

McCabe United Methodist Church
June 7 & 8, 2014
Speaker, Amber Haman

Today is the beginning of the season of Pentecost. We celebrate this season by decorating our church with red, planting red flowers, and wearing red colors. This red is a visible reminder symbolizing the joy and fire of the Holy Spirit.

According to my daughter's children's bible: (which I find incredibly useful with the explanations included) Pentecost is a Jewish festival that fell 50 days after Passover and celebrated the wheat harvest. Later, Jews celebrated Pentecost as the time when they were given the Law of Moses. Christians now celebrate Pentecost as the time when the Holy Spirit was given. Peter spoke to the crowd and quoted the prophet Joel: *"This is what I will do in the last days, God says: I will pour out my spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message; your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams. Yes, even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will proclaim my message."*

Pentecost is also known as the Birthday of the church. When we teach Pentecost in Sunday school, we often take this approach by throwing a birthday party for the church along with making paper flames and tongues. This was all quite confusing for me as a kid, what did crowds and people talking in a bunch of different languages sounding like they were drunk with flames on top of their head have to do with a birthday party? It's a little easier to look at what new Christians were given. Pentecost symbolizes the time when Christians were given a name (the name of *Christian*), a purpose, (spreading the joy of Jesus' word), and the gift of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this mission.

I get a great deal of my information, sometimes fact, sometimes fiction, occasionally a little of both, from my Facebook and Twitter feeds. I asked my "friends" to post what the meaning of Pentecost was to them. I got a couple of interesting answers: slowing down, peace, & reflection, someone said: "something that is five times as expensive as usual", I'll pause and let you ponder that one! But my favorite answer was "power." Power from the Holy Spirit, promised from Jesus in Luke 24:49 *And I myself will send upon you what my Father has promised. But you must wait in the city until the power from above comes down upon you.*

While pondering what to speak of today on Pentecost that may be a little different than what you've heard before, I'm focusing on these new Christians-these 3,000 new converts that have taken on a new religious identity. What are they now called to do? Why, spread the Word!

In my career, I've spent a great deal of time recruiting new employees to the organization which I was a part of. I've utilized many recruiting models, but find one by John Sykes, a noted HR Consultant, to be most eloquent when putting together a recruiting plan.

1. Be absolutely clear what it is you need-in this case, what is the job that needs to be done, and what are the skills, knowledge, and behaviors that are needed for someone to get that job done.
2. Identify good sources of applicants, advertise in the best sources to get the best applicants
3. Use the selection process to "test out" applicants against your requirements
4. Obtain testimonials and references wherever possible.

I can find some similarities with how we "recruit" new Christians. The first step is to be clear in what we need. In this case, new Christians are to spread the Word.

The 2nd step is to identify good sources of applicants. God chose some pretty controversial people as his "applicants!" Most definitely Saul turned Paul, who openly hunted down and persecuted Christians. On the day of Pentecost, both Jews and Gentiles, and people from Crete and Arabia-all experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit and were converted. Each of us, and those we come in contact with...all who are willing, are applicants of Christianity-they must just be reached!

The 3rd step-use the selection process to "test out" applicants against the requirements. So I ask, what are the requirements of Christianity?

I found this simple explanation and prayer from a website called www.peacewithgod.com

We can't earn salvation; we are saved by God's grace when we have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. All you have to do is believe you are a sinner, that Christ died for your sins, and ask His forgiveness. Then turn from your sins—that's called repentance. Jesus Christ knows you and loves you. What matters to Him is the attitude of your heart, your honesty.

The fourth step in recruitment is to give testimonials and references whenever possible. This aspect of recruiting Christians is what is most exciting to me. Prior to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the foreboding of Hell and Damnation was the major "selling point" in following God. Turn from your sins and repent or you will go to Hell...follow the 10 commandments and do sacrifices if you sin. Otherwise Heaven is out of the question and you will burn forever. Over and over again in the Old Testament, God's people turned away

With the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are no longer alone...we get an immediate reward!
This is our Shtick...the answer to the WHIFM principle-If you haven't There are so many stories in Christian publications where the Holy Spirit has

I even think of last week in Chris's story, absolutely incredible testimony by the way, In Chris's most desperate hour, the Holy Spirit filled him and he was able to begin the long journey of healing in mind, body, and spirit.

Please remember this simple prayer- please pray with me.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know I am a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe you died for my sins and rose from the dead. I trust and follow you as my Lord and Savior. Guide my life with the Holy Spirit and help me to do Your will.

In Your name, amen.