

All My Relations/Circle of Blessing
Stewardship Theme 2021
South Congregational Church, Granby, CT
Charlie Kuchenbrod, Stewardship Chair
Charlie.kuchenbrod2@gmail.com
860.490.7332

At the time of this campaign, South Congregational and First Congregational Church in Granby were deep into relationship building as we considered a possible merger. Worship was alternating weekly between the congregations worshipping separately and the congregations worshipping together. The joint worship services had a theme running through the fall and the South Congregational worship services were following the stewardship theme.

The jumping off point for this campaign was Edgar Villanueva's ideas about money as medicine, drawn from his life experience as a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina:

◦“For most people, ‘medicine’ is something used to treat or cure a disease, often a [human]-made drug, or sometimes an herb. Sometimes it refers to the whole field: hospitals, pharmacies, doctors, and so on. In Native traditions, however, medicine is a way of achieving balance. An Indigenous medicine person doesn’t just heal illnesses—he or she can restore harmony or establish a state of being, like peacefulness.”

◦“Money is like water. Water can be a precious life-giving resource. But what happens when water is dammed, when a water cannon is fired on protestors in subzero temperatures? Money should be a tool of love, to facilitate relationships, to help us thrive, rather than to hurt and divide us. If it’s used for sacred, life-giving, restorative purposes, it can be medicine.”

Edgar has also written about how money can be used to divide, control, and exploit people or money can be used to connect and relate to people, and to foster belonging.

The Rev. Dennis P. Moon (hereinafter “Denny”) found this piece on the Internet - https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/well_being/documents/all_my_relations.pdf

Denny wrote a song, “I Honor All My Relations” a recording of which is being distributed with this outline. If the files have gotten separated, contact Charlie. The lyrics and chords are included in Attachment 1. The song has not been transcribed into musical notation, but there may be apps for that.

The song was also turned into a slide show, which you can view here - <https://youtu.be/EUp1YdXPEhQ> (Note that the instrumental version of the song is not in sync with the slides.

Denny outlined a six-part series of worship/sermon themes. See attachment 2. However, life happened and it was compressed into a four-part series.

Testimony is a big part of our stewardship campaigns. We included an invitation to people to testify in our newsletter, see attachment 3. We didn't get a strong response, but we did get one outstanding testimonial.

We also arranged a Zoom meeting with a member of the Lakota tribe who could speak about the way "All My Relations" is embedded in tribal culture.

Attachment 4 includes the components of the pledge invitation that was mailed out.

Worship September 12, 2021 – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVb4ViHjraA> the song is introduced for the first time around 30:00 minutes in.

Worship September 26, 2021 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJPHqeMFuAc> This includes Denny teaching the congregation the song (around 23:30) and the testimonial follows the song around 27:00)

Worship October 10, 2021 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVARbX24S28> This includes a "teaching sermon" by Rev. Sandra Fisher on the stewardship theme that starts around 32:00

Worship October 24, 2021 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90NafP6vs6M> This includes a sermon on the stewardship theme (sort of) that starts around 20:00

Worship October 31, 2021 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iPaOsaJ1rc> This includes another sermon on the stewardship theme that starts around 20:00

Worship November 14m 2021 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2FUDq5MqPQ>. This includes a stewardship sermon at around 26:00 and the call pledges around 51:00.

Attachment 1

I Honor All My Relations*—Denny Moon

1st

G

I honor all my relations

G

For none of us stands on our own

C2

Orchards of apples in gratitude entertain bees.

G

I give my life to creation

G

And life, in turn, receive,

C2

G

In spirit, in beauty, in water in blood and in bone.

Refrain

D

D/C

G/B—G/G

I bow to my mother and father,

D

D/C

G/B—G/G

I bow to my family and friend

D

D/C

G/B—G/G

To cousins of different colors

Amin7

Am7/G

D/F#

To neighbor and stranger I bend.

2nd

I harvest the fruit of my labor

To share with the world as it spins,

Passing the blessing it circles and comes round again.

I harvest the love of my neighbor

And with it our differences mend

Passing the blessing it circles and comes round again.

Refrain

I bow to the grouper and guppy,

To eagles in heights where they dwell.

I bow to the vegetable garden

To fireflies casting their spell.

Vs. 3

Emin7

Some see the fruit of their labor,

Em7

As simply the pow'r to consume,

Am7

Em7

Missing the bliss of assisting more gardens to bloom.

Em7

Some hoard the fruit of their labor

Em7

A solo they sing as their song.

Am7 G
Not trusting the choir of creation to which they belong.

Refrain

I bow to the Myst'ry within us
I bow to the Myst'ry between
I bow to the Myst'ry beyond us
That gathers all into one dream.

Tag(two voices)

G G/B C2 Dsus
I honor all my relations Passing the blessing it circles(repeat twice)

G
And comes round again.

Attachment 2: Stewardship Campaign 2021

Suggested Title: We Live in a Circle of Blessing.

The intention is to show how the inter-relationship of all creation, a central tenet of both the biblical tradition and the indigenous traditions around the world, renders prosperity a matter of giving generously to the Circle of Blessing.

This is accomplished by:

- a. Pairing a biblical text with an indigenous idea.
- b. Hearing a sermon on that text and idea each Sunday.
- c. Witness to the Circle of Blessing: A lay story told that relates to the central idea of each Sunday.

Sunday One: “ All my relations” we live in the web of God’s creation which calls us to give.

1. Bible Text: Genesis 1:24-32
2. Central idea: To have dominion over creation does not mean that creation is an object to simply be used for our benefit but family members, who give life to us. So we must live in gratitude to them and insure their life. (creation story from braiding sweetgrass?)

Witness to the Circle of Blessing: Story of a friendship with an animal.

Sunday two:

1. Bible Text: Psalm 139:13-18; I Corinthians 12:12-26
2. Central idea: Each person is born sacred and complete with the power to give.

*Agency is the power to give of your talents, your means, your self to the larger community.

*Seeking control over another would be like challenging the Creator’s purpose for that person.

Witness to the Circle of Blessing: A story that reveals the discovery of a talent or calling, it doesn’t have to be a big thing, that empowered them to contribute to the larger community. Like the time I was part of a planning team for a weekend conference and realized, at the first presentation, that no one had been set aside to make sure the sound set up and take down was covered. Since it was simple enough, I just stepped in and did it. No big deal.

At the end of the conference the planning team evaluated. The chair said, "Our sound guy got sick at the last minute and couldn't come. How did the sound set up happen?" Someone said, "Denny did it. I didn't think he was capable of such technical responsibility, but I just assumed he was assigned to it." "No." I said, "Everyone else had other responsibilities and I saw it wasn't set up, so I did it."

Sunday three:

1. Text: The Rich Young Ruler I. Mark 10:17-22
2. Central idea: Each person has the freedom to give.

*We are given opportunities to learn and understand that life flows reciprocally, in a circle.

*We are given the power to make our own decisions, we can choose to give in accordance with nature/God's creation or not.

Witness to the Circle of Blessing: A story that reveals how one has given something at some point, and later it comes back to them, literally or figuratively.

Sunday four:

1. Text: The Rich Fool: Build Bigger Barns. Luke 12:13-21
2. Central Idea *Each person has the responsibility to give and receive: Each person learns to be accountable for their own decisions. The circle of resources depends on each not withholding our contribution to the flow.

Witness to the Circle of Blessing: A story of how the withholding of a gift, maybe for a reason that seemed noble at the time, but later revealed to be self-centered, kept someone else from thriving. It could work if the awareness came before or after the gift was given.

Sunday five:

1. Bible text: Acts 2:43-47 the early church holding things in common.

2. Central idea: The individual person has an abundant life of meaning only in giving one's self to a community of mutual respect and support. There is no life by one's self.

*One finds joy, meaning and security, in participating in a life that is larger than one's self, ultimately God's creation, the web of life.

*Community is involved with the individual's decisions, but does not try to control them. There is work navigating the boundary between the individual and the group. We are separate yet connected.

+Anyone who demonstrated inappropriate choices received direction

and guidance from the community to help them make better choices. Hence, the mission of the Stewardship Team is not to guilt us into giving more money to South Church, though we hope you will give as you are able, but to help us all understand how a life of gratitude and generosity is faithful to the way of Jesus. Those who would not accept guidance and could not abide by the ways of the community were free to leave.

+Individuals always had the right to disagree, although the unity of the whole, however, the group was considered most important. This sometimes meant that a dissenting person would leave a group rather than disturb the sense of togetherness and common purpose.

Witness to the Circle of Blessing: A story of giving of something, small or large, that gave great joy to someone, maybe greater than you thought, and in turn filled you with joy and meaning.

Sunday six:

Text: Phillipians 2:5-11

1. Central Idea: In all First Nations and Inuit cultures, people's status increased not by what they had, but by their generosity — what they gave away. So it is with following Jesus.

*The Anishinabé language traditionally had no word for savings. Putting items aside for future use or personal gain was against the value of sharing. Families

and communities depended upon each person contributing his or her best efforts, with all sharing in the products of those efforts.

*The ethic of sharing also extended to non-human elements of the world.

Rituals of returning gifts to the land in exchange for its provision of food and other materials were part of all traditional First Nations and Inuit cultures. For example, when cutting down the centre pole for a Sundance lodge, many prayers of thanks would be given to the tree for allowing its use in the ceremony. In a similar way, when a Cree hunter was successful, the entire community gathered for a feast. Haudenosaunee villagers shared in the tasks necessary to plant, tend, and harvest the crops that would feed them through the winter. In all First Nations and Inuit cultures, people's status increased not by what they accumulated, but by their generosity — what they gave away.

Witness to the Circle of Blessing: A story about a person in your life who was held in respect for their generosity.

Attachment 3: Invitation to Testify

Fall Stewardship Theme
The Circle of Blessing
Do You have a story to tell?

This fall we take a page out of the spiritual tradition of indigenous peoples—which is remarkably like our own biblical tradition. Based on the native American premise that we honor all our relation (which includes not only our own crazy family but animals and plants as well) this program pairs biblical texts with native wisdom to help us see that joy and meaning arise when we offer our resources to the circle of blessing.

We would like to hear YOUR stories from the Circle of Blessing. Read these prompts based on a weekly theme and if a story appears to you. LET US KNOW!

Story Prompts

*You discover for the 1st time (or 2nd or 3rd) that you have a real relationship, a friendship, with an animal of a different species. How did you discover this? What makes it real?

*You discover that you have a talent or passion that the world wants and needs, and you give it to the world.

*You give a gift and a week or a decade later it comes back to you, literally or figuratively.

*You withheld a gift, maybe for a reason that seemed noble at the time, then you realized that it was more important for someone else, and you gave it to them.

*You gave a little gift to someone that meant more to them than you had imagined. In turn, you were filled with joy and meaning.

*A person in your life of average means or less, who was held in respect for their generosity.

Or perhaps one of the lines from the song written for our campaign will inspire a story in you. Please!! Let us know if you have a story to share. (lyrics below)

We are grateful for all you give!!

The Stewardship Team: Charlie Kuchenbrod, Roger Barrett, Sarah Scotto, Bill Ross, Roger and Diane Hensdorf, Denny Moon.

Attachment 4

Pledge letter – front, back, and insert

Dear Members and Friends of South Church,

Denny's song, I Honor All My Relations (see flip side) says it all. When you pledge:

- You experience the bliss of assisting more gardens to bloom;
- You join the chorus of creation to which you belong; and
- You pass the blessings that will circle and come round again!

Kaleidoscope Corner, Faith Journey, Granby UCC youth group...

All gardens!

A worshipping community...

A garden!

A safe place for all – members or not - who need it...

A garden!

People who love their neighbors (or try to!)

A chorus!

People who love themselves (or try to!)

A chorus!

People who love creation (or try to!)

A chorus!

Deeper collaboration with First Church...

New gardens, new songs!

A pledge is a passing of blessings with faith and in hope that blessings don't move in straight lines, they move in circles.

Churches are changing. For our church to continue to thrive, for all of our gardens to grow, for our chorus to be heard, we need a solid core of people willing to be deeply engaged in the creation of our community. This includes being financially generous, according to their means. For our church to continue to thrive, we need the solid core to be surrounded by supporters, perhaps not as deeply engaged, but willing to contribute because even though they may not spend a lot of time in the gardens, it is important to them to know that the gardens are there – for other people and for themselves when they need a garden. And even though they may not always be in the chorus, they want to hear the music. Our pledge goal this year is \$270,000, a modest increase in overall giving, and which will keep our gardens and choruses strong. Some pledges will be lost due to death and departure, and we will need generosity to stay strong.

With Love,

Your Stewardship Committee,

Roger Barrette, Diane & Roger Hensdorf, Charlie Kuchenbrod, Denny Moon, Bill Ross, Sara Scotto

*If you return a pledge card. If we don't hear from you, we will send reminders. If you are not in a position to pledge, please return the card with \$0 marked and we will respect your choice.

Feel free to add a note to our pastors if you feel the need to add a word of explanation or ask for a word of prayer. Your notes will be kept confidential and you are always welcome.

I Honor All My Relation*—Denny Moon

1st

I honor all my relations
For none of us stands on our own
Orchards of apples in gratitude entertain bees.
I give my life to creation
And life, in turn, receive,
In spirit, in beauty, in water in blood and in bone.

Refrain

I bow to my mother and father,
I bow to my family and friend
To cousins of different colors
To neighbor and stranger I bend.

2nd

I harvest the fruit of my labor
To share with the world as it spins,
Passing the blessing it circles and comes round again.
I harvest the love of my neighbor
And with it our differences mend
Passing the blessing it circles and comes round again.

* “All my relations” is the English equivalent of a phrase familiar to most Native peoples of North America. It may begin or end a prayer or speech or a story, and, while each tribe has its own way of expressing this sentiment in its own language, the meaning is the same.

“All my relations” is at first a reminder of who we are and of our relationship with both our family and our relatives. It also reminds us of the extended relationship we share with all human beings. But the relationships that Native people see go further, the web of kinship to animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined.

Refrain

I bow to the grouper and guppy,
To eagles in heights where they dwell.
I bow to the vegetable garden
To fireflies casting their spell.

Vs. 3

Some see the fruit of their labor,
As simply the pow’r to consume,
Missing the bliss of assisting more gardens to bloom.
Some hoard the fruit of their labor
A solo they sing as their song.
Not trusting the choir of creation to which they belong.

Refrain


I bow to the Myst’ry within us
I bow to the Myst’ry between
I bow to the Myst’ry beyond us
That gathers all into one dream.

Tag(two voices)

I honor all my relations
Passing the blessing it circles and I honor all my relations
Passing the blessing it circles and comes round again.

More than that, “All my relations” is an encouragement for us to accept the responsibilities we have within the universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral manner (a common admonishment is to say of someone that they act as if they had no relations).

— Thomas King, *All My Relations*



How we
love our
neighbors,
gardens we
help
cultivate,
choruses
we support

- Online access to worship – streaming and on demand
- Caring Ministry (ministry to shut ins)
- Kaleidoscope Corner
- Faith Journey (confirmation class)
- Granby UCC Youth Ministry
- Sow & Reap
- Service & Learning trips for youth and adults
- Waste Not, Want Not
- Cathedral of the Night (food and support for homeless people)
- Granby Racial Reconciliation
- Community use of facilities: 12 Step Groups, 4H Robotics, Scouts
- Garden of Gratitude (literally a garden!)
- Pumpkin patch
- Salmon Brook Music Series
- Bruce Porter Music Series
- Good Company Community Theater