

A Methodist Way of Life for October 2024 “Open” We practise hospitality and generosity

Harvest Festival

In October we celebrate our Harvest Festival. Following the service we will share together a good lunch and a time to welcome each other and chat with one another.

We meet God in relationship with people. It is good to be open-hearted, open-minded, generous and hospitable.

Hospitality is an attitude of openness to others, to learning about them and from them, to widening our understanding and perhaps being changed by these encounters.

Generosity is also a basic Christian practice. As we have freely received, so we are to give freely. Though this may involve sacrifice, it is rarely right to give in such a way that we are unable to care for ourselves and those who depend on us.

It's important to be open to receiving hospitality and generosity from others. If we only give, we place ourselves in positions of power over others.

God is present with and in all people, in all circumstances, and waits to be discovered.

Our task is to listen, recognise and be transformed by God as we live our lives as He intended.

Key themes

- Being 'open' may include being open-hearted, open-minded, open-walleted and open-homed (all are forms of generosity and hospitality).
- Hospitality may include learning about and from other people, as well as cooking meals or hosting parties. It's not always us being hospitable to someone else – it is a blessing to receive hospitality too.
- Generosity may involve money, but it doesn't have to. We can be generous with our time, gifts and ideas.
- Sometimes, giving our time is a more valuable currency than anything else.

Bible passages that encourage hospitality and generosity

“Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward them for what they have done”

Source: Proverbs Chapter 19 verse 17.

“Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality”.

Source: Romans Chapter 12 verse 13.

“They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the Apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold

property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”

Source: Acts Chapter 2 verses 42 to 46.

Background reflections

There is a widely quoted African saying that can be translated, “A person is a person through other persons”. In other words “We are truly human only when in relationship with others – in generous and hospitable relationships with others”.

Every person is made uniquely in the image of God, and so we meet God in our relationship with other people.

The story of the “widow’s offering”.

Mark’s Gospel Chapter 12 is often given as an example of how generosity is not about the amount we give relative to others, but about heart-attitude: Do we give to show off to others, or out of a position of love for God and others?

It has even been used to justify extreme sacrificial giving, as the widow gave “everything she had, all she had to live on”. As a Church, we must be aware of what we ask of people (whether, money or time) and whether it is always right to ask for or accept what people may be prepared to give, even when it is not healthy for them to do so.

Though being generous and open may involve sacrifice, we should be mindful of each other’s circumstances. We need to recognise that some of us may show generosity to organisations outside of our Church. And some may have people who depend on them for support.

These are private matters, not for us to make judgements on.

Ways for us to respond

- How have you shown hospitality and generosity recently?
Think about your money, time, gifts, possessions, and ideas.
- How have you received or accepted hospitality and generosity lately?
- Which do you find easier, being generous or accepting it? Why do you think this is?
- What could we learn from being open within our own Christian communities?

We invite you to keep a record in your journal on what you have noticed by being “open” in your daily life, with your family, your friends, and in your community?

Source: Abridged from “A Methodist Way Of Life”

www.methodist.org.uk/faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/ Search “Open”

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