My boat has struck something in the depths, something big.
Yet nothing happens! Nothing . . . only stillness and waves.

Nothing has changed—or has everything changed,
and here we are, in the middle of our new life?
Slender Mariposa, photograph by John Thompson, Professor of Historical Theology and Gaylen and Susan Byker Professor of Reformed Theology, 2018. Growing abundantly in the burn zone after Southern California’s 2017 La Tuna Fire, this flower conveys hope and growth in the midst of destruction. “Mariposas commonly explode in numbers after a fire,” says Dr. Thompson. “On the day I photographed this, I saw perhaps 450 mariposas in bloom in the charred Verdugo Mountains; this was just one of them.” See more of Dr. Thompson’s photography on p. 99.
In memory of beloved colleague David Kiefer because there is nothing so disruptive as death, and no time when the promise of resurrection is more precious.

++ Our illustrator, Denise Klitsie, recently kept vigil for her dying mother while working on illustrations for this magazine’s theology section. On the wall was a tapestry depicting a sparrow flying through an idealized landscape. When Connie Sherman died, we added a grace note to one of the illustrations in her honor in the form of a sparrow. Just as we were going to press, the Fuller community suffered the sudden death of registrar and Greek professor David Kiefer, whom we were privileged to work alongside for over 40 years. Now, throughout this magazine (which has been disrupted even in its design), the sparrow can be found: a small bird that often symbolizes hard work, community, and joy and is characterized by its ubiquity—the thought that it is always with us. For more, see p. 97.
Among my teenage instincts about the Christian faith was the sense that it was an elaborate religious scheme for cosmic control. At that point, I was an outsider to the faith that felt to me like a form of social domination within which the appeal, bland and insincere. I don’t remember being skeptical of the earnestness of Christianity I knew, but I did have the general sense that Christianity, with all its norms of its days, and the people he attracted to him did not seem to fit the mainstream, but rather were outsiders for whom Jesus was a disruptive thing I was searching for, not that I had any interest in anyone or anything else but me taking or exercising control of my life. After all, I was just entering college! As I found myself drawn again and again to reading the Gospels, I was continually surprised by Jesus’ disruptive call for people to live as his disciples. Lo que ellas transmitieron fue una atención meticulosa al orden de cosas pequeñas hacer ciertas cosas de cierta manera y evitar otras cosas al hacerlas. Esta me transmitió un mundo en blanco y negro, un túnel con bordes duros y poca vida. Si José dijo era verdad, y así lo es: lo que los evangelios presentaban sobre él, entonces el túnel que estaba viendo parecía una definición de la cultura circundante. Por el contrario, la enseñanza de Jesús parecía abrir el universo entero.

Cuando finalmente di el paso de confianza y se guió a Jesús, creí que sería un viaje de disrupción. Y lo hice sólo. Un descubrimiento adicional en mi vida temprana como seguidor de Jesús fue que convergía en una constante de dissect myself to the core, so that I could have the opportunity to see better the cultural context in which Jesus was operating.

To better understand Jesus’ role in the New Testament, I felt that it was important to read this text. I believe that the context of Jesus’ life and message is best understood through the New Testament. In my experience, Jesus was not just a historical figure who lived and died, but a figure who continues to inspire and challenge believers today.

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As Fuller faces a time of unprecedented disrup-
tion, these are among the theological, per-
sonal, social, and systemic themes we need
to keep in focus. If we measure change starting
and ending with its most personal implica-
tions, we are likely more deeply impacted in dis-
traction and fear. But if we deny its personal
implications, we are probably in denial. Turning
this around, however, if we only consider the
ways disruption is experienced in individ-
ual impact, then we are likely to find ourselves
worse off, victims, and suffering in a sea of
larger, impersonal institutional forces.

We have written elsewhere (fuller.edu/future)
about some of the many internal and exter-
nal forces at play in affecting Fuller now and
to face its future. Out of those discussions,
written inside much larger national and inter-
national disruptions in cultures, institutions,
and alliances. We are living at a time when
it seems entire landscapes are chang-
ing. Even institutions with vast endowments
like protective ecosystems are feeling the tidal
waves of change affecting higher education
and theological education in particular. Even
more so does a school like Fuller, which has
a modest endowment that currently provides
it to be in a little less competition with the
storms of education, culture, and church.

We are remembering that we are part of a
much, much greater and grander story than
“the latest technology.” We are confident in the
depth and wide purposes of God, in which
technological change, for example, is
neither a shock nor a fixation to the God who
loves us for who we are. And we want to
lean into the technological realities before us
in order to be as effectively incarnational as
Dios no se detiene al ofrecer una educación for-
motiva y equidad. Los cambios que Fuller
está haciendo son centrados en el propósito de
la iglesia de Jesucristo y el futuro de la
humanidad. En estos próximos tres años,
ratio para nuestra educación de más grande
y más justa inclusión y equidad. Los cambios que
Fuller está experimentando e impactan a nivel
institucional, comunitario y personal. Nuestra
disrupción institucional, comunitaria y
personal se está traduciendo en la transformación
de viejas, ya sea en Pomona o en todo nuestro país
y el mundo.

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in order to be as effectively incarnational as
culture that God will prevail in working his purposes out.

James 4:14 says “You know that everything is but that they are not going to be able to
because they waited too long. God often says,
when everything is but that they are not going to be able to
because they waited too long. God often says,
You are living at a time when it seems entire landscapes are chang-
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culture that God will prevail in working his purposes out.

We are remembering that the church of Jesus
Christ built on a rock of faith, is not a
cultural movement, and communal, and mission disruption.
Deci-
sions we make about all and any of Fuller’s
mission, purpose, degrees, and institutes need to be
refined and oriented to this great purpose.
The architectural expression of our mission needs
to reflect our holistic, theological perspective on
us so they reflect and strengthen that mission.
Our setting in Pomona has been a motivating
building, written inside much larger national
and international disruptions in cultures, in-
stutions, nations, and alliances. We are living at a
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ing. Even institutions with vast endowments
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culture that God will prevail in working his purposes out.
Disruption is not new to Fuller: the ethos of the seminary has been influenced by it throughout the life of the institution, from its beginning. While maintaining an unswerving commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the intention to become a convening place of different points of view has built Fuller into the largest multidenominational seminary in the world. Fuller’s trajectory has widened in 70 years from a small set of distinctions to an increasing diversity of denominations, countries, theological perspectives, inclusion and equity for women and persons of color, and more—with the ongoing intention to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly in our pursuit of knowing God.

Perhaps the most pronounced of these disruptions—the decision to move Fuller’s campus to Pomona—was set in motion by the Board of Trustees after much deliberation on May 21, 2018, when the vote was confirmed to sell the historic Pasadena campus. At that meeting, a poem by Wendell Berry was read that compares the life of faith to walking toward the sun: a light so bright that it obscures and reveals. Looking back, “the very light / That blinded us shows us the way we came,” the poet says, orienting us toward an unknown future. We, “By blessing brightly lit, keep going toward / The blessed light that yet to us is dark.” That dual movement between uncertainty and grace is familiar territory to Fuller.

Looking backward can stabilize concerns about a future we could not have anticipated. By remembering the vision and risk, passion and mistakes, joy and courage of those who have given their lives to building the seminary, we can see the grace that lit their own steps—and ours in this new season. It is in this spirit that we begin this issue on “disruption.” On the following pages you’ll find three letters from President Mark Labberton, originally posted online at fuller.edu/future, that discuss the seminary’s future and decision to move to Pomona. Interwoven with these are brief memories of a few critical moments in Fuller’s history, to remind us that, as we take this next faithful step, we must follow an institutional tradition of facing disruption with creativity and conviction.

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While the photographs at right were taken in two different cities, the familiar mountains and palm trees at Fuller’s Pasadena campus (upper image) and the seminary’s future home in Pomona (lower image) give a sense of resonance and perspective around the historic move.
LETTER ONE  MAY 3, 2018

Dear Fuller Alumni and Friends,

The world has changed with a whirlwind of change and uncertainty. It is ongoing formation, greater competency, wider community, and deeper wisdom. This is why we launched FULLER studio two years ago, and are now developing the Fuller Leadership Platform in order to offer new access to faith and ministry resources for learners all over the world.

A whirlwind is full of disruption and opportunity. Every day our minds are virtually the same. This is an example of trying to be discerning in the midst of the whirlwind of technology.

We want you to know that after careful thought and prayer by our faculty and trustees, nearly all of our non-clinical master's degrees will be fully available online starting this fall. This flexibility provides students the opportunity to study entirely online, entirely on campus, or through a combination that meets their needs. That is an example of the whirlwind of educational change to which we are seeking to respond wisely and effectively.

Here’s something else I wonder if you know: increasing numbers of people are coming to us wanting the formation of biblical and theological scholarship, but not wanting a graduate degree. They may already have a theology degree, but they want more spiritual formation. They may be already in ministry and want some theological resources for strengthening their ministry. With vocations in churches, education, business, arts, or nonprofit leadership, they want meaningful engagement with resources that will deepen their spiritual lives, theological interpretation, and leadership development. They don’t want and don’t need any more degrees. What they do want is ongoing formation, greater competency, wider community, and deeper wisdom. This is why we launched FULLER studio two years ago, and are now developing the Fuller Leadership Platform in order to offer new access to faith and ministry resources for learners all over the world.

P.S. As we assess all that this “whirlwind” will mean for Fuller, it’s important to me that you are informed. Please visit fuller.edu for regular updates.

Will you please pray for Fuller as we seek God in a time of discernment regarding how to be wise, bold, and faithful in such a time as this? Our current Fuller community has been in this prayerful mode for over a year, and we believe some clarity is emerging. I look forward to sharing more when I write next because I want you to know what Fuller is doing and why. After all, you are part of us and we are part of you.

Anticipating the faithfulness of God,
Mark Labberton

Fuller Seminary’s founding faculty and leadership
stand at the Owens Estate, the original
site planned for the campus. Left to right:
Harold John Ockenga, Charles E. Fuller, Everett Harman, Harold Lindgren, Wilbur Smith, Arnold Granzon, Carl Henry (c. 1947)

“Millionaire Mile” in 1947
Estate on Pasadena’s

Founding Faculty and Leadership

Fuller Seminary

Promoted Fuller Seminary

on his radio program and

established faculty from around

the nation. When the city

refused to change the

zoning to allow teaching

at the Owens Estate,

Charles’s son, Dan Fuller,

stood at its driveway

entrance in the morning

of the first convocation,

directing the 39 new

students to Lake Avenue

Congregational Church,

where classes were held

for the next six years. “We

members of that first class

will never quite forget the

incongruity of hearing

Carl Henry’s insights into

the nature of religious

knowledge while sitting

on kindergarten chairs,”

Dan remembers (Glebe

Winds a Mighty Voice, 1980).

It wasn’t until 1951 that

the seminary bought new

property a few blocks east

of Pasadena City Hall where

President Harold John

Ockenga put it, the seminary

could operate “in the midst

of the thorns and thistles of

this learning life” (Reforming

Fundamentalism, 131).

Visit https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/communities.html to explore more Fuller history.

Fuller Seminary Archivist Alyson Thomas

Special thanks to Hubbard Library archivist Alyson Thomas for her research and photography help in this section.
Students visit the Cravens Estate to study for their courses that, due to zoning complications, were held 3.5 miles away at Lake Avenue Congregational Church (c. 1947–1953).

Years later, Fuller’s campus moved to the location where it would spend the next seven decades. Above, bulldozers bulldoze part of Oakland Avenue to create Arol Burns Mall and what became affectionately known as “the Elbow,” the unofficial entrance into Fuller Seminary’s Pasadena campus at the corner of Oakland and Ford Place.
Dear Fuller Alumni and Friends,

In my recent letter to you I wrote about the whirlwind of change in higher education, and the ways in which Fuller has been providing theological study in an era of profound disruption. At a time when some seminaries are closing their doors, I wanted to expand on my conviction that the spiritual formation our scholarship cultivates—in classic as well as innovative forms—is needed now more than ever. Fuller is capable of designing the path ahead; in fact, we are innovating to craft new learning technologies to expand our traditional degrees without compromising our mission. Charles Fuller was an internationally known radio evangelist who started Fuller was an internationally known radio evangelist who started the seminary: since then—from the studio, to campus decades. The value of a Fuller education far exceeds its price. Students past and present, from all three of our schools, confirm that Fuller has provided education and formation for lives of leadership and action that matter in the world. Whether we are educating for classic Christian ministries or providing formation for graduates serving outside the church, we undergird these callings with deep theological degrees we have offered for decades.

“When I was invited to come to California to join the Fuller faculty, I knew that it was a body of unequaled evangelical scholarship with a mission to shape ministers and missionaries and theologians for the 21st century. I didn’t really know how important the work is that Fuller also does in resourcing people to be therapists or musicians or movie-makers who are not merely Christian on Sundays, but who want their Monday to Saturdayocations to be shaped by the Scriptures. I am thrilled to be engaged in this important work.”

John Goldingay, PhD, David Allen Hubbard Professor Emeritus of Old Testament

Rev. Dr. Brenda Saltz McNeill, Associate Professor and Director of Recognition Studies, Seattle Pacific University

In the coming year, the new Fuller Leadership Platform will be available to a much wider array of learners seeking personal, academic, professional, and spiritual formation. Since 2018 FULLER studio has been delivering our scholarly resources to a wider audience—millions of viewers whose primary interest is an enriched spiritual life.

“The graduate theological education I received at Fuller was absolutely life-changing. It prepared me for ministry as a speaker, author, thought leader, and professor of Recognition Studies. I am confident that Fuller will continue to prepare men and women from every tribe and nation to address the complex issues facing our world.”

Pat Gelsinger, CEO of VMware

“Fuller Seminary, which under former President Charles Fuller, has only strengthened regarding their commitment to be a ‘good global citizen’. Fuller has constantly sought to adapt to shifting needs without losing its biblical grounding—shaping the kinds of courageous, innovative, and faithful evangelical leaders we’re going to need more than ever.”

Peter K. Kim, PhD, President/CEO of Centurion Foundation

As CEO of one of the great high-tech innovative companies, I live daily in the need to innovate or die. Fuller has constantly sought to bring an innovative spirit and deep theological scholarship as it equips influencers of all kinds. Fuller has always known how to adapt to shifting needs without losing its biblical grounding—shaping the kinds of courageous, innovative, and faithful evangelical leaders we’re going to need more than ever.”

Pat Gelsinger, CEO of VMware

“Fuller, an institution devoted to developing leaders for the church. Post-1960s, a few years after Fuller Seminary was founded, I was working with a small group of people who were seeking to learn the truths, values, and character of Christ and to be formed into leaders who could embody these things as an institution. I am excited about Fuller’s future, as it continually innovates to launch future generations of leaders and effective Christlike witnesses in a fast-changing and increasingly globalized world.”

Tom Lin, President, CEO, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship; Fuller trustee and alumnus

Our trustees have been weighing both the disruptive whirlwind and our call to action with special intensity over the last year of board meetings, town halls, countless private conversations, faculty and staff meetings sending us in whole seasons of prayer and fasting as a community—we have been listening deeply to students, alumni, faculty, donors, concerned leaders, advisors, and friends of Fuller. We are united in seeking God’s wisdom at this very important intersection. I promise to write again shortly after the next trustee meetings, which are taking place May 20–21, so you will hear as soon as possible the next steps we plan to take for Fuller’s future. In the meantime, please join us in prayer for wisdom and God’s leading. I am thankful for you and anticipating God’s faithfulness together.

Sebastian Kim, PhD, Assistant Provost for the Korean Studies Center

Such a reinvention also allows us to address institutional weaknesses. As one student put it recently: “It’s amazing what a whirlwind picks up and exposes.” Grateful as I am for this letter’s glowing endorsements, I must also acknowledge criticisms of insufficient financial rigor, broken promises, implicit biases, and systemic injustices. Addressing these challenges must be part of the way forward. We will always live somewhere between the concrete and the aspirational, but this season of tumult gives us a continuing chance to be bold in crafting a future where the theology we study is fully embodied in our life together.

Oscar García-Johnson, PhD, Docema Asociado, Centro Latinoamericano

“Fuller, an institution devoted to developing leaders for the church. Post-1960s, a few years after Fuller Seminary was founded, I was working with a small group of people who were seeking to learn the truths, values, and character of Christ and to be formed into leaders who could embody these things as an institution. I am excited about Fuller’s future, as it continually innovates to launch future generations of leaders and effective Christlike witnesses in a fast-changing and increasingly globalized world.”

Tom Lin, President/CEO, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship; Fuller trustee and alumnus

Please visit fuller.edu/future for updates.

...
The Pasadena Community Counseling Center (top, pictured c. 1964) was the precursor to the School of Psychology. In 1986, the school received its own home on the corner of North Oakland and Walnut, with the relocation of Stephen Hall and construction of Travis Auditorium and the School of Psychology building.

**FOUNDING A SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY**

“Black Saturday could be called Good Saturday,” H. Newton Malony, professor emeritus of psychology, says, since on that 1962 day Fuller’s trustees decided to pursue establishing a school of psychology (Psychology and the Cross, 15; see p. 24 for more about “Black Saturday”).

Yet some theology faculty argued that importing an entirely new discipline through the new school would distract students from confessional faith and the life of the church. The proposed school also uncovered new thorny questions of how to understand the connective tissues between psychology and theology. Some believed that Fuller should promote an “overlay” approach, with students taking psychology classes at a neighboring school and overlaying a theological framework from seminary courses. Others suggested a unique “theo-psychology” that could replace psychology as an academic discipline. Still others suggested an integration model that would emerge as faculty and students weave their Christian commitments and therapeutic practices together—an approach that disrupted churches who were suspicious of therapy and an academic discipline often dismissive of faith. Siding with this third way, President Hubbard said, “We must launch this school on a scope of largeness,” and in 1964–1965, with the vital support of C. Davis and Annette Weyerhaeuser, the Pasadena Community Counseling Center followed by the School of Psychology were established, founded on a principle of thoughtful integration that continues today.
Over the last month, I’ve sent several letters describing the whirlwind of disruption that has upended graduate seminary education in the last few years, and the ways we have tried to shift those g-forces to the advantage of Fuller’s core mission. I’m writing now to tell you about a decision that has just been made (one that, amazingly, was first considered 50 years ago). After a long and careful process, our Board of Trustees has made the decision that, for the vibrant future of Fuller’s mission, we need to leave our campus in Pasadena and move to a new location. Our home for the last 70 years will make our home for the next 70 years possible. That’s where this letter is going—from that bittersweet decision to what I now see as an inspired way forward.

Let me go back to a time earlier in our deliberations, when the trustees gathered late one night on the mall of the Pasadena campus, recalling memories that stretched back almost to the beginning. My own thoughts wandered to my years as a student, long before it was imaginable that I might serve as president during a time of such radical transformation. Like all stories of transformation, this one requires humility and imagination from our trustees, senior leadership, faculty, staff, students, and friends of Fuller. Though we have taken bold steps forward, we are convinced that theological education is just as necessary today as ever, and knowing we must tackle huge risks and have a bold vision in order to transform is unsettling, yet it is also essential. Still, we have taken careful time to come to a decision, holding rumors and speculation and even our own impatience at bay.

As with all stories of transformation, God has been leading. Yes, it has required boldness from our trustees, humility and imagination from our faculty, dogged loyalty from our staff and administrators, honest dialogue with our students, and prayerful trust from our alumni and friends. But let it be enough for now to say that our beginnings in Pomona may look much like our start so many years ago in Pasadena. While leaving will be difficult for many of us, myself included, I am confident that this is the right move to carry us into the decades to come. The sale and move will provide:

- a sizable increase to our endowment, putting Fuller on firmer ground for the next century
- the elimination of all debt
- a significantly lower cost of living for faculty, staff, and students
- seed funding for state-of-the-art facilities designed for both traditional and embedded learning and smarter centralized administration
- a new era of ministry, grounded in a new city, and extending wherever we as Fuller—anywhere in the world.

Seeing and anticipating God’s faithfulness,

Mark Labberton
P.S. Your feedback is very important. Please check for updates, ask questions, submit ideas, and find answers to FAQ on our web pages dedicated to this transformation at fuller.edu/future. There you will also find a sign-up form where you can give us your email address—our preferred way of communicating.

Thank you.

LETTER THREE MAY 21, 2018

Dear Fuller Community and Friends,

Thank you.

Charles E. Fuller
President

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Charles E. Fuller announces New School of World Mission

NAME CHANGE

After September 11, 2001, Fuller’s School of World Mission was becoming more passionate about interfaith dialogue and engaging the Muslim world. “We were expanding our efforts in this area as a result of such increasing importance,” Doug McConnell, the dean at the time, remembers. At the same time, changes in government policies and visa requirements made it difficult for Muslims to arrive to reach the communities where they were called to minister, and countries wary of foreign influence would deport them as soon as they saw the word “World Mission” on their diplomas. In many cases, alumni faced threats to their lives, and in one instance, an alumnus was encouraged to start a training institute in an Arab country, only to have it revoked when he submitted his credentials and given 24 hours to leave. Changing the name of the school was both a way to respond to the changing world and part of an unexpected identity crisis. After many months of faculty gatherings and deliberations, the school reached a decision to change its name to the “School of Intercultural Studies” in 2003. Many graduates were elated and asked for ways to change their diplomas; others felt the name change would undermine the mission of the school. “We felt like we needed a name that would engage with the social contexts that people were going into,” McConnell remembers. “It was an adaptive change to the world we live in.”
The McAlister Library, remodeled in 1977 (pictured top left and bottom left), was augmented 31 years later, in 2008, by the David Allan Hubbard Library.

(Recognize the individuals in the top photo? Email us at editor@fuller.edu)
With political and theological issues pressing in on all sides, the trustees’ “ten-year planning conference” of December 1962 quickly fractured into what is now known as “Black Saturday.” For years, debates about scriptural inerrancy and the identity of the next president fomented, boiling over in this trustee meeting into a struggle for the seminary’s future. With President Harold Okinaga leaving, is it possible that one trustee walked out after bitter arguing—so heated that founding faculty member Harold Lindquist wrote a scathing chapter on the seminary in his 1976 book Battle of the Bible. Hubbard responded with a special issue of Theology, News & Notes, clarifying Fuller’s position regarding Scripture as “the only infallible rule of faith and practice.” Hubbard wrote, “None of us denies the infallibility of the Bible; none of us claims the infallibility of our faculty. We are not perfect. We do not have the absolute authority that God has over our lives. We are not God’s instruments.”

On April 26, 1976, six women staged a two-day sit-in at Provost Glenn Barker’s office to pressure the seminary to support female students in a more direct way. While women could attend some seminary courses as early as 1948 and had gained increased access to degree programs over the following years, by the mid-1970s, women were still vastly underrepresented across the seminary community. Looking back on the sit-in, participant Karen Bums McGill ‘74 says, “Today we have an illustrious panel of women faculty at Fuller. Then, we were looking for full-time, tenure-track women faculty in the School of Theology as there were none at that time, and for a new office that could be a nurturing advocacy for women students. We weren’t going to leave Dr. Barker’s office until there was action toward that,” she remembers. “It was not a tense experience for me, and he was amenable to what we were demanding. We stayed until we heard from him that this was going to happen.” Soon after, the seminary responded by establishing the Office of Women’s Concerns under the leadership of Libbie Patterson. Only two years later, the seminary and the Evangelical Women’s Caucus cosponsored the “Women and the Missouri Synod” conference that over 800 women from around the world attended. “We made it clear that women are welcome, and they started to show up,” the late trustee Max De Pree remembers. “That was the point that founding faculty and trustees left in the fallout, and he was amenable to what we were demanding. We stayed until we heard from him that this was going to happen.” Soon after, the seminary responded by establishing the Office of Women’s Concerns under the leadership of Libbie Patterson. Only two years later, the seminary and the Evangelical Women’s Caucus cosponsored the “Women and the Missouri Synod” conference that over 800 women from around the world attended. “We made it clear that women are welcome, and they started to show up,” the late trustee Max De Pree remembers. “That was the point that founding faculty and trustees left in the fallout, and he was amenable to what we were demanding. We stayed until we heard from him that this was going to happen.” Soon after, the seminary responded by establishing the Office of Women’s Concerns under the leadership of Libbie Patterson.
What follows in this theology section are biblical and theological reflections from our faculty and other theologians who consider disruption from their areas of expertise. The essays are varied, at times contradictory, honest, substantive, and earnestly faithful. The illustrations use the analogy of volcanic activity to trace the journey from stasis to destruction and rebirth that is the arc of disruption. We hope these reflections provoke thought and insight for you, as together we seek to learn where God is leading in this season of disruption.

Lo que sigue en esta sección de teología son reflexiones bíblicas y teológicas de miembros de nuestro cuerpo de profesores, profesoras y otros teólogos que consideran la “disrupción” desde sus áreas de especialización. Los ensayos son variados, a veces contradictorios, honestos, significativos y sinceramente fieles. Las ilustraciones usan la analogía de la actividad volcánica para trazar el viaje desde la quietud hasta la destrucción y el renacimiento, que juntos representan la disrupción. Esperamos que estas reflexiones provoquen pensamiento y reflexión en ustedes, ya que juntos buscamos aprender a dónde nos lleva Dios en este tiempo de disrupción.

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T he Old Testament has its roots in two great disruptions: the collapse of the Late Bronze Age geopolitical system and the Babylonian Exile. These came at the beginning and end, respectively, of the independent national existence of Israel and Judah. So the story of the God of Israel emerged as it did only because of disruptions, and in the ancient Near East, political disruptions were commonly imagined as a state of death. The affirmation that the Lord brings life out of death became a foundational confession in both testaments: it remains the core of the Christian faith, particularly powerful in times of suffering and trauma.

The END OF EMPIRES AND THE BEGINNINGS OF ISRAEL

In the Late Bronze Age, the ancient Near East was dominated by a handful of imperial powers, including Egypt, Hatti, and Babylon. With other great powers bestrided the world. There were numerous cities in the narrow middle land, which was sometimes called “Canaan,” but these were merely fought over by the pharaoh and the Hittite emperors. They primarily used a writing system imported from Mesopotamia.

This world order would have seemed quite permanent after centuries, but it was not. It came to an unexpected and violent end. By the turn of the 12th century BCE. This was the period of the “Sea Peoples,” a group of marauders that seems to have worked its way across the western Mediterranean coast. No single factor caused it, but rather a confluence of probabilities: a climatic downturn, and the collapse of international trade followed by royal courts. The great walled cities fell, one after another. By the end of the 12th century the Hittite Empire had passed away, as had many great Greek city states such as Mycenae. The Egyptians and Babylonians saw their territory shrunk and their power greatly curtailed.

Out of this great disruption, Israel eventually arose. It was able to emerge as a nation because there was a power vacuum in the ancient Near East. Although archaeology and extrabiblical texts can tell us very little about the flourishing of Israel before the Exile, it would have been possible because Egypt and Hatti no longer dominated the land. Their collapse made room for the power of regional kings and for their courts and scribes, who developed national idioms and began to record the stories that have become our Bible.

The biblical stories about the people’s roots in Egyptian oppression, and of divine salvation—as distinctive as they now are. After all, every one of the Canaanites nations worshiped a national deity, and if Iron Age writings are any indication, they typically had fairly similar ideas about what they did. Texts like the Mesha Stele from Moab and the Amarna inscription from Hatti suggest this. For instance, there was a strong belief in a deliverer who would come to rescue the Israelites from foreign oppression. After the exile, Ezra is said to have held a public reading of “the book of the Torah of Moses,” which may have been compiled for the occasion. In other words, it may have been the first time the Torah existed in something like its canonical form.

Arguably, the Old Testament itself took up on its predecessors’ theme of reflection and restoration. I reflect on this in terms of Fuller’s present direction: We would all, at many times, like to have a billion-dollar endowment that makes our purposes feel as permanent and inviolable as first Temple Jerusalem did, and to be spared the difficult self reflection and reinvention that we currently face. Probably no one will complain if, like Israel and Judah, we’re given a few centuries of rest in the land of Pomona after this and before the next disruption.) Nevertheless, the present traumas beckon us out of potentially false forms of confidence and closer to the experience of God’s people throughout the ages.

The months to come are likely to find us torn between lament and praise. We aspire to the faith of Job in his time of mourning—a faith that was itself only aspirational, only the beginning of a conversation “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

ENDNOTES

1. For readers interested in the topic, Eric H. Cline’s 1273 BCE: The Year Civilization Collapsed (Princeton University Press, 2014) offers a very readable discussion.


3. A number of recent scholars have used trauma theory to understand the Bible, two examples are Charles L. Dyer’s It’s Not Your Fault: The Bible’s Theatrically Dystopic View (University Press, 2014).
SHAKEN TO REMAIN: FULLER MOVES

Tommy Givens

"Now therefore thus says YHWH of hosts: Consider how you have fared. You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and you earn wages earn wages but put them into a bag with holes. . . . For thus says YHWH of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all the peoples, so that the treasures of all peoples shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says YHWH of hosts." Haggai 2:6-7.

"See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if our ancestors in the faith did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven?! At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, 'Y et once and for all,' indicates the taking up of shaken things as made things so that things unshaken will remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we worship God virtuously with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:25–29.

T he Bible has often lent itself to fearful and privileged Christians’ overworrying their crises, exacerbating some already sloppy theology. Framing the recent convulsions moving Fuller in terms of the shaking makes things south so that things unshaken will remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we worship God virtuously with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:25–29.

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enrollment but also because of a protracted lack of financial and institutional discipline, which for years overextended our school. The weather for Christian higher education has indeed been bad lately, but we have had a hand in making it especially bad for Fuller. What is more, general enrollment numbers weather for Christian higher education has which for years overextended our school. The Pomona, vibrant with people of color, is a Christian tropes we are learning to renounce of the health of Fuller. We must take into call for patient confession and substantive combined with the clear testimony of some of the Fuller voices as to why, is an unequivocally that we're moving to a more fitting place for Fuller, certainly not that Fuller will be good for Pomona. Amidst the current trends in higher education and the global and digital spread of the Fuller network, some of us may even be tempted to navigate the current dis- truction by minimizing the geographic place of the Fuller campus altogether, to use “place” only metaphorically in yet another iteration of the whole Christian tendency to withdraw from the body and the earth, only to colonize those in spiritual disguise. But we cannot do this while saying meaningfully that we are committed to the place and community of Pomona, which we must as Christians. And claiming what little roots we have developed in Pasadena, saying: “Fuller is a place rather than a place,” is no way to digest the grief of leaving.

Technological disruption, itself an expres- sion of wider cultural shifts, is one of the major forces shacking Fuller and requiring us to ask afresh what sort of education Fuller must deliver. Pomona will not be the center of Fuller, much as our Pasadena campus has ceased to be. The stories of our campus life will be only some among others centered elsewhere by virtue of digital technology. The crucial work of Fuller that does take place on our new campus in Pomona, from class sessions to media production to library research, to one-on-one meetings between professors and students, will not necessarily be rep- resentative of what Fuller people are doing in other places. As we respond to the different needs of our many places, then, the contribu- tions of faculty as researchers, writers, and classroom teachers will be part of a whole with noteworthy contributions by others, with whom faculty in Pomona or elsewhere may or may not collaborate according to their gifts. The widespread and disruptive depro- fessionalization of theology, because of which theology is disseminated less and less from academic towers, deserves a faithful response from Fuller, one that will sometimes prior- itize the contributions of people other than the faculty in Pomona or elsewhere. Those of us who are faculty members will need to face this sort of disruption with generosity, recog- nizing the limits of our competence. Nevertheless, just as it would be foolish to forsake the academic vocation of Fuller, it would be a mistake for Fuller to be unground- ed in any place. We must learn through the present disruption to be grounded in many places, especially in our new place of Pomona as we continue to rigorously study theology, psychology, and mission. Fuller cannot be a source of health and justice for other places if it is not living healthily and justly in its own places. This will involve carefully studying how to be a new arrival in Pomona, one that is relatively large and mostly white, and how to leave Pasadena healthily and justly. If Fuller aims to “grow globally” and I’m not sure that should even be a goal, we must avoid the destructiveness of a market shaped by remote and hollowless ownership. Such a market is driven by im- patient and unhuman transactions. It knows nothing of a God locally and stubbornly placed in flesh, who as such has consistently been unattactive and unimpressive to other human beings according biblical testimony (e.g., Deut 7:7; Ps 118:22; Mark 6:4; John 1:11; 1 Cor 1:23). Rather than succumbing to market pressures that encourage education- al control and creation only from a remote market center in Pomona, with nothing but conformity and consumption anywhere else, we must grow soundly enough in our various particular places to have something worth sharing with other places. Will our work in and from Pomona be grounded and common enough? Will it be service?

The book of Hebrews invokes this ultimate shaking as the work of Jesus in the passage quoted above. It is a messianic eruption growing from its seed, the fiery quaking of Sinai that shook Israel’s life loose from the enslaving web of Egypt and set it on the path of promise. If these ancient ancestors in the faith did not escape the pressures of God’s judgment through the guiding words of Moses the servant, how much less, the writer asks, will we escape the ultimate pres- sures of that same God’s judgment through Jesus the Son? As God’s human heir over all created things, Jesus calls to us with a name and memory that have exhausted the power of death and reach to even the most hidden parts of the earth. Thus, the shaking Haggai announced is finally the disrupting judgment of the risen Jesus, which is rattling everything that humanity has made on the earth, using even the disruption we have brought upon ourselves, so that only what has been transformed by God into the un- shakeable will remain. The disruption caused by the ideological and technological weather in conjunction with our own deep flaws is shaking Fuller and exposing some of what is shakeable about our seminary. As we move our main campus to Pomona, certain branches of Fuller’s past will be shaken loose, and Jesus will continue toattle us in Pomona and other places. Together we must distin- guish between what Fuller has made and what, through Fuller, God has made and is still making by the now unshakeable life of Jesus. This disruptive Jesus reveals that the unshakeable is not what can sell itself as impressive in the short term. That kind of institutional mentality, allying as it is in the currents of our time, will subject Fuller to forces that will undermine it over time as we pour our labor into bags full of holes and work ourselves to death. Institutional life that is healthy and wise takes time to be truthful and just in its places, even at great cost in a market addicted to facades quick to crumble as they are traded for others. Haggai and Hebrews call upon us at Fuller to learn how to digest the shaking forces of death, so that our life remains and grows with God’s kingdom.
W e live in an extraordinary time—a time of “the great disruption.” From mass migration and urbanization to the digitization of our culture, changes are profound, touching almost every aspect of our lives. Of course, disruption and change are nothing new in human history. However, the level of transformation unfolding in our time is different from that of previous eras: it involves not only a compass trade, but also structural modalities, cultural aesthetic expressions, and even the basic nature of our social interactions and sense of identity. Indeed, the current disruption is axial in nature. Rarely in history has humanity experienced such disruption in terms of its magnitude, depth, and scope.

A major source of this great disruption is globalization, which is driven by neoliberal economic forces and technological advances. The idea of a bounded community is increasingly obsolete in a global society; people can freely move around and interact with each other online without the mediation of states. They are increasingly disembodied from face-to-face relationships and communities; this mobility is altering people’s experiences and habits as well as their sense of identity and social relationships. Thus, global civilization is entering a new, unknown era. In the midst of this change and transition many feel like Rip Van Winkle, a character in Washington Irving’s novel, who woke up after a long sleep only to find that the world had dramatically changed. In this era of profound disruption, nobody knows what the future will look like.

The great disruption has thrown humanity into the wilderness—a time of anxiety and unsettlement. These changes are engendering a deep sense of confusion, anxiety, fear, and emotional homelessness. Specifically, globalization deepens the gap between generations (baby boomers and millennials) and their parents. The current rise of populist movements reflects the deep sense of confusion, anxiety, and emotional homelessness.

The Presbyterian Church (USA).

Political Spirituality

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in the post-WWII world was to be an instrument of divine disruption for peace, justice, and love of humanity.

King’s response was not so different from that of Jesus and the early Christians. Facing the violent disruption of the Roman Empire, they responded with a radical new message of the kingdom. They were willing to disrupt the status quo of injustice, violence, and self-indulgence for the sake of a new world of common flourishing. Jesus mobilized the brown-skinned, grassroots, and underclass people of Galilee—a land of violence and collective trauma—with the new political economy of God’s kingdom.

Many, including white liberal theologians, accused King of moving “too fast” in his reform movement. However, when we look back upon his time, we see a nation missed an opportunity to radically address long overdue racial injustices dating all the way to the time of the Puritans. Accused King of moving “too fast” in his reform movement. However, when we look back upon his time, we see a nation missed an opportunity to radically address long overdue racial injustices dating all the way to the time of the Puritans. Many, including white liberal theologians, accused King of moving “too fast” in his reform movement. However, when we look back upon his time, we see a nation missed an opportunity to radically address long overdue racial injustices dating all the way to the time of the Puritans.

Our time calls for radical spiritual and moral transformation to address the root problems of our society. It has become increasingly clear that the status quo does not work, as it will lead to a deeper crisis, including the possibility of human self-destruction, either in war or ecological disaster.

For evangelicals, the great disruption (and its ensuing economic inequality and concentration of power) challenges us to reset the default mode of evangelicalism—its very understanding of the gospel and ministry practices—to put new wine in new wineskins. In the manner that King’s movement was for the renewal of America itself, Fuller, as a theological institution, is called to undertake this task of recasting the vision of ministry in the 21st century and proclaiming the holistic gospel of liberation and restoration that disrupts the status quo of greedy neoliberalism, decaying white normativity, and eccedical anthropocentrism. The process inevitably requires the reinvention of theological education and the curriculum itself. This is not a small task, as it requires constant prayer, confession and repentance, intellectual rigor and new learning, and most importantly the gift of grace will be sufficient to guide us, with pillars of fire and cloud, as far as we trust God in this time of the great disruption.

CONCLUSION

What does this current disruption of moving to Pomona mean for Fuller? How should we respond to this decision in faith? Adapting to a new and changing context is not foreign to Fuller. Following the entrepreneurial spirit of its founder, Fuller has been good at adapting to changing cultures. Many of our programs have been innovative. Even now we try our best to adapt to the great disruption by expanding online courses, theologically engaging with popular culture, and soon popularizing theological study through new offerings to a broader audience. However, as we adapt to change with innovative ideas such as reinventing our courses, programs, and delivery systems, we also need a new, bold, creative moral imagination to undegird courageous actions in faith, because the great disruption that we experience today is too big to be addressed by technical adaptations.

ENDNOTES

2. According to scholars, this is only the third time in history that humanity has experienced this magnitude of disruption: first from hunting/gathering to agricultural, second from agricultural to industrial, and now from industrial to post-industrial.
5. H. J. Law, We Will Get to the Promised Land: Martin Luther King, Jr., A Christian-Political Spirituality (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006), 43–44.

fresh inspiration from God. When we are able to achieve this goal, the move to Pomona will not be an exile but an exodus toward the promised land. Rather than being intimidated or victimized by anxiety about an unknown, insecure future or nostalgia for the past, we need to dare to see God’s new future that is more authentic to the practice of our faith.

A difficult time is ahead of us. The journey will be a messy process with many pulls and pushes, actions and reactions. But I believe that God’s grace will be sufficient to guide us, with pillars of fire and cloud, as far as we trust God in this wilderness journey. Hence, we need to be faithful, courageous, and creative, as we are called to be creative disruptors of injustice and builders of God’s beloved community in this time of the great disruption.

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DISRUPTIONS MEET PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Mark Lau Branson

LET’S pretend, for a moment, that strategic planning works. Or that the behavioral habits of your organization are consistently meeting expectations. Or that your society treats people as if they are created in God’s image. Or that your vocation, your work, and your income are all in sync. Or that the theology you claim to believe, when practiced, has the outcomes you anticipate.

Now imagine counter-experiences. Think of situations in which carefully, prayerfully made plans failed to reach your goals. Recall situations in which the habits of your church or other organization tended to have unexpected outcomes. Consider ways your society or nation fails to treat people as God’s image-bearers. Reflect on disconnects between the theology you claim, the theology you practice, and how God does not always meet your expectations. (Readers who take time to reflect on examples from these two paragraphs will better engage this article.)

These are ruptures—disconnects that we experience regarding thinking, acting, believing, and planning, and the subsequent consequences. We are aware how technology, or money, or health, or relationships, or organizational behaviors can be the sites of disruptions. Any such disruptions are disorienting and they are opportunities for critical, faithful work.1 But frequently, those who are affected by disruptions, including leaders, are likely to use tactics of avoidance—shut as denial, blame, retribution, tighter management, increased training, and a retreat to (somewhat unreliable) habits.2 Frequently we miscategorize, perhaps labeling a problem as financial when the causes are more about deeper cultural matters, or we assume bad planning when it may be that there is a lack of emotional intelligence within a team.3 Disruptions cause us to be reactive, so we employ “fight or flight” responses that are based on the familiar scripts we tell ourselves. These scripts give us a sense of control even when that is an illusion.

While we usually think that disruptions are sudden, appearing quickly and without warning, they can actually be slow and with numerous warning signals. Climate change is disruptive, but it is not sudden and it has been coming with diverse and obvious indicators. An organization’s frameworks regarding leadership or finances or context can also be subject to slower changes that are not getting adequate attention. It is not uncommon for churches to feel disrupted when they become aware of a decades-long shift in a neighborhood’s makeup or even their own internal generation transitions.4

When there is pain and fear involved, we ask: What happened? Who’s to blame? How do we fix it? What can we do to lessen the pain? My focus is theological. How do we think about God in the midst of disruptions? My concern here is not with the problem of theology, regarding whether God caused, or should have prevented, some disruption. Rather, in the aftermath of a disruption, how can we engage practices that help us discern God in the resulting situation, especially regarding new options?5

The stories that Luke provides in the book of Acts show us that disruptions of all types were common as God’s reign engaged the Roman world. Luke writes about astonishment, civic unrest, arrests, shipwreck, and broken relationships. A brief look at chapter 11 shows several disruptions: Paul’s mission team is diverted repeatedly by the Holy Spirit as they travel westward. They arrive in Tarsus, which would be considered a worthy site, but Paul has a night vision, and expectations are disrupted as a discussion leads to a new itinerary toward Macedonia. Several days of expectancy explorations in Philippi lead to nothing, then a Sabbath search outside the gates brings them into a conversation with a group of women. Lydia, a businesswoman and God-fearer, engages the conversation, welcoming their message and baptism for herself and her household. Evidently the vision of a “man from Macedonia” is a woman from Thyatira! Here as throughout Acts, God is ahead of the witnesses—and the story unfolds through disruptions, surprises, experimental forays, and unexpected encounters.

It is this primary theological conviction—that God is always on the ground, among us,ocrates the on the ground, among us, among our neighbors, initiating with love, hope, and sometimes judgment.6

DOING THEOLOGY IN REAL LIFE

Theology is a task, and it takes many forms. In general, theology is simply how humans think about God. Sometimes we focus on developing concepts and theories, which can take shape in creeds or systematic treatises. Sometimes we give focused attention to Scripture, trying to understand the theology of Jeremiah or Matthew or Paul. We also do theology when we pray and worship, articulating our beliefs and longings and lamenting and gratitude. And even though some of us have vocational roles as professors or preachers or authors, everyone does theology—we all think about God, and then we live our lives with that thinking as one element of our thinking and decisions. So one important question is how well do we, as churches and as believers, do theology? And, more specific to this article, how can we do theology well in the midst of disruptions?

Recently I have had several extended conversations with a pastor who would be seen as skilled, successful, and exemplary in her roles both with the congregation and community. (I will call her Pastor Carol). Her church has been experiencing moderate growth for most of the last two decades. Then, three years ago, several key families left in order to relocate about an hour away. They voiced their love for the church and even said they would return at times—but the frequency of those returns has decreased, and Pastor Carol encourages them to find a church nearer to their new homes. Since that year, three other key families have moved to other cities in the region, and all expressed their regrets. Each family that moved away cited the same key reason—the increasing cost of living in the church’s city. Carol also noted that the ethnic group that comprises the majority of the church has been decreasing in the city for a number of years. As the church continues its numerous activities among members and with the surrounding community, this loss has created a disruption that is calling them to new considerations and discernment.

Several years ago I was speaking with a recent seminary graduate who was the youth pastor at a large church. I will call him Pastor James. He was well liked by the kids, drawing teens from around the region to programs that included sports, Bible lessons, and worship practices. As he met kids in his own neighborhood, about 20 minutes from the church, James and his wife spent time driving those neighbors to the church activities. Over a couple of years the kids got a bit older and the transportation needs became more of a challenge. So at this point he faced a disruptive question that came from both the situation and his own awareness: Are there better ways to connect with these neighborhood teens than driving them to church in another community?

The disruptions Carol and James faced were rooted in particular circumstances—
for Carol there was a shift in contextual realities: for James there was a shift in his awareness concerning the church’s (and his) practices of ministry and the on-the-ground situation in his own neighborhood. So the disruptive challenges included matters of context and among people, and the work for Carol and James (and their church) is to discern and test a way forward. I will clarify that central affirmation and describe the approach to theology that is suitable for disruptions. So, it needs to be noted, practical theology is both an academic discipline and a way of discernment for churches and leaders.

**PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AS DISCERNMENT**

As an academic discipline, practical theology has emerged from a role frequently seen as subservient to other fields of study to become a field of rigorous work that refuses to separate theory from practice. At earlier times, subject areas that were considered more academic—biblical studies, systematic theology, church history—were expected to discover and formulate truths that were then applied by practitioners. This “theory-to-practice” method was even frequently adopted by those who taught in various ministry areas. As other areas of theory became valued by practitioners, such as psychology, sociology, organizational studies, and communications, professors and authors labored to create correlations among such disciplines. In that theory-to-practice mode, the “truths” of management or marketing or persuasion were linked, sometimes in questionable ways, with doctrines or biblical passages, the primary wager—that life could be lived well without God. But practical theology, as I am describing it, places God’s current initiatives (God’s actions among people and in specific contexts) at the center of our discernment. While Carol or James could develop strategies and plans without God, they know that practical theological study asks a critical question in the midst of disruptions: since God is currently initiating in the contextual situation—among those people, in their daily lives—how can we discern what God is doing, and what experiments can we begin in order to participate with what God is initiating? In other words, if God is the primary agent (this is what is at stake in the theological concepts of grace, missio Dei, pneumatology, and soteriology), then central to our vocation is discernment and participation. Disruptions make this context and culture, our stories, and our experiences (step three). Our stories are the current situation, and forward to imagine new praxes.

4. **Context and Culture**: Analyze your praxis (the current situation and the theories and factors that are relevant). Seek to understand important influences and consequences by using resources from the culture. In this way, we might begin to discern and shape your new praxis by working with the results of steps one through four and then prayerfully naming what you believe to be your priorities. Focus on what you believe God is doing in your lives and in your context, and experiment with alternatives—mainly for achieving successes, but to extend and expand learning and discernment. Some experiments will be affirmed and may lead toward commitments regarding new praxes.

5. **Imagination and Experiments**: Corporate discern and shape your new praxis by working with the results of steps one through four and then prayerfully naming what you believe to be your priorities. Focus on what you believe God is doing in your lives and in your context, and experiment with alternatives—mainly for achieving successes, but to extend and expand learning and discernment. Some experiments will be affirmed and may lead toward commitments regarding new praxes.

**PRACTICES OF ACTION-REFLECTION**

The disruptions that Carol and James faced called them to a participatory process that brought leaders and members into new, thoughtful, prayerful steps of research, study, storytelling, discernment, and experiments, in addition to expanding their descriptions of their current situations (step one), they created teams that pursued different aspects of research (step two). Some of this was online work, but they both learned that as participants walked their neighborhoods, asking God to guide their conversations and awareness, they were drawn repeatedly into life-on-life encounters and saw how God was already at work in lives of their neighbors. (This shows the overlap between steps two and four.) Each time their discernment teams gathered they spent time in Scripture, reflecting on their own experiences (step three). Our church traditions also have resources in theology and history that can be brought into the group reflections.

Often, if the process includes learning from neighbors, step five will already have been engaged because participants needed to take...
steps into the neighborhood as part of their learning. Step five is about drawing together plans, the priority of consumer preferences, and the laborative, spiritual mode of engaging our circles. Participants need to recognize and attend to what disruptions bring loss, meaning and opportunity for critical reflection and potential new thinking and acting. Disruptions bring loss, meaning that those who experience the interruption will experience wounds; leaders and other participants need to recognize and attend to those wounds as part of the process.

Our cultural norms emphasize strategic plans, the priority of consumer preferences, and the pastor as manager or innovator. Practical theology gives us an alternate, collaborative, spiritual mode of engaging our circumstances and contexts. Because the center of practical theology is to discover God’s presence and activities in the current situation, a fostering of awareness, critical reflection on assumptions, broadening of sources, careful listening, nurturing of imagination, and prayerful experiments will make faithful actions more likely. Disruptions, whatever their source, can remind us of the privilege and the work we have as those called to participate with God in God’s love for our neighbors and for us.

ENDNOTES
2. I want to note something else. When we think about disruptions, we tend to focus on what we consider to be negative experiences, but our lives can be disrupted by low, grace, beauty, kindness, and other surprises. Such interruptions are also opportunities for critical reflection and potential new thinking and acting.
3. Ronald Huisken and Marty Linsky name patterns of avoid ance and recommend practices for leading adaptive change in Leadership on the Line (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002); Robert Kegan and Lisa LeeAnne Lahey engage the challenges that disruptions bring to leaders and organizations and other important resources for more adaptive adult formation in Immunity to Change: Building Resilience in Business (Harvard Business Press, 2009), obviously the key theological priorities of this article are not engaged in these insightful works.
4. In Huisken and Linsky’s Leadership on the line, the important distinction between adaptive and technical challenges is explained: Abraham’s Rodriguez for Mason (Greenwood Drive, IL: NFP Academic, 2015) names the loss of attention to God’s agency in churches, denominations, and other faith communities, see especially pages 102–9.
5. The church in North America is currently experiencing a disruption regarding the ecclesial assumptions and patterns that have developed since the European conquest, see the excellent study by Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile, Participating in God’s Mission: A Theological Vision for the Church in America—Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).
6. Among missiosologists, these questions are about “local theologies,” for the work of believers regarding God, the local context, and their participation; see R. Schreiter, Doctrinal Theology (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985) and C. Sardak, Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).
7. As an academic discipline, practical theology does not always include this connection (that God is the primary agent and purpose discovering God’s current activities so that we might participate). Frequently it is about correlating conceptual matters of theology with other theoretical materials and data (such as social sciences). That theoretical work is important, but my priority is to be acritical approach that serves the daily life of believers, churches, and other groups of Christians.
8. Men and women who frame these lives as atheists are still doing theology, perhaps less consciously, but seeing everything in what Charles Taylor calls an “immanent frame” that is solely horizontal, see his book The Secular Age (Boston: Belknap, 2007), especially ch. 15.
17. For more on thinking and collaboration that highlights God’s gifts and presence, see M. L. Branson, Moments, Hopes and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry, Missional Engagement, and Congregational Change, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).
HEALING WHERE THERE IS NO CURE: THE DISRUPTION OF ILLNESS

Miyoung Yoon Hammer

Beside birth and death, illness is the only experience that every human will encounter at one time or another. Whether it is the common cold, a progressive disease, or terminal cancer, we are confronted by the limitations of our physical existence, reminding us that we are mortal and that “from dust we are and to dust we shall return” (Gen. 3:19). Although health disparities exist and mortality rates among people of color and those with lower socioeconomic status are higher, in the end no one is exempt from illness and eventual death. And yet, in spite of this knowledge of our mortal existence, illness is considered to be one of the most disruptive events. Although illness cannot be compared in magnitude to the impact of events such as natural disasters or war, at the micro-level of individuals and the radius of family members and loved ones around them, the effects can be felt at a deep and profound level and, in effect, be life-changing.

The primary reason illness is so disruptive is because among the many losses that occur with it, the most significant is the loss of control—control of our health, control of how we engage in relationships, control of our ability to be productive in our work, control of our capacity to care for those who need us, and control of being able to determine our future. In most Western cultures, where priority is placed on self-efficacy and self-determination, the unpredictable nature of illness and loss of control that ensues can result in fear, anxiety, and hopelessness—about restoring a sense of normalcy and purpose. Furthermore, a person’s ability to find meaning in all that is happening becomes challenged, and it is often seems that the only way for a sense of normalcy to be restored is by eliminating the cause of disruption: that the illness be eradicated and all symptoms cease. In fact, this search for disease eradication and cure is at the heart of most clinical and research efforts within science and medicine. But what happens when the option for disease eradication does not exist? Can there still be healing?

The Christian response and the paradox of peace

The Christian narrative provides us with the answer—“Yes”—and a template for living into this story of healing in the context of no cure because it is not unlike the way we live with the hope of redemption amidst our sin. On this side of heaven, there is no cure for sin. We still suffer, we still experience pain, and we still grieve death. Christ’s death and resurrection did not eliminate sin on earth, and yet we believe in the promise for redemption that was made possible because of his resurrection. N. T. Wright writes, “The resurrection of Jesus is for Paul, the prototypos of the new creation.” His death is a substitution for our eternal death and, in his resurrection, we have hope for our own in becoming a new creation.

As we consider what this means for our lives, we can look to Christ’s resurrected yet wounded body as an emblem of our redemption narrative. Just as the wounds remained in his resurrected body, pain and suffering remain in the Christian’s life. But what Christ’s resurrection did was to purge all power from those wounds. As Erin Dufault-Hunter writes, “Taken into the body of the world yet triumphant Christ, our own abrasions—whatever their source, whatever their form—also become ways we are known honestly, nakedly, and without shame. For God as loved this wounded world, John claims, that he takes those wounds into himself and thus strips them of disgrace.” Thus, healing means we live not with fear of the pain that is of this world, but instead with the conviction that God’s love has authority over all pain and the power to redeem it.

To believe there can be healing when there is no cure is an important consideration when working with patients and their loved ones who are impacted by terminal or incurable chronic illness. With this belief, we acknowledge the multifaceted and interconnected nature of our human existence as biological, psychological, sociological, and spiritual beings. In the clinical world this is referred to as the biopsychosocial-spiritual perspective, and it informs the way medical family therapists (MedFTs) approach their work with clients affected by illness.

This perspective helps me, as a MedFT, remain attuned to the many ways people are affected by illness and, perhaps more importantly, it prompts me to consider the many ways healing can occur and that healing must be limited to what happens in the body. Herein lies the crux of a new possibility: when we’ve reached a point of no repair with our physical health, there is still hope for renewal and healing in our psychological, relational, and spiritual health. Yet, holding this belief is incredibly challenging, because the task of seeking hope where there is only promises of loss must be done in cautious balance with the acknowledgment of those losses.

HEALING WHILE DYING: A CLINICAL EXAMPLE

When I was pregnant with my first child I worked at a cancer support program, and one of the groups I facilitated was a couples’ support group. The couples in the group had two things in common: they were parents of young children, and one parent in each couple was diagnosed with cancer and had recently transitioned to the terminal stage of the illness. Someone, including myself, probably should have had the foresight to know how emotionally challenging it would be for a first-time mother-to-be to facilitate this group of young parents, where the prospects of survival were grim and most of the children who would survive them were under the age of five. As a MedFT I had encountered difficult clinical situations in my private practice, the hospital, and the cancer support program, where patients and their loved ones received a new diagnosis or were coming to terms with the news that nothing more could be done. I was confident that I possessed the skill set to meet the challenge and would be able to effectively manage my emotional reactions as I listened to and held these parents’ stories of pain, fear, and uncertainty. Yet I was not prepared.

There is a reason why illness-related parent groups are difficult to establish and even harder to sustain. Some of the reasons are matters of logistics, such as the need for childcare to allow both parents to participate in the group. But perhaps the most noteworthy reason is that, in spite of the known benefits of these groups, they serve as constant reminders that life isn’t going as planned. In this developmental life stage of families with young children and adolescents, one of the primary tasks of a parent is to provide a balance of protection, structure, predictability, adventure, and a consistent secure presence. Parental illness compromises these expectations and disrupts notions of a normal family.
life. Furthermore, when the threat of diminished capacity or death is real, this disruption impacts all dimensions of well-being—physical, spiritual, psychological, relational, and emotional. Thus, although as a professional I know how beneficial support groups can be, I understand why any parent would refuse to participate. It doesn’t always seem that the benefit of pain and uncertainties of illness outweighs expressing feelings and understanding the psychosocial impact of illness. Thus, although as a professional I know how beneficial support groups can be, I understand why any parent would refuse to participate. It doesn’t always seem that the benefit of pain and uncertainties of illness outweighs expressing feelings and understanding the psychosocial impact of illness outweighs the emotional exhaustion of illness.

To my surprise, the parent couples in my group were ready to talk and showed up with hard questions: “How do we talk to our children about death?” “How do we maintain normalcy for our children when their bodies. The terminal cancer became an impetus for their efforts to reconcile and heal their relationships and seek peace for themselves. Perhaps more importantly, their belief that they could seek healing was a way that they were no longer allowing the wounds of pending death to have power over them and their families and the remainder of their lives on earth. Almost 15 years later, I still think about the members of that group and the courage they demonstrated as they navigated one of the most disruptive seasons of their lives. There were many tears and not everyone made it to the end of the program. Our sessions were not easy, but they were good. The couples were finding ways to have hope in the midst of loss and, particularly for the two couples who were Christians, they were beginning to see how God was in even this. They found many unexpected blessings in their “new normal” and were living differently. They no longer took the good things in life for granted and were less likely to tolerate the bad. They found many unexpected blessings in their “new normal” and were less likely to live with regret. I think my patients understand something that is fundamental to the Christian life. Living faithfully into the narrative as Christ’s people means we are being renewed day by day. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

In fact, so many of the patients I have worked with have talked about illness (not always cancer) as a gift as they were confronted with their mortality, reevaluated their lives, and began to live differently. They no longer took the good things in life for granted and were less likely to tolerate the bad. They found many unexpected blessings in their “new normal” and were less likely to live with regret. I think my patients understand something that is fundamental to the Christian life. Living faithfully into the narrative as Christ’s people means we are being renewed day by day. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

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The book of Acts is largely a case study in how we can do to increase our resilience? Why and how? Are there life circumstances or practices that can predict who will be more resilient and who least? And are there things we can do to increase our resilience?

There are no definitive answers to any of these questions, but the paradigm has shifted from a focus on people showing non-resilient behavior (a deficit-based vulnerability model) toward a focus on the cognitive and emotional negotiation and management of the sources of stress or trauma shown by resilient individuals. In other words, resilience is not simply a lack of psychopathology in response to difficult challenges, but rather an outcome of how personal or collective goals are achieved, an action-oriented approach, and the capacity for adequate sleep, energy, arousal, and focused attention.32 In the time again, allowing him to rise to the occasion under extreme stress, while increasing the cumulative allostatic load on his cognitive and physical resources.

We have found all of these characteristics associated with aspects of resilience in humanitarian workers.33 We can also see that Paul had many of these characteristics, which may have contributed to his extraordinary resilience. He was driven by his commitment to the goal of spreading the gospel of Jesus, which gave him a sense of purpose. He frequently cultivated the social support he needed, and he probably had considered spiritual resources. The World Health Organization has declared that “for many people, religion, personal beliefs and spirituality are a source of comfort, wellbeing, security, meaning, sense of belonging, purpose, and strength.”42 Essentially, a belief system can provide relief, strength, and the power to overcome hardships, especially when there is a focus on a relationship with a spiritual being and on meaning making.38 The trauma itself can be a catalyst to delve deeper into spiritual and religious practices and beliefs, which in turn have been reported to often result in positive religious coping and posttraumatic growth.43 Awe, inner peace, and hope predict a positive quality of life, while spiritual strength is associated with less stress.39 Having a purpose in life likely provides the motivation to “construcively learn from and reappraise negative events in an adaptive manner and avoid broadening and ruminative tendencies, so as to quickly refocus on one’s goals and purpose.”29

The brain’s response to stress

Cortisol is a hormone that promotes survival during dangerous situations by facilitating the mobilization of the body’s resources for immediate action.34 As a result, cortisol is involved in the body’s autonomic fight-or-flight, physiologic response systems, providing increased energy, arousal, and focused attention.33 In the short term, cortisol secretion is a critical component of the stress response system. However, frequent exposure to chronic stressors or the failure to return in cortisol levels after termination of the stressor can lead to depression and a variety of bodily health functions, such as hypertension, osteoporosis, insulin resistance, obesity and coronary vascular disease.35

DHEA is a hormone that is secreted alongside cortisol in response to stress.36 There is strong evidence to suggest that DHEA helps protect the brain from the deleterious effects of cortisol.37 Levels of DHEA increase under extreme stress,38 but decreases in the case of long-term exposure to chronic stressors.39 Biological concepts such as allostatics (the achievement of stability through biological adaptation to trauma or stress) and allostatic load (the cumulative wear and tear on the body in response to stress) explain both resilience and the development of chronic stress disorders. For an individual such as Paul, one can only imagine that his brain would have been flushed with cortisol and DHEA time and time again, allowing him to rise to the occasion under extreme stress, while increasing the cumulative allostatic load on his cognitive and physical resources.

Adverse events can make future traumatic events even more disruptive,40 although, in Paul’s case, they likely enhanced adaptation as his brain efficiently mobilized adaptive neurocognitive responses to environmental stressors, allowing him to return to allostatic equilibrium. Counterbalancing cortisol, DHEA likely protected learning and memory.41 DHEA also has protective effects of stress so that Paul could adapt. DHEA likely protected Paul’s hippocampus from cortisol, improving learning and memory.41 DHEA also has protective effects on behavior and cognition37 such that, should Paul have experienced symptoms of posttraumatic stress, increased levels of DHEA may have played a role in his recovery. Evidence suggests that levels of DHEA are lower in depressed individuals.42 Therefore, while cortisol and DHEA play different
roles in response to extreme stress, the ratio of DHEA to cortisol has been proposed as a marker for resilience.43

To better understand the connection between resilience biomarkers and such ratios of DHEA to cortisol, we worked with a group of 921 Special Forces members, with a mean age of 44 years, presumably exempts of resilience. We designed the study to assess resilience and the participan’s ability to adapt and recover in the face of adversity over their life span. They gave us blood and saliva samples during normal times (that is, not while under extreme stress), which we analyzed for DHEA and cortisol levels. We had the HIRI included 38 items that constitute a measure of resilience and biomarkers such as the ratio of DHEA to cortisol, which was correlated with the DHEA/cortisol ratio at a somewhat level, whereas, unusually, AdaptivEngagement (that is, we can adapt to chang- ing circumstances), Sense of Purpose (e.g., I find meaning in my work), and Life Satisfaction (that is, not while under extreme stress), can be changed with dedication and motivation. This does not mean that such changes will immediately result in in- creased resilience. However, we, and many other researchers are accumulating increasing evidence that the system- atic and maintained

promotion of protective factors is effective in increasing resilience.44

It is an exciting time to be a resilience re- searcher, as we are turning our attention from the academic to the practical. Perhaps within a few years, we will know for sure which interventions tend to increase resilience for which specific person. In the meantime, in- creasing one’s spiritual resources is an appro- priate step toward bolstering one’s capacity for resilience.

ENDNOTES
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“It is very biblical to enforce the law.” White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, on the morality of separating over 2,000 children from their immigrant parents at the border (June 12, 2018, CNN News)

“It is disgraceful. It’s terrible to see families ripped apart and I don’t support that one bit.” Rev. Franklin Graham, on the situation at the border (June 12, 2018, CNN News)

“Is this not the fast that I choose . . . when you have shown mercy to the destitute and ignored the cry of those in need?” Isaiah 58:6–7

“There is one body and one Spirit . . . one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” Ephesians 4:4,6

The biblical mandate to hospitality goes beyond the responsibility to blood family. First, the concept of family shifts when we understand that there is one heavenly Father who created us all. While there can be legitimate debate in the church over the difference between our sibling relationship as believers and our connections with those outside the faith, we cannot avoid the truth that we have some sort of family obligation to all human beings. We also recognize that our closest spiritual family includes brothers and sisters in Christ from other countries who are currently seeking our hospitality.

There are Christians fleeing terrible violence in Central America and seeking asylum in the United States. The majority of the families who were detained at the border earlier in 2018 whose children were placed in separate detention facilities were Central Americans seeking asylum. Over 40 percent of Hondurans and Guatemalans are evangelical, less than 15 percent of the population of Central America is non-Christian. 3 Syrian Christians are also begging for refuge. Familiar justice is my shorthand phrase for God’s call to live as if we are a family. The truth is that we cannot escape being familial; we can only be a healthy family or a dysfunctional one.

Over 90 verses in the Old and New Testaments call the people of God to offer hospitality to welcome the stranger, and to share our resources. The call to welcome the stranger is not in itself an immigration policy. The development and maintenance of an immigration system is complex. Our current system in the United States is ineffective, illogical, and often unjust and inhumane. Bipartisan immigration reform proposals in 2007 and 2013 were supported by a broad spectrum of legislators: the 2013 proposal completed by “the gang of eight” (four Republicans and four Democrats) passed the Senate but was never brought to the floor of the House of Representatives. The Dream Act, which would provide an option for obtaining legal status to young people who were brought to this country as children, has been consistently supported by 76–90 percent of the American public for over five years. 3 None of this legislation has passed, however, because telephone calls to legislators have been overwhelm- ingly negative. While most Americans seem to favor immigration policies that would be effective, fair, and humane, the issue is not important enough to their lives to contact their congressional representa- tives. Those who believe that immigrants represent a threat to our well-being perceive the issue as critically important and contact their representatives regularly.

The resistance of the anti immigrant forces and the indifference of most Americans are natural reactions. The call to hospitality is essentially disruptive. The customary process of using one’s resources to meet one’s own individual goals and care for one’s immediate family is disrupted by the request from outside to share. The knock on the door as the family sits down to dinner can easily be a headache and a burden. The tired, poor, and huddled masses yearning to be free can easily represent a potential drain and threat to our families and communities. However, the call to hospitality has profound spiritual implications. Henri Nouwen, the great Christian author, says that one of the core movements of the spir- itual life is the transition from hostility to hospitality: 4

The first characteristic of the spiritual life is the continuing movement from loneliness to solitude. Its second equally important characteristic is the movement by which our hostilities can be convert- ed into hospitality. It is there that our changing relationship to our self can be brought to fruition in an ever-changing relationship to our fellow human beings. It is there that our reaching out to our in- nermost self can lead to a reaching out to the many strangers whom we meet on our way through life. In our world full of strangers, estranged from their own past, culture and country, from their neighbors, friends and family, from their deepest self and their God, we witness a painful search for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where com- munity can be found. . . . It is possible for men and women and obligatory for Christians to offer an open and hospitable space where strangers can cast off their strangeness and become our fellow human beings. 5

Alexia Salvatierra

THE BLESSED DISRUPTION OF HOSPITALITY
While Christians have always struggled, we do not own anything that we have; we give or share, the same Giver who provided the original gifts—including the capacity to earn—will give again all that we most need. God the Giver:

The call to hospitality is rooted in four great truths of the gospel:

- **God the Giver:** “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from God the Father of lights” (James 1:17).
- **The Paradox of Love:** “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will find it” (Mark 8:35).
- **The Body:** “If one member suffers, all members suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26).
- **The Blessing of the Other:** “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:2).

The call to hospitality is rooted in four great biblical truths. To believe and to live by these truths is a font of blessing:

- God the Giver: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from God the Father of lights.”—James 1:17.
- The Paradox of Love: “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will find it.”—Mark 8:35.
- The Body: “If one member suffers, all members suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all members rejoice with it.”—1 Corinthians 12:26.
- The Blessing of the Other: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”—Hebrews 13:2.

**God the Giver**

We do not own anything that we have; we are merely stewards. If we lack because we give or share, the same Giver who provided the original gifts—including the capacity to earn—will give again all that we must need. While Christians have always struggled legitimately with questions of responsible stewardship versus the call to generosity, our fundamental orientation must be open and fearless: open hearts and open hands.

Martin Luther, in The Freedom of a Christian, asserts that the peccatum radicale (root sin) is the lack of trust in God's promises. The call to hospitality is at its root a call to trust that God is good.

**The Paradox of Love**

Love is a paradox; we receive by giving. As disciples of Jesus, we know that the core of the gospel is Jesus' sacrifice in love to save the world—a sacrifice that ultimately resulted in the possibility of abundant life for all. We are called to follow him on the way of the cross, there is no room for actions motivated by self-preservation. Again, there can be authentic debate about redemptive and nonredemptive sacrifice, but in order for that debate to be more than thinly cloaked rationalization, we have to be ready to sacrifice all that we are and all that we have for the call of gospel love.

**Being the Body**

We are more connected than we consciously realize. If the child at the border is a believer, her anguish is mine as well. My children and I cannot be completely well unless she is safe and secure.

**The Blessing of the Other**

In Koine Greek, the word “angel” refers to any messenger of God sent to bring a blessing. Missionaries are coming to our shores from the Great Awakenings going on throughout the Global South. As we form our attitudes toward immigration, we need to take this movement of the Holy Spirit into account. Christian refugees have brought the gospel in ages past; it is true that our increasingly secular society might be able to use new messengers of the gospel, particularly from countries where families and family values remain strong. On a material level, there is significant evidence that immigrants contribute more to our society than they cost.

**Hospitality is essentially disruptive. It requires that we remember our needy family members—family united by blood, by the waters of baptism, and by our common Creator—even at those moments when we want to focus our energy on our own individual goals. It calls us to open the door to the unknown, to see that the stranger may bear a blessing instead of a threat. It requires that we share under false Social Security numbers. The funds withdrawn from their paychecks go into a special account in the Social Security Administration that will never be returned to them even if their status is regularized.**

**Resource Note:**

The majority of undocumented immigrants are employed under false Social Security numbers. The funds withdrawn from their paychecks go into a special account in the Social Security Administration that will never be returned to them even if their status is regularized. In a 2012 review of the impact of undocumented immigrants on Social Security, Stephen Goss, the chief actuary of the Social Security Administration, stated, “We estimate that earnings by unauthorized immigrants result in a net positive effect on Social Security financial status generally, and that this effect contributed roughly $2 billion to the cash flow of the program for 2010.” Apart from these taxes and the sales taxes that immigrants also pay, immigrants are much more likely to start a small business than non-immigrants.

Hospitability is essentially disruptive. It requires that we remember our needy family members—family united by blood, by the waters of baptism, and by our common Creator—even at those moments when we want to focus our energy on our own individual goals. It calls us to open the door to the unknown, to see that the stranger may bear a blessing instead of a threat. It requires that we share under false Social Security numbers. The funds withdrawn from their paychecks go into a special account in the Social Security Administration that will never be returned to them even if their status is regularized.

**Hospitality is essentially disruptive. It requires that we remember our needy family members—family united by blood, by the waters of baptism, and by our common Creator—even at those moments when we want to focus our energy on our own individual goals. It calls us to open the door to the unknown, to see that the stranger may bear a blessing instead of a threat. It requires that we share**

ENDNOTES


2. See Immigration, by Dale Hanson Bouma, in The Shepherd’s Guide Series, for an accurate, readable, and comprehensive introduction to the U.S. immigration system. Welcome to Stranger Justice, Compassion and Truth in the Immigration Debate, by Matthew Soerens and Jenny Yang of World Relief, provides an excellent factual overview of the system as well as a Christian analysis.


**VOICES ON DISRUPTION**

**WILLIE JENNINGS**
Fuller Trustee and Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Africana Studies, Yale Divinity School

The first step is to do what we Christians have been trained not to do: Pay attention to the land. What existed in the place before you buy your house or your school? Who lives around you? How does the traffic flow? Where are the sidewalks? Are we here because we just got a good deal on the land? Is there some Holy Spirit reason why we’re here? And what is God saying to me about where I live in relationship to where I worship?

Remember that almost everybody in the book of Acts is being compelled by the Spirit to go where they don’t want to go. The sign of the Spirit’s presence is not “Oh, I’m so thankful you’re here,” it’s “I don’t want you to go there.” That’s the sign of the Spirit’s presence. I think the fundamental reality is that we have especially resisted the Spirit when we think about place and where we live and geography.

We have had no serious thinking of discipleship in relation to real estate, relationship to developers, relationship to land. We’ve had no serious discipleship in thinking about these things. We have allowed the entire world to be part of an economic calculation and not a gospel calculation. Everywhere that private properties become a new reality, everywhere that people are being taught to look out at their world through calculation and commodification, they’re losing their world. Whether it’s here or someplace else, if you are inside those calculations and they’re being mapped on top of old forms of segregation, the question of discipleship is not simply how you should live, but where you should live and how you should rethink your life in a place. That’s what I want people to do: to really start to think about the placement of discipleship. If the incarnation teaches us anything, it’s that God cares about place.

**IF THE INCARNATION TEACHES US ANYTHING, IT’S THAT GOD CARES ABOUT PLACE.**

**JEAN BURCH**
Fuller Trustee and Senior Pastor, Community Bible Church of Greater Pasadena

In February 2016 I was invited to preach at Fuller’s All-Seminary Chapel. After much prayer, I was led to speak on Mark 6:45-52, titling my sermon “Our Response to the Challenge of Change.” I had no idea of the major changes taking place at Fuller at that time, and was surprised when several faculty and students thanked me afterwards for bringing a bit of encouragement to a difficult situation.

When I joined the Board of Trustees in January 2017, I entered into a process of disruption at Fuller caused by the necessity of change. I found my first board meeting—filled with discussion about Fuller moving from Pasadena—to be quite overwhelming. As a lifelong resident of Pasadena, I wondered what this would mean for the local community. Although I listened and tried to understand, it was hard to imagine our city without this institution at its center. I found it difficult to separate what my heart was feeling from what my head was hearing.

Then God sent me back to my message of February 2016. In the Mark passage Jesus, after feeding over 5,000, sent his disciples to the other side of the Sea of Galilee by boat while he went to the mountain to pray. Soon after, the disciples found themselves in the middle of a storm, needing to make it to shore without Jesus in the boat. What a disruption that must have been! Jesus ultimately saved the disciples, who had failed to control their situation. Why did they fail? “For they considered not the miracle of the loaves; for their hearts were hardened.” I was reminded that as difficult as disruption can be, from each one there is a lesson to be learned. God will be with us in the storm or he will meet us on the “other side.”

Now that the decision is made and Fuller is preparing to move to Pomona, I still struggle at times with the thought of Fuller being gone from my city. But then I remember past miracles—and am grateful to be part of a brand new thing.
Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, is in my extended family’s history. I was born in Pasadena when my father was a student at Fuller in its earliest days. My aunt was one of the first women to graduate from Fuller; she lived in Slessor Hall—today’s President’s Office. She met her husband, also a Fuller grad, on this campus. They have one son and one son-in-law who both graduated from Fuller. My brother and his wife met while students at Fuller; he even proposed to her on this campus. And I met my husband, John, when we began as students the same fall and lived in Taylor Hall, then Dorm 150. So at least three couples in my extended family met on this Pasadena campus and in these venerable buildings.

Pasadena and those old houses have always been part of my memories of Fuller. To be sure, buildings have been added and removed over the years. But the houses have always been there—often remodeled inside, but unchanged on the outside. The same is true of Payton Hall, where my office is. The more I visit other campuses, the more I realize how in need of upkeep these old buildings are. Heating and cooling systems don’t work well; ceiling tiles fall at random; windows don’t close. I have often joked that at Fuller we have our treasure—the people—in earthen vessels, namely, in those buildings that have always been part of us but don’t always serve us so well.

Still, I love this quirky Pasadena campus, those earthen vessels. They are part of my family’s heritage. It was here I found my vocation to become a scholar of the New Testament. Here I met my husband. On this campus our daughters played in the old game room and were part of Fuller’s old daycare. I have spent my entire teaching career here. I know that Fuller is defined much more by the treasure it bears than by the vessels that carry that treasure. But, to put it simply, I don’t want to leave those vessels. I don’t want us to go.
My department is all about services. I’m in charge of housing, custodial services, the mail center, food services, telecommunications, transportation, all the copiers on campus, water delivery, basically all the daily operations. This year, I will have worked on Fuller’s Pasadena campus for 30 years, and I’ve been attached to the city for that long. When my husband was a student, we even lived on Ford Place right next to campus for many years. We still live close now, so I go home for lunch—I’m just six minutes away!

Since 2008, my department has had a hard time—we’ve been cut, cut, cut. In custodial services, we’re down from three full-time employees to two; in the mail center, we’re down from four employees to three. In auxiliary services, we are also down from two employees to one. Our custodians used to clean the buildings every day, and now it’s reduced to only once a week for the offices. There aren’t as many students on campus as there used to be, and things are slowing down. I’ve heard from Lalo, who provides food service, that not as many people are coming to the refectory. It’s scary! I’m sure other departments are experiencing similar things, and we’re all functioning with minimum resources.

I haven’t been to Pomona yet, but I do have lots of questions. What will we do about mail rooms? What will we do about housing? Will it be affordable? What about food services—are we going to have a refectory? Will we have housing for international students? Who will clean the new building? Will this give us a chance to update our systems and build the building we want?

It’s going to be hard for me, but I know it’s a necessary move in order to stabilize and balance the budgets. We’ll see how it goes!
Before I can think about the protest at my Baccalaureate as a disruption, I’m led to a question I face daily: Am I a disruption?

Some think my black male body is a disruption to law and order: the incarceration rates of dark bodies—including friends and family of mine—are a testimony to this. Likewise, I have come to see that my truth is disruptive. Simply sharing what I experience as true is experienced by others as a disruption. Realizing this, I spend an excessive amount of energy trying to say what I think in ways that disrupt as little as possible.

I think, “I regret spending $1,600 on this class because the only required authors were white men, which communicated that white theology is normative while others are contextual. It made me wonder why I’m pursuing a degree if my thoughts will be treated as less relevant than those of my white peers.” But if I say this to a white person, I’ll make their life more difficult, I’ll disrupt their ease. So I say, “I would prefer a more diverse reading list.”

This is what it means to be a disruption: I shy away from telling the truth because I have been taught that it makes things harder for white people. I learned to say this part of the truth, but not that part—or to say it with this tone, not that tone.

I joined in the protest at Baccalaureate embedded by brothers and sisters more courageous than I, and am honored to have been a part of it. Wearing a mask before my colleagues, I told the whole truth for 30 minutes as a student. I had to filter the education I was paying for because it had the potential to harm me.

Was the protest a disruption? Because it aimed to disrupt the status quo, it can be called a disruption. But that is a sad reality I don’t want to admit yet. It confirmed, again, that because I am black, the truth of my experience is still a disruption in white spaces.

I love Fuller Seminary. I know so many people who have been blessed by its long history of faithfully providing educational opportunities for all sorts of people from all walks of life. I see the move to Pomona as in line with its mission to continue to prepare people of faith to be obedient to God’s call on their lives. There are four qualities needed for leadership today: decisiveness, the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and the ability to relentlessly deliver on one’s mission. The Fuller leadership looked at all the facts and made a decision that will enable them to relentlessly deliver on the incredible educational programs that define Fuller now and will define it in the future.

In 2020, more than 50 percent of five-year-olds in the United States will be non-white. In 15 years, universities must be able to be what the next generation of both non-white and white students need to thrive. Will this move to Pomona help Fuller to be ready for a more ethnically diverse future? I think so. Is it a bold move? Yes. Is it a good move? Absolutely. Fuller is people. People in Pasadena or Pomona—still on mission. Still at God’s service. I’m looking forward to seeing what God is going to unfold. We only know a little bit. Get ready for incredible years ahead—he is a God who wants the best of us, who goes before us, and who completes the work he has begun. And that is Fuller’s future.
I get up at 5 every morning to come to work in Pasadena. I leave at 6, catch the bus at 6:18, transfer to the Azusa station train, and get to work about 7:30. I’ve been doing this commute for 11 years. When we heard there was a possibility of Fuller moving to Pomona, my wife Lilian and I kept thinking, gosh, it would be nice to finally be close to work. We kept asking everybody—any word? Anything? We got excited and prayed that Fuller would move our way. We started hearing more rumors that Pomona was the number one choice and our excitement grew, and when it was officially announced at the employee meeting, it was such a relief. I can finally be close to work! I know some people aren’t real happy with the decision, because there’s so much history here. Some I’ve talked to say that when Fuller moves, they’re not moving and will leave. I think that’s kind of sad. I understand the history, I know that change is uncomfortable, but I also see that this could be a positive.

Our church is right across the street from the new location. When our pastor shared the news about Fuller’s moving, the church was so excited. When he was a seminarian, a church nearby had a huge impact on him, and he’s hoping that our church could have that impact on future Fuller students in Pomona. I also got a chance to talk to the mayor of Pomona, and when I told him I was employed at Fuller, he told me how excited the city is about the news. We were here for a season in Pasadena, and now we’re entering a new season. When I look at the future of Fuller, I don’t see that as a disruption at all— it’s a blessing!

As I’ve been telling people, there are a number of reasons I’m enthusiastic about Fuller’s move to Pomona. They include its missionally affordability for students, staff, and faculty, and the bright potential of the city itself.

One advantage of Pomona that I’ve not heard people talk about as much as I’d expect is its proximity to intellectual resources and partners. Pomona borders Claremont—their centers are about three miles apart, and this is surely the densest gathering of great liberal arts colleges in the western United States. That means scholarly peers, libraries, lectures, etc. Like most Fuller faculty, my work is interdisciplinary, and I’m so enthusiastic about being part of that. (I love you, USC, UCLA, HUC, and AJU—but thanks to LA traffic, we too rarely see each other.)

Make no mistake, this is a big change. There’s work ahead, and not a few challenges. One evening recently as I walked back to my office from dinner on Colorado Boulevard, I walked past the David Allan Hubbard Library, named for a beloved professor of Old Testament who wrote a book on the prophets entitled Will We Ever Catch Up with the Bible? I walked past lovely old houses built more than a century ago and palm trees planted not long after, in the golden glow of a Pasadena sunset. For all my optimism about Fuller’s future, I mourned a little. I comfort myself by remembering that the mission of God does not depend on location. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman: true worship is “neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... but in spirit and truth.”

Having been allowed an inside look at the whole process, I feel very good about where it’s led us, and about our future. There are big waves coming: I’m grabbing my surfboard to ride them—and I hope other people will, too.
Since I was a non-degree student at Fuller 60 years ago, I have seen many disruptions that have occurred here.

With recent disruptions I find myself experiencing three emotions. The first is gratitude for all that I have received and that has been accomplished here. The second is regret that my comfort zone is being invaded and I can no longer enjoy the benefits in quite the same way. The third is one of anticipation of what new things God will accomplish in the days ahead in this and other places.

In anticipating the future, I hold on to Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of Proverbs 3:21–26:

Dear friend, guard clear thinking and common sense with your life; don’t for a minute lose sight of them. They’ll keep your soul alive and well, they’ll keep you fit and attractive. You’ll travel safely, you’ll neither tire nor trip. You’ll take afternoon naps without a worry, you’ll enjoy a good night’s sleep. No need to panic over alarms or surprises, or predictions that doomsday’s just around the corner. Because God will be right there with you; he’ll keep you safe and sound.

Disruption can refer to several types of interruptions: a rupture that breaks apart, an event that throws things into disorder, or something that interrupts the normal course of things. In reflecting on Fuller’s move to Pomona, it feels like we are being torn away from Pasadena, we may fear being thrown into disorder, and we are ending the longstanding history of having the Pasadena campus as our home base. Some of us have been invested in Pasadena as a location for Fuller. Even as we see God’s providence in this move, we lament.

Interrupting the normal course of things is often uncomfortable, but this disruption has a different meaning when the normal state has included inequity and exclusion. Disruption is necessary. We need to reset— not only in how we strategically approach inclusion and equity, but also in terms of who we are as a Fuller community.

As I embark in my new role as Associate Provost for Faculty Inclusion and Equity, I pray that God would transform us as we reset and embolden us to engage in a strategic process that results in inclusive and equitable change for faculty, students, staff, and senior administration.

ALEXIS ABERNETHY
Associate Provost for Faculty Inclusion and Equity and Professor of Psychology

In June 2018 longtime faculty member Dr. Abernethy was appointed Associate Provost for Faculty Inclusion and Equity, a new position created, in part, to address Black student concerns by helping Fuller learn to better integrate practices of diversity, inclusion, and equity into its faculty, curriculum, and mission.
Online students now exceed the number of on-campus students at Fuller. The disruptive innovation of online education, however, has benefited some to the detriment of others. It has positively impacted me, because I would not have enrolled in Fuller’s MDiv program if I had been required to leave my ministry context in Brazil. At the same time it has meant, for example, that most on-campus students have been forced to take online classes because of insufficient enrollment in on-campus classes.

With online education increasingly becoming the rule, fundamental questions are raised for Fuller not only about how best to serve its growing online student population, but also about what traditional education at Fuller will look like in the future. Questions like these merit our deep self-reflection as a community. Should Fuller appoint a dean of online education to address the unique needs and concerns of online students? Should online professors be allowed to obtain tenure? Should Fuller allow students to pursue doctoral degrees fully online? Should Fuller make its online education available in more languages? How can Fuller have a greater impact in the communities in which its online students are located? Should Fuller encourage its administrators, faculty, and staff to travel periodically to communities in which large numbers of its online students reside, or encourage alumni and online faculty to mentor and network with online students from the same region? How can Fuller ensure that its online students have the same placement and continuing educational opportunities as its on-campus students?

Disruption has been a central theme of my entire professional life. It arrived as I started my career as an elementary teacher competing with thousands of recently dismissed teachers—many of whom carried a decade or more of excellence in the classroom. It continued when I switched my career focus from a classroom-centric K-12 plan to online graduate education. Perhaps harder still was letting go of a dream to be a classroom teacher and instead support other teachers from a distance. My dream was disrupted, and I often wondered why this was my reality.

My new role in teacher support arrived on the eve of arguably one of the most disruptive periods in the history of higher education. With the rapid growth of online learning, teachers are now increasingly finding themselves in a state of disruption. Each classroom is a variable that can now change with each term. Online learning has increased accessibility for countless students around the world, providing new opportunities for anyone with a stable internet connection. But this added opportunity also brings significant challenges and obstacles for teachers. The traditional classroom changed overnight and it now requires teachers to redesign the familiar. This new normal was one I had experienced myself, and one I could empathize with. God has blessed me with this opportunity to work alongside hundreds of amazing faculty as they reinvent themselves to teach online students. I get to help faculty reimagine, redesign, and think anew—something I absolutely love. Although I do miss the classroom sometimes, I find incredible joy in helping teachers teach with excellence.

I find joy in creating new opportunities for students to learn from any distance. Online learning has connected Fuller with students and faculty all around the world. It offers such a beautiful way to learn with God’s beloved across every tribe and nation. My new passion was birthed from a challenging disruption I didn’t want or ask for. It was hard, to be sure—but sometimes the change makes room for God to do amazing things.

Online learning has connected Fuller with students and faculty around the world.
I do not believe the word “disruption” has a distinctly positive or negative connotation. But it can serve as the vehicle for change, where it has been located for over 70 years. Understandably, this decision has grieved many in the Fuller community, but it has also reinvigorated many others. Disruption breeds uncertainty, but it can also catapult us ahead.

Disruption breeds uncertainty, but it can also catapult us ahead. Disruption breeds uncertainty, but it can also catapult us ahead into opportunity that was unsustainable prior to that disruption. As one of the most influential Christian seminaries in the world, Fuller has been provided this unique opportunity to reimagine itself and seminary education.

Spiritual attentiveness is enhanced in intercultural, transcultural, or intercultural settings. I push you to look at the different ways God is working in these types of settings. They become spaces where you can be attentive to new ways of doing ministry, because new encounters invite us to relativize our cultural framings and challenge us to recognize that other ways of looking at the church in mission might actually be more useful.

These encounters also force us to recognize our sins in a racialized and minoritized society. We in the North have not done a good job at serving in intercultural and interracial settings. Many of our churches and seminaries, even Fuller, talk well, declare well, study well, mean well. But sometimes we have been like the burro of the old Mexican song—one step forward, two steps back. We in the United States are created by European-based cultures and colonialism—even within our churches, be they conservative or progressive, fundamentalist or liberal.

Now I take a moment. Our colleagues are silently giving lament and testimony, and if you would like to join with them, you’re invited to also stand. The program will continue, but if you care about Fuller, if you care about this and want to give testimony to your caring, I invite you to stand.

The current silent lament that you are witnessing at this service right now calls us to recognize that our seminary’s struggles in this area have created an environment that has become toxic for many, and that’s why we wear the mask. The path forward is fraught with pain and danger because it will mean profound repentance not unlike Zacchaeus, who demonstrated his repentance by letting go of power, money, and influence. You graduates will have to deal with issues of race and intercultural relations in the current toxic environment of our world. Go forward knowing that this path will not be easily created, but it is here where the Spirit of the Lord wants to speak to us in new ways.

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Fuller has announced that it will uproot its primary campus and leave a city where it has been located for over 70 years. Understandably, this decision has grieved many in the Fuller community, but it has also reinvigorated many others. Even though some of the initiating factors to this decision related to financial and operational impact, I believe the potential opportunity for this reshaping of Fuller’s strategic and missional impact across the globe is far more significant and multidimensional. Inherent in this decision to move is a mindset where Fuller will need to assess, prepare, and preemptively adapt for the uncertainty and continued disruption ahead—all while maintaining the purpose of Fuller’s core mission.

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I come from Kenya, where we have a rich spirituality. But sometimes that spirituality has kept us from understanding mental illness. When someone is depressed, we say you need to pray, have more faith! If someone is hearing voices, we say it’s evil spirits; you need deliverance!

Yes, prayer is good, deliverance is good, but maybe psychotherapy, too, could work. Maybe medication, too, could work. Even after I came to Fuller, I didn’t think I needed therapy for myself. But God was nudging me—like when I went to China on a School of Psychology trip, and I saw one lady talk about her therapy experience with such a light in her eyes! The Lord gave me the image of a window with a lot of mud on it, and therapy cleared the mud so the light could shine through. I thought, “That is so powerful!” Eventually, I was convinced to try it myself, not necessarily because of a mental condition, but for my own self-growth. I was surprised at how much I loved the experience and what a sacred and growth space therapy became. I met God in ways that changed me, and as I saw myself anew, aspects of my self-identity were healed—I thought, “This is so beautiful! Why didn’t I start this process much earlier?” It was hard internal work that helped me embrace my humanity and be in touch with the parts of myself that I wanted to hide. This journey of becoming a therapist has meant embracing my imperfections, and that has allowed me to actually sit better with people, especially clients whose lives have been disrupted by mental illness.

The School of Psychology’s integration of theology and psychology has been a place of disruption and formation for me, and my call now is to take that message back to Kenya—and Africa. I want to be present when people are navigating disruptions related to their mental health and use what I learned to make a difference. My life was disrupted in a good way through therapy and journeying through the program. Now I want to take the lessons from that disruption back to my continent.

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We deplored in Germany; a half dozen Black evangelicals headed for the Berlin Congress on Evangelism in 1966. We were well acquainted, a neat handful of Black preachers who sought to represent the kingdom in the midst of an overwhelmingly white movement. A woman approached us and asked, “Is Dr. King on board?” “No, he is not,” James Earl Massey told her. During the years since, James and I would revisit her question now and then, feeling we still owed her an answer as to why Martin Luther King Jr. was not “on board” in Berlin—or at any other event where evangelicals worldwide gathered. The simple answer was that he had landed at a different foreign city, Chicago, to continue the civil rights movement there.

Not long ago we talked about that 1966 event. James laughed as he said, “Pannell, you and I are the last ones left from that gathering. The rest are all dead.” I teased him that that couldn’t be true. He ticked off the names of the others who were on that flight, and he was right. When I called his home this past June 24, I learned that there was only one left, and I told his wife that I would tease him for daring to leave me behind on my 89th birthday.

James Earl Massey was the featured speaker at the kick-off dinner for the opening of the William E. Pannell Center for African American Church Studies.

Dr. Pannell wrote these words soon after the death of noted preacher, educator, and author James Earl Massey, his longtime friend and co-laborer.
¡Ya No Más!/No More!

my desire to “say something good” inhibits me
paralyzed at the keyboard, at the edge
all the weight of vulnerability traps me
left alone in the silence of my own longings
longings, or channels and rivers of anger at the lies
that nothing can change
that good intentions are what’s most important
that hurt feelings matter more than dead bodies
we are not allowed to speak the truth
because truth demands change or more lies
lies coddle many of us, they whisper
niceness is the right way, niceness
that poisonous word i was taught
to restrain and refrain from truth because
privileged people do not say rude things
you should be grateful for what you have
you sound bitter and resentful
nice people do not say rude things
and it’s rude to say our life exists at the expense of others
my life for your death my white for your black
my dollar for your peso my love for control
how cynical how hopeless, you may think
how unchristian of me to speak in this way
but stay with me, cause there’s hope stay with me
they call it hope that things don’t have to stay this way
hope that anger and joy can find one another and kiss
wrap one another in arms of love not afraid to say
ya no aguantamos más we can’t take it no more
estas mentiras y vidas se acabaron these lies and lives are over
hope outta this mess is down the road, around the corner
living in the midst of classrooms, boardrooms, church pews, streets
do we see the meetings turning into assemblies into organizing into protests
do we hear the words the chants the sermons the cries of many as they say stop. this is killing us. this is part of the problem, you are part of the problem.
the winds are moving, sisters and brothers
loving laughing organizing speaking truth.
those with ears to hear, let them hear
those with eyes to see, let them see
and follow
to places where together we will shout
ya no aguantamos más we can’t take it no more
estas mentiras y vidas acaban las vidas y vidas son

FRANK SCOFFIELD NELLESSEN
MDiv alum; read Frank’s poem in Spanish online at Fuller.edu/Studios

TIMES OF CHANGE ARE ANYTHING BUT NEW TO FULLER.

Times of change are anything but new to Fuller.

When I came as a student in 1971 and was soon faced with signing up for a homiletics class, the problem as I saw it was not that I was the only woman in the entering MDiv class; and I didn’t even know that James Daane, my professor-to-be, thought it theologically improper for women to preach. It was just that I couldn’t imagine a class less related to anything I intended to do, ever.
The strictly pragmatic reason I was taking the standard MDiv curriculum was because a Rockefeller “Trial Year in Seminary” fellowship would pay for courses then required by the PhD in clinical psychology, the program to which I had been accepted as the only woman in that entering class, too.
But homiletics?!?

I sat down to write my first sermon with, shall we say, a bad attitude. But God is full of surprises. In writing that sermon, it was as if I felt the heavens open, and my entire reason for being at Fuller changed and never wavered, despite my continuing with the psychology degree. Daane, whatever his views, treated me fairly and became a beloved friend. One day I dared ask him what he thought about a woman who felt called to preach. He answered memorably, “It’s not my job to define you. That’s God’s job.”

I never looked back: I was ordained as a Presbyterian minister (at a time when only about 3 percent of Presbyterian clergy were female), served gladly as a pastor for about a dozen years, and then was called to Fuller to serve as, you guessed it, a teacher of preaching.

Those early years at Fuller were precious to me. Looking at major changes is hard. But it’s not my job to define Fuller. That’s God’s job.

MARGUERITE SHUSTER
Harold John Ockenga Professor Emerita of Preaching and Theology
My relationship with Fuller began while I was serving a 30-year prison sentence at the California Institution for Women as the tragic result of a domestic violence incident. While a prisoner, I first earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology but, more importantly, I learned how to lean on Jesus—and for 28 years was the lay pastor for the prison psychiatric unit.

In 2003, as I was approaching the 50-year milestone of my life, a dear friend and mentor found Fuller’s Certificate of Christian Studies program for me: six master’s-level classes I could do through distance learning. Computers were not available in prison. I did my coursework by electric typewriter, cassette recordings, and snail mail. On completing that program, I had to submit an integrative essay explaining how Fuller impacted my vocation. The next thing I knew, Fuller had invited me into the MA in Theology program with the necessary classes offered by distance learning. The financial burden seemed impossible, but my friend assured me that God never calls us to do something he can’t afford to pay for.

When my friend could no longer help me financially, Fuller was there with scholarships. I was released from prison in 2010 with five classes left, and I graduated in 2012. Yet life still doesn’t go smoothly. I was not accepted into Fuller’s PhD program the first time I applied—but was placed in the ThM program, where I refined my academic skills while waiting to reapply. In 2014, I was accepted into the PhD program. Reaching back to my sisters in prison, I focused my research on the communication gaps between women prisoners and the Christian volunteers who minister to them.

I turned 65 on the day I submitted my dissertation. Remarkably, Fuller believes that a 65-year-old convict is redeemable and has invested in my future. So at an age when many are contemplating retirement, I find myself being called an emerging scholar whose future augurs well for her chosen ministry of teaching, writing, and advocating for women. I think this proves that God still works miracles.

LINDA BARKMAN
PhD in Intercultural Studies and MA in Theology alum

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I was a “missionary.” But I don’t feel qualified to be called a missionary. My missionary life was so painful that I left that life. I couldn’t endure the situation because my wife and I had moved five times—all internationally: Central Asia, South Africa, Cambodia, England, South Korea.

Whenever we went to a new place, I tried to settle down. I joined ministries and made many friends. I became a member of the community. However, situations always changed and I had to leave each place for various reasons—visa issues, conflicts, unexpected plans. What kind of life is that? Am I a missionary or an international sojourner? I couldn’t accept my life. It wasn’t what I had wanted.

One day, my suppressed stress finally burst out. I made an irreversible mistake to my wife. We separated.

I was alone. And my next destination was Haiti, the poorest country in the world. I had always dreamed of becoming a good development practitioner as well as a good missionary. I had done various development and mission projects in those countries. However, my reality was too harsh. I didn’t want that kind of lifestyle anymore. It was so painful.

On the way back to South Korea from Haiti, I stopped over in Los Angeles. And I joined the Fuller community by God’s guidance and grace. While I was at Fuller, I reconciled with my wife who was in South Korea. She came here, and we are now together again. It has now been two and a half years that I haven’t moved to other countries. But I am not sure how long it will continue. I still have an identity as a sojourner.

Someone may say that the Christian mission is to participate in suffering. Or someone may advise me about the vulnerability that comes with mission. Yes. Thank you. I know. But I can’t deny that the disruption and the suffering are so painful.

Am I ready to join the missionary life again?
In my childhood bedroom, I used to have a drawing of a young girl on a swing. Her head was thrown back, and her face displayed pure exhilaration. The two ropes of the swing were held at the top by a large hand, with the caption, “Will you trust me?” Included at the bottom was Proverbs 3:5–6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

In the midst of life’s disruptions, I would reflect on this drawing. Did I fully trust that God was in control? Could I be like this girl and actually enjoy the process?

Hence, when life disruptions occurred, I saw them as opportunities—to soar higher, to embark on a new adventure. My journey from a life of piano into full-time college ministry was influenced by a major disruption: I broke my finger on the first day of music conservatory, and my left hand was in a cast for six months.

Another disruption came when my parents asked me to consider being the guardian for my youngest sister, who was living in Korea at the time with them. This leap of faith at the age of 24 opened doors into investment banking. More recently, my heart-crushing divorce was the disruption that forced me to evaluate my true desires, which guided me to become a marriage and family therapist at Fuller.

Each of these disruptions called me into discernment and obedience. Because I knew that God was holding the swing of my life, I could take huge risks without fear. And God was faithful to his calling, opening doors and surrounding me with support.

Taking these leaps of faith also meant preparation: countless hours of praying, researching, planning, studying, and making connections. Following God’s call not only involves courage and trust but also a lot of hard work. My prayer is that we at Fuller would see our current disruption as an opportunity to experience exhilaration and that we would devote ourselves to faithful preparation.

Because I knew that God was holding the swing of my life, I could take huge risks without fear.
According to the Enneagram I’m a 3. It means, among other things, that I’m driven to be productive, I hate to waste time, I object to being interrupted, and I find inefficiency annoying. But on April 10, 2018, everything in my life was disrupted.

My sister was in a near-fatal car accident in Austin, Texas. As she stood by the side of the road, a truck hit her at full speed, sending her body sprawling unconsciously through the air. She suffered damage to her brain, her carotid arteries, her ribs and liver, and her face was shattered and would need to be reconstructed. She was rushed to the ICU where she’d spend five weeks. Knowing we were needed close at hand, my family left our home in Houston in order to move into my sister’s home in Austin. For five weeks, ten of us lived under the same roof, the grandparents included.

During this time, I saw my brother-in-law become physically ragged and my small children fall through the cracks. I saw my parents feel the burden of old age. My wife and I slept in bunk beds, in separate bedrooms, and struggled to stay connected. I fell behind on all my projects, and I battled a low-grade irritation at the instability of our days.

But I also witnessed other things. I saw fractured, embittered relationships become reconciled. I saw the body of Christ become God’s sacrificial body. I saw a non-Christian friend break down weeping, crying out to God to heal my sister. I saw myself freed, for a spell, from the pressure I put on myself to measure my worth by my achievements.

And while there is still pain and plenty that cannot be recovered—along with an uncertain future—I have seen, and heard, and tasted, and touched the grace of God in my life, and in the lives of my family and friends and even of strangers, through the disruption, not despite it—and for that I can honestly thank God.

DAVID TAYLOR
Assistant Professor of Theology and Culture and Director of Brehm Texas

On April 21, 2018, my mother passed away after battling a brain tumor for seven long years. Her decline was excruciatingly slow. Initially she had six months to live; that stretched into five years. Eventually, however, the initial disruption of her diagnosis became my new normal: I was the son of the mother with a brain tumor. I guess this is what happens to disruptions with enough time. Now, however, I am the son of a deceased mother, and this has felt more acute.

For the deceased, death is the end or a new beginning. But for the living, death is a major disruption. Even though death is normal and expected, it is, in experience, the most unexpected and abnormal thing. I knew my mom’s death was coming. But that phone call on April 21 was unlike anything I prepared for. “She’s gone. She’s really gone.” Nothing prepared me for the chasm I felt in my heart. Even expected disruptions feel forcibly invasive.

For weeks, I didn’t go to class. I didn’t go to work. I couldn’t read or focus. I couldn’t plan or think ahead. And I did a lot of mind-numbing activity, such as watching reruns or building Legos. My life felt foreign. I would regularly ask, “What am I doing with my life?” or “Who am I?” Slowly, I was able to go back to classes and work. Receiving became enjoyable again. I met with friends and learned to laugh again. The dawn of a new normal was rising, and the light absorbed what darkness tried to hide: disruptions become a part of the new normal.

The shift from disruption to new normal is unpredictable: there’s no way to rush it because there’s no real deadline. One could try to rush the shift, but the shift would ultimately have its way: you’ll either be reeled back or pushed forward, which can be scary because it can be uncomfortable. But the undying hope is that the shift will always be there—as long as there will be a new morning, the shift to new normal is possible.

SOOHO LEE
Current MDiv Student and Office and Project Assistant in the School of Theology Dean’s Office

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Who is Fuller? Fuller Seminary is an evangelical, multidimensional, graduate institution committed to forming global leaders for kingdom vocations. Responding to changes in the church and world, Fuller is transforming the seminary experience for both traditional students and those beyond the classroom, providing theological formation that helps Christ followers serve as faithful, courageous, innovative, collaborative, and fruitful leaders in all of life, in any setting.

Fuller offers 17 master’s and advanced degree programs—with Spanish, Korean, and online options—through its Schools of Theology, Psychology, and Intercultural Studies, as well as rich and varied forms of support for the broader church. Nearly 3,500 students from 80 countries and 110 denominations enroll in Fuller’s degree programs annually, and our 45,000 alumni serve as ministers, counselors, teachers, artists, nonprofit leaders, businesspersons, and in a variety of other vocations around the world.

What makes Fuller unique? Fuller is a unique institution. Students receive an integrated education—combining a master’s degree with both theological and academic components. Fuller’s unique model is rooted in what we call the Fuller Seminary Experience, a set of distinctive characteristics that include the following:

1. **Global Engagement**
   - Fuller students come from more than 80 countries, and Fuller offers online instruction in 110 denominations and 3,500 students from 80 countries and 110 denominations enrol in Fuller’s degree programs annually, and our 45,000 alumni serve as ministers, counselors, teachers, artists, nonprofit leaders, businesspersons, and in a variety of other vocations around the world.

2. **Holistic Education**
   - Fuller students receive a holistic education that combines theological, academic, and spiritual formation.

3. **Ministry Focus**
   - Fuller students are equipped to serve in ministry through a combination of academic and theological training.

4. **Innovative Pedagogy**
   - Fuller students are taught in a variety of innovative ways, including in-class instruction, online courses, and international study programs.

5. **Experiential Learning**
   - Fuller students have opportunities for experiential learning, including internships, service learning, and international study programs.

6. **Diverse Faculty**
   - Fuller students are taught by a diverse faculty of experienced theologians and academics.

7. **Diverse Student Body**
   - Fuller students come from diverse backgrounds and are enrolled in a variety of degree programs.

8. **Church Partnership**
   - Fuller students are partnered with churches around the world, providing opportunities for practical experience.

9. **Spiritual Formation**
   - Fuller students are equipped for spiritual formation and leadership through a combination of academic and theological training.

10. **Global Missions**
    - Fuller students are equipped to serve in global missions through a combination of academic and theological training.

11. **Community Engagement**
    - Fuller students are engaged in community service and social justice initiatives.

12. **Financial Aid**
    - Fuller students have access to a variety of financial aid options, including scholarships and grants.

13. **International Programs**
    - Fuller students have opportunities to study abroad and engage in international programs.

14. **Online Learning**
    - Fuller students have access to online courses and degree programs.

15. **Innovative Technology**
    - Fuller students are taught using innovative technology and online platforms.

16. **Global Network**
    - Fuller students are connected to a global network of alumni and partners.

17. **Innovative Curriculum**
    - Fuller students are taught in a curriculum that is innovative and responsive to the needs of the global church.

Fuller’s unique model is a response to the needs of the global church, and Fuller students are equipped to serve in a variety of vocational contexts.
From the Editor

Apropos for a magazine disrupted by “disruption,” this editorial note does not start the magazine, but ends it with a note about colleague and friend David Kiefer, who has fallen asleep. He was faithful and precise and surprisingly tender, with a sense of humor that snuck up on you. We knew it was summer when David showed up in our office in casual shirts and hat; we knew it was fall when we saw him walking on campus in his smart suit and tie. He didn’t tolerate fools, he helped whenever help was needed, he lived a life of great meaning and significance for those who believe that our work here is to love God with all our hearts and souls and minds and to love our neighbors as ourselves. He had somnambulistic that he bore without self-pity, he was greatly respected, and in the last year of his life he found love and joy on unexpected and full that it actually changed the shape of his face. That made me so happy for him—so happy—that whenever I saw him I grinned and he grinned back. The last time we met he said, “Let’s have lunch and I’ll tell you the story of my love!” He married that love, Linda, late in August, and a few weeks later he was gone.

The emotionally charged weekend originally planned as moving days he spent in a hospital bed, his bride spent in vigil, the community spent in prayer, and some 17 Fuller friends spent moving all of his belongings. The extraordinary group of his staff and their families who pulled together to put muscle to their prayers would “not seek any sort of recognition for their service to our dear friend and his wife,” one said, and declined to be mentioned until another rightly said, “It’s a bit of good news to share with a community that could use some.” Yes.

I look forward to hearing the full story from David on the other side; in the meantime, rest in peace, dear brother. And thank you (you know who you are) for showing, as School of Intercultural Studies Dean Scott Sunquist put it, “the best of Fuller” to David’s loved ones.

+ LAURELLE FARRER is chief storyteller and vice president of communications.

Several of David’s colleagues thought it would be fitting to have a scholarship in his name because of how he loved students. Therefore, Fuller is establishing the David Kiefer Scholarship Fund. Checks can be made to Fuller Theological Seminary, and marked for this purpose. David is pictured, top left, with Ibi Labberton at the 2017 ceremony where he received his 40-year service award. Colleagues speak at his memorial service (upper left) as does his new bride, Linda (near left).
Let the Buildings Speak: Did you have a memorable experience in one of our Pasadena campus buildings? Help us honor this space that has been our home for over seven decades by sharing that memory with us—what happened, when, in what building—at editor@fuller.edu.