

Writer Christine Pohl reminds us, “A life of hospitality begins in worship, with recognition of God’s grace and generosity. Hospitality is not first a duty and responsibility; it is first a response of love and gratitude for God’s love and welcome to us.” Hospitality, then, is a matter of the heart, not bound by tradition or affected by longstanding divisions. A tall order, ho’i, for many of us.

What is your experience of hospitality in the church, right here? What is your experience of hospitality in general? Think about it; share if you like.

Enemies of hospitality are coldness of heart, indifference, fear, distraction or busyness, and, of course, being “stuck up,” *ho’okano*/conceited—to which the kupuna, kumu, and kahu all say “*Mai ho’okano*/ Don’t be conceited!”

One of the ancient philosophers whom we don’t find in the Protestant version of the Bible, is known as Sirach, the book is called Ecclesiasticus or Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach. This person writes, “The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord; the heart has withdrawn from its Maker, For the beginning of pride is sin, and the one who clings to it pours out abominations.” The author goes on to say, “Pride was not created for human beings, or violent anger for those born of humans.” (10: 12, 13, 18)

What is your experience of “abominations,” then? What has resulted from prideful acts? Or have you been spared such rude realities? Think about it; share if you like.

Have you ever visited another church and, upon settling in, were told, “This is my seat?” I’ve seen that happen; it is totally *maha’oi*/rude—especially when most of the sanctuary is empty AND “her seat” is in the back pew. Most of us would never do that; what we do more commonly, is neglect greeting a visitor. We might nod hello and offer a hug or handshake—we’re good at that in Hawai’i. But do we ask

about them, their plans, invite them for refreshments AND ACTUALLY WALK WITH THEM TO HALE KEOPUOLANI? Last week I encouraged a family from Canada, you might remember them, to join us for lunch; then, I went to greet someone else. Later, I realized that they had not accepted the invitation. Of course we do not know why, but making the effort matters.

Jesus uses this teaching moment to remind us of the qualities of guest and host. As kahu, I serve as host in terms of worship, yet I remain your guest because I'm still learning, less than two months into our time together. I just might "sit in your seat" unintentionally; I might cause you some distress and I'll need you to tell me. And, it will be important to understand the nature of your distress. Why did it offend you?

I need you to tell me a lot. A part of hospitality is trust; I appreciate the trust that is growing among us. Eventually, you just might tell me what excites you as well as what holds you back. Such insights will guide future conversations regarding your vision for Waiola. Remember that statement from Proverbs 29, "Without vision the people perish?" It is true that we need the undergirding of a vision for stability, purpose, and persistence. We need a constant makani/wind, like the voice of Auntie Genoa Keawe singing *Alika*, a steady movement. Otherwise, we are a sailing ship in the doldrums where there is little encouragement and a whole lot of *pihoihoi*/anxiety.

While *pihoihoi*/anxiety is a part of our daily experience because life is uncertain, there is no point in making it worse through lack of trust, alienation, lack of vision, or shortage of friendship. In the Sojourners on-line thought for the day last Friday, Hanya Yanagihara is quoted as saying, *Friendship is the most underrated relationship in our lives....It remains the one relation not bound by law, blood, or money—but an unspoken agreement of love.*

What is your experience of friendship in the faith community? Think about it; share if you like.

Speaking of friendship, the Waiola Facebook page has many new "friends" today; 105 as of this morning with our post reaching 185. On Friday, I invited everyone on my friend list to "like" Waiola Church; my wife did the same. Everybody from Cuba to the Philippines has been invited to share hospitality with us.

In conclusion, I want to offer thoughts from the Sojourners “Preaching the Word” reflection on the lectionary passages for this Sunday; it touches on some of the things I’ve mentioned.

A heart of lowliness and humility has the capacity for trust. Trust in God to work through God’s people in a way that is full of grace and new possibilities. This is why Jesus opens up our imagination for hospitality to those with whom a prideful heart has no place: the poor, the prisoner, the tortured, the handicapped, the lame, the blind, the stranger. And yet, to be hospitable to these presumes an open heart to all of life, beginning with the ordinary. Hospitality, writes Henri Nouwen, “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.”

Here is your homework: think about hospitality as the starting point for justice work. Justice is the mandate of the gospel. Does not the teaching of Jesus invite into the work of God who shows us hospitality as a pathway to justice for all who labor and are carrying heavy burdens? Think on these things in the context of Labor Day coming up soon and pray for justice for all workers. Think on these things and pray about them. Think. Pray. Be of good cheer.

Aloha mai; aloha aku.