

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore key themes in the area of Christian welcome and hospitality. Deeply rooted in Holy Scripture, the work consistently incorporates a range of theological and practical imperatives, seamlessly integrating all three strands of the MTh programme.

Drawing upon experiences as a deacon-intern in the Church of Ireland, the author claims that hospitality is a vital, but often overlooked, expression of ministry. Furthermore, it underpins many basic human requirements, namely, food, shelter, inclusion, warmth, safety and love. Argument is made that today, whilst the relationship between church and society is undergoing significant change, these basic human needs are still there. A clear contention is put forward that the church must find new and innovative ways to respond to these needs. This writer contends that the ministry of 'hospitality' is one way of re-connecting the church to the needs of those in their communities.

A mixed methods approach, incorporating qualitative and quantitative investigations, has been adopted for the research. These insights examine and compare findings from biblical scholars, theologians and contemporary writers from a variety of backgrounds. Throughout this work, the author has incorporated perspectives from interviews conducted with a range of individuals, both lay and ordained, in an effort to offer a more rounded discussion. A representative sample of hospitality surveys were discreetly undertaken during Sunday services with the aim of determining the extent of welcome being offered. These findings are evaluated and proposals are presented for the reader in terms of how the Church might re-evaluate its ministry of hospitality.

This dissertation concludes that a new culture of expression of hospitality and welcome offers great hope for the Church in its mission to serve a truly hospitable God.