



sharing  
OCTOBER 6

Sunday, October 6, 2024

***Do Unto Others* Kindness Campaign: SHARING**

“Sharing: A Larger Table” | Hebrews 13:1-5, 16 | Charlie Berthoud

A long time ago, I was on a mission study trip in Honduras, a beautiful and impoverished country, neighboring Guatemala. We spend four or five days in a rural community, with no electricity and no running water, and we were helping the community with their project of building latrines.

One of the teenagers in our group befriended a young Honduran boy, and at one point he gave the boy a stick of gum. Then he watched in amazement as the boy took the gum and broke it into about 10 pieces to share with his family and friends.

That trip was over 25 years ago, and I don't remember a lot of specifics from it, but I remember that incredible example of **sharing**.

SHARING is our word for the day as we continue our KINDNESS campaign, in the midst of this tense election season. Overall, the campaign is aimed at helping us live our Christian faith in this election season, and to be involved in politics—with KINDNESS, COMPASSION, JUSTICE, and more. And we take our inspiration from Jesus, who said “Do unto others as you would have them to unto you.”



Matthew 7:12

Jesus said, “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” (NRSV)



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Three weeks ago, I opened the series with a reading from Ephesians, reminding us to choose our words carefully, as we have discussions and work to make this world a better place.

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths,  
but only what is useful for building up, as  
there is need, so that your words may give  
grace to those who hear.

--Ephesians 4:29



I noted that things might make us angry, but we need to avoid sin and channel our anger in productive ways, remembering that Jesus called us to seek first God's Kingdom.

Two weeks ago, Megan spoke of the power of **COMPASSION**. Last week, Jess spoke of the importance of **JUSTICE**. All of those sermons are on our website.

Today our world is SHARING and it's no coincidence that it's the word for World Communion Sunday, as we celebrate how we share the bread of life and the cup of salvation at the table with Christians all over the world.



Our paraments, the cloth on the communion table, come from Cameroon, thanks to the Songolo family, who were part of this congregation for a long time before moving to Boston a couple years ago. Emilie and her mom gave us this special Cameroonian cloth, called Ndop. The blue is to remind us of the sky, and there are a variety of symbols on it.

And as you know, if you're keeping track our our mission partners or making good use of the prayer list, we pray for and support mission work Kenya, South Sudan, Peru,

Indonesia, and Haiti.

Our connection in Haiti is through our support of the Medical Benevolence Foundation. Haiti has been in the news a lot lately, with Haitian refugees in Ohio—here legally, by the way—on the receiving end of lies and threats and hatred. I wish we collectively had a better appreciation of the desperate situation in Haiti.

Our mission dollars support a hospital and the babies being born in Haiti amidst the chaos.



Hospital St Croix in Haiti

In a recent newsletter from Haiti, we read: “Over half of Haiti’s population is struggling with hunger, and only a quarter of the hospitals are functioning properly. Violence from armed gangs continues to plague the country, with nearly 600,000 people displaced from their homes. Tragically, many health professionals have also been affected by the violence.”



Coyolate, Guatemala



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Our strongest global connection is Guatemala, where we have 20+ year partnerships

with a Presbyterian community in the village of Coyolate and another Presbyterian congregation in Santo Domingo. This week, I traded messages with the pastor of the Santo Domingo congregation, and they are praying for us today.



One of the best things about **World Communion Sunday** is realizing that Christians all over the world are sharing bread, tortillas, wafers, and other elements, along with wine, juice, and even water or coffee, to share in communion, partaking this holy meal together.

So, as we gather at the table today, we do so together with millions of Christians around the world. We are sharing in this feast together.

Our scripture reading today comes from **Hebrews**; it doesn't specifically focus on communion, but it does focus on food and sharing. Hebrews is curious and challenging book toward the end of the New Testament. The first ten chapters lay out a theological argument, contrasting Judaism and Christianity, arguing that Jesus is our high priest, who offered himself as a ritual sacrifice.

The final three chapters of Hebrews are the best known. Chapter 11 is about living by faith, with examples of everyone from Abraham and Sarah to Moses, and even Rahab the prostitute, who lived by faith. Chapter 12 is about running the race of faith, with perseverance, with the great cloud of witnesses cheering us on.

Chapter 13 is a collection of admonitions and encouragement at the close of the letter. Our reading begins with the first five verses of chapter 13, with echoes of Matthew 25 and a couple of the Ten Commandments. Listen for God's word.

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

The subsequent verses mostly deal with rituals and laws about **food** and sacrifice, with the message essentially being that God desires the sacrifice of praise from our lives, our words and our deeds, not our religious rituals. The section concludes in verse 16 with:

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Our religious duty, according to this to share—to share our food, among other things. The word translated as **share** here comes from the Greek word Koinonia, which is often translated and community or fellowship.



Koinonia is also used in a familiar passage from Acts 2:

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

So, this koinonia, this fellowship, this sharing is certainly about food. It makes me think of Jesus' teaching on food.

In Matthew 25, Jesus says, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink."

In Luke 14, Jesus is teaching about food and about including everyone, and he says:

"When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind."

And in Mark 6, in one of the accounts of miraculous feedings of thousands, Jesus tells the disciples "You give them something to eat." Then somehow, thousands of people are fed from just a few loaves of bread and some fish.

The gospel accounts of the miraculous feeding of thousands of people are typically understood in one of two ways:

1. Jesus multiplied the food. If Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead, if he could make blind Bartimaeus see again, he could certainly multiply the loaves and fishes.
2. The other way of understanding the miraculous feeding of thousands is that Jesus' words and presence encouraged the people there to share. So they opened their purses and bags, realizing they all had a little something, so there was more than enough for everyone. It's the first church potluck!

While either is impressive, it seems to me that the bigger miracle is the latter, getting people to share.

In our world today, there are hungry people who are grateful when food is shared and there are lonely people who are grateful when time and space is shared.

In the weekly email, I shared a two-minute video which beautifully captures both our contemporary alienation as well as the joy of coming together. Take a break from the sports highlights and the kitten videos and watch it when you get a chance.

It shows a woman feeling disconnected from neighbors, so she talks her daughter into having a potluck in the hall of their apartment building. Eventually people come out, share their food and have a great time. In the end a little girl coaxes out an older man,

who shows up with bread and wine.

When we share food and time with each other, we build connections and trust, all of which are vital for our faith and for our increasingly fragile democracy.

Making a bigger table and sharing can get messy and even a little complicated. The extra chairs and table don't match. Someone will spill something. There will be lots of dishes to clean up and lots of crumbs on the floor.

Sharing isn't always easy. But it's vital in our time right now, and it's our calling, as followers of Jesus.

How is God calling you to share?

Maybe you need to share a meal with someone, inviting them over for dinner, or go out for coffee or lunch, or asking someone to sit with you in the school cafeteria. Or by saying hello to someone while you have coffee and a donut at church.

Maybe you need to share a word of encouragement, by thanking someone or writing a note of support to someone who is having a hard time.

Maybe you need to share your time and energy with someone who has a different political opinion, asking good questions and when appropriate sharing your opinion. Friends, in Jesus Christ, God came to share our common humanity, and to share the steadfast and tenacious love of God with the world. With our words, with our deeds, with our food, with our lives, we can share God's love with our families, our neighbors, and the world. Thanks be to God.