Acts 2:42-47

42 They devoted themselves
to the apostles' teaching
and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread
and the prayers.

43 Awe came upon everyone,
because many wonders and signs
were being done
by the apostles.

44 All who believed
were together
and had all things in common;

45 they would sell their possessions and goods
and distribute the proceeds to all,
as any had need.

46 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.

Reading the Acts This Week

Once the events of Pentecost are past,
and Peter's long speech is complete –
What's next? Tough acts to follow, eh?

What was the earliest community of faith like?
Teaching, learning, fellowship, breaking bread, prayers
No reference to miraculous or to helping behaviour
What are the 'wonders and signs' then"

The more distinctive claim is of communal property,
not held individually, or by cultural norms of family group,
liquidating goods into cash to share more easily
from each according to ability,
to each according to need

Again, what did they do?
gathering in the temple (what's the future of that in 70CE?)
breaking bread at home, eaten glad and generous
it's a counterculture, apart and against

How do they get the goodwill of all the people,
and how did God add to their number –
in the communitarian household?

This ideal of an original utopian commune
soon crumbles –
see Acts 5, where somebody holds back money
or Acts 6, squabbles about distribution,
accusing apostles of favouring Hebrew over Hellenist

How do you imagine the earliest church,
and how long did it last?
(Paul gets going in the early 50's CE)
What's with the imperfect tense, 'being saved'?

John 10:1-10

‘Very truly, I tell you,
anyone
who does not enter the sheepfold
by the gate
but climbs in
by another way
is a thief and a bandit.

2 The one who enters
by the gate
is the shepherd
of the sheep.

3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him,
and the sheep hear his voice.

He calls his own sheep by name
and leads them out.

4 When he has brought out all his own,
he goes ahead of them,
and the sheep follow him
because they know his voice.

5 They will not follow a stranger,
but they will run from him
because they do not know
the voice of strangers.’

6 Jesus used this figure of speech
with them,
but they did not understand
what he was saying to them.

7 So again
Jesus said to them,
‘Very truly, I tell you,
I am the gate for the sheep.

8 All who came before me
are thieves and bandits;
but the sheep did not listen to them.

9 I am the gate.
Whoever enters by me
will be saved,
and will come in and go out
and find pasture.

10 The thief comes
only to steal and kill and destroy.

I came that they may have life,
and have it abundantly.

Reading the Gospel This Week

It's 'Good Shepherd Sunday',
the "I am" statement
is not 'I am the good shepherd'
this time it's
'I am the gate'

We've looked at the 'I am' before – *ego eimi*
7 times in John –
rather than 'the kingdom of heaven is like'
a claim of incarnation here and now – not 'pie in the sky'

We have a romantic urban vision of sheep and shepherds –
perhaps not shared in the early Common Era –
shepherds had low status, not owners of the sheep,
working nights, thieving for and with sheep

The metaphor here is of a society apart,
with Jesus the only gate in and out
and competing shepherds

It's a mixed metaphor,
to be the gate and the shepherd
either way we are the sheep. –
to be fleeced? to be butchered?

Have you ever worked with sheep?
Did you find them docile, obedient?
Are they good role models for us?