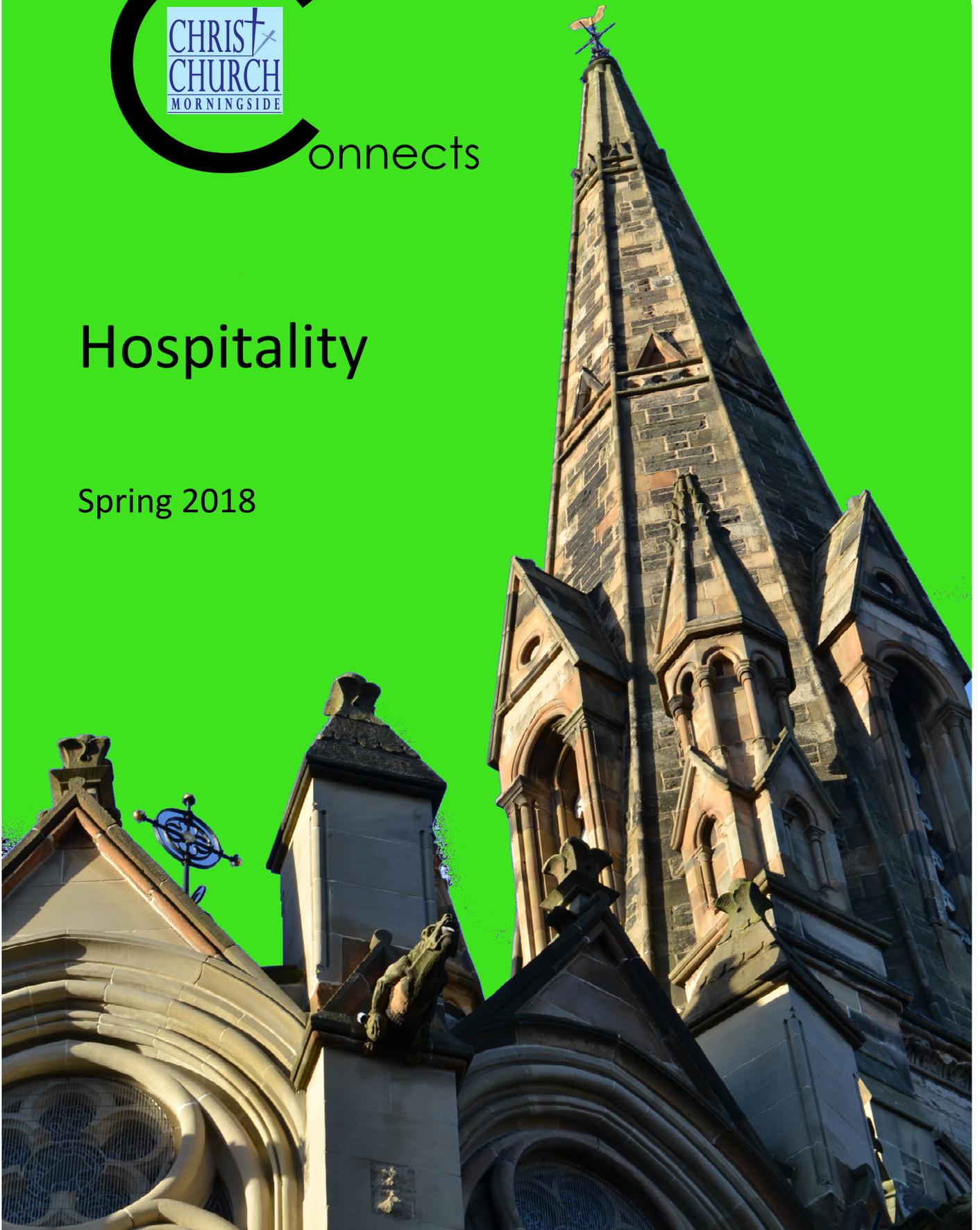




Hospitality

Spring 2018



Dear Friends

Many of you will be familiar with this image of Rublev's icon, The Hospitality of Abraham, which has become the quintessential icon of the Holy Trinity in its depiction of the three mysterious strangers who visited Abraham (Genesis 18.1-15). Not knowing who they are, Abraham bows down low before them and offers them the hospitality of footwashing, rest under the shade of a tree, and a meal. They are of course angels representing God, and they go on to announce that God is going to give Abraham and Sarah a son in their old age.



Abraham offered hospitality whilst unaware that at the same time he was receiving the hospitality of God. Ponder the icon, for it shows God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit seated at the table with space for us to be drawn into this circle of divine.

All acts of true hospitality, big or small, given or received, makes room for “the other”, and not just people we know for we remain mindful of the words of the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews (13.2) — “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” !

Susan Macdonald

A word from the editors,

Christ Church takes its duty of hospitality very seriously, in fact in recent years our Social Committee's name has been changed to the Hospitality Group. We hope that visitors or people coming to our church for the first time will always feel welcome. In this issue you will find examples of hospitality offered and received. We hope you will enjoy reading it. We welcome feedback, so please feel free to share your views with us.

Elizabeth Pearson and Mary Snow

Hospitality around the World

Hospitality in Namibia

Kate Riddle

In 1991 my husband was offered a job in Windhoek, Namibia. We arrived there with our three young sons in the October of that year. It was a hot, dry, barren, alien place, so different from the leafy Surrey I'd left behind that I felt I might as well have landed on the moon. My husband settled into work and my two older boys into the local primary school. The youngest, not quite three years old, and I were left to get on with it, initially in a hotel with very few of our personal possessions around us. Douglas remarked sorrowfully that he was missing his bedroom curtains at home! I felt I was missing a good deal more than that, and in the early weeks there was much gritting of teeth. We were eventually moved into a company house, and the normal routines of family life reasserted themselves and helped with the settling-in process. But I was still decidedly homesick. Christmas approached and I had started making the necessary preparations when a surprising and welcome invitation arrived. A Jewish couple living just round the corner in the same neighbourhood asked if we would all like to go and spend Christmas Day with them. At that time Nahum was in charge of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation and Sharon, his wife, was a midwife. They had a little boy and another baby on the way. They weren't, of course, celebrating Christmas for the same reason we were, but they had decided it was nevertheless a good time to have a gathering of family and friends, a nice meal and the exchange of presents. I've often thought back on the kindness and sensitivity of that gesture, and it was lovely to be included in their warm-hearted party. The family matriarch, Aunt Stephie, who had never met me before, gave me a book written by an Anglican clergyman who had gone to work in a remote Namibian parish in the 1950s. On first arriving in the country, the author had apparently found it 'desolate and overfull of sand.' My own sentiments exactly. As we sat in the garden with our pre-lunch drinks, swotting away the mosquitoes and trying not to get too sun-struck, I wondered if I would ever feel at home. But time passed and, like the Reverend Frank Haythornthwaite, I gradually grew to love Namibia's strange and wonderful uniqueness. I still treasure Aunt Stephie's prescient gift, the reading of which was balm to the soul when I was still new there. And I remember her true words over the Christmas sherry, 'This is a country where you cry when you arrive, but you also cry when you leave.'

Fast-forward to 2018, and we have now been members of Christ Church for fifteen months. In the scheme of things, this means we are still very new! We had sold a weekend property in Perthshire and needed to join a new church; we wanted one that we could walk to from home if possible. I remember when I first entered Christ Church feeling that I had arrived in exactly the right place. There is something about the atmosphere that has an embracing quality. The interior is so beautiful, in a way that is approachable rather than daunting, and the welcome we received after that first service was almost overwhelming. It is a much bigger church than our last one so it takes longer to get to know everyone, and we still have to be reminded of names from time to time. But there's no doubting the readiness with which Christ Church takes in new people, and we look forward to a long association.

Hospitality in British Columbia

Janet Clarkson

Twenty years ago, my husband and I were touring with a new hire car in British Columbia. We were about 15km from a little town called Lilloet when the car started faltering and Duncan pulled in to a safe stopping place because a warning light made it clear the car was going no further. We had seen few houses since the town and knew we were at least two hours from our booked accommodation for the night. The boss of a nearby road repair gang failed to get a signal on his mobile, but said that there was a house close to the highway invisible to us where the occupant had a land line. If she was not in, he would drive us to a place where he could get a signal.

The house owner not only allowed the use of her phone but also invited us to stay out of the 30 degree heat, to await for the arrival of the promised breakdown truck. Although she was still clearing up after a flood from a broken fridge, she gave us cold drinks and made us very welcome. When we left she refused to let us pay for the phone call or the refreshment and insisted on driving us back up the hill to the road.

The breakdown truck driver had been due to leave on his own holiday but delayed his plans to drive us to the Chevy depot in Kamloops where the manager had waited for us, delaying his departure for the weekend. He had arranged and paid for accommodation near the depot and taxis there and to the replacement car in the morning.

We were so grateful to the repair gang, Ollie, our hostess, Ernie, the driver and Glenn at the depot who rescued two hot, worried and thirsty travellers. After our return, we had readings in church from Hebrews Chapter 13 v 1 and Luke's Good Samaritan parable. I don't know whether any of our helpers were familiar with the Bible, but whenever I hear the readings, I remember them all with gratitude.

Hospitality in France

Janet Higinbotham

Last summer John and I were enjoying a delicious meal in a French restaurant in Dinan on a Saturday evening. The local restaurant guidebook listed several restaurants, all of which were closed on Sunday evenings. At an adjoining table a French couple, with whom we chatted, was also enjoying their dinner. Toward the end of our conversation we asked them if they could recommend a restaurant which was open for Sunday dinner. Immediately, the husband of this couple replied "Yes! At our home!" The next night we were collected by car and driven to their home in the French countryside. Before we were "allowed" to enter the house their British sheep dog rounded us up into a "flock" of two, and, when he was satisfied that we were under his control, we were allowed to proceed inside.

We had a most enjoyable evening with them and their two daughters. Dinner started with canapes which were followed by four delicious courses with appropriate wines. It was a wonderful evening!

After an exchange of contact details our host returned us to our hotel. A very recent Christmas greeting informs us that they may be here in Edinburgh later this year. So, we look forward to continuing our friendship with these very hospitable people, all a result of their spontaneous welcome to two strangers living in Scotland. The Auld Alliance is truly alive and well.

Hospitality in the Pyrenees

Tim Horne

The Refuge dinner (*based on comments made at Journeys in Faith: More than just a long walk*) Dinner at a mountain refuge in the Pyrenees is always the high point of the day. Despite the often extremely limited facilities and ingredients it is always a feast. In many refuges all provisions will be carried up from the valley by donkey (or on someone's back). Exceptionally a helicopter may have made the trip.

The guardians were, almost without exception, extraordinarily welcoming and concerned for my wellbeing after a hard day of walking in the mountains. Numbers vary, but usually there would be half a dozen walkers, the guardian and possibly their partner. Not only was my appalling French tolerated, but there would be a seating plan for dinner to ensure I, as usually the only non-French person present, would be seated in the midst of the company. As a result I learnt more French at dinner in the refuges than in many a lesson.

The first course is often "garbure", a thick soup of ham and vegetables, served with freshly made bread. It is a meal in itself, but it is important to remember more courses are to come! The main course is very often lamb; not any old lamb, for you will be told from which valley it came. Then salad followed by cheese, almost always "brebis" (hard goats' cheese) served with cherry jam. Finally there will be a desert often based on freshly made goats' or ewes' milk yoghurt. All this supplemented by wine from the region. The guardian will usually charge something like 20 euros for all of this.

After dinner, food, drink and tiredness induce almost immediate sleep in preparation for that other great refuge tradition: an extremely early start, so you completed most of the climbing before the heat of day.

The sheer intensity of my experiences of dinner in the Pyrenean refuges in some small way helped my understanding of how the supper in the upper room came to take such a central role in the Christian tradition (continuing, of course, what was and remains important to the Jewish faith).

Hospitality in the UK

Hospitality: from the Latin word *Hospitalitem* meaning "friendliness to guests."

Helen Wosu

Becoming an Airbnb host came out of the need to earn an income. At the age of 70+ I no longer had the energy to cope with the stresses of my profession but still needed to earn in order to stay in my home. I realised that one of my strengths was the ability to relate to people of all ages and races and so when I learned about Airbnb and had tried it myself as a guest a couple of times, I listed my home, as they say, on the website. Two and a half years later I have hosted over 150 guests from all corners of the world.

When I decided to open my home to Airbnb guests, I already had an idea of what I hoped to offer but other than that I really didn't know what to expect from the guests who turned up. What I hoped to offer was a comfortable, safe and welcoming space for guests to use as their home for the duration of their stay. I had been told by someone that friends of theirs were Airbnb hosts and it was working well because they had a bedroom annex and in the morning a tray with breakfast was delivered there for them, "so they never have to come into our part of the house". This shocked me I have to admit, and on reflection realised that my idea of hospitality had been strongly influenced by my years in Africa where guests are thanked, profusely, for coming, not the other way around. A guest there who stayed the whole day and joined in whatever was going on in the family life had bestowed a great favour on the family and was duly thanked warmly. I wanted there to be some reflection of that kind of hospitality in me as a host.

Airbnb allow the hosts to accept or reject a request to stay. After a short while I decided to take their other option which allows the guests to book without making a request beforehand as long as the calendar is open for booking. My decision for that was to send out a message that I welcome anyone. I also felt it was easier for guests after a friend told me she had tried 3 or 4 hosts with no success and so booked a hotel.

I then put a lot of thought and effort into the initial welcome into the home to try to help the guest relax as they also may have reservations about staying with a stranger. Then it is up to the guest as to how they choose to interact. A few have very little interaction with me. Most, however, are tourists and like to chat over breakfast or when they come back at the end of the day. If there is anything going at home guests are invited to join in and when Chloe or Safiya are with me they love to ask guests about where they come from.

So, how has it been to share my home 50% of the time with strangers? Pretty good, on the whole. A few remain in my memory mostly because of the stories they have told me about their own lives. The young diplomat from a communist country who shared with me that he was a member of the Party because he had to be, but he felt deeply about the plight of the majority of the people in his country and longed to be able to somehow improve their living conditions. The American girl on route to work for a Christian organisation in an Arab country; the mother whose daughter was addicted to drugs and needed to talk and the young native American girl whose dream was to set up a museum of antiquities for her own tribal group. Several guests on the autistic spectrum clearly found it quite a strain to understand the social niceties demanded of them but tried so hard. The recently bereaved or divorced and yes, one or two unpleasant ones but nothing more than being overcritical.

Guests have left me little notes or cards and sometimes email me with updates on their life. I think I have been really blessed as it has a) made me a much better housekeeper b) provided much needed income and c) enriched my life beyond expectation.



Hospitality at Christ Church

Sunday Coffee time at Christ Church

Ceci Stephens

... is our weekly spot for offering Hospitality and Welcome, also for networking, shopping (at the Fair Trade stall), fundraising, informing (by leaflets and displays) and occasionally (sometimes with wine and often with cake) for celebrating Church Festivals and personal milestones. Quite recently, we managed to incorporate an entire Christening party at a special table!

“Are you coming down for coffee” ... is what you hear each Sunday at Christ Church at the end of our 10am service... and that follows a general invitation issued from the lectern emphasising that all are welcome, especially visitors and newcomers.

Of course nowadays this happens in most churches...but what is our story at Christ Church?

During 1979 the time of the main Sunday service at Christ Church was changed from 11am to 10am. As people did not have to rush home to their Sunday lunch immediately after the Service, it was decided to offer Coffee in the hall and encourage the congregation to spend some social time together. This was well established by the time our family first worshipped here on Easter Sunday 1981. Coffee and tea were served buffet style by teams of 4 volunteers, and the congregation stood and mingled. This pattern continued for the next 32 years. Then in June 2013 it was decided to change to our current pattern of cafe style seating, with people serving each other from cafetieres and tea pots placed on the tables. The idea was to make it easier for people to sit comfortably, to encourage longer more fruitful conversations, and certainly make it easier to incorporate and get to know someone new... and to improve the quality of the coffee.

Quotes from round the table:

“This is the most delicious church coffee, I have ever tasted!”

*“I never thought I’d come round to it,
but this Café/Bistro style is really working”*

*“I have been invited to more thank you lunches at Christ Church Rectory
in one year than in my previous church in ten years!”*

However these gains were not without pain, and would not be possible without commitment and hard work from dedicated volunteers. The main team of 4 people arrive at church by 09.30 to prepare the coffee and lay the tables, and they usually don’t get away until 12.15. Each week one or two sidespeople come down to the hall to set out the tables and chairs... and that is in addition to their regular duties, and each Sunday, whilst the coffee team wash the mugs and pots, ad hoc volunteers kindly pack away the tables and chairs. Since 2013 we have acquired first a dishwasher, and now a wonderful newly appointed state of the art kitchen...but those cafetieres don’t wash themselves!

WE NEED MORE HELP!

We have a dedicated team of 16 regular Coffee volunteers, and a further 8 reserves, but this is not enough to provide cover for every Sunday and for absences. Several of the coffee volunteers have been on the rota for many years, indeed very many of the longer-standing members of our congregation have at some stage helped to serve at coffee time.

If you appreciate our coffee-time at Christ Church, and would like to “give something back” do please consider joining one of the regular teams, or just volunteering to be a reserve. It can even be fun! It is my job to run the rota and “co-ordinate” the coffee teams so if you would like to help, or to make any comments, please don’t hesitate to contact me at cecilia.stephens67@gmail.com or ring 446 0922.

And dont forget...if you see a face that’s new to you, its YOUR cue ... **“Are you coming for coffee?”** With very many ongoing thanks to our dedicated Coffee teams and table setters, without whom none of this would be possible!

Hospitality by the Sidespeople

Alan Shotter

“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.”

Robert Louis Stevenson.

This is an important piece of wisdom and one that can be interpreted in the context of the welcome offered by the sidesperson teams at Christ Church. One of their most important roles is to welcome everyone to our church, both the regular churchgoers and new visitors. It is particularly important that newcomers feel valued and comfortable sharing our church services, and so a warm welcome can plant seeds for the future.

Of course it is not just the words of welcome but the entire experience of being welcomed to Christ Church. The warmth and sincerity of the welcome comes across in the way the words are spoken and the demeanour of the welcomer.

I read an article once about different approaches that can be adopted in giving a welcome, and the subtle undertones as the message is perceived by the recipient. With tongue in cheek, how many of the following types of welcome might be appropriate or even have been used at Christ Church!

The pleasurable welcome

“It’s my pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to you today

The hospitable welcome

“We are delighted to offer the most hospitable welcome we can; so please join us for coffee after the service

The warm welcome

“We are lucky that the weather is more favourable today. The sun and I bid you a warm welcome.....”

The gracious welcome

“My desire is to extend a gracious and inclusive welcome as you join us this morning.....”

The joyful welcome

“It is a great joy to welcome you for what I know will be a wonderful service.....”

The glad welcome

“I am glad to welcome you this morning to share with us the desires, dreams and hopes of the congregation.....”

The delighted welcome

“I’m delighted to see you on this very cold morning, especially as many of our regular members seem to have stayed at home.....”

The tourist welcome

“We are delighted to welcome you to our service today. Are you visiting Edinburgh for the first time?”

The stranger welcome

“Do come in and make some new friends. There are no strangers here, only friends we are yet to meet.....”

The annual welcome

“It is great to see familiar faces again! How quickly a year passes. Yes, the church does look splendid for Christmas.....”

The honourable welcome

“It is an honour to welcome you this morning. Allow me to show you to a pew.....”

This is just a short list of possibilities – I am sure each of us could think of many more.

What is interesting about all these ways of offering a welcome is that the demeanour of the person giving the welcome and the intonation of their voice may display as much as the words themselves. Here in Edinburgh we are likely to smile and sometimes shake hands as we meet people, but in other parts of the world a greeting may follow a ritual of handshakes, bowing, hugging, nose touching and even spitting! (Not popular with Holy Dusters!)



At Christ Church our aim is to give a warm and sincere welcome as well as to provide helpful information and practical assistance relevant to the needs of individuals. Sidespeople undertake a range of duties to ensure the smooth running of the service, taking the collection, tidying up the church after the service and preparing the collection for banking; these tasks are not difficult. In fact it is a pleasure to be involved in these ways as we share in worship. We are always looking out for members of the congregation to become new sidespeople, so please consider whether you might like to join one of our teams- I am sure it will enrich your life!

Being a Welcoming Church

Elizabeth Pearson Pastoral Coordinator

Glasgow has a reputation for being friendly, industrial & wild. People do chat to you in the bus queues. It is a city that grasps you warmly by the throat, generous but with a blade tucked into its sock. Edinburgh is rumoured to be douce, cultured & reserved, where they say firmly “You’ll have had your tea?”, rather than offer you any.

Jokes told at the Fringe Festival included :

A Table & Chairs on the pavement in Edinburgh is a street cafe. In Glasgow it’s the Bailiffs at a house clearance.

Q: “What do you call a man wearing a suit in Glasgow?” A: “ The Accused”

We as a congregation know this stereotype is untrue - that people in Edinburgh can be warm, friendly & welcoming.

People are welcomed at the front porch in church. It is not clear on entering the porch - which door goes in to the church. Some people would like to install a glass door to open out the porch making it a more welcoming space.

Other folk can be more reserved and deliberately enter by the back door - thus avoiding any greeting ! We must respect that.

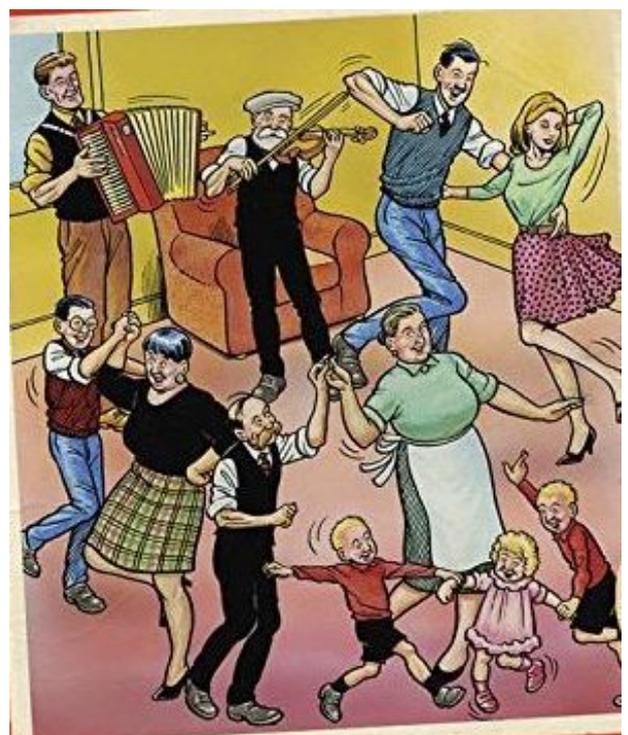
On questioning Friends regarding the Welcoming things they liked about Christ Church- the cafe culture coffee time seemed to come out top. Sitting at tables in the hall with the Cafetieres of good coffee has broken the ice a lot. Enabling new people to meet others in a convivial relaxed setting.

Others mentioned that by becoming A Holy Duster this helped them become part of the church community. The dusting teams often go for coffee afterwards.

Having the excellent “Hospitality Group “ was also mentioned. People on the committee have fun & make friends - then the congregation appreciate the food & conversation at the various social events.

The Fundraising Fashion Show was a highlight and is still talked about fondly. Fortunately Mary Snow is putting on another event on May 5th - a cabaret this time - so we look forward to that

In conclusion I hope we can all make a conscious effort to be “ Welcoming.” Even if it’s not in our nature to be outgoing & friendly - maybe we are shy - but if we just make ourselves speak to anyone in the hall who is standing by themselves- this can make someone’s day !



The Broons enjoying a shindig

What the Bible says about Hospitality



In the New Testament the Greek word translated literally means “love of strangers.”

Hospitality is a virtue that is both commanded and commended throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament, it was specifically commanded by God “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as your native-born.” Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt.” *Leviticus 19: 33-34*.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us not to forget to “entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels unawares”. *Hebrews 13:2*. Indeed in the book of Genesis we read of Abraham’s humble and generous display of hospitality to three strangers. Wealthy and aged, Abraham could have called on one of his many servants to tend to the three unannounced visitors. Yet the hospitable and righteous Abraham generously gave them the best he had. As it turned out, he had entertained the Lord and two angels.

Christians are “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works”. *Ephesians 2:10*. As followers of Christ we emulate his love and compassion when we show hospitality, not only to fellow Christians but even more so to strangers and the less fortunate. In fact, we honour God when we are kind to the needy. *Proverbs 14:31* As Jesus said “When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind and you will be blessed.” *Luke 14:13*.

Christ also taught us the second greatest commandment to “love your neighbour as yourself”. *Matthew 22:39*. and the parable of The Good Samaritan teaches us that “neighbour” has nothing to do with geography, citizenship or race. Wherever and whenever people need us, there we can be neighbours and, like Christ, show mercy. This is the essence of hospitality.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus discusses the hospitable behaviour of those who will inherit the kingdom. “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Matthew 25:34-36. In these days we often don’t think much about entertaining strangers, but hospitality is still an important part of Christian ministry. *Romans 12:13*. *1 Peter 4:9*. By serving others we serve Christ. *Matthew 25:40* We promote the spread of Gods truth. *3 John 5-8*.

Sermon of Second Sunday after Epiphany (14th January 2018) *Susan Macdonald*

1 Samuel 3.1-10, Psalm 139.1-5, 12-17, 1 Corinthians 6.12-20, John 1.43-51:

Come and see.

Think, for a moment, about the effect these words might have on you were you to hear them in an everyday context. Would they generate a certain sense of excitement about whatever it might be you were being invited to witness? Perhaps curiosity? Or maybe gratitude that someone thought to include you?

Come and see.

The words are both simple and warm, issuing an invitation not only to see something, but also to join in. To come along and be part of something.

Come and see.

These words, this invitation, form the heart not only in this opening scene but in much of John's Gospel. A gospel structured around encounters with Jesus. Again and again, from these early disciples we hear of today, to the Pharisee named Nicodemus, to the Samaritan women at the well, to the man born blind, to Peter and Pilate and eventually Thomas, characters throughout John's Gospel are encountered by Jesus. Across the pages of John's Gospel there are women and men, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, powerful and vulnerable, people of all shapes and sizes and varieties that Jesus meets. And to each one, in one way or another, he says the same thing: come and see. Come and see God do a new thing. Come and see as your future opens up in front of you. Come and see the grace of God made manifest and accessible and available to all. In response, some take up that invitation and follow, while others are puzzled, confused, or simply do not believe Jesus' offer. And some not only follow but also invite others to do the same. Andrew finds Peter, Philip finds Nathaniel.

Come and see.

Such easy, warm, and hospitable words that lie not only at the heart of John's Gospel but of Christian evangelism. Evangelism is not about trying to force others into faith or questioning their eternal destiny or threatening them with hellfire, but instead simply offering an invitation to "come and see" what God is still doing in and through Jesus, and the community of disciples who have chosen to follow him.

However the reality is we are often hesitant about inviting others to "come and see" our own faith community, about inviting others to church. And yet, as you probably know, the main reason people do come for the first time is because someone invited them personally. Just as Philip said to Nathaniel, someone said to them, "Come and see", and so the future of the church very much depends on each one of us saying "come and see" to others, inviting others to share what we have found.

The truth is most of us are nervous about sharing our faith but there would have been no church in the early days if people hadn't "noticed and shared" their faith, and there will be none in the future unless we learn to do this too.

We find it very easy to share reasons why we like books, holiday destinations, films, restaurants and so on, don't we? So we already have the necessary skills to say the words "come and see". Before you leave Christ Church today— either at the end of the service, or during coffee time - I invite you to share with someone else one reason why you choose to come this church (and if you are here for the first time I hope you experience something you would like to share with someone else).

To do this is a good beginning to us then going out and saying to others "come and see", and we *can* do that because the Spirit who descended on Jesus at Baptism is at work among us as it was when Philip and Andrew were inspired to reach out to others, when even the scepticism of Nathaniel was overcome, when all kinds of people all over the world are offered an invitation to "come and see", and the desire to do just that is created in them.

So -

"Come, Holy Spirit, that we may see and taste the grace of God afresh. Come, Holy Spirit, that we might share the grace of God with others. Come, Holy Spirit, that we might bear witness with our whole lives to the grace of God made manifest and available to us in Jesus. Amen."



The baptism of Jesus—Mosaic in Ravenna

Hospitality to the Homeless

The Day my father's hospitality was severely tested.

Mary Snow

I understand that for Scots the date July 30th 1966 does not carry the significance that it does for the English so in case you don't recognise it, it was the day of the final of the 1966 World Cup, England versus Germany at Wembley stadium.

At the time we lived in Wokingham Berkshire where my father was curate of All Saints having gone into the church in his forties after a career in the Royal Air Force and as an accountant working for Courtaulds.

He was a keen sportsman and was just settling down to watch the match with family and friends when the doorbell rang.

My mother went to the door wondering who on earth was calling at such an historic moment and why he or she wasn't ready to watch the match like every other patriotic English man or woman.

At the door was the familiar figure of 'Lord Tom' a gentleman of the road who quite frequently called in to visit us on the way to the Salvation Army Hostel in Reading. Usually he would be invited in for a cup of tea and a sandwich and a good chat. Of the three, I think it was the chats that he most enjoyed. This is what caused my mother to pause but her good manners and kind nature prevailed and she invited him in.

My father started to 'tut' as he feared the match that was about to start would be constantly interrupted by Lord Tom.

My mother quickly made a mug of tea and a cheese sandwich and as she did so she impressed on Tom the importance of being quiet during the match.

Tom sat down in the almost full living room with the rest of us to witness the sporting event of the century (for the English) and managed to curb his usual talkative habits.

He rejoiced, as we all did, at England's victory and I think that he was delighted to have shared it with us. We were also delighted to have shared it with him and needless to say Lord Tom had a great deal of after match opinions to voice!

A few years later my father became vicar of St Mary's, Kintbury, West Berkshire. They did not receive as many visits from 'gentlemen of the road' as they did in Wokingham as the village was more off the beaten track but they still welcomed 'regulars' and provided food and company. Many of them asked for permission to stay in the church porch and blankets would be provided to make them more comfortable.

One of the regulars was becoming more and more frail each time he visited until one December night he arrived and my mother tried to persuade him to stay in a spare bedroom of the vicarage until he was feeling stronger. He refused and asked for the blankets so that he could stay in the porch. The next morning he was gone and he never returned again.

Offering hospitality in Edinburgh: Volunteering for Bethany in Edinburgh

The recipients of our hospitality were courteous and thanked us for the food that we had prepared. Their ages ranged from late teens up to their sixties. They came from many different countries as well as from nearby. Most were men but there was a handful of women. The common thread was that for a range of different reasons they had all found themselves homeless and having to live on the streets.

Bethany is a Christian charity that supports the homeless in Edinburgh by providing a night shelter with evening meal and breakfast in church halls around the city. Christ Church supports by taking a turn in providing a team to buy, prepare and serve the evening meal and to buy the food for breakfast the next morning.

Our latest turn took us to Meadow bank led by Lisa Gallagher. We were a team of nine which was great but we found the kitchen rather small and had to take care moving around it in case of collisions.

The menu was sausages, onion gravy, potatoes, carrots and swede (turnip?) followed by apple crumble and custard with pizza as an alternative choice.

Unfortunately the oven was not as effective as we had hoped and the sausages were taking ages to cook. Enter our very own 'sausage queen', Sarah Green. If you are organising a sizzle ask her to help. We ended up frying most of the sausages in batches in a minute pan.

Richard and Gerry were disappointed to find we were serving baby potatoes as on a previous occasion the pair had enjoyed a 'mash-off'! However they did get to mash the swede.

Alan was in charge of the 'drinks trolley', tea, coffee and squash. This task gives him a good chance to chat with the 'customers'.

It was a long night and we did not get back to our homes until close to midnight. It had been quite a challenging evening because of the practicalities but the recipients of our hospitality came back for second helpings and some for thirds! They were grateful for our hard work and certainly took none of it for granted.

I first volunteered to help after reading an article by Alan Shotter a few years ago. If, like me, you are moved to volunteer for future occasions please leave your name and details at the church office.



Who can this be?



Hello Janet!



Kitchen companions

Fancy a cuppa?



Christ Church Morningside is a Registered Charity SC003009

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