

Letters to the Church



NOVEMBER '22

As part of a reorienting effort with PA Bible Newsletters, you will note the address of this is to you personally as a local member of the church, and the voice is also intended to be pastoral.

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD,

As I sit here at my desk, the leaves outside my window cling to their branches with one last sunburst of color, before falling to the ground to be swept away and soon be forgotten by the coming winter's chill. I've always loved this time of year. I find it often to be my most reflective. It offers a helpful pause to think back over the year before the impending rush of holidays and year-end.

I also have a calendar in front of me right now and I can't help but notice that it's looking rather filled, as this time of year always is a time of many guests in the Weir house. With Thanksgiving and Christmas and New Year's ahead, we will be housing, feeding, and receiving many into our home. There is always a precious opportunity with each heart in these moments that we never want to miss.

Especially in the busyness of life, it is good and right for us to show individuals that they are more important than our schedules, from the moment they step over our threshold - time stops, and we make ourselves present to share these precious moments with one another. I think we've all been touched by the thoughtfulness of others when they received us into their homes with warmth and love well beyond our expectations. It is a mark of great Christian character to be a lover of hospitality (Titus 1:8).

This is not only a proper posture of our hearts for hospitality in our homes but for our assemblies together at 700 Market St and in our small groups as well. How easy it is for us to fall into thoughtless routines or treat going to a fellowship much like going to a movie in a theater. We don't want to just rush in last second, sit down in the first available seat, stare forward, and then get up and go as soon as it's over. Much like with guests in our own homes, there are crucial hospitality opportunities every time we assemble that we'd be remiss not to redeem.

Warm hospitality is a mark of a Christ-exalting congregation. It is a gospel expression of our appreciation of how we've been loved and received by our Savior and Lord. As Christians consider the grace that has welcomed us into the kingdom (Romans 15:7), we then turn to show that same honor to others in each heartfelt hello, handshake, hug, conversation, and "until we meet again."

Take note of the apostle Paul in his kind salutations in the introduction of each of his letters, and his lingering goodbyes and compliments to each saint by name in each closing (particularly in Romans). If he was that warm in writing, to stop and "salute" each saint, imagine his kindness in person. There was no missing how much he dearly cherished each brother and sister in the Lord.

*Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.
Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

1 PETER 4:8-9

This is a Christian service that each of us can participate in and grow in toward one another and our communities. Showing hospitality is a way of demonstrating our earnest love. We should note here that we are commanded to show this to “one another,” meaning existing members of the church, and warned specifically to do so “without grumbling.” Meaning, not secretly holding displeasure or contempt to welcome and receive them, but that we should do so with a cheerful and willing mind. How sad that our tendency in human nature is “familiarity that breeds contempt.” As a redeemed community, ours should be a “familiarity that breeds favor.”

What’s fascinating about this word for hospitality used in the New Testament is that it literally could be translated as a “love for strangers.” Think that through the next time you see that familiar person you’ve known for “x number” of years walking through that bell tower entrance. Roll out the red carpet to welcome and lovingly receive them as you would a complete stranger. Show them the earnest grace and attention you would to a distinguished guest from a far land. Let your reception of them be like the extravagant welcome home of the father to his long-lost son: “He’s here! Bring out the best robe, a ring for his hand, kill the fatted calf!”

You have no idea what their week was like. You don’t know the troubles they bear this week. They may be glad. They may be grieving. They may be showing it on their face, or they may not. Either way, make sure that they couldn’t miss that you were genuinely delighted to see them enter. You arranged yourself to be attentive to them as they stayed. You were warm to linger and embrace them as they left. They may not remember a word you said, but they cannot miss how you sincerely loved them. It should remind them of how greatly Christ cares for them.

As members of the Body of Christ and PA Bible, let’s be renowned for our love for each other. (John 13:35) It’s a high call for each of us to imitate Christ’s self-sacrificing hospitality expressed at the cross. Consider how he loved each of us as a stranger and graciously ushered us into his family and home.

Maybe your home like the Weir home will be filled with guests soon for the holidays, but let’s not miss this opportunity before us every week. Let’s start this Sunday, by stretching ourselves out of our little cliques, routines, and comfort zones. Instead with cheerful sacrifice, let’s show Christlike hospitality to our church family in our church home - to “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” (Romans 15:7)

YOUR PASTOR & SERVANT,



Christmas Eve Service

DECEMBER 24TH - 3 PM

New Year's Eve Service

DECEMBER 30TH - 5 PM