

PART 1

■ ■ ■ THIS IS US



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The Book of Acts

THE STORY STILL BEING WRITTEN

The book of Acts opens with a small group of ordinary people huddled in a room, unsure of what comes next. Their leader has just left them. They have no building, no budget, no plan. Just a promise. By the end of the book, that same group of people has turned the world upside down, and the gospel has traveled from a back room in Jerusalem to the doorstep of the Roman Emperor.

So what happened in between?

A promise fulfilled! One presence. One power. The point where everything changed.

The gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts is the second half of a two-part work by Luke, picking up where his Gospel leaves off. And the story of Acts is the story of the Spirit doing what no strategy, program, or personality ever could.

Jesus is gone. But he's not done. Because along with the Holy Spirit he gives his followers a roadmap: they will be his witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea

and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) That one verse holds the whole book together, and we'll explore it in three parts over the next three months.

From there, two threads hold together the entire book. The promised Holy Spirit: who shows up at Pentecost and never leaves us. And the mission: the conviction that the gospel is for anyone, and the commitment to share it with everyone.

And how does the Book of Acts end?

It doesn't. It stops mid-sentence. Luke hands us the pen.

Because "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people... The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:17, 39 NIV)

So we ask again, how does the book then end?

To be continued...

This Is Us

BORN BY THE SPIRIT IN JERUSALEM

The next four weeks take us through Acts 1-6, where the church takes its very first breaths in Jerusalem. It begins with a small, ordinary group of followers who have just watched Jesus ascend into heaven, forty days after his resurrection.

That ascension is his enthronement: Jesus takes his seat as King over all things. His kingdom is established.

What's still to come is how that kingdom shows up here, on earth, in ordinary people. They don't have a building, a budget, or a strategy. What they have is a promise: wait for the Holy Spirit, and you'll receive power.

That promise is fulfilled in Acts 2, at Pentecost. If the ascension is Jesus becoming King, Pentecost is that King moving in with his people, bringing his own presence and power into ordinary, everyday lives.

Everything changes.

Peter, once too afraid to even admit he knew Jesus, preaches boldly to thousands. A crippled man is healed in Jesus' name. Believers share meals, possessions, and daily life with a generosity that draws attention from the whole city.

This is what it looks like when a community runs on the Spirit instead of its own resources and strength.

But Acts 1-6 doesn't shy away from growing pains.

Ananias and Sapphira's dishonesty is confronted directly. Persecution from religious leaders tests the believers' resolve. Widows get overlooked in the daily distribution of food, and the church responds by raising up new leaders to serve.

By the end of these first six chapters, a small, fearful group has become a bold, Spirit-filled community that takes both power and integrity seriously.

It's a picture of the church at its beginning, and in many ways, still a picture of us.



NOTES

THIS WEEK'S READINGS



Acts 1:1-5

2

1

Acts 1:6-11

3

Acts 1:12-14

4



Acts 1:15-26

5



*Re-read
Acts 1 in full*

MISSED A SERMON?



WATCH IT HERE!

Breath Prayer

Standing on Mars Hill in Athens, surrounded by altars and idols to all kinds of false gods, Paul makes a bold claim: “In him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28)

God isn’t some force among many. He’s the environment we exist in.

As Paul writes elsewhere, “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him... He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:16–17)

If we’re honest, we don’t tend to experience that on an ordinary Tuesday. We function as though God is somewhere else, available if we reach for him, but not exactly here.

An ancient spiritual practice known as **BREATH PRAYER** closes that gap.

Breath prayer itself is a short phrase prayed in rhythm with your breathing, part on the inhale, part on the exhale. The most famous example is the **Jesus Prayer**, inspired by Luke 18:

- **INHALE** “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God”
- **EXHALE** “Have mercy on me”

The apostle Paul instructs us this way: “Pray without

ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

And as Richard Foster puts it in his classic book *Celebration of Discipline*, we can live in such a way that “to breathe is to pray.”

Thomas Kelly, an early-20th-century Quaker writer, described what happens when we weave prayer into the fabric of our days, minutes, and even seconds: we settle into what he calls “Life from the Center,” a life that, “takes no time, but it occupies all our time.”

Or as author John Eldredge puts it, “We need Jesus like we need oxygen.”

Breath prayer is simply an intentional way to match life-giving prayer with the life-giving oxygen we already live by.

How We Will Use Breath Prayer in This Series

Rather than pile on a list of to-dos (after all, the Holy Spirit is better at directing us than any specific assignment will ever be), we want to offer an invitation to regularly breathe a prayer throughout the week that reflects each week’s section of Acts.

Participation is simple: prayerfully breathe in the first half of the phrase, breathe out the second half.

The goal isn’t one set-aside moment. It’s weaving

it into the rhythms you’re already moving through: first thing when you wake up, brushing your teeth, making your coffee, driving, walking from one meeting to the next, before a hard conversation, or in the quiet seconds before you fall asleep.

Prayerfully repeat it as often as you’d like, wherever you find yourself.

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you... and you will be my witnesses.

ACTS 1:8



INHALE
“Holy Spirit, give me power”



EXHALE
“To be your witness”



DOWNLOAD
BREATH
PRAYER PHONE
BACKGROUNDS
EACH WEEK



Acts 2:1-47

NOTES

THIS WEEK'S READINGS



Acts 2:1-13

2



Acts 2:14-36

3

Acts 2:37-41

4



Acts 2:42-47

5

*Re-read
Acts 2 in full*

MISSED A SERMON?



WATCH IT HERE!

Repent and be baptized...
and you will receive the
gift of the Holy Spirit.

ACTS 2:38



INHALE "I turn to you"



EXHALE "Holy Spirit, lead me"



Meet KarLeigh

This is KarLeigh's story:

I didn't grow up going to church, but I started attending almost two years ago. It was September 2025, during one of the lowest points of my life, that I truly found my faith. In that season, I spent a lot of time praying and asking God to heal me or fix what felt broken.

One Sunday night during worship, I felt overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit and gave my life to Jesus. It was a moment that I will never forget. After that, I knew I wanted to be baptized, but I still felt like something was missing. Looking back, I now know that the missing piece was community.

A few months later, I started going to Young Decatur and everything began to change. I took a big step out of my comfort zone, reached out to people, and built friendships with others who share my faith. Through the friendships and the support of Young Decatur, I found encouragement, accountability, and a place where I finally felt like I truly belonged.

I especially want to thank Maddie, Bekah, Lizzie, Molly, and all my friends at Young Decatur for loving me, encouraging me, and helping me grow closer to God. Your friendships have meant so much to me and have shown me that we are not meant to walk through faith alone. Community has strengthened my relationship with Jesus more than I ever expected, and today I am so grateful and excited to take this next step and publicly declare that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

Interested in baptism?

Find out more at firstdecaturn.org/baptism

From left: KarLeigh Crutchfield, Thomas Hagan, & Maddie Jones





Acts 3:1-10

Acts 3:11-26

Acts 4:1-22

Acts 4:23-37

*Re-read
Acts 3-4 in full*



17

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Photo by Yon Mills, June 2026 Mission Trip

We cannot help
speaking about what we
have seen and heard.

ACTS 4:20



INHALE *"What I have seen"*



EXHALE *"I cannot help but speak"*



Years & Still Saying “YES!”

In 1834, a small, audacious group of Jesus followers organized a church on the American frontier, in a log cabin that doubled as the Macon County courthouse, the same building where a young lawyer named Abraham Lincoln (yes, that Abraham Lincoln!) once argued cases. They called it First Christian Church.

That was 192 years ago.

Since then, this church has only ever known one way to grow: saying “yes” when God opens a door, even when the timing looks nothing like what anyone planned.

In 1855, a member named Ebenezer McNabb started our first Grow Together ministry: Sunday School! In 1913, under Rev. E.M. Smith, the congregation moved into a new building on Church Street. And in 1996, thirty years ago now, roughly 200 people faced a decision that must have felt enormous at the time: leave the building they knew, and relocate to what was

then open ground on North MacArthur Road. It was a leap of faith for a congregation that size, built on the conviction that God wasn’t finished with First Christian Church yet. And He wasn’t!

What started as one building on MacArthur Road has become a whole ecosystem of doing whatever it takes to further the mission and ministry of our church, through the Club 305 Parsons partnership with

Photo from Herald & Review, August 1996



HANDS FULL: Drew Sullivan of Forsyth, 11, has his hands full helping his church move June 23 from its old downtown location to a new building on Decatur’s north side.

Parsons Elementary, hospital chaplaincy, The Block Ministry, Mosaic Café, and the Arts Academy, to name a few. As our own leaders have said, the full expression of the church has never been limited to a building’s address. That’s why we’ve set our sights on something beyond our own walls: establishing a First Christian presence in every independent and assisted living community in Macon County. What a beautiful ministry! When people reach a stage of life where they can’t get to church, the church comes to them!

That same conviction reaches well beyond Macon County. Our support for missionaries in Kenya stretches back to the 1980s. Today, missionaries BJ and Mary Leonard are living out that same “whatever it takes” spirit on the ground, raising up indigenous Kenyan pastors and church planters, and sending missionaries out from Kenya to reach the rest of the world. The gospel they received is now moving through them to people we may never even hear about this side of heaven. It’s also what sent one of our own, former youth pastor Josh Koskinen, to launch a brand-new partner church nearly 500 miles away in Mukwanago, Wisconsin!

None of that happens by accident. It happens because, generation after generation, this church keeps choosing to say “yes.”

A Pattern as Old as Acts

This isn’t a new story. It’s the oldest story in the book, literally.

Continued on next page ►

In Acts 16, Paul had his ministry route all planned out. Then, in the middle of the night, he saw a vision: a man from Macedonia pleading, “Come over and help us.” Paul hadn’t been looking for Macedonia. But when God made the need clear, he didn’t hesitate. Scripture says he “got ready at once to leave.”

The early church didn’t grow because its leaders had a five-year plan. It grew because ordinary people kept saying yes to open doors they hadn’t gone looking for: a Macedonian call, a Roman jailer, an Ethiopian official on a desert road. Jesus had already told them what to expect: they would be his witnesses, not just in one location, but “to the ends of the earth.” Every expansion in Acts started the same way: a group of faithful Jesus followers paying attention to where God was already at work, and stepping toward it.

What’s Next?

For 192 years, First Christian Church has gathered in one place. But that’s about to change!

This fall, for the first time in our history, we’re preparing to launch a second campus: our South Campus. It grew out of relationship, years of connection with people and a congregation already on the south side of our community, and a season where their need for the future and our need for room to grow lined up in a way that felt less like coincidence and more like a door swinging open.

We’ve felt that need for additional space for a while. Our facilities on North MacArthur Road, built back in 1996, have been nearing capacity during our most popular service times for years now. While we’ve

already taken steps to make more room, a second campus does even more than make room. It’s not just adding seats; it’s planting a whole new outpost of help, healing, and hope in our community.

Beyond this, what new possibilities are ahead, possibly alongside organizations already doing good work in Decatur, that might open up new expressions of the church? Could our own buildings, the very ones we’re so grateful for, be used even more fully for our whole community? We don’t have all those answers yet. But, just as we’ve done for 192 years and counting, we’re committed to walking through open doors until, or unless, God clearly closes one.

We don’t know everything this next chapter holds. Neither did the group that met in a log cabin courthouse in 1834. Neither did the 200 people who

left everything familiar 30 years ago in 1996 to build on MacArthur Road. But if 192 years have taught us anything, it’s to say “yes” to furthering the ministry and mission we’ve been called to!

WHATEVER IT TAKES. Still!



South Campus launch team gathering, June 2026



1834
Rev. Joseph Hostettler
formally organized FCC



1913
New building on Church
Street under Rev. E.M. Smith



2006
Club 305 Parsons after
school program begins



2010
First Discovery Team
sent to Kenya



2015
New FirstKids space & worship
begins in East Auditorium



2027
South Campus in
Mt. Zion will launch

1855
Church member Ebenezer
McNabb, a local architect,
started the first Sunday School



1996
FCC moves to
N MacArthur Rd



2008
Mosaic Café
& gym added

2011
Saturday night worship
services begin



2018
Church online
is launched



Acts 5-6

NOTES

Lined area for notes on page 24.

WEEK

Lined area for notes on page 25.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

1



Acts 5:1-11

2



Acts 5:12-16

3



Acts 5:17-42

4



Acts 6:1-15

5



Re-read
Acts 5-6 in full

MISSED A SERMON?



WATCH IT HERE!

Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit?... You have not lied just to human beings but to God.

ACTS 5:3-4



INHALE "Search my heart, LORD"



EXHALE "Make me true"



WANT TO KNOW

What's Happening

AT FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

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