**Cross-Cultural Ministry at Its Finest
ACTS 6:1-7**

 **RECAP CHAPTER 5:** Ananias & Shira—Apostles Healing Many—Apostles Persecuted

**ACTS 5:41-42** 41The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 42Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

**INTRODUCTION:** **Chinese Christian Church**

Imagine if you would, a traditional Chinese Christian church in Seattle. Imagine that this church has seen some significant growth and now has two services. In the first service, you encounter people in dark suits and white shirts who sing and study Scripture in Chinese. They may have been born in China or Hong Kong or perhaps in Taiwan and for them, anything spoken in English must be translated.

In the other service, you encounter something much different, young, American born Chinese who speak mostly English and whose culture is clearly North American. They know very little about the old country, only the stories they have been told. The sing praise choruses and conduct their entire service in English.

This is cross-culturalism in the 21 Century and we don’t need to look to the American Chinese church to find it, it is alive and well right here on Whidbey Island, albeit more subtle, we can surely understand the illustration.

Today as we study the first seven verses of Acts six, we will discover that cross-culturalism was alive and well in this new born Jerusalem congregation.

**ACTS 6:1** 1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

The Jerusalem congregation consisted of many Jews born and raised in the nation of Israel. **They spoke Aramaic and Hebrew.** They read Scripture and worshiped in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament. **Then there were also Jews of Grecian nationality.** They were Greeks who converted to Judaism or were Jews dispersed generations earlier when the nation of Israel was conquered. These **Hellenistic Christians spoke Greek and read the Greek translation of the Old Testament** (The Septuagint) and worshiped mostly in their own language.

**ACTS 6:2** 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.

**Problems will arise:** This presents the leaders and the congregation opportunities for growth.

Problems will arise, but how do we face them? **Do we assign blame or do we examine our ministries to discover what changes need to be made?

The apostles devoted themselves** to what Jesus called them to do.

**ACTS 6:3-4** 3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”
 **Why Seven?** Jewish courts existed of seven members.

**QUOTE:** It is better to put seven men to work than to attempt to do the work of seven men. (Voelker adaptation of DL Moody) **From Among you.** Those chosen to lead must be part of the Body of Christ to lead within the Body. **What About Reputation?** Leaders within the church must be known, to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.

**Equally Serving Together!** Everyone served according to their calling and their gifts. There was no distinction made between importance of roles, they were all important, because they were all roles that served the Body pf Christ.

**ACTS 6:5-6** 5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

**Elder Led—Congregation Approved.** Notice that it was the elders if you would, those Jesus placed in charge that led, but they sought the approval of the congregation, you might say there was even unity between the elders and the congregation. And what a blessing that was.

**QUOTE:** The one who rows a boat, seldom has time to rock it!

**ACTS 6:7** 7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

**A Large Number of Priests:** When reading the first part of Acts we often associate the noun priests with the high-level priests in the Sanhedrin, because they are seen to act against the disciple in Chapter 4:1, **but there were many priests throughout all of Israel. Historians have written that were as many as 8000 priests and 10,000 Levites** who assisted the priest in the country of Israel. They all had the duty to serve in the Temple once a year, but **most of the time they took care of the more menial task of taking care of the flock**, much like the work that was being done by the Christians in chapter six.

**CONCLUSION:** Some Trust in chariots and Horses

Everyone did what they were asked and called to do and there is no record of those denying the task because they were not qualified. **They were seeking wisdom and strength from God.**

**PROVERBS 20:7** 7Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.