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Christian Guesthood: Reconstructing Ecclesial Identity for Hospitality Under Conditions of Hostility

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Page
85-97

Abstract
How can Christian communities sustain hospitality when their social existence is shaped by hostility rather than welcome? Existing scholarship offers compelling normative accounts of the church's vocation to welcome the stranger, while giving comparatively less attention to the dispositions that sustain this vocation under persecution and social exclusion. Addressing this question, the article adopts a constructive practical theological approach, bringing Christian experiences of hostility in Indonesia into dialogue with theological traditions of hospitality and the biblical witness. It argues that grounding hospitality in ecclesial identity can sustain the church's hospitable practice by giving this vocation a formative basis beyond ethical obligation. Its central constructive proposal is Christian guesthood, which understands the church as a community received by God and whose welcome of others flows from this prior reception. By locating ecclesial identity in participation in divine grace, Christian guesthood offers theological resources for cultivating humble presence, faithful witness, and generous welcome amid precarious access to social space. The article thus advances Christian guesthood as a dispositional framework for understanding and cultivating the church's hospitable witness under conditions of marginalisation and exclusion.

Keywords: *Christian guesthood, Christian hospitality, hostility, dispositional formation, practical theology*

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Introduction: Christian Hospitality amid Hostility

Any practical theological account of hospitality in the twenty-first century must begin with the persistent reality of hostility that continues to shape the church's life. As Thomas Schirrmacher argues, martyrdom is "an intrinsic element of Old Testament, New Testament, Jewish and Early Church faith" rather than merely "an embarrassing side effect of Christianity."[1] Particular instances of hostility towards Christians in contemporary Indonesia raise a practical theological question: how can those affected sustain hospitality amid persecution and social exclusion? Such hostility can take the form of restrictions on worship, discriminatory treatment, interference with religious gatherings, and physical violence.[2]

Under such conditions, the theological question is no longer simply whether the church should practise hospitality, but how such hospitality remains possible.

Recent events in Indonesia bring this question into sharp focus. In June 2026, a Catholic family in Cipayung, Depok,[3] relocated a memorial Mass to the YLCC funeral home following objections from local residents and mediation involving the police and municipal authorities. Several months earlier, the POUK Tesalonika congregation in Teluknaga, Tangerang Regency, celebrated Easter in a former sub-district office after its prayer house had been sealed following the Good Friday service.[4] Other incidents include the disruption of worship at Gereja Kristen Kemah Daud in Rajabasa, Bandar Lampung, in February 2023, and the forced dispersal of a Rosary prayer gathering organised by Catholic students from Pamulang University in South Tangerang in May 2024.[5] These incidents illustrate recurring constraints on Christian worship in particular local settings, where objections from other residents can lead to relocation, closure, or disruption. They raise a practical theological question: what understanding of ecclesial identity can sustain a commitment to hospitality among Christians whose own presence and worship encounter resistance?

This article treats these incidents as vignettes that illuminate a broader pattern of lived religion. Following Ruard Ganzevoort, practical theology is understood as a hermeneutics of *lived religion*, attending to "the actions and meanings operant in the ways humans live, interact and relate to the divine."[6] For many Christian communities in Indonesia, faith is lived through an ongoing negotiation of social space in which religious practice is continually conditioned by external pressures. This reading is supported by

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[1] Thomas Schirrmacher. *The Persecution of Christians Concerns Us All: Towards a Theology of Martyrdom* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2018), 16.

[2] Schirrmacher, *The Persecution of Christians*, 24, 86, 126.

[3] Ridho Danu Prasetyo, "Duduk Perkara Larangan Misa Arwah di Depok: Warga Keberatan, Akhirnya Pindah Lokasi," *Kompas.com*, July 1, 2026, https://megapolitan.kompas.com/read/2026/07/01/08130341/duduk-perkara-larangan-misa-arwah-di-depok-warga-keberatan-akhirnya; Shinta Maharani, "Penyebab Jemaat POUK Tesalonika Paskah di Kantor Kecamatan," *Tempo.co*, April 5, 2026, https://www.tempo.co/politik/penyebab-jemaat-pouk-tesalonika-paskah-di-kantor-kecamatan-2126804.

[4] Maharani, "Penyebab Jemaat POUK Tesalonika Paskah di Kantor Kecamatan."

[5] Muhammad Riski Gika and Indah Satria, "Analisis Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia (HAM) Terkait Larangan Ibadah Jemaat Gereja di Rajabasa Kota Bandar Lampung," *JLEB: Journal of Law Education and Business* 2, no. 2 (2024): 1489–94, https://doi.org/10.57235/jleb.v2i2.3170.

[6] R. Ruard Ganzevoort and Johan H. Roeland, "Lived religion: The praxis of practical theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 18, no. 1 (2014): 91-101, http://www.ruardganzevoort.nl/pdf/2014_Lived_Religion.pdf.

wider structural evidence. *Indonesia Persecution 101* documents increasingly restrictive religious regulations, persistent obstacles to obtaining permits for places of worship, and forms of local extremism that curtail the full participation of Christian communities in public life.[7] Hostility should therefore be understood as an enduring social condition rather than a succession of discrete incidents, shaping the everyday practice of Christian faith.

Hostility wounds communities, but it also forms them. Repeated experiences of rejection encourage communities to erect protective boundaries, preserve memories of trauma, and come to perceive *the Other* primarily through the lens of threat. This raises the central question of the article: how can the church continue to practise hospitality when its social existence is marked by rejection and violence? Existing scholarship explains persuasively why Christians are called to welcome the stranger.[8] Existing scholarship gives comparatively less attention to how Christians facing hostility develop the dispositions that sustain hospitality. This question brings together three related concerns: why those affected should continue to welcome others; what understanding of the church guides such welcome, its practices, and its purposes; and how congregational life forms dispositions that sustain hospitality under pressure. The article focuses on the third concern while drawing on the ethical and ecclesiological grounds of Christian welcome. It proposes Christian guesthood as a theological framework for this task, understanding the church as a community whose welcome of others flows from its own reception by God. From this perspective, hospitality expresses gratitude for divine grace and regard for the dignity of others. Its purposes include bearing faithful witness and nurturing relationships of mutual regard. The article considers how worship, teaching, and shared practices of receiving and offering care can cultivate humble presence, faithful witness, and generous welcome in the Indonesian situations examined.

Method: A Constructive Practical Theological Approach

This article adopts a constructive practical theological approach that brings practical theology into dialogue with constructive theology. From practical theology, it draws the conviction that theological reflection both arises from and returns to the lived reality of the church, which Pete Ward defines as "any way of thinking that takes both practice and theology seriously."[9] From constructive theology, it adopts the methodological freedom to develop theological claims in response to contextually specific challenges.[10] These commitments guide the study towards a constructive account of ecclesial identity as the basis for hospitable practice.

Methodologically, the study adapts Ganzevoort's metaphor of tracing the sacred.[11]

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[7] International Christian Concern, *Indonesia: Persecution 101* (Silver Spring: International Christian Concern, n.d.), 2-6, https://www.persecution.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Indonesia-Persecution-101.pdf.

[8] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Matthew Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration in an Age of Fear* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

[9] Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry, and the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 5.

[10] Judith Wolfe, "Christian Theology," in *The St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, ed. Brendan N. Wolfe (St Andrews: University of St Andrews, 2022), sect. 2.2.3, https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/ChristianTheology.

[11] Ganzevoort and Roeland, "Lived religion," 4–5.

The four introductory vignettes are treated not as a comprehensive sociological data set but as interpretive windows through which the lived experience of Christian hostility becomes theologically intelligible, consistent with the critical-hermeneutical orientation of practical theology. The first stage examines the *lived religion* of Christian communities in Indonesia by interpreting the experiences of hostility disclosed in the introductory vignettes within their wider structural context. This corresponds to Ganzevoort's mode of *travelling*, in which the researcher enters the lived experience of the community as a fellow pilgrim rather than an external observer. The second stage critically engages the theology of hospitality developed by Pohl, Bretherton, and Kaemingk in order to identify the conceptual gap between normative justification and dispositional formation. Here the study operates within Ganzevoort's mode of *studying* as a form of second-order theological reflection. The third stage develops Christian guesthood as a constructive response to that gap and explores its implications for ecclesial practice under conditions of hostility. This reflects the mode of *sketching*, since the proposal is presented as a constructive theological framework rather than a final doctrinal formulation. Across all three stages, the mode of *following* provides the confessional orientation of the inquiry by tracing God's hospitable presence within the lived experience of marginalised Christian communities. The constructive proposal therefore remains grounded in ecclesial practice while extending theological reflection beyond descriptive analysis.

I draw on Ganzevoort's account of the dynamic relationship between observer and participant perspectives to clarify my methodological position.[12] As a commentator, I interpret the experiences of hostility described in the Indonesian cases examined. As a referee, I assess how existing theological accounts illuminate the relationship between ecclesial identity and hospitality. As a coach, I develop Christian guesthood as a constructive proposal for cultivating dispositions that may sustain hospitality under pressure. I undertake these roles as a member of the Christian tradition addressed in this study. This confessional location informs my interpretation and requires critical reflection on the assumptions I bring to the cases and theological sources. The study's contribution is therefore contextual and constructive: it brings particular experiences of hostility into dialogue with theological reflection to consider how ecclesial identity and congregational practice may support hospitable witness.

Christian Hospitality under Conditions of Hostility

The preceding discussion has shown that hostility towards Christian communities is neither an episodic phenomenon nor a relic of the early church, but a continuing reality that shapes the lived experience of many Christians.[13] The central theological question is therefore no longer whether the church is called to practise hospitality, but how such hospitality remains possible when relationships are marked by rejection, fear, and violence. This section addresses that question by examining the theological foundations of hospitality in the work of Christine Pohl, Luke Bretherton, and Matthew Kaemingk. Read together, these theologians establish hospitality as a constitutive practice of the church while leaving unresolved the question of how it is sustained under conditions of

[12] Ganzevoort and Roeland, "Lived religion," 7.

[13] Schirrmacher, *The Persecution of Christians*, 16, 24, 86, 126.

hostility.

Christine Pohl identifies hospitality as one of the Christian tradition's most fundamental moral practices while also tracing its gradual decline as social, economic, and institutional developments distanced it from the ordinary life of the church.[14] Recovering hospitality therefore involves more than restoring a neglected ecclesial practice. It entails recovering the church's identity as a community shaped by God's welcome.[15] Pohl defines Christian hospitality as the practice of welcoming strangers into "a safe, personal, and comfortable place, a place of respect and acceptance and friendship", thereby incorporating them into "a life-giving and life-sustaining network of relations."[16] Hospitality thus seeks to restore relationships of belonging rather than merely respond to immediate human need.

For Pohl, the theological foundation of hospitality is found in the person of Jesus Christ. The Gospels portray Christ both as the host who welcomes humanity into the kingdom of God and as the guest who embraces vulnerability: a refugee child, an itinerant preacher with nowhere to lay his head, and the Son who came to his own yet was rejected.[17] Christian hospitality therefore arises from participation in God's reconciling work rather than from moral idealism. The church welcomes because it has first been welcomed by God in Christ.[18]

Luke Bretherton develops this theological vision by describing hospitality as "a root metaphor and practice embedded in the Christian tradition."[19] Unlike liberal tolerance, which depends upon shared cultural consensus and often reduces coexistence to mutual non-interference, hospitality constitutes a political and ethical practice that makes possible genuine encounter, dialogue, and the shared search for truth amid moral difference.[20] His reading of Luke's meal narratives further shows that Jesus reconfigures the boundaries of holiness not by abolishing them but by making hospitality itself a means of holiness.[21] Hospitality therefore holds together openness to others and faithfulness to God's calling.

Matthew Kaemingk extends this trajectory within the context of Christian-Muslim relations in plural societies. He argues that politics shaped by fear and identity polarisation encourages religious communities to perceive the Other primarily as a threat. Against this tendency, Kaemingk rejects both indiscriminate openness and defensive withdrawal. Christian hospitality becomes possible only when grounded in a secure identity in Christ, enabling the church to welcome others without relinquishing its theological convictions.[22] Hospitality, in this account, does not erase difference but reshapes the way difference is inhabited within the public sphere.

Taken together, Pohl, Bretherton, and Kaemingk provide a compelling theological

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[14] Pohl, *Making Room*, 3–15, 36–60
[15] Pohl, *Making Room*, 3.
[16] Pohl, *Making Room*, 13.
[17] Pohl, *Making Room*, 16–18.
[18] Pohl, *Making Room*, 17.
[19] Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 128.
[20] Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 126–127, 147.
[21] Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 128–129.
[22] Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration*, 1–8, 184–186.

account of why the church is called to practise hospitality. One question nevertheless remains unresolved. Their work explains the normative foundations of Christian hospitality more convincingly than the dispositional conditions that enable it to endure when the church itself experiences rejection, discrimination, and hostility. The following section addresses this conceptual gap by reassessing existing ecclesiological paradigms before developing *Christian guesthood* as a constructive account of ecclesial identity.

Why Hospitality Requires Christian Guesthood

Before advancing a constructive proposal, one conceptual question must first be addressed: why does the dispositional gap identified above require a new ecclesiological category when Christian theology already offers several ways of understanding the church under conditions of marginalisation? The first and most influential is the paradigm of the host, which has long shaped theological accounts of hospitality.

Within this paradigm, the church welcomes others from a position of possession, stability, and authority. János Boros's critique of radical hospitality exposes the fragility of this assumption. Hospitality, he argues, presupposes *ipséité*—the sovereignty of the self—and *oikonomia*, the mastery of one's own household.[23] The capacity to welcome therefore depends upon forms of possession that simultaneously define its limits. Such a model functions where the church enjoys secure social space but becomes unstable once that space is contested. For marginalised communities, sovereignty over social space is precisely what cannot be presumed.[24] The problem, then, is not simply the loss of space but the assumption that hospitality requires spatial security before it can be practised.

A second alternative is found in Kuyperian public theology. Kuyper's doctrine of *sphere sovereignty* secures a legitimate place for the church by affirming that each sphere of life possesses its own authority under the lordship of Christ.[25] Yet its primary concern lies with the institutional relationship between church and state rather than the formation of ecclesial dispositions. Kuyper himself recognises the persistent tendency of the modern state to expand at the expense of other social spheres.[26] An ecclesial identity grounded chiefly in protected public space therefore remains vulnerable to the very political pressures it seeks to resist, since its security ultimately depends upon the stability of external social arrangements.

A third possibility appears in pilgrim ecclesiology and the theology of exile, exemplified by Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon's account of the church as *Resident Aliens*.[27] This tradition rightly emphasises the church's distinctiveness within the world and offers a compelling account of Christian identity under conditions of estrangement. Its principal concern, however, is the preservation of ecclesial identity. The

[23] János Boros, "The Poetics and Politics of Hospitality and Hostility," *Pázmány Papers* 1, no. 1 (2023): 50–51, https://doi.org/10.69706/PP.2023.1.1.3.

[24] Boros, "The Poetics and Politics of Hospitality and Hostility," 54.

[25] Sphere Sovereignty. Abraham Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 466–468.

[26] Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper*, 472–473.

[27] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004).

concern of this article is different. It asks not only how the church endures hostility but how it continues to extend hospitality while living within it.

Christian guesthood develops these ecclesiological insights by connecting the church's prior reception by God with the formation of hospitable dispositions under hostility. In continuity with pilgrim and resident-alien ecclesiologies, its contribution lies in articulating how received belonging can sustain welcome alongside the pursuit of protection and equal citizenship. Boros's analysis of hospitality's dependence upon the host's sovereignty identifies the vulnerability this proposal addresses: when control over space becomes precarious, belonging to God can provide a theological basis for sustaining a hospitable orientation, while access, authority, and protection remain matters for legal and political action.[28] Ontological and spatial security thus constitute distinguishable yet complementary dimensions of ecclesial life: divine welcome grounds the church's identity, while secure places of worship and institutional protection support its embodied practices. Christian guesthood names the church's dependence upon God while affirming its members' full historical belonging, political agency, and equal citizenship within Indonesia.

The relationship outlined above distinguishes two complementary dimensions of security, each with a specific role in ecclesial life. Spatial security comprises recognised access to places of worship, institutional stability, and public protection through which hospitality acquires concrete expression. Ontological security concerns the church's identity as a community received by God through Christ and continually sustained by the Holy Spirit. Its christological grounding and pneumatological sustenance locate the source of ecclesial belonging in divine faithfulness, providing a theological basis for perseverance amid changing conditions of political recognition, legal protection, and cultural acceptance. The communal experience of this belonging nevertheless remains vulnerable to suffering and requires sustained pastoral and spiritual formation. Participation in God's reconciling life can thus support the church's continuing vocation to welcome while strengthening its commitment to securing the social conditions through which hospitality can be practised with dignity and safety.

Christian guesthood therefore functions as a constructive ecclesiological category whose metaphorical expression carries theological and analytical significance. Its conceptual standing rests on two related grounds. First, the New Testament's description of believers as paroikoi and parepidēmoi (1 Pet. 2:11) supplies resources for understanding ecclesial existence through dependence, vulnerability, and faithful presence. Read alongside the scriptural witness to God's reception of humanity in Christ, these descriptions inform a constructive account of the church as a community whose belonging is received through grace and expressed through welcome. Secondly, the category articulates a coherent relationship between divine reception, ecclesial identity, and the communal practices through which hospitable dispositions may develop. Its distinctiveness within pilgrim, exile, and resident-alien ecclesiologies lies in bringing this relationship into sustained focus under conditions of hostility. Christian guesthood thereby offers an interpretive framework for examining how communities facing

[28] Boros, "The Poetics and Politics of Hospitality and Hostility," 51.

contested access to social space might cultivate patience, faithful presence, and steadfastness while pursuing protection and equal citizenship. Its explanatory and formative possibilities remain open to contextual assessment and empirical investigation.

Towards Christian Guesthood: Reconstructing Ecclesial Dispositions under Conditions of Hostility

The preceding critique exposes a central paradox. The church is fundamentally called to practise hospitality, yet its socio-historical reality is frequently marked by rejection and vulnerability. This tension shifts the discussion from ethics to ecclesial identity. While existing scholarship explains why the church is called to welcome the stranger, it leaves unresolved the question of what kind of ecclesial identity enables such hospitality to endure under persecution and structural exclusion. The decisive issue is therefore not simply what the church does, but who the church is before it acts.

This ontological shift marks the constructive contribution of the present study. Drawing on Ward's understanding of practical theology as reflection grounded in the lived reality of the church,[29] together with Wolfe's account of constructive theology as the creative development of theological claims in response to contemporary challenges, the argument seeks to extend rather than replace existing theologies of hospitality.[30] Its aim is not to introduce a new moral obligation but to reconstruct the dispositional foundation through which hospitable practice remains resilient when the church inhabits a precarious social location.

Against this background, the article advances Christian guesthood as a constructive account of ecclesial identity. *Christian guesthood* understands the church first as a community received by God before it becomes a host to others. Divine reception therefore precedes ethical hospitality both logically and ontologically, relocating the source of welcome from the possession of social space to participation in God's prior act of grace. Understood in this way, ecclesial identity becomes the indispensable dispositional ground from which genuine hospitality emerges.

This account is deeply rooted in the biblical narrative. Israel was formed through the lived experience of being strangers in Egypt long before receiving the command to love the stranger (Deut. 10:19). The New Testament likewise presents Christ as one who came to his own yet was rejected (John 1:11), lived without a place to lay his head (Matt. 8:20), and revealed the kingdom of God through the vulnerability of the cross rather than imperial power. The earliest Christian communities also described themselves as *paroikoi* and *parepidēmoi* (1 Pet. 2:11), identifying their public existence with the condition of sojourners rather than possessors. This biblical pattern finds further expression in Paul's description of the church as "afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8–9). Paul's paradox reveals that hostility may shape the church's historical experience, yet it cannot determine the church's deepest identity, which remains secured by God's sustaining presence. Taken together, these biblical witnesses present guesthood as a

[29] Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*, 5

[30] Wolfe, "Christian Theology," sect. 2.2.3.

constitutive mode of ecclesial belonging through which the people of God participate in God's redemptive work, even amid conditions of rejection and vulnerability.

The term *ontological security* has an established genealogy across sociology, political psychology, and international relations. Anthony Giddens[31] developed the concept to describe the continuity of self-identity and basic trust sustained through everyday routines. Catarina Kinnvall examined how religious and national identities provide ontological security amid the uncertainties of globalisation. Jennifer Mitzen extended the concept to international relations, showing how actors' attachment to familiar relationships and routines can perpetuate conflict.

This article reconstructs the concept theologically, grounding ontological security in God's prior welcome through Christ and the sustaining work of the Holy Spirit. Within this constructive practical theological framework, participation in divine hospitality establishes the church's belonging, while ecclesial practices cultivate its lived expression. This received identity offers resources for sustaining hospitality when social routines, institutional stability, and access to secure spaces become disrupted. Its reconciling foundation also gives such security an outward orientation, enabling the church to pursue communal protection while remaining attentive to its neighbours.

Responding to Hostility: Christian Guesthood as a Practical Theological Response

The constructive proposal of *Christian guesthood* is ultimately tested in the concrete realities of ecclesial life under social pressure. This challenge is illuminated by Jacques Derrida's influential reflections on hospitality. In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida exposes the constitutive tension between the ethical imperative of unconditional welcome and the political, legal, and institutional structures that inevitably regulate hospitality in practice.[32] Hospitality is thus suspended between an unconditional ethical demand and the juridical limits that determine who may be received. The paradox reaches its sharpest expression in *Negotiations*, where Derrida describes the *délit d'hospitalité* ('crime of hospitality'): the situation in which the elementary act of welcoming the stranger is itself rendered unlawful by political authority.[33] His analysis reveals how hostility can become embedded within the very structures that govern hospitality, providing the conceptual point of departure for the constructive proposal developed here.[34]

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[31] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Catarina Kinnvall further developed the concept by demonstrating how religious and national identities function as sources of ontological security amid the uncertainties of globalisation. Catarina Kinnvall "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security," *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2004): 741–67, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00396.x; While Jennifer Mitzen extended it to international relations by arguing that political actors often seek the stability of familiar identities even when these perpetuate conflict. Jennifer Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma," *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 341–70, https://polisci.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-06/JM_OSWP_EJIR_2006.pdf.

[32] Jacques Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971–2001*, ed. and trans. Elisabeth G. Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[33] Derrida, *Negotiations*, 133.

[34] Recent commentators have observed that Derrida's account is intentionally aporetic, leaving unresolved the

This paradox becomes particularly acute when social hostility transforms the church's peaceful gathering and public presence into contested, even transgressive, acts, as illustrated by the Indonesian vignettes discussed above. Communities called to welcome the stranger find their own presence publicly challenged, forcing hospitality to confront its practical limits. As Pohl observes, hospitality requires the creation of a safe, respectful, and life-giving space.[35] Yet under conditions of hostility, when the stranger is perceived as an existential threat, communities instinctively contract their practices of welcome, erecting protective boundaries in response to fear. Identity-driven politics reinforces precisely this dynamic by conditioning religious communities to perceive the Other primarily through the lens of suspicion.[36]

Kaemingk rightly argues that a secure identity in Christ enables the church to resist both uncritical assimilation and defensive withdrawal.[37] What remains less fully explained is how such security is cultivated as a durable ecclesial disposition under sustained hostility. *Christian guesthood* addresses this question by locating the church's prior reception by God as the ontological source from which resilient dispositions of hospitality emerge. Ecclesial identity, grounded in God's prior welcome, becomes the enduring condition that sustains hospitable practice when external circumstances become increasingly hostile. The movement from received identity to hospitable dispositions takes shape through sustained communal formation. Worship and catechesis interpret belonging through God's welcome; lament and pastoral care give suffering a voice; and repeated practices of mutual care and neighbourly encounter can cultivate patience, faithful presence, and steadfastness.

For the POUK Tesalonika congregation, whose prayer house was sealed, this framework suggests how communal formation might sustain worship and openness towards neighbours alongside advocacy for secure access to a place of worship. This application constitutes a constructive interpretation whose practical adequacy requires assessment with the community concerned. Christian guesthood names the church's dependence upon God, while affirming its members' full belonging to Indonesia and equal citizenship. Hospitality can thus accompany legal action, public protest, and advocacy for religious freedom, with communal agency, safety, and protective boundaries guiding the forms of encounter pursued. Ontological security provides a theological resource for sustaining these commitments, while institutional protection and the restoration of rights remain essential to their concrete exercise.

Through these formative practices, Christian guesthood may cultivate three interconnected dispositions. Patience sustains the demanding work of dialogue, advocacy, and communal recovery. Faithful presence nurtures continued participation

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practical mediation between unconditional and conditional hospitality. See, for example, Kakoliris, who argues that Derrida ultimately shifts attention toward the continual negotiation and limitation of violence rather than the realisation of pure hospitality. Gerasimos Kakoliris "Jacques Derrida on the Ethics of Hospitality," in *The Ethics of Subjectivity: Perspectives since the Dawn of Modernity*, edited by Elvis Imafidon (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 143–156. The present article proceeds in a different direction by asking how Christian theology can account for the durable formation of hospitable dispositions under conditions of hostility.

[35] Pohl, *Making Room*, 13.

[36] Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration*, 1–8.

[37] Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration*, 184-186.

in neighbourhood life and public witness, with appropriate attention to safety. Steadfastness supports fidelity to the gospel alongside persistent efforts to secure equal treatment and religious freedom. Together, these dispositions can help communities defend their dignity while sustaining relationships through which hospitality remains possible.

The constructive contribution of Christian guesthood lies in connecting received belonging, communal formation, and hospitable action under pressure. God's prior welcome provides the theological ground; ecclesial practices cultivate its appropriation; and contextual discernment guides its public expression. This framework offers a theological account of how communities facing exclusion might sustain generous welcome while pursuing protection, justice, and the restoration of rights.

Conclusion: The Church as a Guest Who Welcomes

This article has developed Christian guesthood as a constructive account of how ecclesial identity and communal formation may sustain hospitality under conditions of hostility. Reading selected Indonesian incidents alongside theological accounts of hospitality, it has focused on the dispositions through which Christians facing exclusion might continue to welcome others. Its central proposal understands the church as a community first received by God, whose participation in divine welcome gives theological grounding and direction to its hospitable practice.

Building on Pohl, Bretherton, and Kaemingk, Christian guesthood connects divine reception, ecclesial belonging, and the formation of hospitable dispositions. Ontological security names the assurance of belonging grounded in God's welcome through Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Worship, catechesis, lament, pastoral care, and neighbourly encounter can cultivate the communal appropriation of this belonging, supporting patience, faithful presence, and steadfastness. The proposal's distinctive contribution lies in articulating these relationships under conditions of contested worship and precarious access to social space.

In the Indonesian situations examined, this theological orientation affirms Christians' full historical belonging, equal citizenship, and agency in pursuing religious freedom. Hospitable witness can accompany legal advocacy, public protest, and efforts to secure communal protection. Christian guesthood therefore holds together openness towards neighbours, attention to suffering, and the pursuit of justice, with communities discerning appropriate forms of engagement in light of their circumstances and safety.

The argument offers a theological framework whose formative possibilities require empirical exploration. Ethnographic inquiry and theological action research could examine how communities receive, contest, and embody Christian guesthood, including its liturgical and catechetical expressions. Such inquiry would clarify how belonging received through divine grace becomes a lived resource for welcoming others while defending dignity and seeking the restoration of rights.

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