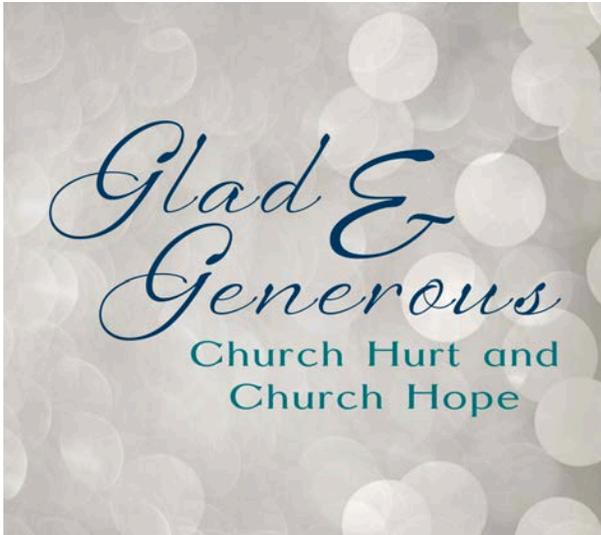


GLAD & GENEROUS: CHURCH HURT & CHURCH HOPE

September 7, 2025

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Acts 2:42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. This is a beautiful, even if idealized, description of the early church. We know from Paul's letters that the church was not perfect. Still, in what ways does the 21st-century church reflect or depart from this depiction in Acts? In what ways does South Elkhorn reflect or depart from this depiction?
3. Why do you think "glad and generous hearts" are so attractive and might lead a church community to grow?
4. The church devoted itself to learning, being with each other, eating together, and praying. In addition, they would use their resources to benefit those in need. Which of these aspects of church life resonates with you right now? Which do you find most challenging?
5. The word "saved" can be a scary word, connoting in our 21st-century context the talk of hell and damnation. The early church realized that life with God meant being saved from all sorts of dynamics and forces that are

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real in everyday life, including loneliness, hostility, bitterness, injustice, suffering, stubbornness, cruelty, shame, self-aggrandizement, and so much more. What “spiritual wounds” do you think need saving/healing in our 21st century, and how might the church be a place of spiritual healing and hope?

6. Recall a time when a church-oriented meal or fellowship time was a blessing or joy you did not expect to feel so deeply. Why do you think that was?

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