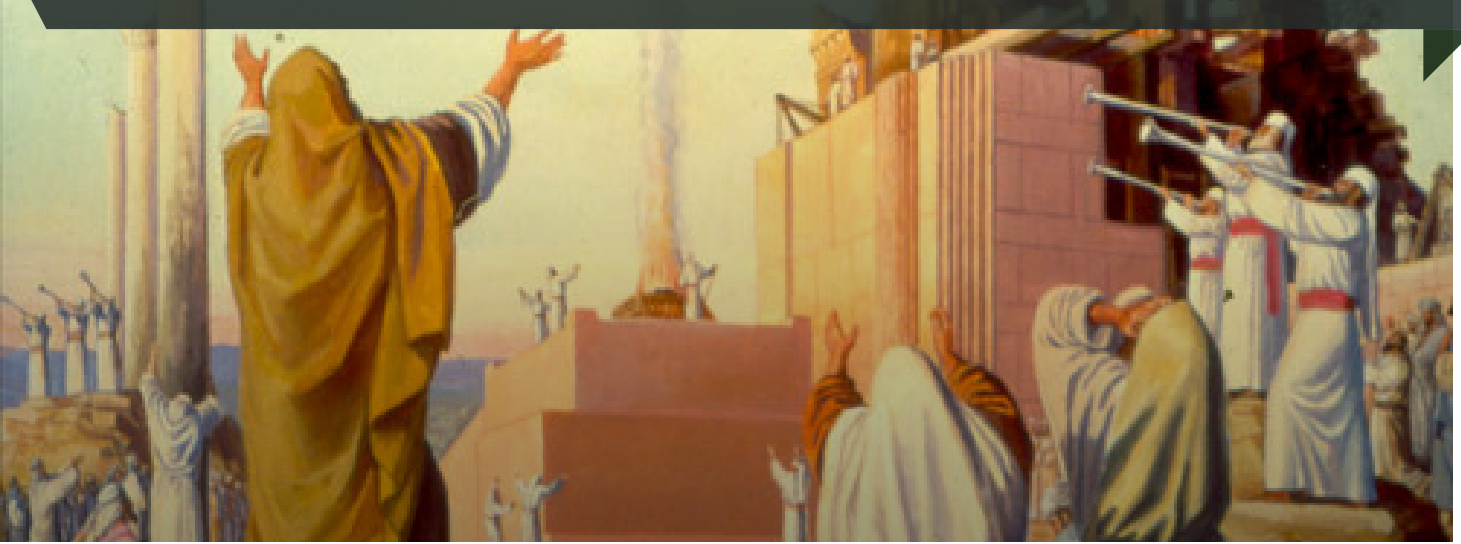


The Iowa Friend

May 2023



THE NOISE OF CHANGE

By: Manny Garcia, General Superintendent

A friend of mine once told me, “Change is always perceived as loss,” and in the years since this nugget of wisdom was shared with me, I have reflected on it often, amending it as I learned experientially how change can be both necessary and difficult. These were difficult lessons learned in the trenches of ministry leadership through many failed attempts. Perhaps in my younger (and more naïve) years I simply expected the older members of the churches I served to understand. If anyone should *get it*, shouldn’t it be these seasoned saints? And because of that expectation, I overlooked the very real need of people enduring loss to have space to grieve that experience. My current iteration of the statement above is, “Change is often perceived as loss, and when it is, space to grieve is necessary for healthy momentum to continue.” Even still, as those leading or advocating change, we must be able to distinguish the difference between resistance and grief because at face value, they often look the same.

A timeless example of this reality is in the First Testament book of Ezra. In chapter 3 the Jewish people had regathered in Jerusalem and were beginning to reconstruct the temple after nearly fifty years. As the foundation of the temple was laid, here is the picture Ezra paints:

"When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with

cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: 'He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.' And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away."

There is a lot happening here, but perhaps the most notable are the mixed reactions of the people. Those who had seen the previous temple; priests, Levites, and family leaders, wept because this was not the same temple they knew before. Others rejoiced at the beginning of something new being birthed in a place where the cornerstone of their tradition once stood. We can relate to this story more than we often realize. Change often affords us the space to reflect on what was. When my family moved to Iowa last year, we readily noted the things that we were “missing” in our new home. Our former house in Kansas had more bathrooms, a finished basement, and the list continued. Does that mean our new home was a bust? Of course not! We are blessed to have a beautiful space to continue our family story in, but in the crucible of change, we were grieving what we lost. In churches, we



cont. from page 1

often see this being played out seasonally as new people come in, former people move on, as new leadership brings new ideas, culture and technology move us into new spaces, and so on. The established members of these communities must continually process the newness of this rhythm, and it can be daunting. Rather than bemoaning that process; which can often isolate those who are grieving and lead to division, we can name it and enter into it with

intentionality; which can lead to a deepening of community and a shared understanding of purpose.

This is somewhat of an oversimplification of a much more complex process. Remember, the first two stages of grief are denial and anger, which are common reactions to changes within many churches. As a matter of fact, once anger is experienced, even needed change can get derailed. New ideas are abandoned, relationships are strained, and progress is halted. Instead of accepting this as reality, what might it look like to press into the grief, giving space and time to those who need it while continuing to reinforce the mission and hope for effective change that moves us toward the vision God has given us? The patience, grace, and wisdom to differentiate the difference between grief and resistance are indispensable skills for tradition and shared experience.

The onus, however, is not completely on those leading the change. Those who have been around long enough to remember what was, can do their own inner work, asking, "Why do I feel this way when considering this change?" This is a very different approach than just getting it. Grief has a way of removing one's ability to be rational, and this is where denial and anger come into the picture. Phrases like, "Not in my church," or "That's just not how we do things here," are the best we can do when trying to communicate the loss we feel when even considering something new. That loss, however, is not enough of a reason to hinder progress. The purpose of the Church is transformation, not perseveration. When we give too much energy to maintaining what is, we miss out on the opportunity to see what can be.

Notice the final verse of the passage above, "No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise." When we fail to engage in the hard work of necessary change, grieving what was while welcoming what is being born in its place, we are just a noisy rabble with an indecipherable message. This reminds of Paul's admonition in his first letter to Corinth:

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal . . . love is patient and kind . . . is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on having its own way; it is not irritable or resentful . . . Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

If we are thoughtful and loving, we can experience new life in places that once flourished, but it may look different than before. It is a slow and purposeful process as we are reminded by the Israelites, who waited another 15-20 years for the temple to be completed. And while none of us are building temples, any sustainable change we hope to experience will require time and grace and an abundance of love for one another. Without these things, we are just making noise. Instead of just making noise, let us bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things as we move toward God's will together.



UPDATES FROM IAYM

An update to the recording process was approved in March at Spring Body of Representatives. If you would like to view the the updates Path to Recording, it can be found at iaym.org. There you will find "Recording of Ministers" under the Resources tab.

If your local church/meeting has a potential candidate for recording, an overview of the initial steps for this process can be found on the website.



Little Fry Camp (grades K-2) **June 23-25** \$210
Elementary Camp (grades 3-5) **June 20-23** \$210
Middle School Camp (grades 6-8) **June 9-13** \$280
High School Camp (grades 9-12) **June 14-19** \$350

A TESTIMONY OF REVIVAL

By: Nancy Bontempo

If God wakes you up in the middle of the night with an idea, pay close attention. That's what happened to me Monday, February 13th at 2:00 am. Twelve hours earlier, I had heard about a chapel service at Asbury University (Wilmore, Kentucky) that began Wednesday, February 8th but hadn't yet ended. God's middle of the night message to me was, "GO!" and so by Tuesday morning, February 14th, we were packing the car and informing the church to pray for our trip.

What we experienced was faith-deepening and hope-inspiring. We were blessed to be seated in Hughes Auditorium Wednesday afternoon (even as crowds were growing by the hour). But the greater blessing was to hear testimony after testimony of students having personal interactions with Jesus, transforming them from powerless church kids – sadly dealing with the typical problems of our world: anxiety, addictions, hopelessness,



woundedness – to warriors experiencing what Jesus promised to his followers...Holy Spirit power, agape love and a self-controlled mind. Abused kids forgave their abusive parents. Broken friendships healed. Feelings of suicide gave way to hope.

The question on everyone's lips is, "Was this a genuine revival?" What we saw was pretty convincing, but the answer to the question will come over time. Real revival results in hearts and lives radically and permanently transformed. Until we can look back over the years to judge this event with that perspective, I can confidently say that the Spirit is stirring a new generation of Jesus followers to carry the Gospel to a lost and dark generation.



**CAMP
REGISTRATION IS
OPEN NOW!**

Register early! The cost of each camp will increase \$25 after May 15.



Register at
<https://www.iaymyouth.org/register.html>



USFW CONFERENCE

The United Society of Friends Women is hosting a Women in Ministry conference with International Friends Church, August 19, 2023. For more information, contact Hilda Shikhubari at 651-529-4091 or hildashikhubari@gmail.com. Registration can be found at iaym.org under the "Events" tab.

**USFW
Women in Ministry
Conference**

Pastor Judy Easley-Marshall
Host: Pastor Judith Wamalwa
Speaker: Charlotte Stangeland

August 19, 2023 | 9:30AM - 3:30PM

Waycross Evangelical Church
7733 W River Rd.
Brooklyn Park, MN 55444

Entry into the Conference is \$15



What's COMING UP?

FAMILY CAMP

Our Annual family Camp is coming up September 15-17. Family Camp is for families of all shapes and sizes, from single adults to couples, families with young children to empty nesters, single parent families to blended families, and everyone in between. Everyone is welcome because in IAYM we are all FAMILY!

FRIENDS SUMMIT

Friends Summit is all about the movement. The movement among young adult Friends. The church movement. The Kingdom. Summit is a national conference for young adults to experience how the reality of God's kingdom is calling the Friends Church in mission and engaging us with passion.

Summit is for youth and young adults ages 16-25 with accompanying mentors. Please prayerfully consider supporting young leaders in your meeting to attend this winter. More details including travel and costs to come!

**empower a leader.
change your church.
fuel a movement.**

**FRIENDS
SUMMIT
2023**

December 28, 2023 - January 1, 2024 | Houston, TX



Time to Dine

IOWA YEARLY MEETING 2023

JULY 27-30, 2023 — OSKALOOSA, IA

"MY FOOD IS TO DO THE WILL OF HIM
WHO SENT ME AND TO FINISH HIS WORK."

JOHN 4:34



2023 IAYM ANNUAL SESSIONS



Our speaker for this year will be Winn Collier. Winn has been a pastor for 26 years, Winn was the founding pastor of All Souls in Charlottesville, Virginia, and now teaches pastoral theology and directs the Eugene Peterson Center for Christian Imagination at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI. Winn holds a PhD. in Religion & Literature from the University of Virginia, where he explored the sacramental vision of Wendell Berry's fiction. Winn has written five books (most recently the epistolary novel *Love Big, Be Well: Letters to a Smalltown Church* and *A Burning in My Bones*, the biography of Eugene Peterson) and for a number of periodicals, including *Christian Century*, *Christianity Today*, and *Washington Post*. Winn's wife Miska is a spiritual director and yoga teacher, and since they're now empty nesters, they spend large doses of time on their dog Gus (short for St. Augustine).

Registration opens May 15th! Make sure to get registered before June 30 to get the early bird discount! Registration information can be found under the events tab at iaym.org.

Sign Up

WILLING TO VOLUNTEER?

Behind the scenes of our Annual Sessions, there are many spaces where we could use your help! If you are willing and able to help with anything such as moving tables, volunteering in the nursery, helping with registration, grilling and serving food, or anything in between, please give us a call or email sarah@iaym.org.