



A Welcoming Love that Transforms Differences

January 2017



Dear Friend,

Did you host guests for Christmas or New Year's Eve/Day?

I figured out what to feed my family, including my vegan husband, on Christmas Eve – as we welcomed Jesus, God with us. Our special dessert always includes a birthday cake for baby Jesus. This year it was a [candy cane chocolate cake](#) – a fabulous ending to a Christmas feast.

During our [Week of Prayer](#) in November, [Pastor Sheri Weaver](#) wrote a devotional about hospitality (based on [Luke 14](#)) which I love.

Sheri wrote: *It takes a lot of work to throw a good party. Hours spent on choosing the menu, preparing the dishes, decorating, setting up, and tearing down. When a guest comments, "Your feasts are to die for!" any host would blush and feel it all worth the effort.*

At one particular potluck, Jesus is overheard commenting to his host, "Your socials really are to die for, but I have a way they could actually resurrect people. What if, when you give a feast, instead of investing your time, talents, influence, and expertise for those who already think you're special, try going an extra mile for the other... for the one you've yet to get to know... for the one you may even suspect is your enemy. Perhaps, at your next get-together," Jesus nudges, "You'll make ready a seat for those whose lame bodies cannot manage a standing ovation; you'll fold the linen napkins for those whose hands are too crippled to applaud; you'll display your finest crystal for those too blind to see."

As in countless other points in his ministry, Jesus reminds us of our God who cares not for a "tit-for-tat-reality," where love is only shared between equals, but envisions with us a world based on a

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welcoming love that transforms differences and ultimately dismantles death. This kind of hospitality not only is to die for but will bring God's people back to life and when the dead are raised, that's a celebration worth attending!

In this month when we celebrate volunteerism and the legacy of [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), I am grateful for Bridge of Hope Families, Neighboring Volunteers, board and staff, and donors who build relationships that [transform everyone involved](#).

Let me know if your [agency](#) wants to invite a church to build a Bridge of Hope [Neighborhood](#) with a family facing homelessness ... with a family they've "yet to get to know" by offering a "welcoming love that transforms differences."

What's New?

- Recently, a James Brown/CBS [video](#) featured 2 neighboring Baptist churches in Macon, GA. The churches "share a complicated history but are working to forge a new relationship." They are working "to heal the racial divide by bringing their churches together."
- [Pastor Andy Wade](#) wrote this helpful [blog](#) about reflecting on 2016 and preparing for 2017. His reflection questions help us to "look for God's in-breaking into our lives and communities."
- Author [Jennifer Grant](#) will speak at our May 12, 2017 [Gala Luncheon](#) at Doubletree Resort in Lancaster (PA). [Sponsors invited](#) and you can [purchase tickets](#) here.

Check out this [video](#) with James Brown of CBS about how 2 churches in Macon, GA are coming together.



"Above all else, hospitality means listening. 'Listening is the highest form of hospitality,' says Henri Nouwen, aiming 'not to change people but offering them space where change can take place.'"

Blessings,



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