



By their actions it is easy to tell that the early church believed that being in community was essential to living for Christ. How has community shaped your faith, your excitement and ability to live for Christ? How does this idea change your perception of your role within your community?

Adult to Small Child

Read: Acts 2:1-4.

Reflect: Although the church won't celebrate Pentecost for several weeks, this is the week when our scripture readings take us through the story of the Spirit in the church. To describe the Spirit, scripture uses powerful images, including a violent wind and tongues of fire. Just as suggested last week with planting seeds to represent death and darkness, this week we might also want to be cautious with our analogies, as very young children are quite literal. On the other hand, I'm personally fine with young children believing that God is *literally* the wind.

Respond: Bubble Prayer: Soap bubbles are such a magical part of a young child's life. They are easily incorporated into a fun and whimsical prayer. Say any prayer you wish out loud and then blow the bubbles. One simple prayer might be, "God, thank you for the gift of the Spirit. Amen."

Adult to Elementary Child

Read: Acts 2:42-47.

Reflect: This book of what happened after Jesus died, rose again, and returned to God is called Acts, which really interests me. It's the story about what Jesus's followers *did*, not what they thought, but how they behaved. In the second chapter of Acts, Luke describes the community of believers doing a lot of what we do on Sundays when we gather at church: teaching and being taught by the apostles, praying, sharing meals and "breaking bread" together. They sound like a family; they took care of each other in ways that sound surprising to us; they shared everything, selling their homes and possessions in order to provide for those among them who had the least. In living this way, they felt awe and joy and the community grew as other people saw what they were doing, how they *acted* toward each other.

Respond: There's an old saying: You might be the only Bible someone reads today. What do you think that means? What is one thing your family does that would show others without explaining that you are followers of Jesus?

Adult to Youth or Young Adult

Read: Acts 2:43-47.

Reflect: Acts 2:43-47 tells us how Jesus' followers lived in the early days of the church. They sold their possessions, shared money and resources, ate together, fellowshiped. The early Christians who had literally experienced Jesus' life, death and resurrection created a community. Their response to Jesus' resurrection and ascension was to live together, work together and be in ministry together.

Acts 2:44-45.

Adult to Adult

Reflect: "And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need." Community is a sharing of commonalities and interests by a particular group. Along with other reasons, communities are formed for social change and spiritual growth. When we lean in to our community, we see families flourish and municipalities begin to resolve systemic issues that are the root cause of city wide turmoil. In "Mi Casa Uptown," Rich Perez pens a love story about his city and loving her well just as Christ loved his church. "Mi Casa Uptown" teaches how to fight injustice, welcome new hope, and respect the land on which a city is built. Rich Perez reminds us that Christ deeply loved his community. In Acts 2, we are reminded that the first church was a community, not a building of bricks, walls or crosses. It was a group of believers gathered in the presence of Jesus. I imagine this was what it was to be the hands and feet of Jesus. When we are here for one another, we are the church in its purest form.

Respond: How can you love your community well this week? Consider attending a poetry event, advocating for a park's natural resources, or simply praying for her. Your community, similar to the first church, asks us to love her well. Jesus filled the streets with hope and equipped us to do the same.

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