

**SPECIAL
SUNDAY**

HUMAN RELATIONS DAY

SERMON STARTER



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

HUMAN RELATIONS DAY SERMON STARTER



When Sandra was at her lowest point, she felt alone. But as she began the hard work to emerge from addiction on a journey to wholeness, she found a faithful community of individuals who each contributed different gifts to support her.

One person helped her through the recovery process. Another sparked her dream of owning a home. Another helped her navigate the homebuying process. Financial gifts like those made through the Human Relations Day Sunday offering support the work of the Better Community Development Programs that journeyed with Sandra. And of course, she worked and planned and through all of it, God gave her the courage and determination to live into her potential.

So much is possible when we claim our God-given gifts and join with others who have different gifts to build up God's people. Too often we allow ourselves to fall into bickering, division, and self-righteous rhetoric. And while it is important to address systems and principalities that breed injustice, it is equally important to build on our strengths and create networks of transformational love.

Paul writes in his letter to the church in Corinth: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, NRSV).

We are in this together, friends. When one of us is hurting, we all hurt. And when we stop worrying about what just impacts "me," and see that Jesus calls us to care for all humanity, we can be part of creating the beloved community in partnership with God and with our neighbor. How many gifts are buried under the weight of poverty? The whole of society benefits when every person's sacred worth is recognized through access to quality housing, education and healthcare.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said in *Birth of a New Age*, "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."



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As individuals, on our own, none of us has the capacity to “save the world.” Only God can do that. But working together and with our gifts infused with the Holy Spirit to strive for “the common good,” our lives and the lives of others can be transformed. We see what is possible in Sandra’s story—a woman whose life was transformed through the faithfulness of a network of differently gifted people. They each shared their uniqueness to journey alongside her.

We see the change that is possible in our own congregation and through our annual conference when we work together for the common good (*offer examples of Spirit led local ministry that is transforming lives*).

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote, “I continue to dream about a revival that creates authentic community in which each person can be unleashed through the empowerment of the Spirit.”

What is the gift that the Spirit is ready to unleash through you? How will you strive to build God’s kin-dom, the whole family of God?

Knowledge, wisdom, prophecy, miracles, healing, discernment, interpreting and speaking in tongues are some of the gifts that Paul explains we have been given to partner for the common good.

Will you nurture and strengthen your gift and join it with others’ to lift up this community so that as a church, we can touch neighborhoods around the world?

Today we have the opportunity to present our financial gifts to be used for a common good through our The United Methodist Church’s Human Relations Day offering. We know how systemic inequality affects the most vulnerable people. When neighbors experience poverty and live in communities that have limited to resources, as a denomination, our gifts on Human Relations Day work together to empower faith-based volunteer programs, Community Developers and programs that work with at-risk teens. I encourage you to give generously.

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”

—1 CORINTHIANS 12:7, NRSV



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