

Focus on Acts 1:15–17, 21–26

WHAT is important to know?

— From *“Exegetical Perspective,”* A. Katherine Grieb

Luke reports the community’s prayer, calling upon God as the one who knows everyone’s heart. They cast lots, an ancient biblical practice for determining God’s will, and when the lot fell on Matthias, he was “added to the eleven apostles” (v. 26). In summary, the community, under Peter’s leadership, took extraordinary measures to ensure that there were twelve apostles again before Pentecost. Why did they do that? Later on, when other members of the original Twelve died, this replacement action was not repeated. The deliberate reconstitution of the Twelve seems to have occurred in preparation for the reception of the Holy Spirit of the Lord, who had chosen exactly twelve to symbolize the restoration of the tribes of Israel.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From *“Theological Perspective,”* Noel Leo Erskine

The first chapter of Acts is about transition and change in the leadership of the church. According to the first fourteen verses, Jesus took forty days in which he taught the disciples the mysteries of the kingdom of God as he prepared them to assume leadership for the church. It is instructive for us that the choice of Matthias was in the context of prayer. Prayer is the appropriate context for decision making as the church deals with issues of leadership. Prayer signals that the church looks beyond itself for guidance and direction.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From *“Pastoral Perspective,”*

Jeffrey C. Peterson-Davis

This story of the selection of Matthias pushes us to ask questions about how we discern the will of God. This story stands at an important crossroad for the first disciples. Jesus has ascended, and they are about to receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In the crucible of the uncertainty in those days, the disciples remained faithful in prayer and in seeking the will of God. May it be that we would be sustained by that same focus in the uncertainty of these days.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From *“Homiletical Perspective,”*

Barbara K. Lundblad

Justus lost the toss of the dice, but there is no indication that he lost his faith in Jesus. As the book of Acts unfolds, there are hundreds of unnamed people who pass on the story of Jesus. Most of them are even less well known than Justus. Without these ordinary folks, Peter and Paul would have remained quite lonely and ineffective in bearing witness “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The people listening to today’s sermon are there because ordinary people told somebody about Jesus. Thanks be to God!