



# Beneath the Spires

## Hospitality: Not Just a Handshake

*"Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."*

### By Pastor Joanne

I've been thinking a lot lately about hospitality, about how we present our church to visitors/newcomers and how we re-present Christ in our community. We usually think of hospitality as the friendly greeting someone gets when they walk in the door, but hospitality does, and should, go much deeper than that.

When I attend worship as a visitor, I'm always keenly aware of what makes me feel welcomed. Although I've never encountered a church that does not proclaim to be "friendly and welcoming," my actual experiences have run the gamut from good to bad.

When I visited the "Church for All People," the only person who spoke to me throughout the entire service was the woman who handed me the bulletin. And on the flipside was the Cape



Cod church that put a white-hot spotlight on visitors. I was asked to wear a nametag that said "visitor" and then in the middle of the service was urged to stand and introduce myself. (I declined both invitations.) As I left the service, the pastor came running out of the building after me to make sure I felt welcomed. Needless to say, I haven't been back to either place.

Certainly there is a middle ground between complete disregard and declining-church desperation. Especially if we are modeling the hospitality of Christ. For the visitor or the person seeking spiritual help,

this Sunday is the only Sunday that counts.

Several years ago, Bishop Robert Schnase's book, "Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations," was a must-read for pastors and congregations. The first of the five practices was "radical hospitality." Those two words don't really seem to fit together, but Schnase explains it this way: *Radical means "arising from the source" and describes practices that are rooted in the life of Christ and that radiate into the lives of others. Radical means "drastically different from ordinary practice, outside the normal," and so it provokes practices that exceed expectations, that go the second* (Continued on next page)

### Save the date:

Ash Wednesday	2/26
Palm Sunday	4/5
Easter Sunday	4/12
Plant Sale	5/8
Spring Flea Market	5/9
Spring Flea Market Rain Date	5/16

### Did you know?

*Lent is a season of 40 days, which represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry. It is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter and a time of self-examination and reflection. Sundays in Lent are not counted in the 40 days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter" and the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection.*

*mile, that take welcoming the stranger to the max.*

*Churches characterized by radical hospitality . . . exhibit a restlessness because they realize so many people do not have a faith relationship to a faith community.*

Jesus practiced a hospitality that was radical – busting through cultural and religious boundaries to invite people in, to care for and love them. He did it with great love and intentionality.

Radical hospitality will have us seeing people as Jesus sees them and seeing Jesus in the people God brings to us.

People are searching for faith communities that make them feel welcomed and loved, needed, accepted and supported. We may never know the courage it takes for the older man to walk into the doors of our church. We may never understand the fears and pain a young woman is carrying in her heart. We may never realize that the young couple is desperately looking for a church that will accept their “less-than-quiet” children. We may never know the joy of someone suffering from an autoimmune illness like celiac disease when they discover that all the communion bread is gluten-free. We can be the soft place to land in difficult times.

Radical hospitality also extends to the condition and care of our physical spaces. Try this simple exercise the next time you come to church: Walk into the church as if for the very first time. What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear? Are there signs helping to navi-

2. What am I willing to change about myself to make this happen?

3. Who are three people that I can pray for and then invite to join me at church for worship, an activity or mission project?

In God’s care and service,  
*Pastor Joanne*

### **Henri Nouwen On Hospitality**

“Hospitality means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. .

. . . The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations.

Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adore the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own.”

#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Wednesday, Feb. 26:** Pastor Joanne will be available at the church from 9 a.m. to 12 noon to offer ashes to those who cannot attend the evening Ash Wednesday service.

**Wednesday, Feb. 26:** Join us on Ash Wednesday for a soup supper at 6 p.m., and a time of worship to begin Lent at 7 p.m. If you’d like to bring a pot of soup, please contact Marianne in the church office at 914-666-5014.

**Sunday, March 1:** First Sunday of Lent

**Wednesday, March 4:** 6:45 p.m. Trustees meeting; 8 p.m. Church Council meeting. All are welcome to attend the council meeting.

**Monday, March 9:** Blood drive at Northern Westchester Hospital, 400 E. Main Street, Mount Kisco; 1-7 p.m., conference rooms C & D.

**Saturday, March 14:** Gather on the front lawn to watch the St. Patrick’s Day parade at 2 p.m.

**Sunday, April 5:** Palm Sunday

**Thursday, April 9:** Maundy Thursday service at Katonah UMC

**Friday, April 10:** Good Friday service in our chapel

**Sunday, April 12:** Easter Sunrise Service with Katonah UMC at Cross River Reservoir; 10:15 a.m. Easter celebration in our sanctuary.  
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## February Birthdays

6 <sup>th</sup>	Pastor Joanne
15 <sup>th</sup>	Heather Kent
18 <sup>th</sup>	Sandra Gillotti,
20 <sup>th</sup>	Marianne Baldwin
25 <sup>th</sup>	Jill Manning
	Vienna Zeppieri
26 <sup>th</sup>	Karen McKitrick
27 <sup>th</sup>	Matthew Morales

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday, May 9:** Spring flea market, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Rain date is May 16. Interested vendors should contact the church office at 914-666-5014.

**July 13-17:** Bilingual Vacation Bible School sponsored by the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Mount Kisco. A great opportunity for kids to learn about God and make new friends. Details are still being worked out; please speak to Pastor Joanne if you're interested in sending your kids or volunteering to help.



The Sunday School kids and youth of the church, with the help of Lisa Porter, prepared a pasta and meatball dinner for our guests from the Emergency Shelter Partnership.

## *Thank You So Much!*

As a result of your generous support of the church and its ministries, we were able to pay 100 percent of our 2019 apportionments to the New York Conference. We have adopted a strategy that prioritizes these payments as "first fruits."

One of the unique and defining factors of the United Methodist Church is that we are connectional. One way we show this connection is through apportioned giving.

Apportioned giving is a term that describes how the money you give to your church is divided and distributed throughout the United Methodist Church to provide support for ministry and mission, both locally and around the world.

Apportionments are fuel for ministry. They enable us to share the concerns of many people. Shared giving is a vehicle bringing God's grace into our churches, our conference, and beyond.

## *Tuesday Bible Study*

This gathering has a new home at the Mount Kisco Diner, 252 E. Main Street, on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. No advance preparation is needed. Bring a Bible and a desire to learn. For additional information, contact Dave Visaggio at 914-262-9973, or Ross Porter at 914-261-1402.

## The Choice

By Max Lucado

It's quiet. It's early. My coffee is hot. The sky is still black. The world is still asleep. The day is coming.

In a few moments the day will arrive. It will roar down the track with the rising of the sun. The stillness of the dawn will be exchanged for the noise of the day. The calm of solitude will be replaced by the pounding pace of the human race. The refuge of the early morning will be invaded by decisions to be made and deadlines to be met.

For the next 12 hours I will be exposed to the day's demands. It is now that I must make a choice. Because of Calvary, I'm free to choose. And so I choose.

*I choose love . . .*

No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness. I choose love. Today I will love God and what God loves.

*I choose joy . . .*

I will invite my God to be the God of circumstance. I will refuse the temptation to be cynical – the tool of the lazy thinker. I will refuse to see people as anything less than human beings, created by God. I will refuse to see any problem as anything less than an opportunity to see God.

*I choose peace . . .*

I will live forgiven. I will forgive so that I may live.

*I choose patience . . .*

I will overlook the inconveniences of the world. Instead of cursing the one who takes my place, I'll invite him to do so. Rather than complain that the wait is too long, I will thank God for a moment to pray. Instead of clinching my fist at new assignments, I will face them with joy and courage.

*I choose kindness . . .*

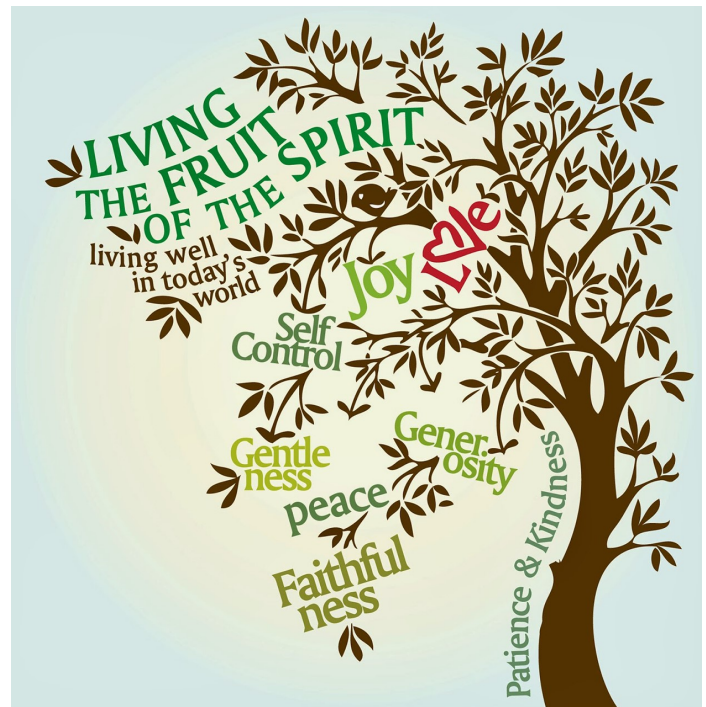
I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me.

*I choose goodness . . .*

I will go without a dollar before I take a dishonest one. I will be overlooked before I will boast. I will confess before I will accuse. I choose goodness.

*I choose faithfulness . . .*

Today I will keep my promises. My debtors will not regret their trust. My associates will not question my word. My wife will not question my love. And my children will never fear



that their father will not come home.

*I choose gentleness . . .*

Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice may it be only in praise. If I clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand, may it be only of myself.

*I choose self-control . . .*

I am a spiritual being. After this body is dead, my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot, rule the eternal. I choose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ. I choose self-control.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – the fruit of the Spirit. To these I commit my day. If I succeed, I will give thanks. If I fail, I will seek his grace. And then, when this day is done, I will place my head on my pillow and rest.

– From *When God Whispers Your Name*, copyright (Thomas Nelson, 1999)

*I choose gentleness . . .*



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Find us on Facebook, too!

**We pray. We love.  
We serve.**

## Entering the Passion of Jesus

Dive deep into the history of the last days before the crucifixion.

Jesus' final days were full of risk. Every move he made was filled with anticipation, danger, and the potential for great loss or great reward. Jesus risked his reputation when he entered Jerusalem in a victory parade. He risked his life when he dared to teach in the Temple. His followers risked everything when they left behind their homes, or anointed him with costly perfume. We take risks as we read and re-read these stories, finding new meanings and new challenges.

In *Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Week*, author, and biblical scholar Amy-Jill Levine explores the biblical texts surrounding the Passion story. She shows us how the text raises questions for the reader, and how we all face risk in our Christian experience.

This book will be the focus of our worship during Lent and Pastor Joanne's six-session book study, beginning March 1. You can participate in one of two book study sessions each week - one at 11:45 a.m. Sundays in the Education Room following a short time for fellowship. The second meets from 7-8:30 p.m. Thursdays, beginning March 5, in the parsonage. If neither of those times is good, please see Pastor Joanne to talk about other options. Books are available through the church office for \$8.50 each.

This Lent series invites us to "freeze-frame" moments in the Holy Week story in order to spend more time in this part of the story and also to see our own lives as part of the ongoing story of risk for the sake of making a better world.



ENTERING  
THE PASSION  
of JESUS

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO HOLY WEEK



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