

The Rev. Jay Lawlor “Welcoming Jesus” theme for Fourth Sunday After Pentecost July 2, 2017 at St. Paul's, New Albany

The Rev. Jay Lawlor was at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in New Albany, IN as guest Celebrant and preacher for Sunday services on July 2, 2017.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, US, February 22, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Rev. Jay Lawlor](#) delivered a



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The Rev. Jay Lawlor

[sermon](#) titled “Welcoming Jesus” to the people of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in New Albany, Indiana for the 4th Sunday After Pentecost - July 2, 2017. An excerpt of the Rev. Lawlor's sermon follows:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. (MT 10:40)

The act of welcoming was central to ancient societies. “To welcome” meant to show hospitality toward, to be hospitable

to. One welcomed a stranger under one's patronage in showing hospitality. It was an act of kinship and reciprocity. The stranger becoming a friend, in a way like family, and becoming part of kinship network where hospitality is extended throughout the network. This was very important as these ancient societies were not individualistic. They had a collective understanding of identity. Therefore, how one was welcomed, how one was shown hospitality, was reflective of the wider group, even of society, as a whole.

Jesus used this to tell his disciples that those who welcomed them, welcomed Jesus, and those who welcomed Jesus also welcomed God the Father. The act of welcoming – of hospitality – was important to Jesus and early Christian communities. So much so, that it is mentioned in every Gospel and other New Testament texts numerous times. Welcome and hospitality is, or at least should be, a central identifier of Christian community.

A good measure of whether or not we should be doing something is to look and see if it was important to Jesus. Especially if it was important enough for him to pass it on to his disciples – something to be continued, taught, and shared as part of the Jesus Movement. Welcome and hospitality is one such aspect of being Christian – of being part of the Jesus Movement – that was important to Jesus and his disciples.

Being relatively new to Indiana, I can say there is something to Hoosier Hospitality. And serving as a supply priest throughout the diocese, I have experienced and witnessed Christian welcome and hospitality. It has been a benefit of traveling the diocese – to experience a number of our congregations. To experience how Episcopal members of the Jesus Movement across the Diocese of Indianapolis strive to offer the welcome and hospitality of Jesus.

And while Hoosier Hospitality is a real thing. We are Christians living in a culture which has a strong sense of individuality woven into our DNA. A strong sense of independence and individuality can be good things. At our best we reflect diversity and openness to others. Independent thinking can lead to innovation and broadening of ideas, perspectives, and invention.

When we are not at our best, we experience divisiveness, exclusion, and labeling those different from us as “other” rather than as beloved children of God. Reflecting the type of welcome and hospitality Jesus offers can be counter-cultural. It can be a challenge to offer welcome and hospitality in an age that often demands uniformity over unity. I love the statement on your website that: We celebrate our unity in Christ while honoring our differences, always putting the work of love before uniformity of opinion.

The Rev. Jay Lawlor's complete sermon is available at <https://www.therevjaylawlor.com/rev-jay-lawlor-sermon-4-sun-pentecost-year-july-2-2017/>

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