



## Presbyterians Sharing Sunday

### 2016 Worship Resource

---

#### WELCOME

Today we celebrate the mission and ministry we do together through *Presbyterians Sharing*. Together, as Presbyterians across Canada, we proclaim the good news of the gospel in Canada and around the world. Together we help develop innovative ministries for children and youth. We equip leaders – lay and clergy – to do effective ministry. We support, encourage and enrich congregations in the areas of worship, evangelism, mission, Christian education, stewardship, planned giving, leadership, and congregational development and renewal. We work with international mission partners to share the hope and grace of God. We send mission staff, short term volunteers and grants to support and accompany these partners in leadership development, Bible translation, Christian education, theological education and evangelism. We support new church development and help congregations renew and grow their ministries. Together we speak up for the voiceless and support healing and reconciliation ministries. By supporting *Presbyterians Sharing*, we are participating in the life-giving mission of God.

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

**All: Worship the Lord with gladness; come into God's presence with singing.**

L: Know that the Lord is God.

**All: It is God that made us and we are God's; we are God's people, and the sheep of God's pasture.**

L: Enter God's gates with thanksgiving and God's courts with praise.

**ALL: Give thanks to God, bless God's name.**

#### PRAYER OF ADORATION

L: God of the Universe, we come to worship and to praise you because you are the creator of all things.

**All: You spoke and the earth and everything in it was made.**

L: You came to us as Jesus Christ; as he spoke he taught us about your great love for us,

**All: a love that is to be shared with others.**

L: You come to us today through your Holy Spirit who continues to speak your word to us;

**All: your Spirit teaches us how to love and care for ourselves and for others.**

L: Holy Triune God, kindle in us the fire of your love and set our hearts ablaze with excitement for your enlivening word this day.

**ALL: All glory, honour, and praise be yours, our Holy Triune God, Creator, Redeemer and Counselor. Amen.**

#### LORD'S PRAYER (unison)

## **SUGGESTED HYMNS:**

425 - We praise you, O God  
625 - Seek ye first  
626 - Lord of all power  
637 - Take my life and let it be consecrated

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE**

Merciful God,  
We know that we are your people and have committed ourselves to live as Jesus calls us to live.  
Forgive us when we fail to follow Jesus  
and when we forget that all we have is truly yours to be used according to your will.  
Forgive us for our self-centeredness,  
when we see money and possessions as ours only to be used as we see fit.  
Forgive us when we see others in need and refuse to help  
even though we are able to offer them support.

Let us offer our personal prayers of confession in a moment of silence.

*(moment of silence)*

Merciful and patient Lord, we humbly seek forgiveness for all the sin of our lives and the sin of the world. In the name of Jesus, our blessed Redeemer we pray. Amen.

## **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Friends in Christ, hear the good news and believe.  
The scriptures assure us that if we confess our sins, God will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Thanks be to God!

## **SUGGESTED CHILDREN'S HYMNS**

466 - Praise the Lord with the sound of trumpet  
476 - Amigos de Cristo/Friends of the Lord  
631 - Lord, I want to be a Christian  
631 - Jesus hands were kind hands  
655 - Give me oil in my lamp  
726 - May the God of hope go with us every day

## **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE & PRAYER**

Today I'd like to share with you a story from the Bible about the amazing things that God can do when people are willing to share with others. This story is from the book of John 6:1-13.

*Read John 6:1-13 from a child-friendly version of the Bible or tell the story in your own words*

Isn't that amazing? How could Jesus have fed all those people? It truly was a miracle!

What is your favourite part of the story?

The part of this story I like the best is that the little boy was willing to give his fish and loaves of bread to Jesus so that they could be shared with other people. And not only were they shared with a few people - Jesus used the boy's generous gift to feed **thousands** of people!

We don't always see how God uses our gifts for others. But when we give gifts to the church, we can trust that God will do wonderful things with them.

Let us pray.

Dear Jesus, thank you that you love us and help us. Show us how to use these gifts to help others. Please continue to do amazing things for people with the gifts we give to the church. We pray in your name. Amen.

### **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON** **RESPONSIVE READING** **EPISTLE LESSON**

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15

Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16

1 Timothy 6:6-19

### **SUGGESTED HYMNS**

481 - Blest be the tie that binds

632 - Help us accept each other

635 - Brother, sister, let me serve you

672 - Jesus calls us o'er the tumult

### **GOSPEL LESSON**

Luke 16:19-31

### **PRAYER FOR DISCERNMENT**

Holy Spirit,

We humbly ask that you would inspire us as we consider the words of scripture and reflect on how they speak to our lives this day. Help us to listen, to reflect on, and to understand God's word. Help us to discern the will of God and give us the wisdom and courage to obey it.

We pray in the name of our Lord and Teacher, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## **SERMON: God knows us by name**

American theologian Donald Messer tells the story of a rich man who was approached to contribute to a major financial campaign:

The urgent need and compelling case were stated and the call was made for his support.

The man responded: "I understand why you think I can give fifty thousand dollars. I am a man with my own business and, it is true, I have all the signs of affluence. But there are some things you don't know. Did you know that my mother is in an expensive nursing home?"

Well, no, we didn't know.

"Did you know also that my brother died, and left a family of five and had almost no insurance?"

No, we didn't.

"Did you know that my son is deeply religious, has gone into social work, and makes less than the national poverty level to meet the needs of his family?"

No, we hadn't realized.

"Well then," the rich man said, "if I don't give any of them a penny, why do you think I'll give it to you?"

This rich man reminds me of Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens' story "A Christmas Carol". Ebenezer cut himself off from his family and friends, and making money was his only concern. One Christmas, when approached to make a donation to help the poor, Ebenezer refused to help, saying that he minds his own business and expects others to do the same. He wasn't interested in helping anyone but himself.

We see parallels from these two stories with the rich man in our Gospel lesson. The rich man isn't interested in the poor man who sits at his gate. The rich man pays no attention to Lazarus, even though he is sick and starving. The rich man has no sense that his wealth should be used to help Lazarus. In the rich man's mind, there is a big wall that separates him from Lazarus. And he allows poor Lazarus to die in agony, just outside his gate.

It is hard for us to relate to the rich man. "That's not me", we think. "There aren't any people sitting at my gate, begging for food. I do what I can to help the poor." But maybe we all have a bit of the rich man in us – and that's what makes the text so uncomfortable. We all know people who are in need, but we don't always notice and sometimes we willfully look away.

Did you notice that the poor man has a name? He is actually the only person in all of Jesus' parables who is given a specific name. The rich man doesn't get named, but Lazarus does. The poor are so important to God that God knows them by name!

Even after the rich man dies, he still never learns Lazarus's name. From Hades he looks up and sees Lazarus sitting beside Abraham in Heaven. But even in Hades, the rich man shows no remorse for how he neglected Lazarus. All he wants from Lazarus is something for himself – a drop of water. There is no change in the rich man's heart. Before he was separated from Lazarus by a wall and gate of his own making, but now he's separated from Lazarus by a great abyss that cannot be crossed.

Ebenezer Scrooge, however, does change. In a dream, he is shown people whose lives he can transform while he is still alive. He learns their names, he sees their need – and his heart is changed.

Giving to *Presbyterians Sharing* is one way that our congregation supports the mission and ministry work that we do together as The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We support *Presbyterians Sharing* through our congregation's budget and through designated gifts in offering envelopes. Our gifts encourage and equip congregational renewal and development; support inner city, native and refugee ministries; support students studying for ministry; equip clergy and lay leaders; send mission personnel to work with international partners . . . and so much more!

Though many of us don't know the names of the countless people who are supported through *Presbyterians Sharing*, we have collectively discerned, as members and adherents of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, that God is calling us to do this important work. And the work *is* important. Even though giving to *Presbyterians Sharing* can sometimes feel like an obligation or even a tax, it is a wonderful opportunity to minister to others.

Today, as we remember Lazarus – who was so important to God that God knew him by name – let us learn some of the names and stories of the people who are ministering on our behalf and those whose lives are being changed.

\*\*\*

The Rev. Deb Rapport is the Director of ARISE Ministry, a mission of the Presbytery of East Toronto. ARISE offers hope to victims of sex-trafficking and sexual exploitation through a ministry of outreach, case management and pastoral care.

Deb shares a story about Ashley. “Ashley and I have an ongoing outreach relationship. ARISE has been present with her through her struggles with abusive men, addiction and street-life. We have helped her get to detox and safety, and talked about the sense of failure she feels in each relapse.

One night, as we walked towards Ashley, we could see that she was talking to a male customer. She asked if we could come back later because she really wanted to talk. We were about 20 metres away when she called out, “Deborah, I'm sorry. Can you come back? You're worth more to me than him right now.” It was a bold statement of affirmation and of hope. Ashley talked about her desperate need for change and her hope that this time would be different. Then she said, ‘You're doing some revolutionary work and I need to be part of it.’”

\*\*\*\*

Joseph has been at Blantyre's maximum security Chichiri prison since 2006. Overcrowding is a critical problem in Malawi's prisons. At Chichiri there are 2,000 prisoners housed in a space built for 800. Cell blocks are so crowded that there is no room for them to lie down at night – they must try to sleep sitting up, pressed against one another. It is brutal during the hot summer months, and the unhygienic conditions lead to the spread of illness and disease. There is not enough food, and the food that is available lacks protein and nutritional value. Many of these men have not been given a trial.

*Presbyterians Sharing* supports the prison's chaplains and has helped provide sleeping mats, blankets, soap, hymn books and Bibles to prisoners. Joseph started attending Blantyre Synod's weekly Bible study soon after he arrived at Chichiri. The prison's ecumenical chapel was built with grants from gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing*. Before the chapel was built, studies were held outside – a challenge during hot weather, and an impossibility during heavy rains. Joseph shares, “It is by the grace of God that I am alive. I remembered the advice I got from

my mother – to pray while I am in prison, as only God can change you. I cannot stop praising God because he is doing great things. Once I finish prison life, I will keep praising God because of what he has done for me.”

\*\*\*\*

Donovan is a member of the Wabaseamong Ojibway Nation. A crown ward from an early age, he ended up homeless after bouncing from foster home to foster home. At the age of 12 he got involved with the wrong crowd and started using drugs and alcohol.

Today, Donovan is a participant in Kenora Fellowship Centre’s mentorship program. He has benefitted from life-skills training as well as the centre’s shelter program and residential transition program. Donovan shares, “The staff work hard to make programs which help the people. There have been many times recently I wanted to end my life and the centre has helped me through these times. I am so thankful they cared for me and stood by me during the tough times.”

After Donovan attended Canada Youth – our national youth program – he shared, “I was very thankful for the experience, met many people and was very encouraged. I enjoyed listening and talking with Eugene Arcand and thought a lot about my life and family after hearing his residential school experience. It was truly an awesome experience. I learned a lot, cried a lot, and shared a lot about our community with Canada Youth. It was like I was supposed to be out there. Thank you to all of you who support the Kenora Fellowship Centre. You are helping to make a difference in people’s lives, like mine.”

\*\*\*\*

These are just a few names and stories of the many people who receive support through our gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing*. It is by learning about our mission and ministry that the stranger at our gate becomes a friend who is welcomed inside and given help.

There are many ways that our congregation can get to know more about people supported through *Presbyterians Sharing*:

We can learn more about our mission and ministries through resources like mission moments, bulletin inserts and videos.

We can invite someone from one of our ministries in Canada to visit us and share their stories, or visit a congregation that has been newly planted or replanted to see how God is at work.

We can plan a trip to visit Winnipeg’s Place of Hope congregation or Kenora Fellowship Centre and meet some of the people seeking fellowship in the inner city. Or we could go to Prince Albert and worship with people of the Mistawasis First Nation.

We might visit some of our international partners to see how God’s word is proclaimed in a different country and culture, and be inspired to reach out to our community when we return.

We can encourage our youth and youth leaders to attend Canada Youth and to share their experiences with us.

We can get to know students studying for the ministry, learn their names, and pray for them. Some of us could join a committee of the national church and work with others to help shape the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

When Ebenezer Scrooge realized how important it was to have loving, personal relationships with others, he opened his heart to them and shared his wealth generously. Our faith in Jesus Christ starts with a personal relationship with him and with the Creator and the Holy Spirit.

Our congregational life extends our loving relationships to our fellow members. But it takes even more effort to develop relationships with people who are outside of our gates and needing our help. Personally knowing people – learning their names and their stories – inspires us to help them generously.

May God inspire us all to reach out to others through our support for *Presbyterians Sharing*, as we strive to love others as we love ourselves.

## **OUR OFFERINGS TO GOD**

### **DOXOLOGY**

#### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Generous God,

We bring these gifts to you with hearts full of thanksgiving. As you have given to us, let us give to others – not only these gifts of money, but indeed our very selves. May our gifts further the mission of Christ in our world. May they also empower the missions and ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who turned the gift of a few loaves and fishes into enough for thousands.

Amen.

#### **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION (PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE)**

God of grace,

We give thanks for our spiritual connectedness to you  
and for the power, wisdom, and strength you give us.

We give thanks for our spiritual connectedness with other Christians  
and the love, support and care we receive from our sisters and brothers in the body of Christ.

Thank you for the people you put in our path each day and for the way  
we can see the image of Christ in their faces, especially those who are in great need.

Thank you that you are with us in the challenges we face

and thank you for the ways you help us grow stronger as we work through our challenges.

Thank you for listening to our prayers; inspire us to listen for your voice as we pray for others,  
so that we may discern what you call us to do to help.

God of love, we now bring to you our prayers for others.

In this moment of silence, we pray for your blessings on those who need healing and  
comforting:

*(silent prayer)*

Almighty God, on this *Presbyterians Sharing* Sunday,  
we ask you to empower all the ministries and mission of our national church.  
Help us to learn about the important work that is being done  
as your people are ministered to and inspired to seek after you.  
We pray for all the people supported by *Presbyterians Sharing* and ask that you  
would lead them in the work you have given them to do, whether in Canada or in other lands.  
We especially pray for the people who are working with those who sit at the gates of our rich  
communities praying for help.  
Gracious God, show us how we can get to know these laborers in your fields  
and appreciate the work they do.  
Show us how we can get to know the people who are being helped.  
Loving Lord, help us to be your eyes, feet, and hands in our world, bringing your love and care  
to people in need. We pray all these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **SUGGESTED HYMNS**

587 - Called as partners in Christ's service  
634 - Will you come and follow me  
637 - Take my life and let it be consecrated  
712 - Arise, your light has come  
722 - Lord, whose love  
724 - Come now, you blessed, eat at my table

### **CHARGE**

Go in the peace of Christ and share his love with those near and far. Trust that God will use  
your generosity to do amazing things. Remember that Christ is counting on you.

### **BENEDICTION**

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.

\*\*\*\*

*The 2016 Presbyterians Sharing Sunday worship service was written by the Rev. Tom Billard,  
minister at North Bramalea Presbyterian Church in Brampton, Ontario and Convener of The  
Presbyterian Church in Canada's Life and Mission Agency Committee.*