

NOW & NEXT

HOW THE CHURCH IS CHANGING FOR GOOD

presented by  AMPLIFY MEDIA

Episode 7 – The Art of Hospitality in a Digital World

Watch this episode on demand and download related resources at AmplifyMedia.com/NowandNext/the-art-of-hospitality-in-a-digital-world/.

Host – Rev. Lisa Yebuah, Lead Pastor, Southeast Raleigh Table, Raleigh, NC

Panelists –

- Rev. Hannah Bonner

Director at Frontera Wesley, Tucson, AZ

- Rev. Carol Howard Merritt

Pastor and Author of Healing Spiritual Wounds, New Canaan, CT

- Debi Nixon

Executive Director, The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Kansas City, MO

What do hospitality and welcome look like now that we're no longer in physical spaces together? That's at the heart of the questions our panelists discussed during this webinar.

This new digital world of church is different than before, when most churches recorded their services and put them online and visitors peered in from the outside. Now, churches and faith communities are challenged to create a digital space that is an experience for everyone. One example of this difference is lighting of candles. Now, as a pastor lights a candle, they invite people in their homes to also light a candle to center them for the communal experience of worship.

People long for connection, now more than ever, so reminding people in your community that we are still living life together is important. Even though we are physically distant you can still engage with member and visitors with personal emails, calls, texts, and cards and letters. Hospitality is relational.

We also need to shift our paradigm on the "successes" of hospitality. The simple act of inviting someone to worship or a group experience is showing hospitality. Even if they don't participate, the continued invitations are important because they are points of connection.

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Engage people in the places and contexts of where they are. For example, offer a variety of group activities – not just worship on Sunday morning – such as an online Vespers prayer service one evening a week, an informal coffee and conversation time where people can join in a Zoom meeting room or other chat room, and continuing your small groups are all different ways for people to plug in and connect with others. Know that each demographic has its own needs and way of communicating that can be replicated online. For example, Hannah Bonner taught us how to add our pronouns to our Zoom names, an important signal to young people that you care about their identities. Jesus modeled connecting with people within their contexts.

The simple acts of making sure older or homebound members of your community have their medications and food is also hospitality. Prioritize these members who were already on the periphery and engage other members to call and write them.

Don't be afraid to try new things. What is most important is to show people you care.

Unite people around a cause, whether it's a social justice campaign, a food bank, or a prayer drive. People want to be part of your mission of being light in the world.

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