

**“6 + 7 + 9 + 3 = The Church”**  
**June 4, 2017 – Pentecost Sunday**

One of the reasons I went into the ministry is that I'm not very good at math. For me, using an equation to describe anything is a bit dangerous. But its Pentecost and over the last 35 or so years I've learned that today, of all days, you trust the spirit. Trusting the Spirit is pretty important if we're going to be the church. Today's equation is, like most that are based in matters of the faith, without a doubt incomplete. Along with **6 + 7 + 9 + 3** there are a whole lot of other numbers that could be in the equation. Like 12 disciples and about 40 followers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost there in the upper room. And before the day was out 3000 more were added to the number. A number that continues to grow today.

Because of the the 3 in the equation the church was born on the day of Pentecost, and there was a celebration that **EVERYONE** was invited to. Because of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the creator, the savior and the comforter – the new order of a new covenant came to be. The party wasn't just for the Disciples, it was for the visitors. It didn't matter that a lot of the people there spoke different languages. It didn't matter that people dressed differently from each other. It didn't matter that there were people who were kind of on the seamy side of society. Everyone there was invited to the party God was

throwing. Everyone was given a present—the gift of the Holy Spirit. It blew within them like helium in one of these red balloons.

On this day of Pentecost we remember that the church was born in wind and fire, not to sweep us heavenward, but to enable us to lift up those in doubt, heal the broken, reconcile what is lost, and bring strength to those who are hurting. That is why the church exists; not just for us when we feel like we belong, that all is right with the world, but more importantly for us when we feel like we don't belong. And the church is for the outsider never invited to a party. The party is for all who are hungering and thirsting for hope and meaning, and we are, my friends, the servants of them, and servants of us, offering a cake of blessing and a song of inclusion.

The party is for the teenager with the tattoos and piercings and funky hair with baggy jeans. The church is for the man or woman who doesn't dress up to our standards. The church is for the kid who is dressed in clothes closet chic. We are the host and the servant. The church is for the family with two moms or two dads, or the family with one mom or one dad. The church is for those who cannot speak our language, or at least not all that well, the church is for people who do not know our rituals, and are accepted anyway because the church isn't about differences, it's about what we all have in common. It isn't about them, it is about us.

Maybe we are starting to get a little nervous, a bit worried? Because if the church is for all those people, is it really for me too? Surely, the disciples were a bit worried as well. Standing there talking in a language they maybe had never even heard before and it was coming out of their own mouth. God saw to it that they had what they needed, and that was the Holy Spirit. A dangerous, world changing, people loving, lost sheep gathering Holy Spirit. We don't need to be afraid, when we have the Spirit with us, God is with us, to give us the strength and the courage to move forward. When the Holy Spirit is involved, lives are changed, minds and hearts are turned around, and communities are transformed. When the Holy Spirit opens the doors and blows through all sorts of things can happen...the church can happen.

We just have to decide if we are going to be the church of Jesus Christ or the church of its kind of nice to get together on Sunday's. We can be a church or we can be THE church. If we are going to be the church, there's a whole lot of Holy Spirit to fill us and we have lot to celebrate. It's a church that says, "hallelujah and congratulations and God be with you to 6 high school grads who we've watched grow from shy and awkward kids into fine young adults whose potential we know, because the Holy Spirit is in them, is unlimited." It's a church that says, "Welcome to 7 who are just starting their high school years who are all too soon going to be standing where the 6 stood moments ago who this day will do the most grown up thing in their young lives

as they say, “yes, I Believe” and “Yes I want to be a part of the church born on Pentecost.” It’s a church that embraces these 9 gifts from the Holy Spirit and makes them part of each one of us – Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Humility, Self-Control and makes them part of the equation of who we are as the church.

“We celebrate the church of Jesus Christ, where two or three or thousands can gather together in the Lord’s name and touch this world with the amazing good news that somebody cares, that God joins us in community so that someday this world will be loved to wholeness. We celebrate this community, where people say Yes in the face of No, where they light candles in the darkest night, where healing and compassion leave no time for self-righteousness, and the life-sustaining love of Christ is evident in the life of the believers.

We celebrate the church, where we dare to stand up, where risk runs rampant, and you and I and all Christ’s disciples are called upon to follow even when it costs us something, something precious like our friends, like our respectability, like our future with the company. Let’s celebrate the church of Jesus Christ where the wonderful wildness of God breaks through common clay pots and fills us with a holy spirit that overflows and we see rainbows,

many splendored colors, light in pitch darkness— and every day is a festival of faith!<sup>1</sup>

The church is a place for celebration and contemplation, for exuberant joy and for grappling with grief. It is for the fortunate but also for the fallen, fragile and failed among us. It is for those who feel pretty sure they have found the way led by the Spirit, and the Spirit led who are searching for meaning, hope and direction. It is for fabulously accomplished, the lost and lonely, and it is for you and for me, even though and especially because we are imperfect... it is for all of God's precious children 6 + 7 + 12 + 40 + 3000 + 350 + 2.3 billion and growing all because the 1 in 3 made it happen – on Pentecost. ...and all of God's children...are precious.

Come, the spirit is here....let us be the church, born anew this Pentecost Day.

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Weems, Reaching for Rainbows