

“Sharing at One Table” SM Tribune December 3, 2020,
Rev. Becca Bateman, Pastor for Family Ministries

It's that time of year to decide the menu, who prepares what dish, and set time of day and location so we can all be together. Family gatherings often lead to wonderful times around the table. Memories are shared and formed over meaningful conversation and great food. In my family gatherings, we always packed in as many family members (and friends too) as we could. We have had so many people that there would always be at least one kids' table. And while many of us look forward to family meals this holiday season, this year we all recognize that our expectations have to change. We're all having to downsize our gatherings but this may be more of a blessing than we realize!

The 2020 holidays are an opportunity to re-think what a family gathering looks like. It will definitely be diminished in size. But this allows us to all pay more individual attention to each other. This actually may be the year there's room for the kids to join the adult table! One goal may be to restrict our young people from looking at their devices, and encourage them to have a conversation with their grandfather sitting across the table. Find ways to integrate kids into the life and discussions of the older family members. To share one another's company, and share one another's life stories is a gift that must be opened whenever possible – especially for children!

I had the occasion to receive some important advice from someone who had lost their parents recently. She explained that when her parents died, she realized how much she didn't know about them. What were they like as children? What mischief did they cause as teenagers? What were some of the highs and lows of their life together as a young married couple? She regretted not knowing these details, and she didn't want her kids or grandkids to have the same regret. So, with the help of technology, my friend will be joining her family by FaceTime at the Thanksgiving dinner table with the intent of asking a bunch of questions. Exchanging questions and answers as a family strengthens not only the intergenerational relationships that are key to a person's identity but can also strengthen one's faith.

Here are some questions to share around the table: Besides family, what are you grateful for? Name a favorite concert or artist you saw? What is a meaningful bible verse/story or other literature that is meaningful and why? Who at the table, is really good at something? What is the most exotic food you've ever tried? Who was your best friend growing up? If you choose any kind of special talent, what would it be? Name a season of life when you felt close to God and a season of life when you wondered if God existed.

Think of your own questions for your own family. In these isolating times, it's more important than ever to share (even remotely), around the table!