

Together / Juntos – Acts / Hechos 2

We live in a painfully divided country wracked with a pandemic, climate change, extreme income inequalities, racial injustice, lies, and conspiracy theories. What better time than this to gather to continue the work of Jesus, peacefully, simply, together? In our church's tagline and in Acts 2, "together" does not imply agreement with each other nor unity necessarily; it simply means together in one place. When the disciples gathered to celebrate the Jewish festival of Pentecost, they were uncertain, troubled, and saddened by the suffering and death of their teacher and leader, of their Lord. Of course, they also had been gladdened and reassured by his resurrection and subsequent ascension, but they really did not know what was to come next. They never did. But they were together even though they were worried about the future, divided over leadership, and no doubt more frightened than ever before in their lives. Although we are not faced with all that at district conference, we, too, may not be of the same mind, but we can be together in one place and continue Jesus's work with a peaceful, simple approach.



If I chose "together" as my theme because I wanted to emphasize a state of being rather than a philosophy or a program of action, then I chose Acts 2 as the text because that chapter by the evangelist we call Luke contains the word "together" translated into English more often than in any other part of the Bible, Hebrew or Greek. In fact, the first sentence in the Greek original of Acts 2 actually concludes with the words "together together." Troubled by this predicament, English translators have always turned one of these two "togethers" into some other expression, such as "with one accord" (King James) or "in one place" (NIV, RSV, and NRSV). Amazingly, in the Greek original the last word of Acts 2 as is actually "together" as well, although it apparently is never translated this literally. There is much more in Acts 2 than "together," but clearly the writer wanted us to contemplate what it means to be together.

The logo for the theme together is a detail from a 15th century anonymous French illumination found at the Getty Museum in Brentwood, California. The rich tempera colors and gold leaf illustrate the exact moment in Acts 2 when the sound and fire of the holy spirit descended upon the disciples together at Pentecost, Sisters and Brothers alike. Throughout Acts 2 it is mainly Peter and other male disciples who seem to be speaking, but in this exquisitely detailed painting two women, presumably two of the Biblical Mary's, sit front and center in prayerful ecstasy. Moreover, with their full beards and relatively plain clothing, the group seems to be modeling Brethren together, continuing the work of Jesus peacefully and simply.

Peace,

Al Clark, 2021 PSWD Moderator

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