



EQUIPPING FOR... **EVANGELISM & MISSION**

Reverse Hospitality

Produced by Canadian Ministries

The topic and much of the material for this resource has come from Peter Bush, as a result of his attendance at the World Council of Churches gathering “Reclaiming Evangelism” in the fall of 2015. Peter is The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s representative with *Evangelism Connections* and the minister at Westwood Presbyterian Church, Winnipeg. Questions and feedback can be directed to him at peterwwpres@mymts.net or Canadian Ministries at canadianministries@presbyterian.ca .

How We Welcome Guests

“When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.” Luke 14:13

The general approach to evangelism has been “if we build it, they will come.” What we “build” may be a church building, a youth group, an adult study or fellowship group, an after-school weekday program or a great music ministry. It is argued that if we “build” those things well, then people who have left the church and people with little or no church background will be attracted; they will join the programs and worship of the church, become part of the life of the congregation. Some call this the “attractional approach” to growing the church. It emphasizes offering great hospitality to the newcomers who come to worship and to the programs the congregation offers; that is, those people already part of the church act as hosts, offering hospitality to newcomers who come like guests into the congregation’s building (or sometimes into homes).

Read Luke 14:7-14.

Sing or read “All who hunger, gather gladly” #534 in the Book of Praise.

Reflect on your understanding of Christian hospitality. How is hospitality offered by your congregation? What



does it “look” like? Who offers hospitality? When? Where? And to whom? What have been your church’s successes and frustrations with welcoming people?

How We Become Guests

“Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you.” Luke 10:8

The attractional approach comes from a time when Christianity was “the” religion of Canada and all other faith groups or people of no faith were invited to be guests at the dominant table, the one hosted by Christianity. That is no longer the case; all faith groups are guests at the dominant table hosted today by secular society. That means Christians have to discover how to live with status as a minority group, with beliefs that are different from the majority culture. Believing that very few people in our communities desire to come to church even if invited, some church leaders have concluded there is a first step to church attendance – one that has biblical basis – the “missional journey.” This may be similar to what some call “missional evangelism” and others “incarnational ministry.” Below it is discussed and studied as “reverse hospitality.”

A Study of Luke 10:1-12

Opening prayer

Inviting God, you are always ready to receive us.
You welcome us completely, you love us

Reverse hospitality

The story in Luke 10:1-12, where Jesus sends out 70 followers, challenges many past assumptions about how evangelism is best done. The disciples are *not* sent out to attract people to come and hear Jesus. They are *not* to offer hospitality; in fact they can’t offer hospitality because they are guests not hosts. Instead they are *to join in with* the people in the community where they are guests. And as guests, they are invited to say, “Peace be with you” and “The kingdom of God has come near.” The reverse hospitality of being guests who have good news to offer is an important challenge to the contemporary church.



unconditionally. As we read your Word and reflect on our experiences, guide us to discern your will for our lives and for our church. Amen.

First Reading

Read aloud Luke 10:1-12 and listen for words or phrases that catch your attention, that surprise you or make you wonder. Reflect on these. Talk about what seems to be happening in this story.

1. To whom does Jesus send his followers and why?
2. How were the disciples like an “advance party,” going out to get things ready for the main event? What might they have hoped to accomplish?
3. Why are the sent ones told to take nothing with them? How might their dependence on others have impacted their journey?
4. Read “Reverse hospitality.” How might the Luke passage challenge churches today?

Sing or read “Go ye, go ye into the world” #755 in the Book of Praise.

The Tasks

What were the followers to do when they arrived in a town? At least four tasks were named:

- Accept hospitality (as a guest)
- Say “Peace be on you”
- Proclaim the news that “The Kingdom of God is near”
- Heal people

Second Reading

Read aloud again Luke 10:1-12, trying to visualize the people and the scenes. Listen to find yourself in the story: What role would you have played? Would you have been one of the 70 people who were sent? A person standing at Jesus’ side sending the others out? A fellow traveller on the road? A townspeople welcoming a pair of disciples? An onlooker? A townspeople turning away a pair of disciples? Share with others your perspective of the story from this role.

Jesus tells the disciples what to do and say in the situations they will encounter. (See “The Tasks.”) Put yourself in their place.

1. With what tone of voice, what inflection, what emotion might you say the words
 - a. “Peace to this house” (verse 5b)?
 - b. “The kingdom of God has come near to you” (verse 9b)?
 - c. “Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near” (verse 11)?
2. How might being a guest have affected the way the disciples spoke and acted? They were to “cure the sick.” How might they have felt about their responsibility to bring healing? How would they have known whom to heal and how to heal?

Third Reading

Read aloud again Luke 10:1-12, this time listening to find application for your own congregation.

Select questions from “What does this mean for me and my congregation?” Allow time for people to tell their stories. When it is helpful, restate or summarize key points to encourage the group to have deeper conversations from which might emerge a new idea or action, or a different way of expressing hospitality.

What does this mean for me and my congregation?

1. How would your conversations and actions with people in the community change if you were totally dependent on them? How does being a guest feel different than being a host?
2. The disciples were sent to offer peace to “whatever house” they entered. Describe a time in your life when a guest brought a blessing of peace to you.
3. The disciples were not to limit this offering; it was up to the host to share/accept it or not. How might we sometimes limit the blessing we offer to others, or choose who to bless and not to bless? Why do we make those distinctions? What would need to change in us to offer the blessing of peace to everyone? How do you feel about making such changes?
4. Who were the people who shared the peace? What were the implications for those people? When have you met a person who shares in peace, but is not a Christian, and perhaps worked together towards something in the kingdom of God? How do you feel about joining in as equal partners in such situations, without taking over or being in charge?
5. What do we mean by the statement, “The kingdom of God is near”? Where in your community is the kingdom of God being advanced so you could say this in the presence of neighbours?
6. How might your congregation or you as an individual offer healing in your community or neighbourhood? What would that offer of healing look like if it were offered from the position of being a guest rather than as a host – or as expert, who takes care of everything or “fixes things”?



Fourth Reading

Read aloud again Luke 10:1-12, this time listening for what the Spirit is saying to you. What is it challenging you to be? How is it offering encouragement? A call to action? A rebuke? After reading the passage, pause for quiet reflection and then give participants the chance to speak about what they think the Spirit is saying. Wrap-up this conversation with a challenge to participants to do more than talk; invite them to act on what the Spirit is saying. Close with prayer.

(Optional) Read the passage aloud a fifth and last time. Have a moment of silence and no further discussion about the passage. Close with prayer.

Closing prayer

Loving and patient God, we have listened to your Word. We have reflected on our experiences. Help us recognize the Spirit at work among and through us. Send us out into our community to participate in mission, sharing your transforming peace, and being transformed. Amen.

For further reading

Bowen, John (2015). *What is a Fresh Expression of Church? A beginner's guide to a movement that is changing the church*, Wycliffe College, Toronto, 2015. Available at <http://institute.wycliffecollege.ca/wp-content/uploads/fresh-expressions-final.pdf>

Start with *showing* the gospel

“Recent interviews have revealed that worshipping communities tend to begin with a *mission* emphasis rather than a *worship* emphasis. In fact, they tend to see mission and evangelism as forms of worship...they honor God, they said, by being God’s ‘hands and feet.’ And, through modeling this behavior publicly and around non-Christians, they hope to bring more people to God. The idea is to ‘show the gospel’ before ‘telling about it.’”

...According to Pew Research Center, most of the people saying they are unaffiliated with a religion still say religion matters! But “when asked what part of church would draw them in, only 57% state they would come for Sunday worship. Research shows that these ‘un-churched’ and ‘de-churched’ are attracted more by opportunities to make a difference in the world. They want to do service work, build relationships, and receive grace. Worship comes as a natural response to that grace.”

– From *Presbyterians Today*, January/February 2016, p. 7

Sorsbie, Jeremy M. (2012). *Can Revers Hospitality be Effective in Christian Mission Today?* Cliff College, Sheffield, UK. Available at <http://www.churcharmy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=138671>

World Council of Churches, 2012. *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*. Document and study guide. See <http://presbyterian.ca/canadian-ministries/evangelism/>

Canadian Ministries wants to hear from YOU!

What parts of this resource are most useful? Share your story of hospitality in mission and evangelism! Recommend a resource! Make a suggestion or ask a question!

Contact us at canadianministries@presbyterian.ca or call 416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301 Ext. 271. Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/pccconnect](https://www.facebook.com/pccconnect).