



Home Sweet Home, Again

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As we dive into Matthew 25 this year, we hear these words, “Lord, when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you...?” In the Presbytery, we have accepted the challenge posed in this verse and are examining [access to affordable, safe housing in our communities](#).

When the gospel was written, the duty of hospitality was well-ingrained and included an aspect of safety from harm. The stranger who seeks shelter must be protected, even at risk to the person offering such hospitality. The code of welcoming the stranger ensured survival.

So, too, the Presbytery’s focus thus far has been on safe shelter. We have looked at the availability of quality, affordable homes in order to give people a safe place to live. We worry about evictions and the harm that can be caused to families seeking shelter in crisis. We take up our hammers or checkbooks to solve housing problems. But, there’s more to this Matthew 25 passage than the logistics of rent, heat, and a roof.

We are called to *welcome* strangers, not just tend to them. Like Abraham in Genesis 18, we are called to run toward the stranger to show hospitality and to urge them to accept our best offerings. Abraham didn’t wait for a request from the three visitors to his tent, silently hoping that they might pass on and become someone else’s burden. He welcomed them with humility and urgency. True welcome converts our good works from mere transactions to spiritual love.

Future homeowner [Kimber Watson shared her excitement](#) on Monday about the prospect of a new home with Habitat for Humanity -- a safe place to raise her children. Equally enthusiastically though, she spoke of the welcome she was already receiving in the neighborhood. As she helps construct the house with other Habitat volunteers, neighbors have introduced themselves and expressed their own excitement about having the Watson family in the neighborhood. Their house won’t simply be a sturdy place to live; it will be a home. Because of the community that is already surrounding her, she feels accepted, prepared, and part of something larger than herself.

As the church, we can be very skilled at fixing problems, whether it be medical care or housing or (starting next month) criminal justice systems. Those fixes are absolutely necessary for people to have opportunities for better lives. Please don’t stop what you’re doing. If you haven’t already checked it out, this week’s Fresh Impressions invites you to rehab, refurbish, or reinvent an item from one of the nearby ReStores, to help support your local Habitat. It’s a fun way to support an organization that responds in practical ways to the need for affordable housing.

We are challenged, however, to go further, from transactional support into relational caring. That is the place where long-term transformation happens. When we run to welcome the stranger with open arms, we are transformed as much as the traveler in our midst. With attention to the welcome we offer, we can answer more confidently the question posed in Matthew 25. “Lord, when did we see you? Every day, Lord. Every day.”

