



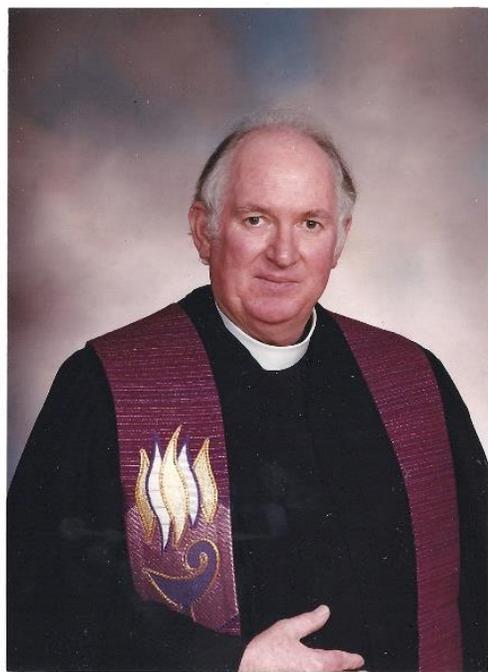
St. John's Newsletter

August 2016

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This newsletter consists of only the sermon which was preached on Sunday, July 31st. After worship many of the members present at St. John's that day commented on the excellent message contained within. When reading a sermon one does not get the same connotations, but this message for the people in the congregation will still have merit. If you were there you will be able to review the words once again, and if you weren't then we hope you will be able to take a few minutes to study what was said.

Six "C's" for Christians Who Are Presbyterian

1 Corinthians 12: 12-26

*"Knowing, Enjoying
and Sharing
Christ's Love
With All"*

There are many "C" words in our Christian walk, but this morning I want to focus briefly on a few of them that I believe are important for us and I think we should be familiar with.

Every time we come together in worship I believe that makes a day like today a wonderful day in the life of the St John's family. For me and I hope for you, it is a sign that God is not finished with his work here and that there is more work for us to do. Yes, this family has had a few struggles on a number of different levels over the past few years and the past year has been particularly challenging. But see it as it really is! Saint John's is still here and ministry and mission are taking place. We can do no less than celebrate that there are men and women of faith who have answered the Call in order to give to God an offering from the gifts of the Spirit as they have them. The people who have a burning love in their heart that children of all ages and adults continue to learn

the Scripture and hear the Good News of Jesus are truly a blessing. The men and women who have stepped up to take care of our property and our financial obligations, some of these people have very special gifts of the Spirit in their leadership and expertise, are truly a blessing. Our Elders, teaching and leaders in all areas are a blessing and a gift to this congregation family. Together this is a pastoral and called ministry. And this is why people take training and are ordained and installed to lead in their respective office. Why do we have all these people? Because that is who we are a Christians who gather under the umbrella of what it means to be Presbyterian.

Our denomination, thus our congregation is a **Confessional Church**. Our chief declarations of belief all begin with the words, **I believe**. I feel this is often overlooked and I feel that it is an important part of the statement that it is not written corporately, but personally – not – **we believe**, but, **I believe**. And the wonderful thing is that we take it upon ourselves personally and at the same time share it in a unique way with Presbyterians across Canada and around the world. In this large relationship we find that we are a **Connected Church**. This means that we are part of a large family and much like our own nuclear families, we have a lot of things in common with some of the members and we even have some differences of opinion with some of our family members. But we are still a family. If you ever look up the word “Presbyterian” on the web you will find over 100,000 Presbyterian web links. We are part of one of the largest protestant denominations in the world. Here in Canada there are 972 congregations and about 1400 ordained clergy and missionaries. I do not have an up to date number for the PCC membership. On the other side of the river in the US – the PC(USA) there are over 2.5 million members; 11,200 congregations and about 21,000 clergy and missionaries. You can then imagine the number when you add the PC of America; Cumberland PC; the Reformed PC; the Orthodox PC and the Moravian Church – which is a transplanted German Presbyterian Church.

Because we are a Confessional and Connected Church we are therefore called to be people that are **Committed to Caring** for one another and for all those with whom we share our earthly home. There is little more important to most of us in this life than relationships; a relationship with our Saviour, relationship with our friends; relationships with family' relationships in church; relationship of many kinds are all important. One thing that I have noticed with most people, especially the young folk, they have a desire to belong. Most people; today, be they young or mature want to be connected to something or someone. They want to connect with boy friends and girl friends, husband and wife, parent and child, etc. They want to belong and they want to connect. They also want to connect with a special group. They want to connect with the right people – or the people who are right for them.

As Christians we are committed to caring and being connected to each other. Paul wrote, [1 Cor. 12:12] ***For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.*** Once you accept Jesus into your heart, you have a divine connection with other Christians then and there. Have you ever noticed that a Christians will always find other Christians? And they will nearly always greet one another with great affection or a simple, God Bless You! Why? Because we are connected. Psalm 75: 7 says it beautifully: ***For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*** He is our God! He watches over us and we are in his care.

God has made a commitment to every person here today, to care for you. You might want to say that is very important but I want to go further and say that it is a big deal! To think that the God of creation is committed to care for you and me – for all of us! And God has placed in our lives, certain

people who care for us, parents, brothers and sisters, family, friends, neighbours, teachers, elders and pastors, all placed in our lives to care for us because of the connection to us.

Some of you may not have had the privilege of a caring family or caring friends. To each of you I want you to know that this congregation with its teachers and elders are committed to caring for you. I like many of you many have read some of the memories recorded by friends of the late President Ronald Reagan. A man who in his later years did not remember that he had been the President, it was said of him by his former White House staff that he was a very caring boss to work for, so much so that those in the offices around the Oval Office nicknamed him, **Daddy**. He was able to care for every person who worked with and for him, Why? Because he allowed himself to connect with them.

Some of you have known tough times and major let downs by people around you and in some instances trust levels and understanding care may be low on the totem pole. On behalf of each serving elder, trustee Board member and teacher, we are committed to living out 1 Cor. 12:23: **those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect**. If you sometimes feel that no one cares about “**me**”, just know that we are committed to give you extra honour and care, because you are important,

All of us need to make the commitment to care because you never know what is going on in the mind of the person next to you. Take a moment to look at the person either to your left or right. If you can, look into their eyes, and quietly repeat after me, **I am committed, to caring for you because we are connected**. I really believe this. If we cannot care for those of this house and fellowship, how can we expect God to give us more members and friends to care for. During this Intentional Interim Time while the congregation goes through a time of healing and rejuvenation, every member and adherent, and regular visitor will be included in the congregation's pastoral care umbrella, and this umbrella will also reach out for at least a year to those members who have chosen to become inactive. I think St John's has a good track record of doing a great job. But we can always do better – right?

I want to share with you **Three Attitudes** every one of us here needs in order to care and connect with people.

1: **The Attitude of Love:** this attitude is shown by placing a person and their needs over your own needs.

2: **The Attitude of Confidence:** this attitude is best revealed by you determining that you are going to be liked by those there and you are going to be friends.

3: **The Attitude of Acceptance:** this attitude is defined by your decision to like that person even though they are different from you.

People are important, young or elderly, and we should make every one of them feel important. And that is why our guests and visitors should be the focus of connection. We may only have one opportunity for them to feel we truly care for them. When you see a guest or visitor, connect with them with an attitude of love, confidence and acceptance.

Some of you may question why this is so important. From the Scriptures: **If someone says ' I love God,' but hates his brother, that person is a liar, for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God whom we cannot see?** God has commanded that we must love not only him but our

Christian family too. [1 John 4: 20-21]. If we are unwilling to connect with others, then we do not truly care for God.

I believe that everyone is wanting to connect with someone somewhere. Think about it for a moment:

here are some ways that people try to connect with others:

1. real friendships
2. relationships (boyfriend, girlfriend, fiancée, husband, wife, parent, child)
3. phone calls
4. dating service – which are on the rise
5. groups – prayer, youth, bible study, men and women's groups, church, clubs and teams
6. social and political interaction

Sometimes people even go so far to get connected they compromise their personal convictions. Everyone needs some kind of connection with someone else. The teaching of Proverbs 27:10; *Do not forsake, or, do not abandon a friend.* Why? If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble [Ecclesiastes 4:12].

Whether we like it nor not, we all need to connect with someone. I believe God created us for close relationships with each other and you and I need people – one another.

I believe relationships are so important because:

- 1, they provide a sense of belonging.
2. they help you feel secure in who you are
3. they provide the only way to establish friendships
4. they help you fill the need to be needed.

Everyone is looking for connection. I think we ought to find it right here within this worshipping community, ministry with men and women and children whom God loves.

Caring for people is hard work. Connecting with people is a life work. I want to be honest with you, caring for people takes a lot of work. It will suck your emotions, drain you and at times even exhaust you physically and spiritually. Caring for people you do not like – that is hard work. Caring for people who smell, look bad, are not like you – that is hard work. Jesus asked Peter (Jn. 21) *Do you love me?* Peter replied, *Of course I do.* Then Jesus responded, *“If you love me, take care of my people (my sheep).”* If you truly love Jesus, you will try to care for God's people. Caring is hard work. And as difficult as caring is, connecting requires your life. When you connect your heart to someone else, it is for life.

In the Book of Philemon there is a story of Onesimus and Paul. Onesimus had fallen away from the faith, but Paul poured his very life into this 'you' man. He said, *I think of him as my own son because he became a believer as a result of my ministry here in prison ... I am sending him back to you, and with him comes my own heart ... give him the same welcome you would give me. If he has harmed you in any way or stolen anything from you, charge me for it* [v 10,12, 17-19]. Paul connected with Onesimus so much that he called him his 'own son.' Paul devoted his life to connecting with people and it was his life work. The message for us is that we are to care for people and to connect with people.

Caring should not just be said, but shown. You can say you “care” about someone until you are *blue in the face*, but they will not believe it until they see that you care. We can say that we are a loving and caring ministry here, but it means nothing until the ‘*they's*’ outside this fellowship see it.

1 Jn. 3:18 is a powerful teaching: *Dear children, let us stop saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions.* Care is only truly seen in our words when they become actions. Some practical ways we can show we care are:

1. say *Hello*
2. ask how they are doing and really mean it
3. sit with a guest or a visitor and ask if you might join them
4. send an anonymous card to someone and encourage them
5. pray with someone who is not yet your friend. Ask them and more frequently than not they will say. *Yes*

We must be the place that shows we care.

Caring is not about cliques but it is about connection. I know that there are people we are very close to, people with whom we are more involved with, people whom we are more connected to, and that is OK. But the members of Christ's Body who genuinely care for others will desire to make some sort of connection with people and that does not mean you have to become best Buddy with everyone. The teaching of Paul in Ephesians 4:16: *Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.* We are placed in this congregation, in this community at this time to be connected. It is because of you, members and leaders, Saint John's can become healthy, can grow and can be a place that is full of love for one another in Jesus Christ. For you who are not members here at this time, you are important and in in time you may choose to make this your worship family and be part of that love and caring. For you who are visitors today, we pray you are in a place of love and caring in your church community.

To all of you who are committed members of this congregation, officers, teachers and leaders, I want to encourage you to work hard to care for and connect with one another and also with strangers. This place should be where people of all ages feel cared for and everyone can make a lifelong connection.

I will conclude by giving you two more “C's” for your consideration. Christians are **CHOSEN** by Jesus Christ. He has claimed you before you claimed him. And if you can respond to this message I have shared with you today, you will be **CHALLENGED**. It is hard work, but it is the most rewarding challenge that life will present you with.

May God bless each of you as you meditate on these words I have had the privilege to share with you this morning.