

MAGNOLIA MINDS: These Times, They Are Ah' Changin'

By Donnie Stuart, pastor

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Did you hear the story about the church leader who was not allowed to serve in the church nursery? He didn't believe change was ever necessary!

Recently, the decision was made in our household to terminate our long-term relationship with a satellite television provider. Though I am not a fan of disrupted patterns, I just could no longer accept the terms and conditions. The repetitive programming with its excessive advertising was just not worth the investment of our time, money, or energy.

The cost had greatly exceeded the return, and I accepted the challenge of change. Consequently, we discovered far better viewing options for much less investment of our resources.

Thinking over the social impacts brought about by the 2020 pandemic, I wonder if the changes brought about in our churches might be similar. We're learning and adapting to new ways to express our worship and obedience to the Lord by being His witness. This learning curve has been neither smooth nor seamless.

Worship services look different now and many people are disheartened. This is not the way it was. We are uncomfortable with the disruption to our routine. The truth of the matter is that we like what we like and expect everyone else to come to our way of thinking. We often suffer from a key limiting factor: spiritual inertia.

A long-taught principle is that change will not occur until

the pain/price of remaining the same becomes greater than that of changing. Mainstream churches are so accustomed to expecting people to come to us that we are too often stuck in our spiritual patterns. Christ did not tell us to always sit and wait. His last command was, "Go, and make disciples" (Acts 1:8).

The long-used, yet ineffective, "Y'all come!" approach is not available to us, but make no mistake – those passionate about ministering, witnessing, and serving are finding effective ways to be the hands and feet of Christ's Bride.

No generation of Christians has had the plethora of avenues with which to touch people. Everything from the old school follow-up cards and calls to Tik Tok on smart devices are widely available and easy to use (except for some of us "old dogs"). We have the tools at hand and the skills are attainable, but the motivation must come from the true commitment to our Savior's command.

What a privilege we are given to represent our Savior! We can curse the darkness and the footprints on our grass or we can light a candle, click on a flashlight, plug in a search beacon, and even flip on the breaker that will give light in dark corners of our own communities. We are called to spread the Gospel of salvation.

Change in how we distribute the unchanging message of God's love for each of us, Jesus Christ's atonement for our sin, and the need for a personal, life-changing salvation experience is simply honoring a Christian commitment to obedience. When Joseph and Mary found and began chastising their missing son in the temple, His reply was simply, "Did you not realize that I must be about My Father's business?"

Isn't it time that each of us – individually and collectively – commit to "being about our Savior's business," even if it requires change?

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