

## Focus on Acts 1:15–17, 21–26

### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” A. Katherine Grieb

After the resurrection of Jesus, the succession puzzles continue. There seems to have been no expectation that any one disciple or family member should succeed Jesus as Messiah designate. No dynasty seems to have been either intended or suggested, whether by relation, descent, or appointment. Instead, we have Luke’s intriguing account in Acts 1:15–26, of the early church’s pressing concern to replace the apostate disciple Judas with another who would bring their number back up to twelve. Indeed, so urgent is this concern that, along with the ministry of prayer, it dominates the activity of the Jesus community waiting in Jerusalem during the ten days between the ascension of Jesus and Pentecost.

### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Noel Leo Erskine

The challenge facing the church today is to be careful not to place issues of structure above the mission of the church. “Does that remind us of many elections that take place in our churches? Rather than asking ourselves who can make a better contribution to the mission in an ever-changing world, we seek someone who can continue what has been done previously. . . . The very fact that Matthias is never again mentioned should serve as a warning: do not try to force the Spirit to act according to our own purposes.”

### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,”

Jeffrey D. Peterson-Davis

This story of the selection of Matthias pushes us to ask questions about how we discern the will of God and the confidence we place in systems we employ. While casting lots seems primitive and out of step with reason, could we trust that God might reveal the divine will in such a simple and definitive way? To what extent do the methods we employ in discernment get tangled up in our own need to control circumstances and outcomes? How do we see the community of the early followers of Jesus engaging in discernment? How does prayer influence our decision making?

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

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”

Barbara K. Lundblad

We can be grateful for the witness of those who are so little known. The sermon can be a time to acknowledge and celebrate the ordinary people who have carried the extraordinary gospel from one generation to the next. Who is Justus in your faith journey? There is the Sunday school teacher who taught for over forty years, never eligible for a church board because women were not even allowed to vote. There is a man whose name you cannot remember who told you that Jesus held him through the weeks and months after his wife died. And there is every person sitting in the sanctuary. Thanks be to God!