Amanda Lucas
Lay Leader FHC
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Acts 2:42-27

**Now What?**
The Early Church in Acts 2

**INTRODUCTION:** The last couple of weeks have been a whirlwind in the life of our church—and for good reason. From Palm Sunday’s joyful hosannas to our Interactive Easter event, through Good Friday’s solemn reflection and the quiet of Holy Saturday, we walked with Christ to the cross and then celebrated His glorious resurrection on Easter morning. What a journey—spiritually and logistically! And after all the preparation, the advertising, inviting, setting up, rehearsing, preaching, praising, and praying — Easter Sunday came and went in the blink of an eye, leaving us with a feeling of “now what?”

 “Now what?” is a question I have received a lot over the past few months regarding our own ministries here at Forest Hills. What do we do about attendance? Why does our wider community seem so disengaged in their faith? Where has our hunger to grow and learn together gone? We’ve tried things that haven’t worked. What we’ve always done doesn’t seem to be working anymore. *Now what?* We persevere.

As your lay leader, my primary function is (aside from at least pretending I know everything that goes on here, and I appreciate that some of you do believe I always have all the answers) to work closely with Pastor Andrew to vision where our church is, was, and needs to go. For those who know me, you know that I don’t pull any punches. What you see is what you get, you do not have to guess what I am thinking so I will give it to you straight from the hip – *Forest Hills needs a resurgence of faith and revival of the Spirit*. We need to press in, not back down. God has more for us—far more than we can ask or imagine—but we cannot afford to sit idle while we wait. My deepest desire is to see us burning with passion for the Lord and reclaiming the abundant, confident, joy-filled life He intends for His people. I have been a part of this church family for more than half of my life, and I firmly believe that God has positioned us for something great, but there is some foundational work to be done.

So again… now what? Maybe you’re thinking, “We’ve heard this before.” What kind of work are we talking about this time? (Not the May 3rd workday—but yes, do mark your calendars!) I’m talking about spiritual work. Not starting something new but returning to something ancient. I’m talking about going back to the foundation laid by the early church in Acts 2—a church marked by growth, prayer, generosity, learning, evangelism, identity, joy, and unwavering devotion. That church was alive. That church was on fire for God. We can be that church again.

The path forward isn’t complicated, it’s faithful. It’s rooted in devotion. It’s built on learning, fellowship, and prayer. As Revelation 3 reminds us, the Lord does not desire a lukewarm church. He calls us to be bold, burning with purpose. When we ask Him to move, we should not be surprised when He hands us the tools to begin the work. That’s where we are now: it’s time to take action. Acts 2 will be our guide as we move forward—not just to survive, but to thrive. So, church—now what? We return to our foundation. We pursue the Lord with everything we’ve got. We become the church He is calling us to be.

**A LEARNING CHURCH:** As we heard in today’s Scripture, the first commitment of the early church was to the apostles’ teaching—the Gospel story. They were a learning church. Imagine hearing Peter’s testimony firsthand, sitting under the instruction of those who had walked with Jesus! In that era, oral teaching was essential, and these new believers were eager—hungry—to know more about the One who had changed everything.

What about us? Do we share that same hunger to grow in our faith? Or have we allowed other priorities to take the place of learning more about our Lord? God has promised to reveal Himself through His Word—are we open to the Spirit’s leading? The truth is simple: the deeper we grow in our knowledge of God, the stronger our relationship with Him becomes. And yet, how often do we settle for surface-level faith or resolve to live with the discoveries we made early in our faith without pushing further?

We never truly graduate as students of God’s Word, Jesus, the Bread of Life! The closest we come to graduation is when we go on to glory—and even then, we will surely still have more to learn! So why do we sometimes act as though we’ve already learned all there is to know about Him? We would never say we’ve “aged out” of serving the Lord—so why would we assume we’ve reached the end of growing in our knowledge of Him? To stop pursuing the knowledge of God is to place our confidence in ourselves rather than in the One who continually invites us deeper. True disciples return to the Word again and again, in steady, persevering pursuit of more. As 2 Peter 3:17–18 urges, we are to “be on guard” and to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.”

If we are to be faithful disciples, we must be devoted students—because we cannot share the Good News of Jesus without knowing Him. Through His Word, we come to know His heart, His promises, and His will for us. So, I ask you: are we a learning church, like the believers in Acts 2? Are we seeking to deepen our relationship with the Lord through Scripture? Do we want to see a continued transformation of our hearts and the heart of our church? If not, it’s time to renew that commitment. One way to do that is through our Grow Group classes offered throughout the year—opportunities to dig deeper together, to grow stronger in faith, and to become the church God is calling us to be.

**A CHURCH OF FELLOWSHIP:** Did you know that fellowship isn’t just something we do—or a place we go—but something we have? Many churches, including ours, have a “Fellowship Hall,” and over time the word has become nearly synonymous with meals and coffee hours. While sharing a meal was certainly part of the Acts 2 church’s life, biblical fellowship is far more than simply gathering around a table.

The word used in Acts 2:42 for “fellowhip” is *koinonia* (koi-no-nee-ah), a Greek term that speaks of deep relationship, shared life, and common purpose. It means participation, communion, partnership. And in the New Testament, it’s often used to describe the fellowship we have with Jesus Himself— in the form of *theia koinonia* (thay-ah koi-no-nee-ah) —holy communion. This isn’t just about a sacrament; it’s about a living, active relationship. Fellowship with Christ means walking with Him daily—learning, serving, praying, and yes, even eating together. It’s shared life with our Savior. As 1 John 1:3 puts it*, “What we have seen and heard we also announce to you so that you can have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”* True fellowship is meant to be shared—it begins with Christ and extends to one another.

In the church, this fellowship takes many forms: worshiping together, praying for one another, learning and serving side by side. It includes our friendships, our shared burdens, our joys and meals—but also our united mission to live for Christ and spread His Gospel. The Acts 2 believers depended on each other for strength, encouragement, and faith-building community. Jesus affirms this kind of spiritual closeness in Matthew 18:19–20*: “If two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, then my Father who is in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I’m there with them.”*

God never intended for us to walk this journey of faith alone. Our fellowship must be intentional and strong, reflecting the unity we have in Christ. So, whether it’s Sunday worship or a Wednesday night dinner and Bible study, come not just to attend—but to connect. Don’t slip out the door. Stay. Engage. Share life with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us follow the lead of the Acts 2 church: abiding together in love, encouraging one another in truth, and binding ourselves in holy fellowship—because where we gather in His name, Christ is among us.

**A PRAYING CHURCH:** The church in Acts 2 was fully devoted to seeking God—together. They prayed collectively for courage to spread the Gospel, for resources to sustain their fledgling ministry (many of them sold what little they had just to support the work), and they undoubtedly prayed for guidance at every turn. They understood something vital: they couldn’t do what lay ahead in their own strength. So, they didn’t try. They sought the Lord first and foremost, and prayer was the foundation of everything they did.

Oswald Chambers, the Scottish evangelist and author of the devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*, once noted that “We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense.” So, let me ask—where do we fall on that spectrum? Are we regularly praying for the Lord to go before us, or are we asking Him to bless our plans after we’ve made them? Are we going to battle for our church in prayer daily, or only when it crosses our mind? Is prayer the first weapon in our spiritual arsenal—or the last?

 Now, I realize comparing the early church to the modern one isn’t exactly apples to apples. But think about it—not much has changed where it truly matters. Our mission is still the same, as Pastor Andrew mentioned last week: go and make disciples. The settings have changed, yes, but the challenges are real, and the enemy is still the same. He would love nothing more than to see God’s people weary, scattered, and silent. Prayer is the lifeblood of the church—our direct line to the Father—and it should feel as natural to us as breathing. A praying church is a healthy church: one committed to both personal prayer and corporate, communal prayer. A church truly devoted to prayer is one that prays in faith—boldly, specifically, and persistently.

 We shouldn’t be afraid to ask God for big things. He invites us to! Because of the fellowship we share with Christ, we have access to the throne room. And Jesus Himself tells us in Luke 11:9–10: *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”*

Ask—because it acknowledges that we know He hears us.

Seek—because it takes time, patience, and intentional pursuit.

Knock—because persistence honors the God who always responds.

The Lord wants us to bring our needs to Him. So, what do we need right here at Forest Hills? What do you need in your personal walk? Ask. Seek. Knock. Keep pounding on the door.

 Of course, Scripture reminds us that *how* we pray *matters*. James 4:3 says, *“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives…”* That’s why we not only pray boldly—but also in surrender to God’s will. Pray big, yes. But pray with a heart that is also asking, “Lord, what do *You* want?” I challenge all of us today: make prayer a habit, not a formality. Pray for your pastors and their families, for our church leaders, for your fellow believers. Join a prayer team (known as PAX teams). Fully engage when we pray together in worship. Ask God to move among us, and just as importantly—ask Him to help us listen.

Don’t give prayer lip service. Invest your heart, mind, and soul in it. Stand firm. Pray persistently. Pray expectantly. And be ready for the Lord to answer—maybe not in the way we think, or in the timing we want, but always in the way that brings Him glory.

**THEY *DEVOTED* THEMSELVES:** Finally, if we truly want to live into the model of the Acts 2 church, we must pause and consider one key word from our Scripture reading today: *devotion*.

We often hear this word tossed around in our faith lives—whether it’s in reference to a quiet time or a short biblical reflection—but in its original context, “devotion” in Acts 2 carried far more weight. The Greek term used here means to be steadfastly attentive to, constant, adherent, and unremitting in care. These early believers were fully engaged—in prayer, in learning, in fellowship. They lived in a state of constant, consistent, and persevering pursuit of Jesus. That was the lens through which they did everything. So let’s ask the hard question: are *we* that devoted?

In the American church today, we generally know what we should be doing—praying, learning, fellowshipping—but too often, the issue isn’t lack of knowledge. It’s lack of devotion. And I don’t mean we’re incapable of being devoted; quite the opposite. We prove our ability for devotion every day—to our careers, our phones, our entertainment, politics, or even the approval of others. The problem is that our devotion is often misplaced. In many ways, we’ve watered down the meaning of devotion. Or perhaps we’ve spread it so thin across everything that its intensity has been lost. But the truth is, biblical devotion was never meant to be divided—it was meant to be directed, wholly and fully, toward Jesus.

So where are we placing our devotion? Are we pursuing Jesus with the same passion and purpose the early church did, or have we grown lukewarm? Are we committed to sharing the Good News in our communities, or are we simply waiting for others to come to us? Are we steadily growing in the disciplines of prayer, learning, and fellowship—or just dabbling?

This is my challenge for each of us today: it’s time to turn up the dial—on both the frequency and intensity of our devotion. Because here’s the truth: none of what we’ve talked about today—prayer, fellowship, learning—will bear lasting fruit in the life of the church unless it is rooted in a deep and steady devotion to Christ. The kind of devotion that shapes how we spend our time, where we focus our energy, and what we ultimately live for. Let’s reignite our commitment. Let’s return to the simple, powerful practices of the early church—not just out of obligation, but out of love for the One who first devoted Himself to us.

**WRAP UP:** So… now what? If we’ve truly listened to the example of the Acts 2 church, then we know the answer isn’t found in the newest church program, a better marketing strategy, or even in doing more for the sake of activity. The answer is found in returning to the roots of our faith with renewed devotion. Now is the time to become a learning church—anchored in Scripture, hungry to know more of the Lord *every day*. Now is the time to become a fellowshipping church—deepening our bonds with one another through shared worship, shared life, and shared purpose in Christ. Now is the time to become a praying church—one that seeks the Lord’s will first, that intercedes boldly and persistently, that goes to battle on its knees.

The early believers weren’t perfect, but they were devoted. They didn’t have wealth or influence or polished worship sets—but they had an unshakable commitment to Christ and to one another. And through their steadfastness, the church grew, lives were changed, and the Gospel spread like wildfire. So again—now what? Now, we take up the mantle. We re-center our priorities. We recommit to learning, to fellowship, and to prayer—not as boxes to check, but as lifelines of our faith. And we do it all with the same heart as that first church: fully devoted, fully dependent, and fully expectant that God will move among us. May we become *that* church. Starting right now. Amen.