

It's funny. I would never have guessed that coffee and doughnut holes would require so much conversation and debate. We have talked about when we should serve them ala covid. We talked about self-serve vs. being served. We talked about blueberry or no blueberry. We talked about the cost and who should pick it up. We talked about how to best connect our first and second service folks together over caffeine and sugar. I think we've just about talked ourselves out on the issue.

So let me close our collective discussion by saying this: **the refreshments aren't about you and I and our needs.** Not really. It's the opportunity to offer hospitality to our guests to provide food and drink as well as a chance to pause and allow them to get to know us better. Hopefully, by getting to know us better they will be getting to know the living Christ within us a little better as well. If fried dough, coffee, and iced tea can keep our visitors with us an extra five minutes and if we see those golden minutes as an opportunity to welcome and love on them, then everything about them will have been a success.

There's a cost involved and its surprisingly high. Something like \$300 dollars a week in food and supplies, give or take. Correct me if I'm wrong, but that means from an annual perspective $\$300 \times 52 = \$15,600$. I'm sure that there are folks within our congregation who could write a check to cover the entire cost of our after-worship hospitality for the

year, but that's not the point. There are also the dozen of volunteer hours tied up in getting everything ready, serving, and cleaning up. This is no trivial endeavor.

When I say that the coffee and snacks are not about you and your needs, what I'm saying is that **these simple things play a real role in making those God sends to us feel welcomed and valued.** But they are the tip of the iceberg. When you get your coffee or are eating your delicious Jack's doughnut holes, are you standing in a tight circle, talking only with your Carmel UMC friends or are you looking around for the unfamiliar faces of those you have not yet met? Is your conversation, whatever it may be, one of encouragement and friendship, or will you be overheard voicing complaint or criticism?

If we've got five extra minutes to interact with those who are new to us (or who have just returned after a long quarantine) we need to make sure that we are making the most of them in the cause of Christ. My guess is that most of us haven't even thought about how precious that brief opportunity truly is to our church and for our witness. How they get paid for, whether they are blueberry or chocolate chip (*do they even have chocolate chip?!?*), or the size of the cups none of that compares to what could and should be happening around that coffee pot. Enjoy the refreshments, enjoy your brothers and sisters in Christ, but keep at least one eye and one ear out for those who need the warm welcome we are famous for here at Carmel UMC.

Tim