



GOSPEL CHURCH

ACTS 1-12



Acts 1-12 - How the good news defines and drives us.

'Church.' What does the word bring to mind for you? Elaborate ritual? Long sermons? Slow hymns? We at MPC are obviously a 'church.' But what is that exactly? What's the point of being a church? Increasingly over the last few decades, many Australians would answer: "not much!" But Luke, the author of The Book of Acts, would disagree.

Acts tells the story of how the church got started, and it's an exciting account. It's a story that extends the "good story", the gospel, about Jesus. The one who died for sin is King! And this good news creates the church, gathering a new community around King Jesus. With the arrival of the long promised Holy Spirit, this good news *transforms* the church, making it a more and more Jesus-shaped community - though there are some bumps along the way! And fanned by the Spirit this good news drove the church, empowering its mission to share this good news with more and more people.

The story of the church was exciting, when it was a *gospel* church; and it's still exciting today, if we're *still a gospel church*. In this first quarter of 2018, we'll immerse ourselves in Acts 1-12. We'll immerse ourselves in the gripping story of how the church got started, how they learned their purpose, and how they faced almost insurmountable challenges. But then we'll also see it's not just the story of the *original* church, it's the first part of *our* story as a church. And so together, in this story we'll see how we got started, get a clearer view of *our* purpose, and gain a firmer grasp on how we can face similar challenges today. It's our prayer that reading, thinking and praying through Acts 1-12 this quarter will draw us together as a *gospel* church... much like the original church, but in 21st century Brisbane. We'd love you to pray that with us.

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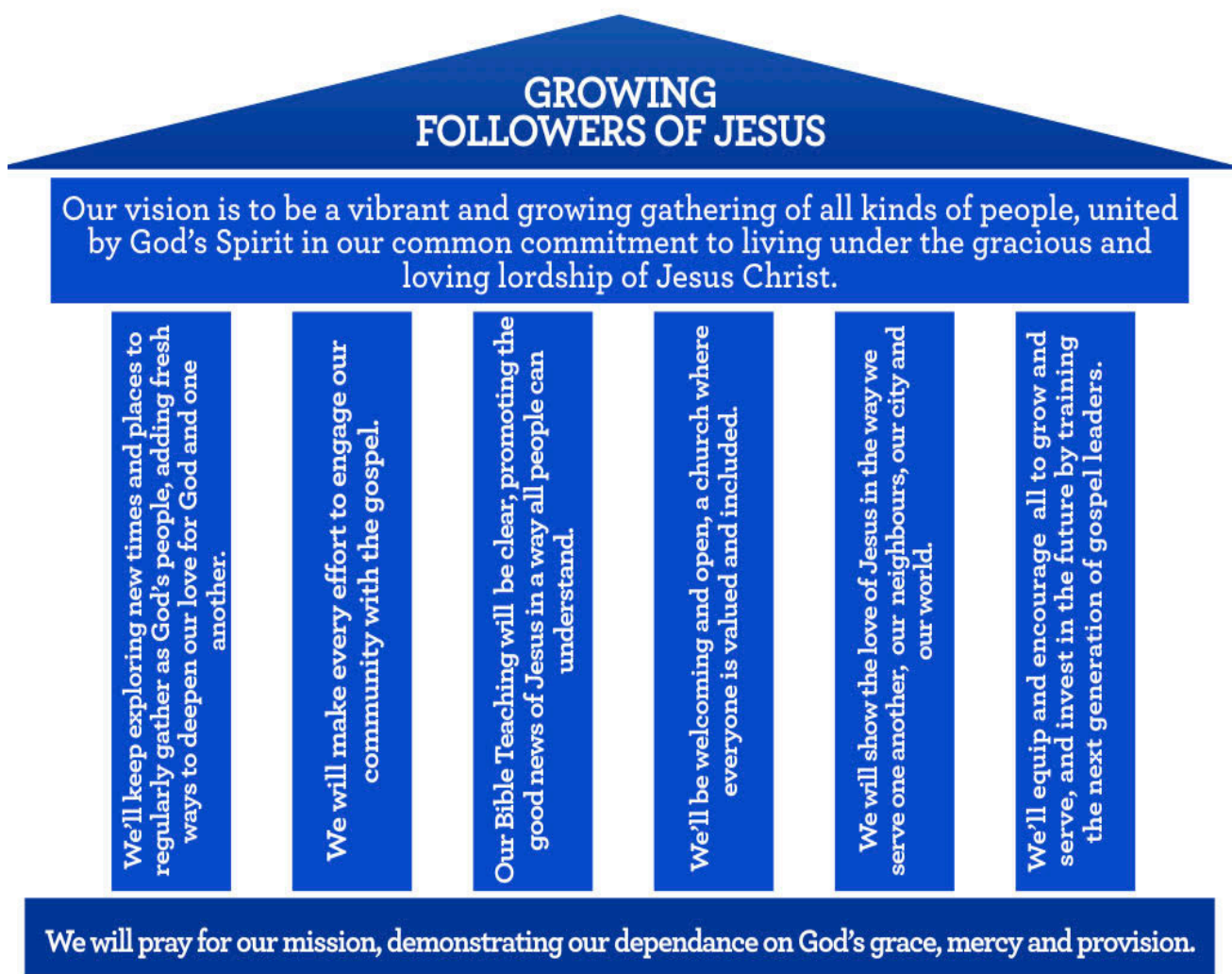
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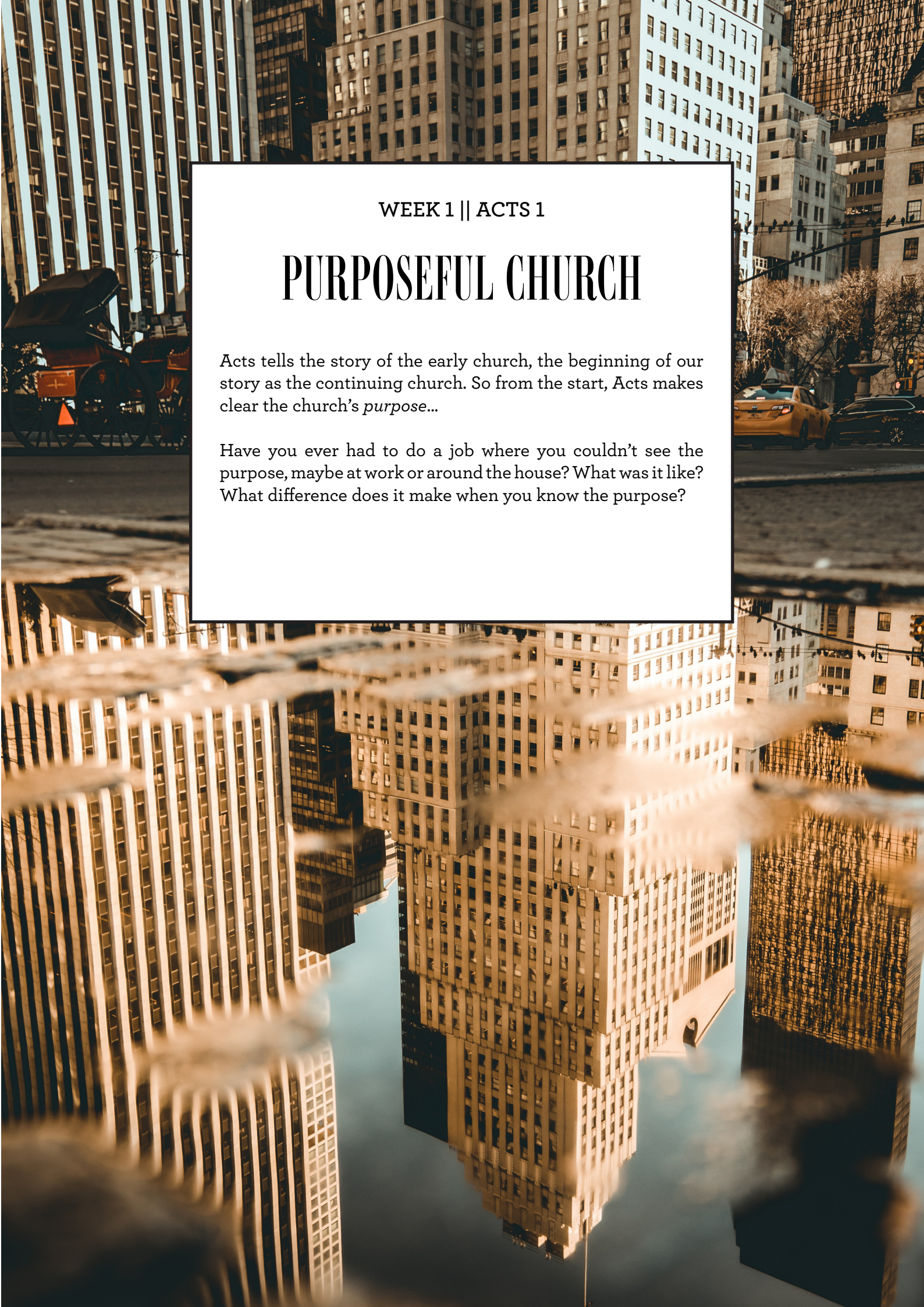
Refocusing our Gospel Vision...

One useful definition of organisational vision is that it is “a clear mental picture of what could be, fueled by the conviction that it should be.”

In 2017, a team made up of members of all our congregations met over three weekends to prayerfully re-think and recapture our mental picture of the kind of church MPC could be and should be in the future. You can see the results in full on our website at <https://mpc.org.au/re-vision-2017>. We condensed the results in a diagram (below) with our overall mission of “Growing Followers of Jesus” at the top, the undergirding of prayer as the base; and six key vision pillars.

As we launch into our study of the first church in the Book of Acts, it’s a good opportunity to check if our vision correlates with God’s vision for his church. Each week there’ll be a reference to a key section of our vision as described on this page.



The background of the entire page is a photograph of a city street. In the foreground, a horse-drawn carriage is visible on the left. The street is lined with tall, multi-story buildings. The scene is captured in a way that creates a sense of depth and perspective, with buildings receding into the distance. The lighting is warm, suggesting a late afternoon or early morning setting. The overall atmosphere is one of a busy, historic urban environment.

WEEK 1 || ACTS 1

PURPOSEFUL CHURCH

Acts tells the story of the early church, the beginning of our story as the continuing church. So from the start, Acts makes clear the church's *purpose*...

Have you ever had to do a job where you couldn't see the purpose, maybe at work or around the house? What was it like? What difference does it make when you know the purpose?

THE STORY SO FAR...

Luke relates Acts to his Gospel account: “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven.” Maybe you don’t normally think of Jesus’ entire life, death, resurrection and ascension to heaven as just what Jesus *began* to do! But, according to Luke, Jesus has much more to do in this world. Acts is all about what Jesus *continued* to do...

As background to Acts, read Acts 10:36-43 where Peter recounts Jesus’ life

1. Summarise the main features of “the good news”:

v38

v39

v40

v41

v42

v43

2. In our series “Good News That Changes Everything” we summarised the gospel as: “**The one who died for sin is King**”. Which of Peter’s points match this summary? What extra points does Peter make?

The gospel is a great story, especially because it’s a true story! The question is, where will the story lead next?

THE STORY CONTINUES...

Read Acts 1:1-14

3. After the pain of seeing Jesus crucified and the joy of seeing him resurrected, what do the **apostles** hope Jesus will do next? (1:6)

Should Christians have similar political hopes today? Why or why not?

4. What mission does Jesus give his people instead? (1:8)

Is this mission still the church's mission today? Why or why not?

5. How do you think the apostles would have felt, being given this mission just as they 'lost' Jesus?

How do you feel about playing your part in this mission today? Confident?

Chosen Apostles

Acts 1:15-26 shows in a particularly striking way that Jesus keeps acting after his ascension in just the way he acted before it, only now through his people by his Spirit. Jesus had *chosen* twelve apostles (Luke 6:13). But Judas betrayed him and needed to be replaced. So Peter gets the church to nominate two men who knew Jesus first hand, and they pray for Jesus to *choose* one of them as they draw lots (Acts 1:24). Later we'll see Jesus *choose* yet another apostle (Acts 9:15) - Paul. While all believers in Jesus have the Holy Spirit (see next week in Acts), the Spirit empowers each of us in different ways for different tasks at different times. These *chosen* apostles were empowered by the Spirit in special ways to perform major tasks at special moments in salvation history (e.g. the first time Jews ever heard the gospel (Acts 2), the first time non-Jews ever heard the gospel (Acts 8) etc.) Now, we aren't living in such special moments of salvation history and none of our leaders are authorised by Jesus himself in such a direct way. We're not apostles, but we're all empowered by the same Spirit to act as Jesus' witnesses at various times in our lives. So we can learn something of what that's like from the apostles' example, as long as we keep in mind how their time and chosen role was different to ours.

6. Jesus gives his people the gift of the Holy Spirit. In this context what's the purpose of that gift? (1:8)

If you follow Jesus, do you realise the Holy Spirit can empower you to witness to Jesus beyond what you naturally could? What difference might it make if you kept this in mind?

7. Having been given a big mission to fulfill, the apostles turn straight to "constant prayer" (1:14). Why would that be?

We now have the promised Spirit (see next week in Acts!). But we still rely on his power to fulfill our mission. Do you think as a church we should be "constantly praying" for the power to bear witness to Jesus? Try to explain your response.

How could we pray more specifically for our mission to be witnesses to Jesus on Brisbane's northside? What should we ask for?

GOSPEL VISION

8. The MPC vision we adopted as a church in December 2017 is pictured on page 1. Which key parts of the vision align with the mission of the early church?

How could you personally contribute to making those parts of our vision become reality?

9. What events and activities do you see in our MPC calendar that reflect our gospel purpose? And how can you play a role in fulfilling that purpose?

If we're a Spirit-filled church on a gospel mission, that gospel purpose will be reflected in everything we do. Let's pray that it will be.