

Acts of the Apostles Class Sparks SMPC Member's Creativity

We are always so thankful for the many God-given talents of our church members, and this week is no exception.

In the "Acts of the Apostles" class that met during the Easter season, participants created a symbol each week that represents one aspect of God or God's kingdom that was revealed to them during the group's study session. Church member Judy Casey volunteered to create a quilt from these symbols for the edification and inspiration of the congregation - we are excited to share it with you today!

"Judy's quilt project was such a blessing to our class!" said Director of Spiritual Formation Rebecca Guzman. "We enjoyed the way her illustrations of what we have learned have helped to deepen the meaning of our study and encouraged us to reflect further on the aspect of God or discipleship that was revealed in our study of Acts."

Judy has been an active member of SMPC since 2014. She and her husband, C.W., have worshiped with us online since the pandemic. She has been a participant and a teacher in the JOY Sunday school classes and was excited to have the opportunity to join in the Acts of the Apostles class via Zoom.



"The class allowed me to see Acts in a whole different way," she said. "I've always thought I've known the story of what the apostles did, but now that I am getting an in-depth look and able to discuss it with fellow church members, I see how inclusive our Christian life can be."

She's been sewing since she was a teenager and started quilting about 20 years ago after she and her two daughters, Amy and Molly, took a quilting class together.

"It fills me with such joy knowing that I can contribute to the church in this way for the glory of Him," said Judy.

We thank Judy for her creativity and inspiration. SMPC will cherish the quilt for many years to come.

Acts of the Apostles:

Week by Week & Square by Square

Week 1: Acts 5:27-32 (Peter Is Questioned). Fire

Peter and the apostles are questioned before the Jerusalem council in this passage. Peter's defense for preaching, teaching, and healing in the name of Jesus is very simple, but also very powerful. He simply cannot deny what the Holy Spirit has called him to do. In the same way, we are called to spread the good news. The Holy Spirit is like the fire in our belly that compels us to share the justice and love of Christ with the world.

Week 2: Acts 9:1-20 (Saul on the Road to Damascus). The Interrupted Circle of Violence

This week, we talked about the theologian Willie James Jennings' description of Saul: "No one is more dangerous than one with the power to take life and who already has mind and sight set on those who are a threat to a safe future. Such a person is a closed circle relying on the inner coherence of their logic. Their authority confirms their argument, and their argument justifies their actions and their actions reinforce the appropriateness of their authority. Violence, in order to be smooth, elegant, and seemingly natural, needs people who are closed circles." The quilt square for this day is a symbol of the closed circle of violence being interrupted by the power of God to change Saul's heart and life when Jesus appears to Saul on the road to Damascus.

Week 3: Acts 9:36-43 (Tabitha is Raised from the Dead). All Gifts Are Important

A resurrection story might seem like a strange time to talk about spiritual gifts, but it is clear from our reading of the passage that Tabitha's work in her community is central and that her work it is not finished. Although Tabitha's vocation of clothing widows may not seem like a very important one, it is clear that God sees the importance. God raises Tabitha so she can continue with her work. In the same way, we are called to faithfully carry out the work that God has given us to do, whether we see that it is important or not.

Week 4: Acts 11:1-18 (Peter Spreads the Gospel to the Gentiles). Birds of Different Feathers Flock Together

As part of our study of this passage, we read the children's book *They're So Flamboyant* by Michael Genhart. In the book, a flock of flamingos moves into the neighborhood, and the other birds are not ready to welcome them. When they arrive at the flamingos' home to confront them, they are greeted with a party and invited in for food and fellowship. They realize that they had pre-judged the flamingos and learned from them to welcome all. This is just what the Holy Spirit is doing with the church in Jerusalem—breaking down boundaries and calling them to welcome all to the table, and this is just what the Holy Spirit is doing with us.

Week 5: Acts 16:9-15 (The Conversion of Lydia). By the River

Paul and the apostles are told in a vision by a man to go to Macedonia to preach the gospel. When they arrive, they meet some women instead, at a "place of prayer" by the river. One of these women is Lydia, a God-fearing Gentile who comes to believe the gospel, and she and her entire household are baptized. Lydia is a businesswoman, a dealer in purple cloth (reflected in the frame), and she opens her home, of which she is the head, to become a church. Paul and the apostles stay with her before continuing their missionary journey.

Week 6: Acts 16:16-34 (Paul and Silas in Prison). Breaking Chains, Healing Hearts

Shortly after they leave Lydia's home, Paul and Silas are thrown into jail because they cast a demon out of an enslaved woman. The woman is a fortune teller, and once the demon is cast out, she is no longer valuable to her owners. Thus, they have broken her chains of slavery. Then, as they are singing and praying at midnight, the Spirit breaks open the prisoners' chains and the prison doors with an earthquake. The jailer, when he discovers that all of the prisoners have stayed, asks Paul and Silas what he must do to be saved, is baptized, and has Paul and Silas stay in his home. In this passage, the Spirit breaks chains and heals hearts.