



**FOOD FOR  
THE JOURNEY**

# WALKING alongside

strengthening congregational community ministries

## » Community Gardening Ministry «

### » DEVOTIONAL

#### **Scripture**

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

— Acts 4:32

#### **Kelsey's Story**

When I was a sophomore in high school, my church took a mission trip to Tijuana, Mexico. While staying at a church in the city, we went out in teams to complete building assignments for members of the congregation. My team was tasked with insulating a two-room home for an elderly woman who lived alone. Each morning when we arrived, she had a modest breakfast of beans, eggs, and tortillas waiting for us. As we ate together each morning, we got to know the heart of the elderly woman. She was grateful for our help, and our language barriers were torn down as we communicated with smiles, laughter and limited Spanish.

On our final day in her home, we moved her refrigerator to insulate the wall behind it. The door accidentally swung open, and we saw the sparse contents of her refrigerator. As I closed the door, I realized how much the woman had sacrificed to feed us each morning. The impact of her actions has stayed with me through the years. The woman in Mexico had nothing, yet she gave freely of her food. Community gardening provides an opportunity for the church to give freely as well. While the circumstances are different from my mission trip experience, the result is the same. Sharing food reminds us of the ways we are called to live with and care for others.

#### **Commentary**

The first sentence of this verse in Acts reveals a passionate unity among believers that exemplifies a recurring theme in the New Testament. Along with Luke, Paul also encouraged unity as he wrote letters to the Romans, Ephesians, and Philippians. Given the culture of persecution and ridicule in first-century Rome, unity of believers was especially important for the solidarity of the church. Though it had special meaning for the early church, unity is no less important for believers today.

The Acts passage describes a time in early church life when believers gave up their land and possessions for the good of the church. While some believers gave up everything, others retained private ownership of land and goods to provide for the church on an ongoing basis (Fernando, 1998). This outpouring of possessions was compelled, not by church leaders or by direct instruction from God, but out of an attitude of the heart. Importantly, this was not the first, but the second reference in Acts to the selling of possessions.

American churches today tend to be less economically diverse than the church in Acts. While believers may reach out to different populations through ministry, they tend to attend churches with people who are like them (Fernando, 1998). One way to unify the church "in one heart and mind," as the passage suggests, is to reach out to neighbors through community gardening. Gardens bring people of all

MORE ON BACK

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different ages, ethnicities, and income brackets together for a common cause: growing nutritious foods to feed the community. While not every believer may feel called to sell his possessions for the good of the church, anyone can give of their time and energy to create a garden that will yield, not only vegetables, but mutual respect, friendships, and connections.

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, we thank you for making the earth fruitful, so that it might produce what is needed for life: Bless those who work in the fields; give us seasonable weather; and grant that we may all share the fruits for the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—"Prayer for Agriculture," Book of Common Prayer

### **Question for reflection**

- In what ways can your church be community with your neighbors?

### **Stepping Stones**

*Brief descriptions of how to implement specific ministries. For each of the five broader areas above, many ministries can be envisioned. We have identified a few of these for each area and have articulated the steps for how that ministry might be planned.*

### **Pathways**

*Learn from the first-hand account of those already engaged in this specific ministry. Plus, develop networking contacts as go-to sources to explore solutions to challenges or celebrations of successes.*

### **Food for the Journey**

*A short devotional based on scripture that can be used in church bulletins, as a Moment for Mission during worship or as an introduction to a Bible study.*

### **Reference**

Fernando, D. A. (1998). *NIV Application Commentary, Acts*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.