

What we share with the hungry

Hunger & Poverty April 6, 2021

We might ask, ‘What is separating us from those who have the need to begin with?’

by Bryce Wiebe, director of Special Offerings and the Presbyterian Giving Catalog | Special to Presbyterian News Service



Bryce Wiebe, director of Special Offerings and the Presbyterian Giving Catalog, makes bread dough while preaching an online sermon for the Synod of the Covenant. (Screenshot)

LOUISVILLE — “*Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul and no one said that any of the things that belonged to [them] was [their] own, but they had everything in common.*” (Acts 4:32, English Standard Version)

Sharing food is one of my great joys. I know, I know ... that isn’t altogether unique, and definitely not unique for Presbyterians I know. We gather around tables for myriad reasons, and in lots of different ways. But the act of sharing food can remind us of other things we share namely a *need* for food — hunger — and the interdependence it takes to make a meal possible. I think it is true that we never eat alone. Not really. Even if we sit at the table by ourselves, we are eating with each and every person who finds a part to play in this interconnected food system that helps bring food to table.

Soon after the shutdown orders began in March 2020, some of us came to a new, or refreshed, awareness of the fact that many people in that intricate system have limited

resources for keeping their tables filled. There's beauty in the truth that "we never truly eat alone," but it is tragic when we see so many of those with whom we "eat" — essential farm, transportation, restaurant or grocery workers — barely have enough themselves, if they're able to eat at all.

Christians are called (and often do) give generously to meet human need. The sentence above from Acts 4 keeps working on me, though. Seeing and meeting the need are essential actions in the story, but this sentence pushes my reflection further.

What I see in this breath of Acts 4 (and it's only a breath) is a practice of unity's truth in the face of a separation lie. Seeing the need, they give to meet it, but also embrace a more challenging suggestion: We cannot eat alone, and no one will hunger alone, either. "Ownership," in the story, was surrendered as a sign and symbol of disunity, of a world where some eat on their own and some do not eat at all. The next story, where believers decide to hold back a portion and are dishonest about it, would teach us not to be dishonest in our speech, but also to reject the lie that affluence, ownership and control can sustain us, when all they do is sort, stratify and separate, with death-dealing results for ourselves and for others.

The next time we recognize a need in someone else, we would do well to give to meet it. We might do better if we ask what is separating us from those who have need to begin with.

Questions on which to reflect:

In what ways do I separate myself from my neighbor-in-need?

In what ways do I embrace the lies that affluence, ownership and control can save me?

In what ways do I fail to face the needs of another because I wish to hide from that need within myself?

Bryce Wiebe is director of [Special Offerings](#) and the [Presbyterian Giving Catalog](#). This reflection comes from a sermon Wiebe recorded for the [Synod of the Covenant](#). [Click here](#) to watch the sermon.

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This piece was originally published on "[Where Your Heart Is...A Weekly Offerings Stewardship Blog](#)."