



A Measure of Grace

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WGA Plans for Future *By Mary Heathman*

In the book, *5 Life Stages of Nonprofit Organizations* (Wilder Foundation, 2001), the author, Judith Sharken Simon, provides a useful perspective on life cycles of nonprofit organizations. She identifies:

- Stage One: Imagine and Inspire ("Can the dream be realized?")
- Stage Two: Found and Frame ("How are we going to pull this off?")
- Stage Three: Ground and Grow ("How can we build this to be viable?")
- Stage Four: Produce and Sustain "How can the momentum be sustained?")
- Stage Five: Review and Renew "What do we need to redesign?")

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In the first twenty years of ministry, WGA board, staff and leadership have accomplished several trips through Simon's five stages. Sometimes stumbling along, other times marching pur-
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posefully, we have journeyed together to where we find ourselves now in our 20th anniversary year. Because of the emphasis on seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance and direction, and our commitment to decision-making by consensus (see page 7), WGA has effectively navigated the minefields of organizational growth and change thus far.

In the past few years, in my role as WGA executive director, I have found myself returning over and over again to Stage Four and Five questions, "How can the momentum be sustained?" and "What do we need to redesign?" I have kept questions like these before the staff and board; discussions have been worthwhile and fruitful.

It is common knowledge among organizational change experts that it takes a different kind of leadership to found and develop a ministry than it does to direct and maintain an organization already established. When this difference in needs and skill sets is not acknowledged and planned for, the ministry can get stuck in the first life cycle of its growth as an organization. The WGA Board, staff and leadership decided to pray and plan so that Where Grace Abounds would continue in healthy growth and maturity.

In the meantime, (off and on for several years), I have been experiencing some growing pains of my own. I

found my thoughts and heart continually turning toward new things, wanting to focus on outreach and other frontiers for WGA.

Consensus was building, and when we all sensed the Holy Spirit's timing, the board agreed last year to a Succession Plan, and a new job description for our next executive director. It was left to the staff to come up with a proposal for an implementation plan, a timeline and all the decisions involved. These issues were major discussion points during the annual staff planning sessions in October.

As fruit has been on the vine, growing, it gains color and comes into its peak flavor. So it is with a decision that has been allowed to ripen under the Lord's guidance and timetable. It becomes obvious to us all—of a sudden it seems—and there is a knowing, an assurance that cannot be mistaken.



At our staff planning meeting in October, 2005, the staff came to consensus about a transition plan and who should succeed me as executive director. The staff prayed, agreed on a

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Elvis Presley was singing, wearing a colorful Hawaiian shirt, standing in a boat gliding through still water toward his bride. The movie was *Blue Hawaii*, and I was mesmerized by Elvis' dark good looks, the lush splendor of the Hawaiian coastline, the romantic story of hometown boy marries hometown girl.

"This is the moment, I've waited for. I can hear my heart singing. Soon bells will be ringing. I will love you longer than forever; promise me that you will leave me never. Now that we are one, clouds won't hide the sun. Blue skies of Hawaii smile, on this, our wedding day. I do, love you, with all my heart." (Lyrics from Hawaiian Wedding Song)

Hmm . . . well let's see, where was I?

Oh yes, the moment we've all been waiting for, (or the more grammatically correct," the moment for which we have all been waiting.")

The marketing people for chick flicks know what it is—it is that moment when Richard Gere, in an *Officer and a Gentleman*, roars up on his motorcycle, strides into a factory, swings his woman into his arms and carries her away. Or it is when the same

"The Moment..." By Mary Heathman

actor he conquers his fear of heights by climbing the fire escape to rescue his "princess," in *Pretty Woman*.

It has been my observation that the heart will recognize what it feels when it sees it projected—we ache even as we laugh at Renee Zellweger in *Bridget Jones' Diary*, singing dramatically along, "All by myself. I don't want to be all by myself."

What is it about that moment? What do these scenes, stories, and songs shake loose deep within the human heart? A friend of mine and I were talking about this recently. He says that the big lie of these messages is that a love like that exists at all.

In a very real sense, I know my friend is right. My heart came to that conclusion years ago; what my heart wants doesn't exist. My hopes for a husband to share my life with, had recently gone up in smoke; I knew that I would likely never have what I had wanted my whole life—a husband to love and be loved by.

Then out of the ashes came a decision to live anyway, to commit my heart to God's purposes. I don't know where the strength came to rise up like that; maybe it has to do with "those that wait upon the Lord shall

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The Moment *continued from page 3)*

renew their strength, shall rise up like eagles.”

(Note: It's odd that it was in that place of dis-illusionment, in surrender, that I found something profound—since that time I have never again felt so lost, so empty, so abandoned, as had been the case with all the other conclusions of my heart.)

Another friend told of an experience a few weeks ago. Her neighbor told her that their unborn baby had an abnormality. The doctor said they should test again before they decided what to do. The couple decided not to retest; no matter the outcome, they were going to have the baby anyway.

Similar to the decision the parents made, I decided to live anyway, even though I am not likely to get what my heart so often tells me I want. That decision has been made, no longer to be second-guessed—a done deal!

Yet, my heart has to be dealt with; what do I do with the residue—the leftover yearnings of my heart? I was designed to love and be loved, by God and human beings. I also know that my love of God is pitiful compared to where it should be. I resonate with the lyrics from a Keith Green song "I

know how I ought to be; alive to you and dead to me; O what can be done with an old heart like mine, soften it up with oil and wine, the oil is you, your spirit of love. Please wash me anew in the wine of your blood." This has become a constant prayer.

Ultimately, I can only offer the residue to the Lord for sorting out. Some residue is lies I still believe, having concluded through false (yet compelling)

interpretation of my life's experiences. Some are God-planted seedlings, rooted in truth, dumbly struggling for expression. I need His help in telling the difference, and changing my heart to want only His truth.

Only He can love me like I need to be loved. Only He can touch that deep place that still feels lost, is

still waiting to be recognized as valuable.

In an article I read recently in the New York Times, an elderly woman thinks to herself as she is being patronized by her family, "I know I am talking too much; I keep telling about that time when I was a little girl and was lost in the department store and how my mother found me." The woman knew that she was telling the story again and again because it was still

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Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks

Holy Portals

Among other things, 2 Chronicles describes the temple that Solomon built for God. The Holy of Holies, a 30 foot square room, was veneered with gold. Two towering golden angels, each with a wingspan of 15 feet, spanned the room from wall to wall. A curtain of crimson, purple and blue hung over the entire opening. It had figures of cherubim worked into it.

I read this section and sat in my living room trying to imagine the proportions and impact. It was taller than my house, as deep as the deepest part of my house and as long as two big rooms. Gold glared from every corner--any light in the room would have been magnified and almost taken on a life of its own as it bounced back and forth between walls, ceiling, gold articles in the room. And the Angels, consider 25-foot gold figures with an immense wing span dominating the room, hovering ominously. As I sat with my eyes closed, the overwhelming emotion that emerged was awe that teetered dangerously close to terror. Added to the sheer immenseness and grandeur of the room would have been the fact that this room was dedicated to the very presence of

God. The ark of the covenant that Solomon was about to place in this room had been the cause of plagues, curses, and sudden death to the wicked and well-intentioned alike. The priest that was chosen by lot to enter this most holy of rooms through the immense curtain, would have had a rope tied to his ankle that extended outside of the room and dried pomegranates would have been sewn to the bottom of his robe. The theory was that if there was a thud, a scream, a flash of light, or a end to the sound of rattling pomegranate seeds, the rope was used to pull the body of the priest out of the room in order to save the risk to anyone who might have to go in and retrieve it. This was a scary room -- a scary God.

But there were two more structural pieces in this room that I hadn't notice. Two pillars--one on each side of the entrance--went from floor to ceiling (30 feet tall). They were ornately carved and decorated, and they had names. One was called Stability and the other was called Security. I was surprised that they weren't called "Holiness and Righteousness," or "Fear and Truth," or some other combination that matched the overwhelming presence of the room.

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I thought about these names and realized that they are two of the things I long for most. Two qualities that I would most want to represent the God that had such power in that room. I spent the day saying to myself, "I enter in through the doorposts of Stability and Security." My awe/terror were not dimmed or diminished, but a sense of glory began to fill me up. I thought of Job's words, "Though He slay me, yet will I serve Him"(Job 13:15). He is not tame, but there is a deep stability to his character and actions, deeper than the foundations of the world that he created. He is an unmoving rock--to whom I can cling for a stability that reaches beyond what I see and know and understand. Security speaks to the protection of what is valuable. I am valuable to him. Somehow in the swirling power of that room and that presence I am secure. I kept

imagining a small child whose father was a great potentate with the power to kill or favor on a whim. I imagined that child running into her father's presence, where brave men trembled to enter, and jumping onto his lap. To her this man was daddy and she had no question in her mind as to her safety.

For Security and Stability, Jesus rent the curtain with his death and invited us in to this room. May we enter as children and not



as priests. Our High Priest has endured all of the risk for us already. We enter into His Holy presence with stability and security. ☆

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true; she was feeling lost again and needed to be found, and "I am still waiting." she says. ☆

(Note: WGA group members often feel lost and are waiting to be found. It is gratifying to provide a place of peace and rest, of opportunities for growth, of grace and truth. And it is a privilege to wait together with them for the moment that will eventually come, when we receive fully all that we yearn for—our Fulfillment.)



(Plans for Future *continued from page 2*)

proposal and took it to the next board meeting. The discussion among staff and board and leadership was similar to what the staff had experienced at the planning meeting. There was universal affirmation and confirmation that board members did indeed see Roger Jones as the developing leader of the ministry.

In November, 2005, with 100% consensus, Roger Jones was named the successor to the Executive Director for WGA. With unanimity, the Board confirmed and affirmed that it “seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit” that in the spring of 2007, I would move into a new role as Found-

ing Director of Where Grace Abounds and that Roger Jones would then take on his new responsibilities as Executive Director.

Look for an article from Roger in the next Measure of Grace where he will tell his side of the story and outline his vision for the role of the next Executive Director of Where Grace Abounds. I will also follow up in future issues with my vision for my role as Founder. And look for an article from program director, Scott Kingry, where he describes his vision for the future of WGA’s discipleship ministry. ☆

Decision Making by Consensus By Mary Heathman

Building consensus is not an analysis of pros and cons of all the options, though that certainly is part of the discussion. It is not a series of presentations and proposals by persuasive voices, (although we talk together a lot!) It also isn’t a vote. If there is one strong voice that is convinced we have not reached the Lord’s best, we assume that there is yet something to explore, or it is not yet the right timing, and we go back to the drawing board. And finally, consensus building isn’t following a man-made system like parliamentary procedure, though Roberts Rules of Order can be helpful in guiding discussion and keeping order in meetings.

All the aforementioned methods are often parts of the decision-making process, but they are not the “prime objective,” so to speak. Discerning God’s will, finding it together, is the main focus.

Consensus building is a framework for attending to the Holy Spirit through prayer and discussion. It is careful listening to one another (with the expectation that God speaks through His people), and a commitment to openness and honesty as we patiently wait for the Lord’s direction to come together. It is an organic process, like ripening on the Vine. ☆



February At a Glance

February 9th: Spoke at Christian Fellowship School

February 22nd: Spoke at Arvada Covenant Church

February 26th: Spoke to youth at Cherry Hills Community Church

February 28th: Spoke at Abundant Life Christian Center

March And Beyond

March 5th: Spoke to youth at Cherry Hills Community Church

March 31st—April 2nd 2006: WGA Family and Friends Retreat

April 27th-29th: Restoring the Glory Conference

May 12th: 100% Truth : 100% Grace Equipping Men and Women for Authentic Living in a Warped World
This seminar is for pastors and Christian Leaders who wish to dialogue about cultural and societal issues that impact the church. The key note speaker is Frederica Mathewes-Green.

May 12th-13th: Distortion and Reality: Authentic Living for Men and Women Living in a Warped World
This seminar is for men and women who wish to learn more about our culture and its impact upon gender, youth, and relationships. Frederica Mathewes-Green is the key note speaker.

For more info about these seminars, check out WGA's website at www.wheregraceabounds.org.

June 27th—July 2nd: Exodus International Conference, Indiana Wesleyan University

Thursday Night Group

February 2nd: 48

February 9th : 46

February 16th: 44

February 23rd: 39

Orientation meeting - 4 new people

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A Measure of Grace
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Where Grace Abounds
exists to guide and support
men and women who seek to
understand sexuality and
relationship, and to inspire
all people to know and
personally appropriate
God's plan for their
sexuality and relationships.

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