



Chalice Circle Packet

September 2020

What Does It Mean to Live Faithfully with an Ethic of Hospitality?

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HOSPITALITY

Hospitality, as a religious principle, has always mattered. Not only to religious communities greeting their guests, but to the very purpose of religious life. As a posture of open-hearted welcome, hospitality insists that only when we warmly greet the stranger will we be capable of receiving God as well. Or, in another way of putting it, every barrier we raise to keep the “other” at arm’s length will also barricade our hearts against the sacred source of life itself.

In countless stories from wisdom teachings, God arrives disguised as the “other” and only reveals a deeper, sacred identity to those who warmly welcome God unaware. The ones who possess little but share without holding back, who open the door without qualifying questions about merit or identity or even political persuasion – these are the ones who encounter the holy.

So how are we to understand this in the pandemic, when our mounting losses give everything a whiff of scarcity? And when safe practices warn us not to open our arms to one another? How do we welcome anyone “in” – friend, stranger or God, disguised or not – when our mutual wellbeing requires distancing and masking and closing our church buildings? What does hospitality ask of us now?

Perhaps one thing we’re learning about hospitality today, is that it is not always about space. It can also be about time. Although we must hold back from sharing space with one another, we can still share time – online, by mail, by phone, in front stoop conversations, and visits by window. We might not be able to invite one another into our homes and churches, but we are finding so many other ways to welcome one another into our lives.

This can still be challenging. Well before the pandemic, poet Naomi Shihab Nye pointed out how unusual it can be to let down our guard against requests for our time:

*No, I was not busy when you came!
I was not preparing to be busy.
That’s the armor everyone put on
at the end of the century
to pretend they had a purpose
in the world.*

For some of us, the pandemic has brought an abundance of free time, so this is a good chance to practice hospitality by sharing that bounty. For others, with children or other loved ones needing care at home or working in demanding frontline jobs, the pandemic has required all the waking hours of each day and then some. How do we practice hospitality when it feels like we have nothing to give?

This is a second learning about hospitality, driven home by the pandemic but important in every time. Hospitality's generosity has never depended on how much one can spare. It has always been shaped more significantly by a willingness to share whatever is there, bountiful or not.

In the biblical story of Elijah and the ravens and the widow, a long drought has brought fear and famine. God directs the prophet Elijah to go to a brook where he will have water and where ravens will bring him bread and meat each day. When the brook dries up, God sends Elijah on to Zarephath, where he's told a widow will provide him with food. At the town gate, Elijah meets a widow and asks for a piece of bread. She explains she has only enough flour and oil for a single loaf, which she is preparing to bake as a last meal for herself and her son before they die. Elijah tells her not to be afraid. Then he asks her to go home and do as she had planned, but to first make him a small loaf before baking another for her and her son. Doing this, he assures the mother, her flour and oil will be replenished by God until God sends rain.

Think about it. There, in the midst of a drought, Elijah first receives hospitality from God and nature, delivered by the brook and the ravens. Then, hospitality comes from a starving mother willing to answer Elijah's request for his own small loaf of bread despite her scarce supply. And, indeed, when she does, her flour and oil do not run out. She and her son and the prophet are nourished and survive.

Perhaps what hospitality asks of us today, as always, is to notice where a sense of scarcity is locking our hearts down, guarding us from a willingness to share. If we cannot safely open our doors to each other, maybe we are asked to remove our armor of busy-ness and to open our hearts and our days to one another. To show up – on Zoom, on the phone, or on the front lawn. To be present – through the window, in the mail, on social media, in the park. To share what we have – even if it is just this one moment, just this one hour, just this one day.

What a sweet welcome that can be.

Karen

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Spiritual Practices

Option A

A Hospitality of Time

In Naomi Shihab Nye's poem, "Red Brocade," she writes about how rare it is in our busy society for people to say:

*No, I was not busy when you came!
I was not preparing to be busy.
That's the armor everyone put on
at the end of the century
to pretend they had a purpose
in the world.*

Watch Shonda Rhimes' Ted Talk, ["My Year of Saying Yes to Everything,"](#) and create your own practice of saying "yes" to something you have not regularly said yes to before. Choose something you are likely to encounter daily or often in the next few weeks. Is it answering your phone even when you don't recognize the number? Accepting an invitation from a friend or family member to participate in a zoom call? Playing with a child (online or in person, safely distanced)? Listening to someone's story? Maybe it's saying yes to all requests you receive, that you reasonably can, for two weeks.

You set the rules for your practice of hospitably sharing your time with others. Then follow them for two weeks. What do you learn about your willingness to welcome others with gifts of your time? Come to the circle prepared to share what you experienced, noticed and learned.

Option B

The Uninvited Guest

We practice hospitality not only with people but also with circumstances and emotions. In the poem by Rumi, known as “The Guest House,” we’re reminded that every emotion has something to offer us as wisdom and guidance. In order to receive that wisdom and guidance, though, we must welcome them in with gratitude.

Guest House, by Rumi

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,*

*still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
meet them at the door laughing and invite
them in.*

*Be grateful for whatever comes.
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*
~ Coleman Barks, trans.

In this practice of hospitality, reserve 10-15 minutes at the end of each day to consider when in the day did you experience an unwanted or uninvited emotion. If nothing comes to mind, move on to the desired ones and use the exercise with one of them. But try not to pass over the opportunity to welcome the difficult emotions you may prefer to leave outside on the doorstep. That is the deeper point of this practice.

Choosing one emotion, preferably one you’d rather not experience or encounter, imagine opening the door wide and inviting them in for conversation. Beginning with the prompt below, write about an exchange you might have with them, as a dialogue or your own reflection on it. As you work with this practice over time, notice if it affects how you respond to difficult emotions in the moment, as they arise.

Before coming to the circle, review your daily writings and consider what your own emotions, especially the challenging ones, might be trying to tell you now.

The prompt is, **If I sit with you and listen to what you have to say, I might....**

Questions to Ponder

Read through the questions below and notice which one(s) resonate with you. One or more of the questions might seem particularly compelling – or some might stir resistance in you. Either of these reactions might make the question fruitful to consider. Choose just one and take time to consider it, over several days if possible. Write it down on a piece of paper you carry in your pocket. Or take a picture of it with your phone. Or record it in your journal – and spend some time, each day if you can, reflecting on it in writing or otherwise, noticing where it leads you and what you learn from it and your response to it.

1. Think of a time, recently or long ago, when you felt fully welcomed. Recall what specifically made you feel welcome. How did you feel and how did you respond? How does that, and other experiences of hospitality, influence how you welcome others?
2. Is it easier for you to offer hospitality or to receive it? Why? And how does that affect your relationships with others?
3. What do you do when someone offers you hospitality you do not want to receive? Can you name why you want to decline it? What does that reason mean for your future relationship with the person offering hospitality?
4. What do you do when you offer hospitality that is declined? Are you able to adjust to different forms of hospitality that might be more likely to be received by the one being welcomed?
5. Have you ever experienced a guest who offered you hospitality in your own home? What happened and how did you feel about that?
6. Who is not welcome at your door (or in your life), and why? Has this changed over time? Why or why not? Is it related to the question of whom you regard as the “other”?
7. Have you ever been surprised by the outcome of inviting an unwanted guest or stranger into your life or your home?
8. Is there a part of yourself that is difficult for you to welcome? What might you learn if you open the door and invite that part of yourself into conversation?
9. Is the hospitality you offer others (or don't offer) related to hospitality you do or don't offer to parts of yourself? How so, or how not?
10. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it. Or maybe the question or call you need to hear is waiting in one of the quotes listed below. Consider looking there!

Resources

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. They will not be analyzed in our circles. Instead they are here to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started and open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to live faithfully with an ethic of hospitality.

Word Definitions & Roots

Hospitality

The quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way.

Word Origin: from L. *hospitalitas* "friendliness to guests," from *hospes*, "guest" (also meaning stranger). Other words derived from this root include "host," "hospice," "hospitable," "hostel" and "hotel." Similarly, in other languages, the Arabic word *dayf* and Greek word *xenos* both mean guest and host, suggesting an understanding of reciprocity between host and guest.

Wise Words

Hospitality is the key to new ideas, new friends, new possibilities. What we take into our lives changes us. Without new people and new ideas, we are imprisoned inside ourselves.

and

It is the first step toward dismantling the barriers of the world. Hospitality is the way we turn a prejudiced world around one heart at a time.

and

Hospitality is simply love on the loose.

~ Joan D Chittister

Hospitality is the practice of God's welcome by reaching across difference to participate in God's actions bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis.

~ Letty M. Russell

True hospitality is welcoming the stranger on her own terms. This kind of hospitality can only be offered by those who've found the center of their lives in their own hearts.

~ Henri Nouwen

Despite all that has been said about the pattern of segregation in our society, it is my conviction that time is against it. In fact, much of the current effort to hold the line may be viewed as a back-against-the-wall endeavor. The more the world becomes a neighborhood in which time and space are approaching zero as a limit, the more urgent becomes the issue of neighborliness. The walls [that separate us] are crumbling-this is one of the dramatic facts of our world. The fact itself is very frightening to many who have lived always behind the walls, within the walls, or beyond the walls. It is deeply disturbing also to those who have found the existence of the walls essential to their own peace, well-being, and security. Out of sight, out of mind-this can no longer be the case."

~ Howard Thurman

In the cherry blossom's shade
there's no such thing as a stranger.

~ Kobayashi Issa

Our full humanity is contingent on our hospitality; we can be complete only when we are giving something away; when we sit at the table and pass the peas to the person next to us we see that person in a whole new way.

~ Alice Waters

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. ~ Hebrews 13:1-2

Hospitality is always defined by the other.... [T]here are many kinds of the other. (1) the other who is unknown, who knocks at the door; (2) the other who is a foreigner, who comes from another country, speaks another language, has different habits and culture; (3) the other who belongs to a different social class and lives in poverty; (4) the other who has been snubbed by society, who is need, tired, and starving; (5) the other who is the radical Other, who is God hidden behind the figure of two wandering people. Hospitality is unconditional and it applies to all kinds of the other."

~ Leonardo Boff

Poetry

From "Song of a Man Who Has Come Through" by D.H. Lawrence

What is the knocking?
What is the knocking at the door in the night?
It is somebody wants to do us harm.

No, no, it is the three strange angels.
Admit them, admit them.
excerpt from "Song of a Man Who Has Come Through," by D.H. Lawrence

"Red Brocade" by Naomi Shihab Nye

The Arabs used to say,
When a stranger appears at your door,
feed him for three days
before asking who he is,
where he's come from,
where he's headed.
That way, he'll have strength enough
to answer.
Or, by then you'll be such good friends
you don't care.

Let's go back to that.
Rice? Pine nuts?
Here, take the red brocade pillow.
My child will serve water
to your horse.

No, I was not busy when you came!
I was not preparing to be busy.
That's the armor everyone put on
at the end of the century
to pretend they had a purpose
in the world.

I refuse to be claimed.
Your plate is waiting.
We will snip fresh mint
into your tea.
"Red Brocade," 19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East, Green Willow Books, 2002.

From "Friends do things like this" by Hafiz

Friends do things like this:
Tell which matt their house key is
Hidden under.

. . . .
For you would not believe
The extraordinary view
Of God
From my bedroom
Window.

Excerpt from "Friends Do Things Like This," by Hafiz, trans by Daniel Ladinsky, *The Gift*

"Song by a Shepherd," by William Blake (1757–1827). Recorded as a song with video by The Wraiths, under the title "Welcome Stranger to This Place," <https://vimeo.com/11658001>

Music

For a playlist inspired by the opening reflection on this month's theme and prepared by a Unity member, visit this [Spotify link](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0fBwyozy6tW2BUzxtmqMtA?si=wRgPMvrlRKG9HuG2S32U4g). (Note: you may have to register for a free Spotify account to listen to more than 30 seconds of each song.)
<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0fBwyozy6tW2BUzxtmqMtA?si=wRgPMvrlRKG9HuG2S32U4g>

For detailed notes about these recording artists, see the end of this packet.

Videos & Podcasts

[How We Can Face the Future Without Fear, Together](#), Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Ted Talk

It's a fateful moment in history. We've seen divisive elections, divided societies and the growth of extremism -- all fueled by anxiety and uncertainty.

"Is there something we can do, each of us, to be able to face the future without fear?" asks Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. Sacks gives us three specific ways we can move from the politics of "me" to the politics of "all of us, together."

https://www.ted.com/talks/rabbi_lord_jonathan_sacks_how_we_can_face_the_future_without_fear_together

["My Year of Saying Yes to Everything," Shonda Rhimes' Ted Talk](#)

A reflection on making time for what matters. Shonda Rhimes, the titan behind Grey's Anatomy, Scandal and How to Get Away With Murder, is responsible for some 70 hours of television per season, and she loves to work. "When I am hard at work, when I am deep in it, there is no other feeling," she says. She has a name for this feeling: The hum. The hum is a drug, the hum is music, the hum is God's whisper in her ear. But what happens when it stops? Is she anything besides the hum? In this moving talk, join Rhimes on a journey through her "year of yes" and find out how she got her hum back.

https://www.ted.com/talks/shonda_rhimes_my_year_of_saying_yes_to_everything

Articles and Online Sources

["Radical Hospitality,"](#) by Marilyn Sewell

In a sermon to her congregation, Rev. Sewell considers the theological roots and the demanding challenges of practicing radical hospitality, individually and as a congregation.

[Hospitality on the Way,"](#) by Wes Granberg-Michaelson, *Sojourners* magazine

The writer recalls the hospitality experienced as a pilgrim walking the Camino and contrasts this to the United States' immigration policies.

Books

[Love You Forever](#), Robert Munsch, Sheila McGraw, illustrator,

From Goodreads: "An extraordinarily different story by Robert Munsch is a gentle affirmation of the love a parent feels for their child--forever."

[The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse](#), by Charlie Mackesy, Ebury Press, 2019

A book for all ages. From Goodreads: "A book of hope for uncertain times. Enter the world of Charlie's four unlikely friends, discover their story and their most important life lessons."

"A wonderful work of art and a wonderful window into the human heart." Richard Curtis

[Radical Hospitality](#), by Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt, Paraclete Press, 2011

Homan, a Benedictine monk, and Pratt, a journalist and retreat leader, highlight the value of openhearted hospitality in a time of fear, especially fear of strangers. They suggest daily practices, based on the Rule of St. Benedict, that can lead to greater hospitality in any person's life.

[The House of Broken Angels](#), novel by Luis Alberto Urrea, Little, Brown & Co., 2018

From Goodreads: "The definitive Mexican-American immigrant story, a sprawling and deeply felt portrait of a Mexican-American family occasioned by the impending loss of its patriarch, from one of the country's most beloved authors." Author Viet Thanh Nguyen says, "The novel has it all – humor, history, politics, emotions, all packaged into a highly readable account of a Mexican American family that straddles the border of the United States and Mexico."

Movies

[The Two Popes](#)

2019 biographical drama film directed by Fernando Meirelles and written by Anthony McCarten, adapted from McCarten's play "The Pope." Starring Anthony Hopkins and Jonathan Pryce (From Wikipedia)

[The Lost Boys of Sudan, Directed by Jon Shenk, Megan Mylan](#)

Documentary about the struggles of two African youth to adapt to their new life in America.

[Fire On the Mountain: A Gathering of Shamans, produced and directed by David Cherniack](#)

Documentary filmed in 1997 at a ten-day gathering of tribal elders, wisdom keepers, and medicine women from five continents, who had travelled to Karma Ling, a Tibetan Buddhist retreat center in the French Alps, to discuss their concerns with the Dalai Lama and representatives of the world's religions.

NOTES ON PERFORMERS FEATURED IN THE SPOTIFY [MUSIC PLAYLIST](#)

Let My Love Open the Door -- Pete Townshend

Peter Dennis Blandford Townshend (born 19 May 1945) is an English guitarist, singer and composer. He is co-founder, leader, principal songwriter, guitarist and secondary lead vocalist of The Who, considered to be one of the most important and influential rock bands of the 20th century.

Blues Stay Away from Me -- The Delmore Brothers

Alton Delmore (December 25, 1908 – June 8, 1964) and Rabon Delmore (December 3, 1916 – December 4, 1952), billed as The Delmore Brothers, were country music pioneer singer-songwriters and musicians who were stars of the Grand Ole Opry in the 1930s. The Delmore Brothers, together with other brother duos such as the Louvin Brothers, the Blue Sky Boys, the Monroe Brothers (Birch Monroe, Charlie Monroe and Bill Monroe), the McGee Brothers, and The Stanley Brothers, had a profound impact on the history of country music and American popular music. The duo performed extensively with Arthur Smith as the Arthur Smith Trio throughout the 1930s.

Galvanize -- Chemical Brothers

The Chemical Brothers are a British electronic music duo composed of Tom Rowlands and Ed Simons, originating in Manchester in 1989. Along with the Prodigy, Fatboy Slim, and other fellow acts, they were pioneers at bringing the big beat genre to the forefront of pop culture. They achieved widespread success when their second album Dig Your Own Hole topped the UK charts

in 1997. In the United Kingdom they have had six number one albums and thirteen Top Twenty singles, including two number ones. In the United States they have won six Grammy Awards including "Best Rock Instrumental Performance", "Best Dance Recording" and "Best Dance/Electronic Album" of the year as recently as 2020.

Somewhere -- West Side Story

West Side Story is a musical with a book by Arthur Laurents, music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. It was inspired by William Shakespeare's play Romeo and Juliet.

I Don't Love Nobody -- Elizabeth Cotten

Elizabeth "Libba" Cotten (née Nevills) (January 5, 1893 – June 29, 1987) was an American blues and folk musician, singer, and songwriter.

A self-taught left-handed guitarist, Cotten developed her own original style. She played a guitar strung for a right-handed player, but played it upside down, as she was left-handed. This position meant that she would play the bass lines with her fingers and the melody with her thumb. Her signature alternating bass style has become known as "Cotten picking".

Too Much of Nothing -- Bob Dylan and the Band

Bob Dylan (born Robert Allen Zimmerman; May 24, 1941) is an American singer-songwriter, author, and visual artist who has been a major figure in popular culture for more than 50 years. Much of his most celebrated work dates from the 1960s, when songs such as "Blowin' in the Wind" (1963) and "The Times They Are a-Changin'" (1964) became anthems for the civil rights and anti-war movements. His lyrics during this period incorporated a range of political, social, philosophical, and literary influences, defied pop music conventions and appealed to the burgeoning counterculture.

The Band were a roots rock group consisting of four Canadians and one American: Rick Danko (bass guitar, vocals, fiddle), Garth Hudson (keyboards, accordion, saxophone), Richard Manuel (keyboards, drums, vocals), Robbie Robertson (guitar, vocals), and Levon Helm (drums, vocals, mandolin, guitar). Between 1958 and 1963, they originally formed as The Hawks, a backing band for rockabilly singer Ronnie Hawkins. In the mid-1960s they gained recognition backing Bob Dylan, and the 1966 tour was notable as Dylan's first with an electric band. After leaving Dylan and changing their

name to the Band, they released several albums to critical and popular acclaim, highlighted by the songs "The Weight" and "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." According to AllMusic, "For roughly half-a-decade, from 1968 through 1975, The Band were one of the most popular and influential rock groups in the world." Their influence on several generations of musicians has been substantial: Roger Waters called their debut album, *Music from Big Pink*, the second "most influential record in the history of rock and roll," and music journalist Al Aronowitz called its "country soul....a sound never heard before."

All Is Not Lost -- Ok Go

OK Go is an American rock band originally from Chicago, Illinois, now based in Los Angeles, California. The band is composed of Damian Kulash (lead vocals, guitar), Tim Nordwind (bass guitar and vocals), Dan Konopka (drums and percussion) and Andy Ross (guitar, keyboards and vocals), who joined them in 2005, replacing Andy Duncan. The band is known for its often quirky and elaborate one-take music videos.

Lost on the River -- The Basement Tapes

The New Basement Tapes is a British-American musical supergroup made up of members Jim James, Elvis Costello, Marcus Mumford, Taylor Goldsmith, and Rhiannon Giddens. The group is best known for *Lost on the River: The New Basement Tapes*, their 2014 album which consists of tracks based on newly uncovered lyrics handwritten by Bob Dylan in 1967 during the recording of his 1975 album with The Band, *The Basement Tapes*. The group is also featured in the 2014 Showtime documentary *Lost Songs: The Basement Tapes Continued*.

Elijah Rock -- Mahalia Jackson

Mahalia Jackson (/məˈheɪliə/ mə-HAY-lee-ə; born Mahala Jackson; October 26, 1911 – January 27, 1972) was an American gospel singer. Possessing a contralto voice, she was referred to as "The Queen of Gospel". She became one of the most influential gospel singers in the world and was heralded internationally as a singer and civil rights activist. She was described by entertainer Harry Belafonte as "the single most powerful black woman in the United States". She recorded about 30 albums (mostly for Columbia

Records) during her career, and her 45 rpm records included a dozen "golds"—million-sellers.

The Black Arts -- Stereolab

Stereolab are an English-French avant-pop band formed in London in 1990. Led by the songwriting team of Tim Gane and Lætitia Sadier, the group's music combines influences from krautrock, lounge and 1960s pop music, often incorporating a repetitive motorik beat with heavy use of vintage electronic keyboards and female vocals sung in English and French. On stage, they play in a more feedback-driven and guitar-oriented style. The band also draw from funk, jazz and Brazilian music, and were one of the first artists to be dubbed "post-rock". They are regarded among the most innovative and influential groups of the 1990s.

Keep A' Knockin – Little Richard

Richard Wayne Penniman (December 5, 1932 – May 9, 2020), known as Little Richard, was an American musician, singer, and songwriter. He was an influential figure in popular music and culture for seven decades. Nicknamed "The Innovator, The Originator, and The Architect of Rock and Roll", Richard's most celebrated work dates from the mid-1950s, when his charismatic showmanship and dynamic music, characterized by frenetic piano playing, pounding back beat and raspy shouted vocals, laid the foundation for rock and roll. Richard's innovative emotive vocalizations and up tempo rhythmic music also played a key role in the formation of other popular music genres, including soul and funk, respectively. He influenced numerous singers and musicians across musical genres from rock to hip hop; his music helped shape rhythm and blues for generations to come.

Open Up That Door – Nappy Brown

Napoleon Brown Goodson Culp] (October 12, 1929 – September 20, 2008) better known by his stage name Nappy Brown, was an American R&B singer. His hits include the 1955 Billboard chart #2, "Don't Be Angry", "Little By Little", and "Night Time Is the Right Time". His style was recognizable; Brown used a wide vibrato, melisma, and distinctive extra syllables, in particular, "li-li-li-li-li."

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