It isn’t often we hear from the book of Proverbs. This book is written as a way to impart wisdom and was written around the 10th century and 5th century B.C. It is sometimes attributed to King Solomon. Whether or not he actually is the author of the book we don’t know for sure but much of the book was written during his lifetime. It is telling in that it highlights the same problems and challenges of being human, how to live with one another and how to lessen the disparities between peoples that we struggle with today. It shows that almost from the beginning of human life humanity has struggled to live in a just and equitable society. Almost from the beginning resources have been hoarded by a few and human differences have been highlighted rather than appreciated and cherished. Much of the Bible highlights the difference between the rich and the poor but differences and biases against people exist for a multitude of reasons. For instance, in the gospel, Jesus treats a gentile woman as an outsider and no better than a dog until he realizes that she too is a believer and demonstrates faith in a God who continually challenges us to widen our circle of relationships. Last week I listened to a podcast with Krista Tippett and her guest Arlie Hoschschild who is a retired professor of Sociology at Berkeley. Arlie admits that she has spent much of her life in a bubble living in Berkeley and teaching at a liberal University has often been filled with like -minded people who think like she does and who support the same causes, and likely vote the same. She decided to do a study which she has turned into a book about called “Strangers in their own Land”. For the study Arlie spent five years making regular trips to Southwest Louisiana which was a tea party stronghold. She went there to intentionally speak to people who were vastly different from herself and she went as an empathetic listener. Her preparation for this study was that as a child she lived in many places: Israel, New Zealand, Ghana, Tunisia because her dad was in the Foreign Service. Arlie is the founder of sociology of emotion. She has found and we can observe in ourselves and others that often our political beliefs and beliefs about one another are based not on rational thinking or facts, but rather they are believed on an emotional level. To get at how people developed their political beliefs Arlie explored the deep stories of the people on the right and people on the left. She found out where they came from, what had formed them into the people they are today and how the walls of deep division had made it almost impossible for left and right to even have a civil conversation or listen to one another. We have seemingly lost any semblance of understanding for those who are outside our bubbles. For the people on the right Arlie found a deep sense that there is a feeling that they have been waiting in a line for a long time and others have cut in front of them and they have been left behind. The example given was how people such as Obama with a single mother managed to get a Harvard education. No thought was given to the possibility that he is a brilliant man and worked his way to this achievement. Another issue mentioned is the power and wealth of big corporations who managed to avoid any repercussions financially and instead were given all sorts of tax breaks. One man mentioned that if his little fishing boat leaked oil into the water he’d be fined and it would be a great financial hardship whereas a large corporation polluting a whole community got off scott free. Arlie believes that a way to meet one another across divisions is to take off our personal alarm bells and come into each encounter with an open, empathetic mind; look for and Find moments of commonality, things that both sides agree on. Arlie formed a coalition based on these mutual ideas: safeguarding children on the internet; reducing prison populations for nonviolent offenders; protecting against commercialization of the human genome; pushing for good jobs; rebuilding our rail system, roads, and bridges; and our social infrastructure. Not a bad list for a beginning conversation. The NBCFA has been searching for ways to branch out to those that need assistance or companionship that are off the radar. The food pop ups have been a tremendous success but have reached a saturation point. So how do we now reach out to those who still need resources and make connections with those we truly don’t know at all. How do we even know what the needs are? How do we find out what the deep stories are for those in this community that have no voice and choose or are forced to live off the grid? Is there a way to bring healing to those who we have vast differences with? This fall our pledge drive will focus on Every Perfect Gift. This theme is based on the New Testament reading from James that we heard last week: **17**Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+1%3A17&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-30266a)]

In the weeks ahead I encourage you to think of the gifts you have given and gifts you have received particularly as they pertain to St. David’s and this community of the body of Christ. I invite you to share your deep stories of how this community has shaped your faith, your spirituality, your acts of service. I invite you to think about what our next steps should be in this unprecedented time of COVID and yet great need in the community. Jesus steps outside his comfort zone. He steps outside the societal boundaries but in doing so he comes closer to the wide embrace of a God who wraps her arms around all creation and every living being. Jesus brings healing to the Gentile womens’ daughter sight unseen and he brings healing to the blind man. He does so using the ritual of magic healers not because he needed to for healing but because he met the people where they were and in a way that was mutually inclusive. It’s not easy to set our own agendas and rightness aside. But it brings us together to know that what we have in common is that the Lord made us all. Knowing that Gods’ image is imprinted on each one of us and therefore we know that healing is possible no matter how great the division. Here are the words to the song of the pledge drive:

Thankful and grateful, we gather and belong.
Asking: “What’s the best gift you’ve received?” Rememb’ring in delight – Voices raised in song --
God’s abundant generosity -- because we have believed.

[CHORUS:]
EVERY PERFECT GIFT comes from God above.
EVERY PERFECT GIFT carries a measure of God’s Love. We remember Jesus’ sacrifice in each Eucharist we lift: Knowing we’ve been given EVERY PERFECT GIFT.

Broken, yet hopeful, we become new again --
Present to each moment that we live.
Appreciating life – All we’ve been given.
Knowing our blessings aren’t ours alone, we ask: “What can I give?”

(CHORUS)

Baptized into kinship, we’ve been blessed with wings to fly Like a caterpillar transformed into a butterfly
Souls breaking free to discover, inspire and share
Giving and believing God answers ev’ry prayer.