**“Life is change. Growth is optional.”**

–Karen Kaiser Clark

*Lessons on Growth and Change from the Church in Jerusalem*

**Acts 6:1–7 (ESV)** ***1****Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists (Greek speaking Jews from other nations) arose against the Hebrews (hometown Israelites) because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.* ***2****And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.* ***3****Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.* ***4****But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

 ***5****And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.* ***6****These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.*

***7****And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

What happened here?

***The problem was real.***

The Greek widows were not whining, and the issue was grave: who was eating and who was not. It was not a conflict over preferences.

***The leadership was listening.***

True Leaders take the initiative when some-thing needs attention, and engage the assembly in the process.

***The solution was within.***

The whole church takes responsibility, supports the answer, and empowers workers.

What can we learn? How do we “do likewise”?

***Embrace the challenges of growth / diversity.***

We don’t expect everyone to be just like us. We respect other generations and choices. Change energizes life and brings growth to all who welcome it. 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

***Be an active part of the solution.***

We seek God’s wisdom. We participate. We make suggestions. We work together. Eph. 4:11-16

***Focus upon the well-being of others.***

When we engage change, seeking not to be served, but to serve*, we grow in wisdom and joy. James 1:2-5; 1 John 3:16*