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Thoughts  
“A Living Hope: *The Baptismal Covenant*”

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∴ ZERO ∴

*“Grace to you and PEACE from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

∴ ONE ∴

Dear Sisters and Brothers,  
dear new members,

We have just heard words from Luke in Acts 4  
which depict a wonderful image of the early  
Christian community, the early Christian  
church, to say so, in Jerusalem.

Actually, our biblical paragraph started with  
“they”. But it is not explained who “they” were

Let me read to you verse 41, the verse prior to  
our text. It reads:

*<sup>41</sup> [Those] who welcomed [Peter’s] message  
were baptized, and that day about three thou-  
sand persons were added.*

## ::: TWO :::

Now, when we look around here at Peace Church we do not actually have exactly three thousand people which were added to our community today.

We have received 12 new members alongside with 2 of our members reaffirming their faith today.

To be honest, I am a little overwhelmed... So large a group I have never received as new professing members in the whole time of my ministry in the UMC.

And I find it a strong sign of hope that all of you whom received into membership today made this decision.

And by that, I mean not primarily a sign of hope for the church, this church, the UMC or Peace Church.

To me this is a sign of hope for the whole world.

You have given your consent to the question:

*“According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?”*

Entering the professing membership of the church is about nurturing this church with prayer, presence, ministry, and finances.

But moreover, it is about serving as Christ's representatives in the world—bringing the gospel to everyone.

### **::: THREE :::**

*<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

Being part of the Christian church is about learning, about fellowship, about being united with Christ and each other in the celebration of Holy Communion and prayer.

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It's a way of life that start in baptism. But today you have deliberately confirmed your baptismal covenant—and entered in wholehearted professing membership.

∴ **FOUR** ∴

*<sup>43</sup> Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.*

This passage is outstanding, isn't it. I wonder what signs and wonders this verse actually relates to.

But the core of this verse is, that Christ's mission continues in it's fulness. Although Christ is absent from an innerworldy point of view, his mission continues, strongly... and lets people find a home in him—and *his* church.

∴ **FIVE** ∴

*<sup>44</sup> All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day, as they*

*spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

Oh, what a wonderful sight or report this is.

You could get the idea that is the actualization of Christian hope and fellowship.

But honestly, what we can read here is the archetype of Christian community.

We do not know, if this image of an ideal Christian community could ever be realized as depicted here.

But the point is, that this is what happens when Jesus words and his example lives in a community.

It is exactly what we strive for.

And wholeheartedly I can say that a major portion of this is the soil on which our community at Peace Church is built.

**::: SIX :::**

So, this image leads the way:  
The needy get what they need,  
the thirsty and hungry will be feed,  
fellowship is practised in breaking the bread,  
the food is shared.

And behind all of this: The Lord of the church,  
Jesus Christ, now acting through the arms of his  
disciples, accompanying the lonely and des-  
paired through the feed of his followers.

**::: SEVEN :::**

This is exactly why this day is a sign of hope  
for everyone.

What we heard, which was laid upon us in our  
baptism, is now in full flowering as we con-  
sciously profess our faith and declare to be  
willing to be the continuing representatives of  
Christ in our world.

May the Lord bless and keep us—and especially  
those who have confirmed their lives in God's  
creative love, and his gospel for the world.

And so, we pray—in singing,

“Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Take my moments and my days; let them flow in endless praise, let them flow in endless praise.”

::: Amen.