

Sharing Goods and Breaking Bread

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Acts 2: 42-27

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As we move through this pandemic, one thing that has become even more obvious is the systemic problems and discrepancies in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. Food bank lines in the US and demand here in Canada has increased phenomenally. The disproportionate numbers of poor, seniors in care homes and people of colour who are more exposed and dying because of being vulnerable working in lower paying, front line sector jobs, having more crowded living conditions, insufficient staffing and resources, and in the US much less access to health care. We are learning of more and more people in need in our area with some students from Victoria school unable to study because they are hungry, and hampers being put together by Glen Elm School. We can be proud of Alex Pelletier being mentioned in the premier's speech highlighting how people in Saskatchewan are coming together but as one of our members said, it also raises the question of why is it that people have to fill the need of people's hunger, when the government should be addressing the problem?

The post-Pentecost, early church had established a community to address these issues. They sold everything they had, and held all goods in common, so that everyone would have what they needed. This does not mean everyone had the same amount, but each person would have the resources and support for whatever their needs were. It was also a practical endeavor because of the 3000 people that Acts 2 names were baptized, many of them were from outside of Jerusalem and decided to stay with this new community of Jesus followers. They needed a place to stay, food, clothing, everything. Their needs would have been greater than someone already living in Jerusalem and the sharing of goods in common, allowed them to have their needs met. They gathered together to hear the teachings of the apostles, share in fellowship, experience the breaking of the bread, which would have been communion, and engage in prayers. The prayers would have been similar to the Jewish prayers that were obligatory for the Jewish priests and rabbis but became a praying of the hours, for these early Christians. This is what later became the Daily Office, which is what our prayer services are based on.

Later in the passage, it mentions again breaking of bread together in homes – “they broke bread together at home and ate food with glad and generous hearts”. This gathering together over a meal was part of the practices of the community of faith of the early church which may or may not have included communion, but was church. As we move through this time, I am realizing that it is unlikely that we

will be able to gather as a full community for quite some time. This week I read a few articles about singing in church, one that identified that Churches when they gather in [Germany](#) are not allowed to sing, because the virus droplets can be spread farther when singing. Another was by a [music director](#) who had done research on this and concluded that she cannot support singing together until it is known that it is safe to do so. I can't imagine getting together for church face to face and not singing! So, it may be quite a while before we are able to meet in person. Given that, it makes me wonder as things open up more, in the later phases, whether we might look at being like the early church and gather in homes for meals together as church, form small groups of house church, where we would share a meal, and pray and reflect on scripture. Maybe it would be neighbourhood dinner church in our homes with those from Eastside who are in your area. Or maybe just gathering for prayer and reflection, for those may not want to share a meal. These are some musings and wonderings as we need to think creatively on how we be church during this time.

The sharing of goods in common in the early church community, seems to be a very radical thing in our minds, and to our present context and economy. Most believe it just wouldn't work. However, what are the ways that it may work? Some of how we support those in need, is through taxation, but we all know that the social support system is still insufficient. It is not enough to help people make ends meet, and the system is under-resourced and understaffed, especially the child welfare system. As a result, community initiatives step in to fill the gaps. The food banks started in the 80's as a temporary measure to address a need. Now they are an institution. We share our resources and goods in common as we can, as evidenced by the generosity through the initiatives we are supporting during this time:

- Alex Pelletier's lunch program for the homeless. We have people donating juice boxes, granola bars and fruit and a few others delivering it to Alex on Fridays.
- Anna-Marie Donovan who is a teacher at Victoria school has identified that a number of their students are too hungry to study so we are providing meals once a week, and drop offs for that is happening Thursdays from 10-11 when Harvey is in the office.
- This week I talked with Bert and they are making lunches every day for folk in their community. They needed Friday covered and asked if we could take that on, so we had a few step up for this past Friday and could use more folk willing to help with that.

If you have any questions or wish to help with these initiatives, let me know. We may not sell our possessions but we do share what we have to distribute to those in

need. These are ways that we share goods in common. We certainly could do better collectively and as governments.

As they gathered, the early church experienced the goodwill of the people. Some translations say 'they liked what they saw'. People liked what they saw of this new community. How they lived and worshiped and learned together was worked out among them day by day, what the needs were, how they were to respond, and addressing the issues of this new community. May we work out day by day, how we be community in what is being called by some, liminal space, this in-between time. May we be open to exploring what we can do together as we sort out how we can be together, and be the church. May we continue to celebrate the sharing of resources that we are doing and being invited into as we seek to be faithful and live out the gospel in our time.