

# **The United Church**

**Acts 6:1-7**

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**Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”**

## **Acts 6:1-7, cont.**

**And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.**

# Unity is not an option

- **“I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).**

# 1. The God We Worship

**“The Church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshiping men... Modern Christianity is simply not producing the kind of Christian who can appreciate or experience the life in the Spirit. The words, ‘Be still, and know that I am God,’ mean next to nothing to the self-confident, bustling worshiper ...” (A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*)**

# 1. The God We Worship

- **“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing...” (Acts 6:1)**
- **These were not just people increasing, but followers of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.**
- **The Spirit of God indwelt each of them.**
- **Changed hearts**
- **“That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us” (John 17:21)**

# Philippians 2:1-5

- **“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”**

## 2. The Things that Divide Us

- **“A complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution” (Acts 6:1).**
- **Hellenists: Grecian Jews:**
  - They spoke more Greek than Aramaic or Hebrew
  - They read the Greek Old Testament, not Hebrew
  - They were more zealous for the holy places of Jerusalem than those who lived there
  - In some ways they seemed less Jewish, but in other ways they seemed more Jewish



# What divides us?

- **Mother tongues**
- **National culture and customs**
- **Generational differences**
- **Interests, experiences, education**
- **Different demonic strongholds**
- **Different spiritual gifts**
- **Different personalities**

# Respecting Differences

- **So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats...The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. (Romans 14:19-23)**

### **3. The proper use of position**

- “And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’” (Acts 6:2-4)**

# Exodus 18:17-23

**But Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. Surely you and these people with you will wear yourselves out, because the task is too heavy for you. You cannot handle it alone. Now listen to me; I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their causes to Him. Teach them the statutes and laws, and show them the way to live and the work they must do.**

## **Exodus 18:17-23, cont.**

**Furthermore, select capable men from among the people—God-fearing, trustworthy men who are averse to dishonest gain. Appoint them over the people as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. Have these men judge the people at all times. Then they can bring you any major issue, but all minor cases they can judge on their own, so that your load may be lightened as they share it with you. If you follow this advice and God so directs you, you will be able to endure, and all these people can go home in peace.**

## **4. The working out of details, Acts 6:5-6**

- And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:5-6)**

# The Spirit of a Servant

- **“For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psalm 84:10).**
- **“But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43-45).**

# What are we to do?

- **We are followers of Jesus Christ**
- **We follow Christ together – love and respect**
- **Leaders – Let us act before God and one another as people worthy of respect**
- **Church – Help us do our job. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who must give an account. To this end, allow them to lead with joy and not with grief, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17).**