

The Ministry of Hospitality

By Austin Fleming

Yours is the first of Christ's faces
to greet God's people
as they assemble for prayer.

Your greeting of welcome
is the first wish that "The Lord be with you!"

Yours is the word
that welcomes the stranger to be at home,
or in the silence
that makes of our assembly a foreign land.

Yours is the task of discretion:
knowing how to welcome, and,
when and where to seat the latecomer.

Yours may be the last word
that ushers the community
to its week of work in the Lord's vineyard.

Yours is the Lord's face and voice
for those who enter and depart
the holy ground of prayer.

Come to your work and your post
from your personal prayer;
be as ready as the Lord to meet his people.

Let your welcome and your smile
be for all who enter;
remember that you will have time
to see your close friends later in the week.

Seek out the lost and the confused;
do not wait for them to come to you.

When appropriate,
lend a hand and an arm to the disabled,
remembering your own infirmities.

Greet each person as the Lord,
for that is precisely whom you meet.

When taking up the collection, remember
that it is for the work of God's people,
especially among the poor;
remember, too,
that many who make an offering
are themselves the poor.

Remember that you stand at the temple gates:
some will come rejoicing,
and others in fear;
some will come healed,
and others to seek that healing.

Be sensitive,
and welcome all as best you can.

Some will rush by and ignore you:
let go of your disappointment
and pray for the Lord's gently touch
on their heavy or hurried hearts.

Some may fall ill while at prayer:
see to their needs
as you have them see to yours.

Be slow to judge those who leave early:
be glad that they have shared in our prayer
and recall that only the Lord
knows the reasons of the heart.

When your brothers and sisters
thank and praise you for your work,
take delight
in the welcome they have found,
and rejoice in the work
the Lord has accomplished through you.

Be faithful in the work you do,
for through it the Lord saves his people.

