

The Iowa Friend Newsletter

Think About the Mission of the Church by: Tom Showalter, General Superintendent

I had made the commitment to visit every one of our thirty-three churches for worship this year. Currently, I have been able to visit thirty-one of the thirty-three and plan to visit the remaining two in November. As I reflect on these visits, I see some of our meetings doing well, pursuing the mission God has given to the Church and being effective. On the other hand, I see some of our meetings struggling for survival, with low attendance numbers, and finances.

I have shared on many occasions, in reports and in person, of the decline of the Church in America. In Iowa Yearly Meeting specifically, I shared in my 2018 Yearly Meeting report that in 1978, IAYM had 5,267 in forty-four churches with a total average Sunday attendance of 2,812. Just forty years later, IAYM has thirty-three churches with 3,677 members, but only 1,390 as an average worship attendance. That's less than 40% of the members actually showing up in attendance at the churches where their membership resides.

The following words written by pastor and author Jim Cymbala touched my heart and challenged me at my core:

- “While there are excellent churches doing great work, on the whole we are not seeing anywhere near the fruit in our churches that we read about in the New Testament. Millions of American Christians know deep inside that something is missing among us despite arguments and hype to the contrary...”
- “When will we be desperate enough to come to God just as we are, pleading for his help and ready to follow wherever he leads?...”
- “That’s why our churches are so often powerless and Christianity is in decline. God’s answers for us have been replaced by human intelligence, leaving us as dim lights in an increasingly dark world”
- “We all need to repent of trying to extend His kingdom in our own strength. We need Him to change things. The great news is that He delights in helping us when we listen, trust, and obey Him”
- **“The only answer to a lukewarm church or a struggling Christian is the same as ever--the fire of the Holy Spirit!”**

(Cymbala, Jim. Storm: Hearing Jesus for the Times We Live In, pp.27-28).

As Cymbala states, “When will we be desperate enough to come to God just as we are, pleading for his help and ready to follow wherever he leads?...” Our church busyness is not yielding the harvest intended...it’s just making us tired, busier, and burned out.

The goal of writing a letter as such is not to induce more guilt to hard-working, church-going, and well-intentioned people. I want to challenge you to think about the mission of the Church and not just the activities that are being done. If you were to start a new church in a new community with new people, how much of what is currently being done in your meeting would you continue doing in a new start up church?

I have just completed four years in Iowa Yearly Meeting in October. It has been my goal to see all who are connected to IAYM to understand, embrace, and pursue the mission of the Church. I love our mission statement adopted in 2018: *The Body of IAYM exists to exalt Jesus Christ by becoming fruitful disciple-makers and expressing God's love by serving all people (John 15:1-17). (Did I say I love that?)*

If each of our meetings, regardless of size, can embrace that mission and look for ways to implement that mission in their local setting, I am convinced that health would be restored. How can I make such a bold statement? The Head of the Church said so:

Jesus said in John 14:12-14 (from the New Century Version):

“12 I tell you the truth, whoever believes in me will do the same things that I do. Those who believe will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And if you ask for anything in my name, I will do it for you so that the Father’s glory will be shown through the Son. 14 If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.”

We must pray and ask God to open doors and to seek ways to serve our communities to expand His Kingdom, and continue to make disciples...or continue to lose numbers, lose our effectiveness and maybe even possibly lose hope. We are urged to “walk by faith, not by sight.” Walking by sight can be depressing, but walking by faith, trusting in the One who called us, prepared us, and empowered us results in an unshakeable foundation of trust in Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2 (NCV): 2 Let us look only to Jesus, the One who began our faith and who makes it perfect. He suffered death on the cross. But he accepted the shame as if it were nothing because of the joy that God put before him. And now he is sitting at the right side of God's throne.

He waits at God’s right side to hear from us! “When will we be desperate enough to come to God just as we are, pleading for his help and ready to follow wherever he leads?...” (Cymbala).

It Takes a Village

Jan Palmer for IAYM Missions Board

(Last year I asked for stories about IAYM missionaries. This is one of those stories.)

It's a common saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." In the community where I grew up there were several pairs of watchful adult eyes keeping track of all the kids in the neighborhood. And if one of us called out, "Mom!", more than one head popped out of a door. How does this care and watchfulness translate to our faith community? How is our village doing with those entrusted to our care?

There was once a good little Quaker boy who trudged along with his parents through the doors of his local church, and to Quarterly Meeting, and to Yearly Meeting, where he heard the Gospel message, consistently and faithfully. By the time he was a teenager though, frustrated and rebellious, he was actively watching for his chance to shake free from the traditions that bound him.

In April of 1975, a month before he was scheduled to graduate from high school, the Holy Spirit broke through his stubbornness, rebellion, and sin. A group of students, which included Daryl and Pat Coffin, from the Navigators chapter at the University of Northern Iowa had been invited to a special event at Salem Friends Church. Through some strong parental persuasion, this young man attended that meeting, effectively changing the course of his life. God used those students to show him the vanity and futility of his rebellious spirit, to provide answers to his intellectual questions, and to model a contextualization of faith in the Triune God. And of course, there were faithful prayer warriors, to whom God responded by drawing Jay Hollowell to Himself.

About this same time on the other side of the world, another high schooler who also grew up attending Sunday School, listening to stories about Jesus, was being nurtured through the seeds planted in her child heart. Through Bible studies with a faithful pastor, Amor's spiritual eyes were opened to her own human frailty and to Jesus' priceless gift of forgiveness, salvation, faith, and eternal life.

As Jay and Amor began to grow individually in their Christian faith they were both drawn to groups which promoted missions and missionaries, one of which was InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF); IVCF at Friends University in Wichita, KS, for Jay and IVCF Philippines for Amor. Eventually, Jay was led to go to Asian Theological Seminary where he contacted IVCF Philippines about part-time work. And that's where Jay and Amor became colleagues in ministry, friends, and husband and wife. In 1990 God led them to join OMF International (Overseas Missionary Fellowship – formerly China Inland Mission founded by Hudson Taylor in 1865). They were assigned to the Philippines, where they taught for several years at Biblical Seminary of the Philippines (BSOP) in Manila. Many of their students are now serving the Lord as pastors and teachers. In 2014 Jay was appointed OMF Philippines Field Director, overseeing ministries with Folk Catholics, Muslims, tribal peoples, theological and ministry formation, and offering support and guidance to 60

missionaries from twelve countries. Amor's gifts have been utilized in teaching at the seminary and mentoring many women; students, young missionaries, and other Christian leaders within and outside OMF. She is also, currently, the Transitions Manager of the OMF Guest House in Manila.

When asked to describe their call to missions, both Jay and Amor point to early influences in their lives – role models, people who were praying for them, teachers and mentors who faithfully communicated and lived the Gospel message.

JAY "The roots of this (his call to missions) is having grown up in a church, quarterly meeting, and yearly meeting where missions was a thing and where meeting missionaries was a normal event. I needed a whole variety of nudges and experiences before sensing that God was calling me to missions. I am grateful to God and all the faithful people who gave such nudges."

AMOR "In His abundant grace, God blessed me with spiritual mentors through the ministries of the local churches and the IVCF through the years of my spiritual journey. These mentors emphasized evangelism, discipleship, and missions. God also put in my heart the desire to serve Him full-time in Christian service wherever He wanted me to use the gifts and abilities He has given me. I wanted to be an answer to His call for more workers because the harvest is plentiful.

With almost 30 years of service the Hollowells are career missionaries. In their 60's, they, like many veteran missionaries are trusting God to make the next phase of service clear. And they recognize with gratitude the influence of a whole network of believers who will walk with them through the discernment process.

As I read Jay and Amor's story I was impressed with two things: the lasting effect of early influences on their lives and the support system that has stayed with them. And I thought, who are the future missionaries among us, and what are we as a faith community doing about it? Look back at the question at the beginning of this article – "How is our village doing with those entrusted to our care?" Can you and I be an early influence in someone's life? Is God nudging you about a child/young person in your family, church, community? Is there a brother or sister in the faith, or a doubter, or a seeker who needs an expression of God's love through you?

JAY "I think of the idea that it takes a village to raise a child. Reflecting on over 60 years of life has reaffirmed that it also takes a village to make and keep a missionary, or a pastor, or a Sunday School teacher, or a growing church member, or any other role we can name. However, that would only be saying that when we are called to be believers, we are called to participate in His Body, the church."

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL VILLAGE



Motor Friends Church

turns 150 years old this year!

and we would like to invite our friends
from around Iowa Yearly Meeting to join
us on

Sunday November 10th

Schedule for the day:

10 am Fellowship

10:30 am Worship Service

12 pm Potluck Meal

Meat, drinks, table service provided

1 pm Memory Service of Sharing

Please feel free to send a memory or reflection

If you are unable to attend!

**Motor Friends Church, 14350 240th Ave
Milo, IA 50166**

Les Trout, 94, of Newton died on Monday, October 21, 2019. Cyrus Leslie "Les" Trout, the son of Cecil and Jennie (McCausland) Trout, was born on October 11, 1925 on the family farm north-east of Newton. Not only was he born, but he was also raised, and lived most of his life on the farm that was settled by his ancestors because of the Abolitionist Movement. That same farm has since been recognized as a Heritage Farm. Les graduated from Newton High School in 1943 and attended the University of Iowa. He was united in marriage with LaVola Herrington on June 12, 1949 at the Center Friends Church in rural Newton.



Les was a lifelong farmer. For over 35 years, he was a Grade A Dairy Farmer and later continued farming including having a Christmas Tree Farm for many more years. Les was a member of the Center Friends Church, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and the Quaker Men. He also served as a Trustee for the Kellogg Township for 50 years and was on the Board of Trustees for William Penn University.

Les is survived by his wife, LaVola "Bo" Trout of Newton; daughters, Leslie (Bruce) Maach of Newton, Cheri (Marty) Doane of Des Moines, and Jenni (Brad) Patty of Newton; his grandchildren, great-grandchildren; his brothers, Dale (Bernice) Trout of Newton and Jerry (Beth) Trout of Minneapolis, Minnesota; sister-in-law, Eleanor Trout; and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; two brothers, Bob and Morris Trout; and son-in-law, Bill Boyce.

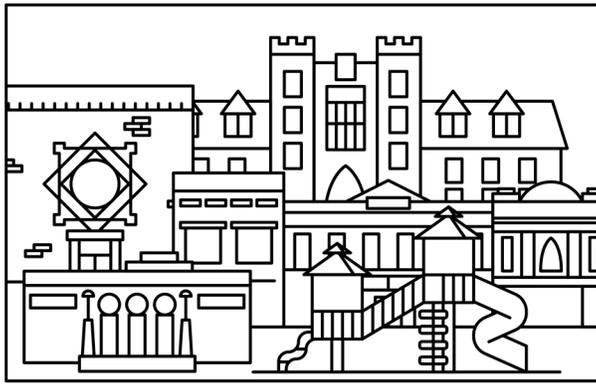


Levi Willits, 96, died September 18, 2019. Levi Mahlon Willits was born in Bangor Township, Marshall County, IA, the only son of Louisa Upton and Earl Vining Willits on September 23, 1922, joining three sisters, Ruth, Rosella, and Mary. He attended Bangor School through eighth grade and graduated from Union High School in 1939. Levi completed three years at Iowa State College and then enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps. After a short time of service, he returned to the family farm after his father's death where he resided for the majority of his life. Levi was united in marriage to Anna Lea Martin on June 18, 1944. They had four children: Earl Martin, Nancy Carol, Ray Eugene, and Donald Lee. He exemplified a life of Christian service.

Levi was an active life-long member of the Bangor Friends Church, serving as clerk of Bangor Monthly Meeting, clerk of Iowa Yearly Meeting and a trustee of Friends United Meeting. He was a trustee of the Board of Directors of William Penn College. Levi served as a trustee of the Quakerdale Boys and Girls home for 21 years. He was secretary of the Bangor Friends Cemetery Association for 51 years.

Levi was an early pioneer in no-till farming and was a member of the Marshall County Soil Conservation. Levi married Ramona Lea Coffman in 1990 after the death of Anna Lea, his wife of 45 years. They volunteered for Heifer Project International, Habitat for Humanity, and the Church of the Brethren Service Center. Levi and Ramona were representatives of Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (VOCA) in El Salvador. They were volunteer park hosts for many years at state parks in the U.S. Levi and Ramona spent winters in Tucson, Arizona where they were active in their retirement community. His family will remember him for his generosity, strong Christian faith and his love for a good party. He welcomed all who would gather for any occasion.

Levi is survived by his wife Ramona, daughter in-law Martha Willits, daughter Nancy (Ron) Woodward, son Ray, and son Don (Lynn). Eight grandchildren and thirteen great-grandchildren survive him and have many wonderful memories of Grandpa and Great Grandpa Levi. An infant sister, Lydia, his parents, his first wife, Anna Lea, son Earl and sisters Gertrude Hall, Ruth Hitch, Rosella Lane, and Mary Wantiez preceded Levi in death.



WORSHIP A DIFFERENT WAY
GRINNELL FRIENDS CHURCH

Twice a year, Grinnell Friends Church is interacting with our community in what we call "Worship A Different Way". We are recognizing that God has placed us in our community for His glory, and that worship can be anything that points back to Him.

On September 29, we held our 5th "Worship a Different Way" service. Five different teams were commissioned in non-traditional forms of worship that morning. We had one team clearing brush from three different properties. We had a team painting a local park shelter. One group spent the morning repainting a home. We had a small team going door

to door and washing exterior windows. Finally, we had a team preparing freezer meals for the Mesquakie Kidz mid-week program. Additionally, we had a group of individuals spending time in prayer for our teams as they interacted with our community. We came back together at noon to share a meal and stories.

This service has been a great reminder to our church body that the Church is not solely for the fellowship of the believer, but also to seek and to save the lost, and that God wants to draw all people to Him. We are blessed to be a part of His plan and purpose.



It's not too early to think about Christmas giving!

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