

## **OPENNESS AND WARMTH – A Welcoming Community**

This means we are committed to emulating Jesus in our manner as well as his Word. The church is for every kind of person from every kind of background. The church is meant to be an authentic and loving community both towards ‘insiders’ and toward those who visit as ‘outsiders’. Therefore, everything we do must be done with humility, sensitivity and a listening ear to those who are not yet a part of us.

*Romans 15.7 – Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

**Read** Romans 15.1-13

### **Context & Meaning**

The message of the gospel is one of hospitality. It’s a message about the true God welcoming sinners into his presence, welcoming them into his spacious house full of grace, forgiveness, and joy. God, out of his abundant grace sent his Son into our fearful, fragmented, and estranged world so that the good news of invitation and acceptance might be made known through him. God sent Jesus into a uninviting world so that he might turn hostility (hostility between God and man and man and man) into hospitality.

Now as a result of this, the community of Christ, the community shaped and sustained by this welcoming God, is to be a hospitable community. It’s to be a community that’s always seeking to create and maintain an outward face, a welcoming face, to those who aren’t yet a part of us. This outward face manifests itself in showing a respect for opinions that differ from the Church and a realism that acknowledges the beauty and the brokenness of the world in which we live. It is through this manifestation that the Church participates in and reflects God’s peaceable kingdom in the world. Such a manifestation indicates our willingness to cross boundaries (ethnic, economic, educational, political, gender, sexuality) by being open and welcoming to the stranger as well as to one another. Tragically, without such a community the world will not know of the hospitable and peaceable kingdom that Jesus has set up through his death and resurrection.

### **Apply**

At Redeemer we seek to be ‘warm and open’ in everything we do, but this doesn’t mean that we forgo our Reformed and theological distinctives for we are committed to articulating these truths in our words as well as in our actions. Even so, we are eager to inculcate a broader church culture where there is freedom to think differently and grow into these particular convictions. Our desire is that people will first think of Redeemer as a ‘Gospel-Driven’ Church rather than a Reformed Church, as a church that’s defined first by who we are for – THE REDEEMER, rather than who we’re against within the broader evangelical community.

Furthermore, we recognize that the gospel has made us a community of saints who continue to struggle with sin. Therefore, we seek to remain alert and on

guard against those particular sins that seek to harm authentic community (gossip, the creation of cliques, and personality followings), by fostering a culture of repentance regarding our natural tendency to be turned inward rather than outward. This means that there will be no ‘insider moments’ among the general membership in that we should always expect and welcome those who are new to our worship, community groups, Bible Studies, etc...

Lastly, being a ‘open and warm’ church means not only being so on Sundays but on everyday and for everybody who is around us – co-workers, neighbors, family etc... We must seek to be a people who are living out hospitality in all we do – welcoming people in our lives, homes, and church.

**For Reflection and Discussion** – *Respecting the Other (Romans 15.1-13)*

1. Would describe Redeemer as a welcoming church? Why or why not?
2. Discuss how you were welcomed into Redeemer. Do you think this was unique to you or do you think this is the average way a new person might be welcomed and received into
3. Are you on the lookout on Sunday mornings, Bible Studies, at community events for new people? When you see them do you greet them and try to find out something about them? Why or why not?
4. How do you remain on guard against the particular sins that seek to hinder us from being a welcoming community (gossip, the creation of cliques, personality followings)?
5. Do you have trouble respecting opinions that differ from your own? If so, why is this case and should you, for the sake of the gospel, seek to show a ‘Christian toleration’ for those who live and think differently from you?
6. Is hospitality something you practice on daily basis, i.e. welcoming people into your lives and homes? How would describe the importance of Christian hospitality to another?

**Prayer**      *O Lord, make me and this Church a welcoming community for we have been welcomed into life by Jesus who is Life indeed. Amen.*