

**LEAP: Amazed**  
by Pastor Kurt Hoover

**Holy Spirit Litany adapted from Psalm 51**

**Pastor:** Create in me a clean heart, O God,

**All: and renew a right spirit within me.**

**Pastor:** Cast me not away from your presence,

**All: and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**

**Pastor:** Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

**All: and uphold me with a willing spirit.**

**Pastor:** We worship You Lord in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen**

**Acts 6: 1-7** 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

<sup>7</sup> 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 8: 9-13** <sup>9</sup> But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of

Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. <sup>10</sup> They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” <sup>11</sup> And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. <sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup> Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

**Who are the people in your life that have really amazed you? Left an impression on you? Who was it that you were thrilled to be in the presence of? Maybe it was a onetime experience of a notable person or that favorite relative or family friend.**

**Who is it that has Amazed you? And is it possible that your presence may have had the same effect on them. Is it possible that there is something about you and your faith and your presence that amazes others? Even those highly influential people you think may not have even noticed.**

**I have told you the story of Max Wagaman. If I am honest, I craved his attention and Fatherly advice at a time in my life when my own Father was living in New York. He is gone now. Max Wagman went in for heart surgery the same day I did last year. He passed peacefully in his armchair at home several days later. It was an honor to tell the story of the influence that man had on my life. I wrote it from my recliner 2 weeks into my own heart surgery recovery.**

**Who is it that has amazed you?**

**My Highschool wrestling coach was a similar presence for me. He cared about us all and he cared enough to say what we needed to hear. I remember one time in the weight room he bench pressed 3-4 plates on each side of the bar. He then went and pulled the whole rack for a Lat pulldown. I blurted out from the other side of the weight room... 'You are a God!' He heard it out of the corner of the room, paused a while well others voiced their amazement in other ways... He then turned to me, pointed at me... 'No Hoover, there is only one God, and it certainly is not me.' Don't ever make that mistake.**

**Who has amazed you? And is it possible that your simple, honest faith may have had just as much an impact on them.**

**In Acts chapter 6, verse 7 we get this one throw away line that is easy to read past and not absorb the power of its meaning.**

*...a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

**These two readings the birth of lay leadership in the church and the story of this Magician named Simon... These 2 stories are often overlooked but are really interesting and telling stories of the early church.**

**Because what is the church, after all? It is not the building or the steeple, but it is the people. If the members don't take on the mission it has very little impact on the community, and if it doesn't have staff, leaders, shepherds, pastors what kind of future will there be for this movement. I personally believe God will always provide leaders. But how does he do it, who will it be, what has been your part, what will be your family's part?**

**These stories point to just what it was that turned a great many Priests to be obedient to this little sect of the Jewish faith and**

**their new way of connecting with God through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.**

**Really it should have been the other way around. The Priests should have been the early adopters who lead their villages and their synagogues into this new experience of God. But it was the other way around, it was the simple faith or people in their synagogue who turned them to believe and be obedient to the faith.**

**The weight of this simple statement cannot be underestimated. Every town in Judea and Nazareth and even Samaria and Antioch for that matter... Each village had a member of the Priestly family. They were the ones that lead the pilgrimages to Jerusalem and made sure each village celebrated the high holy Festivals.**

**This is perhaps the greatest turning point for the early church, when the members of the church helped their pastors see what God was doing in the world.**

**These are two stories about the leaders and staff of the church. One is the appointment of the first church board. The Fellowship, and the Evangelism and the Benevolence committee are all wrapped into one. Seven men appointed to care for the widow and the administration of the communities' events and meals and charity. And as you keep reading in Acts these lay leaders had just as much influence as the Apostles who were doing all the amazing miracles. Stephen was the first Martyr, Philip the first church planter.**

**Then there is the story of Simon, the Magician. How many of you knew there was a magician who converted to the faith and was Baptized in the early church. I mean this is fascinating to me. And the best part of his introduction in Acts chapter 8 is**

**that the one who amazed others became amazed by the faith and the work of the early church!**

**That is you today. You are a part of the single most amazing and influential group of people in your community.**

**These are two stories about the leaders and staff of the church. How is it, today, that God is still creating these leaders and staff. And who will they be at Messiah 20 years if not 125 years from now.**

**We'll look around the room, read the stories our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary team is collecting and posting in the Lobby. On the community board the team is posting new stories each month of just how God has done this same work through the people of Messiah Lutheran Church. Here is just one snip it from the church directory circa 1972 when the church still met on Hunter Avenue.**

***“Holding Forth the Word of Life” -Phil. 2:16***

***This was the constant aim of the Apostle Paul once he had found the Lord Jesus as his dear Savior. Is this not also our aim at Messiah Lutheran Church to faithfully hold forth the Word of Life? We pray that each and every one of us may do our part in this wonderful work.***

***It is the Word of Life that gives us hope for this present life and for the life which is to come, even eternal life. This abundant life we find in Jesus Christ the Lord and Head of the Church. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men,” St. John writes in his prologue. The new church window also reminds us He is our Good Shepherd.***

*It takes teamwork to hold forth the Word of Life. To advance His kingdom under the banner of the Cross it takes prayer and labor of love in the fellowship of the Gospel. May we count on your loyal support of the church in giving of your time, talent, and treasure? God bless us and keep us ever faithful unto the day He gives us the Crown of Eternal Life. To God be all the glory!*

*Sincerely in Christ,  
Kenneth A. Anderson, Pastor*

**Pastor Kenneth Anderson. This guy amazes me and I have never met him... and what is his appeal, he asks to be amazed by the members of the church.**

**How is it, today, that God is still creating these leaders and staff. And who will they be at Messiah 20 years if not 125 years from now? Just below this newsletter article form Pastor Kenneth Anderson is a picture of the Lutefisk Dinner Committee in which you will find a very young Donna Robertson. Anyone here related to Donna? Yes. Her daughter Heather Brown sings on the Praise team. Her son in law Mike Brown is currently taking Seminary classes, and her Grandson is our Worship Coordinator!**

**The church exist to amaze people. What has been your part, what will be your family's part. That is you today. You are a part of the single most amazing and influential group of people in your communities we represent.**

**When I think of Max Wagamne and Coach Van Horn. I think how possibly could I have ever been anything close to the influence they had on me. Do you know what the reality is? The only reason those guys coached, and lead youth group was because of who would be there. Us teenagers had far more influence over them and their identity than we could ever have**

**imagined. A pew full of high school students and each new family who has made worship a priority... that is the most amazing thing in the church! That is always how it works in God's Kingdom we get to amaze the amazing people in our lives.**

**The work of God through you and your presence. Your simple everyday witness to the value of and the work of God in your life has far more influence than you could ever imagine. Because in the end that is God's design. That is how He chooses to be known. Through the faith and life, stories of answered prayers and comforting presence of the members.**

**The great signs and miracles that gave Simon faith and turned the Jewish priests of the early church to a new and living faith in God... Yes, some of them were amazing in their miraculous nature, but far more amazing and numerous were the day-to-day miracles and simple inspirations of faith, LEAPS of faith, that produced the leaders, and shepherds described in Acts. Men who took over the charity of the poor, faithfully attended the worship meeting and the scripture study. Simple everyday faith that rubs off on those around us, not because of anything in particular we intend to do, but because God has chosen to be present in the everyday faith of those who trust in Him.**

**You are the ones who amaze others, even the mentors and influencers in your own life!**



*Peter's conflict with Simon Magus* by [Avanzino Nucci](#), 1620.

