

Devotion, Third Week of Eastertide, 2024

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

I'll be downright honest with you – hospitality is not one of my gifts. I'm a reluctant cook and I tend to get tied in knots about getting the house ready for visitors. Then I worry about the food being hot enough and ready at the same time, whether folks are having a good time, etc. etc. It's just not an easy thing with me. But I know plenty of people who tackle this with ease – a bunch of them are in our church. Connie McWilliams and Beverly Johnson decorated the fellowship hall beautifully this past Sunday for the luncheon to welcome Jim and me back – and all of you brought wonderful food, as usual. And TWO cakes – not just one! I haven't had a true birthday cake with candles since our youngest child left the nest. She always insisted that she and Jim go pick it out. So It's been a while since I've blown out candles! Thank you for your graciousness and generosity to us.

We are called in the Bible to be hospitable people, all the way back to Abraham and Sarai entertaining the three strangers who turned out to be angels and told her she was to have a child. In the Middle East, hospitality is critically important, and to turn away someone in need is a terrible failure of the commandments of God and Allah. In those areas of the world where water sources may be scarce, providing water to travelers is at times critical to survival. In many areas there and in Africa, families will take the only food they have to share with visitors.

We forget about that here in the U.S., where strangers are looked at more skeptically. And yet, Jim and I have been recipients of water and other care at times when we had a crisis. Once, when we were in a strange town in particular distress over a family issue, a stranger looked at us as we asked directions, and said, "You look like you are deeply bothered. Let me pray for you right now." And she wrapped us in her arms and did so. God sends us out to be these angels to those in distress, and I try to always remember that. Mary Smith is good about noticing homeless folks on the streets around our church, and she often hands them food. She's the one who first found out about the needs of homeless children in our schools, and that's how our Babb Project got started. That's probably how most of our mission projects got started – someone in the church noticed a need, and asked folks to step in and help.

Jeanne