

The Iowa Friend Newsletter

Jesus, Mary, (and Me?): Incarnational Vulnerability and Human Responsibility

It's when we face for a moment
the worst our kind can do, and shudder to know
the taint in our own selves, that awe
cracks the mind's shell and enters the heart:
not to a flower, not to a dolphin,
to no innocent form
but to this creature vainly sure
it and no other is god-like, God
(out of compassion for our ugly
failure to evolve) entrusts,
as guest, as brother,
the Word.

-- *On the Mystery of the Incarnation,*
by Denise Levertov

Mary carried Jesus's physical body inside her physical body for nine months—give or take. She felt her stomach cramping, her breasts swelling, her skin pushing out and stretching against a hardening belly, her digestive system adapting, her back and feet aching. She felt God, this baby, growing inside her, kicking His tiny feet, shifting His still-forming body. She might have endured morning sickness during her first trimester. Bending, sitting, and lifting must have become laborious. Sleeping must have grown more and more uncomfortable. Traveling to Bethlehem must have been unpleasant.

What was it like for the Spirit of God to “overshadow” Mary, create, and implant a tiny embryo in her uterus? Did she feel this happen in her womb? If Jesus was fully God and fully human as incarnational theology explains, did He share Mary's DNA? Did Jesus look like Mary? Did He have her toes? Her nose? Or did God bypass Mary's egg and implant a fully formed embryo inside her? Was she just a vessel?

Whatever the case, the physicality of this mystery was and is very real. Mary carried Jesus's physical body inside her physical



body for nine months—give or take. She birthed Christ from her own womb with all the labor and messiness of childbirth. She was the channel through which God entered the world as a dependent, vulnerable, crying, nursing, spitting-up, pooping, sleeping, laughing, cooing infant. She made profound mother-infant eye contact with this baby and offered Him nourishment from her own body. She knew His smells, recognized variations in His cries, watched Him sleep. Wow.

This image of the God incarnate dumbfounds me. The Word became flesh inside Mary's body? Mary and Joseph were responsible to keep this vulnerable infant Jesus alive without advanced medicine? They had to live as refugees in Egypt to keep Him safe from an infanticidal ruler? Certainly, the Spirit of God's visitations to Joseph, Mary, and the Magi carefully orchestrated and greatly aided the effort, but He relied quite heavily on human participation and obedience to initiate the gospel mystery.

Two thousand years later, God continues to rely on human beings to keep the gospel mystery alive in this world. He could have made His life on earth so unquestionably divine, so historically verifiable, so undeniably true that nobody during Jesus' time or ours could even begin to doubt the reality of His birthed, crucified, and resurrected body. Instead, He chose to depend on our participation and obedience.

Like Mary and Joseph, like the apostles, like Christians throughout the last two millennia, God asks each of us to use our own fragile human bodies to keep the incarnate Christ alive in this world. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are to be His physical hands, His physical feet, His physical voice, His physical love and compassion. *The Body of Christ. God with us. God in us. Wow.*

by Kara Wilson
College Avenue Friends Church



Over the first couple days of October my team was joined by two of Cru's national staff to train in the process of launching student led movements. Throughout this time we got to cast vision for the Cru movement here and plan action steps toward reaching this vision. One of our greatest hopes is that God would provide Christian students to lead Cru movements on every major campus in Florianopolis and Greater Florianopolis area(10 campuses!)

During training we read through several chapters of Acts to learn about how God used Paul to reach people with the gospel. One thing that stuck out to me about Paul's ministry was how he not only recognized that God was already moving in the places he went, but he trusted that God would continue to work in these places even after he was gone. This view of God's character has been humbling and encouraging as it challenges me to take a step back and realize that God is the one who is truly at work and all He asks me to do is be present and trust Him.

Another part of our vision this year is to engage our student leaders in discipleship. While at Ohio State, discipleship was one of my favorite parts of ministry with Cru. For me, it was a time to walk alongside the women from my part of campus and form deep relationships with them all while pursuing God together. This month, I got to start meeting with Diulia for discipleship. She is one of the students God has been raising up to help lead Cru on UFSC's campus. She is quickly becoming a dear friend and is a huge blessing. I am so encouraged by her deep love for people,

her great desire to know God, and her heart for sharing about God with others.

One of my favorite parts of ministry thus far has been getting to spend time talking with students about their lives and beliefs. Recently, my teammate, Jordan, and I got to have a conversation with Mirella, a student at Unisul. Mirella said that she didn't believe Jesus was perfect, so he couldn't be our creator and savior, but he might have been a spiritual leader. Later in the conversation, Jordan and I got to share to gospel with Mirella. As we started talking about Jesus and how he lived a perfect life and died on the cross because of his love for us, Mirella's demeanor softened. Upon asking her how hearing this made her feel, she said that Jesus must have been perfect if he loved people that much. Although Mirella didn't accept Christ during our time together, I am hopeful that God is softening her heart.

This month 12 students from campuses across Florianopolis were accepted to go on summer mission to Maringa, Brazil! This is so exciting as this is the most students Cru Floripa has ever sent on summer mission! As this approaches (in January), many students are still raising support so that they may join the mission in Maringa.

If you would like to help them reach their goals please let me know so that I can give you more information on how you can help!

Andria.mulholland@cru.org

Year End Gifts for Staff

Our Iowa Yearly Meeting Pastors Association is giving gifts for staff in December. If you would like to contribute—please send your gift to Wes Blanchard (treasurer for the Pastors Association).

His address is 12172 150th Ave., Indianola, IA 50125
Please send your gift before December 16th.

The staff of our Yearly Meeting are:

Tom Showalter—General Superintendent of Iowa Yearly Meeting—serving in Oskaloosa, IA

Mac & Berny McDonald—Serving at Mesquakie Friends in Tama, IA

Chip & Alicia Daleske—Serving at Camp Quaker Heights in Eldora, IA

Mary Thury—Office Administrator of Iowa Yearly Meeting—serving in Oskaloosa, IA





Linda I. Hourihan, 73, of Mt. Pleasant, IA, passed away unexpectedly Saturday, November 9, 2019



Born December 4, 1945, in Fairfield, IA, Linda Ilene was the daughter of Maurice and Marjorie (Manley) Benn. She was a 1963 graduate of Fairfield High School. On July 13, 1963, she married Charles Walter Hourihan in Salem, IA. He preceded her in death on July 27, 2012.

For many years, Linda worked in the library at Mt. Pleasant Correctional Facility. After retiring from the correctional facility, she was employed in the records department of the University of Iowa Hospital. Linda moved to Queen City, MO, in 2007, and returned to Mt. Pleasant in 2016. She was a resident of Sunnybrook for the past couple of years.

Linda was a member of Salem Friends Church. She had a great love for her children and grandchildren, along with extending her love to foster children for forty years. Surrounding Linda in her life were six daughters, Teresa Hourihan of Burlington, IA, Karen (Eric) Myers of Enumclaw, WA, Kathy (Patrick) Kaveney of Carlsbad, CA, Melissa (Walter) Bailey of Bourbonnais, IL, Jessica (Michael) Warth of Stronghurst, IL, and Jenna (Daniel) Wixom of Mt. Pleasant, IA. She is also survived by three sisters, Margaret Stephens of Fairfield, IA, Patricia (James) Campbell of Oskaloosa, IA, and Mary Markham of Iowa City, IA.

Linda Garrison and YanMauel Fuentes Castaigne

were married on November 5th in Holguin, Cuba in his hometown. They are awaiting his visa; upon receiving it, he will make his home in Eldora.



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You're Invited: "4 Chair Discipling" Seminar At Fairfield Friends Church

Our Focus at Fairfield Friends recently has been to re-examine the Gospels through the lens of Jesus' method of building a disciple-making movement.

Think of it, you and I are here today as a result of 11 men taking Jesus at His Word nearly 2000 years ago and 6400 miles way! Jesus recognized that the people he encountered were at different stages of growth and development, and he worked to challenge each of them to move to the next level.

In *4 Chair Discipling*, you'll get a clear and simple picture of how to follow in Jesus' footsteps and do the same thing as a life-style.

To me, this is the missing ingredient in the American church. With roughly 350K plus churches in the USA and 80% of them plateauing or declining, it's time to get back to the original mission of Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Thess. 1:8 & 2:8.

That is why we are presenting a half-day seminar on the overview of what it means to be a disciple that makes a disciple.

What: 4 Chair Disciple-Making Seminar by Sonlife Ministries

When: Saturday, February 15th

Time: 9:00 a.m.- 1:30 p.m.

Where: Fairfield Friends Church Gym

Who: Anyone who would like an overview of the strategy of Jesus.

Cost: \$25.00 which includes workbook and lunch!

RSVP: Friday 1/31/2020

Fairfield Friends Church has been trained and certified to present the 4 Chair Seminar by Sonlife ministries. For more info on 4 Chair Discipling and Sonlife Ministries click here: <http://4chairdiscipling.com>

Since we would need to order workbooks and prepare food for lunch we would like to know no later than 1/31 or sooner to our administrative assistant Nikki Rude friendschurch@lisco.com

If you or any of your congregants would like to meet and talk with some of our folks who have been working through the 4 Chair Discipling, let me know and we would love to come and present our experience as individuals and church with you!



When I think of being a leader in my work and a young mother at home, one word comes to mind over and over: willingness.

As a teenager and young woman, I was taught in no uncertain terms that my primary role in life—the ultimate call that all other calls would revolve around—was to support my husband’s call and to raise my children. I could do other things, sure—as long as I was home most of the time and my work never inconvenienced my husband or took my time away from our children. I was taught that this is how to be a godly woman.

In my late 20s, I began to learn that the idea of godly womanhood that I was taught is not an idea that God teaches. I learned that God teaches me to follow whatever call God puts on my life—and through my experience staying home all the time with my babies, I learned that my call was not at home. I love my family passionately and I love spending time with them—but my own gifts and callings are not those of a homemaker. I have friends who are gifted housewives, and I believe that is a beautiful ministry—but it is not my ministry. I persistently heard God calling me to ministry outside my home, and slowly, I became able to heed that call.

In my early 30s, I was starting a house church and studying in seminary, and I was happy for my ministry to be a small and quiet one, where I could help people while remaining in the background. I knew I could lead—but I didn’t particularly want to lead. Then one day, I learned that even among groups that are intentionally egalitarian, there are few women leaders in Christian organizations. I thought about my life, and I wondered: if, as a child, I had seen women in ministerial leadership, would it have taken me until my 30s to realize that I could be a leader, too? Maybe not. And so I became willing to become a leader in an organization, should the opportunity ever arise. You know—someday.

“Someday” came much sooner than I expected in the form of my current calling to be the Director of Belize Friends Ministries for Friends United Meeting. While my children are still little, I have the opportunity to be a leader in an organization



that is educating at-risk youth, providing a place to worship in the Quaker way, and running programs to increase the peace of a troubled neighborhood. It is an organization that has purposefully looked for where the Holy Spirit is working and is joining people within the Southside neighborhood of Belize City in that work. It is coming alongside concerned citizens and bolstering their efforts with resources and training. I believe in this work, and I’m so grateful and excited to get a chance to participate in it.

Friends’ ministry in Belize is much bigger than any one person. It is a genuine movement of the Holy Spirit. In the process of discerning if I was being called to go to Belize, I realized that what I mainly am is willing. My family is willing. I don’t have all the answers—but I am willing. I am willing to go and see what I can do to support the work that is happening there, even while I remain committed to supporting my family and the work that we are doing at home.

With Isaiah, I say, Here I am, Lord.

Here I am, Friends. Send me. —Nikki Holland

