

Today we are observing All Saints Day when we remember all those saints who came before us and all the saints gathered here in the pews today. We are also coming to the end of our pledge campaign where each week, we have been having reflections on why it is important to give.

I was inspired by a sentence from this week's reflection which is based on All Saints. The sentence is *"I believe, quite strongly, that we are all saints. We are all beloved children of God. And we are intimately connected with all those who have gone before, all who are now living, and all those who will come after."* This sentence reminded me how important and powerful the connections we have are – the connections we have with one other here at St. Peter's, the connections we have with those outside this community, the connections we have with the world and the connections we have with God.

Let's start by thinking about the connections we have at St. Peter's. I have an exercise I want to try. I have some string and I want to use it to think about our connections. I need a volunteer to begin. Hold the end of the string. Now look around. Look for someone you are connected to. Maybe you have had a conversation with them. Maybe you have worked together on a church workday, or food pantry or a gift auction. Maybe your connection is that you have shared the peace of the Lord. Who do you choose to be connected to by this string?

Repeat until you have 6-10 connections Now we can't do everybody, but let's try this with those who are holding the string. As one person to pull on the part of the string they are holding. Can you all feel it? Ask another person? Have someone drop their string. Imagine what it would be like to have this string connected to someone outside St. Peter's and how they would be affected if we were not here.

Our connection just by showing up here on a Sunday is powerful. Our gathering here as a worshipping community connects us – whether it is a lifelong friendship, a time of serving together or just by shaking hands at the peace. You may think – yes I know we are connected but what does that really translate to. We come to church. We help those in need. We go home. Are we really connected?

I have a story about connection in our St. Peter's community – a story where connection was powerful. Saturday before last, one of our parishioners, Amanda, suffered a stroke and was rushed to the hospital. She is young and a mother to three - all of whom are involved in our parish. Her sisters organized something called a meal train which is an app to organize meals for someone in need and donations. I shared the link in my Sunday email and on the St. Peter's Facebook page. I took a look at the page Thursday morning to see how the donations were going and saw that several parishioners had contributed both with donations of money and of actual meals. One person, one of our paid choir members, had contributed and wrote the following, *"You guys are awesome - all my prayers are going towards you! Can't wait to see you back in the pews!"*

It was a connection I had not expected. I had no idea that they knew each other. It doesn't matter how the connection was made. What matters is that a connection was made because we gather here at St. Peter's. That is just one connection that was revealed because of illness. I suspect that there are many more that connect us at St. Peter's and to those at St. Peter's to those outside. This story is an example of the difference the ministry of our St. Peter's community makes. The comment "Can't wait you to see you again in the pews." speaks to me of the power of our community to make connections which is at the heart of our ministries. This is why we give. We give in thanksgiving for the ministries that God creates among us.

Your giving makes our ministries possible. Your giving allows us to gather in these pews, to make those connections, to help one another when we are in need, to hear scripture together, to pray together and to encounter the holy together as we come to the altar to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Your giving helps us make space for many connections beyond our worship that happen in our Food Pantry, our bible study, our fellowship times like Caribbean Night and Ice Cream Socials, the Mother's Guild tricky trays that raise money for our community, the NA/AA groups, the Cub Scouts, and even the condo association from down the street.

Your giving supports our staff who care for our buildings where all these connections happen, who provide what is needed for worship, who provide pastoral calls and teaching where many more connections happen.

Our giving, is really in response to the relationship that we have with God that is mirrored in our connection to one another and that connection is very important.

Our Gospel is what is called the beatitudes. Blessings and woes. The blessings are for the poor, the hungry, those who weep and those who are excluded. The woes are for the rich, those who are full, those who are laughing and those who are loved by all. These words are very challenging especially for those of us who have money or are full or are laughing or who have many friends. There are many gaps between these two realities and yet I believe Jesus is calling us to bridge these gaps. I believe we bridge those gaps through the connections we have at St. Peter's and through the connections that go beyond.

St. Peter's and all that comes with it – the buildings, the worship, the staff, the ministries and the groups that gather are all part of how we make connections. They are all a part of how we connect to Jesus Christ and how he calls us to be in this world. They remind us that we cannot leave behind the poor, the grieving, the excluded and the hungry. This work of St. Peter's is what you are being asked to give to. I am amazed at all that happens at St. Peter's day in, and day out because I see it.

This year what will you give to the work of St. Peter's knowing how many connections are happening through its ministries. I have decided to increase my pledge by a small percentage. I have reached the tithe, but feel I need to give more especially when I think about all of the connections we make for God's kingdom.

In invite you to pray, to ponder, and to use some of the tools we have given you over the past several weeks in our pledge campaign newsletters. Think about what you will give to St. Peter's for 2020. There are many more connections to be made. What are you being called to give as you support these connections to God and all those around us?