

St. David's Presbyterian Church
St. John's, NL
"What 'Sharing' Looks Like"
Dr. J. Dent

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18th Sunday after Pentecost
Presbyterians Sharing Sunday

We all try to teach our children to share, and some of us who don't have children have tried teach their friends' children to share. We want them to share because we don't like to see them fight and sometimes we get a little scared when we see them fighting, triggering stuff inside us. We also want them to learn at an early age how to navigate relationship issues, such as control issues and possessiveness. We all need to learn how to put off our desires to not have our own way, right away. So we try to help our children not beat up on each other over toys or games or other stuff, and not just the boys, but the girls as well. We can have a discussion sometime about which sex we think is more vicious when it comes to conflict. Meanwhile, we're just trying to help the kids.

And of course, it is difficult to help another person in your life, young or old, if we haven't ourselves sought to learn that same lesson. So it is difficult to teach someone how to share if we ourselves are having a hard time sharing, whether it's our money or our time, a passionate opinion or a dispassionate discourse. Whatever it is, we are called to share in a way that we would like to receive. That's the golden rule. It's very clear in the Judeo-Christian ethic and quite clear in many other religions as well. Some have said that if we could only master that one teaching, perhaps there would be far less war and conflict of all kinds on this planet.

But the fact is there are some areas in this life where we simply don't get along. Let me suggest just one: music. Now I don't know what kind of music you like best and I don't know if you listen to music everyday or whether you only turn it on occasionally. Some have the radio going all the time or the satellite stations. Others, not so much. And then when you are in the car with someone else, what station do you decide to listen to?

One of my daughters loves rap and urban. The other one has learned to love country. I'm not a big fan of either. I think they know this. A DJ friend of mine from California with a famous rock station on AM radio back in the 70s, said he just couldn't see a senior couple decades after it was popular, saying a 'rap' song was "their song." And I haven't warmed up to opera much either. You know, I like to keep an open mind when it comes to

music, but opera, country and rap just don't speak to me like jazz and classical, blues and a few decades of popular music. I even like barbershop, which might drive some crazy. But there it is. And you know probably where I am going with this.

This Sunday is about Sharing. It's specifically about Presbyterians Sharing, which is our national budget as a denomination. It's how we fund our national offices, our international missions, our theological education, our church planting and national missions, and a bunch of other stuff. We were supposed to have a handout on this, but it didn't make it in the mail. St. David's is committed to this national budget and is voluntarily funding these programs to the tune of \$21,000 per year. Now we could hire a part time worker in some area of the congregation instead of sharing that money with the national church. We could pay a good portion of our oil money for heat, maybe all of it with that money. But instead we choose to share. We choose to be a part of a larger movement, with many benefits. Thus we are not alone.

We share because we believe in the larger body of Christ doing more than we can do ourselves. We share because we believe that our national church is doing a reasonably good job in missions and world development and assistance all over the place. We share because Jesus teaches us to share with each other just like we are trying to teach our children.

We note in the Scriptures that the Lord did not go along with those disciples who wanted to harshly or not so harshly shut down others doing ministry in Jesus' name with whom they did not agree. Jesus noted on that occasion in Mark 9 that "whoever is not against us is for us." And then Jesus suggested several practical ways to be for one another: give a cold drink of water, particularly nice in the desert. He also wanted us to make sure we helped children, practically and in the faith. He then goes on to talk about cutting off body parts, and what I understand from that teaching is that he says there will be times where you will have to choose. You will have to choose where you spend your time Sunday morning. There are several other major activities in the city this morning. You have chosen to be here. Others have chosen to be somewhere else. All of us will have to choose, what we see with our eyes, that is, where we go whether in real life or cyber space, what we do with our hands, that is, what actions we choose to carry out, and what we do with our feet, also about what travel and moving options we have. If we are devoting these things to evil, hurtful, community destroying ways;

then we need to stop it or cut it off. If we are wrecking our relationship with God, we need to cut it off. If we are choosing to trust God with our vision, our travels, our actions, then we need to continue on in these ways.

We need to honor our relationship to God, to renew this day, and say “yes” to Jesus. We need to help each other here in the church and in the community. We do that at times, with the Christmas hamper outreach. We do that regularly with the Bridges to Hope program and community building.

We also need to share with each other when it comes to music in our worship. For some, some of the music today will not be their favorite or preferred music. For others, it will be a great encouragement. For others still, it may not make a huge difference at all. But for all of us, we need to share the musical space with the young and the older, with the traditional and the contemporary. So here we are together. It is good to be together. Sometimes it may push our buttons with some of the parts of the service musically. Musicians may not perfectly carry out what had been planned or hoped for. But together we share many styles of music and worship with the desire to lift up the one God we choose to honor and love.

And because we honor this One, we also try to love one another. Yesterday we had twenty church leaders from this congregation come together and talk to each other about the future. We had both Board and Session talking about some exciting plans, plans that will keep us on an adventure together for a long time; not just doing the same thing over and over. We will continue to worship in creative ways. We will continue to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will continue to ask ourselves and God what God wants us to do together. It may be quite a ride. But that's part of what I'm looking forward to doing together. I hope you too have a sense of anticipation.

Let us pray.