

A Greeting from the College of Bishops of the Western Jurisdiction



Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ who calls us in love!

In the congregations and ministry settings of the Western Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, we offer hospitality in a variety of ways. Persons who come into our churches for the first time are greeted with warmth and ushered into worship services. Our hospitality says: *We are glad you have come.* We may offer to sit with the newcomer during the worship service. Our hospitality says: *I'd like to get to know you better.* After worship, we may walk with the visitor and introduce her or him to others. Our hospitality says: *Our fellowship is open to you!* As the first-time visitor leaves, we may speak a word of invitation to return. Our hospitality says: *We want you to return!*

This is the kind of hospitality, or warm welcome we expect in every ministry setting, whether it is a local congregation, a youth group gathering, a Bible Study group, a campus ministry fellowship.

But in addition, here in the Western Jurisdiction, we have made a commitment to go beyond being hospitable. We are calling all of our congregations and ministry settings in the Western Jurisdiction to create a sacred space where **extravagant hospitality** is expected and practiced. Extravagant hospitality speaks of a welcome that offers to others all that we have and all that we are in the name of the God who is extravagant in the gift of life and Creation; the gift of salvation in Christ; and the gift of companionship in the Holy Spirit.

Extravagant hospitality is evidenced by welcome that is graciously offered to everyone, without regard to the kinds of differences that often divide humankind. The artificial and superficial barriers that keep us apart are torn down by the love of Christ. The table for all of God's children feasting in fellowship and love, honoring each other because of our differences, is our vision of who we seek to become through our faith in Jesus Christ.

As recipients of those gifts from God through our faith, we commit ourselves to extend the same kind of extravagant welcome to others through the ministries of our United Methodist Church. We pledge to practice this hospitality not only as people come and enter our churches. We pledge to go out into the communities outside our churches to offer extravagant hospitality to ALL people in the community and the world.

This is our vision. And our hope. And our promise in the name of the God of grace who loves us all!

In Christ's shalom,

Robert T. Hoshibata,
President, College of Bishops
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