

Sharing Our Gifts

Presbyterians Sharing Sunday – Sermon September 26, 2021

Golden Verse: Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12: 27

Scripture Readings: Exodus 4:10-17 and 1 Corinthians 12: 27–31

Honeybees play an essential role in our world. They pollinate crops and trees, which in turn provide us with food to eat and air to breathe. They are social insects, living in community, thousands in one hive. Each has a task to perform in order to keep the hive functioning well.

The head of the colony is the queen, who lays about 200,000 eggs each year. The drones fertilize those eggs. And then there are worker bees, who have many jobs. Some feed the brood, others build and repair the honeycomb. There are bees who clean, guard and defend the hive, gather pollen and nectar and produce honey and wax.

When it's hot outside, bees fan their wings to keep the hive cool. When it gets cold, they vibrate to keep one another warm. And when a worker bee discovers nectar? It dances to share the good news of the discovery with the other workers!

Bees depend on one another for survival—one bee cannot survive without its colony. By working together, each bee uses its skills to serve and keep the community healthy and strong. Like bees in a hive, each one of us is an integral part of God's family.

Today's Scripture reading comes from a letter Paul wrote to the congregation in Corinth, a few years after the resurrection of Jesus. He knew the congregation was experiencing challenges. People were preaching the gospel. Some were experiencing holy visions, others were healers, teachers, miracle workers. However, there was conflict. They began to judge each other, each believing that their own gifts were more important and more valuable to Christ's church.

So, Paul used the body as an illustration for the church. He reminded them that the body doesn't function if every part is the same, it functions because each one is different. Each part has its own unique role to play. So it is with the church: a body with many members, every member essential, all part of God's family. Paul reminded the congregation that all gifts and abilities come from God and should be used to further God's kingdom.

Of course, it's not always easy to work together or to have the confidence to share our gifts. We just have to look at Moses and Aaron to see that there is lots of room

for imperfection. But we also learn from their story that God can use our gifts, imperfections and all. When God called Moses from the burning bush to lead the Israelites, Moses protested that he couldn't speak well and felt inadequate for the job. So, God gave him Aaron, an excellent orator, as a partner, and assured Moses that he would help them both to speak.

We can learn much from Moses' and Aaron's partnership. In order to lead God's people, both Moses and Aaron had to be willing to work together for God's mission. As Moses' older brother, Aaron had to humble himself to accept God's choice, and Moses had to accept the help. And, as promised, God worked through them both. Together they faced the Pharaoh and led the Israelites not only out of captivity but through four decades in the desert. Neither Moses nor Aaron was perfect, both made mistakes along the way, but God was able to work through them, imperfections and all, as they led God's people to the promised land.

We are called into a church community so that we might both receive God's blessings and share God's blessings with others. As a church, we have been given a variety of gifts and each of us can play a valuable role. You might work with children and youth, preach, or lead worship. Maybe you make the coffee or clean up after an event. You might minister through music, welcome people at the door or offer listening ears in quiet times. You might excel at fundraising, or prepare minutes, agendas and newsletters. You might spend hours praying for ministries or writing encouraging notes. There are many gifts and abilities. While some gifts are more visible and attention-getting, the quieter, behind-the-scenes gifts are just as important. It won't always be easy, but with God's help, we can nurture and grow our gifts. We may play different roles, using different gifts at different times, but without ALL of the gifts that are offered, our churches cannot do what we are called to do: to care for one another, and to share God's transforming love in the world.

Today, we celebrate people from all walks of life who are using their gifts to participate in God's mission through their gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. As our church's mission and ministry fund, Presbyterians Sharing is one of the ways that Presbyterians across Canada work together to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, sharing God's love and hope in our communities, in Canada and around the world.

Because of our gifts:

- New congregations are planted and others experience growth and renewal
- Ministries with Indigenous people in Canada are serving people scarred by Residential Schools, racism, discrimination and the loss of culture and language.

- Theological students in Canada, Malawi, Nigeria, Ghana and Beirut prepare to shine Christ's light in their communities.
 - Indigenous teams translate the Bible into their own languages in Taiwan.
 - Young people attend and are inspired by Canada Youth events.
 - Refugees find friendship and support through Action Réfugiés Montréal.
- ...and so much more!

Working together isn't always easy, but as we share in ministry across Canada and around the world, God is working through all of us. Through Presbyterians Sharing, we share the good news around the world, in word and action. We are disciples of Christ, empowered by the Spirit, glorifying God and rejoicing in service.

We are members of a body bigger than our individual congregations, and together we are involved in God's mission and ministry in ways that are bigger than our individual efforts. Together, we are the Presbyterian Church in Canada, a vibrant denomination, putting our faith into action.

We can use our unique gifts—of time, talent and treasure—big and small, to make a difference in the world God loves. We may not all have the gift of chaplaincy, or the ability to teach in a prison in Malawi, or the knowledge to translate the Bible. But when we give to Presbyterians Sharing, our financial gifts, our prayers and our encouraging words empower others to use their gifts to share God's love on our behalf, in Canada and around the world. We can learn about the ministries we support and be inspired to live out God's mission in our communities. We can reach out to people who are socially isolated. We can share the gospel in new ways. We can extend the gift of hospitality, and care for marginalized people. This is what Presbyterians Sharing is all about.

Each of us has received gifts from God. So dance like the honeybee! Share the good news! And know this—when we put our gifts into God's hands, God does remarkable things. Amen