

Worship Service for September 26th: 18th Sunday after Pentecost - Presbyterians
Sharing Sunday

- **Old Testament:** Exodus 4:10-17
- **New Testament:** 1 Corinthians 12: 27–31
- **Psalms:** Psalm 104

Announcements: Sunday October 3rd is Communion Sunday.

Sermon Title: SHARING OUR GIFTS!

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 epistle 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.

In the Acts 11:27-28, some prophets had traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch to visit the Christians. One of the prophets, Agabus prophesied that there was going to be famine in the Roman Empire. In verse 29, we are told that "the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could." In 2 Corinthians 9 the Bible also talks about Christians who were giving gifts of money to assist other churches.

When we give to Presbyterians Sharing, we participate in God's mission together, expressing our faith through our actions and decisions. Together, we build strong congregations, serve vulnerable people, walk with Indigenous people, seek justice and share Christ's love around the world. We are there when a prisoner in Malawi discovers Christ's love through Bible study, and when a congregation adapts to meet community needs in new ways. We are there when a child receives a healthy snack and after-school support from an inner-city ministry, and when theological students in Canada, Malawi, Nigeria, Ghana and Beirut graduate, ready to shine Christ's light. On Presbyterians Sharing Sunday, we celebrate the mission and ministry we share together, as we proclaim God's love, hope, faith and grace in the world God loves. When we put our gifts in God's hands, God does remarkable things!

It is said that "charity begins at home and does not end there." Therefore our giving has to start from our own church before going out to others. We cannot starve our homes to feed others. That is unacceptable in the eyes of God and man. We cannot give to Presbyterian Sharing only because we want to spite the church for making decisions that didn't please us or the other way round. Each offering has its place in the church, and we cannot forgo one for another. Giving only to Presbyterian Sharing without giving our offering and tithes is acting in disobedience to God. They each have their place and purpose.

And above all we are called upon to share our gifts in love. 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 says,

"If I were to speak with eloquence in earth's many languages, and in the heavenly tongues of angels, yet I didn't express myself with love, my words would be reduced to the hollow sound of nothing more than a clanging cymbal.

²And if I were to have the gift of prophecy with a profound understanding of God's hidden secrets, and if I possessed unending supernatural knowledge, and if I had the greatest gift of faith that could move mountains, but have never learned to love, then I am nothing. ³And if I were to be so generous as to give away everything I owned to feed the poor, and to offer my body to be burned as a martyr, without the pure motive of love, I would gain nothing of value.

⁴Love is large and incredibly patient. Love is gentle and consistently kind to all. It refuses to be jealous when blessing comes to someone else. Love does not brag about one's achievements nor inflate its own importance. ⁵Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honor. Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense. ⁶Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong. ⁷Love is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others. Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up.

May God grant us the grace to share our gifts in love, in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer

God of loving kindness, we bring you our prayers for your church and for your world, that they may be transformed and filled with your love.

We pray for your church in this neighbourhood and around the world. Guard and nurture it in the ways of unity and service for your people. Wherever and whenever your church is divided, make it whole; where it is torn by conflict and misunderstanding, repair it; and where it is tempted by forms of dishonesty or idolatry, reform our worship and restore our devotion.

Especially, we pray now for the cares and concerns of this congregation and our community beyond our congregation.

Compassionate God, we ask for mercy and healing for people who struggle. Help us to be vessels of your love, sharing faith and hope. We thank you for The Presbyterian Church in Canada and for the many congregations that are part of it. May we work together through word and action, using our gifts to share the love of God that we know in Jesus Christ. We pray for the mission and ministries we support through Presbyterians Sharing. We pray for international mission staff and partners who are working to share the good news of God's love and justice around the world.

We pray for national staff, committees and volunteers who work hard to support congregations, presbyteries, and synods in these changing and challenging times. We remember ministries with Indigenous people and pray for their leaders and members. We pray that healing and reconciliation work will help build good relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We pray for ministries working with marginalized people in Canada, that they will provide healing and hope.

We pray for the students, faculty and staff at our theological colleges: Knox College, Presbyterian College and St. Andrew's Hall and Vancouver School of Theology.

We pray for the ministry of all congregations, that you grant us energy, wisdom and compassion as we seek to follow you. Bless us as we work on matters of justice and speak out for the voiceless. Bless us as we witness to your love in our communities, start new communities of faith across Canada and share your hope with the world.

O God, for the joy of participating in the transforming work of Jesus Christ and for the ability to share in building a future with hope, we give you thanks. Merciful God, accept our prayers, spoken and unspoken, and strengthen us to do your will through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Now go into the world to share the good news, and to live out God's vision of a new heaven and a new earth. And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.