

The Beat Goes On.....

Fasten your seat belts. We are about to embark on a great adventure in the living Word of God.

The Apostle Luke has given to us in the book of Acts the continuing story of Jesus who, through the Holy Spirit works in people of faith to do the will of God. Luke shares stories of how God worked through the Holy Spirit, empowering God's people to do God's will. Page | 1

We can apply the stories in the book of Acts to ourselves and know we also can be empowered to do the work God calls us to do, today. And God calls each of us to serve in a unique way. Job 10:8 says, "God, your hands shaped me and made me" and Isaiah 43:21 God says, "the people I have shaped for myself will broadcast my praises," which we do, We absolutely "Praise God" whenever we serve God. We praise God with our caring actions towards others.

The Scripture reading is long today. It is two of the most pivotal chapters in the story of the spread of Christianity. If you have eyes to see and if you listen with ears to hear you will observe three levels woven into these stories. First is the story itself, second is the behind the scenes work of God, and third is that the Word applies to every human, in every day of age. Pam Risinger will read for us Acts 6:1-15, 7: 54-59.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So, the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.

Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

This proposal pleased the whole group.

They chose:

Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So, the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." So, they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Acts 7: 54-59 The Stoning of Stephen

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. "At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." This is the Word of God.

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The murder of Stephen in many ways parallels the story line of Jesus. There are many similarities, not the least being that both Jesus and Stephen were hated and murdered for doing good. Yet, even though these stories are 21 hundred years old we read another story that preceded them by thousands of years, but was also very similar.

Genesis chapter 4 speaks of discord, evil and murder. Genesis 4 says, "Adam slept with Eve his wife. She conceived and had a baby boy, Cain. Then she had another baby, Abel. Abel was a herdsman and Cain a farmer. Time passed. Cain brought an offering to God from the produce of his farm. My guess is Cain did not take much time to choose excellent produce, I think Cain did what he felt obligated to do without much thought. Maybe he grabbed the leftover produce? Abel brought his offering, but from the firstborn animals of his herd, choice cuts of meat. Abel had to carefully consider the meat he was giving God and Abel brought his best to God. God liked Abel and his offering, but Cain and his offering didn't get God's approval. Cain lost his temper! He began to mope ... Genesis 4:8 tells us that Cain and Abel were out in the field; Cain came at Abel, his brother, and killed him. The first murder had taken place.

Shocking!!— It is shocking whether reading the story of Cain and Abel for the first time, or even to those of us who know the story. The very first brothers in history were in discord over one doing good and one not. At the core of Cain's violence was disobedience to God. Cain killed his brother Abel because Abel did good in the sight of God.

We are conditioned in our 2017 culture to the horrible normalness of murder. News bombards us daily with global atrocity. The Scriptures - between Genesis and Revelation - are also peppered with similar discord, jealousy, evil and murder.

The taking of human life by murder is recorded throughout Scripture

(a) Even though we are told Human beings are created in God's image....

(b) Even though God prohibits killing in Exod. 20:13; and Deut. 5:17,

(c) Even though Jesus also spoke out against murder in (Matt. 19:18).

MURDER HAPPENS AT ALARMING RATES ALL AROUND US. MURDER CONTINUES It's hard to select a current reference because every day a seemingly more shocking news story breaks. The attempted murder of Republican Congressmen Steve Scalise and three other people as they were practicing for a charity baseball game three weeks ago has almost been forgotten.

There was a Top 100 pop music hit from 1967 that reminded me that what goes around comes around." I think some of you will remember Sonny and Cher singing, "And The Beat Goes On."

Drums keep pounding a rhythm to the brain

La de da de de, la de da de da

History has turned the page, uh huh

Men still keep on marching off to war
Bums still cry, "Hey buddy, have you got a dime?"
And the beat goes on, the beat goes on

1967 – 50 years ago was the year cryonics was first used to freeze and preserve a man after his death. He asked to be preserved with the hope that he could be revived in the future. 50 years ago The Vietnam war and protests of the war were daily news topics in 1967. The six-day Israeli War against Syria, Egypt and Jordan was in 1967.

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I lived in Redondo Beach, LA very close to where the Watts riots had occurred just 2 years earlier. A crowd of witnesses watched a white California Highway Patrol officer pull a Black man over and arrest him for drunk driving. The crowd exploded which lead to 4-5 days of rioting, leaving 53 people dead and 2000 injured. Those were violent days of racial and civil unrest, not dis-similar to Ferguson, Missouri and some of the racial discord in our news of late. My mother had cancer in 1967. It seemed to me that evil was everywhere. It was a time of fear for many. I was afraid. I watched the news on TV, it often frightened me. At times, though, the news awed me.....

On December 3, 1967, a 53-year-old South African man had transplanted into his chest the heart of a 25-year-old woman killed in a car accident. The first successful human heart transplant had occurred making medical history.

Soon after that physical heart transplant in 1967, A pastor of a little church I had visited with friends cared enough to drive several miles to visit a girl he hardly knew. Me. He helped me have a spiritual heart transplant. I became a believer in Jesus Christ because that man took the time to explain to me that Jesus loved me and had a plan for my life. That Jesus gave his life to pay the price of my sin. He told me I needed Jesus and all I had to do was confess my sin and ask Jesus to forgive me and come into my heart. I did and I had a new heart! All because someone dared to show a young girl some care.

Even with Jesus securing my future and helping take the fear away.....I did not know “then” what I know now. Some things take time. (One benefit of aging is the knowledge and wisdom that comes just by living and growing older). We can look back and we can know what it means for the beat to go on...I know now—what it means for “The beat to go on..... The beat, the tic, tic, toc of the clock that began at creation--it keeps ticking.” God’s time is always ticking. The beat goes on and we grow older. Our life happens. Our life stories may seem painful or be told with nostalgia as “back in the day,” but truth is, the beat goes on.....for each one of us.....For the world .The Drum Beat Of Evil And The Drum Beat Of God continue. Over and over again the beat, the sinful beat and the evil beat caused by Satan is redeemed by God. God takes what is and God can actually make good from bad!

There is an example of such in the Acts Scripture we read today which gives us insight into how God makes things good. There are two words Hellenist and Hebrew. Hellenists were the Jewish Greeks who had not lived in Jerusalem. Their ancestors had been displaced in the exile centuries earlier but had retained their faith as Jews. Hebrews were the Jewish people who had returned to live in Judea and Jerusalem after the exile.

The word: Hellenists is found in Acts 6:1 and Acts 9:29, Hellenists in this Acts context refer to the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians in the early church in Jerusalem.

Hellenists were most likely a bit more liberal in their interpretation of the Torah than the very strict and conservative 'Hebrews,' who were the Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians in the Jerusalem church.

As believers in Jesus both the Hellenists and Hebrews were living in Christian community which was the very first church. Probably they had trouble communicating because they spoke different languages. Most likely the two had traditional and cultural differences also.

It is not surprising that discord broke out between them. It is not surprising that others were watching and waiting to start trouble. Evil was present. Stephen was murdered. Stephen was not stoned by either of the new Jewish Christian groups, but by other people standing around not liking what was being done. And remember what was being done by Stephen, in this case, was "very good."

Murder is evil! Crucifixion was evil. Immediately following Jesus' crucifixion, his family and his disciples believed evil had won. They were heart broken and they were afraid. Jesus' murdered body was sealed in a tomb with a rock too heavy to be moved. The black of night descended darker than ever before. Saturday dawned and it was still dark in their hearts because all they hoped for was gone.

It appeared to all that evil had won. But evil did not win because God took the ultimate of evil, the crucifixion, the murder of Jesus and God made it the ultimate good. God moved the rock that sealed the tomb of Jesus and Jesus walked out! Jesus arose from the grave! And we, all believers in Jesus, were redeemed, restored to perfect relations with our God. Because of Jesus our hearts can be changed.

"OUR HELP, OUR HOPE COMES FROM GOD, WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH." The Bible vibrates with the steady drumbeat of faith. God recycles evil into righteousness. Over and over and over again when God gets involved in our life, the bad, that which is evil becomes good. That pattern is repeated in Scripture in Old Testament and New Testament, something bad happens, God steps into the mess and God makes good out of the bad.

The bad that happens is not always evil, like murder.

The bad that happens might be caused by sin or not.

The bad that happens often is just life happening.

The bad might be as simple as discord which leads to disunity.

In our Acts Scriptures today, the Greeks had to stand up for their faith in Jesus in order to be accepted as equals in faith by the Hebrew believers in Jesus. Their different language was surely the least cause of disunity, but once they realized they all had the same faith in Jesus and were baptized into one body with Jesus as the head (1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Col. 1:18; 2:19).

They were able, together, to take the time to address the problem and fix it. There were many things to iron out, but in the end each group, the Jewish people from Jerusalem and Jewish people from all parts of Greece and the Gentile people, who believed in Jesus, accepted each other because both Jew and Gentile, everyone who believed in Jesus had been reconciled to one another through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:13-18). They had continuity together for one reason only and that was they both Hebrew and Greek Christians together believed in the one true God. Jesus!

Each believer in the church whether they were Hellenist or Hebrew was gifted by God with particular talents or abilities to use within the church (1 Cor. 12:12-31; Rom. 12:4-8). Each

believer became part of the church at baptism, being baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27) and consequently, we say today, “we are ‘in Christ’” (Phil. 1:1; Rom. 8:1). We say, Christians are a building of which Christ is the cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). We say, the church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33), Israel is the wife or bride of God (Hos. 1-3; Ezek. 16, 23). Christ is the vine; believers are the branches (John 15:1-11). All of these are ways to say “Christian” and are different names for the church, for believers in Jesus, they are names that the Bible gives to those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Scripture helps us “put aside the differences” and draw close together and close to Christ, giving us a deep sense of identity as Christians with each other and with other Christians.

That is one reason Christians take care of each other, even those we disagree with. We help those in need. Especially those who need forgiveness. That is why we care because God cares for us. God gifts us and we are to use our gifts to help others. It is outlined in Scripture.

There was always structured ministry in the church. Both 1 Thess. 5:12 and Heb. 13:7, in general terms, equate ministry within the whole of the church as: (1) Being the light of the world) (2) Being the salt of the earth, and leaven. (Matt. 5:13-16; 13:33) and (3) It is said, that members of the church are a royal priesthood, empowered to declare to the world the wonderful deeds of God (1 Pet. 2:9). And.....There are a variety of specific titles in the church. Deacon, 1 Tim. 3:8-13; Bishop, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Elder, 1 Tim. 4:17-20; Pastor, Eph. 4:11; Teacher, 1 Cor. 12:28; Evangelist, Eph. 4:11; And Prophet, 1 Cor. 12:28). Those who held these specific positions were then and are now believed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11). Those who believed in Jesus also believed they were to minister or serve in the church with the gift God had given them (Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:7-11).

Such gifts and empowering of the Holy Spirit were not confined to ‘just those titled to a specific job.’ No, there were then, as there are today, various ways to serve the church. Every single believer in Jesus was expected to be blessed by God in some way to serve within the church and to use that gift to benefit the whole church.

OUR DEACON MINISTRY AT ROSE HILL CHURCH IS PATTERNED AFTER THE MINISTRY OF Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas first established in Acts 6

The church in the 1st century presented those they chose to be the caregivers to the apostles, who then prayed and laid their hands on those who would be in charge of the care of the congregation.

The result of this well-organized plan to care for their church members was: 1). The Word of God spread. 2). The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and, 3) was that a large number of Jewish priests became obedient to faith in Jesus. Well....

We do a similar ministry here at Rose Hill. We carefully chose, prayed for, laid hands on and we ordained deacons for their work of caring for those amongst us. There is an extra bulletin today listing who our Deacons are: Ron Lince as Moderator and the other Deacons are Susan Lindh, Bette Palo, Rose Thelander, Roy McIntosh, Pat Ernsberger, Barbara Lince, Kristin White, Barbara Kull, Scot Moorhead, Lola Sianipar and Kurt Thompson. These leader-friends do a good work. A very good work in our church! And they do so for our surrounding community. This slide lists

their official duties they have taken on. You'll find the same in the Deacon bulletin. And each Deacon is assigned one or two homebound or older people to visit, befriend and minister to.

Administration	
Moderator	Ron Lince
Secretary	Lola Sianipar
Nominating Committee	Pat Ernsberger
Congregational Care	
Parish Coordinators	Susan Lindh & Roy McIntosh
Flowers and Cards	Rev. Jannie Box
Rosebuds	Barbara Kull
Memorial & Funeral Coordinator	Barbara Lince & Barbara Kull
Teacup Ministry	Barbara Lince & Kristin White
Congregational Christmas Card	Kristin White
Visitations	All Deacons
Community Outreach	
Woodinville Storehouse Food Bank	Scot Moorhead
Back to School Supplies Collection	Bette Palo
Prison Fellowship Angel Tree	Rose Thelander
Thanksgiving & Christmas Food Box	Pat Ernsberger

There are many such people we visit. Our goal has been that someone from Rose Hill would visit one time a month. Well, just like the problem in Acts 6:1 from the Hellenist Christians to the Hebrew Christians. We too have had some concern expressed that the folks we visit need to be visited more often. In order to properly coordinate efforts to make sure we have not missed someone in need, it's been agreed we want to keep a record of all visits. The tool we plan to use is called "The Care Network." I'm excited to undertake this helpful new step.

We already have some church members involved in the Care Network who are augmenting the work of the Deacons by visiting the homebound. They are: Joyce Foy, Renell Griffith, Linda Holbrook, Karl Palo, the Bozorth's, the McIntosh's, the Smith's. And I anticipate there are others of you who are regularly caring for and visiting church members. I'm sorry not to have read your names.

By implementing The Care Network, we will capture information to better minister within our congregation. There is a sign-up sheet to become a visitor for "The Care Network" out in the foyer. I'll be thrilled if you are led to put your name on the list. I'll follow-up with you.

And, if your God given gift is definitely not visiting homebound folks, THEN there are other Holy Spirit inspired gifts of service you can, and likely already are, giving to our church. One discovery I've personally experienced is that God empowers me as I am challenged to serve in ways I'm not necessarily comfortable with. I cannot sing! I cannot carry a tune. I can't believe I sang today! I know it was terrible, as short as it was. I did so to show even when you don't have a gift you can do what needs to be done for God's Kingdom. God will empower you and give you the capabilities to accomplish anything God wants you to do to serve effectively. So, you may not be a star but I bet you can visit someone and make them smile:

A training manual for those who want to look at is available. It is titled, **THE CARING CONGREGATION**, by Karen Lampe. It contends that congregational care done well does help a

church grow because hurting people outside the church often find, not just help for, and relief from, their needs and hurts, but they also find companionship from the loving acts provided by church members. Best of all, they find hope. Hope in being restored, hope that the bad will end and they Hope for good. The bad can be redeemed and made good. **Redemption is the key to caregiving. The simple definition of redemption is to restore. When we use our hands, empowered by the Holy Spirit, as the hands of Jesus we help Jesus restore those who are broken. We help God restore hurting people to the whole person God intends for each of us to be.**

Through our acts of kindness and care people can find restoration for confused minds, broken hearts, sick bodies, even death and grief. I know we can expect the word of God to spread when we share God's Words and care for people.

Now back to our Acts Scripture....

What was God doing when all the organization to care for the believers was going on in the early church? Oh God was at work! He was overseeing that organization! In verses 1-52 of Acts chapter 7, that we did not read, Stephen sets before the Sanhedrin evidence of his deep reverence for the entire history of Israel. He told the religious leaders that did not believe in Jesus that their standing around watching and their resistance to the Gospel was continuing the rebellion of God's People against God's plan that began with Abraham, and continued with Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and all twelve of the tribes of Israel.

God made good each time of His people's rebellion. God always does. The deacons chosen in the very first church were Greek. Stephen was a Hellenist, Greek. It is most probable that the presence of the Greek Leaders, the Hellenists, is one of the reasons the Christian movement quickly spread into the Greek-speaking Gentile world.¹ (Smile). If there had not been troubles between the Hellenists and Hebrews, that might not have happened. And there is another line that got my attention: *"They laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."* This tells me Saul was there, he saw the murder of Stephen that so very much was parallel of the story of Jesus' murder. Saul heard Stephen give his defense of his faith and of Jewish history, which Paul would have also known well. The Saul, later called Paul and made equal to the apostles was being wooed by God, trained by God. God was using bad to make good.

The Greek word for church is (ekklēsia) meaning 'assembly' or 'gathering.' In the Greek translation of the OLD TESTAMENT (the Septuagint), two main words are used for the People of God in their assembly (ekklēsia) and synagogue (synagogē). Because Jews in the first century used the term, synagogue for their gatherings, the first Greek-speaking Christians selected ekklesia in order to show that their assembling together to worship was rooted in the OLD TESTAMENT and that they the Greeks continued as the OLD TESTAMENT People of God. By the end of the first century the vast majority of membership in the New Testament churches were Gentiles. Only God could have done such a thing!

Slide, THE BEAT GOES ON-PLEASE LEAVE UP TO THE END.

¹ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In *Harper's Bible dictionary* (1st ed., p. 382). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

I have watched Jesus as the world has gone by for 50 years now. And I know the beat continues to go on. You do too especially if you have walked close with God. Even if Jesus has been in your life a short while, those who walk close with him have experienced and know God makes good of our bad. Today in 2017 It is not young men going off to war, It is young Americans, men and women, going off to Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria. *History has turned the page, uh huh The beat goes on.....Bums still cry, "Hey buddy, have you got a dime?"* "They might find redemption if we give them some of our time.....!!!!!!!"

The man cryonically preserved in 1967 and others after him have been found to have body fractures in their frozen states which indicates their bodies might break in a thaw. One Cryonic researcher I read about last week said, "I have peace of mind knowing I might wake up again someday in the future." Oh, such comments make me realize there are people, good people who need to hear the word of God and Know they will rise again, there is life after death. God tells us we will ALL rise again, Just like Jesus did!

When the charity baseball game continued without Republican Congressman Steve Scalise who had been shot, Republicans and Democrats met at 2nd base at National Ballpark in Wash D.C., while on national TV, to pray. They set aside their differences prayed together, played a game together and raised a lot of money for charity. God through Jesus Christ brings reconciliation. Jesus brings redemption. Both Old Testament and New Testament tell us that God decrees, "Before me every knee will bow (Isaiah 45: 23) and Every tongue will acknowledge me [God] (Romans 14:11).

The Biblical Story needs to be heard today. Scripture is alive. The living word of God! Yes, it is stories from centuries ago that when looked at carefully we can see God working behind the scenes of every single story. And every word of Scripture is applicable to the reader. Applicable to us, right now today. How can we apply the Scripture we read and heard about today to ourselves?

Let us work together to help spread the good news of Jesus Christ to those in our world today as the first deacons did so long ago

When someone amongst us is in a bad situation we want to step in and help God make good for them, in whatever situation it might be and in whatever way God directs us. Because God makes beautiful things out of us! And God empowers us to help make beautiful things!

Let us work together to help spread the good news of Jesus Christ to those in our world today as the first deacons did so long ago. And let's watch God work!

Amen