

Think About 4

St Philip's United Church of Christ

Reading for the week: Acts 4:32-35

This week, you might try the practice again of reading this brief Bible story to yourself three times – first to get the story, second to see what words stand out to you, and third to develop some thoughts and questions. After each reading, pause for a moment, and allow the words of the story to speak to you.

This week's lesson talks about an extraordinary sense of community among the believers. It says they were of "one heart and mind." What does that phrase mean to you? Have you ever been part of a group of people who were of "one heart and mind?" There are many different kinds of human relationships that cause us to have feelings for one another. We remember classmates or work groups, or people we knew in military or community service, and think we'd like to see those folks again. In our present lives, we are still making friends, and we find ourselves drawn to one another, often because of common interests, experiences or needs. But there is a particular kind of fellowship, affection and mutual commitment among those who have shared a common dream and worked for it together. The followers of Jesus in the early church didn't develop an attitude of sharing because someone told them they had to, or even because it was the right thing to do. They did it because they were bound to one another in a cherished common mission.

Some of today's Christian congregations are family chapels, some are like clubs, and some are like stores where certain kinds of people like to shop. Some seem like entertainments. Others are based upon familiar traditions and habits. But the best congregations are those where the people are bound to one another because of their common experience of the importance of the work they do together.

Here's a simple exercise for you to practice this week to explore your sense of spiritual fellowship in your congregation:

First, make a list of the things you really like about your church. Allow yourself to go beyond the first one or two things that come to mind. If you say "the friendly people" first, you won't be alone; so go a little further. What is it about them that makes them seem friendly? Are they friendly in some way that is different from other groups you attend or belong to?

Second, make a list of the things you feel our congregation is deeply committed to or deeply cares about. How do you think these things affect the warmth of your relationships in our church?

Think about this: the act of sharing is at heart an act of humility. To share our possessions, our work, our time, and our compassion is to affirm that others are as important and deserving as we are. When we do that, we grow greatly in spiritual awareness.

(This weekly "think about" is printed as an attachment to our Sunday bulletin at St Philip's United Church of Christ, 10708 Lavinia Drive, St Louis, MO 63123. It may also be found on our website. We encourage you to make comments and also to share the page with anyone you feel may enjoy seeing it. We are a congregation of the United Church of Christ, a progressive Christian denomination that is committed to

*inclusive ministry in the spirit of Christ's prayer "that all God's people may be one." Allen M. Fluent,
Transitional Pastor)*