participate in one mission experience.

**Table 29**

Scenario: "I served 10 years for armed robbery. I was in a gang and we decided to rob a local store. I had a gun and I was the only one who got caught. I never squealed on my accomplices. Now I am trying to turn my life around. While in prison I earned my General Education Diploma and have taken some college courses. I would like to be part of a Christian church family that is willing to help me grow in my new found faith."

**FORMER INMATE**

Bold type at the top of the column represents congregation total.

**Most Hospitable -----Least Hospitable**

<b>Invited to join</b>								<b>Would not be welcome to worship</b>
St. Matthew's	17	53.8	27.4	1.9				
Mission participants	<b>12.12</b>	<b>60.61</b>	<b>24.24</b>					
Sample churches	29.7	43.2	24.3		2.7			
<b>Would fit in easily</b>								<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
St. Matthew's	21.7	54.7	20.8	2.8				
Mission participants	<b>18.18</b>	<b>57.58</b>	<b>24.24</b>					
Sample churches	40.5	35.1	24.3					
<b>Not uncomfortable</b>								<b>Would not be invited to join</b>
St. Matthew's	37.7	15.1	41.5	1.9	2.8	.9		
Mission participants	<b>45.45</b>	<b>6.06</b>	<b>39.39</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.03</b>		
Sample churches	32.4	32.4	32.4	2.7				
<b>Would find help</b>								<b>Would not fit in</b>
St. Matthew's	6.6	48.1	25.5	14.2	5.7			
Mission participants	<b>3.03</b>	<b>51.52</b>	<b>12.12</b>	<b>27.27</b>	<b>6.06</b>			
Sample churches	16.2	43.2	16.2	13.5	10.8			

Table 5-29 continued

<b>May become a leader</b>							<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
St. Matthew's	17.9	14.2	38.7	19.8	8.5	.9	
Mission participants	15.15	15.15	33.33	27.27	9.09		
Sample churches	27	18.9	21.6	13.5	13.5	5.4	
<b>Simple solution</b>							<b>Would not find help</b>
St. Matthew's	43.4	17	25.5	9.4	4.7		
Mission participants	45.45	12.12	24.24	12.12	6.06	2.7	
Sample churches	32.4	21.6	16.2	21.6	5.4		
<b>Invited to join</b>							<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
St. Matthew's	14.2	27.4	23.6	17.9	13.2	3.8	
Mission participants	15.15	21.21	24.24	18.18	15.15	6.06	
Sample churches	35.1	13.5	18.9	13.5	10.8	8.1	
<b>Would fit in easily</b>							<b>Difficult solution</b>
St. Matthew's	18.9	44.3	22.6	3.8	5.7	4.7	
Mission participants	15.15	45.45	24.24	3.03	10.8	12.12	
Sample churches	32.4	32.4	8.1	13.5		2.7	

The results between the mission participants and the congregation were very similar in this scenario as shown in Table 29. The mission participants have had the opportunity to work with several ex-convicts and have had positive experiences. They tend to be more conscious of their personal possessions but seem willing to engage the ex-convicts in dialogue. It is interesting that the results are so similar, especially since the mission participants know that those with whom they associate will remain at the work site while the mission participant will return home to Pennsylvania. One would think that the extended hospitality would be greater to those strangers who become known only for a week, while the stranger that arrives at the door of the church may become a permanent part of the congregation. Perhaps the concern for self and family outweigh the desire to extend unfettered hospitality.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The major reason for my continuation of studies at Lancaster Theological Seminary was to discover if there were new venues to pursue in my ministry at St. Matthew's. I have been ministering to the congregation of St. Matthew's for eight years and felt I was at a crossroads in my ministry. I believed my studies at Lancaster would better enable me to focus on the future mission of St. Matthew's and gain a better understanding of the congregation's attitude toward the practice of hospitality. I chose hospitality as my focus because St. Matthew's seems to project the image of unfettered hospitality. The studies and readings over the past four years have enabled me to better understand the congregation's actions and gain focus on the future direction of St. Matthew's.

When I began gathering the various bodies of data from the questionnaire and interviews, I attempted to determine if the congregation of St. Matthew's differed in their practice of hospitality to the practice of other churches within Penn Central Conference. I felt that the practice would be at variance from those churches that were urban since the urban churches had a better chance to meet and welcome the stranger. The results showed little disparity between the sample churches and St. Matthew's in their willingness to practice hospitality. Another challenging issue is whether extending hospitality increased church membership. The results portrayed the fact that most of the members who have joined within the last eight years profess the welcoming atmosphere of the congregation as an important reason that they became members. Thus, at St. Matthew's, the practice of hospitality seems to go hand in hand with church growth since

our membership has increased due to the hospitable nature of the congregation. In dealing with the congregation of St. Matthew's I have discovered that a positive response is easier to achieve if they are asked them if they would like to practice hospitality as compared to asking if they wish to practice evangelism. I am sure that same response is prevalent in many other congregations as well. With this in mind, it may be prudent to suggest a name change to St. Matthew's Evangelism Committee so that it better represents the true purpose of the committee.

Of all the responses, only one negative response occurred and that concerned a person who felt she and her husband were disenfranchised. This situation has been part of the congregations' history and will no doubt continue until the parties involved either leave the congregation or pass away. Using hospitality to address social concerns has taken place through our help with the local food bank, homeless shelter, nursing homes, and our mission trips. As the congregation better understands the practice of hospitality, they may discover common ground between those who stress social activism and those who stress church growth. Through careful training on the practice of hospitality, the church may experience numerical growth as well as increased participation in social issues.

I believed significant dissimilarity on the questionnaire results between the various age groups would occur, but the outcome of the questionnaire portrayed similar responses. The older members have established opinions, both positive and negative, and tend to voice them more openly than the younger members. I was surprised with the comparable results between all ages and felt the outcome embodied the inter-generational co-operation within the congregation.

The difficulty with assessing the results of the questionnaire is exemplified in the fact that the scenarios are fictitious. When the situation is fiction, a positive response is easier to make. If the situation actually occurred, the observation that the stranger would choose St. Matthew's because they expected a hospitable welcome should be addressed. Most of the strangers who visit our church are usually dressed appropriately and act in a similar manner as the majority of congregation. Testing the congregation's practice of hospitality using real strangers rather than the fictitious ones portrayed in the questionnaire would be interesting. Actors portraying the strangers might be asked to visit the church and relate their experience to the congregation on a follow up visit. During the times when strangers worshiped with us and did not act in a manner that was accepted, the congregation responded by extending hospitality during and after the service. This hospitality took the form of individuals assisting the stranger with finding the correct hymn, assisting the stranger to a seat, introducing the stranger to other congregation members, and remaining with the stranger following worship so that they might have the opportunity to learn more about the church. The respondents' anecdotal comments from the questionnaire demonstrate how important the first impression is when choosing a church. Many of those who recently joined St. Matthew's stated that they had not intended to make St. Matthew's their only stop since they were church hunting. Several acknowledged that the hospitality extended convinced them that this was where they wanted to worship. Some of the most powerful displays of hospitality came from that which was extended by members of St. Matthew's more so than any extended by the minister.

A future project for St. Matthew's may involve skits or plays that portray the experiences of the congregation toward extended hospitality. Many participants of the mission trip have had "polar reversal" experiences when extending hospitality. During these reversed experiences, the participants became the guest while the original guest became the host. Those who experienced these occurrences would be invited to share their experience in a small group and a skit or play could be produced from this meeting. These experiences then could be re-enacted through the scripted story line or parable. An appropriate time for this experience might be during a Maundy Thursday service, as it would coincide with the servant motif and foot washing. Through these stories, the congregation may become more willing to aggressively seek those who are searching for a church home or looking for needed assistance.

Hospitality fosters a human connection, which makes it a fragile practice. A question that arises from this human connection is whether hospitality may be practiced if said connection is minimal. Verna L. Call, a member of my D. Min. class, focused her study on the ministerial needs of those suffering from Alzheimer's Disease or related dementia. Further study of the relationship, between the practice of hospitality and said diseases, would enable congregations to discover new ways to offer the stranger a safe place within the church community. The study might focus on discovering how established limits to the practice of hospitality may expand or decrease within the congregation and the guest as they deal with the effects of Alzheimers. Another important focus between these topics might center on the polar reversal that may take place as the Alzheimer patient, who may have been the congregation's ultimate host, becomes the guest. At the same time, the congregation traverses from receiving

hospitality from the host to extending hospitality to the host who, through illness, becomes a stranger.

The practice of hospitality becomes even more delicate when the explosive aspects of limits are added. To implement a hospitable atmosphere within the church community, it is pertinent for the congregation to understand their limits and to be comfortable when they are implemented. The congregation should institute guidelines that reflect the limits they place on said practice. Since boundaries help us define what a community holds precious, a study of the congregation's boundaries and limits would be helpful to better understand those things that are important to them. Once limits are recognized the information would be shared with the congregation, so they may see where they fit in. With these guiding principles in place, the congregation could choose their amount of participation according to their comfort level. The Evangelism Committee would flesh out these limits through dialogue, questionnaires, and workshops. The results of this dissertation would be of value in establishing a foundation on which to begin the study.

The use of boundaries, as discovered in the practice of hospitality, would be useful in the discernment of acceptable responses within a congregation. Brian Hardee, a member of my D. Min. program, focused his study on the practice of the prayers of the people. When prayers are lifted up, does the respondent consider the privacy issues that arise from vocal prayer especially when it focuses on a person's illness or dilemma? Does the practice of spoken prayers by the congregation go beyond the congregation's established limits of hospitality by forcing the stranger or recipient of the prayer out of their safety zone? A continued study of the similarities and differences between

practiced hospitality and the prayers of the people may provide useful information for future guest and host relationships within any congregation.

Further study may focus on the established limits that were reflected in the respondent's answers to the questionnaire. The pre-existing limits may be based on the stranger's willingness to relate to the congregation. If the stranger experienced an inhospitable reception at other churches, he or she may be less inclined to open themselves to the congregation of St. Matthew's. However, if he or she is willing to attend worship at St. Matthew's, he or she may be more open to a dialogue with members of the congregation. The congregation would be more likely to place limits on their hospitality if the stranger's lifestyle is, in some offensive way, in conflict with theirs. These limits may become more pronounced as the stranger moves toward membership and is still not willing to change his/her lifestyle.

The congregation needs to understand the reality of actual hospitality. The practice is life giving to the host as well as the guest and it can be a life changing experience. When practicing hospitality, more troubled souls than angels may be discovered, but that is not reason enough to discontinue the practice. Christine Pohl states, "Hospitality is a skill and a gift, but it is also a practice which flourishes as multiple skills are developed, as particular commitments and values are nurtured, and as certain settings are cultivated"(9). As the congregation continues the practice of hospitality, they will develop new skills that will increase their willingness to extend hospitality to the stranger. Once the congregation understands the concept of limits, the Evangelism Committee would strive to raise those limits so the practitioners would be able to retain their comfort level as they increase their hospitality. The congregation must



realize they should not use the concept of limits on their hospitality because they may be tightfisted or unwilling to extend hospitality through monetary means. As the congregation confronts their limits, they should begin to realize that many limits are in place due to fear, distrust, financial concerns, and a misunderstanding of the existing situation.

A possible venue to assist in raising the limits in the practice of hospitality may be found through role-playing. Role-playing was used when the Called to Care committee was organized and was very successful in helping the participants better understand their limits when responding to a crisis. The congregation should continue to push the envelope when confronting their personal comfort level.

When we welcome the stranger into our midst, we become connected by allowing the stranger into a space that has meaning or value to us. Many people value this space and consider it their personal space. This space could be a pew in the church, the kitchen of the church, the worship service, or other aspects of the church community where they find comfort and security. If a stranger enters their sacred space, they may lash out at the stranger and may negate days, months, or years of extended hospitality as practiced by the congregation. The congregation should be prepared for the inevitable and be ready to address the issue when it arises. When first establishing a focus on the practice of hospitality within the congregation, steps should be taken to make all participants aware of what may occur between the host and stranger. Using examples from other congregations that have experience with the practice of hospitality would be helpful. A continued dialogue with Open and Affirming Congregations, inner city congregations, and individuals who manage homeless shelters and food banks would enable the

congregation to better understand where their practice of hospitality may lead. Because the practice of hospitality will change the practitioner, the church needs to discuss how the congregation will deal with problems that may arise when said changes occur. Some of these transformations, such as becoming Open and Affirming, providing housing for the homeless, working with needy families may cause the local community to respond in a positive or negative manner. Members of the congregation should receive training in all aspects of hospitality so they are able to make an educated reply to the questions that may arise.

Using St. Matthew's Called to Care organization as an example, the congregation could embark on a continual study of the practice of hospitality. Called to Care is made up of twelve members, and its members visit the shut-ins, the hospitalized, and members who are going through difficult times. The group received training using scenarios that portrayed situations they may face. Every member of Called to Care was given a list of physical, mental, and social problems members of the congregation may face. The members were asked to choose to work with those who had problems with which they felt most comfortable. One woman, who had heart surgery, volunteered to visit members who were undergoing heart surgery or had heart problems. This method of learning would be useful when working toward extending the practice of hospitality in the church community. Using a checklist, the members would be asked if they have had any experience in dealing with certain situations or people. The results would be placed on file and once the initial greeting with the stranger was made and their background was discovered, the visitor would be placed with the person or persons who were comfortable with the visitor's background or situation. Care would have to be taken to be sure the

visitor does not spend any length of time with those members who disagree with the stranger's background and attempt to enforce their limits of hospitality on the stranger. Every congregation has those who are more than willing to voice their opinions no matter who hears said opinions. If the stranger is able to "get to know" the congregation before they have a face to face confrontation with any member that has a negative opinion of the stranger, then the results of that disagreement would have less impact on the stranger.

As stated previously, the common meal levels the playing field between the host and stranger. While working toward my Masters of Divinity, I spent several days working in Philadelphia with the homeless. On Sunday, we worshiped at an Episcopal church near center city. During the service, I noticed many people in the congregation who appeared to be homeless. Following worship, everyone went to the fellowship hall for refreshments. I was curious as to how the members of the church would treat these people. Several of the members went out of their way to assist them and offered them food and drink. Several of the homeless people took extra food and put it in their pockets. The members who were serving the food did not reprimand them; rather they gave them extra food and even plastic bags for the food. I am sure the congregation had established rules and regulations on how to deal with the homeless because they performed this ministry every Sunday. Perhaps these homeless people were regular attendees, but it was refreshing to see how they extended hospitality to each one of them without exception or incrimination.

St. Matthew's has a time of food and fellowship one Sunday a month. This activity has been established for one year and is very successful. If visitors are in the congregation, they are always invited to join us. I try to watch the congregation's

response to those strangers who share our table and have never been disappointed in their hospitable nature. I have never seen strangers sit by themselves while eating, because someone from the church always sits with them and talks with them. The members of St. Matthew's seem to be at their most hospitable level when enjoying food and fellowship. While on our mission trips the group always invites those we are helping to the table. Several women within the mission group have a permanent job when the group travels to Maine. They work in the kitchen and prepare food for the transients. Every year they have a loyal following because of the creations they make. Both the women within the church and those on the mission trips extend hospitality through their cooking skills.

We have never sponsored a weekend retreat for adults at St. Matthew's. While working on this project, I discovered a retreat guide dealing with hospitality entitled, Hospitality Evangelism: Sharing the Bread of Life. This guide is written by Phill Nall and Mark Price and it provides detailed information on how to sponsor a month long investigation of hospitality which ends with a three day retreat. This would be an excellent project for the Evangelism Committee to undertake. It would serve as a first step in improving our practice of hospitality and give the participants a chance to raise the bar on their personal limits to that practice. One important aspect of this training program is the intergenerational fellowship, which concludes the event.

St. Matthew's is located close to the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Interstate 81. Because of our proximity to these much traveled roads, our church could extend hospitality by offering the use of the church as a place of lodging for church groups traveling through the area. When Fellowship Hall was updated, the Consistory had a shower installed. These facilities could provide the perfect opportunity for members of

St. Matthew's to meet and extend hospitality to strangers. Since this would occur in a controlled situation, the members of St. Matthew's would have the occasion to better understand their personal limits and develop ways to raise those limits. The members could investigate all aspects of this proposal and establish a set of rules for the visitors to follow. As members of St. Matthew's become more comfortable with this program, the rules might be changed to better reflect the increase or decrease in the limits of hospitality as established by the members. This activity would be a wonderful way to welcome the stranger and the newness they bring with them into the congregations midst. Hearing the stories the strangers have to tell and perhaps begin to see the world from a novel perspective would be an exciting experience for the adults and youth of St. Matthew's.

The congregation needs to be involved in activities of hospitality that are relevant to the life of St. Matthew's. By bringing the stranger to the congregation, more members have the opportunity to look within themselves to determine their personal stance on the practice of hospitality. The church may take many different directions once they begin to address how and why they practice hospitality. Guest speakers would be invited to our worship services to address social issues and a team may be formed to investigate what it means to be Open and Affirming.

The future of St. Matthew's hinges on our practice of hospitality and whether the congregation is willing to take that practice to the next level. Being content with the status quo would be convenient, but Christ challenges us to make a difference in the world. We must be willing to leave the comfort of our community of faith and extend our hospitality to the world.



## APPENDIX

### A. Practitioners of Hospitality

The books and articles written by actual practitioners of hospitality provide theological insight through their personal experiences as the authors struggle with the social and spiritual aspects of hospitality. Henri Nouwen uses his personal experiences with his students and members of a “special needs” community in which he worked. The way he dealt with one vocal member of that community was especially insightful.

Anne Lamott writes in an unorthodox fashion, which makes for enjoyable reading; yet, she provokes much soul searching concerning the practice of hospitality. She presents many illustrations of how inhospitable many people were toward her and her son because of their physical appearances, but she also writes of several wonderful experiences of Christ-like hospitality provided by strangers.

Daniel Homan practices hospitality within the Benedictine community. He deals with the struggles that go with the practice of hospitality. He stresses the importance of following biblical tradition and being willing to experience the holiness of life by allowing oneself to be tolerant and accepting of others. He also makes suggestions as to how to recognize the sacred in those we meet.

Christine Pohl, a professor of Christian social ethics, is one of the more outspoken proponents of hospitality. She studied at L’Abri Fellowship in England where she saw hospitality lived out in a day-to-day way and worked with resettling refugees and the homeless in New York City. She was also part of a church in New York that practiced hospitality and celebrated diversity before it was popular. Pohl covers the practice of hospitality from ancient times to the present. She relates biblical stories of hospitality

with events in her life and presents illustrative material from eight Christian communities that welcome strangers. She presented several lectures on “The Hospitable Church” for the Oak Brook Conference on Ministry in 2002. Her presentation is insightful in that it addresses not only the issues of the accessible church but also the realization that once a “stranger” visits, they should feel welcomed enough to visit again. She stresses that hospitality must come from the heart and the host must be willing to cross social boundaries to welcome the stranger. She provides some of the most enlightened, up-to-date, and challenging information available concerning the practice of hospitality within the Christian community.



## B. St. Matthew's Questionnaire on Hospitality

Imagine you have moved into a new area and are looking for a new church. Please indicate the level of importance for the following items in their significance in making you feel welcomed at the church you visit. The answers are ranked as follows: **3 = Very Important 2 = Important**

**1 = Not Important 0 = Makes me feel uncomfortable**

Circle the number that best matches your response.

1. I had no problem finding a parking space	3	2	1	0
2. I had no difficulty entering the building	3	2	1	0
3. I was welcomed by a church greeter	3	2	1	0
4. The Order of worship was easy to follow	3	2	1	0
5. Someone in the pew greeted me	3	2	1	0
6. I was invited to Sunday School or other activities	3	2	1	0
7. I was left alone with my own thoughts	3	2	1	0
20. I was able to sense God's presence	3	2	1	0
21. The pastor's message used Biblical support	3	2	1	0
22. The Children's message was enlightening	3	2	1	0
23. The pastor greeted me following worship	3	2	1	0
24. The people dressed up for worship	3	2	1	0
25. The people dressed casually	3	2	1	0
26. The hymns were familiar	3	2	1	0
27. The sanctuary was neat and clean	3	2	1	0
28. The sanctuary reflected a comfortable feeling	3	2	1	0
29. The system for the hearing impaired was useful	3	2	1	0
30. I received a monthly newsletter	3	2	1	0
31. I noticed the Bulletin board display	3	2	1	0
20. There were pictures and displays in the church	3	2	1	0
26. They took time to greet each other during worship	3	2	1	0
27. I was invited to a time of fellowship after worship	3	2	1	0
28. I was introduced during the service	3	2	1	0
29. I was asked to wear a badge with my name on it	3	2	1	0
30. I was visited by a member(s) or minister	3	2	1	0
31. Other _____	3	2	1	0

**How do you rate St. Matthew's practice of hospitality in the following items?**

**The answers are ranked as follows:**

**3 = Makes me feel very comfortable**

**2 = Makes me feel somewhat comfortable**

**1 = Does not significantly affect my comfort level**

**0 = Makes me feel uncomfortable**

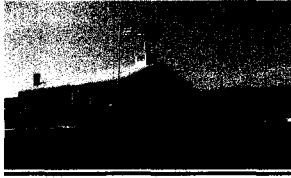
**Circle the number that best matches your response.**

1. Ease of finding a parking space	3	2	1	0
2. Using steps or elevator to enter building	3	2	1	0
3. Church member greeting you at the door	3	2	1	0
4. Order of Worship does not change	3	2	1	0
5. Pastor's announcements before worship	3	2	1	0
6. Use of lay readers for scripture	3	2	1	0
15. The pastor's uses Biblical support in sermons	3	2	1	0
16. The Children's message	3	2	1	0
17. The pastor's greeting following worship	3	2	1	0
18. The congregation's casual dress for worship	3	2	1	0
19. The familiarity of the hymns	3	2	1	0
20. The condition of the sanctuary	3	2	1	0
21. Receiving a monthly newsletter	3	2	1	0
22. The Bulletin board display	3	2	1	0
20. The picture displays	3	2	1	0
23. The Right Hand of Fellowship	3	2	1	0
24. The time of fellowship after worship	3	2	1	0
25. Church sponsored family activities	3	2	1	0
26. Mission trips and activities	3	2	1	0
27. Visits by the pastor	3	2	1	0

**Based on your overall experience with St. Matthew's how would you rate this congregation as a place where the stranger is made to feel welcomed?** Please circle the number that best fits your experience at St. Matthew's.

+3 Very Welcoming    +2    +1    0    -1    -2    -3 Very Unwelcoming

**From your personal experience at St. Matthew's have you had an occurrence that was either welcoming or unwelcoming?** It would be helpful if you could relate that experience or experiences below. If necessary please continue to the top of the next page.



**St. Matthew's United Church of Christ**

When you think of the congregation and the building called St. Matthew's, how do you feel? Please check the number that best reflects your personal feelings.

<b><u>Pleasant</u></b>	1. Very	2. Rather	3. A Little	4. Neither	5. A Little	6. Rather	7. Very	<b>Unpleasant</b>
<b>Welcoming</b>	1. Very	2. Rather	3. A Little	4. Neither	5. A Little	6. Rather	7. Very	<b>Unwelcoming</b>
<b>Indifferent</b>	1. Very	2. Rather	3. A Little	4. Neither	5. A Little	6. Rather	7. Very	<b>Interested</b>
<b>Important</b>	1. Very	2. Rather	3. A Little	4. Neither	5. A Little	6. Rather	7. Very	<b>Unimportant</b>
<b>I Fit in</b>	1. Very	2. Rather	3. A Little	4. Neither	5. A Little	6. Rather	7. Very	<b>I Do not fit in</b>
<b>Risky</b>	1. Very	2. Rather	3. A Little	4. Neither	5. A Little	6. Rather	7. Very	<b>Safe</b>
<b>Familiar</b>	1. Very	2. Rather	3. A Little	4. Neither	5. A Little	6. Rather	7. Very	<b>Unfamiliar</b>
<b>Like</b>	1. Very	2. Rather	3. A Little	4. Neither	5. A Little	6. Rather	7. Very	<b>Dislike</b>
<b>Simple</b>	1. Very	2. Rather	3. A Little	4. Neither	5. A Little	6. Rather	7. Very	<b>Complex</b>

The following pictures show various fictitious "strangers" that may seek to worship at St. Matthew's. Please check one of the six boxes (not the boxes in bold) that best describes how you feel the congregation of St. Matthew's would react or feel toward the visitor. A brief "quote" from the individuals is beside the picture.



“I owned my own business and had a wonderful family but I was unable to keep pace with modern technology and lost my company to a large corporation. I felt lost and did not know what to do. Unfortunately I turned to alcohol. Now my family has turned their backs on me and I have nothing to live for.”

**Homeless Man At St. Matthew’s, this person would:**

↵ ⇐ Please check the appropriate box located between the arrows ⇒

<b>Be welcome to worship with us</b>	Enthusiastic Welcome	Moderate Welcome	Restrained Welcome	Uncaring Welcome	Cold Welcome	Not Welcome	<b>Would not be welcome to worship with us</b>
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	Enthusiastic Response	Moderate Response	Restrained Response	Little Response	Passing Response	No Response	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
<b>Would be invited to join the church</b>	Personal visit and invitation to return	Mailed invitation to return	Sign guest book and asked to return	No invitation to return	Ignored during the visit	Suggest that they find a church more suitable for their needs	<b>Would not be invited to join the church</b>
<b>Would fit in easily</b>	Have much in common	Have some common principles	Have few common principles	May fit in if they change	Would take much work to fit in	They are too different from us and will never fit in	<b>Would not fit in</b>
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	Would have no problems being in contact with this person	Would work one-on-one with this person(s)	Would work with this person(s) to learn more about them	Would work with a committee to assist this person(s)	Would only associate with this person(s) in a controlled situation	Would not associate with this person(s)	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
<b>Would find help</b>	Members of the congregation would step in to help	Members of Called to Care or would be asked to assist	Members would assist the person(s) only if they ask for help	Members would take the person(s) to organizations that could provide assistance	Members would give the person(s) a list of resources to provide assistance	Members would be too busy to assist the person(s)	<b>Would not find help</b>
<b>May become a leader in the church</b>	Would be treated as any new member and offered leadership opportunities	Would be included in organizations after proving their worth	Would have to put in their time before being offered a leadership role	Might be able to assist in committees	Would need to conform to our values	Not wanted as a leader	<b>Would not become a leader in the church</b>
<b>Simple solution</b>	Welcoming this person(s) would not be difficult	There may be some minor concerns	A time of deliberation would be needed	The minister and consistory could handle the situation	Difficult decisions would have to be made	A lengthy time of study, soul searching and prayer would be needed	<b>Difficult solution</b>



“I was young and foolish and never thought it would happen to me. My boy friend said that if I really loved him then I would do anything for him. As soon as I discovered I was pregnant he took off. My family kicked me out and I’m living at Safe Harbour. But I can only stay there for 3 months and then I have to find an apartment. I’m not afraid to work and I want to get a good job so I can raise my son in a loving surrounding.”

## Unwed Mother At St. Matthew’s, this person would:

↔ Please check the appropriate box located between the arrows ↔

<b>Be welcome to worship with us</b>	Enthusiastic Welcome	Moderate Welcome	Restrained Welcome	Uncaring Welcome	Cold Welcome	Not Welcome	<b>Would not be welcome to worship with us</b>
<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	Enthusiastic Response	Moderate Response	Restrained Response	Little Response	Passing Response	No Response	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
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<b>Would find help</b>	Members of the congregation would step in to help	Members of Called to Care or would be asked to assist	Members would assist the person(s) only if they ask for help	Members would take the person(s) to organizations that could provide assistance	Members would give the person(s) a list of resources to provide assistance	Members would be too busy to assist the person(s)	<b>Would not find help</b>
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“Yes I used to be a member of the Klu Klux Klan but I saw the error of my ways. Now I’m trying to become part of a congregation that is willing to overlook my many faults and help me overcome my racism. I also have friends who are searching for a community of believers.”

**K.K.K. Member At St. Matthew’s, this person would:**

⇐ Please check the appropriate box located between the arrows ⇒

<b>Be welcome to worship with us</b>	Enthusiastic Welcome	Moderate Welcome	Restrained Welcome	Uncaring Welcome	Cold Welcome	Not Welcome	<b>Would not be welcome to worship with us</b>
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“We have been living together for four years. I used to attend a very conservative church but was asked to leave when I started bringing my partner to church. He is not interested in being part of any church that treats us as sinners. We both are seeking a church that is willing to accept us as children of God and treat us as family.”

**Gay Couple At St. Matthew's, this couple would:**

⇐ Please check the appropriate box located between the arrows ⇒

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<b>Would fit in easily</b>	Have much in common	Have some common principles	Have few common principles	May fit in if they change	Would take much work to fit in	They are too different from us and will never fit in	<b>Would not fit in</b>
<b>Would not make me feel uncomfortable</b>	Would have no problems being in contact with this person	Would work one-on-one with this person(s)	Would work with this person(s) to learn more about them	Would work with a committee to assist this person(s)	Would only associate with this person(s) in a controlled situation	Would not associate with this person(s)	<b>Would make me feel uncomfortable</b>
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“We have been married for five years and recently moved into the area. In our previous church we were accepted by most of the church members but would hear negative remarks concerning our inter-racial marriage. We want to be part of a community of faith that treats us like any married couple.”

**Married Couple At St. Matthew's, this couple would:**

⇐ Please check the appropriate box located between the arrows ⇐

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“We enjoy being in each others company and church is a great place to meet on Sunday. Even though we don’t always seem like we’re paying attention during the service we do pick up a lot of Christian attitudes from the congregation. We are still struggling with our faith and sometimes

**Teenagers At St. Matthew’s, these youth would:**

↔Please check the appropriate box located between the arrows↔

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<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	Enthusiastic Response	Moderate Response	Restrained Response	Little Response	Passing Response	No Response	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
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**“I am a high paid professional woman. I have had to work very hard to make it to the top. I have been involved in many churches in the past but always seem to discover that the members do not want change. Since I know how to make organizations function I feel I would be an asset to any congregation to which I belong. I expect co-operation from those in the congregation who do not have the expertise I possess. If you are willing to do it “my way” then the church will succeed in this high tech world.”**

**Professional Woman At St. Matthew's, this person would:**

↔ Please check the appropriate box located between the arrows ↔

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<b>Find someone to listen to them</b>	Enthusiastic Response	Moderate Response	Restrained Response	Little Response	Passing Response	No Response	<b>Would not find someone to listen to them</b>
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**“I served 10 years for armed robbery. I was in a gang and we decided to rob a local store. I had a gun and I was the only one who got caught. I never squealed on my accomplices. Now I’m trying to turn my life around. While in prison I earned my General Education Diploma and have taken some college courses. I would like to be part of a Christian church family that is willing to help me grow in my new found faith.”**

**Former Inmate At St. Matthew’s, this person would:**

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Background information:

1. What is your gender?      Male      Female
2. What is your age?    15 or younger    16-25    26-35    36-45    46-55  
56-65    65-75    70+
3. What is your marital status?    Single    Separated or divorced  
Widowed    Married
4. How many children live in your household in the following age groups?  
0-4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5-12 \_\_\_\_\_ 13-17 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are you...  
Student    Employed full time    Employed part time    Full time  
homemaker    Retired

If you are a visitor to St. Matthew's please answer the following questions:

6. How many times have you attended worship services at St. Matthew's?  
Once    2-5    6-10    10 or more
7. How many times have you participated in other aspects of congregational life at St. Matthew's?  
None    Once    2-5    6-10    10 or more

The following questions should be answered by those who are (or were) members of St. Matthew's.

8. Are you?    Presently a member      Previously a member
9. How long have you been (or were you) a member of St. Matthew's?  
1 year or less      1-2 years      3-4 years      5-7 years      8-10  
years  
More than 10 years but less than all your life      All your life
10. What is/was your usual level of attendance at worship services?  
Every week      Nearly every week      About 3 times a month  
About twice a month  
About once a month      about every 6 weeks      Once or twice a year      less  
than once a year

11. What is/was your usual level of participation in other aspects of congregational life?

Very active    Active    Occasional    None

12. Have you participated in any Mission Trips? Circle number of trips in which you participated.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8

Comments:

**All of the information received will be used to produce a dissertation on the practice of hospitality within the congregational setting of St. Matthew's. No names of members will be used within the dissertation unless permission is granted. Thank you for assisting with this study.**

## **C. WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **ID #9**

I want to be lifted up or inspired during worship. It is my time with God.

### **ID #14**

I have never felt unwelcomed at St. Matthew's. Not by the people or the environment. The people are all very welcoming and caring toward everyone, regardless of their age.

### **ID #19**

I don't mind what people wear to church but they need to show respect with proper clothing.

### **ID #25**

After attending a UCC church for 7+ years in another state, I was not sure I wanted to try one in PA. The other state UCC church was cold and unfriendly. I never even had a visit from the minister. After the first visit to St. Matthew's I was welcomed by the people all around me and received a visit from the minister within one week. I have been made to feel very welcome both at the church service and other activities. The members of this church seem to get along even when they disagree with each other.

### **ID #29**

We were welcomed to the church by many people. The congregation was friendly and they seemed happy to have you attend church and Sunday School.

### **ID #32**

I first experienced a welcome from a member when she taught me in Vacation Bible School

### **ID # 40**

Since I have been here so long, I always feel welcome and hope I make new people feel the same.

You will notice for all examples I chose (Would be invited to join the church #3) that is because I do not think people should be asked to join the church right away. It may intimidate them.

**ID #52**

From our first visit, I was pleasantly surprised at how welcoming the congregation was to us. People introduced themselves, smiled, and asked us to return. We were also impressed with how active the church was and how helpful the congregation was with one another.

**ID #53**

As a relatively new member of the congregation, the thing that struck me the most was how I was welcomed from the first service I attended. I was always greeted with a smile and people went out of their way to introduce themselves and make me feel I belonged.

**ID #59**

I enjoy sitting with my friends and sharing my feelings and problems with them.

**ID #60**

The pastor remembers my name and always asks me a question that indicates he knows me. I always feel welcome but I have a lot of family and friends at church.

**ID #61**

Each week I am welcomed as a family member. I know of only one member who will not greet me or speak to me. Everyone else shows care and concern.

**ID #62**

I have never had an unwelcoming experience. You are treated like a member of a large family when attending St. Matthew's. When I had knee surgery a few years ago everyone took the time to see how I was doing. They are always caring.

**ID #63**

I have an on-going personality conflict with another member.

**ID #68**

When I first came to the church many years ago one of the older members welcomed me as if I had gone there all of my life. That person has not passed on but I will never forget how he made me feel at the time. If he were still here, he would be one of the great assists to the church. I know his family and friends were so proud of him and for all that he did for St. Matthew's.

Some questions on the questionnaire could have more than one answer.

**ID #79**

I became a member of St. Matthew's because I grew up in this area and attended church here with my grandparents and parents. Many of the members now have been there for years. Although I do not get to attend as much as I would like these days due to my work schedule, etc. I always feel welcomed by everyone when I do get a chance to attend. I have rarely in all the years that I have attended St. Matthew's seen any members of the congregation treat someone as though they were not welcome.

**ID #83**

When we first attended St. Matthew's we felt very welcomed by the congregation and Pastor Justh. He then visited our home and that was important to us. The only suggestion that I have is that maybe someone from a specific group (Sunday School, Women's Guild, etc.) could explain who and what they do.

**ID #88**

My children were welcomed, greeted, and treated as if they mattered. When we first visited St. Matthew's we intended to visit other churches as well. We never went anywhere else, however, since we had such positive experiences at St. Matthew's. The first thing I noticed was just how much people at St. Matthew's go out of their way to greet you and treat everyone as if they are welcomed. My children, especially, were welcomed as if they were "part of the family." Darrel later came to our home to speak to my husband and I and answered any questions we may have. He brought pictures and stories and shared some history about the church and its congregation.

I had difficulty answering some of the questionnaire because I am a new member. I doubt most members would know the person's story (as written in the questionnaire) before they met them, so the initial welcome would always be positive. After learning the details, some would be put off.

**ID #89**

People said hello and talked to you a lot, even though they didn't know me.

**ID #97**

My unwelcoming experience was having an assigned job on Sunday and then walking in and someone else was doing that job. Not a word was said to me about the incident. Also, my husband was treated badly but it is still my church.



**ID #99**

It was the over-all experience of being a new visitor. People talked to me, welcomed me, and invited me back. It didn't matter my personal situation. It was unconditional. And still is.

**ID #100**

St. Matthew's is a very warm and inviting church. I really enjoy the pleasant atmosphere. The congregation has always welcomed me in the sanctuary and outside of the church.

**ID #105**

The congregation made me feel welcomed when I came there. My children were also welcomed. We are pleased to be part of St. Matthew's.

## **D. PRELIMINARY CONGREGATIONAL DISCUSSIONS**

### **March 16<sup>th</sup>. Questions for discussion**

1. It is important to recognize the stranger in our own familiar circle. When we are able to be good hosts for the strangers in our midst, we may find ways to expand our hospitality to a broader horizon. Did the pastor present enough information during the service to help you better identify the stranger in our midst?
2. Was the pastor able to give you insight as to how the practice of hospitality affects your relationship between the pastor and others within the congregation?
3. The church is perhaps one of the few places left where we can meet people who are different than we are but with whom we can form a larger family. Does the pastor relate well to those who are different? In what ways are members of St. Matthew's different?
4. "The church is not an institution forcing us to follow its rules. It is a community of people inviting us to still our hunger and thirst at its tables." Have there been incidents within this congregation where others have refused to follow our "rules?" How has the pastor responded in these incidents? Do we accept those who refuse to follow "our rules?"
5. For those who suffer, the church building is perceived as a house of power rather than a house of hospitality. Have you experienced a time of suffering or grief and felt the pastor has not responded in a hospitable manner?
6. Did the pastor present any symbols or actions that gave you more insight to the practice of hospitality?

### **March 23 Questions for Discussion**

1. "When we think back to the places where we felt most at home, we quickly see that it was where our hosts gave us the precious freedom to come and go on our own terms and did not claim us for their own needs." Does St. Matthew's offer that freedom or does the pastor expect all members to "pull their own?"
2. "We can only perceive the stranger as an enemy as long as we have something to defend." Has the pastor ever defended a position or idea at the expense of others?
3. "Hospitality is an attitude. It's the lifelong struggle to overcome the walls you build around yourself to protect yourself and to protect your time so you can carry out your plans without letting anyone get in the way." In what ways has the pastor helped the congregation overcome the "walls they've built around them."
4. In what ways does the pastor reflect the practice of hospitality?
5. In what ways could the pastor improve our practice of hospitality?
6. What programs have been established at St. Matthew's during the past 6 years that have advanced the practice of hospitality?

## Post worship interviews – March 16, 2003

1. It is important to recognize the stranger in our own familiar circle. When we are able to be good hosts for the strangers in our midst we may find ways to expand our hospitality to a broader horizon. Did the pastor present enough information during the service to help you better identify the stranger in our midst?

The congregation recognized, almost immediately, that this service would be different. The first change they noticed was the absence of the greeters at the door and the absence of the cross etc. from the front of the sanctuary.

#1 *“My son (who is 4 years old) kept asking when are we going to shake hands?”*

Another member said, *“I sensed the lack of hospitality when I realized that you were not in the narthex greeting those who came into the church. You also seemed to be in places where I could not find you. This was extremely frustrating since I was the head usher and had to ask you some questions. I now realize how important it is to have the minister available before the service.”*

#2 *“It was very difficult for me not to get involved in greeting the people as they entered the church. Several times I had to make sure they picked up their bulletins even though we were not to assist them. It seemed so unnatural for us to act this way.”*

#3 *“I have to go home and ponder over the complete service to better understand what just occurred. There was so much happening that I just got caught up in the flow and wondered what was going to occur next. I’m looking forward to next Sunday when I can put all this information into some semblance of order.”*

#4 *“The ‘Stranger at the door’ skits gave me a good understanding of the strangers within our community. I really felt bad because you kept turning them away. The one woman at the door (Joan) almost looked like she was going to cry.”*

#5 *“I think the skits and presentations really brought the idea of hospitality to our attention. It was very confusing trying to follow the bulletin because it was in a different order than I was use to. You told us “we were now the visitor” and I soon realized that you were right!”*

#6 *“When I sat down and realized that I did not have a bulletin I suddenly felt like a stranger. It was a little embarrassing walking back to pick up a bulletin but I soon realized I was not alone.”*

#7 *“I think the service made everyone think. We often take our church family for granted, and that service really should have made all of us realize what a great and caring group we really are!”*

2. Was the pastor able to give you insight as to how the practice of hospitality affects your relationship between the pastor and others within the congregation?

#1 *“Several of the skits, especially the one concerning the woman who was being criticized by members of her congregation, did a great job of demonstrating how hospitality affects our congregation.”*

#2 *“Until today, I took the greeters for granted. It was strange to enter the church and not have anyone there to greet you and give you a bulletin.”*

#3 *"I never really considered the cross, candles and flags as symbols of hospitality but I really missed not having them in the front of the sanctuary. I also missed saying the Apostle's Creed or one of the other creeds we always say. After you explained why the symbols were placed in the back of the sanctuary and the creed was not said, I better understood how symbols and creeds reflect our Christian practice of hospitality."*

#4 *"I really missed the anthem. Listening to the music really gives me a boost. I was especially disappointed when the children's message took place in the back of the sanctuary. I enjoy watching the children as you speak to them. I never realized how important hospitality is within our church community."*

#5 *"I walked into the narthex with my hand out, expecting a handshake and a bulletin but I received nothing. If I had been a first time visitor I probably would have turned around and left. I'm glad you did have an usher nearby to greet any visitors that may have attended the service."*

#6 *"If all our church services lacked the hospitality that today's service lacked I think we would invite the minister to leave. The service was definitely an 'eye opening experience.'"*

#7 *"After you turned away the woman who said she was having surgery and needed some help I heard one elderly gentleman say (quite loudly) 'Boy, he sure got rid of her in a hurry.' The gentleman also said, during a skit presented by a husband and wife, 'Why did they bring their personal problems to church?' (The skit depicted a couple arguing about whether they should attend a church that did not demonstrate hospitality.) I got a kick out of how this elderly man became so involved in the service. He really wanted the church to get back to practicing hospitality."*

3. The church is perhaps one of the few places left where we can meet people who are different than we are but with whom we can form a larger family. Does the pastor relate well to those who are different? In what ways are members of St. Matthew's different?

#1 *"We are individuals but actually make up a wonderful family."*

#2 *"There are those who are different but we seem to go out of our way to accommodate them. When we go on our mission trips we always are willing to treat everyone in our group as equals. Even though we have gone through some very difficult times in the past we now seem to work together more than we ever did in the past."*

#3 *"Every time I miss church I feel like I missed out on something. Walking into the church is like walking into my parent's home. It's coming home."*

#4 *"My daughter left this church and joined a church closer to where she lives. One day she asked the minister if he could get someone in the church to help a friend who was in need of baby items. The minister told her that since her friend was not a member they could not help her. My daughter asked me, 'the pastor wouldn't do that would he?' Because of that incident and because she wanted to be with her family (she grew up in St. Matthew's) she rejoined the church."*

#5 *"I have seen too many Christians that depict Christianity with a small 'c' and I do not like to be around them. At St. Matthew's we all have our differences but we always seem to 'agree to disagree' on the sensitive issues and work together for the betterment of the church and the world."*

#6 *"We only were in this church for two weeks and already we heard about the mission trips. Our family has never gone on a mission trip but no one who does participate treats us differently. You would think that those who go on these trips would form a clique but they return home willing to share their stories and always trying to get new members to participate."*

4. The church is not an institution forcing us to follow its rules. It is a community of people inviting us to still our hunger and thirst at its tables." Have there been incidents within this congregation where others have refused to follow our "rules?" How has the pastor responded in these incidents? Do we accept those who refuse to follow "our rules?"

#1 *"Several years ago, before the pastor was here, we went through a terrible time with the previous minister. Because so many members left the church we really struggled. Those who left called this church "The devil's church" and told everyone that God was not in our church because of an incident that occurred with the previous minister. Since the pastor arrived he has been able to help us through that difficult time and has brought many of our former members back to St. Matthew's. Some of those who left because they lost their "control" will probably never return but we were able to prove them wrong when they said, "The church will close in a few years."*

#2 *"The Youth Group went on a camping trip and the pastor posted several rules concerning bike riding and helmets. The state the youth were visiting required bicycle helmets. One of the adult chaperones decided to let the helmet rule up to the youth. The pastor immediately stepped into the 'fray' and made sure the youth obeyed the rules. The youth leader became extremely irritated and spent the remaining week trying to drive a wedge between the pastor and the youth. When she realized that this effort was futile she stopped helping and ignored everyone. She wanted to go home but she had no ride home. I was appreciative of the pastor's willingness to not 'bend the rules' even though it caused him a lot of distress. This incident also demonstrated, to the parents, Darrel was not willing to put the youth at risk."*

#3 *"We, as a congregation accept those who won't follow the rules but we continue to try to discover a solution to the problem. The pastor has actually presented situations from the pulpit that reflects on some of the problems we have gone through. Because he is willing to address these issues our church has witnessed a tremendous growth and wonderful fellowship."*

5. For those who suffer, the church building is perceived as a house of power rather than a house of hospitality. Have you experienced a time of suffering or grief and felt the pastor has not responded in a hospitable manner?

#1 *"I perceived St. Matthew's as a house of power, not in a negative sense, when I was suffering from my episodes of cancer. For six years the prayers, cards, visits and assistance of the church members lifted me. During this time most of my prayers were for myself rather than others. After the doctor gave me a clean bill of health I realized that I was drawing my source of power from the church but was not returning anything back in return. The church was truly my source of power during this long struggle. I now want to*

*change that situation. I am thankful for the many times the pastor volunteered to take me to the doctors and for medicine when my husband was at work. He definitely displayed hospitality.”*

*#2 “Sometimes I can understand how people may look at the church as a negative power. When a tragedy strikes you or a loved one, you want to blame someone or something. What better object to blame than the church because many people feel the tragedy was caused by God. It is during times when we are being persecuted that the church must be willing to practice hospitality even though it may be difficult to do. It is hard to help others when they treat you badly or resent you, but that’s when our church is the strongest.”*

*#3 “When one of our members passed away I was overwhelmed by the memorial gift she gave the church. I spoke to one of her nieces following the funeral and she told me that her aunt wanted to give the church the money not just because St. Matthew’s was the church in which she was raised but because the pastor showed her so much compassion and love*

6. Did the pastor present any symbols or actions that gave you more insight to the practice of hospitality?

*#1 “One of the most disturbing actions the pastor performed was the turning away of those who came to the door. I have seen him in action on our mission trips and when people stop at the church asking for money etc. and his response during this service seemed so unnatural for him.”*

*#2 “I was very concerned when the pastor told the Consistory that the flags would be removed from the sanctuary. I was pleased that they were only moved to the back of the sanctuary.”*

*#3 “When we did not ‘pass the peace’ I really felt I was missing something. I was glad that we had the prayer service following the service. Even though it was not scheduled I was glad that the pastor changed the format so it could be part of the service.”*

*#4 “I was really confused over some of the responses. I kept trying to find out where we were in the bulletin. I guess I never realized how comfortable I’ve become with our style of worship. I will be more attentive to our visitors in the future in case they need assistance.”*

*#5 “Having the children’s message in the back of the church really made me realize how much I look forward to seeing them in the front of the church. The children represent hospitality in so many ways. It is wonderful to see them represent Christ through their actions and responses. ‘Out of the mouth of babes!’”*

*#6 “Taking the offering out the back door made me think of how many times I put money in the plate and never really think about why I’m doing it, except that it’s part of being a Christian. I’ll pay more attention in the future when we dedicate our offerings to God.”*

### **Post worship interviews – March 16, 2003**

1. When we think back to the places where we felt most at home, we quickly see that it was where our hosts gave us the precious freedom to come and go on our own terms and did not claim us for their own needs.” Does St. Matthew’s offer that freedom or does the pastor expect all members to “pull their own?”

*#1 “You ask us if we would be willing to help within the church and community, but if I say no, you do not get upset with me.”*

*#2 “We all seem to work together. If a person doesn’t participate in an activity such as our barbecue, cabaret or mission trip those who do participate do not become upset over their inactivity. It seems that everyone has their own area where they shine.”*

*#3 “I truly feel that we have been given the freedom to ‘come and go’ as we choose at St. Matthew’s. If we miss a few Sunday’s we usually get a call from the pastor or another member but they only show concern not ‘nosiness!’”*

*#3 “For me, one of the greatest examples of someone who ‘pulls their own’ is the pastor. He is always involved in all our projects and, unlike many of our previous ministers, doesn’t ask someone to do something that he is not willing to do. That attitude has really brought this church together.”*

2. “We can only perceive the stranger as an enemy as long as we have something to defend.” Has the pastor ever defended a position or idea at the expense of others?

*#1 “The pastor has defended many positions during his time at St. Matthew’s but I can not think of any time he has done it at the expense of others. He has continually upheld our concerns over OCWM and has taken a lot of criticism from others in the conference because of St. Matthew’s stance. I’m sure that he would probably want to have it differently but he is willing to take the heat and stick by us. Perhaps if incidents in the past had not occurred this prevailing attitude would not exist. I am thankful that the pastor continues to stress the importance of co-operation with the conference and home offices and I’m sure that in time we will be able to work through this situation.”*

3. “Hospitality is an attitude. It's the lifelong struggle to overcome the walls you build around yourself to protect yourself and to protect your time so you can carry out your plans without letting anyone get in the way.” In what ways has the pastor helped the congregation overcome the “walls they’ve built around them.

*#1 “We tend to build walls that we don’t know exist. Today, during communion I discovered that I was very uncomfortable because we celebrated communion in a different way. Through that exercise I was able to better understand that our walls can come tumbling down when we face change. I’m not sure if I could accept constant change, especially when we perform the sacraments, but I’m sure if we continued to*

*institute small changes I would be able to 'go with the flow.' Of course, would I then begin to build another wall?"*

*#2 "I guess you might say I've built a wall concerning communion. When we passed the bread and everyone touched the loaf I felt some discomfort. Was that wrong? But I also felt closer to my neighbor during this communion than in our regular communions because I was actually able to hand them the elements and be part of the service."*

*#3 "I really felt blessed during communion. As we passed the bread and the juice and said the words I felt I was practicing true hospitality. It was especially uplifting when I heard those sitting behind me saying 'This is the gift of God's love' to their neighbor. I really felt part of the communion service."*

*#4 "Do we really think of hospitality as an attitude? I guess when we say someone has the 'Right attitude' that could pertain to hospitality, but I never really thought of the practice of hospitality as an attitude. Perhaps someone who practices hospitality develops a positive attitude because they learn not to expect too much from those they are helping. It's like those who live in third world countries seem to reflect a more hospitable nature because they do not expect anything in return."*

*#5 "When I think of those who demonstrate hospitality I find that they seemed to grow up that way. They were naturally hospitable. I think it's difficult for someone to practice hospitality if they are shy or backward."*

*#6 "I use to think the same thing, until I went on a mission trip and discovered that those who practice hospitality usually aren't the big talkers. They do their talking with their actions."*

*#7 "I agree. Take a certain member of our congregation as an example. She is one of the quietest persons I know but she is also one of the greatest examples of Christian hospitality within this congregation."*

### 3. In what ways does the pastor reflect the practice of hospitality?

*#1 "I remember a time when I was in the hospital. The pastor brought me a bag of goodies and spent time with me talking about many different things. It was nice because he didn't dwell on my illness but took my mind off my problems. To me, this is what hospitality is all about. Being able to give others a chance to look at life in a different way."*

*#2 "The pastor is always available when we are working on building projects, fund raisers and all the other activities we have. He probably doesn't realize how much those who are working on projects look forward to his deliveries of ice cream or other snacks."*

*#3 "I remember when we first called the pastor to this church. He had to serve 90 days at his previous church to fulfill the contract. We painted the parsonage and the pastor and his wife came up to St. Matthew's and helped us paint even though he was not officially our minister yet. I know that really made an impression with many members."*

*#4 "Recently I was told about how the pastor made a special trip to one of our elderly members to take him a walker. That member couldn't say enough nice things about the pastor because of his willingness to take time out of his day to help him."*

*#5 "I enjoy going on our mission trips and have noticed that when we first started the trips Darrel would always be the leader of hospitality. Now we have learned how to practice hospitality and the pastor is able to work in other areas rather than trying to*



*always be with us. I enjoy sharing our moments of hospitality during our evening vespers!"*

4. In what ways could the pastor improve our practice of hospitality?

*#1 "Perhaps we could establish a program that would give those who can't take a week off work to do mission work in the area. I realize the pastor has tried to establish some local projects but perhaps the congregation should become more involved in organizing these programs."*

*#2 "I think the Youth have been instrumental in improving our practice of hospitality. They have their adopted grandparents, work at the Salvation Army, take Christmas gifts to Claremont Farm, Sarah Todd and Thornwald Nursing Homes and sponsor a luncheon for our seniors. Between the pastor and our Youth leader. I think hospitality will continue to grow at St. Matthew's."*

*#3 "Many of our youth actually think all churches operate the way St. Matthew's operates. I know that my daughters have had their eyes opened when they attended Penn Central Conference and heard the other ministers complaining about their congregations. The youth don't remember what we went through seven years ago, which is good, but that incident made us stronger. We have to keep looking to the future. These services on hospitality were a good way to give the congregation vision toward the future."*

*#4 "Recently we had a woman that had called the pastor and wanted to know if we could purchase one gift for each of her children for Christmas. The pastor contacted the Women's Guild and I was put in charge. When I asked the woman why she contacted St. Matthew's she replied, 'Everyone knows you are the church that helps people.' That says a lot for our church and the pastor's direction."*

*#5 "I would like to see the youth provide baby sitting service to those parents who may need some quiet time and can't afford to pay someone to watch their children. Perhaps Darrel could organize a group to start this project. Maybe the church could come up with a fund to pay the youth or donate money to the youth fund."*

7. What programs have been established at St. Matthew's during the past 6 years that have advanced the practice of hospitality?

*#1 "I think the most important program is our mission trips. I can't think of a better way to discover the importance of giving or receiving hospitality than when on a mission trip."*

*#2 "Our monthly collections for Project S.H.A.R.E. are definitely an important practice of hospitality. I am especially proud (Can I use that word?) of our designation as a 'Corn Church.' I think it says something about the church when a volunteer organization can ask a church to fulfill a need and follow up with that same effort every month. To give 120 cans of corn a month as well as many other items speaks highly for our congregation."*

*#3 "When we installed the elevator we established a vision of our future. We demonstrated to those who felt our church was going to die that we were looking to the*

*future and we were willing to open our hearts and wallets to demonstrate our hospitality. Paving the drive way was another example of our vision for the future.”*

*#4 “The many events the pastor gets the Confirmation Class involved in demonstrate to them the importance of hospitality. When they go on their Trip Thru Life they always seem to learn something about themselves and how they can help others. I really enjoyed Confirmation because we learned how important it was to be willing to donate our time and efforts to the church. No matter our ability the minister and the congregation always accepted what we had to offer.”*

*#5 “The Youth Group is a great outreach for the practice of hospitality. They not only seem to get along so well together but they also work very well with the elderly in the congregation. It is wonderful to see how active our youth are within the church.”*

*#6 “The minister presenting the children’s message is definitely hospitality. The children love hearing the stories or being part of the antics that sometimes occur during these special times. I find that I sometimes learn more during those messages than I do during the sermon.”*

*#7 “Our Called To Care program is a wonderful example of hospitality. I know that those who are on the receiving end of our Called To Care committee really enjoy their visits. When the pastor visits it’s nice but many think, ‘well that’s his job’ but when a Called To Care person visits that shows that our congregation cares.”*

*#8 “Our annual Cabaret evenings to raise money for our mission trips is a great way to practice hospitality. We always spend time talking with those who come to the show and by waiting on their tables we get an opportunity to practice our hospitality. It also gives us a chance to show them that we aren’t really ‘professionals’ so if the show doesn’t go well they won’t throw tomatoes!”*

*#9 “Our adopted Grandparent program is an important part of our congregation’s practice of hospitality. The Grandparents especially appreciate receiving the gifts and cards from the youth when they go on their annual camping trips.”*

*#10 “Our Chicken BBQ is very popular with many people in the area. I know the chicken is the best around but many people say they attend because they enjoy the fellowship.”*

*#11 “Our monthly time of ‘Food and Fellowship’ is getting more popular. Many of the adults that never attend Sunday School usually stay for that event and we have some great discussions.”*

*#12 “When we have special Cantata’s, and invite the community and the two churches which participate in our Lenten Services, we have a chance to practice our hospitality. Many of those who attend ever go to church so this is a time when we can treat them as we would want to be treated if we were to attend a function in a different church.”*

*#13 “Vacation Bible School really brings out the best and worst in the practice of hospitality. Some times we have problems trying to work with people from the other church because their minister always feels things must be done in a certain way. It is sometimes difficult to practice hospitality but we always seem to have a successful event. We tend to put our differences away and work together for the children.”*

## E. INTERVIEWS

#1 Female – 16 – mission participant

1. Please describe a time when you received hospitality.

*The way a husband and wife in the congregation have always accepted me as family.*

2. Are you able to identify a time when you have given hospitality?

*I enjoy going to a local nursing home and interacting with the residents. Just by listening to them seems to give them great pleasure. They need to know that someone cares about them. I realized that hospitality can be displayed in many ways. Recently I saw my father standing by the gate at a band competition clapping and cheering each band as they exited the field. I felt that was a kind thing to do.*

3. What are your experiences of hospitality within our congregation?

*The congregation expresses their hospitality in the way they treat all people with respect. No matter your age or quality of life our members treat you with respect.*

4. Are you able to relate the ways you have contributed to hospitality within the church?

*I greet visitors and try to get involved in activities that go into the community. Cabaret always goes to a local nursing home, which is a great way to demonstrate hospitality.*

5. Are there ways you have contributed to hospitality outside the church? How could our congregation improve our hospitality?

*The “right hand of fellowship” which we use every Sunday is a wonderful way to extend hospitality.*

6. As you have performed acts of hospitality have you expected anything in return for that act?

*When we help at a local nursing home, we always get a good feeling and leave with a positive attitude.*

7. How would you describe your participation in the practice of hospitality?

*I limit my participation because of my age. You have to be constantly aware of what goes on around you in today’s society.*

- a. Handshake
- b. Acknowledge a stranger
- c. Phone calls
- d. Visit a stranger
- e. Have lunch with a stranger
- f. Spend several days working with or living with a stranger  
(i.e. mission trip)

- g. Invite a stranger into your home - *it's not my home*
  - 1. For a meal
  - 2. Overnight
  - 3. For a week
  - 4. For a year

#2 Female – 46 – mission participant

8. Please describe a time when you received hospitality.

*The first time I entered the church I thought of the welcome I received from a family in the congregation.*

9. Are you able to identify a time when you have given hospitality?

*I think there are more times when we have received hospitality more than we have given hospitality. Recently our daughter brought several girls home from college for the weekend and I thought about the act of hospitality we were practicing. I hoped that the girls perceived our hospitality as genuine.*

10. What are your experiences of hospitality within our congregation?

*Sometimes I wonder if we treat the strangers with more hospitality than we do those who have been members for a long time. Our congregation goes out of their way to greet new visitors etc. but sometimes we forget to greet those we know because we figure we will see them again. Sometimes people seem to get lost in the business of the church but that seems to be the way it is with most organizations. If you do not participate in the activities, you tend to fall by the wayside.*

11. Are you able to relate the ways you have contributed to hospitality within the church?

*I try to help those who want to stand back and watch rather than get involved. Women's guild and Men's breakfast seems to be a great way for new members to get to know what St. Matthew's is all about. Mission trips are a wonderful way to provide hospitality but perhaps others that do not participate feel that the participants form a click.*

12. Are there ways you have contributed to hospitality outside the church? How could our congregation improve our hospitality?

*"The Lord uses unexpected times and circumstances to draw people to faith." The participants on the mission trip sometimes feel excluded when they work alone on a project but they are drawn back into the community through our daily vesper services. I can't really think of any new ideas that would improve our hospitality.*

13. As you have performed acts of hospitality, have you expected anything in return for that act?

*I've expected safety for our group. I expected not to break the law. I expect everything to be on the "up and up." I am not willing to put myself out on a limb. My hospitality has limits. "Maybe I am doing the right thing for the moment but how will*

*it affect the future?” Our children take hospitality for granted because of their home life while other children, who live in a difficult situation, may appreciate hospitality because it is a positive influence in their lives.*

14. How would you describe your participation in the practice of hospitality?  
*This depends on how you define a stranger. It is important to know when you practice hospitality is it coming from your heart or is it because you feel guilt.*

- a. Handshake
- b. Acknowledge a stranger
- c. Phone calls - *is there a “contact” person*
- d. Visit a stranger – *see someone on the street who needs help. I remember as a child learning CPR the teacher said, “You really have to remember that you are a Christian and do this.”*
- e. Have lunch with a stranger
- f. Spend several days working with or living with a stranger  
*It is easier to work with a stranger but living with one may be difficult. I remember staying in an airport waiting all night and seeing the people sleeping curled up around their computers because they were aware of what could happen. We did not like the living conditions at HOME but the kids from the other group didn’t seem to mind. A S.S. teacher once said, “Just because you have more than someone else, you shouldn’t feel guilty about it.”*
- f. Invite a stranger into your home
  5. For a meal
  6. Overnight
  7. For a week – *again depends on the background of the stranger*
  8. For a year *I would not hesitate to take in a foreign exchange student but then they are backed by an organization that supervises the person.*

#3 Female – 58 – mission participant

15. Please describe a time when you received hospitality.

*I have helped my sister in-law out during her times of illness and mentioned to her about one of our trees in the lawn dying because of the weather. I came home one day and discovered that her and her husband had purchased a tree and planted in our yard. They had checked with her husband before they purchased the tree.*

16. Are you able to identify a time when you have given hospitality?

*A laundry man picks up her clothes from her work. He had just left his wife and had nothing. So they purchased food for him and got some furniture. They have been helping him for several months. He also asked for money for food which they have given him. There are two sides to every story and we only know one side but at least we are doing what we can.*

17. What are your experiences of hospitality within our congregation?

*I feel our congregation is very hospitable to others. There use to be clicks within the congregation that left others out but things have changed dramatically and everyone really seems to get along.*

18. Are you able to relate the ways you have contributed to hospitality within the church?

*I'm a Sunday school teacher and perhaps teaching the tone chimes and junior choir are acts of hospitality.*

19. Are there ways you have contributed to hospitality outside the church? How could our congregation improve our hospitality?

20. As you have performed acts of hospitality have you expected anything in return for that act?

*At first I would like to think I expected nothing but when we go on the mission trips I always get a good feeling within my self. If that did not occur maybe I would be disappointed if this feeling did not occur. When we do Christ's work we feel good.*

21. How would you describe your participation in the practice of hospitality?

- a. Handshake *would a hug mean more than a handshake. That was very special to my mother.*
- b. Acknowledge a stranger – *depends on the situation*
- c. Phone calls
- d. Visit a stranger *I would have some fear because of the changes in society.*
- e. Have lunch with a stranger *I've already made lunch for transients who pass by our home but I have them stay on the porch. I do this because of the many incidents that have occurred in our area with strangers setting up people and stealing from them.*
- f. Spend several days working with or living with a stranger  
(i.e. mission trip)
- g. Invite a stranger into your home  
*A lot of my response depends on the situation. If my husband is home, it is easier to invite a stranger into the home.*
  9. Overnight
  10. For a week
  11. For a year

#4 Male – 60 – mission participant

22. Please describe a time when you received hospitality.

*One time I had a flat tire on the mail route and I went to a home to ask to use the phone. The woman volunteered to take me to get a new tire and helped me put the tire on. She refused any payment for her hospitality.*

23. Are you able to identify a time when you have given hospitality?

*There are two fellows at the post office and wanted garages built. They asked him for help so he is helping them build garages. Right now, they are on their second garage. All he receives is a meal when working on the garage.*

24. What are your experiences of hospitality within our congregation?

*Many members of the congregation have been through many of the same experiences and are more compassionate because of their personal trials.*

25. Are you able to relate the ways you have contributed to hospitality within the church?

*I participate in men's activities and help work on ongoing projects within the church*

26. Are there ways you have contributed to hospitality outside the church? How could our congregation improve our hospitality?

*Always make sure we greet each other. Never miss an opportunity to say hello.*

27. As you have performed acts of hospitality, have you expected anything in return for that act?

*The final day of our mission trip is always both the high and low point of the experience. I feel great because of what we've accomplished yet I also feel down because I know this feeling will soon leave.*

28. How would you describe your participation in the practice of hospitality?

- a. Handshake *I have trouble thanking people for things they have done. I don't know why but I'm hesitant to speak my feelings.*
- b. Acknowledge a stranger
- c. Phone calls
- d. Visit a stranger *it depends on the situation*
- e. Have lunch with a stranger
- f. Spend several days working with or living with a stranger  
(i.e. mission trip)
- g. Invite a stranger into your home *my father would always invite strangers into our home.*
  - 12. For a meal
  - 13. Overnight
  - 14. For a week
  - 15. For a year

#5 Male – 41 – mission participant

29. Please describe a time when you received hospitality.

*I had just moved into the area and was working with a fellow who took me under his wing. One day I was saying how I needed some money to get my cable hooked up but I hadn't received a pay check yet. He put a \$50 bill on the truck seat and told me to get the cable. They also invited me for dinner many times. I probably wouldn't be*

*living in this area if it hadn't been for them. That occurred over 20 years ago and it still sticks out in my mind.*

30. Are you able to identify a time when you have given hospitality?

*We have had several carvers over for dinner and we invited friends of our friends to spend the night. The best side effect of hospitality is making new friends.*

31. What are your experiences of hospitality within our congregation?

*Our congregation is very open even though there is friction at times. I remember when I would miss church and a gentleman would always ask my wife what I was up to. I appreciated his concern.*

32. Are you able to relate the ways you have contributed to hospitality within the church?

*If I see a stranger in the church, I try to greet them and let them know they are welcomed. I don't think you should go overboard because some people really don't want to be pointed out as being visitors.*

33. Are there ways you have contributed to hospitality outside the church? How could our congregation improve our hospitality?

*I enjoy being around people and try to help those in need.*

34. As you have performed acts of hospitality, have you expected anything in return for that act?

*I never really think of expecting something in return but I always seem to receive something for what I give in the way of personal satisfaction. I don't do it expecting the person I helped to then help me at a later time. Perhaps that is why the mission trips are so important to me. I can help others and not expect anything in return because many of those I help I will never see again. I would be disappointed if I went on a mission trip and did not feel the feeling of accomplishment and completing God's will. I do expect something from the spiritual aspect not the material aspect.*

35. How would you describe your participation in the practice of hospitality?

- a. Handshake *I never was a hugger but I find I am more willing to hug others. I took a co-operation class at work and when we ended everyone was hugging*
- b. Acknowledge a stranger *I sometimes acknowledge strangers but it depends on the area and the situation.*
- c. Phone calls
- d. Visit a stranger *I visited a friend who became a stranger when he was arrested for drugs. I was asked by a friend, "If he was your friend before why wouldn't he still be your friend?" That helped me go visit him in prison and after he got out, he told me, "When you are down you really find out who your friends are."*
- e. Have lunch with a stranger
- f. Spend several days working with or living with a stranger  
(i.e. mission trip) *Our mission trips give us a chance to spend time with strangers. I'm not sure if I would want to live with some of those we help for two reasons: what is the condition of their home and would it be an imposition if I stayed with them.*



- g. Invite a stranger into your home
  - 16. For a meal
  - 17. Overnight *We have done this but then again we knew their friends so we had some background on them. Several times we've had over 20 people staying at our home for a few days but they were known by our relatives.*
  - 18. For a week
  - 19. For a year

#6 Male – 56 – mission participant

36. Please describe a time when you received hospitality.

*When my mother died and you came to the home and stayed with me. Even though you didn't have to do that.*

37. Are you able to identify a time when you have given hospitality?

*One time I came out of a local restaurant and found an elderly women who had fallen. I helped her up and stayed with her until help arrived. Sometimes I'm hesitant to say no and I find I over extend myself. Recently we helped a man who had an accident while driving behind us. We could have kept going but we went back to check on what happened.*

38. What are your experiences of hospitality within our congregation?

*The way we help with Project Share and mission trips. Everyone is there to help you. Recently when I lost my job many members of the congregation demonstrated concern. I think hospitality was developed rather than passed down. We are much more hospitable now than we were several years ago. Now we realize everyone is not perfect.*

39. Are you able to relate the ways you have contributed to hospitality within the church?

*I try to go the extra mile to assist those who need help.*

40. Are there ways you have contributed to hospitality outside the church? How could our congregation improve our hospitality?

*We had a situation several years ago that caused a lot of problems. But we were willing to let the person back into our home so he could make amends with his mother.*

41. As you have performed acts of hospitality, have you expected anything in return for that act?

*Because I lost my job I sometimes wonder why I'm in the situation I'm in now especially since I really try to help others when ever possible. Is that being selfish? I have a great family and wonderful wife. Why do I still feel like I expect God to help me more? I don't want something from my hospitality but I do feel good when those we are helping also feel good. I feel good just being with the group.*

42. How would you describe your participation in the practice of hospitality?

- a. Handshake *I'm more willing to give hugs. Our church is not so formal so we are more able to exhibit hospitality.*

- b. Acknowledge a stranger *I remember giving a stranger \$3 for food and watched him purchase lottery tickets. Perhaps I should have just turned my back after I gave him the money?*
- c. Phone calls
- d. Visit a stranger *depending on the situation I would visit a stranger.*
- e. Have lunch with a stranger
- f. Spend several days working with or living with a stranger  
(i.e. mission trip) *I would not have any problems living with those we help. Perhaps this is because when I was young I helped build silos and we would live on the farms and many of the living conditions were very bad. I learned to go with the flow.*
- g. Invite a stranger into your home
  - 20. For a meal
  - 21. Overnight *We are willing to house strangers but we also would like to know something about their background.*
  - 22. For a week
  - 23. For a year

#7 Female – 56 – mission participant

43. Please describe a time when you received hospitality.

*The time my mother died I remember how many people did nice things for us, sent us cards and just showed kindness.*

44. Are you able to identify a time when you have given hospitality?

*I try to share hospitality everyday of my life. If someone needs a hug, I try to be there for them. (I noted how pleasant she is when answering the phone at work) We hosted our son's family for his wedding.*

45. What are your experiences of hospitality within our congregation?

*Our congregation is very caring and are there to talk with you, give you a hug. The situation we went through definitely made the church more hospitable. Many of those who did not portray hospitality are now out of the church. So many people have used my mother as their image of real hospitality. She led by example.*

46. Are you able to relate the ways you have contributed to hospitality within the church?

*We brought Ken, who was a soccer coach from Ireland into our home for a week. It was a wonderful experience and we would do it again.*

47. Are there ways you have contributed to hospitality outside the church? How could our congregation improve our hospitality?

*We never left our feelings toward our son's former wife even though she caused many problems. Perhaps her childhood is the reason for how she lives now. The grandchildren need to be in a family that demonstrates love.*

48. As you have performed acts of hospitality, have you expected anything in return for that act?

*I expect God's grace because I'm living my life through God's love. When we experience God's grace on the earth, we feel love. When I think about the feeling of love I have to admit that it makes me feel good. I would feel down if I went on a mission trip and didn't feel good about it.*

49. How would you describe your participation in the practice of hospitality?

- a. Handshake
- b. Acknowledge a stranger *I try to acknowledge strangers when I walk in Carlisle. But many times I also try to see what the situation is since many of the homeless people do not demonstrate normal behavior.*
- c. Phone calls
- d. Visit a stranger
- e. Have lunch with a stranger *I would purchase lunch for them but I would have to really think about it if they were not dressed properly or had not bathed for a while.*
- f. Spend several days working with or living with a stranger  
(i.e. mission trip) *I enjoy working with those we meet but I'm not sure I would want to live with them because of some of the living conditions. Cleanliness is very important to my life style.*
- g. Invite a stranger into your home
  - 24. For a meal
  - 25. Overnight
  - 26. For a week *we did this many times and our home is always available for people who need somewhere to stay. But we usually know something about the visitor.*
  - 27. For a year

#8 Female – 85

50. Please describe a time when you received hospitality.

*I actually can't think of a time when I received hospitality. Maybe it's because as I was growing up I always saw my mother practice hospitality and I felt it was something everyone did. I guess my mother would be my example for when I received hospitality.*

51. Are you able to identify a time when you have given hospitality?

*There was a girl who's husband abused her. She lived in a local city and knew me through another family member. She called me and lived with me for a week and then found a home. I felt I was able to help her through this difficult time just by giving her a safe place and spending a lot of time talking with her and crying with her. Even though I felt she should return to her husband I did not give her that advice.*

52. What are your experiences of hospitality within our congregation?

*In previous years I felt the church was very cold and inhospitable. I never felt that I was a part of the church because they had several clicks. In the past few years many things have changed and I feel much more welcomed. Perhaps it's because those that led the clicks either left the church or passed away.*

53. Are you able to relate the ways you have contributed to hospitality within the church?

*I use to participate in the fund raising activities and Women's Guild. I always tried to greet visitors.*

54. Are there ways you have contributed to hospitality outside the church? How could our congregation improve our hospitality?

*I have had many people come to my home to live with me. Recently I had an 86 year old women who's family would not take her in. I would love to take in more people but my health is not what it use to be.*

55. As you have performed acts of hospitality have you expected anything in return for that act?

*I never expected anything in return but I do enjoy the friendship and relationships that develop from the hospitality that I've extended. I like to make my visitors feel worthwhile and I always try to be positive when around them. I had a young girl from Lebanon live with me for over 3 years and now she lives in Carlisle and is the first person to visit me if I'm not feeling well. I guess by helping others I'm being helped as well.*

56. How would you describe your participation in the practice of hospitality?

- a. Handshake
- b. Acknowledge a stranger
- c. Phone calls *I try to call several people every day.*
- d. Visit a stranger
- e. Have lunch with a stranger *I used to make meals for people who would stop by our business and ask for some food. It was much easier to do when my husband was living.*
- f. Spend several days working with or living with a stranger  
(i.e. mission trip)
- g. Invite a stranger into your home
  28. For a meal
  29. Overnight
  30. For a week
  31. For a year *I've had many people stay with me. The ground rules I have is no drinking, smoking and they should try to help with the housework. Most of those who stayed with me continue the relationship we developed.*

F. SERVICE LACKING HOSPITALITY



**ST. MATTHEW'S  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

*3240 Spring Road  
Carlisle, PA 17013*  
Pastor Darrel R. Justh

## Third Sunday of Lent

"Hospitality is always risky.

You never know who's on the other side of the door."

*-Nancy Forest*

9:00 a.m. Worship

March 16, 2003

**This exercise, in removing hospitality from the church is designed to show you the many ways we practice hospitality and do not realize we are doing it. The service has been arranged in a way that will make the participants feel as though they are in a different congregation. You are now the visitor.**

\*Call to Worship

L: In the quietness of first moments our worship ascends unto God.  
How have you come?

P: **"For God alone my soul waits in silence,  
for my hope is from Him."**

L: Is your hope in any other?

P: **"He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be  
shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honor;  
My mighty rock, my refuge is God."**

L: Trust in Him at all times. O people; pour out your heart before him;

P: **"God is a refuge for us. We wait before the Lord."**

Prelude *The Last Mile of the Way*

-Oatman

**We have removed the candles from the front of the sanctuary because the lighting of the candles symbolizes god's presence in this church. If we are not hospitable to god then his word will fall on deaf ears. The flags have been placed in the back of the sanctuary because the united church of flag represents an open and accepting fellowship, which symbolizes true hospitality. The American flag represents not only our love for our country and the freedom we experience but it also represents our willingness to accept all people no matter their race, political persuasion or belief. This nation was built on the practice of hospitality.**

\*Prayer (Men read bold print – women read bold italic underlined print)

**Great and loving God,**

***We come before Thee,***

**emptied of all that would distract,**

***seeking all that would redeem.***

**Let these moments not become so routine**

***as to be predictable,***

**nor so familiar**

***as to be conventional.***

**Prepare us for the unexpected.**

***Open us to the variety of worship's spontaneity***

in praise of our savior.

Amen

**God speak to us so that we may be willing to seek out those who are lost and alone and in search of Christian fellowship and love.**

\*Hymn of Adoration #531 *God Speak To Me*

\*Prayer of Confession

L: You look well. Is it not the sick alone who need salvation?

**P: We all need salvation all our lives. Our hearts are heavy with the sins of pride. We do not always show on the outside the remorse we feel on the inside, but our sin is real.**

L: What is your desire?

**P: Forgiveness, restoration, reconciliation with God.**

L: How can this happen for you?

**P: By confession and repentance on our part and through pardon and mercy on God's part.**

L: And what else?

**P: By looking to Jesus, our crucified and risen Savior.**

L: God promises deliverance to those of a contrite heart. God knows your confession and in Christ forgives. Be healed inside and out. Serve the Lord.

**P: We will serve the Lord with joyful hearts. Amen**

\*Gloria #756 *Glory to God*

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

### **Stranger At The Door – 1**

Response (#1 – Youth & Teens, #2 – age 20-40's, #3 – age 50 and up)

1. How often we notice the faults of others
2. Their peculiarities, their differences, their forgetfulness.
3. How misguided they are
1. They do not have their life together.
2. We are sure of our superiority.
3. We believe the right way

All: Heaven is our reward.

### **Stranger At The Door – 2**

1. Then we notice how we fail to live up to what we believe.
2. We are ashamed of our shortcomings.
3. We claim tolerance but do not show mercy.
1. We are sure of glory but blind to gospel demands.
2. We are religious but think like hypocrites.
3. Lord, forgive our hypocrisy.

All: Father, forgive us for we know not what we do!

In our world the assumption is that strangers are a potential danger and that it is up to them to disprove it. Our heart might desire to help others: to feed the hungry, visit the prisoners and offer a shelter to travelers; but meanwhile we have surrounded ourselves with a wall of fear and hostile feelings, instinctively avoiding people and places where we might be reminded of our good intentions. We always want to be in control.

Skit *One Woman Coming Up*

*How many times do we think that we are in control of the events that surround us? Sometimes strange things may happen when we try to tell God how we should live our lives.*

**We try to be hospitable but so many times we fall short. We even use language that will not offend others but we soon discover that we dilute God's word.**

Scripture Genesis 18:1-15 *Abraham and Sarah: Fertility-Challenged*  
"Politically Correct Old Testament Stories" (O.T. # 14)

Children's Message

Hymn #606 *Nearer My God, To You*

### **Stranger At The Door - 3**

\*A Litany of Provision (#1 pulpit side (north) #2 lectern side (south))

1. What we give
2. God Blesses
1. What we withhold
2. God requires
1. What we want
2. God understands
1. What we need
2. God provides
1. What we enjoy
2. God lavishes
1. What we share
2. God multiplies.

Unison: **All that is used is of God. All that remains is of God. We gather up the baskets full and give God the praise!**

**The church is not an institution forcing us to follow its rules. It is a community of people inviting us to still our hunger and thirst at its tables**

Skit *The Woman Caught in Committee*

*We all want to follow God's will but sometimes we find ourselves becoming overly judgmental. What would happen if we accept others without conditions just as Christ accepts us?*

**Our society seems to be increasingly full of fearful, defensive, aggressive people anxiously clinging to their property and inclined to look at their surrounding world with suspicion, always expecting an enemy to suddenly appear, intrude and do harm. But still – that is our vocation: to convert the *hostis* into a *hospes*, the enemy into a guest and to create the free and fearless space where brotherhood and sisterhood can be formed and fully experienced**



Scripture Luke 10:25-37 *The Generosity-Gifted Samaritan*  
“Politically Correct Parables” (N.T. #71)

Communal Prayer

L: If life’s struggles seem more than you can bear, take them to God,  
wait silently in prayer.

Time of Silence

(When the handbell plays please read one sentence in unison.  
Meditate on that sentence until the handbell is played again)

- **Holy God, invade the sanctuary of our hearts as we worship Thee.**
- **Expand the horizon of our dispirited souls and open us to the broad vistas of that eternal love whose reach knows no end.**
- **Teach us that the salvation of the lost knows no bounds, that to claim faith and hide it under a bushel is the delight of the evil one.**
- **Empower us to speak prayerfully of our experience with Jesus Christ to all who need to hear.**
- **May we not fail to share our faith lest others, in their struggle with life, come down to the end of the way and meet judgment without the Advocate, Jesus Christ.**
- **Today and always we intercede for those: who mask inferiority with loudness,**
- **who grow weaker each day,**
- **who harbor secret sins,**
- **who doubt there is a God,**
- **who keep their distance,**
- **who are plagued with one overwhelming fault,**
- **who have children and feel overextended,**
- **who want children and are unable to have them,**
- **who gambled foolishly and lost it all,**
- **who are caught up in a tragedy not of their own doing,**
- **who got out in the nick of time,**
- **who tried to help and got hurt,**
- **who still pray for an unheard-from son or daughter, after all these years.**
- **Thou knows the needs of each of these persons and how close the mention of their problems comes to each of us.**
- **Instruct and use us in the ministry that meets life’s deepest needs.**
- **Never stop calling us, for we need Thee now more than ever. Amen.**

\*Lord’s Prayer (debts and debtors)

#### **Stranger At The Door - 4**

Giving of our Tithes and Offerings

**Old and New Testament stories not only show how serious our obligation is to welcome the stranger in our home, but they also tell us that guests are carrying precious gifts with them, which they are eager to reveal to a receptive host. If we give of our gifts with reservations how can God grant**

**us those gifts that make us a community? All we have belongs to God.  
Can we present our gifts to God with a joyful heart?**

Offertory *Just A Closer Walk With Thee* -Denton

\*Doxology

**Bless Thou the gifts our hands have brought; Bless Thou the work  
our hearts have planned; Ours is the faith, the will, the thought;  
The rest, O God, is in Thy hand.**

\*Prayer of Dedication

**Merciful God, teach us to give first from love, not from any other motive: Our  
love for Thee, our love for others, the proper love for ourselves. Then show us as  
we give from love there is always more to give. Amen**

Skit *One Last Sunday*

*What keeps people coming back to St. Matthew's? Are there changes we may make  
that will better represent Christ? Listen to a couple that are deciding if they wish to  
return to a church they visited.*

\*Closing Hymn #607 *We Would Be Building*

**Stranger At The Door - 5**

**Strangers do not need to be different from us. They may be "our own kind  
of people" who have become alienated from us for a variety of reasons.  
Who is a stranger to you? Will you extend to them God's gift of hospitality?**

\*Benediction

Walk bravely into this new week. Shun the evil, hold the good. Forgive those who  
wound you, wound not in return. Encourage the discouraged. Cherish time with the  
lonely. Pray in private places about all things. Be found celebrating. Practice  
rejoicing. Encourage laughter in your soul. Show kindness. Receive the peace of  
God. Think deeply. Live exuberantly. Trust God in trial or triumph. And in  
opportune moments practice hospitality. Amen

\*Threefold Amen #812

\*Postlude *Ye Are The Light Of The World* - Broughton

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## G. SERVICE WITH HOSPITALITY



**CHRISTIANS**  
Caring for each other

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**Fourth Sunday of Lent**

**Hospitality Sunday**

*"Hospitality is the struggle to live God's will and to abandon your own will, to "open the home" of*

*your life to whatever God puts in your path."* Nancy Forest

**9:00 a.m. Worship**

**March 23, 2003**

Joys and Concerns of the Church

**Opening Prayer**

**We come together in this house of prayer, trusting you, O God, to give us everything we need. As you provide for the birds of the air, you supply life's necessities for your children to share. We choose to respond to your promises by**

**identifying ourselves as your servant people who seek to be guided by your word and willingly open our hearts to those in need. Today, we gather to do the tasks you entrust to us, praying for strength to practice hospitality in your name. Amen.**

Prelude *How Firm A Foundation*

**\*Call to Worship**

L: With profound happiness, we welcome one another.

How good it is to approach the altar of our God!

**P: Happy are those who live in God's house!**

**Singing our praise to God fills us with joy.**

L: Here we welcome both friend and stranger.

All peoples of the earth are God's children.

**P: We greet one another by name in Jesus' name.**

**Together we extol the name of our God.**

L: Open your hearts to receive new strength.

Open your lives to renewed understandings.

**P: Surely God will equip us to face our world.**

**We will be ambassadors for God wherever we go.**

**Stranger At The Door – 1**

**\*Hymn of Adoration *My Brothers and Sisters* -Lavon Bayler**

**My brothers and my sisters, who meet in Jesus' name,  
why do we choose as favorites the ones with wealth and fame?**

**The poor receive God's favor, for they have learned to trust.**

**Their faith is rich and growing; they, more than we, are just.**

**By disregarding others whose ways are different,**

**We violate the mandate that God, in Christ, has sent.**

**Love neighbors as yourself, and shun partiality.**

**Our sisters and our brothers are all humanity.**

**What good are words of faith that are empty platitudes,**

**That speak of warmth and peace, yet will offer no one foods**

**To fill their bodies' dire need or meet their spirits' thirst.**

**Forgive us, God, and help us put serving actions first.**

**Stranger At The Door – 2**

**\*Call to Confession**

God has called us, not to a set of beliefs but to a relationship of trust. We are drawn to the Spirit whose will for us is life at its fullest, attuned to all that is good and true. We are embraced by the gospel of peace. We come now to confess that we have looked elsewhere for our salvation.

**\*Prayer of Confession**

**0 God, we confess that we are reluctant to move into this Lenten journey to Jerusalem. The past appears pleasant in comparison with the future unknown. We meet pressing human need with fear and pain and inaction. In a chorus with worshipers everywhere, we say, "We have fallen short, we live in a state of brokenness and alienation. We have sinned." 0 God, our Sustainer and Redeemer, help us to discover the gifts of power, talent, and energy which you give us, that we might bring healing into a broken world. Forgive our sin, strengthen our resolve, and renew us in your ever-vibrant Spirit. Amen.**

\*Assurance of Forgiveness

L: Happy are those who daily find their strength in the living God, seeking to help those in need. Happy are those who trust in God, who sincerely and truthfully search for ways to serve where God needs them most.

**P: God redeems us, whatever our circumstances, lifting our spirits, even when our bodies are in chains. May we serve boldly as ambassadors for Jesus Christ.**

\*Gloria #756

L: **So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there remember that your sister or brother has something against you, leave your gift in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother or sister, and then come back and offer your gift.**

**P: In response to Christ's command, we reach out to each other in love.**

\*Right Hand of Fellowship

**Stranger At The Door – 3**

Anthem Junior Choir

Skit *Open My Eyes Lord*

Scripture I Kings 17:8-16 (O.T. #324)

Luke 14:16b-24 (N.T. #77)

Children's Message

**Stranger At The Door – 4**

Hymn #541 *They Asked, "Who's My Neighbor?"*

Message *"Do We Refuse God's Hospitality?"*

\*Justice – *United Farm Workers* (Hymnal #863)

\*Pastoral Prayer

\*Lord's Prayer (debts and debtors)

Offertory Invitation

Allow us, O Lord, to match our gifts of money with gifts of ourselves.

May all our gifts come from our heart.

Offering *Christi's Theme*

\*Doxology #785

\*Prayer of Dedication

**May our giving add strength to the witness of your church as we humbly seek your truth and lovingly share it. Ready us to proclaim the gospel of peace in our homes, in our places of work and leisure, throughout our community and the world. Amen.**

**Stranger At The Door – 5**

Celebration of Holy Communion

L: Why is it that we come together like this? What is it that we think sharing some bread and wine can do to change the spaces that separate us from one another, and from God's world?

**P: We eat and drink with other people on many occasions.**

L: How is it that the common act of eating—with strangers, even with enemies—can be transforming, healing, activating? Are we even sure we believe that can happen? Do we really want it to happen?

**P: Sometimes it feels like everyone wants worship to make the differences fade away in the wholeness, in God; sometimes it feels like everyone wants the colors of the rainbow to run like wet dye and mix.**

L: Let us worship God, with the hope instead that after all the winds and storms of being together, the colors of our various lives might appear, distinct, yet unified, like a rainbow.

**P: Let us worship in the hope that just for a moment, God's Spirit might shine through us to bring light and color to an often dark and complex world. We hunger for moments of wholeness like that.**

L: Yes, we hunger, not only for the rainbow to appear bright and illuminating, but also that we might come to the end of this rainbow fed and ready again to meet wind and storm with hope.

**P: Because of our faith we have the hope of clear skies and rainbows ahead, once more.**

Eucharistic Prayer

L: Holy One, you speak to us in silence, yet all languages interpret you. Because you call us to be in community, we are able to become gifts to one another. We invoke now your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts, that in sharing them, we may discern your presence which becomes our life.

We remember and give you thanks for those called out with a vision of possibility and promise: for Abraham and Sarah, for Isaac and Rebecca, for Jacob with Leah and Rachel, for Moses and Miriam. We thank you for your people who followed Moses through the waters of the Red Sea into the wilderness until they became a people ready to enter the promised land.

We thank you for the openness of Mary who dared to accept the call to be the bearer and nurturer of your Anointed One, Jesus. We bless you, O God, for Jesus, who through his life, crucifixion, death, and resurrection fully lived the promise of redemptive wholeness available for all who would be obedient to your creating will.

Therefore we rejoice to proclaim:

**ALL: Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.**

The Sharing of the Bread and Wine

L: Through the broken bread we participate in the body of Christ.

(As the congregation passes the bread down the pew we ask that you break off a piece of bread and hand the loaf to your neighbor. As they receive the bread say to them)

**This is the gift of God's love.**

L: Through the cup of blessing we participate in the new life Christ gives.

(As you pass the cups of juice say to your neighbor)

**This is the gift of God's spirit.**

\*The Thanksgiving

**We give thanks, O God, because in your own free gift of love you have reached out to us. You have refreshed us at your table; touched our deepest needs, and called us to a life shared in memory and hope. Send us forth with courage and joy in the name of Jesus Christ, that we, too, may represent love and peace for one another and the world. Amen.**



## H. SKITS FOR STRANGER AT THE DOOR

### MARCH 16

#1 Tabitha

“I have been kicked out of my home because my parents don’t like my boyfriend. Can you help me?”

*-Perhaps you should get yourself a new boyfriend.*

#2 Aaron

“Hey dude. Is there someplace that me and my friends can hang out?”

*-We don’t want your kind hanging around our church*

#3 Janell

“I have to have surgery and will not be able to drive for a month. Is there anyone here that would be able to take me to the store and the doctors?”

*-We’re all too busy. Don’t you have some relatives that could do that for you?*

#4 Bill

“I just lost my job and I’m looking for some way to earn some money to pay my bills. Can you help me?”

*-I’m sure McDonalds is looking for help.*

#5 Joan

“I was wondering if you could possibly spare some food or money?”

*-We already give to Project Share. It’s a short 5 mile walk to their office and you could probably get there by this afternoon.*

### MARCH 23

#1 Tabitha

“I have been kicked out of my home because my parents don’t like my boyfriend. Can you help me?”

Marcia

*-I’ll tell you what I can do. I’ll call your parents and see if it’s ok for you to stay with us for a little while and in the meantime we can set up a meeting with our minister, you and your parents to see if we can solve this problem.*

#2 Aaron

“Hey dude. Is there someplace that me and my friends can hang out?”

Jill

*-We offer Sunday School every Sunday and have a great youth group that likes to take some exciting trips during the year. Perhaps you would like to come back and sit with me and I’ll introduce you to some of our youth.*



#3 Janell

“I have to have surgery and will not be able to drive for a month. Is there anyone here that would be able to take me to the store and the doctors?”

Anita

*-I would be happy to set up a volunteer group to see that you have transportation. I'm sure we wouldn't have any trouble getting you some meals as well. Let me know when you're going to the hospital and we can have the minister stop in and some of our Called to Care members.*

#4 Bill

“I just lost my job and I'm looking for some way to earn some money to pay my bills. Can you help me?”

Ed

*-Can you paint or do carpentry? I have some work you could do and I'm sure we can find others in the congregation that would be willing to help you. Is there any way our church can help you with your insurance?*

#5 Joan

“I was wondering if you could possibly spare some food or money?”

BettyLou

*-I just happen to have a roast cooking this very minute. If you want to wait until church is over you are welcome to go home with me and I'll give you lunch. After that we can go to the store and I'll get you a few items to take care of you until Project Share opens.*

## I. STORY PATTERNS

### THE NEED

**Jove & Mercury -**  
weary travelers

**Trojan War**  
Paris needs a wife

**Elijah – I Kings**  
Needed food and water

**Odyssey**  
Need was not known  
until Athena was fed and  
entertained

**Maha-bharata**  
Need is unknown  
because the stranger  
cannot be recognized as  
a friend or foe. The  
stranger, in the case of  
Yudhishtira proves to  
be a dog.

**Psalm 41**  
Friendship and trust

**Genesis 18**  
Abraham has no heir

### EXTEND - REFUSE

Refused by many until  
they came to the home  
of an elderly couple

Hospitality was  
extended by the husband  
of Helen but Paris  
refused the hospitality  
by stealing Helen.

A widow offers him  
food.

Hospitality was  
extended because  
Telemachos did not  
know if Athena was a  
beggar or a god

Hospitality is to be  
extended so the host  
may discover the  
strangers true purpose

Hospitality was  
extended through a meal  
but his friend, who he  
trusted, used the  
occasion of his illness to  
attack him

Hospitality extended to  
the strangers with a meal  
and a place to rest

### CONSEQUENCES

Replenished the wine  
and visitors revealed as  
gods. They were given  
their eternal desires.

Menelaus, Helen's  
husband goes to Troy in  
search of Paris and the  
Troy War begins

Widow is removed from  
life of poverty because  
the oil jug and jar of  
meal are always full

Athena serves as  
Telemachos godly  
patron and helps him  
find his father Odysseus.

Yudhishtira, a  
character in the Maha-  
bharata, is accepted into  
heaven because he  
refuses to send a dog,  
who followed him,  
away.

The author is protected  
from his enemies by  
God and realizes that he  
will be raised up so that  
he may repay those who  
are against him.

Strangers reveal  
themselves as angels  
and Sarah becomes  
pregnant

## THE NEED

## EXTEND - REFUSE

## CONSEQUENCES

### **Psalm 41**

A friend in time of suffering

Friend, with whom he broke bread, lifted his heel against him.

Hospitality refused

God healed him so he could “repay” his friend

### **Kings 2:4**

Elisha needs a place to stay

A woman allows him to use a room when he passes through the area.

She is promised a son. The son later dies and Elisha brings him back to life

### **Genesis 24**

Isaac needs a wife

Servant wants a sign to help him choose a wife for Isaac. The sign is an act of hospitality.

Rebekah gives him water & shares a meal

Isaac marries Rebekah

### **Genesis 19**

Lot has guests who the locals want to “know better.”

To show his hospitality Lot offers his daughters to the men

This act of hospitality is refused by the men and God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah

### **Judges 20**

A Levite needed a place to stay for the night

Hospitality offered but the Levite’s concubine was killed

The offenders and their cities from the tribe of Benjamin were destroyed

### **Job**

Wants instruction from the Counselors

Counselors, instead of giving him instruction tell him that he has obviously sinned

Counselors are forgiven through Job’s prayers and Job garners a new family, animals and a long life

Satan wants a human to test their faith in God

God allows Satan to test Job

Job endures the test and God proves Satan wrong

### **Luke 14**

The host has a feast and needs his friends to participate in the meal

Host’s friends refuse the offer to the banquet. Offer is extended to the outcasts

Those who are of the lower class partake in the meal

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