

For _____ Elders



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Writer: Annemarie Klassen
Editors: Dorothy Henderson and Barbara McLean
Consultant: Keith Knight

Presbyterians Sharing . . .

Quiz

A quick and snappy exercise that may be used to introduce a discussion about *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* at a meeting of session. Divide the session into pairs, provide a few moments for them to answer these questions, and then review the answers as a group. You may make this into a fun exercise, seeing who finishes first or giving a prize to the pair with the most answers (perhaps they could do a moment for mission on Sunday morning?). However, the intention is not to see who has the most answers, but to introduce various aspects of *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*

1. Joy Randall is a missionary in _____.
2. Another name for *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* is the _____ budget.
3. *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* provides financial support for church camps. **True or False**
4. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has six mission staff people or couples in Central America. The names of three are _____, _____, _____.
5. The following ministry in our presbytery or synod receives support from *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*

6. The Bible says that the love of _____ is the root of all evil, yet it enables ministry to happen.
7. *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* provides financial support for theological colleges. **True or False**
8. An annual meeting of Presbyterians from across Canada, funded through *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*, is _____.
9. *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* supports the following number of overseas staff (circle one number):
about 20, about 30, about 40, about 50.
10. Name two missions of Canada Ministries that are supported through *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*
11. Last year our congregation gave \$_____ to *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*
12. "Be rich in good works, generous, and _____ to _____."
I Timothy 6:18

Answers on back

Answers to Quiz

1. Taiwan
2. General Assembly
3. False
4. Joe Reed, David Villalonga, Denise Van Wissen, Jim and Brenda Patterson, Ken and Kennis Kim, Fernando Cascante
5. (your minister may know if you do not)
6. money
7. true
8. the General Assembly
9. about 40
10. Tyndale-St. Georges Community Centre in Montreal, Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry
11. (Does your session decide what allocation to recommend to the congregation?)
12. ready to share

But it's hard to raise funds for

Presbyterians Sharing . . .

Over the past year, *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* workshops have been held in presbyteries across Canada. They have provided opportunities for congregations to learn more about the mission and ministry of *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*, to share with each other and to provide feedback about some of the issues they face with regard to *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*. These have been energizing events and people have typically gone back to their congregations with enthusiasm and a vision for raising awareness for the wide variety of ministries supported through *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*.

One of the discussion questions at these workshops was, "**What does Presbyterians Sharing . . . mean to you?**"

Answers included responses such as:

- Connecting us with congregations across Canada
- Being a church
- Spreading God's word
- It provides a way to enter mission
- We have a need to share
- Starting new congregations
- A different form of stewardship – outside the congregation
- What if we were on the receiving end?
- Seeing beyond ourselves
- Expanding and broadening
- Following Christ's command
- Resources and services for my congregation
- Sharing with others
- Partnerships with others
- Congregations that do well in mission have less trouble at home

Another discussion question was, "**What are some of the challenges your congregation experiences around Presbyterians Sharing . . . ?**"

The following is a summary of the most frequent responses. As your session provides leadership in *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*, you may want to address these concerns as they relate to your congregation.

1. A GENERAL LACK OF INFORMATION

- **No access to available resources (the most common response)**
- Lack of understanding about the allocation formula
- Confusion about the difference between PWS&D and *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*
- Lack of knowledge about where the money is going (e.g., does it all go to Toronto?)

The strongest message coming out of the workshops was that people do not know what *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* does. Many – perhaps the majority – had no knowledge of the educational resources that are available free of charge. In fact, they were amazed at the many resources that are available. Samples of these resources are regularly sent to all congregations. Included in this mailing is a list of these resources. The session is encouraged to ensure that these resources are used, with the aim that increased knowledge will strengthen understanding and foster a sense of connectedness, interest and enthusiasm, as well as prayer and financial support.

Note: The November 2002 issue of *For Elders* included information about the last three bullets in the above list.

2. **SOME CONGREGATIONS ARE FACING A CASH CRUNCH**, due to one or more of the following reasons:

- An increase in local congregational costs
- Upkeep and maintenance for aging buildings
- Declining membership
- A decrease in intentional, percentage giving, or tithing, by congregational members

A cash crunch may lead to a "need to look after ourselves first" mentality. Increased local costs are a real problem for many congregations. While it is important for congregations to be financially responsible so that they can cover their ongoing expenses for ministry, a healthy congregation will seek a balance between meeting its own needs and sharing with others. Congregations that have a concern beyond their own survival, however important and necessary, will likely find that their own ministries grow as they also reach out beyond themselves.

At the same time, congregations are encouraged to develop a strong stewardship ministry that will help people grow in giving as a response of gratitude for God's gracious gifts. The 120th General Assembly (1994) adopted a minimum of 5% of gross annual income as a 'modern tithe.'

"It seems appropriate to suggest that Canadian Presbyterians be encouraged to give 'the modern tithe' or five per cent (5%) of gross annual household income in support of the ministry and mission of the Church (the 106th General Assembly approved a similar recommendation calling for the biblical practice of proportional giving and a minimum goal of offering 5% of income . . .) This level of giving will help people to put God first in their lives. In response to the generosity of God and with an attitude of gratitude people will be encouraged to grow in their givings to five per cent and beyond. . ." (1994 Acts and Proceedings, p.334)

While 5% is only half of the tithe suggested in the Old Testament, think of all the church could do – locally, nationally and internationally – if Presbyterians gave 5% of their income!

3. **PRESBYTERIANS SHARING . . . IS NOT CONCRETE AND TANGIBLE** (like the minister's salary or the fuel bill)

- There is in our day an increasing desire for relationships in mission – for a personal face, a concrete connection
- It's hard to make the personal connection when the *Presbyterians Sharing* . . . money goes to a unified budget, i.e., one budget that is distributed to many ministries and agencies

The above concerns indicate the need to be intentional and creative in education – to make the ministries funded through *Presbyterians Sharing* . . . personal and reachable. Simply sending money year after year without education about why it is being sent and how it will make a difference in people's lives misses a valuable opportunity for people to feel connected.

Some congregations go on mission tours to see how the church works with partners in many places. Or they invite mission speakers to share their story. Arrangements for mission tours and mission speakers can be made through the Mission Interpretation office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

(For more information, see "Telling the Story of *Presbyterians Sharing* . . ." included in this *For Elders* issue.)

4. CHANGING TRENDS IN GIVING, such as

- Questioning the advantage of denominational mission
- An increasing number of financial requests from other worthy organizations
- A desire for hands-on local mission vs. sending money to central, far-away locations

People coming into the Presbyterian Church for the first time, and many young adults, may not have the denominational loyalty of somebody who has been a longstanding member. They frequently ask, "What does it mean to be Presbyterian?" or "Why is it important to be part of a denomination anyway?" These are valid questions that would make for a good study session for a new members' class, young adult class or other study group. (A helpful study resource, available through The Bookroom, is *Glorifying and Enjoying God: The People, Practice and Promise of The Presbyterian Church in Canada*).

Presbyterians Sharing . . . makes possible our existence as a denomination in Canada. It also enable us, as a connec-tional church, to participate together in mission and ministry through the education of clergy, the support of congregations in their ministries, the building of new congregations, and mission work with partners in Canada and around the world.

Raising Awareness of *Presbyterians Sharing* . . . —How do we get started?

Appoint a few people with responsibility for this ministry

- Who? Enthusiastic, visionary people with representation from session.
- Point person: One of these people could be the point person to receive educational materials from the Stewardship/Education for Mission office of the national church.
- Begin each meeting with a brief study about mission and stewardship.
- Discuss budgetary needs and how the committee's work will be funded.

Make a plan

Short term

- choose a few things to do immediately, e.g., short articles in the newsletter, a Moment for Mission, bulletin inserts, regular prayer support in worship

Long term – make a plan for the year

Ask yourselves:

- what do you want to accomplish in the next year?
- what are your targets for giving?
- how many people do you want to involve?

A year-round approach might look like this:

- every Sunday: a moment in worship – a mission capsule, a prayer during the offering, a snapshot in the bulletin
- every month: a specific focus on a particular ministry funded through *Presbyterians Sharing* . . .
- every quarter: a new display in the narthex; an article in the church newsletter
- in the spring: a mission study; a visit from a missionary (as available)
- in the fall: *Presbyterians Sharing* . . . Sunday; a mission fest

Develop a cohesive approach to mission. In your year-round plan, include the work of PWS&D, the WMS/AMS and local initiatives. If other groups have responsibility for these areas of work, consult with them and work together as much as possible. Take note of the following designated Sunday opportunities for mission awareness and education:

- PWS&D Sunday (first Sunday in February)
- Mission Awareness Sunday (WMS/AMS – last Sunday in April)
- *Presbyterians Sharing* . . . Sunday (last Sunday in September)

Some general suggestions for mission funding

Involve all the people in congregation – children, youth, adults.

Don't be afraid to have expectations – People live forward or downward according to what is expected.

Provide a variety of ways for people to give:

- special offerings
- special times such as Christmas
- special offering boxes
- regular, weekly giving
- pre-authorized remittances through the bank

Use a wide variety of communication tools.

Repeat the message – use the same picture more than once, tell the same facts over again. It is said that people retain about 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, and 50% of what they see *and* hear.

Celebrate; be encouraging; be positive.

Pray regularly for The Presbyterian Church in Canada and its ministries.

Work with the stewardship committee or whoever has responsibility for mission funding

- review the *suggested* allocation; make recommendations to the session regarding what allocation the congregation will *accept*
- Some congregations choose three mission projects to pray for, educate about, support financially:
 - at the local level
 - in Canada – *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* (through Canada Ministries)
 - globally – *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* (through International Ministries) and PWS&D
- raise mission awareness through a *Something Extra* project

Telling the Story of *Presbyterians Sharing . . .*

Worship

Mission is grounded in worship. Make mission and the content of the church's mission a frequent part of the sermon, hymns, prayers, litanies and dramatic presentations.

Offering

Make connections between the gifts of money and the ministries supported through *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* In prayers, thank God for these ministries and ask God to bless them.

A suggestion: From time to time, during the offering, have the treasurer bring forward the cheque that will be sent for *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* In the prayer, thank God for the people who have generously given their money and pray that the ministries supported through these gifts will be blessed.

Presbyterians Sharing . . . Sunday

The last Sunday in September of every year is designated as *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* Sunday. Take this opportunity to have a special focus on *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* Worship resources, sent to every congregation in June of each year, may be used for this service.

Mission Study

Provide significant opportunities for engagement with the gospel message and how it relates to mission. This is a good way to build a high level of interest and commitment to mission.

Visiting speakers

Invite mission staff to share their stories with your congregation. Where possible, invite church office staff to come and talk about their areas of ministry. (Contact the Mission Interpretation Coordinator to make these arrangements.)

Reports to the congregation

Take many opportunities to share stories of the mission and ministries of *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* This may happen at various times and places – in the sermon, church school classes, a Moment for Mission in Worship, at the beginning of a committee meeting or board meeting, new members' class.

This may happen in written form – in the church bulletin, or as an article in the congregation's newsletter. One Presbyterian congregation has appointed a person to write a *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* /stewardship snapshot every week for use as a bulletin insert.

Mission Displays

Create displays on bulletin boards and on table tops.
Be creative! Use pictures, words, objects.
Place displays in places where people will see them.

Mission Fairs

Set aside a day or weekend to communicate what you are doing in mission and to celebrate it. Include the work of *Presbyterians Sharing . . .* and PWS&D.

These times usually include speakers, audiovisuals, displays or booths that tell about some aspect of mission. They might include a dinner or after-church luncheon.

Build this up as a significant event in your congregation. Make it energizing and fun. It will be most effective if a majority of the congregation participates.

Opportunities for more direct involvement in mission:

(These programs are coordinated through the Mission Interpretation Office. Call 1-800-619-7301; 416-441-1111, Ext. 259, or email bnawratil@presbyterian.ca.)

Twinning – Congregations may twin with groups or congregations where we have mission partners, in Canada or abroad. A resource is available to help congregations discern whether they wish to enter a twinning relationship.

Mission Tours – Two types of mission tours are offered: exposure tours and work tours. The Mission Interpretation Coordinator will work with the congregation on all steps of the process:

- choosing the destination and connecting with the mission staff who will host the tour
- before the tour: discernment process, Bible study, preparation details and orientation
- after the tour: debriefing and follow-up