

Any list of the top ten reasons for a wider church would surely include “to help congregations do together what can **only** be done, or can **best** be done, together.”¹ This year we have seen eloquent testimony to that truth as our local church contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) have gone immediately to work responding to devastating earthquakes in Haiti and Chile. Through the wider church, we have been present to our sisters and brothers in need across the nation and around the globe.

Last year local churches of the Minnesota Conference gave a total of \$90,800 to OGHS. Macalester-Plymouth United Church, St. Paul; First UCC, Northfield; Chapel Hills, Edina; Union Congregational, St. Louis Park; Peace, Duluth; Zion UCC, LeSueur; Mayflower, Minneapolis; Pilgrim, Duluth; and New Brighton UCC together contributing nearly \$32,000. Several small-membership congregations were especially generous: Grace, Millville; St. Paul’s, Welcome; Pilgrims, Maple Grove; St. James, Barnesville; and Cherokee Park, St. Paul.

These and all OGHS contributions made possible a timely and faithful response to international emergencies and national disasters. They also assisted in refugee resettlement and in ministries in the areas of education, health and agriculture.

This Sunday, March 14, is the suggested Sunday for receiving the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. I encourage you to give generously.

While you have your checkbook out, consider as well a contribution to Minnesota FoodShare. Each March, FoodShare directs the largest food drive in the state. This year the campaign is working to raise 12 million combined pounds and dollars because the need at the 300 food shelves around the state is sobering. To learn more, go to <http://mnfoodshare.gmcc.org/>.

In her poem, “Beyond the Snow Belt,” Mary Oliver writes of a devastating snow storm “two counties north,” which “let’s be truthful ... to us is far away.” She concludes, “Till *the principle of things* takes root, how shall examples move us from our calm? I only say, **except as we have loved, all news arrives as from a distant land.**”²

As people of faith, we confess that “the principle of things” is that all are beloved children of one God. News of need, whether on another continent or in a neighboring county, comes to us not as from a distant land but as a word about those we love.

Thanks be to God for the gift of the wider church and for the opportunity to give generously – to share our resources and to change lives!

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¹ Richard L. Hamm, Recreating the Church: Leadership for the Postmodern Age, p. 114.

² Mary Oliver, New and Selected Poems: Volume One, p. 245.