

ACTS – OPPOSITION AND WITNESSING

Date	Special Sunday	Minister/Preacher	Theme	Purpose
08-Mar-20		Rev Adrian Burr	Acts: Stephen sees Jesus! (6:)	Opposition
15-Mar-20		Elizabeth Wade	Acts: Stephen sees Jesus! (7:)	Witnessing
22-Mar-20	Mothers Day	Elizabeth Wade	Acts: Stephen sees Jesus! (8:)	Witnessing

The Call

Acts sets out the story of the growing community of those who are prepared to be disciples of Jesus. Some have dubbed Acts not “the acts of the apostles” but “the acts of the Holy Spirit” Others point out that, in a sense, Acts is still *current affairs* as the acts of the Holy Spirit continue to this day! The history of the early church is the story of the outpouring (at Latter First Fruits/Pentecost) followed by significant manifestations of the Spirit’s power and intent.

The call for WECC in 2020 is to rejoice in that early history and to pray to God for a similar outpouring in Haverhill.

It was in Stephen that we see the beginnings of serious opposition (persecution) in a way that led to death. That is so sad. But it still goes on today. Despite opposition (week 1) we still need to go on witnessing. That is our greatest call.

Series participants and Dates

as above

Series Objective

Acts is a key turning point in the ongoing Jesus story. Jesus' mission moves from Israel to global. Is this the first example of "globalisation"?!

Acts demonstrates the reality that Jesus would be absent from His disciples in bodily form, yet in-dwelling them via His wonderful Holy Spirit. The ministry of Holy Spirit (always detectible in the OT) now takes *centre stage* and is the "added-value" provided via the New Covenant.

Whilst we live in a 21st Century World, spiritually the needs we encounter are the same (identical?) to those encountered by the earliest church:

- rejection of "the Jesus Way"
- resistance to "the Jesus Way" (persecution)
- alternative "ways" devised/offered by this world

The true "cost" of being a disciple of Jesus becomes clearer; yet the blessings of being a disciple – and the associated God-given power – also become clearer in Acts.

In Haverhill WECC is in a time of change, just as the Disciples were in Acts chapter 1 after the loss of Jesus in the flesh. Yet Jesus would leave behind Him a life changing legacy. Whilst not a direct analogy, WECC now need to sense what legacy God has provided through previous leadership and how He now intends us to build upon that legacy. In Acts it becomes clear that one day Jesus will return. In the next few years it is possible that Haverhill will seek to appoint a new Minister. Will WECC give the new Minister a steer on what is expected, or do we expect that a new Minister will give us the 'steer' that he/she expects? (Or a mixture of both?).

What does it mean to step out "in faith" today? How dependable is our God? What should we learn from Acts to buoy us in Haverhill in 2020-21?

At the end of this second part of the Acts series (as above), our flock will know at least 3 things with confidence:

1. The gospel message is one we can and must share – with a degree of total confidence, yet not with arrogance
2. Opposition is to be expected – indeed it would be noteworthy if it was absent! Opposition "goes with the territory" for the Christian. Witnessing is a command of Jesus – and it comes at a certain cost.
3. All the "problems" we face have been faced before. There are no surprises to God and He is in total control. Acts gives us a sense of what "church" looks like and WE need to have the same Godly confidence that the earliest church had.

We will return from Acts from time to time throughout 2020 and aim to use Rev Alex Jacobs "100 Days With Acts" as a focal point – and also our Lent preparation material.