

**“Led by the Spirit”**  
**Acts 6:1-7**  
**Brentwood First Presbyterian**  
**4/20/08**  
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**The Hellenists complained**

When I was a teenager, I was asked to be the treasurer of the Episcopalian Young Churchmen. The EYC. At first I thought it was sort of like an award, with no attendant responsibilities. Then I realized I had to keep a ledger, stock the Coke machine weekly, take the coins from the machine and roll them, and take them to the bank. I learned how to write checks. I got used to it, and continued in the capacity of treasurer for 4 years. Four years that seemed like an eternity to a teenager. Some of you are too young to know that once upon a time Cokes came not in cans or plastic bottles, but in thick green glass bottles. And in two different bottle sizes. And remember how those old Coke machines had a painting of Santa Claus holding a Coke on their side? That was my job every week, filling the Coke machine after worship, collecting the change, and taking it to the bank. In a way it was good for me, because I had a job to do at church. The Episcopalian Young Churchmen were depending on me. I even quit complaining to my parents about having to go to church every Sunday! Because I had a job to do!

The Hellenists, the Greek speaking members of the first church of Jerusalem, complained. Because whenever folks get together, someone complains. Because different folks have different needs. Some have financial needs and are hungry for food. And some satisfy psychological needs by being bossy. The Hellenists were the bossy people in the first church of Jerusalem.

Someone I will call Mrs. Smith, an adult member of my childhood church, told me, a teenager, that I was falling short in my “job” as treasurer of the Episcopal Young Churchmen. I was placing only one row of small bottled Cokes in the Coke machine, instead of the two rows she wanted, because everyone knows the short Cokes taste better than the tall bottled Cokes! In retrospect, it was the proverbial tempest in a teapot. Almost burned me out.

The session, which is the governing body of our church, is studying a pamphlet written by Steven Boots. He has identified characteristics of a church that saves and rescues people from tempests in teapots.

Boots says the ideal leader in such a church has the following attributes:

- 1) a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ,
- 2) commitment to building up the faith of others,

- 3) responsiveness to the needs of others,
- 4) recognition of the gifts in others,
- 5) the willingness and the gift of building up relationships, and the most important attribute,
- 6) lets go and lets God.

Letting go and letting God is like riding a tandem bike. When you start out, you are in charge in the front, deciding where and when to turn. And God is in the back giving words of encouragement and giving pedal power. Somewhere along the way you trade places with God. And when God takes control you go places that are wonderful and surprising and all you have to do is enjoy the ride and pedal.

Yes, there are more constructive ways to accomplish the ministries of Jesus than complaining like the Hellenists did.

### **The twelve called together, gathered the whole community, and selected 7**

One way of handling conflict is to immediately react. With no pause between stimulus and response. Like Pavlov's dog. This often happens with disastrous results. Another way to handle conflict is to pause. Pause to pray and seek God's Spirit for guidance. After a prayerful pause, the 12 apostles selected 7 disciples of good standing, full of wisdom, **and** Spirit.

To be a disciple it is not enough to have a good reputation. It is not enough to know what Scripture says. The 12 apostles knew those who serve the church must ALSO be full of God's Spirit.

How do we know those full of God's Spirit? We know they are Christians by their love. But we know someone is full of God's Spirit by their fruits. So what are the fruits of the Spirit?

Open your pew Bibles right now to Galatians 5:22-26, and read along with me. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing with one another, envying one another."

Love, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are the fruits of the Spirit. These are how we know who is Spirit filled.

And what does Spirit filled leadership accomplish?

## **The Word of God continued to spread, the number of disciples increased greatly**

Boots, the writer of the pamphlet the session is studying, says that the primary quality of a church that rescues and saves through transformation is SPIRITUAL ENERGY. He writes one needs 4 things to create spiritual energy.

- 1) We leave worship with more energy than when we came. For folks under the age of 50, this requires contemporary Christian music. For those over the age of 50 this requires traditional and gospel music. Our church tries to use a mix of all three in every worship service.
- 2) in Bible study, we need to experience the living presence of God. We have two Bible studies for adults on Sundays, and Weiling and I also lead a Bible study Thursday afternoons at the Heritage at Brentwood.
- 3) one needs multiple opportunities to pray, with quiet time to listen to God. We pray at every church gathering.
- 4) mission outreach needs to do more than cutting a check. It needs to engage people in relationship to others and to God, or it becomes distant and impersonal. Hands on mission activities work best. Boots says a church is a congregation of missionaries, not a congregation with a mission. Gladys and I lead worship every Sunday afternoon at the Somerville NH. We go to the DPC soup kitchen the third Weds of each month, except this month they had water problems, and this is the first month in over a year we have not gone. Stella and I went to Guatemala on a mission trip last year, and plan to go again this November. Frank went to Iraq this year. And Katy says she wants to get active in Grace Works again. Yes, we are a congregation of missionaries.

### **Conclusion**

Because they created spiritual energy, and because of the way they resolved their first conflict, the first church of Jerusalem spread the Word of God, and the first church itself spread from Jerusalem to Rome, and all the way around the world.

Sing with me Hymn #417.