

Visions United
"Acts" Now
 Stories of Making Church Outside a Building

Before there is a Church... Before there is a building... There is a community
 Born of the Spirit at Pentecost
 Our new Spirit Gathering theme series is based on the 'Acts of the Apostles'.
 These are the first stories of making church outside a building.
 These are our stories!

As we read through this book from the Bible, we are listening to these stories from Acts to see where we are in the story: *How may God be using a story to have a conversation with us about 'who we are' and 'how we are church' together in these days of on-line recordings, gathering in rented space, and engaging ministry in a new neighbourhood as part of the Community Hub project?*

We are reading through Acts in three stages, or 'acts', pausing to celebrate the liturgical seasons of Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter:

'Act 1': October 18 - November 22, 2020

'Act 2': January 10 - February 14, 2021

'Act 3': April 11 - May 23, 2021

Below is an outline of suggested weekly readings for 'Act 2':

Week	Reading	Theme
Week 1 - Jan 10	Acts 9: 1 - 31	The Story of Paul: A Change of Heart - Becoming the Story <i>Reflection: Godly Play Story - Paul's Journey</i> Core Story: Saul's Damascus Road Experience (<i>Acts 9:1-19 is one of three accounts of Saul's 'conversion. See also Acts 22 & 26</i>) Paul Preaches in Damascus; Saul's Escape; Saul in Jerusalem Wondering Questions: I wonder... <i>What part of Paul's story is just for you? When is a time you had a change of heart and became like new? Where is Visions - in this story? In what ways is Visions becoming the Story?</i>
Week 2 - Jan 17	Acts 9: 32-43	An Upstairs Room: The Story of Tabitha/Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43) <i>Weaving Life into Community with our words, deeds and prayers</i>
Week 3 - Jan 24	Acts 10 - 12	A Rooftop Conversion/Change of Heart: Peter's Vision & Cornelius' Visit (Acts 10) Who belongs? Drawing the Circle Wider. <i>Additional reading: Acts 11:19 - 12</i> Mission among the Gentiles, the first 'food aid program'.
Week 4 - Jan 31	Acts 13 -15:35	A Council Table: Conflict and Creativity - A Third Way with the Spirit! (Acts 15 - The Council at Jerusalem)
Week 5 - Feb 7	Acts 15:36-16:15	Down by the River: The Story of Lydia (Acts 16:11-16)
Week 6 - Feb 14	Acts 16:16 - 40	In Times of Trouble: A Prison Cell Acts 16: 25-34 <i>Paul & Silas were singing hymns. In times of trouble what songs of faith quell our fears and sustain our journey?</i>

(Bible Study Questions on next page)

Bible Study Wondering Questions

As you read through Acts, linger with the stories and the people you encounter.

Spend some time wondering about some of these questions:

Where does this story take place - what is the setting?

Who are the characters and what is the relationship among them?

How is the Spirit of Christ at work in the story?

How is this a story of making church, making gospel community?

Is there a phrase or image that captures your imagination?

What puzzles you in this story? What would you like to learn more about?

What assumptions may be challenged?

Where are you in the story?

Where is Visions in this story?

Recall your own stories of making 'church' outside a building; give Rev Shawn a call if you have a story you'd like to share (506-588-0326).

Appendix A: Judaism and Christianity in First-Century

As we read further into Acts, and the 'gospel story' spreads into the Gentile (*non-Jewish*) world, the relationship between Judaism and Christianity becomes more complicated. Christians today have a responsibility to ensure we do not contribute to anti-Semitism in our world. It's important to remember, firstly, that Jesus, himself, was Jewish; and secondly, 'Christianity' was not initially a separate religion, but more of a 'sect' within Judaism. That's why the followers described themselves as 'followers of the Way of Jesus'. Acts is likely written after the split between Judaism and Christianity, yet looks back and tells the story of the emerging movement that was still within Judaism. The reality is 2000 years later the Church is more like the 'establishment' and less like the emerging movement. The 'Appendix' offers a glimpse into the first century context, and can help us avoid a 'we' and 'them' interpretation about Christianity and Judaism.