

The structure will be big, as tall as the Eiffel Tower. And wide, stretching the length of some of the world's largest cruise ships. Built as an enormous metal grid, it will contain 126 wind turbines. It will float on a platform, anchored to the ocean floor using the same technology employed by the oil and gas industry. And they will call it "Windcatcher."

A Norwegian company is developing this new system to generate electricity from wind power. *Fast Company* magazine reports that when it becomes operational next year, "it could deliver five times the annual energy of the world's largest single turbine. That's because the system is three times taller than the average turbine, exposing the blades to higher wind speeds."

Imagine 126 turbines spinning in an enormous grid. The Windcatcher blades will be smaller than those on a typical windmill, which will enable them to spin faster. And the position of the grid in deep water will enable it to catch the strongest of winds. Numbers. Size. Location. Put these elements together, and you have a single structure that will generate enough electricity to run 80,000 European homes. That's a lot of power.

Windcatcher is still on the drawing boards, so its performance is uncertain. "What happens when a big storm or hurricane hits it?" asks Dave Makichuk of *Asia Times*. "Would it withstand a hurricane or freak storm, or even rough seas? Would these blades chop up sea birds at an alarming rate?" Such questions still need to be answered.

On the day of Pentecost, the apostles of Jesus, including the newly called Matthias, were gathered in Jerusalem for a harvest festival. Pentecost, which translated from the Greek means the "50th day" was, a celebration that took place 50 days after the Feast of First fruits, which was connected to the Passover. Jews from around the Mediterranean region were gathered to celebrate this festival in

Jerusalem, including “Parthians, Medes and Elamites,” along with residents of a dozen other regions mentioned in the book of Acts.

The 12 apostles were sitting in a house in Jerusalem, probably feeling uncertain and a bit powerless. Yes, they had been inspired and energized when Jesus was raised to new life on Easter. But his time among them had come to an end just a few days earlier, on the day of Ascension, when Jesus “was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.” Now, what were they supposed to do?

“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.” This wind was as fast as the air that rushes at high altitudes, and as strong as the breeze that blows over deep waters. But this was not a hurricane or freak storm. No, it was a power that came from God. “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

The apostles became Windcatchers, so to speak, powered by the Holy Spirit. They were effective because of their numbers: There were 12 of them, not just one, and God was obviously doing something new, because so many of God’s previous power-people had been individuals ... John the Baptist, Mary, Jesus, Elijah, Moses, Isaac, Abraham. They were all big turbines. But now God was working through a community, just like the Windcatcher employs an array of turbines.

The apostles were also the right size: Small. They were not the bigshots of religion or politics, people who made an impression on others with their insights or influence. In fact, when they began to speak in other languages, the God-fearing Jews from other nations were utterly amazed. They asked, “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?”

Now in case you aren’t aware, at that time Galilee was known as a backcountry. The boondocks. The sticks. No one expected a group from Galilee to

master all the diverse languages of the world. You know the old joke: What do you call someone who speaks three languages? Trilingual. What do you call someone who speaks two languages? Bilingual. What do you call someone who speaks only one language? American. The same was true for the Galileans. They were not multilingual ... until the day of Pentecost.

The apostles were also in the right place: Jerusalem. They were gathered for a religious festival, which was a good place to be as they showed their devotion to God. But their position in Jerusalem also gave them access to God-fearing people from every nation from around the region. They did not hesitate to declare the wonders of God in a variety of languages. And Peter was not reluctant to raise his voice and address the crowd, saying, “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.” On Pentecost, the apostles discovered the secret to spiritual power: which sometimes includes having the right numbers, the right size, the right place. And we can employ that power today.

I’m certain we can agree that we benefit from numbers, just as the first apostles did. We need to be in community with one another if our faith and Christian commitment is going to grow. This means we must put a focus on gathering for worship and Bible study, and on working together in ministry and mission.

The first mention of the Greek word *ekklesia* in the Bible is found in the gospel of Matthew, and it is translated “church.” What the word literally means is “gathering,” and it comes from the ancient Greek assembly of citizens in a city-state. The word appears again in Acts, when “Barnabas and Saul met with the church” — the *ekklesia* — in Antioch. And it was in that city that the disciples were first called “Christians.”

We need to gather in numbers to be the church. Jesus is with us when we are together in community, just as he promised us in Matthew, saying, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am.” Assembling for community worship and Bible study gives us the most inspiration, insight, and guidance. When we stop taking part, our faith tends to cool off. If the isolation of the pandemic taught us anything, it is that gathering is a critical factor in the vitality of the church.

Assemblies are also needed for effective ministry and mission. Individuals can have brilliant and creative ideas, but implementation requires a team. Far too often, individuals pursue ministry ideas on their own, only to become frustrated when they cannot achieve their dreams. For any effort to be successful, at least five passionate people must commit themselves to it. Ministry and mission require numbers.

As Christians, we also need to be the right size. This has nothing to do with the height or weight of individuals, nor does it align with the number of people in a congregation. Instead, Christians need to be small enough to catch the wind of the Holy Spirit and then act boldly in the world. This is similar to the Windcatcher system, in which small turbines spin quickly in high wind.

Look at the apostle Peter in the book of Acts. He did not see himself as a bigshot or as a spiritual superstar. In fact, he had denied Jesus three times just a few months earlier. Peter had no special status in the religious, political, or financial communities of Jerusalem. He was exactly the right size to be a disciple of Jesus.

Although he was small in the eyes of the world, he was big enough to speak the truth. “These men are not drunk, as you suppose,” he said to the crowd. They had, after all, assumed that the words of the apostles were the babblings of people feeling tipsy. “No,” said Peter, “this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘In

the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.’” Peter was just the right size to do what God wanted him to do: Connect the gift of the Holy Spirit to the prophecy of Joel, and to share this news with the people of Jerusalem. He concluded by assuring them that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Our challenge is to make sure that we are the right size for ministry and mission. You may be a powerful officer in the military, but you can be the right size for serving a meal to the homeless. You may be an influential attorney, but you can be the right size for teaching a Bible study. You may be an elementary school student, but you can be the right size for singing in a children’s choir. All that matters is that you be right-sized for discipleship.

The final secret to spiritual power is place. This means being in the right place at the right time, just as the apostles were in the right place, Jerusalem, at the right time, the day of Pentecost. For many of us, there will be places that are the right spot for us: Home, school, work, the neighborhood we live in, the gym we workout in, the church we attend. But like the Windcatcher, we need to position ourselves correctly to catch the wind. Sometimes we need to leave the comfort of familiar places to accomplish our purposes.

The apostles declared the wonders of God to a group of strangers. Who is the stranger that *you* need to approach? Peter stood up to a hostile crowd and spoke the truth. Where do *you* need to take a stand about something that is important to you and to God? The apostles were pushed out into the streets and into the world by God’s powerful Spirit. What is the step that *you* need to take, in response to the movement of the Spirit? After all, the wind of God is always blowing. Let’s catch it. And let’s share God’s power with the world. Amen.