



Sermon, March 26, 2017  
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Coburg and Junction City United Methodist Churches

Sermon Series: Where Do We Go from Here?  
“Sharing”

*Preparation to Receive Scripture: Has there ever been a time in your life when you tried doing things on your own, but then found it easier to share the task?*

**Scripture: Exodus 18 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**18:1** Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. <sup>2</sup> After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro took her back, <sup>3</sup> along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been an alien in a foreign land"), <sup>4</sup> and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). <sup>5</sup> Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came into the wilderness where Moses was encamped at the mountain of God, bringing Moses' sons and wife to him. <sup>6</sup> He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, with your wife and her two sons." <sup>7</sup> Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed down and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare, and they went into the tent. <sup>8</sup> Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had beset them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. <sup>9</sup> Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in delivering them from the Egyptians.

<sup>10</sup> Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. <sup>11</sup> Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because he delivered the people from the Egyptians, when they dealt arrogantly with them." <sup>12</sup> And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

<sup>13</sup> The next day Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him from morning until evening. <sup>14</sup> When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?" <sup>15</sup> Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. <sup>16</sup> When they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God." <sup>17</sup> Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. <sup>18</sup> You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. <sup>19</sup> Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; <sup>20</sup> teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. <sup>21</sup> You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. <sup>22</sup> Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. <sup>23</sup> If you do this,

## “Sharing”

and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace.”

<sup>24</sup> So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. <sup>25</sup> Moses chose able men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. <sup>26</sup> And they judged the people at all times; hard cases they brought to Moses, but any minor case they decided themselves. <sup>27</sup> Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went off to his own country.

Sarah Jo Plucker, shared the following story in *Reader's Digest*:

When my father's company hired a consultant to improve efficiency, he immediately called a meeting of all shop personnel. In stressing the importance of following a set plan of engineering procedures, he gave this analogy: "You are on the Titanic, and it's sinking. You find yourself on a lifeboat. It's dark and hazy. Which direction would you row? Now, you're in the same situation, but you have the ship's navigator with you. Which way would you row? You'd row the way the navigator told you to, right?"

In the crowd there were murmurs of agreement until one man in the back piped up. "Well, I don't know," he said. "He already hit one iceberg!"

We like to follow a leader, but we want to be sure he or she knows where they are going, or that they know what they are doing. This morning's scripture reading is a very revealing story about the true nature of leadership, and how the best leadership is shared leadership.

### **Jethro sharing advice – ideas from a seasoned leader**

Let's see if we can recap the main points of Jethro's advice to Moses. But first, before we do that, let's consider how it is that Jethro might have come by this wisdom:

1. He is called "the priest of Midian," which might be an actual title of office. He is actually a person of influence, perhaps the head of a temple, perhaps a priest in the court of the ruler.
2. He has a large herd of sheep, which Moses tends. He is a man of some wealth.

## “Sharing”

3. All of this suggests that he has probably been a leader and responsible for overseeing operations that affect many people. His advice probably comes far hard-earned experience.

So, what are the main points he shares with Moses? (Invite responses)

1. Understand your role. Moses was to represent the people to God, and God to the people. That is an all-consuming job in itself. Moses is to instruct people in how they should live.
2. Divide the task of listening and judging among smaller groups, with successive levels of difficulty or significance. Only the most difficult cases go to Moses.
3. Choose your leaders, your judges, carefully. They must be people of proven wisdom, personal integrity, and not able to be bribed.
4. Given them instruction, that they will then pass on to the rest of the people.

Congregational questions:

1. Sharing the task of leadership and arbitration – how has this changed?
2. How do we share leadership and gifts?

### **UMCOR Story**

I would like to share with you the story of one of the most successful relief agencies in the world, and one that is a great example of what we can accomplish if we share leadership, and share the work together. Of course, I’m speaking about our own UMCOR: The United Methodist Committee on Relief.

UMCOR was founded in 1940, as “voice of conscience among Methodists to act in the relief of human suffering without distinction of race, color, or creed.” So, said Bishop Herbert Welch at General Conference in 1940 when UMCOR’s forerunner, the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief (MCOR), was started. The goal then was to respond to suffering among peoples overseas after the onset of World War II.

## “Sharing”

Although the committee was supposed to be temporary, General Conference, the church’s legislative body, re-approved its work every four years. In 1972, the committee was made a permanent part of the General Board of Global Ministries and renamed the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). A structure was formalized and the committee’s scope expanded to include disaster relief in the United States. UMCOR works in more than 80 countries worldwide, including the United States. Its mission, grounded in the teachings of Jesus, is to alleviate human suffering - whether caused by war, conflict or natural disaster, with open hearts and minds to all people. UMCOR responds to natural or civil disasters that are interruptions of such magnitude that they overwhelm a community’s ability to recover on its own. UMCOR works through programs that address hunger, poverty, sustainable agriculture, international and domestic emergencies, refugee and immigrant concerns, global health issues, and transitional development.

UMCOR has helped survivors of earthquakes in Nicaragua, famine in Africa, and tornadoes, floods, and hurricanes in the United States. As countries such as Liberia, Rwanda, and Bosnia experienced civil strife, UMCOR was there to help affected communities rebuild homes and lives. We provided communities with training and education to help them confront hunger and poverty.

UMCOR has provided relief to survivors of earthquakes in Haiti and Chile; floods in Pakistan; and the 2011 tsunami, earthquake, and nuclear threat in Japan; our field office in Afghanistan has helped rebuild communities torn apart by decades of war, and we provided long-term recovery aid to communities in the US South devastated by hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike.

UMCOR’s unique structure encourages quick, significant responses. UMCOR represents a branch of the General Board of Global Ministries’ Health and Relief Unit. Under this unit, UMCOR enjoys financial stability, organizational accountability, and bureaucratic protection. The organization is led by a board of 18 directors from around the world who oversee operations, develop strategies, and search out opportunities

## “Sharing”

for providing aid. Offices in New York, Washington DC, and Vienna, Austria monitor world situations and evaluate how relief can be best distributed. Programs are organized according to their geographical regions: Africa, Europe and Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the United States.

What makes UMCOR unique is its structure for receiving donations. UMCOR is organized so that when a need arises the committee sends all pertinent information to local churches and organizations worldwide. These churches and organizations then collect donations and send them to distribution centers. By doing this UMCOR is able to receive large donations very quickly and very efficiently, thus reducing overhead and operational costs. UMCOR acts as an information relay point between needs and donations. In an effort to streamline relief efforts around the world UMCOR has developed five core areas of relief: Hunger, Health, Refugees, Emergencies, and Relief Supplies. Each area of relief consists of many projects in different distressed areas of the world.

That is UMCOR, an agency that is a leader among relief agencies worldwide. Its leadership is based in the teaching of Jesus Christ, and it sets a standard for others to follow. Peter Drucker says this about leadership: “Leadership is not magnetic personality. That can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not making friends and influencing people; that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, the raising of a person's performance to higher standards, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.”

One way we can do that for one another is to recognize the strength, abilities, skill, character, and laudable qualities in others. Our spiritual practice for this week is affirming others in order to bolster their confidence and increase their desire to serve and become persons of good character, generosity of spirit, and exhibit true compassion. So this morning, we are going to start that practice by writing affirmations.

## “Sharing”

### **PRACTICE *Affirmations***

- 1. Using the enclosed cards, write a message of affirmation and appreciation to someone in the church whose leadership and service you are thankful for. Take it home and mail it to them. You may remain anonymous.*