



Twin Cities Christian

NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter of Riverview Park Christian Church

MAY 2025

HOSPITALITY FOR ALL

Given all that's happening in our country around immigration, I thought I'd share this column I wrote that was originally published in the Herald-Palladium in September 2024.

I've lived in 23 different places. I know... that sounds like a lot! Two years ago, my wife and I moved to Berrien County, and we hope to make this our community for the rest of our lives, but it's been quite a journey to get to this point.

Some of those places where I've lived were in different states, a few of them were in the same town, but all of them involved packing up, moving, and settling into a new spot. Moving, migrating, journeying, whatever you want to call it, takes a lot of physical and emotional energy.

We're not the only ones that are on the move, though. According to Steinway Moving and Storage, people in this country move on average almost 12 times during their lives. With all that moving comes a lot of new faces and places.

From my own experience, experiencing hospitality in a new location makes a huge difference. When we moved into our house last year in Berrien Springs, our neighbors across the street left a small gift and note to welcome us to the neighborhood. That gesture let us know that we had found a place we could call home.

Hospitality has been part of the Christian way of living since the days of Jesus and the early Christian communities. Benedict of Nursia was a monk who lived during the 5th and 6th centuries in the lands of the Roman Empire, and he wrote a rule for living that has been followed by monastic communities and average Christians for centuries.

In his rule, Benedict wrote, "All guests who present themselves are to be received as Christ, who said, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' (Matthew 25:35)" All of us who are on the move from one place to another are strangers to our new community, and yet we all are to be received as Jesus himself.

Benedict also wrote, "Great care and concern is to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims because in them more particularly Christ is received." Those of us who are struggling or

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seeking God and a better life reflect the person of Jesus even more, so we, again, are to be welcomed as if we are Jesus himself.

This kind of hospitality was no small task in the days of Benedict and his monastery. The Roman Empire at the time was constantly at war, and those traveling through his part of the world could easily have been people intent on violence. Yet, they were welcomed by the Christian community of the monastery.

What does this call to a spirit of hospitality mean for Christians today? It means welcoming those who are moving into our community, whether they are from Cass County, Chicago, Mexico or Africa.

Welcoming and hospitality can take on different forms, from a small gift left on a front porch to help with housing and those things we need to set up a home. But whatever we do, those of us who are Christians are called to treat the person new to our community as Jesus himself.

Beyond what each of us does to welcome “the stranger,” we need to create a culture of hospitality, where society functions in a welcoming way. Creating such a culture requires leadership that models and shows the path towards hospitality.

Benedict also wrote in his rule that, “The prioress or abbot shall pour water on the hands of the guests, and with the entire community shall wash their feet.” The leaders of the monastery – the prioress or abbot - were expected to show humble service to the guests as if they were Jesus, modeling for the rest of the monastery residents how to show hospitality.

Many people argue that immigrants and those traveling to our country pose a danger, maybe even as the travelers did during the time of Benedict. Yet, immigrants do not commit crimes at any higher rate than people who were born in this country, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. At the same time, many studies show that, overall, immigrants strengthen our economy, providing workers that employers need and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship.

Make no mistake, then... hospitality is not easy. Whether it's someone retiring in our county from Chicago, or someone immigrating here from South America, a changing population means a changing community, with new stresses as well as opportunities.

Those of us who are Christians, though, are called to treat our newly arrived brothers and sisters as Jesus in our individual actions as well as in how we create our culture and society.

As Jesus said in Matthew 25:34,35, hospitality models in this life what Jesus tells us awaits us in the life to come: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ... for I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

*Peace in Christ,
Pastor Dan*



PRAYERS

PRAYERS FOR HEALTH:

Our Church Family-Chris A., Glenn C., and Ken S.

PRAYERS FOR:

- Hope, love and kindness to grow in the world.
- 8-year-old Aurora, who has cancer.
- Fred W., June S's. brother.
- Sheila and Dave's friend, Scott, who has cancer.
- Dale's niece Melanie, who has cancer.
- The mother of Ken's and June's daughter-in-law Erin, as she was recently diagnosed with cancer.
- Glenn's daughter, Lisa, who has been hospitalized with health issues.

GRATITUDE FOR:

- Families being together.
- Worshipping the risen Lord.

CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

Tom B. May 30

Chuck G. May 31

ANNIVERSARIES

Kathy and Scott K. May 14



MAY OUTREACH PROJECTS

We will continue Pennies for Patients for the American Cancer Society through Mid-May.



Throughout the month of May, we're doing another FOOD DRIVE for Mosaic!

Here are the items needed:

- Soups
- Canned Fruit
- Pasta and Sauce
- Breakfast Cereal
- Crackers
- Canned Vegetables
- Canned Chili
- Rice (including flavored rice)
- Boxed Potatoes
- Gluten free foods, like pasta

Monetary donations are also accepted. You can make a check to Riverview, with "Mosaic" or "Food Drive" in the memo line, and we can then gather those donations and send one check.

BIBLE STUDY CONTINUES

We're continuing our shared Bible study of Luke's gospel with Pilgrim and Zion UCC churches! The study will be on



Mondays, 11 AM-12 Noon starting on Monday, April 28, and going through Monday, June 9 (with Memorial Day off). Everyone is welcome to take part, and you don't need to have participated in the first sessions. Each gathering stands on its own, as we discuss a different section in Luke. Let Pastor Dan know if you're interested, or you can sign up at church.

Coffee



KLATSCH

EVERY THURSDAY @ 10AM starting in May!

May 1, 8, 15, 22, & 29

Join us for a time to socialize! Coffee and juice will be served, in addition to a treat! No need to sign up, just show up.

We are located INSIDE Zion UCC. Please enter on the right side of the building toward the back of the building. This side entrance will be unlocked.



Join us for a

MEMORIAL DAY PICNIC

Food, Fun & Friends

**SUNDAY,
MAY 18**

Following Worship Service
See the sign-up sheet please.



A Place to Call Home

by *Global Ministries* | published on Mar 14, 2025

Written by: Margaret Kofron, a Global Missions Intern with the Middle East & Europe Region

Before arriving at Mediterranean Hope in Scicli, Sicily, I worked with a nonprofit called The Samaritans in Green Valley, Arizona, United States. These two organizations have had a strong partnership for several years, united by a shared mission: to offer humanitarian support to migrants facing life-threatening challenges. The Samaritans operate in the Sonoran Desert along the United States-Mexico border, spanning over 260,000 square kilometers. Tragically, the U.S. government has weaponized this desert landscape to deter migration through a policy known as *Prevention through Deterrence*. The idea behind this policy is to push migrants into more hostile terrain, hoping to force them to turn back or face death.

In response, The Samaritans conduct desert searches to locate and assist migrants. When they find them, they offer medical care, food, and water helping to prevent death in the unforgiving desert. The most significant obstacle they face is the extreme lack of water. In contrast, in the Mediterranean, the problem is the opposite—an abundance of water—but a perilous one. The sea becomes an obstacle to migration, with people risking their lives to cross it. Despite the difference in environment, the core issue is the same: migrants are being forced into vulnerable, dangerous situations because the proper channels for safe migration and support are either inadequate or nonexistent.

After a year of working in Arizona, I was curious to see what this kind of humanitarian work looked like in Europe. In November, I arrived in Scicli, Sicily, where I would stay for three months, working with Mediterranean Hope. Their program, The House of Many Cultures, functions as a reception center that provides support for migrants in the later stages of their journey. Rather than providing immediate aid, their work focuses on helping migrants—referred to as “guests”—transition and integrate into their new environment.

Upon arrival in Scicli, I was struck by the warmth and hospitality extended to the guests. They are not only greeted with open arms but are also offered comprehensive support: assistance with documentation, medical care, housing, food, schooling for children, language lessons, and help with cultural integration. This experience was new to me. While in Arizona, I supported individuals and families with basic needs. I had never been involved in the more complex aspects of immigration, like navigating the bureaucratic process or helping with language adaptation.

When I envision a world where people from all walks of life are welcomed with open arms, I dream of a world where every step of the journey is supported. Mediterranean Hope is making this vision a reality, one day at a time. When I arrived in Scicli, there were already guests being assisted in their integration. Most had arrived from northern African countries, traveling through humanitarian corridors, a safer alternative to the dangerous Mediterranean boat journey. Still, some had attempted the perilous sea crossing before. During my time in Scicli, I also had the privilege of welcoming a family of six from Afghanistan and a young woman from Iran of Afghan descent. Building relationships with each of them was deeply moving. The gradual development of these relationships, marked by trust and shared experiences, was both humbling and inspiring.

My work at The House of Many Cultures primarily centered around hospitality. Along with two other volunteers, I helped organize activities, including art projects, excursions to neighboring cities and beaches, soccer games, and supported language classes. I also assisted with an after-school program. Teaching Italian was challenging, as I didn’t speak the language fluently, and I often felt I wasn’t as helpful as I had hoped. However, I quickly realized that the value of our work went far beyond language instruction. The connections we made, the kindness we offered, and the relationships that we were building held just as much significance as the lessons in Italian. As humans, we are inherently social creatures, and when someone is forced to flee their home and move to a new country, these social bonds are vital. Simply being present, offering a smile, or sharing a conversation provides comfort and stability, helping to rebuild a sense of belonging and community. Another area, I would like to highlight, where The House of Many Cultures is making a significant impact is in its after-school program. Designed to support children from diverse family backgrounds, this program helps those who may not speak Italian at home succeed academically. My mother often shares a proverb with me from the Maasai people. When greeting one another they ask “How are the children?” instead of the more common question “How are you?”. It’s a simple yet powerful measure of community health. If children are well, the community is likely healthy, but if they are struggling, it’s a sign that something deeper needs attention. The after-school program is a testament to this principle. By supporting children from diverse backgrounds, the program helps ensure that these young minds are nurtured, educated, and cared for. It was truly heartwarming to witness how children, despite their different backgrounds, behaved just like children: eager to learn, laugh, and play. Over the three months, we had our fair share of good days, okay days, and difficult

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days. But that's the reality of working with children— not all days are great but all days offer us an opportunity for learning.

As we move into 2025 and beyond, I hope that as a global community, we learn to embrace each other more fully. I hope we see our differences not as barriers but as strengths. There is enough on this earth for all of us, and through shared humanity, we can build stronger communities, grounded in compassion, understanding, and solidarity. By being present for one another and fostering relationships, we can collectively create a world where everyone – regardless of where they come from – can find hope, safety, and a place to call home.



May Flowers

Summer started flirting
Though it's still a ways away
Hinting at the future
Of warm and longer days

Still the April showers
May have more to bring
It's all part of the cycle
That happens every spring

And then there are May flowers
That dot the mountain side
Waving us a welcome
Along each country ride

Though they may be fleeting
The memories stay true
Cause when I see those flowers
It brings back memories of you

- Robert Longley

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