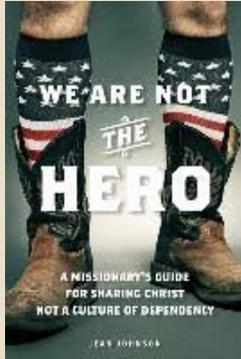


## ***Mike's Mission Notes:***

On Sunday April 30<sup>th</sup>, I got to visit Bradley Hill Presbyterian Church for worship. In between the two worship services I was able to attend one of their Adult Education Classes. I happened across a



great session led by Jean Johnson who was discussing her recent book “We Are Not the Hero” and more specifically her experience with overseas Missionary work in Cambodia.

I'd like to think it is divine providence, but she referenced Acts 2:42-47, which was a part of the lectionary reading for Sunday May 7<sup>th</sup>, so hopefully the text is still fresh on everyone's mind.

She talked about how so often missionaries brought with them all the trappings of the Western Church, thinking like buildings, books, trained & paid staff. When she started her work, she just assumed that was a part of doing church, but when she went back to re-read Acts 2:42-47, she began to appreciate a simplicity in the early church. A simplicity that didn't cost a whole lot to implement. She realized that by doing things like paying for buildings and staff, she was a part of forming faith communities that were becoming dependent on those funds, instead of creating faith communities that could support themselves. She shifted her work, and started to strive to help faith communities create something that looked more like Acts 2:42-47, where the focus was prayer and teaching and breaking bread together and fellowship, and not on buildings and staff and supplies.

The immediate implication is to re-think the way international mission is done, that it takes on a more partner based model, which many of the programs currently existing in our presbytery do a great job of, like the work in Cuba and Kenya and Haiti and various other countries that has been highlighted in previous mission highlights.

But it got me thinking more about local mission. Money in churches is getting tighter and tighter, and often, mission seems too often to be the first thing on the chopping block.

I know I am not the first person to ever say this, but where might churches struggling with supporting re-focus themselves, so that they are existing using the early church of Acts 2 as an example, instead of trying to embody the well-funded programs of the post-World War II church.

There is nothing wrong with all the western church's standard equipment, if it is not preventing a faith community from living into the call to make disciples and share God's love with the world. Maybe Jean Johnson's work can inspire not only a renewed look at international mission, but can help churches take a long look at their own local missions as well.