

Extra Shot | Hospitality as Essential to Mission

| Karin Peter

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

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Blake Smith 00:29

Hey, Project Zion Podcast listeners. This is Blake Smith, and I want to welcome you to this Extra Shot episode. Recently, the Council of Presidents of Seventy led a two-day session on hospitality in the Central Mission Center, the council has been gracious enough to allow us to air these presentations for you, our listeners. This episode is titled, "Hospitality as Essential to Mission, and was led by Senior President of Seventy, Karin Peter.

Karin Peter 00:59

Hello there. I'm Karin Peter, and I serve as senior president of this wonderful group of people known as Presidents of Seventy and as a council, we are so pleased to be with you as we explore the multiple aspects of Christ-centered hospitality. So in general, hospitality is the practice of inviting, welcoming and nurturing others in healthy, authentic relationships. Think a bit. When have you experienced memorable hospitality? For me, it was when I visited the mosque in Jonesboro, Arkansas. I called ahead and the Imam of the mosque invited me to come on Friday evening, it's their outreach night. So I did. He welcomed me. He encouraged me to come inside and sit with the men downstairs while all the women went upstairs, because upstairs there's a screen and you cannot see what's taking place. And he knew I was there to experience their call to prayer and their evening of worship together. He informed me that this was a breach of protocol, but he also felt it was the best way for me to learn and for us to be in relationship. Later, we broke our fast with dates and Diet Coke. He told me, Diet Coke is strictly not what we would normally do. But you know, these US Muslims. As the men were called to prayer, he again said, normally you would be upstairs, but we want you to stay here so you can see what takes place. Now, later, I did go upstairs with the women to eat. My husband, however, who is quite quiet and a little shy, was left downstairs with the men. He was not anticipating this. I worried. The whole time I was upstairs. I hurried down as soon as I knew it was appropriate, and walked into a room where all the men, including my spouse, are kicked back and joking and having a great time as they tried to talk Ray into raising sheep and goats so they could have lambs and kids for their feast days. My point is hospitality can be found in unexpected places. Christ-centered hospitality, however, is practicing hospitality that is grounded in our commitment to live the ministries and the message of Jesus. It comes out of the very center of our thoughts and our choices and our character. It's the heart of who we are and what we're about. Christ-centered hospitality is at the core of Christian identity and

practice. As Christians, we identify with God, the Divine Presence, as the one who invites us to the table, who sustains us, who welcomes us., Whether we are stranger or sinner or alien or saint, it makes no difference. God embraces us in a holy community of mercy, justice and love. So, Christ-centered hospitality is how we reflect those aspects of God's nature embodied in Jesus into the places where we live and breathe. Christ-centered hospitality is a sign of the nearness of the peaceable reign of God. In Luke 14, we read, He said also to the one who had invited him, "when you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." So, what does this really mean to practice Christ-centered hospitality beyond just a title or a sentence or a phrase? Well, it's a way of being in communion with the spirit as it weaves our lives and the lives of others together in sacred community. When we look at hospitality as a practice of faith, we become more intentional in offering hospitality as part of our journey of discipleship. I want to be clear though, hospitality is not a missionary tool. It is not a tactic to get people to come to church. It is not something we do once in a while as part of our social or religious obligation, Christ-centered hospitality is a way of life that responds to the God who invites, welcomes and nurtures us. It is the aroma, the taste and the texture of God's loving presence in the world. So I've shared three words several times, invite, welcome, nurture, from my perspective, from the 20 minutes we spend together, those are the most important three words to remember, invite, welcome, nurture. The invitation is the means by which others are called or summoned into your space, and their transformation can make it into a shared space as congregations or groups, there are all kinds of community invitations that we can practice, to invite others to engage in the life of this shared space, invitations to service projects, book clubs, communal meals, invitations to camps, events, reunions, retreats and been invitations to check out the Community of Christ YouTube channel or Instagram account, or for a shameless plug to Listen to Project Zion Podcast on your phone on a regular basis, especially every Sunday morning, or to invite someone to engage in a rigorous course of study through the Community of Christ seminary. All of those are wonderful ways that congregations can invite, welcome and nurture others. But as an individual, what do I do? Invitations to coffee or a shared experience, to a conversation, perhaps a conversation about voting as a spiritual practice, an invitation to help you accomplish something, or an invitation so that you can broaden your perspective through conversation and relationship. So, the second word, welcome. Ministries of welcome are practices that help us as congregations or groups or ministries or individuals to prepare and receive the holy presence of others and to provide a positive atmosphere and a memorable experience. A communal welcome might look like, making sure your facility is ready to welcome others, just as you would if you're inviting folks to your house, greeting people, greeting people in a communal setting, like your church front door or a small group activity. Entrance is the opportunity for people with positive outlook, social intelligence and good interpersonal skills to shine in this aspect of Christ-centered hospitality of welcome, but as an individual, the ministry of welcome is a practice of doing the extra little bit, just the extra little bit to let others know you are so happy that they have come and you can engage in knowing each other better. It's simple things like inviting some someone to a meal and lighting a candle, introducing people in a group to your friends and family, going out of your way to include someone who is left out, or inviting and welcoming someone into an activity that you enjoy and want them to enjoy as well, invitation and welcome. The last word. Do you remember? Nurture. This is the hardest for me. I'm just going to be honest before I share with you about it. But it is the third leg of hospitality, nurturing

ministries develop and maintain an attitude or a community identity where everyone has the opportunity to grow and mature in discipleship. It's really where we live out the blessings of community. So, congregational nurturing looks like offering to sit with someone who's new to make sure the quirky traditions of your congregation are explained, or the hymn numbers in the bulletin are clear, or the instructions given from the pulpit make sense. It could look like your congregation or group providing mentoring partnerships for new disciples, or even you choosing to walk with someone on their spiritual journey. One nurturing element that I think is important is that when we nurture others, that includes providing and sharing about helpful resources that we have in Community of Christ, which means we need to know what they are, and we need to know what's in them, so that when we share them with folks, a conversation can occur that nurtures not only new friends and disciples, but our own ability to mature in Christ-centered hospitality as an individual. Some nurturing practices you might want to work on would be having conversations with people who think differently with you to build common ground, learning about and practicing holy listening, or discovering that your acquaintance has something in common with someone you know and connecting them. It can even be sharing a movie or book recommendation and inviting someone into a conversation about it. My personal favorites, my favorite discussion movie is Lars and the Real Girl with Ryan Gosling, who is so cute. And my favorite book, if you're ready for it, is, The Historical Quest for Satan. I know I. But it's a marvelous book for discussing where the kind of ideas that we have and images that are formed in our mind when we hear that word, where they came from, and how we can better understand what they mean in our culture, but also put them in their proper place in a life of discipleship. I'm happy to give you links for either of those things, the movie or the book. And sometimes individual nurturing happens unexpectedly. I was at a conference for borderland Mormons, we call seekers, and seeker ministry in the church. And it was at the University of Utah where TylerMarz used to be, and he worked there. I was in line. I'm looking for a Diet Coke. So thank God it wasn't BYU. It was University of Utah, and I went down to the commissary area. I'm in line with my credit card because who carries real money, and in front of me is a man about my age, and I hear him talking to the cashier. I forgot cash. I only have a credit card. All I want is this 89 cent Diet Coke. I noticed immediately, so I listen in, and the cashier said, I will have to charge you, I don't know, 50 cents or something for the charge for the 89 cent Diet Coke. And so I just jumped in, because pushy. I am, and I just jumped in and said, put that with mine. That's fine, just put it with my stuff. And he turned around, he's like, Oh no, no, no. Like, Sure, no problem. So we did, and we chatted, and I made a new friend, a new friend, who invited my husband and I to have dinner with he and his wife. The next time I came to town. A new friend, I still contact and he still contacts me every once in a while. Nurturing happens in all kinds of ways, but it goes back to what we talked about at the beginning, building authentic Christ-centered relationships. So those three words, invite, welcome, nurture, that's what Christ_centered hospitality is about. And remember, we're going beyond the minimum, beyond the obligation, beyond the duty, we are intentionally inviting others into a space where transformation can occur. We are welcoming others as respected equal partners on this journey, and we are nurturing authentic relationships that are marked by mutual respect, responsibility, justice, covenant and faithfulness, because those are the principles of healthy relationships. So to close, keep this question with you to reflect on for the next few days. In what ways is the spirit inviting me into a practice of Christ-centered hospitality?