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SKETCHBOOK

An Evergreen Creatives Initiative

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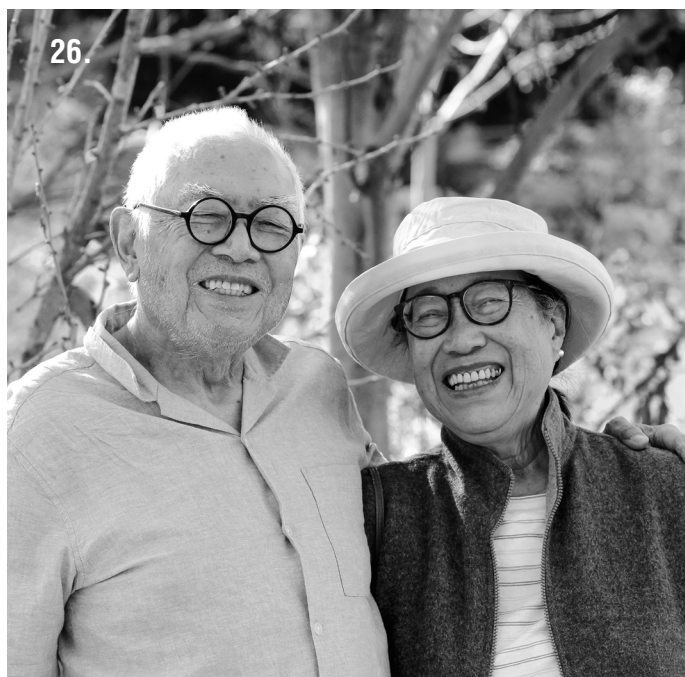
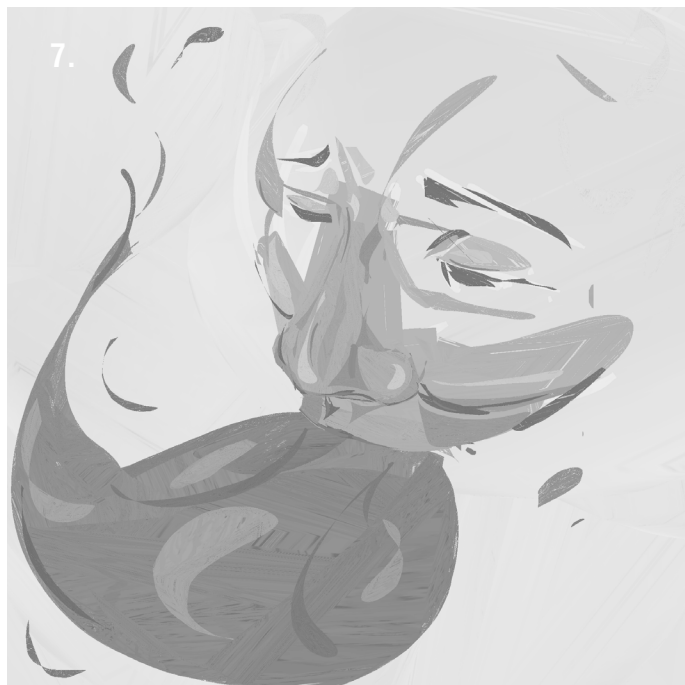
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...being stretched...

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Poetry



Sing Us Home

By Wendy Lew Toda

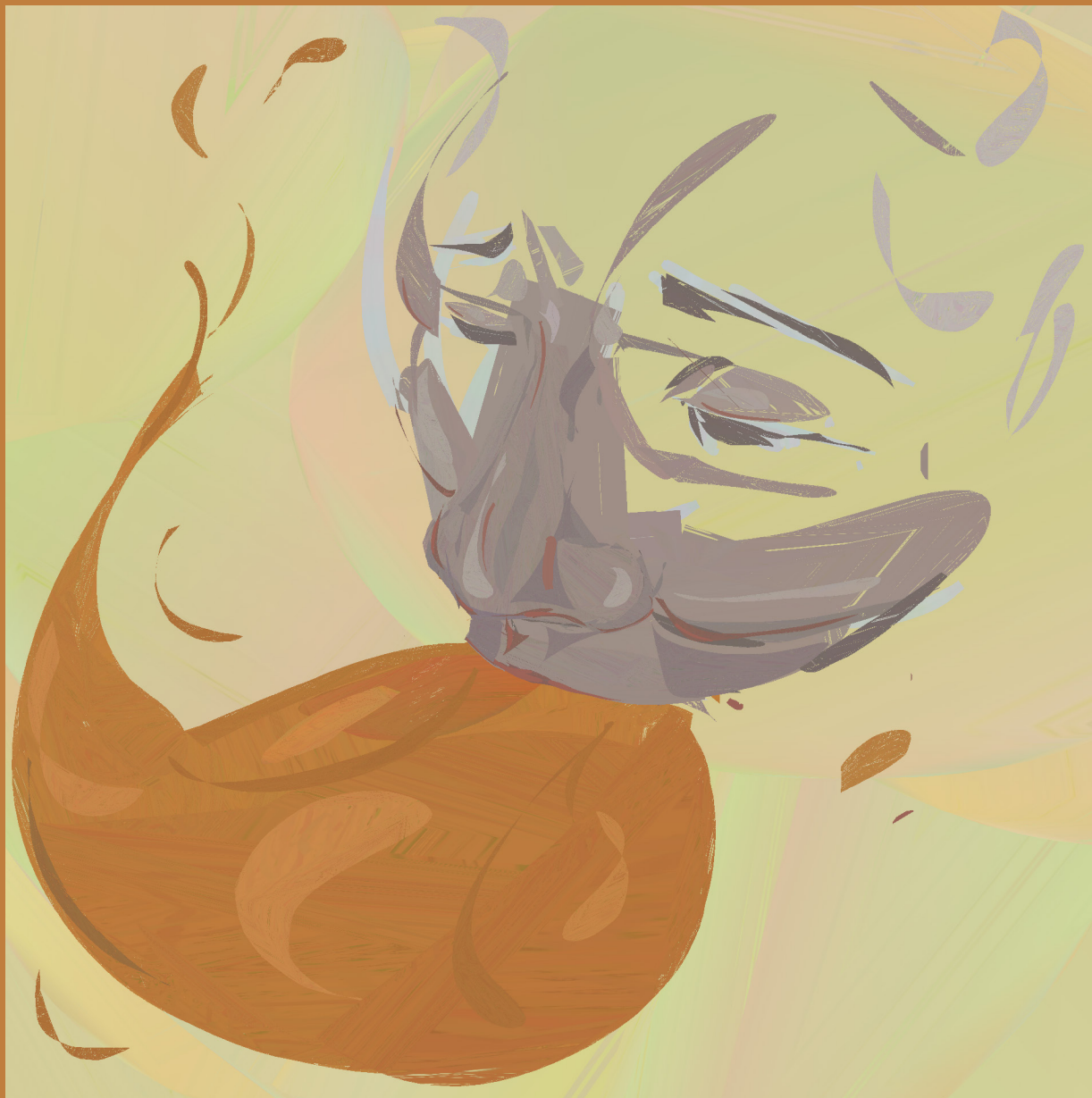
Title: *Sing Us Home*

Description: There are times when we feel broken and empty, not knowing when or if there will ever be repair for all that feels missing. It is into exactly this fragile, homeless place God comes, gently singing color where there's been none, blessing the beauty of our jagged edges with gold, creating home for us once again.

Painting an eggshell is like cradling a tiny moment of purpose and sacrifice (broken to make a cake for a dear family member who was feeling sad). The curved surface, cracks, and broken edges must be held with great care. These are curious, thoughtful conversations, spoken in color, between the eggshells and me.

Media: Eggshell, watercolor, acrylics
©2022 Wendy Lew Toda

Come
with all the ways
home has not been
for you
for me.
One who is
before us
everywhere
even here
in this hidden space
with open arms
a gentle hello
meets us
gathering us in
tracing a golden touch
along our jagged edges
promising repair
to come
someday
soon
please
breathe color into our emptiness
be near
cradle us
broken eggshells are we
speak new life
into our waiting
let your song of home
settle in
here
now
hum sweet welcome
deep into our bones
nestle our souls
into belonging
as you sing us home
again
again
again.



Tangerine Tea

(free verse)

By Joe Lipsey III

Every day, I wake to morning
A greeting
Whether mourning or with glee, I greet the morning
Tangerine Tea

Fruit juice like a mist; a descending cloud upon a harvest of dry leaves –
good things – creation

My hands, descendants of earth, embrace a womb of heat
Spring waters dancing through veils
good things

An aroma – sweet

A kiss opens the door
As the river of Heaven flows, so does citrus and bitters and atoms galore
I am known

This union, so divine, deserves applause
A celebration – a receiving line
We are one

Every day, I wake to morning
A greeting
Whether mourning or with glee, I greet the morning
Tangerine Tea

POETRY

Home With You

Speak to me
Whispers – soft tones

Give me nods of approval
Gestures of acceptance
Comradery

Look my way
Stare, even

Let me know I'm home

Of Motion

Motion is a breath

The origin and story

The ever-present

Reflections



Fire of Rest

By Alex Eng

The art piece displays a campfire with two pairs of hands extending towards the fire to keep warm. I spent some time thinking about what defines a home until I came up with fire as a metaphor. A campfire invites rest and fosters gathering. This reflects the idea that home is not defined by a place but rather the people that it is composed of. The fire represents warmth and safety from an unknown and dangerous environment, similar to how a home represents warmth and safety from the outside world.

The Place Where We Dwell

By Eric Lui

"You know that point in your life when you realize the house you grew up in isn't really your home anymore? All of a sudden even though you have some place where you put your shit, that idea of home is gone." - Garden State. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2004.

Three months into moving back to my childhood home in Alhambra, my mom gave a bunch of my clothes away. I had moved back home to take care of my mom who was recently diagnosed with Alzheimers. Dementia was all new to me and I had no idea what was to come.

I was at work one day and my mom was home with her caregiver. We had the cameras on at the house just to make sure she was doing well. I was watching the cameras when I saw my Mom had invited some of her friends to come over.

The next thing I knew, her friends were in our guest room where I stored a lot of my clothes and I watched as my mom offered my clothes to them. I saw them taking hoodies, jackets, and shirts out of the closet and putting them in bags to take home.

I was shocked and angrily called her but she didn't pick up. I watched on the cameras as her friends left with my clothes and thanked my mom.

Finally my mom picked up and I immediately blurted out "What is happening? Why did you give my clothes away?!?"



“Those are my friends,” she replied. “They are in need of clothes so I donated our extra clothes to them.”

“But those are my clothes!” I said as I tried to hold my voice back in anger. “I can donate some other clothes to them.”

“No, those are not your clothes and they are mine to give out as I please.”

I put my phone down and stared at it in disbelief. I knew there was no way I could convince her otherwise. It was the Alzheimer’s talking.

Eventually we were able to find out who her friends were and we explained everything to them and they were understanding and returned the clothes back to me. They told me that my mom would regularly help them out by donating her own clothes to them or buy them supplies when they needed it. I was not surprised by this as my mom was a very generous person. After that incident, I moved all my clothes into my small room and bought a lock for my door in case it happened again. I couldn’t believe I had to buy a lock for my own room in my own house.

That night, I just needed to get out of that house. I called up some friends and asked if I could come over and hang out at their place. When I arrived at my friend’s house, there was a whole spread of raw meats and veggies surrounding a pot of boiling spicy broth. I was so happy to eat and be in the presence of my friends. We discussed the latest episode of *The Mandalorian* and argued which Jordans were the best sneakers, and expressed anger at the way the Lakers were playing. I told them how my day went and how my mom almost gave away some of my clothes and

they hung onto every word and let me vent about my day.

As I sat there stuffing my face with fragrant beef just freshly cooked in the delicious broth, it was at that moment that I realized that the house I had moved into wasn’t my home anymore. Home for me has always been a place that I felt safe and could relax and could be my domain to do as I please. It was the place where I could come to after a long day at work and just be away from the troubles of the world and know that everything was OK when I was there.

Though I made a choice to move back into my mom’s house, I knew that it would come with a lot of sacrifices. I would lose a lot of my freedom to do what I wanted and go out whenever I wanted. I knew it would take a toll on me physically, especially with sleep and rest. And mostly, I knew it was going to affect me emotionally and mentally to have to take care of my mom everyday as Alzheimer’s slowly takes her away and changes her to a totally different person.

And so as I sat there at my friend’s dining table, I looked around the room and saw all familiar faces of people that I’ve known and loved for so long and for the first time in months, I felt secure. I felt like I wanted to be here in this moment forever. For a short two hours, all the stresses of my life were forgotten and I could feel carefree again. And it hit me that this was home. That home now meant putting my arm around my friend as we cracked up at a 10 year old inside joke while drinking a beer. Or talking about the latest person I was dating and trying to decipher why she ghosted me and everyone telling me that the right girl was out there for me. Or just sitting around and listening to an old *A Tribe Called Quest* album and getting lost in the beats...just feeling safe.



Walking Each Other Home

By Marian Sunabe

On a recent episode of Star Trek: Discovery, the chief medical officer was offered a position on the Enterprise but ultimately chooses to stay on the Discovery because his partner was stationed there. “I realized that my home is wherever you are,” he says. Home is, indeed, where the heart is.

More than a physical dwelling, like a house or starship, home is where the people you love are. For many Americans, the idea of home is tied to a place that shelters your loved ones (usually spouse and children) and is close to where you work. In many traditions including Asian and Latino cultures, the definition of home encompasses extended family as well: grandparents or other older family members, or perhaps unmarried relatives.

Asian families often assume that the responsibility for caring for elderly parents falls to their children. When my youngest daughter, Halle, was little, Jack used to joke with her saying that we had her so that she would live with us forever and take care of us in our old age. Though it was said in jest at the time, there was some truth behind it – the responsibility will fall to all three of our kids to make caretaking decisions for us when we inevitably will need it. But is there another option that relieves the children from bearing the full burden

of parental care? And what about people who don’t have children, or who are single, either widowed or unmarried? Who cares for them in their old age?

I’ve been thinking hard about the issues surrounding aging, particularly the concept of “aging in place” or “aging at home” as I’ve helped to care for my elderly mother this past year. The American value system stresses independence, so growing old at home and taking care of yourself without outside assistance is considered the ideal. But is it the best model for one’s mental and emotional health? Is it economically and environmentally sustainable? And is it spiritually nurturing? We are created by God to be in relationship with others, to flourish within companionship groups. As we age, we lose connections to friends and family, whether through illness or infirmity or inability to travel. We become isolated. So aging at home, alone, is less than ideal.

Perhaps we could extend our concept of family to include community, and extend our concept of a single-family “home” to that of multiple family clusters or groupings located in close proximity to one another.

Let me float an idea that is a radical departure from our current concept of “family home”, but whose time, perhaps, has come. I’ve been learning about a growing movement in this country called “cohousing.”



Aging Alone: increasing isolation as aspects of your life fragment and fall away.
Acrylic, collage. 2022.

It is a group of people – couples, families, single folks – related and unrelated – who commit to live in community together. It is “a community where people would share community-owned resources such as a large common house where they would have meals together frequently and engage in other social activities; where they would live close to one another but have their own home and income; and where they wouldn’t become lonely, isolated, or bored as they got older.”* Now, doesn’t that sound like a lovely way to grow old? A proactive step we can take while still young(-ish) and energetic would be to intentionally form our own “retirement communities,” creating our own personal Leisure Worlds...but not limited to elderly people!

Churches are ideally suited to foster such community. Church culture already embraces social values of mutual support, selflessness, and caring for the needs of others, and encourages small group socialization and interdependence. How might churches reimagine the process of aging and our roles with, and responsibility for, those in our congregation as they age?

The Acts 2 community did things like “share all things in common” and share meals together. While I don’t believe that this Acts 2 community is some sort of biblical mandate to live in this communal way, I do think it offers an aspirational picture of how we might benefit from community-mindedness.

An obvious benefit of cohousing clusters/ groupings would be the social interaction that would be built-in to the community. There would always be people nearby to garden with, cook with, run errands with,

play games with, exercise with, learn with. Having people nearby also serves a security function; should anyone get hurt or fall ill, help is close at hand. Home health care nurses and therapists may still be needed to provide specialized care as the elderly become more incapacitated and their needs grow beyond the community's ability to provide care adequately. Still, the community can be a partner in caring for its elder members, providing their children some respite from caring for aging parents.

Another lifestyle advantage would be that individuals would have fewer possessions, because seldom-used items can be shared, like hedge pruners or ladders or waffle irons. Did you know that some members of the Evergreen community are already sharing their possessions? On Facebook's "Buy Nothing Evergreen Baptist Church" page, church members let each other know what they want to give away and what they are looking for. On a recent perusal of the page, I saw offers of a refrigerator, side table, lamps, CDs, baby furniture and toys...all free to congregation members! As we age, we are often looking



Home is where the Heart is: physical location of your dwelling is less important than who you are in proximity to. Watercolor, pencil, collage. 2022.

to downsize and get rid of our excess belongings. Younger folks are looking to upsize as they move out of their parents' home and build their own home. A mutually beneficial exchange of possessions could take place amongst church members, maybe even on a Sunday morning after service in the church parking lot!

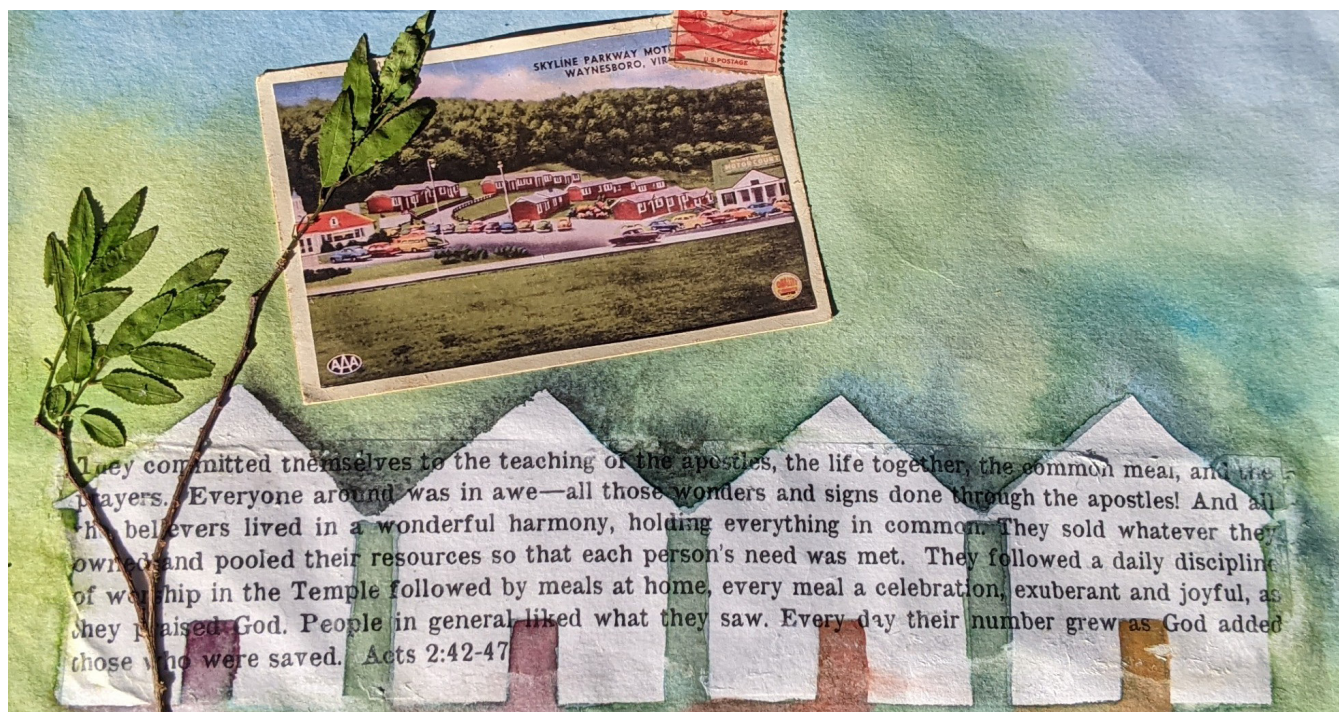
Our church family has always been good at sharing meals together, and this seems to be an important aspect of communal life for the Acts 2 community. Preparing and enjoying meals communally would be a source of soul-sustenance, not just physical sustenance, in a cohousing arrangement.

We can challenge ourselves to exchange our individualistic and independent ideas about aging for community-based, interdependent models. Of course, we won't be changing our mindset about aging overnight. It may take decades, generations even. But I believe the cohousing model is more in line with

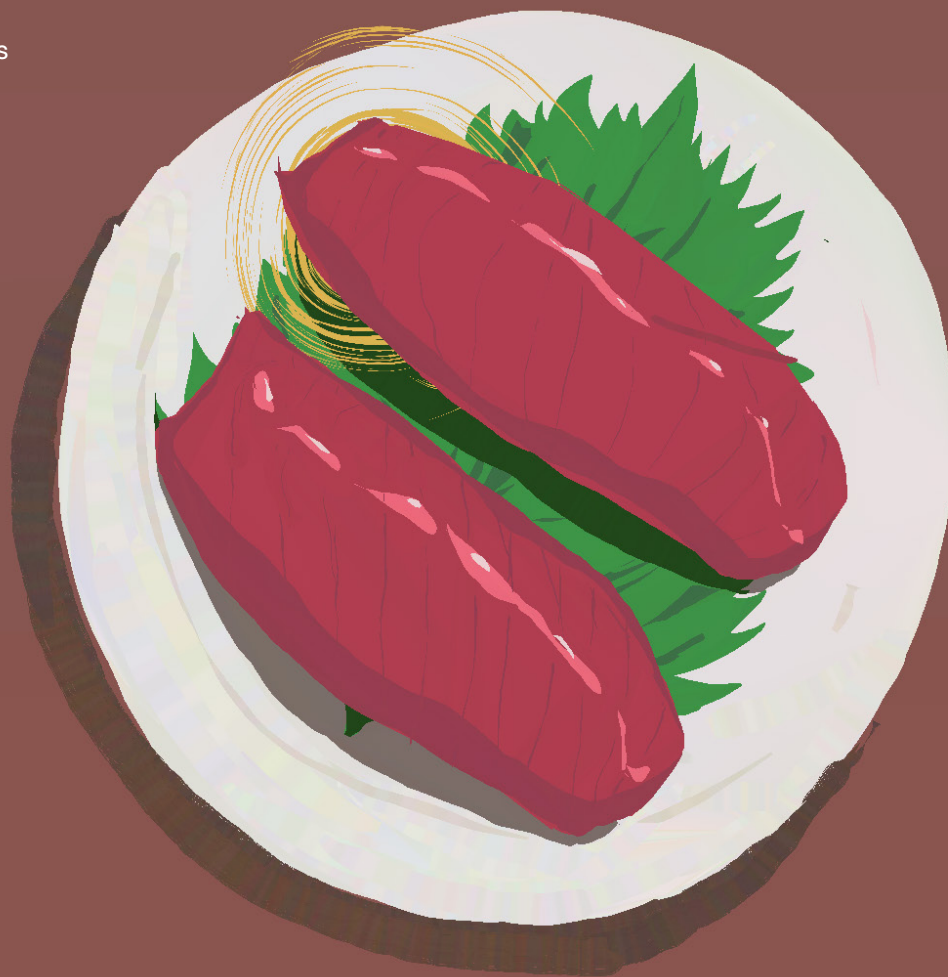
the Acts 2 church, making room in our hearts for our extended communities, and thus enlarging our sense of family and of home.

Where do you think you will grow old and live out the final years of your life? Who will you grow old with? Who will be there in your home to assist you with all of the activities of daily living? It's never too early to start reimagining your concept of home.

*State of the Art Cohousing: Lessons Learned from Quimper Village, Alexandria Levitt and Charles Durrett, 2020.



The Acts 2 Community: a future to consider.
Watercolor, collage. 2022.



Taste

By Megan Soun Thomsen

Growing up in Memphis, I didn't have access to great sushi. Most of the sushi I ate came in the form of a pre-packaged box from the sushi section at my local grocery store.

My sushi life took a dramatic shift for the better a few months

ago, and it's all thanks to Evergreen's very own Kevin Suzukida. The week everything changed for me, my small group leaders sent a text to us saying, "Don't bring your own dinner to small group this week—Kevin caught a fish!"

I had high expectations for this meal, but it somehow far excee-

ded all my wildest dreams. When I walked into small group, I was met by the most beautiful spread of bluefin tuna and yellow tail prepared in a myriad of ways, including sashimi, spicy tuna, poke, and toro. For those of you may have also grown up eating grocery store sushi, toro refers to this rich, fatty part of tuna that absolutely melts in your mouth. And to top it all off, Kevin also brought fancy soy sauce because Kikkoman just wasn't going to cut it for this meal.

As we ate this meal, I don't remember there being a lot of conversation. Most of the words said between bites of poke and toro were something to the effect of "Wow this is so good!" and "Oh my gosh, I am extremely happy right now." We all left that night feeling so full, yes full of fish, but also full of joy and gratitude.

This feeling of pure joy that we shared around the table is a big part of what made this meal so special. I think this sort of pure joy around food is pretty rare in our world. So often the joy and pleasure we get from food is quickly followed by guilt and shame. I shouldn't of ea-

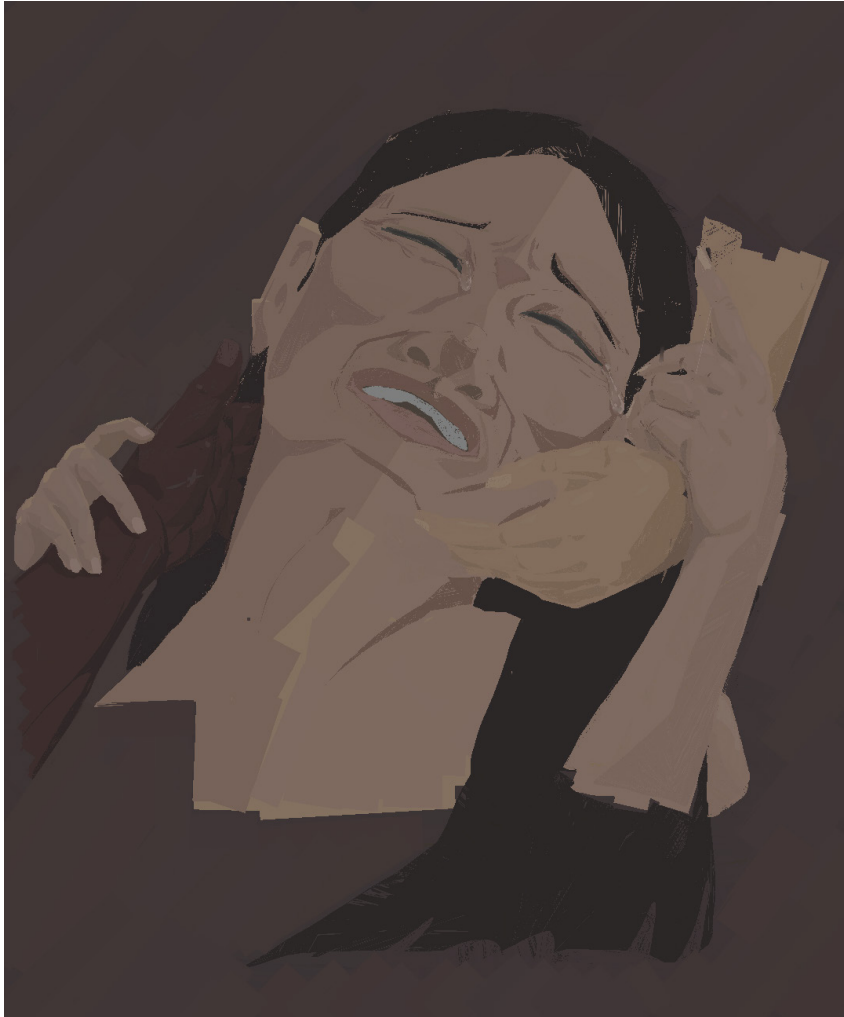
ten that. I'm so bad for eating this. I have no self-control. We see food as a guilty pleasure, a sinful indulgence, an obstacle that gets in the way of the "ideal" body, an enemy to be controlled and conquered.

For a period of my life, this was the way I viewed food. Obsessed with thinness, I spent my days counting calories, making up a lot of rules about what I should and shouldn't eat, and beating myself up when I broke these rules. Food was not joy, it was misery.

And then I stumbled upon a book called *Food and Faith* by Norman Wirzba. In it, he compared my way of viewing food, where food was reduced to numbers and ingredients, to opening a beautiful, love letter and "judging it to be nothing more than a page covered with random markings." For according to Wirzba, food is "God's love made tasty." He writes, "Food is a gift of love. As with all of creation, food does not have to be. The fact that it is, and that it has the potential to occasion great delight, is a sign that God made the world not out of boredom but out of joy."

Eating used to be an anxiety-provoking, shame-inducing experience for me. But as I started to understand food as God's love letter to creation, eating became sacred—an activity where I consistently encounter the grace and goodness of God.

I think we got it right that night we ate Kevin's fish. Instead of reducing the meal to calories and fat grams, we experienced this food for what it truly was. It was incredibly fresh and tasty fish, but it was also more than that. In every bite of sashimi dipped in fancy soy sauce, we tasted Kevin's generosity, his selfless choice to share his prized fish with us and to prepare an unforgettable meal. And in every bite of melt-in-your-mouth toro, we tasted the rich, rich love of a God who gives us good things like fish and friends.



Tender Grasps

By Robert Jong

Title: *Tender Grasps*

Medium: Digital

Description: Amidst the sea of relentless challenges, home has been a space of comfort and healing. The tender hands of home provide an anchor of peace and understanding in our times of greatest need. Holding tight, we must remember the ways we share and provide this space with those around us.

Entering

By Robert Jong

Title: *Entering*

Medium: Digital

Description: Home is not always a space we find ourselves in. We might find ourselves separated, lost, or even removed from a space we can call home. Be that by our own volition in seeking somewhere new and life-giving, or to leave the shackles and malaise from where we have left. In that liminal space we find ourselves, homes are warmth; home is a beacon of inviting light calling to us. We must only enter.



Characters

By Blake Thomsen

Miller Fong



*“Everybody has gifts,”
says Miller Fong.*

*“God has given me the gift
of the magic of being an
architect.”*

The gift of design has always flowed through Miller’s family. His Chinese immigrant parents started a furniture business in downtown Los Angeles, where Miller was born and raised. He started working for the family business as a young boy.

Miller went on to major in architecture at nearby USC, which delighted his father. “He told me that

when I graduated, he would dance in the streets,” Miller says with a smile. “And on graduation day, he did!”

Upon graduating from USC, Miller began working for the family business full time. In 1968, he designed a lotus chair that is now in the permanent collection at LACMA, following in the footsteps of his father, whose wave chaise resides in the permanent collection at MoMA in New York.

As his career has progressed, Miller has taken his architectural gifts beyond furniture design. For the past 18 years, he has served as a professor in the architecture department at USC. He teaches a course called “Architect’s Sketchbook” to 21st-century students who sometimes struggle to express themselves without technology.

“It’s about being able to put your vision down on paper without a computer,” Miller explains. “The journey from head to hand to paper is a very different journey than through the computer.”

Miller’s gifts are also on display throughout Evergreen’s campus. Miller led a redesign of the sanctuary that tripled the size of the stage and added five times more light. “The chapel and the children’s village are also my design,” Miller explains. “The concept is to harmonize the campus and make it look like it was all built at the same time. The cross in the facade of the chapel is a way of telling people, ‘There’s a church back here.’”





In the past 15 years, alongside his teaching responsibilities at USC, he has remodeled houses throughout the L.A. area. “When I remodel people’s houses, I do it for the least amount of money,” Miller explains. The opportunity to use his gift is more important than the financial reward.

“It’s the magic,” he says. “The challenge is people basically want to fix their houses. I don’t fix houses; I want to transform their houses. That transformation is based on them telling me their wants and needs and dreams.”

The most special houses he has designed are those he has shared with his wife of 58 years, Jetty. They met when Miller was 19. “I knew she was for me,” he says. “The most important element in my journey is marrying Jetty. The grace of God flows directly through her to anyone that meets her.”

Whether designing homes, churches, furniture, or anything in between, Miller is certain of the impression he hopes to leave. “People ask, ‘What do you want people to say about your architecture?’ It’s simple. I want them to say: ‘Wow.’”



Greg & Bonnie Song

“One of the ways we express our love and gratitude for other people is being able to be hospitable,” says Greg Song. So Greg and his wife Bonnie have hosted a myriad of events at their South Pasadena home over the years: Sedaqah groups, hot pot nights, Open Door ministry gatherings, and everything in between.

“We want our home to be a place where you can feel secure, you feel warmth, you can let your guard down,” Bonnie explains. “You feel fed emotionally, physically, spiritually, and mentally.”

But the onset of the pandemic hampered the Song’s ability to host, bringing isolation to a space that had previously functioned as a social hub. “For many people, especially for those with mental health issues, lockdown was extremely isolating, stifling, and depressing,” Bonnie says.

The isolation was particularly tough for their son Nicholas, who came home from UC Santa Barbara during the peak of the pandemic. “He had such a big social circle,” Bonnie explains. “It was really hard for him to be at home and then to also have to be battling a lot of his deepest mental health challenges.”

Nick tragically died by suicide on April 27, 2021, forever altering the fabric of the Song home and their community. “After Nick passed, we’ve been



“After Nick passed, it really showed us that the church wasn’t just Evergreen’s campus in Rosemead, and the sanctuary, and the ministry center, and so on,” Greg says. “It really solidified in us that the church really was the people that surrounded us and supported us during this time.”

trying to get used to our home again,” Bonnie says. “His room is still unused. We don’t hear him come through the door anymore. We don’t hear him laughing. He used to brew a lot of pour over coffee – we don’t smell his coffee. We don’t watch Lakers games with him on the sofa. Our home physically is very different now without him.”

In the aftermath of Nick’s death, which coincided with an easing of lockdown restrictions, the Songs were able to open their home again. They hosted members of their extended family and of their Evergreen church family, whose support helped the Song’s navigate their devastating new reality.

The Songs have also been able to open their home to Nick’s friends from high school and college. “That has been a secondary blessing for what had happened to Nick,” Greg says. “It allowed us to get to know Nick from a different standpoint through his friends, who have been really gracious to us in sharing some of the things that they knew about Nick and how they interacted with Nick. We’ve been able to use our home as a place to invite them not only into our house but into our lives... They have really been a comfort to us in this time.”

Amidst all of the challenges, the Songs have been grateful for the ways God has met them in their grief. “We just know that Nick is in his forever home,” Bonnie says. “The home that we hopefully all will be in. He’s forever in the arms of God. And he’s waiting there to welcome us to his home.”

Devotionals

By Virgil Lew



The Office

THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF INVOCATION

Since the pandemic has invaded the world, our country, our states, our cities and our homes, the office, in many cases, is at home. Prior to the pandemic, there was a popular practice of working remotely from designated locations rather than the work office. Working in a remote location or anywhere in the world for that matter is the luxury of technological innovation. Further, technology gives us this virtual pleasure of “being there” without having to “travel there” to the office for work.

Invocation as an activity is not commonly associated with a spiritual practice or work. But could it be or should it be? The word invocation implies to pray or bless. It is an intentional act of blessing and invoking God as the source of that blessing. How can your office, wherever it may be, be a place of blessing? The Apostle Paul gives us insight into this approach. He uses the

phrase “one another”. Invocation is an interpersonal gesture. It is an expression of words and action to another person. Altogether, words, attitude, and behavior go hand in hand in an invocation. Hear these snippets from the Apostle Paul: “serve one another humbly in love” (*Gal. 5:13*), “be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing one another in love” (*Eph. 4: 2*), and “be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (*Eph. 4: 32*).

Being in the office and working is for one another. Being kind and loving to each other in any setting is being human. It is our responsibility and calling to invoke and promote the well-being of our neighbor. The spiritual practice of invocation is among one of the greatest commandments Jesus spoke to us. Let’s begin by practicing it today.

Reflections

1. *In what ways can you invoke a blessing to your coworker?*
2. *When you hear or read the Apostle Paul’s words “one another”, what stirs within you?*
3. *How does this reflection change your perspective of office as a spiritual practice of invocation?*

The *Kitchen*

A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF SAVORING

Psalm 34: 8 says aesthetically, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” I wonder how this verse connects with our experience with the kitchen? From my remembrance of the kitchen, it was the busiest place when meals were being prepared. There was a lot chopping, washing, slicing, and preparing all sorts of foods. “If you are not helping, get out of the kitchen” were the words my mother would say to me. I, of course, scampered out without hesitation. However, now that I think about it, it was a special place where all sorts of smells and flavors were mounting. The kitchen was the prequel to a banquet. The aroma from a stir-fried chicken dish met a conscious delight in my palette. My stomach began to rumble, my mouth started to water, and my body was drawn to all the wonderful and delicious dishes coming from that place.

The Psalmist says with a deep conviction and intention that tasting that the Lord is good is well beyond a 3-star Michelin restaurant meal. Tasting and also seeing paired together gives us a glimpse of the heavenly meal waiting for us. That is worth savoring.



Reflections

1. *What is your favorite meal from the kitchen? Who prepared it and how was it prepared?*
2. *Were you hands-on or hands-off in the kitchen? Why?*
3. *What image or picture comes to your mind when you hear “taste and see that the Lord is good”?*



The *Living Room*

A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF REMEMBERING



The living room is a place to live, thrive, rest, enjoy, be comfortable and most of all be. It is also a place to reflect and slow down. Being in the living room reminds you of personal memories. These collections of memories may be an important way to honor God. Remembering is not a trivial thing. It connects what God has done for us, i.e., a shower of blessings, companionship, wisdom, knowledge, promise, mercy, compassion, goodness and love. Psalm 23: 6 says this: “Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will

dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (NIV) Recollecting and connecting all these wonderful consecrations will allow us to thrive in a pandemic, a society politically charged with jingoisms, a future with uncertainties, and regardless of whether or not your financial stability is guaranteed.

Certainly, the living room is a place to rest and to open ourselves to the Lord and His abiding presence. This is worth remembering and even to stake our lives on.



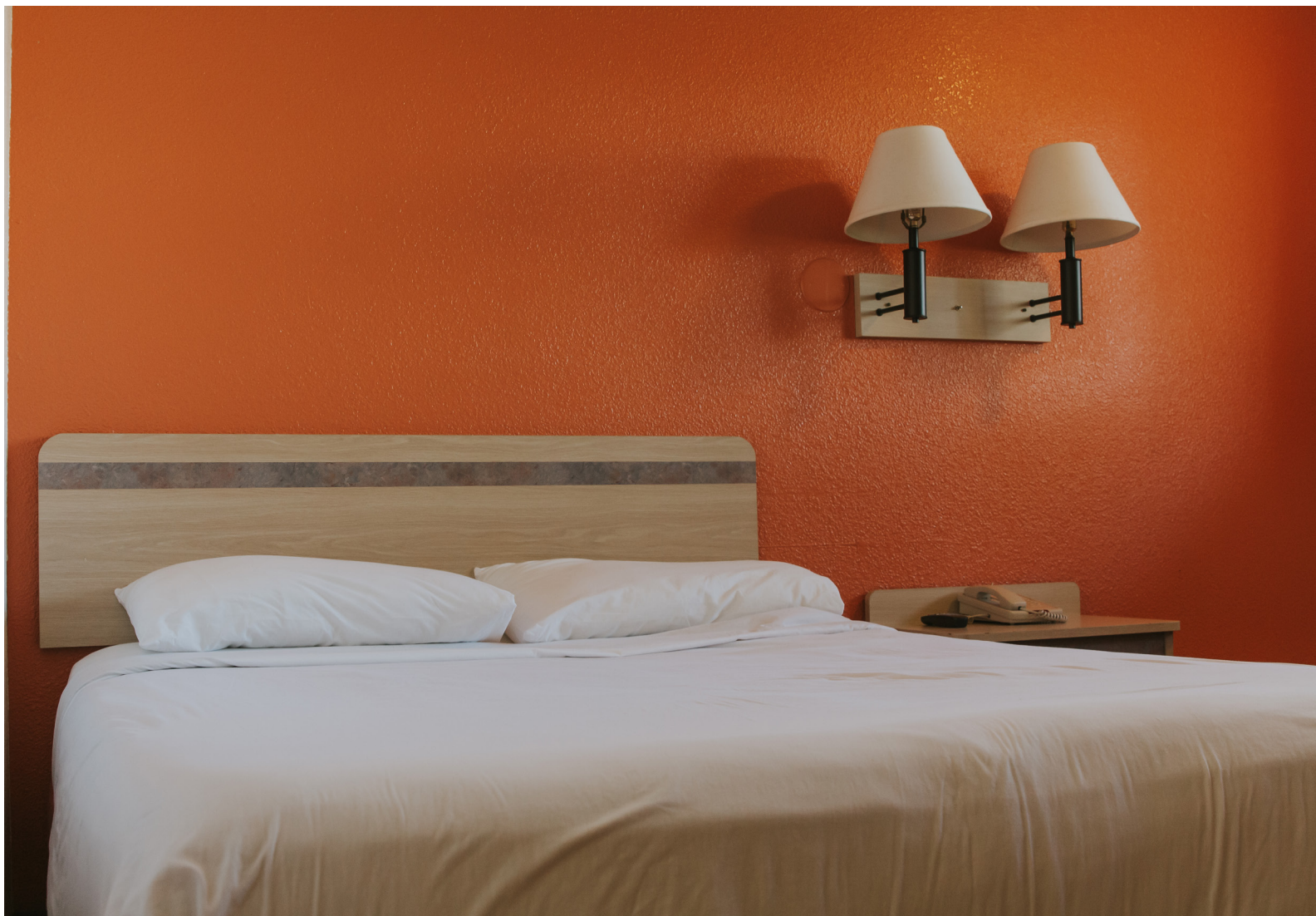
Reflections

- 1. In what ways has your living room been a place of comfort and a place of remembering? Reflect on significant things you did there.*
- 2. As you lounge on the couch, pause for a moment and ask yourself, how has God shown you His goodness and mercy to you this day?*
- 3. What prevents you from enjoying personal memories in the living room?*

DEVOTIONALS

The *Bedroom*

A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF REST





Bed, rest and sleep are what describes the bedroom for me. Yes, there may be a dresser drawer, a bathroom and other personal items, but mainly we enter the bedroom to sleep and rest. We may not realize the subtle connection between our rest and God's sabbath command to rest. Matter of fact, all activities we do must cease at some point. It is this ceasing that intrigues me. Our bodies demand rest whether we know it or not. Could it be that our createdness requires a spiritual restfulness? In Genesis 2:3, which is the root of sabbath rest, the text says, *"Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."* God rested in his holy bedroom from his efforts and labor. Isn't it interesting that God needed rest? Was it for his sake or ours? No one knows the answer.

Respectfully, the Old Testament is abounding with reference to sabbath rest (*Ex. 20: 8, 11; Deut. 5: 12*). Moreover, in the purity commands recorded in the Book of Leviticus 19: 30, there is an understated and direct connection between sabbath rest and the sanctuary. Both are tied together. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians (*1 Cor. 6: 19 – 20*), interestingly enough, reinterprets this command. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We are the sanctuaries of God. Therefore, rest is essential to keep the sacredness of our temples pure and holy. When we hit the sheets tonight, remember we are fulfilling God's intention from the very beginning.

Reflections

1. *When was the last time you really got a good night's sleep? How did it feel?*
2. *What are your thoughts regarding your body as God's temple and rest?*
3. *How will the spirituality of rest now change your spiritual perspective as you live and rest in God?*

Study

Written By January Lim

This paper was written during my studies at Fuller Theological Seminary for the class, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*. What does it mean to welcome the presence of Jesus? Is it by preparing a scrumptious banquet, covering all details as a good hostess? Or is it through bestowing undivided attention upon the guest of honor?

As a Korean American woman in ministry, I strive to utilize my socio-religious location in tandem with the pericope of Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-42) to provide practical implications for inviting Jesus into our homes. Note, the content of the paper has been condensed for the sake of brevity.

Sacred Hospitality

WELCOMING JESUS THROUGH THE LENS OF MARTHA AND MARY

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. 40 But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." 41 But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42 there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)

SETTING THE SCENE

The episode of Martha and Mary comes towards the conclusion of Luke chapter 10 which begins with Jesus sending out seventy two of his disciples with instructions to spread the news of the coming kingdom of God. (10:1-12, TNIV) He is clear about the type of hospitality the disciples are to receive in as well as the type of “unwelcome” hospitality to spurn. Not all will invite the kingdom of God into their midst and this is a given fact. Jesus is clear that whoever rejects the disciple, rejects him. (10:16)

The short four verse episode of Martha and Mary prioritizes the importance of hearing from God above cultural norms and traditions, across all genders. It is remarkable that as Jesus notes the importance of genuine hospitality, the first account of his being welcomed into a home is one that belongs to women. In the migrant, missionary life of Jesus, his acceptance of this feminine hospitality gives way to the Lord revealing a socially ground-breaking affirmation of women in his ministry and the way he defines the priorities of discipleship¹. This paper will aim to delve into what hosting the presence of Jesus and the kingdom of God actually looks like embodied and delineated through the characters of Martha, Mary and Jesus. Additionally, the latter portion of this paper will extrapolate how the story of Martha and Mary may be applied to Korean American women within the church today.

INTRODUCING THE PLAYERS

MARTHA

While Jesus is on a journey with the disciples, a woman named Martha invites Jesus to her home. It is interesting to note that Martha has her own home and is quite independent and secure. Her Aramaic female name may be translated as “ruling lady” which helps to emphasize her autonomous, well-off position². Readers are not privy to how she came into financial security, but she is able to host Jesus by her own means. There is a chance that she may have had influence within her community as a female leader, and this may be important in reading into her character as one representative of a typical female “leader” within her cultural context³. Her commitments to the numerous domestic tasks at hand in order to host Jesus, therefore, could be read as typical set of obligations for any woman in charge of welcoming a teacher or Rabbi into her home. In essence, Martha is behaving as she is expected to within the Jewish society of her time.

Additionally, Martha is described to have a sister named Mary. Though we do not know if they are related by blood, Martha is characterized as one that takes care of others. Jesus must have recognized her service as a genuine offer as he agrees to Martha’s invitation; he does not reject her offer as he encourages his disciples to do under different circumstances. However, it is this very service (*diakonia*) for Jesus that causes Martha to become distracted (*perispao*) which translated from Greek, means to be “dragged around.” Perhaps Martha was feeling burdened by her self-imposed act of hosting

¹ There are conflicting thoughts regarding Luke-Acts and the way it highlights and promotes women or subtly restricts women to silence. Whatever the author’s intent, this paper will focus mainly on the biblical commentaries and exegetical conclusions that may be drawn rather than focusing on the motivations of the writer of Luke-Acts.

that she felt was due to Jesus when she was longing to bask in his presence as her sister Mary was comfortably doing⁴. However, when Martha speaks up for her own frustrations, it is not to create space for herself at Jesus' feet; rather, it is to ask Jesus to put Mary in her proper place alongside Martha in the service of others⁵. The party has become centered by Martha's own needs as attested by her "me-talk"⁶ instead of centering on Jesus' presence.

Thus far, readers may sympathize with Martha. Not only has she been able to recognize and see Jesus' presence as one worth hosting in her home, she has been slaving away to ensure his comfort. More importantly, one may be impressed by her ability to speak up to a male authority of higher status and social identity. Remarkably, Martha is unafraid to take her issues directly to the one she believes has the power to make right the injustice done to her. Jesus' response to Martha is notable, not in his complete rejection of Martha's efforts or grievance, but in the way he rebukes in a *personal manner* — as attested by his calling of her name twice— that Martha has unwittingly become like seeds that fall upon the thorns.(8:14) Despite her good intentions, Martha has allowed the opportunity to welcome the presence of the Lord to become choked by the anxiety of fulfilling her role as hostess assigned to her by society⁷.

MARY

Unlike her sister— a woman who takes initiative and is able to speak her mind—Mary is silent throughout this

short pericope. However, her posture before Jesus is a subversive one. First, Mary goes against the cultural gender norms by not restricting her presence to serving her Rabbi from a distance or from behind the scenes. Mary, seated at the feet of Jesus, is not of "service" to any one but to Jesus himself. By Martha or any other Jewish woman's standards, Mary is not living up to what is culturally expected of her. She may even bring shame upon her sister and her household by refusing to uphold her co-hostess duties. Her decision to sit at the feet of Jesus is a social risk indeed!

Moreover, Mary, as a woman, goes against social codes by placing herself in the position of a student to Jesus. Within Judaism, women did not have the right to be taught, especially by men⁸. Hence, Mary brings about tension in both her refusal to submit to domestic duties, as well as in placing herself as a recipient of divine teaching⁹. As a result of her choice to go against traditional customs, Mary is able to live out the blessed status that Jesus describes his disciples in verse 24: she is able to see and hear what the Father has revealed to her. Whether or not Mary's actions are out of pure indulgence or out of intentional rebellion, her posture of prioritizing Jesus' words and presence is what he highlights as "the better" choice. Take note, Jesus is not saying that Mary should not serve others; he is emphasizing that attending to Jesus himself should always come first.

JESUS

Jesus is the Lord as identified by the author of Luke, Martha, and Mary's posture by his feet¹⁰. As displayed

²Turid Karlsen. Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), p.98.

³Turid Karlsen. Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), p.101.

⁴Alan R. Culpepper and Gail R O'Day. *The New Interpreter's Bible: The Gospel of Luke, the Gospel of John*. (Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon, 1995), 457.

by the earlier portions of the chapter, Jesus is the one who commissions and empowers his disciples to go out into different town and places to heal and to cast out demons. He is filled with the Holy Spirit and is the Son who knows his Father, and through whom the Father reveals himself. (10:22)

In Martha's case, Jesus is a teacher who is both gracious in his acceptance of Martha's extensions of hospitality. He is patient as he listens and registers her complaint against Mary. He is direct and gentle in his rebuke towards her. The Lord calls Martha by name twice before he addresses and validates the genuine worries that Martha is expressing; he is clear about the fact his concern is not about what she is doing, but rather, her attitude of worry and anxiety.

In regards to Mary, Jesus' role has changed from being hosted to becoming the host. It is Jesus who is feeding Mary with sustenance that she as a woman, has never been privy to. It is Jesus who is giving her space to sit and engage. It is Jesus who is welcoming Mary into his presence and affirming her rightful place next to him as her disciple. By giving Mary permission to receive from him, Jesus goes against every social and cultural restriction of women learning about spiritual matters. The fact that there is no mention of the disciples after the opening of the short pericope stands to highlight how much Jesus has centered the two women in that specific moment of his Lordship. There is no one that stops him from hosting Mary or interrupts his dialogue with Martha. His full attention is given to the two women that he cares for.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FOR THE KOREAN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN WOMAN

As a disciple of God who is a woman of color, what are some practical lessons to take away from the story of Martha and Mary? As a second generation Korean American woman who has grown up within the patriarchal religious environment of the first generation Korean immigrant church, I believe that there are a few points of praxis that can be applied by women like myself.

First, God encourages us to look beyond the cultural norms and expectations of a Korean woman. We do not have to stick to the domestic course of serving in the kitchen or taking care of others constantly. We have been given permission by Jesus to hear his word at intimate proximity — as close any male disciple — and to receive the Lord's presence at the risk of seeming culturally defiant. It is not only permissible, but it is a more lasting investment to prioritize the Lord's presence over all other duties.

However, as Jesus was gentle and validating of Martha's efforts, it is important for the younger generations to respect and validate the worries and the weight of being "dragged" by the traditional obligations that our mothers and sisters of the older generation carry. How can we host conversations where we are able to be open and honest about our needs as sisters without mirroring Martha's self-revolving plea towards God to "tell her to help me!" How can the church encourage sisters to stand in solidarity even in the midst of pursuing God differently?

⁵ Franklin Scott Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows: Capable Women of Purpose and Persistence in Lukes Gospel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 169.

⁶ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), p.437.

⁷ Alan R. Culpepper and Gail R O'Day. *The New Interpreter's Bible: The Gospel of Luke, the Gospel of John*. (Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon, 1995), 231.

There is something to glean from Martha's non-apologetic way of turning to the Lord. She is the one to invite Jesus over to her home. She is unafraid to host the most (in)famous Rabbi of her day who she believes to be the Lord! As a daughter of a conservative pastor's family, I am accustomed—as many Korean American women are—to being silenced and told what to do. To talk back to an elder is to be disrespectful and defiant; to speak as Martha did to Jesus is unthinkable within the Korean culture. How liberating and vindicating Martha's dialogue with Jesus might sound to someone who has been muted all her life? Especially by a male authority? Even more astoundingly, Jesus does not call Martha defiant nor does he shut her down completely. Jesus listens and addresses her source of pain. Perhaps in our own dialogues with the Lord, our sisters and I can afford to speak more openly as we lament our grievances, trusting that the Lord will address and validate our sources of pain.

Lastly, it is important to note that the pericope ends with plenty of room for Martha to join Mary at the feet of Jesus. Though the reader may receive Jesus' words to Martha as one of comparison, I lean towards receiving Jesus' rebuke as an invitation for Martha to join him. There is still plenty of time decide not to take care of the catering or lists of things to do. Jesus is not going anywhere any time soon. In fact he reassures Martha that the posture Mary has chosen before him is one that cannot be taken away. Despite the generations worth of patriarchy, cultural practices that have taken away our voices, and the complicated conversations between the women of different generations and origin, Jesus reminds us that it is not too late to sit at his feet. There is

still plenty of teaching and divine sustenance available to us. As Jesus himself was, we are on a journey. Some will welcome us and many will not. Yet, Jesus is the host who invites all who are willing to see and hear. He calls us by name and reassures us that what he has for us, cannot be taken away.

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⁸ Turid Karlsen, Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), p.102.

⁹ Turid Karlsen, Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), p.103.

¹⁰ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), p.434.

Love Letters

Dear God.

Although I could be super spiritual and tell you that I have felt like you have completely provided for everything, I know that this is not how I always feel. Many times, I feel that you are not there.

In some ways, I feel like I can only blame myself... perhaps my "spiritual eyes" aren't open, or that I am not praying "hard" enough.

This COVID-19 pandemic where we have seen so much death and suffering, I am astounded by the callousness of even those we call our siblings in Christ, acting carelessly in Your name. As a pediatric oncologist, I often times ask where You are in the midst of this unimaginable pain and anguish?

More close to home, where were you when I was in an abusive church environment during my college and post-college years, where I am still counseling and processing with other former members more than 10 years later? And of course, my sexuality that I tried to ignore & change for so long by striving to be the most exemplary "Christian" I could be in both the church and workplace contexts - did I really have to go through all of the baggage that it continues to entail?

At the same time, when I look back at my life thus far, I discover Your protection in the things that I take for granted - the water I drink, the air that I breathe, the full use of my faculties... or major family events that predate my existence on this planet - what if my grandmother did not have the foresight to escape to the South from what is now North Korea in the aftermath of WWII? Where would I be?

Paradoxically, I feel Your protection the most in the moments that I know both in my head and my heart where I do not have any control. I am reminded of the paradox of Christianity - where death becomes life as evidenced by Jesus' life and Easter - and where I can confidently say that my help comes from You, the Maker of Heaven and Earth.

Brian

Dear God. I love you.
you love us.
you are next to me.
love Jayden

Dear God,
God you are like a parent and
a friend to me. I love that you
listen to me anytime I need
you to, I also love that you
comfort me and protect me
when I am in troubled times.
I am thankful that you
love me.

Love,
Maddie

Dear God,

I want to take a moment to say "Thank You for always being there for me." When I reflect over the words "God as Provider," I recall a time when I was pregnant with my first child Chris. Just into my 6th month of pregnancy, my husband Al received a layoff notice from his employer. I continued to work during my pregnancy, but as my delivery date approached, I had to take a leave of absence from work. With my husband unemployed and I only receiving small monthly disability checks, we had to dip into our savings. So although the arrival of our first child was a joyous occasion, it was a scary time for us financially. But, we remained faithful to you Lord and you never failed us.

Around the time Chris turned 2 months old, a friend from work, Lisa, told us about a job opportunity for Al. Praise you God, Al interviewed and was hired. In addition, the company offered educational benefits and covered the cost for Al to return to college to study Education. Within 4 years, Al studied and retrained for a more secure new career as a Middle School Teacher. With a steady job as a teacher, we were able to start saving again. Thank you Lord for seeing Al through this time, as he eventually ended up teaching until his retirement. Praise you God, as I never received a layoff notice, for giving me the ability to continue to work fulltime and be a mom to 2 daughters, Chris and Bethany, and for the opportunity to work for over 30 years. You have always provided for my needs and more importantly when I needed to, I was able to retire early, so I could help care for my mom during the Pandemic.

Thank you Lord for your faithfulness to me and my family. Lord God, you are my strength!! Lord God, you are my Provider!! I love you Lord... Kelly ☺

Dear God,

Sometimes, I really don't know what it means for you to discipline the ones you love. Honestly, the idea makes me bristle. I don't feel it's like the misguided and sometimes hurtful correction of my parents. I know your plans are better, your intentions more perfect. But as a queer Black woman, it feels like the world has already punished me enough for who I am. Growing up, even the church told me there would be times when God wanted to "teach me a lesson". I'm still discovering all the ways people can internalize a message like that.

Still, as a queer Black woman, I cherish the way I have learned to find beauty in my pain. I can feel now that you journey alongside me, especially in the most acute moments of isolation. I know that you are not a teacher or parent that would cast hardship on me and watch from a distance. You, the most gentle Instructor, have come down to my eye-level and placed yourself in my experience. You continue to walk among the ones you love, familiar with the incredible pain and joy of living.

I know that your discipline isn't meant to hurt, but to teach me how to live in the midst of it. I know you are making me stronger, more compassionate, more patient, more of myself, and more like you. I long to be your student for the rest of my life.

Love, Mide

Dear God—

February 20, 2022

It's been a long time since I've written to you. I kept a sporadic journal during my cancer journey. Now that I'm back to teaching after being out since June, I feel like I barely have time to breathe.

I'm so thankful that a couple of years ago you gave me Christina as a great Christian mentor who really helped me to work through many things, esp. anger that I didn't even know I was suppressing. I think that most anger stems from feeling that you are withholding things that I think I want or need, and I wonder why I'm not good enough or am I that bad or being punished for something? I learned that it's okay to be sad and mad but not stay there for months and years like I used to. You have amazed me that I can make such a quick turnaround in a day or 2 instead of months?

When I got the cancer diagnosis, I was totally devastated and I wondered, "Why me?" Wasn't I dealing with enough caring for my cute little mom and trying to be your light to my students and my circle of influence? I felt it was such a waste of time and so inefficient of you, but obviously, you have the big picture, and cancer was one way that you slowed me way down.

After the initial shock, I had to quickly switch gears to cleaning mode since I asked a good friend from college to help me for a couple of days after surgery. I was so overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of so many family and friends. Jenny offered to help me clean which of course I thought I should be able to

clean my own place, but my time management was out of whack, so thankfully she helped me clean enough before Brian arrived.

I was so thankful that I felt almost no pain after surgery, but then I had to quickly gear up for chemo. You know that I absolutely HATE NEEDLES, so to have one stuck in my arm for 5 hours at a time really SUCKED!! But again, I was so thankful that I didn't have horrible side effects such as food tasting like metal or vomiting.

Thank you for sending so many people with food, gifts, letters, emails, and texts. Chimp was such an angel to pray for me daily. Students and staff from my school brought me a gift basket and wrote notes. I felt truly loved. I really hated going through cancer, but you sent people my way to remind me that you were still in charge and taking care of me.

You patiently taught me to slow down and take care of myself. I thought I was taking care of myself, but apparently not enough. Uncle Marshall reminded me that every day is a gift from you, and I can't assume anything about tomorrow.

I really learned so much from praying through cancer and the one lesson that stands out to me most was instead of asking, "Why me?" You want me to ask, "How can I bless others?" I've always had the attitude that I want to learn from everything that I've been through and that hopefully others can learn, too.

Thank you for patiently reminding me that I'm not in control, that it's okay to not be perfect, and that I can't do everything.

~ Sandra

Stories

The Dragonfly Door

By Quincy Sakai

Natsuko sat outside on a large plain of cloud, absentmindedly watching a toy fly up and down, her little bamboo dragonfly. The bright red sun felt warm against her skin with the dragonfly fluttering to cover the light from her face every so often.

“Having fun there?” Natsuko flinched at the unexpected voice, causing the little dragonfly to tumble off the cloud.

“You messed me up...” she muttered to Ayame. She was a type of yokai, mythical creatures of many forms. Ayame raised an eyebrow, her fox shadow looming over Natsuko. “What?”

“A few spirits just arrived, I need some help performing the tea ceremonies.”

“I don’t have a choice, do I?”

“Nope. And they’re not going to wait there forever so let’s get moving on.”

Within the floating islands, there were four different chashitsu—or tea houses—where ceremonies were held for spirits to ascend into the afterlife. These tea houses laid on clouds above the city of yokai. This area was called Heiwa, and where Natsuko lived with Ayame.

Every now and then, the yokai would come to visit them. These supernatural creatures possessed different abilities. Some could speak while others were spirits of animals on Earth. If a yokai lived long enough, they could visit Earth, taking the form of a human. Natsuko often found herself envious of this ability, or really, any supernatural ability at all. She was probably the only human in all of Heiwa, yet the only one who wouldn’t have the chance to visit Earth.

At the chashitsu, Natsuko set the table and paid careful attention that each decoration was in its correct place. The floor was made of tatami straw mats and a low wooden table was set in the center of the room. At

last, an old woman arrived through the sliding doors of the temple, who Natsuko welcomed and sat across the table from her. As usual, Natsuko led the spirit through the different procedures. Every now and then she would catch a glance from the old lady.

At the very end of the ceremony, Natsuko looked at the guest’s face one last time—she carried the same strange expression. Her eyebrows were slightly furrowed and her mouth was slightly downturned, not in a way that made her look displeased, just...lost. An expression that intrigued her even though she had seen it many times—a face that knew the end was coming. Although she knew better, Natsuko couldn’t help but ask her something.

“Did you... have a good life?” Her voice came out meeker than intended, but the old lady still seemed to have heard and thought about this for a moment. Her mouth opened and closed a few times, before finally answering.

“It wasn’t perfect, but it was good enough.” This seemed to be enough for the guest, because soon after her gaze softened into a sort of weak smile. Knowing that even though there would be no more of life left, she found it in herself to be okay with that. With enough being said, the old lady stood up and exited the chashitsu. She faded away slowly, finally reaching the entrance where she disappeared into the afterlife. It was the most peaceful kind of ending because it was bittersweet. It was the act of letting go that not everyone could reach.

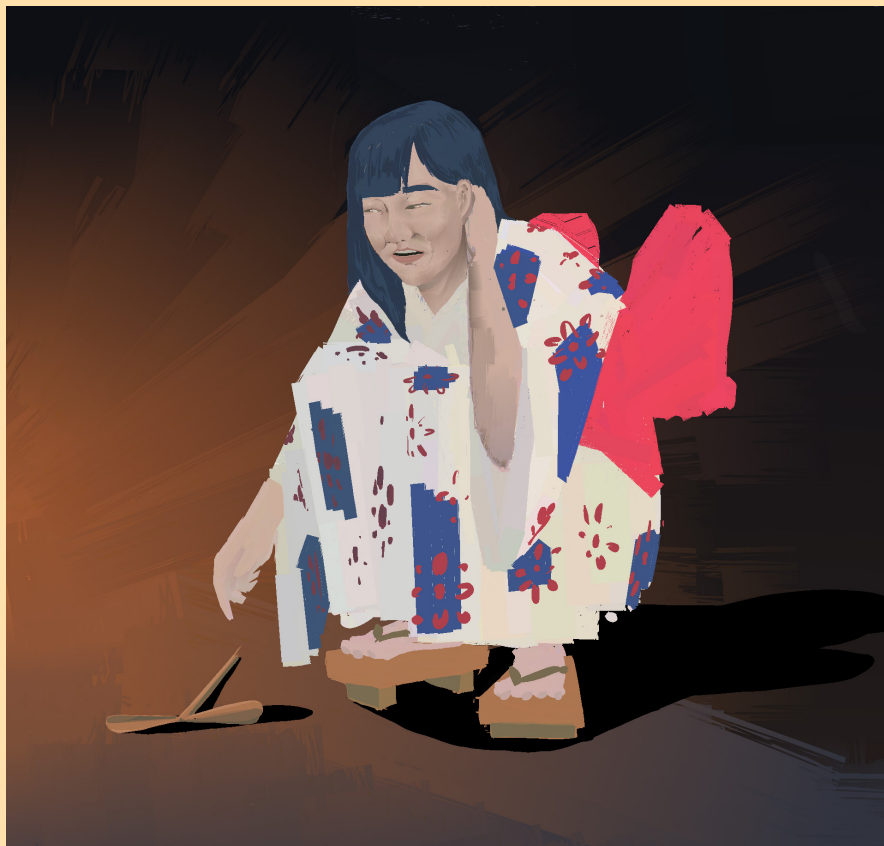
The silence was soon broken by light footsteps approaching her. Natsuko sensed Ayame behind her. “I wonder what it’s like to live on Earth,” she mused.

“You want to go that badly?”

“Of course I do. I...don’t belong here.”

Ayame sat beside her, both of them facing the empty end of the table. “You do, I know you might not





feel like it, but you're a part of this world just as much as I am."

"You're a kitsune," Ayame's fox tails were hidden at the moment, but that didn't mean they weren't there. "You're supposed to be here. I...I just appeared out of nowhere! Everyone has someone who looks like them here, a family." Natsuko looked away from her. "And you're

not my family. You just got stuck with me."

She immediately regretted her words, but she could already hear Ayame take a long sigh, letting the silence enter the room.

Later that day after finishing with the spirits, Natsuko climbed down to the yokai city to retrieve her

bamboo dragonfly. And admittedly, to keep her mind off of what she had said earlier.

Rather than streets, the city had wide rivers with elevated sidewalks on each side. Small houses lined the streets, with floating lanterns lighting up the area.

"Natsuko!" She turned around to see Matsu, the forest spirit. He was riding in a boat being rowed by a cloaked yokai.

"Hi Matsu! Have you seen a bamboo dragonfly? It's small and light brown-ish. Kinda like this—" She tried to use her hands to resemble the toy.

"No, but I'll keep an eye out for it."

"Thanks," she continued to search after waving her friend goodbye.

After some time, she was still unsuccessful in finding the bamboo dragonfly, but she wound up in front of a door with a dragonfly crest on it. There were three dragonfly drawings inside a circle, their tails all pointing towards the center.

Huh, that's a coincidence.

Somehow, she found herself turning the knob. Light spilled through, causing Natsuko to squint her eyes to fully take in the view. Her eyes began to adjust as she stared. There were bright lights and tall buildings, unlike ones she'd ever seen. The tiled walkways wound

around the city with the main streets having a broad street where cars drove past. She remembered the stories yokai would tell her about a place that looked like the human world where she was born.

Was this it? She stepped through the door, and then took one tentative step after another. Natsuko began to venture into the different stores and crevices of the city. She only noticed how much time had passed when the sky became dark, a loud crackle could be heard from far away. They were colorful and bright, then scattering into the dark sky.

As she watched fireworks crack and fly into the sky with amazement, Natsuko fell back onto a ledge to watch.

That was when her eyes caught on a little boy with his dad. They were also watching the fireworks, laughing together. The father

handed the son a sparkler, drawing all sorts of shapes carelessly into the air. Why did this seem familiar? Surely she had never seen these people before.

Natsuko wasn't sure when she left the ledge to walk back into the streets of the town. There was a certain smell in the air. A smell of smoke that burned her lungs and a hint of grilled meat. The smoke danced down the street as well, setting in like a light fog drawing her in and blurring her sight. The fresh smell of yakitori was a new experience, but not unfamiliar. It was exactly how Ayame's clothes smelled when she brought it home for Natsuko once. As she wandered further into the street, she was met with the stands grilling chicken skewers. There were people all around her, yet it felt like she was completely alone. After all this time she still just wanted one thing—to belong. And now that she was at the place she always dreamed to be—

Her foot hit against something small.

The bamboo dragonfly.

Natsuko hadn't thought about it in so long. This little thing was so

important to her because Ayame had given it to her as a birthday gift. Even now when she looked at the dragonfly she was reminded of Ayame's quiet nature and the way the edges of her mellow expression would occasionally curl into a smile. The way that she always tried to make Natsuko happy, even though the one thing she wanted was the one thing Ayame could not give her.

Looking down at the bamboo dragonfly, she knew the name of the pit inside her stomach—homesickness. But a different type than the one she used to feel back in Heiwa. This one was much stronger. A sickness tied to real memories and nostalgia, not a reverie. That boy with his father—could that have been her? Or maybe, she already was. Had the father handed the boy the sparkler just like Ayame had handed her the bamboo dragonfly?

Still, it was a rare sight to see such a world that was so different yet so similar to her own. As the last fireworks went off, she took one last look at the star-decorated sky and went back through the streets and through the door, to the land of flying temples and yokai.

Home.

I *Killed* Carl Jung

DJ Uno

“When Nietzsche said ‘God is dead,’ he uttered a truth which is valid for the greater part of Europe. People were influenced by it not because he said so, but because it stated a widespread psychological fact.” - Carl Jung, CW 11.

See, this is why I killed him. Doesn't he kind of just sound like an obnoxious, unlikable person?



There is a big house inside my head with dozens of rooms, maybe even hundreds. Even after all the time I've spent wandering through the halls, I still haven't explored them all. At the end of one long hallway there is a door made of heavy, dark oak wood. It opens, revealing a room dimly lit by a stone fireplace. Tall bookshelves line the walls, the faded books coated in a layer of dust. The floor is wood as well, but mostly concealed by an ornate Persian rug, red fabric with gold trim and a fancy floral pattern. A grandiose desk sits on the other end of the room, silhouetted from behind by a grimy old window. Amidst the books and papers strewn across the desk, I see the shadow of an old man.

The man looks up from his work. He's wearing a white-collared shirt with a gray vest on top, the chain of a gold pocket watch snaking out between the buttons. He is tall, balding but with a trimmed white beard crowding in around his lips. His eyes are sharp and piercing, the brows narrow and suspicious, and his gaze flicks up to examine me.

He's Caucasian. Why is it that so many of these rooms are filled with old, white men, anyway?

"Um, sorry," I stutter, feeling like I'm intruding even though, actually, it's my house. "Who are you?"

He inspects me in silence, then leans forward, resting his chin on bony, steepled fingers. "You may call me the Professor. Please, come in. Sit."

I walk across the room and sit in a tiny wooden chair that's way too small for me, facing the Professor across

his desk. He gazes down at me, and it feels like he's inside my head, which, of course, he is. The silence ferments unsettlingly for a few minutes. The sweat on the back of my shirt is making it stick to the chair, and I anxiously wonder if I'm supposed to be saying something.

Finally, the Professor clears his throat, and says, "You are more comfortable using logic than listening to your emotions, hm? Yes, and you tend to get lost in your thoughts, and prefer staying inside rather than being around other people. Hmmm...let's see now...I would have to say you must be an INTP. A Logician. People like you have an enormous capability to take in information, and synthesize it into complex systems. Some might say you're more like a robot than a human; but who says that has to be a bad thing? The weakness of human emotion just doesn't apply to you like it does to everyone else. With your incredible mind, if you train it properly, you can one day come to know all that there is to know."

I sit listening in wonder. His words seem to flow into an empty region of myself, filling up some vacant receptacle in my stomach. It feels so comforting, so fulfilling to have four simple letters I can hold on to that encapsulate who I am. All the things that I thought were wrong with me, all the ways I'd failed to measure up in the past, seem much less painful with the knowledge that there are others with this label on them, just like me.

A sudden twinge of guilt pangs at my chest. There's someone else in the house, who lives in one of the rooms upstairs, that promised to fill my feeling of

identity, and that He was transforming me into a new and perfect creation. But His work has been taking forever! I need an identity now, because lately I've been meeting people who are so unique and interesting and confident in themselves, and I feel so boring by comparison.

I come back to visit the Professor the next day, and the next, and keep coming back for months. I sit at his desk in my tiny chair, and he teaches me all about his classification system, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. I learn more and more about myself every day, the things I can and can't do, the types of people I'm compatible with, and those I just won't get along with. Slowly, I learn to love this new identity I've been given.

I still go to the room upstairs to visit my friend every once in a while, but I don't tell Him about the Professor. He wouldn't understand it, He's always talking about each of His creations being perfectly unique, no two exactly alike. One day, during a visit to my friend upstairs, He stops me in the middle of our conversation. "I think it would be good for you to leave the house for a little while," He says. "Go outside, see what's out there. I know how much you love learning; maybe you'll find something new!"

I reluctantly comply, and pack my bags. I get on a bus, and find myself sitting next to another guy, a Chinese-American boy about my age, with a wide grin always plastered across his face. "Ah, you know about the Myers-Briggs?" he asks me. "I took a test online once. I'm an INFJ!"

It takes me about fifteen minutes of talking to him

to decide that he's wrong. He's loud, overbearing, and always trying to start a conversation when I'm trying to sleep. He can't entertain complex logical systems the way I can, oftentimes getting impatient and resorting to simpler conclusions. I smirk at him, filled with condescension towards this boy's lack of self-awareness. We ride together for what feels like forever, and eventually he realizes I'm not looking for a conversation and falls into silence. The next couple hours are much more peaceful, and I'm free to retreat back into my head and wander through the halls.

We arrive at our destination, I'm not even sure where, but I'm forced to share a bunk bed with the boy from the bus. I groan inwardly. It's late, though, and I go straight to bed without a word to my new roommate.

I dream that I'm on a tiny fishing boat in the middle of the ocean. There are four other guys in the boat with me, laughing and having a good time. I sigh, and look out across the water bored out of my mind. I squint at the line where the water meets the sky, and see a great darkness suddenly rushing up out of it. Soon it has enveloped the sky, a huge thunderstorm that covers up the sun, and the waves are a hundred feet tall on every side. Rain is pouring down on us, and my companions are panicking, desperately trying to paddle against the current.

Through the rain and wind, I see a man in shining white robes walking on the water towards us. Everyone else steps out of the boat onto the waves to walk towards him. He grabs each one by the hand, pulling them to safety close by his side, and soon I am the only one left in the boat.

I try to stand up, but I can't move my legs. I cry out to my companions, and one of them turns around. It's my roommate, the boy from the bus. I scream and wave my hands, but he only looks confused. He's looking as hard as he can, but it's like his gaze goes right through me. I'm invisible.

Desperately, I try to drag myself over the edge of the boat with my hands, and splash into the water. I'm sinking, and the bright light from the man's robes fades until finally, my body comes to rest on the ocean floor. I'm completely alone. I dig my fingers into the cold sand, and feel them brush against metal. I lift a small object out of the ground, and grope it to find its shape: a small revolver. Perhaps this is the only way out of here, I think. I lift the gun up against my head, and --

I open my eyes. Sunlight streams through a window beside me. I can breathe again. I rub my eyes, then stare at the underside of the top bunk bed above me. After a few minutes of hesitation, I get up to peek past the edge of the bunk. My roommate is already gone, though, the sheets neatly folded back into place. I sigh, and sit back down on my bed.

A few days later, I'm back on the bus, ready to go home. I make sure to be the last one on board so I can find a seat by myself. I stare out the window the entire time.

When I get back to my house, I hurl my bag onto the floor of the entryway, and go straight to the Professor's study. I knock on the solid oak door. "Come in," he says.

I walk up to his desk, but don't sit on my tiny chair. "Didn't have a good time?" he asks snidely. "Figures, after all, you are an--"

I snatch the revolver out of my pocket, point it square against his forehead, and pull the trigger.

BANG! His body hits the floor, blood spilling out onto the red and gold carpet, and I drop the gun and run upstairs in tears.

So, that's the story of why I killed Carl Jung. His body is still there, in case you're wondering, in that dusty old room in the house inside my head. I hear his ghost murmuring sometimes, whispering things to try to get me to place people in boxes and neat categories. And though he once really did help me connect with people, and to understand myself and others better, I've decided to let that room in my house remain unoccupied, for now.

I'm beginning to see the very tiny beginnings of a new mindset I think God is leading me into – one in which I never completely understand the people around me, or even myself. Though it's frightening sometimes to live with so much left unknown, I'm confident that He's making something new in me. And sometimes, in order for something new to come, something old needs to die.

Home: *Past, Present, & Future*

By Jason Ashimoto | Senior Pastor

My home is both old and new. Four decades ago, my grandparents moved to Monterey Park into what would eventually become their final house. With both of my parents working full-time jobs, I spent most of my childhood in this house and attended school nearby. As a child, I remember watching my grandmother in the kitchen peeling apples to make her famous apple strudel (semi-sweet with a dusting of cinnamon sugar on top) while she hummed a pleasant tune to herself. I remember following my grandfather around the garage and yard, making toy guns out of scrap pieces of wood and PVC pipe, while he tended to the Japanese cucumbers in his garden. During the summer, my mom would drop me off every day before she went to work. I would call up a friend down the street and play with our Star Wars action figures in the front yard for hours – pausing only when my grandmother brought us push-pop ice cream for a mid-afternoon snack. Most of my younger years were spent here in the company of my maternal grandparents. After they passed away, I moved into this house at the age of 30, thinking it might be a temporary situation until I got married. After Fara and I got engaged, we decided to stay. Now with our daughters, this has become a generational home for our family.



The contents of our house straddles about 100 years. Lego sets and barbie dolls sit on a steamer trunk turned coffee table that my grandmother took on a boat to Japan as a young woman. My new electric drill sits next to my grandfather's old one in the garage on a workbench that he built. Fara uses my grandmother's vintage nut grinder to chop walnuts for cookies and treats she bakes for our girls. There is a 1944 Denver Post newspaper about a US bombing raid in Tokyo framed next to our internet router in the guest room. My grandmother took her final breath in the same room that her great granddaughters sleep in today. The old and the new mix together, giving a sense of the past, present, and future of our family in one home. I love this characteristic of our house – it feels like we're a part of something bigger than ourselves... like we're just one small part of a larger story.

I see our church in the same way. *Evergreen is a home we inherit.* Our spiritual ancestors from Evergreen's past have handed their faith down to us. It is a tremendous privilege to be entrusted with this church's legacy as the caretakers of its rich history and faith. We continue to honor our congregation's cloud

of witnesses through the stories we pass on (such as those about our congregations incarceration in WWII) and the traditions we practice (such as our mochi-making and lunar new year celebrations). Secondly, *Evergreen is a home for the present.* Even as we approach our centennial church birthday in a few years, it's important that we don't feel like an aging church. Our technological changes, the topics we discuss in service, and our response to the pandemic show me that God's blessing on us has been the ability to adapt and undergo transformation to continually renew and refresh our ministry. Lastly, *Evergreen is a home for the future.* While we cherish and honor our past, we also want to embrace God's future. Our journey of LGBTQ inclusion and the culture we create as a place for theological diversity is one way to follow God's path forward for this congregation. It creates a space where future generations of Evergreeners can feel God's embrace and care, in an increasingly splintered world. I think this is one of the unique characteristics of our church home – the mix of our faith family's history and future... legacy and rebirth... that threads God's movement across our congregational life from 1925 through tomorrow.

