

JOURNALS POSTED ON MARCH 27, 2015

Privilege



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Privilege...!

March, 2015

Dear Friends,

Since joining International Ministries in 1999, I've felt especially blessed to work with such a gifted group of people. Over the years, I have continued to look at my colleagues with a sense of awe, and have remained so grateful that I've had the chance to get to know folks who are just plain amazing. From the staff who work in Valley Forge to those that do peace and reconciliation work in the most heavily conflict-ridden areas throughout the Middle East, American Baptist International Ministries personnel inspire me on every level.

I have also been inspired by all the people I've had the *privilege* to meet across the United States and around the world in my deputation travels over the years. I've mentioned this before, but it's worth repeating; I am blessed to meet so many followers of Jesus who are living their lives with faith, courage, perseverance, and *hope*.

This sense of extraordinary *privilege* has continued as I've worked this past year on IM's future planning process, **Responding to the Call**. As I have conducted interviews and gathered data, I've had the *privilege of hearing people's personal stories...* how God called them, and has been calling them to ministry – wherever He's placed them. I've listened to people's hopes and dreams for their local church or organization, and their hopes and dreams for International Ministries. And I've heard what people think about IM when it's at its best...what gives it health, strength, and vitality. Some of the interview data includes a lot of beautiful quotes, such as:

"IM missionaries are effective, enthusiastic, and passionate!"

"IM is flexible, innovative, perseveres, shows up, attends to needs, is servant minded, has integrity and listens to God."

"We are so inspired that you are making adjustments to changing times and cultures and delivering the same gospel of Christ".

"International Ministries sits at the feet of the poorest and most marginalized to learn how to do ministry".

"You don't really become fully missional until you realize that both you and the other are the subject and object of God's mission."

"When people think of International Ministries, they think of faith, hope, and Jesus."

A huge part of **Responding to the Call** is the work of 'discernment team' – a group of 26 people who represent different IM stakeholders domestically and internationally. It has been a *privilege* to get to know this group of people...pastors, professors, business women and men, lay leaders, representatives of IM's international partners, etc. The discernment team has been reading through the data, praying, and asking: what is God saying to us through these conversations...? The team has met three times and the final meeting is scheduled on April 21 and 22, 2015. The outcome of this process – presented to the board in June, 2015 – will be a fresh new vision for the work of International Ministries, ministry priorities, and measurable goals as we head into our 3rd century of mission...!

Would you pray with me that the discernment team is acutely sensitive to the Holy Spirit as we meet together one last time, and that God's will be made clear for the

future of International Ministries?

As we head into Holy Week and prepare for Easter, I am reminded of some of my favorite verses in the Bible, which seem especially applicable at this time of prayerful discernment:

Isaiah 43: 18-20

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. *See, I am doing a new thing!* Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? *I am making a way* in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

1 Peter 1: 3-5

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a *living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade."

Last, I sang a hymn in church a few weeks ago called "We are a new creation" (Jane Parker Huber, 1981). It's sung to the tune of "Lead on, oh King Eternal" (Lanchashire) and its words also seem especially applicable for IM:

"We are a new creation of Christ, the living Word

Our songs of jubilation shall everywhere be heard

New life blooms fresh and glorious for those who *heed the call*

Of Christ, who reigns victorious over sin and death and all.

We are a new creation of God for *this new day*

As partners let us follow the life, the truth, the way

Christ bids us work together as colleagues, old and young

As women, men and nations, God's folk of every tongue.

We are a new creation by God's own gracious hand

Old burdens cast behind us, *a daring future planned!*

In ministry and mission, *united let us live*

In Christ, a shining vision to God's wide world to give".

It is a *privilege* to partner with you! Thank you for your love, support and prayers. As always, let me know how I may pray for you.

May you experience living hope through Jesus this Easter and always,

Karen