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Fuller Magazine, Issue 014, 2019 - Suffering With

Fuller Theological Seminary

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**STORY** Rick Reynolds, pictured above, sees himself and the image of God in those experiencing poverty and homelessness in Seattle  

**THEOLOGY** This issue explores the theological realities of "suffering with" through a collection of articles curated by Cynthia Eriksson  

**VOICE** The Fuller community reflects on the topics of race and inclusion, vocation, and embodied learning in a digital world
From the Very Beginning
the Word Was with God,
by Dao Zi. Wash-ink painting,
83"x20" x 3, 2017. Dao Zi,
artist, poet, and critic, says
of his work, “ink painting
is the art of ‘transforming
blood into ink’: the most
unselfish love manifested,
the most unworthy person
reborn, with world outlook
renewed, ink painting is no
longer ink but new life.”

Dao Zi was one of eleven
Chinese Christian artists,
from both mainland China
and the USA, hosted by
Fuller’s China Initiative
on April 25-27, 2019. A
symposium was held in
which the artists shared
their spiritual journeys in
words and visual art. Their
works were exhibited on
campus through June 15.
See more of Dao Zi’s work
on pp. 11 and 98–99.
To Suffer Together That We May Be Transformed Together

I don’t want to do a deep dive on suffering, Associate Professor of Psychology and PsyD Program Chair Cynthia Eriksson told the FULLER studio editorial advisory board last year. She preferred to focus on what it means to “suffer with,” she clarified, rather than delving into what it means to suffer alone.

So began an investigation—for her and her colleagues who have graced us with their writings in this issue’s theology section—on what it means to accompany those who suffer. Familiar territory to Dr. Eriksson, who specializes in, among other things, posttraumatic stress disorder. “In the deep work of trauma recovery,” she once wrote, “understanding the human response to tragedy and grief is especially important. This knowledge orients us to a position of grace as we work to create places of safety, rituals of grief and connection, and opportunities to connect for trauma survivors. Walking with others through trauma, attending to our own trauma survivors. Walking with others through trauma, attending to our own trauma.”

In an era when suffering is, for some, a strangely motivated competition, “suffering with” breaks the trends of individualism and inches us toward communal life and the transformation Dr. Eriksson writes about.

Mutual transformation is the goal here at Fuller—part of our ethos as well as an element that defines our aspirations, especially in the era of disruption that we are facing.” Our choosing to “suffer with” connects us deeply with the incarnation, reverberating the love of a God who chose to become human—God with us—so that we would not be alone in the sometimes dark journey toward hope.

There are several stories in this issue, too, as with every issue of FULLER magazine, of those who have given their lives to walk with the suffering and found their lives enriched for it. Every cup of suffering is full, I have heard it said, acknowledging that pain is not only universal but a basis for such Christlike empathy. In an era when suffering is, for some, a strangely motivated competition, “suffering with” breaks the trends of individualism and inches us toward communal life and the transformation Dr. Eriksson writes about.
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We are not only those who “weep with those who weep,” of course. We also “rejoice with those who rejoice.” But it is definitely meant to be both. While all suffer, suffering does not automatically breed a readiness to suffer with others. This is where Paul lifts up the suffering of Jesus as the precursor that has touched the lives of all those in Corinth. We are to be motivated and enabled to suffer with others not just because we also suffer, but primarily because we who in Christ know One who suffered with us and gave us comfort. This is the soil from which Christian compassion is explained and fortified. People ask me if I miss being a pastor. I understand the question, but it assumes difference more than similarity between being a president and being a pastor. I believe what mattered most to me personally about being a pastor is what still matters most to me about being a president: the privilege of standing with others in their stories of joy, suffering, and of everything in between. These are the

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함께할 특권을 갖습니다. 그럴 때마다 예수님의 함께 고난 받으시는 사랑이 고난 가운데 있는 저를 품어주시며 제 마음을 열어주셨고 연민의 마음이 커지게 하셨습니다. 분명 이것은 저의 직책이나 역할 때문이 아니라, 적나라한 저의 궁핍함을 예수님께서 따뜻한 치유의 사랑으로 감싸주시기 때문일 것입니다.

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Jesus holds with tender, healing love.
It seems hard to look around at our world and not see suffering in every direction. When the plague devastated 14th-century Europe, it was often the Christians who most distinctively stayed in the cities to care for the dying—an instinct born of knowing the God of all mercy and compassion. Whenever this has been the church’s reputation, the gospel has been authenticated. And when such love is not our reputation, or even worse, when it is the opposite, it is no wonder that our gospel is repudiated.

All who follow Jesus must ask: Have we been loved by God in our suffering? If so, then suffering with our suffering world is our vocation. God’s people can and must embrace and embody it, or we apparently have no good news.
A Hug
AND
a Coke

Flight attendant Kristalyn Simler finds that small acts of hospitality can have a significant impact

Written by JOY NETANYA THOMPSON
Photographed by NATE HARRISON
As Kristalyn Simler (MAGL ’11) approached her 40th birthday, she started to feel that her time at Young Life International, where she’d worked for 13 years, was done. While she wholeheartedly supported Young Life’s mission to “reach the furthest kid out,” she sensed the need to expand her ministry. She’d heard someone say, “How can you love the world that God loves if you haven’t seen the world?” and it sparked something in her. “I just knew in my heart that I wanted more people to know who Jesus is,” she says.

With these feelings stirring, Kristalyn returned home from a work trip to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and saw a sign advertising that Alaska Airlines was hiring flight attendants. She’d never considered working for an airline, but the moment seemed God-inspired—and she decided to go for it. “I literally saw a sign and never would have thought about it otherwise,” she says. For such a dramatic career change, Kristalyn didn’t experience shocked reactions from friends and family; rather, everyone from her husband to her friends expressed confidence in her choice. “You’re perfect for it,” they told her. “Growing up,” says Kristalyn, “my mom used to say she should have named me Kristalyn GO instead of Kristalyn Jo! I always loved going places; I love people and people watching.” She has a track record of making unconventional and sometimes adventurous life choices, from living in Costa Rica for several years with her husband and having her first child there, to deciding to adopt a second child. While working for Young Life International, she almost never said no to a work trip. Becoming a flight attendant at age 40 made sense to her and her community and, four years later, she hasn’t regretted it.

True to her spirited nature, Kristalyn boldly ventured into her new vocation, where her ministry is just as intentional as it was while working for Young Life. “The ministry part comes in the jump seat, sitting and talking with other flight attendants,” she says. “Everyone is going through a lot and you never realize it.” Well, you never realize it unless you ask how they are doing, as Kristalyn so compassionately does. Instead of picking up a book or making small talk about flying schedules, she makes a point to ask how their day went before getting to the airport, or if anything had happened the day before. That’s when the stories pour out: one recently divorced coworker quietly shares the ups and downs of securing child care, while another confides that he had just helped his aging father move into an assisted living facility.

Never knowing what will come up, Kristalyn employs her adaptable temperament in these conversations, ready to bend and flex and offer her own steady smile. “People have commented on how peaceful I am,” she says. For her, ministry is simply “loving people where they are at—literally in the jump seat, but also their place in life.” She rarely flies with the same coworkers twice, but she’ll often follow up on meaningful conversations with a little note in their office mailbox, offering encouragement or saying that she’d prayed for them.

Kristalyn’s ministry of encouragement in the small things extends just as much to the passengers on her flights. From the Midwest to the South, the East Coast to Hawaii and Alaska, the routes she flies offer opportunities to interact with people from all different cultures within and outside of the United States. A graduate of Fuller’s MA in Global Leadership program, she credits her cross-cultural communication courses for preparing her for this part of the job. “It was very applicable to what I now do on a daily basis,” she says. She also found the broad program to validate all of her natural gifts, like a passion for social justice and loving people from different cultures. “The reason I got a degree in global leadership,” she explains, “is because I’ve always had a heart for the whole world.”

As she describes her job, it’s clear that Kristalyn finds real joy in truly seeing others—paying attention to what makes them unique or what burdens they might be carrying. Even though working on a flight can be extremely fast-paced, “I take the time to look at people,” Kristalyn says. Handing out beverages, she tries to make eye contact with passengers who seem down, or give an extra cookie to a person she senses might sometimes be overlooked. From the Spanish-speaking grandma traveling alone to the moody teenager on a family vacation, Kristalyn tries to connect with whoever ends up on her flight. “I just want to let people know that I see them.”

Sometimes, seeing her passengers means handing out Kleenex, other times it’s laughing at their jokes. She references Romans 12, where Paul writes about rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn. Kristalyn remembers one flight that affected her deeply early in her flight attendant career, traveling a route the airline calls “the milk run” because it stops at
many remote Alaskan villages along the way to its final destination. This particular milk run took place shortly after a small sightseeing plane crashed in Alaska, and Kristalyn’s flight was full of passengers whose loved ones had died in the crash. “It wasn’t a direct flight for any of those people to get out and go directly home, so we had to go three more little stops on this milk run,” she says. She still gets choked up thinking about it—remembering one woman who’d been celebrating her wedding anniversary and lost her husband in the crash; another who had been on a trip with her grown children and husband was now flying home alone. Kristalyn walked the aisles, offering tissues and a listening ear. “I was hugging passengers,” she recalls, clearly moved by the experience. “I was like, ‘I don’t know you and I’ll never see you again, but you’re in the depths of despair, so I can at least give you a hug and a Coke.’”

Another memorable time had Kristalyn rejoicing with those who rejoiced on a plane chartered by a cannery based in Alaska. The flight was full of mostly men heading up for a short but brutal season of hard work. “Many didn’t know English fluently and I wondered if they fully knew what they were getting themselves into,” Kristalyn recalls. On such charter flights, the canneries work with the airline to provide certain food and beverage selections for the passengers, and sometimes they don’t provide anything at all. But this one time, the flight had been catered incorrectly, and Kristalyn was able to provide her passengers with the finest she had to offer from the first-class galley—which she served to them on elegant plates with real silverware. “At first everyone declined my offer, thinking they had to pay,” she says, “but once they understood they didn’t have to, I just filled their trays and laid it before them.”

As they began to eat, she watched as many sat a little bit taller, Kristalyn remembers. “Even now as I recall that trip, it brings a big smile to my face and makes my heart crunch a little bit,” she shares. “They were thankful, gracious, surprised, and joyful. It was a gift to give the unexpected to people who weren’t expecting anything.”

It’s that same attitude that has allowed Kristalyn to have a fulfilling ministry in an unconventional career as a flight attendant. She brings to each flight a similar posture: thankful, gracious, joyful—not expecting anything, but treating each person, each experience, as a gift.

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“I just want to let people know that I see them.”
Rick Reynolds shares how in choosing to look at—and not past—the poor, he’s seen himself and the image of God

Written by ANDRE HENRY
Photographed by NATE HARRISON

“W e d o n’t think of ourselves as being garbage generators,” Rick Reynolds (MAT ’85) chuckles while explaining the work he stumbled into at Seattle’s Operation Nightwatch. “We got somebody hauling it off for us, whereas people sleeping outside don’t have that luxury.” His work has required him to look deeply at those who are often invisible to mainstream society, which he says has been a transformative experience.

Operation Nightwatch is a faith-based compassion ministry that seeks to reduce the impact of poverty and homelessness. Before joining the organization 25 years ago, Rick was attending Seattle Pacific University, training to become a school teacher. However, after one quarter of student teaching, he decided to drop out of the university’s School of Education. “It was my senior year; I only had two quarters to finish up, and after one quarter of teaching, I hated it,” he explains. “I have nothing but the highest respect for people who can manage a classroom. The problem was that I had a high tolerance of chaos, and that doesn’t work in a classroom.”

Afterward, Rick’s vocational path led from Seattle Pacific to Fuller’s Seattle campus.

During his first quarter in seminary, Rick seemed to find his calling with Operation Nightwatch. Although he was not yet ordained, he bought a clerical collar to wear while passing out pizzas to Seattle’s poor as a volunteer with the organization. “Nightwatch said if you’re on an ordination track, which I was, they didn’t have any qualms about letting you wear the collar,” he explains. Ten years later, Rick became the organization’s executive director.

To combat homelessness, Operation Nightwatch provides some basic survival services, including a dispatch center that feeds and provides access to shelter for about 120 to 140 single adults. They also have an apartment building for 24 formerly homeless seniors. “It’s very simple housing, kind of dormitory-style,” Rick explains. “But it’s a permanent rental, so people have a bed, a dresser, a refrigerator, a place to call home, and a community around them, which is really great.” He says that these basic survival services are essential for people experiencing homelessness to get stable. Otherwise, “they tend to go from being a one-time homeless person to being periodically homeless, because they have these recurring problems, to being somebody who’s stuck on the street.”

Twenty-five years into doing this work, Rick says he has seen significant changes in the relationship between the city and its homeless population. He remembers that years ago it didn’t take long for people to move from a shelter into some kind of permanent housing. “But as the downtown and closed-in neighborhoods have become gentrified, a lot of people have been priced out,” he says. “And so that’s when despair settles in, hopelessness and then drugs and alcohol become more of an issue, and mental health issues start to surface. It’s pretty heartbreaking, really.”

Rick speaks of the divide between the city’s homeless and mainstream people as “sadly ironic.” He tells a story to illustrate that those with homes are not so different from the homeless: “The newspaper covered how an area of town was being cleared out by the authorities, and likely needed to be. The mayor was proudly showing off the mess that had been left behind by ‘filthy homeless people’ on the little greenbelt area,” he recalls. “But buried on another page was an article about a 30 million gallon sewer overflow into Lake Washington that barely ruffled anybody’s feathers at the time. Ten million gallons of sewage from people...
living in houses dumped into a local lake, but we’re going to focus on the half ton of garbage that homeless people left behind, because they are forced to sleep outside and don’t have anything to do with their cars and bottles and effluent.” He says he wishes people could see that “human beings are human beings, and everybody’s worthy of dignity and respect. They all have the stamp of God on them.”

The problem, Rick suggests, is that cultural lenses of prejudice often make it difficult for us to recognize the image of God in the poor. “They’re all created in the image of God, and that’s the thing: I want people to look, and not just look past.”

Working with the poor has required Rick to truly look at the poor and to confront his own prejudices.

His first year on the job with Operation Nightwatch, he had a memorable exchange with a man named Ronnie. To Rick, Ronnie fit all of the stereotypes that many assign to the homeless: “He was loud, obnoxious, drunk, heard things that nobody else could hear, and was getting barred from one shelter after another.”

One night, while standing in front of the shelter with his homeless friends, Ronnie asked, “Pastor Rick, ain’t I beautiful?” Telling the story, Rick pauses for a second. “He’s looking at me with this big crooked grin on his face,” he recalls. “I said, ‘Ronnie, you’re beautiful.’ I’d come up next to him to try to do an old seminary buddy hug. And he throws his arms around me. He’s hunched down. He’s six inches taller than me. His cheek is pressed up against my cheek. Pulls back, kisses me on the cheek, and off he goes to shelter, into the night.”

He admits that he was initially “self-congratulatory” about that exchange with Ronnie. However, upon later reflection, he had an epiphany: “Sometimes I’m the ‘Ronnie.’ I’m the one who doesn’t smell so great. I’m the one who doesn’t act right. You know? That homeless guy has got every bit of God’s grace on him that you have.”

Rick suggests that if we are intentional about looking at the poor, we’ll also have our prejudices challenged, much like his were with Ronnie. “We have these assumptions about people standing on street corners. Panhandlers are who we see,” he says. “But if you just keep your eyes open, you’re going to see homeless people that go to work every day, and homeless people that are doing the best job they can to stay out of trouble, and are peaceable, funny, intelligent, talented people.”

Sometimes Rick has run into a homeless person he knows through Operation Nightwatch at their workplace. “They’re horrified that I’m going to out them, because there’s such a stigma attached to being homeless that nobody wants to let anybody know, and they don’t want their families to know,” he says. “Some of them have families out of town; they’d be mortified if they found out a loved one was homeless.”

After two and half decades, Rick still understands the temptation many of us have to look past the poor. “There’s an awkwardness when you encounter somebody who’s maybe panhandling or sitting around. And we all kind of do that little dance around them, and we don’t want to look too closely,” he says, recalling how he recently tried to avoid eye contact with someone panhandling at a stoplight. “That awkwardness only intensified when he saw that the panhandling man was someone he knew. ‘I’m still trying to overcome that avoidance. It’s something that everybody needs to get over.’”

If we can manage to get over that, Rick says, he hopes that people can graduate from “the acknowledgement of the poor to basic humane treatment.” He suggests keeping an extra bottle of water in your car to pass out, or a soft granola bar—“because a lot of these guys can’t chew very well; they don’t have good teeth.” And then, he continues, “maybe moving beyond charity to advocacy: speaking up when they’re making it illegal to sleep in your car, or banning sidewalk loitering.”

He believes in the power of looking at—and not past—the poor to gradually transform us, because he continues to experience that transformation himself. It’s why, he says, 25 years later, he’s still excited about his work with Operation Nightwatch. Rick dreams that, perhaps, a commitment on the part of everyday people to refuse to look past the poor could lead to a world without tent cities. “I don’t know what the way forward is,” he says. “I don’t know how it’s going to happen, but I believe that God’s future for us is that there’s equity and social justice and care for all human beings.”

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At the Wooten Center in South Los Angeles, Naomi McSwain uses education to help young people thrive

Written by JEROME BLANCO
Photographed by LINDSEY SHEETS

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In south Los Angeles, on 91st and Western, a row of six storefronts faces the humming streets. A colorful mural is painted along a cinderblock wall on one side, detailed with the words “love, understanding, compassion.” On the other end of the mural is a plea: “Please stop the killing because the pain is forever.” Even from the outside, one can sense the weight of the work done in the Al Wooten Jr. Youth Center.

Inside the youth center is a series of interconnected rooms—winding and maze-like in order to connect what used to be six separate retail stores. University pennants line the hallways. Tacked to a bulletin board are college plan worksheets filled out by students from third to twelfth grade, detailing their career aspirations and goals for higher education. Naomi McSwain (MAICS ’09), executive director of the center, explains the comprehensive after-school and college prep programs the nonprofit offers. Their CollegeTrek and Summer Fun Camp activities are all based on California’s subject requirements for high school graduation and university admissions. Along with homework assistance and tutoring, the center offers world languages and culture, performing and visual arts, and SAT prep workshops. Summer classes have featured aerospace engineering and computer animation with curricula, materials, and instructors provided by NASA and Disney. Over 350 kids, from all over the South LA area, are helped by one or another of their programs annually.

Naomi knows the center is involved in crucial, life-changing work. But she has her own personal ties to the center, too. Alton Wooten Jr., for whom the center is named, was her cousin, killed at random in a drive-by shooting—a gang initiation—in 1989. He was 35. Well loved, he was seen by family and friends as “everybody’s big brother.” The center was born out of his family’s determination to establish something in his honor that went against the spirit and system of violence that ended his life. Naomi says, “We couldn’t let him be just another statistic.”

The late Myrtle Faye Rumph—Al’s mother and Naomi’s aunt—founded the Wooten Center in 1990. To affirm the center’s purpose, hanging in one hallway are quilts made up of panels honoring community members who lost their lives to violence. Al’s panel, made by his mother, is displayed next to too many others. The memorials to the lost next to the college pennants on the walls speak the heart of the center’s mission: education as a life-saving alternative to violence. Naomi herself faced the choice between these diverging paths. In high school she was involved in gangs, selling drugs and running from gunfire. But a combination of her mom pushing her to church and time spent at a local youth center proved a turning point. The church helped change her heart. The center helped her turn straight Fs into straight As, leading to an education that saved her from what would have been a very different life. Of the Wooten Center’s rigorous college prep system and robust educational bent, Naomi explains, “We’re doing the kind of program I needed.”

But arriving at youth center work wasn’t a straightforward path for Naomi. While she was involved in the center at its founding, she left to pursue a career in journalism—reporting, for years, on the violence that plagued the LA area, including the civil unrest in 1992 over the Rodney King beating. “I was at Florence and Normandie that night,” she says. She’d lived minutes away.

Later, she left South LA to cover gang violence in Pasadena. She wrote on killing after killing, churning out stories until it burned her out. She felt her stories offered no solutions—the rapid nature of the news cycle didn’t grant her the space or time—and they even exacerbated the problems of violence by sharing information that gangs ended up using to retaliate. She remembered helplessly holding the mother of a victim, a woman she was meant to interview, as the woman wept in her arms. “I never picked up my notebook,” Naomi says of that moment. The trauma of her work eventually led to an emotional breakdown, and her editors told her to take a month off. She spent the time in therapy, then in prayer.

“I told God I wanted to use my skills to help, instead of writing all these stories that weren’t going anywhere,” she says. She quit her job and, soon after, decided to further her education. “To learn more about children and children’s programming,” she says, “that’s how I ended up at Fuller.” It was the inaugural year of the Children at Risk program in the School of Intercultural Studies. “It gave me exactly what I was wanting to do as a reporter,” Naomi says. “I told God I wanted to use my skills to help, instead of writing all these stories that weren’t going anywhere.”

After her studies, she felt pulled back to youth center work and set her sights on multiple nonprofit organizations. She didn’t consider a return to the Al Wooten Center, merely because of how far it was from her home. But, in the midst of her search, she received a call from her aunt. The center’s executive director was leaving, and they needed somebody for the interim. “I never entered my mind that I would end up back here,” she says.
Naomi reflects. “I thought I’d be here for two or three months. I’ve now been here since 2010.” Naomi has put everything she’s learned into practice. The solutions she craved and wrote about extensively at Fuller came to life in the center’s work. Her graduate thesis, “A Missional Approach to Gang Prevention in Los Angeles,” serves as a framework for much of what the center does. Naomi credits her studies for teaching her the importance of contextualization, which has defined how the center serves its students. “How do you contextualize? Learning about the kids, seeing what they want, and then basing your programs on that,” she says.

“We preach the concept of homework and studies,” she explains. “After the homework is done, it’s time to study!” Study, at the center, means working on individual challenges and sharpening weak areas, or delving into research on whatever subject interests the student. “It’s college prep,” Naomi says. “Learn how to research, to study, to be disciplined.”

The practice has taught kids to use a critical and constructive lens to view their world—to identify problems and create solutions. “A problem the kids identified was junk food,” Naomi says. “Too much McDonald’s, too much Jack in the Box. Their solution was a community garden! Now they grow lettuce, tomatoes, and kale, right by the basketball courts at the back.

Everything the center does in its after-school program is project based. Instead of math or science lectures, the kids have math and science labs—time to learn through practice. “The kids love it,” Naomi says. She glows while recalling their kids’ success stories. She remembers Juan, who came to the center as a nine-year-old, pants sagging low. “He’d tell everybody, ‘All of my friends are O.G.s’”—shorthand for original gangsters—“and that was all he knew,” she says. “We had to show him something else.” Juan came to the program regularly, and Naomi laughs as she describes the moment he walked into their job fair, years after his first day, transformed: in a tie, vest, and belt, his shirt tucked in. “He’s doing well now,” she says. “He graduated last year.”

Naomi is ready and willing to deal with the more challenging kids too. She thinks of Debra, saying, “she reminds me of the old me—loud, boisterous, obnoxious, rude, belligerent.” Debra did everything she could to get herself kicked out. But it takes “baby steps” to get to
change, Naomi says. After months of resistance, Debra agreed to fill out a college plan, smiling about the idea of college after the center took her on a tour of UCLA. “I’m always fine with the rambunctious ones,” Naomi says. “I love to talk to those kids because I was that kid.” In her office, she keeps pictures of herself from her gang years. “That’s not you, Miss Naomi!” kids say. But she assures them she’s that girl. “Then I show them my degrees. I say, guess what? You can change too.” Even with the ups and downs, she says, “I can’t think of a kid here—and I hope it never happens—that went bad, or went the other way. They always improve. Of course they’re going to improve if you’re nurturing them. Between education and showing them opportunities, that will change their life. If that’s not ministry, I don’t know what is.”

She remembers a young man she interviewed when she was still a journalist: a gang member who’d survived being shot by an AK-47. “What are your goals and dreams?” she asked him. “I want to be a truck driver,” he told her, “so I can drive far away from here.” “A place to go for something to do,” Naomi says, capturing the spirit of what the center offers kids like this young man, who said he’d joined a gang because he had nothing else to do. “If he’d been in an after-school program,” she says, “maybe he never would’ve gotten into a gang or been shot.” Instead of violence, she says, “We have to give them something else.” Through the Al Wooten Center, Naomi strives to offer that something else day by day. “This is mission work in South Los Angeles,” she says. “It’s saving lives.”

Learn more about the Wooten Center at www.wootencenter.org/supporters.

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It all started with the runaways, the kids who ended up on the decidedly unglamorous streets of Hollywood in the late sixties. Jim Draker (PhD ’70) was training lay counselors at First Presbyterian Church to serve in a coffeehouse ministry called the Salt Company, and in the “crash houses” that offered teenagers and young adults a brief respite from a broken life. “I kept being drawn to the street,” he says, “I wasn’t drawn to the pulpit, but I was drawn to the people.” He saw the possibility within these at-risk adolescents and, he says, “I got hooked.”

He trained the church workers to listen to young people, to be empathetic, warm, and genuine. “I saw the importance of that,” Jim says, “and I said, ‘That’s what I want to do.’” He dreamed of creating a live-in setting where young people could experience the healing power of Christian community. After receiving his MDiv and then a PhD in clinical psychology from Fuller, he had his chance to make his dream a reality. In 1972, Jim joined his friend George Sheffer III and his father, George Sheffer Jr., when they founded the Dale House Project, a residential treatment center for troubled young people, in Colorado Springs. Jim served as the training director, and today, as an “almost retired” psychologist, he still serves on the project’s board of directors. “I think we’ve all been amazed at how effective it’s been,” Jim says, “and it’s still going strong.”

Dale House, which received its initial funding from a Lilly Foundation grant, began under the auspices of Young Life, the parachurch ministry where Jim had been on staff as an undergraduate. It is now a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, named for the
downtown street where the facilities are located. “We didn’t want any fancy psychological names,” Jim says. “All of our kids have grown up in such a way where neglect, abuse, and trauma have just been a part of their lives,” says Ted Woodard, executive director of Dale House. “Year after year after year, and kid after kid after kid, it’s just unbelievable the stories of what our kids have suffered, what they’ve been through, what they’ve really had to do to survive.” He notes that although they have been victims, they also have had victims. “Our kids have committed so many crimes,” he says. “Every kid that’s here at this particular point in time is either here for assault, burglary, or robbery.” It’s normal for the Dale House residents to have grand theft auto, carjacking, home burglaries, or shootings on their records, says Ted.

They stay, on average, from five to ten months. During that time, some complete a GED or take classes at the local high school, community college, or vocational school. Others work at off-site jobs, or in the Dale House urban garden. They develop skills in banking, budgeting, grocery shopping, and cooking. Just as important, the residents build relationships with their peers and with the live-in staff.

“Relationship is the key to intervention—that's the psychology word—for young people who are lost,” Jim says. “It has a pretty solid theological basis, but also a psychological basis.”

This model uses an integrative approach drawn from Jim’s studies at Fuller, influenced by family systems theory, Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s book Life Together, and what Jim describes as a “theology of a second chance.” Dale House offers a form of community that the young people may never have experienced. “On a daily basis, they’ll see trust. They’ll see compassion,” he says. And they’ll also experience accountability. When a problem arises, the staff will lovingly say, “We need to talk about this.”

Ted, the executive director, tells the story of a young man whose relapse into drug use meant he had to leave Dale House. When Ted and another staff member picked the young man up at his workplace to take him back to jail, they allowed him to explain the situation to his boss, giving him the dignity of leaving his job well—something he had never done before. After finishing his jail time, he returned to Dale House, and left with his court-ordered restitution paid, $2,000 saved, and his relationship with his mom restored.

This same ethos of communal accountability infuses the way the Dale House staff and the board operate. “We have times of training, times of sharing, and times...
for confronting,” Jim says. “In the tough times, we try to handle it as a family.”

The staff, known as primary care workers, are recent college graduates who serve for a year as they prepare for careers in such fields as chaplaincy, social work, and education. Many have gone on to study at Fuller through a partnership arrangement with the seminary: “What I wanted to do was train counselors who would live in this setting and become role models,” Jim says, “but also who were clinically trained and theologically sound. What I really enjoy is the people who come and are being trained by us to go out and do likewise.”

The staff work with referring agencies, teachers, probation officers, and court-appointed guardians. But they are also responsible for leading devotions, speaking at the Sunday “family night,” and modeling Christlike behavior. “We’re talking about incarnational ministry,” Jim explains. “We use it in action, not only in theological language.”

That ministry also involves caring for the staff, who can feel overwhelmed by the stress of dealing with behavioral challenges, and the long shifts required for supervising their assigned residents 24 hours a day. If they need extra time off or counseling, they get it, Jim says.

Initially, Dale House dealt mostly with drug issues, but as the culture has changed, the severity of the problems has increased dramatically. A few years ago, shots were fired into the facility in a drive-by incident. The executive director eventually learned the identity of the shooter, and reached out to him while he was in custody. “It’s gone from light street work to very serious social work” involving young people coming out of incarceration, Jim says. Some have been involved with gangs. Most are referred by the Department of Human Services and the Division of Youth Services, which provides for the care of youths committed by the courts. But the intense issues they bring haven’t diminished his empathy for them.

The problems of abuse, neglect, and trauma aren’t new. “It’s always been difficult for some kids growing up,” Jim says. But now, “from junior high on up, it has become much more pressure packed.” Technology often exacerbates the problems. Kids who lack strong family support become attracted to unhealthy relationships, as they always have. Now, Jim notes, computers and smartphones have given young people easy access to a dark and destructive side of the culture, including increasingly violent content. Bullying, both online and in person, has intensified. “It’s pretty difficult for kids to even believe they’re likeable,” Jim says. But the Dale House team has a different perception: “We see them as young people who were given to us by God.”

The concept of relational healing has informed other aspects of Jim’s work and personal life. He developed and served as cochair of the Colorado Psychological Association’s Colleague Assistance Program (CAP), designed to support psychologists in distress as the result of personal, financial, or professional problems, such as a client filing a complaint with the state licensing board. He also chaired the American Psychological Association’s Advisory Committee on Colleague Assistance. Even in that context, he focused on providing good relational care as well as good advice. He described the beginning of the consultation process in a 2007 interview with the APA Monitor on Psychology. “Oftentimes, we’ll meet in a coffee shop and just start talking. The first interview is to kind of quell their fears and assure them we have people who will stick with them,” he says.

He and his wife have belonged to one small group or another since their days in Pasadena, and he’s a big supporter of the small group model that many churches have adopted to encourage members to care for one another. He also meets with six of his former Fuller classmates every July in Southern California. They began calling themselves “the bucket boys” after one of them described the annual reunions as one of his “bucket list” items.

Jim’s heart, though, still reserves a special place for lost and discarded young people, just as it did more than four decades ago. There have been success stories, like the Dale House alumnus who became a successful businessman, and now hosts a barbecue for the staff and residents each year. But, Jim adds, “There have also been losses.”

One of his great joys is to see individual lives transformed as the community bears witness to the healing power of the gospel. Such change, he says, “is the movement of the Spirit.”

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She must break a compadrazgo, while it is harder to reveal a testimony of pain, confusion, loss, disappointment, or anger toward God.

Yet sometimes in our faith communities, suffering may be spoken only after the rescue has come. We value the testimony of triumph, while it is harder to reveal a testimony of pain, confusion, loss, disappointment, or anger toward God.  

Los estudiosos de la fe también hemos hablado de sufrimiento, pero a veces después de que el rescate ha llegado. Valoramos el testimonio de triunfo, mientras que es más difícil revelar un testimonio de dolor, confusión, pérdida, decepción o enojo hacia Dios.  

But the gospel tells a different story: Jesus is moved with compassion. Jesus weeps and cries. Jesus goes to the cross, and suffers with.

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SUFFERING: WITH A TENDER JOURNEY OF MUTUALITY IN SUFFERING, COMFORT, AND JOY

Cynthia Eriksson

THEOLOGY

We write “tenderly.” That was the prompting I felt from God as I prayed for the untold time for guidance on how to write this article. I heard it in my heart: “Tenderly.”

Friends, this is a challenging journey.

The call to “suffer with” in the role of pastor, therapist, counselor, or chaplain—one that holds great joy and great sorrow. You have seen the best and the worst of people. You cannot un-see the stories that you have heard. You cannot un-know the types of evil and abuse that have been perpetrated on people dear to you. You cannot un-know the images of destruction, violence, or mutilation that have been in your own heart. You hold the reality of human life and human pain in your heart.

Depending upon your cultural and social location, the reality of evil and pain may be a challenge in different ways. If you have lived in relative privilege (as I have), you may have insulated yourself from an awareness of vulnerability or threat. Hearing the stories and seeing the pain diamantes that defense. If you are part of a community facing ongoing violence, attending to the needs of your people is a daily task. Taking the time to consider your own pain, or the cumulative impact of so many stories may feel impossible. Navigating the space of suffering and trauma as a Christian leader in your community—shepherding and teaching, overseeing and cylinders—can be exhausting.

Our theologies may even contribute to the vulnerability with which we approach suffering. In the human desire to avoid pain, we may create theologies that suggest that God does not want us to feel pain. How did my Protestant, white, middle-class church upbringing teach me that God wanted me to feel good? When did suffering and pain become something that indicated a lack of God’s presence, or a lack of God’s strength? The reality is that being human brings suffering. Caring for one’s fellow humans is painful.

The COST of Suffering with Henri Nouwen challenges readers to count that cost in his small but powerful book César, Drinck The Cup!1 When James and John, the sons of Zebedee, press Jesus with their desire for a position of privilege and attention, Jesus asks them, “Can you drink the cup?” (Matt 20:22). Nouwen writes, “Jesus is the cup of sorrow, not just his own sorrow, but the sorrow of the whole human race. It is a cup full of physical, mental, and spiritual anguish.”2 Nouwen invites the reader to reflect on the actions this question implies: “fulling, and drinking the cup in its fullness of joy and suffering. This is not the suffering that we ourselves face, this is the capacity to drink the suffering of others—to suffer with.”

“Drinking the cup” in ministry brings us face to face with stories of unexpected tragedy, human betrayal, abuse, and evil. Hearing the details and caring for the storytellers makes the cup of sorrow personal and deeply painful. Psychologists have noted the extent of this suffering that we ourselves face, this is the need for protection, control, or distance.

Physically, our bodies respond to the sense of threat. Our sleep can be disrupted with nightmares or we can find ourselves easily irritated and jumpy. We may feel especially revved and jumpy. We may feel especially revved up or worn out. We might also notice that we avoid people, places, or things that remind us of the tragedies. Ultimately, we might try to avoid the feelings by disconnecting from others or numbing out with overwork, food, the internet, or other substances. Trauma specialists have identified this phenomenon as “indirect trauma” or “vicarious trauma,” or “secondary traumatic stress.”

Suffering with can break your heart.

The SKILLS of Suffering with

It is tempting to create a type of wall around our hearts that allows us to hear the story but not feel the feeling. If caring about someone else’s life is what opens us up to this pain and vulnerability, then perhaps finding a way to listen—but not to care—is the antidote?

The divine answer to that question is, “No!” Just as Jesus “moved into the neighborhood” (John 14:12, The Message), we are called to “move in” towards the pain. Further, connecting deeply with someone in the midst of suffering can actually become a means of protection against vicarious traumatization.3

Trauma clinicians and researchers suggest that the openness to feeling pain is an important part of working through vicarious trauma. Many of us who have written about resilience to indirect trauma (including myself) have emphasized the things that counselors or pastors can do outside of work time. Good self-care practices, such as healthy eating and exercise habits, and supportive supervision and peer relationships are an essential part of reducing burnout at work.4 This foundational health is important, as there is evidence that experiencing burnout can make us even more at risk of developing secondary or vicarious trauma symptoms.5

However, in addition to these life balance and health choices, there are important emotional and cognitive skills that contribute to resilience in drawing toward connection with others.

Brian Miller and Ginny Sprang call moving toward the pain a “radical empathy,” which is a genuine empathy that draws us to engage again with and resist the themes that “stop us at the surface.”6 The skill needed in this moment is attention to our own feelings as we are processing for ourselves and for others. Noticing our feelings and the associated physical and cognitive labor, can develop. As we pay attention to our feelings, we are also paying attention to our internal state. We can practice “move in” towards the pain a “radical empathy,” which is a genuine empathy that draws us to engage again with and resist the themes that “stop us at the surface.”

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You Drink the Cup?

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The divine answer to that question is, “No!” Just as Jesus “moved into the neighborhood” (John 14:12, The Message), we are called to “move in” towards the pain. Further, connecting deeply with someone in the midst of suffering can actually become a means of protection against vicarious traumatization. Trauma clinicians and researchers suggest that the openness to feeling pain is an important part of working through vicarious trauma. Many of us who have written about resilience to indirect trauma (including myself) have emphasized the things that counselors or pastors can do outside of work time. Good self-care practices, such as healthy eating and exercise habits, and supportive supervision and peer relationships are an essential part of reducing burnout at work. This foundational health is important, as there is evidence that experiencing burnout can make us even more at risk of developing secondary or vicarious trauma symptoms. However, in addition to these life balance and health choices, there are important emotional and cognitive skills that contribute to resilience in drawing toward connection with others.

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The context of ruminations involves a focus on what we are feeling, and is usually a passive re-experiencing of disquieting events. Rumination often focuses on judgments about the events or people involved and the negative aspect of what happened, or what we should have done, or what was so distressful about what someone else did.

Rumination happens when we let our minds wander. You can hear the temptation to blame the self or others, to grasp at the illusion of control, or to worry. Yet we are called to “capture every thought” (2 Cor 10:5).

To combat rumination, we need to first pay attention and acknowledge when this is happening. Recognize that thinking again and again about a situation is not the same as problem solving (rumination actually reduces our ability to problem solve). Then, a key step in combating the ruminitive process is to move from passive to active. Capture those wandering thoughts and shift them to active and specific thoughts. What can you do in that moment? It may be an act of advocacy or providing resources. Or, it may be an intentional choice to properly give the situation
to God in lament or intercession. If you find yourself ruminating at other times, move to activities that require attention and build positive emotion (such as exercise or a productive hobby) or seek connection in relationships (and avoid isolation).13

As you reflect on the skills and resources you have developed to support the call of suffering and healing, ask yourself these questions:

• What rhythms of rest and work have you found to sustain yourself?
• What spiritual practices have you discovered that name the pain in language that helps you know you are not crazy?
• What habits do you have to draw you out of rumination?
• Now ask yourself, am I practicing these?
• What friends and colleagues have helped you know you are not crazy?
• What habits do you have to draw you out of rumination?
• What rhythms of rest and work have you found to sustain yourself?
• What spiritual practices have you discovered that name the pain in language that helps you know you are not crazy?
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• What habits do you have to draw you out of rumination?
• What rhythms of rest and work have you found to sustain yourself?

THE JOY OF SUFFERING WITH

The extraordinary promise in answering the call to ‘drink the cup’ is that it is a cup of both suffering and joy. That is the paradox: in feeling the pain, joining the suffering, or ‘drinking the cup,’ we find comfort and joy. Nouwen writes, ‘In the midst of the sorrows is consolation, in the midst of the darkness is light; in the midst of the despair is hope, in the midst of Babylon is a glimpse of Jerusalem, and in the midst of the army of demons is the consoling angel. The cup of sorrows, inconceivable as it seems, is also the cup of joy. Only when we discover this in our own life can we consider drinking it.’14

The intermingling of suffering and joy is cultivated in the opportunity for mutual comfort and healing. As Paul writes to the Corinthians:

3. Ibid., 157.
6. American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statis-
9. K. Schild et al., “What Comes First: Job Burnout or Second-
11. Ibid., 116.
12. Ibid., 157.
13. Ibid.
14. Nouwen, Can You Drink the Cup, 43.
16. On October 30, 2018, at The Fuller School of Psychology Panel on Black Psychology, Thema Bryant Davis cited the ways that White Western psychology focuses on coping with symptoms of trauma, rather than creating change. See also T. Bryant Davis, Thriving in the Wake of Trauma: A Multicultural Guide (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001).

ENDNOTES

1. Consider the reflections of Kate Bowler in her book Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I’ve Loved (New York: Random House, 2018). Further, Mark Labberton interviewed Bowler for the Conversing podcast: fullerton.edu/kate-bowler-on-suffering


3. Ibid., 32.


11. Ibid., 116.

12. Ibid., 157.

13. Ibid.

14. Nouwen, Can You Drink the Cup, 43.


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RESPONDING TO SUICIDE WITH THE MINISTRY OF GOD’S PRESENCE

Mary Glenn

S

“I could have stopped it.” I felt the weight of those words and wanted to relieve this student of his burden. I tried to be sensitive to his pain and uncertainty that loved ones may feel. Yet the “what if” questions—What if I missed something? What if I could have stopped him from doing this?—were distraught. As chaplains, we provided presence, care, and resources. Since neither I nor my chaplain partner spoke Cantonese, we connected them with the local Chinese funeral home. These “care-givers” helped them culturally process the death and accompanying issues such as shame and grief. There are different types of responses such as roles we can give and people we can walk with to support, grief care, and help to school personnel. When I arrived at the school the next morning, I was asked to meet in the vice principal’s office with the student’s teachers and guidance counselors. These staff members were just wrestling with grief and guilt. They asked the “what if” questions: What if I missed something? What if I could have stopped him from doing this?

One of the student’s teachers stated, “There is nothing you can say that will convince me that it isn’t my fault. I missed the signs. I could have stopped it.” I felt the weight of those words and wanted to relieve this teacher of that sadness and guilt. Yet what someone feels in that moment is real—as real as it can get. I cannot talk someone out of feeling regret for what they could have done, but what I can do is listen with care, offer compassion, and help people understand the dynamics of suicide. My background as a chaplain is not to negate someone’s feelings, but to walk with them through their grief.

Before arriving on the scene of a suicide, I remind myself of my particular lens as a white, Irish, Christian, female law enforcement chaplain. The Irish commonly practice traditions with regard to loss. It is paramount that I reflect on my own cultural, vocational, and life experience with, understanding of, and responses to grief. In addition to being aware of my lenses, I try to be sensitive to the lenses and understandings of those whose worlds I step into. Their cultural experience with and practices of grief could be starkly different from my own. There is no normative approach to death, including suicide—but there are best practices that span the diversity called in the intercultural world we step into. Their cultural experience with and practices of grief could be starkly different from my own. There is no normative approach to death, including suicide—but there are best practices that span the diversity called in the intercultural world we step into.

The text flashed across my phone while I was sitting in my Tuesday night Bible study. It is the kind of text I have received countless times before, and it is never easy to read. A 14-year-old Chinese boy from an immigrant family killed himself. As the local police chaplain, I was called in to provide support, grief care, and help to school personnel. When I arrived at the school the next morning, I was asked to meet in the vice principal’s office with the student’s teachers and guidance counselors. These staff members were in deep wrestling with grief and guilt. They asked the “what if” questions: What if I missed something? What if I could have stopped him from doing this?

One of the student’s teachers stated, “There is nothing you can say that will convince me that it isn’t my fault. I missed the signs. I could have stopped it.” I felt the weight of those words and wanted to relieve this teacher of that sadness and guilt. Yet what someone feels in that moment is real—as real as it can get. I cannot talk someone out of feeling regret for what they could have done, but what I can do is listen with care, offer compassion, and help people understand the dynamics of suicide. My background as a chaplain is not to negate someone’s feelings, but to walk with them through their grief.

Before arriving on the scene of a suicide, I remind myself of my particular lens as a white, Irish, Christian, female law enforcement chaplain. The Irish commonly practice traditions with regard to loss. It is paramount that I reflect on my own cultural, vocational, and life experience with, understanding of, and responses to grief. In addition to being aware of my lenses, I try to be sensitive to the lenses and understandings of those whose worlds I step into. Their cultural experience with and practices of grief could be starkly different from my own. There is no normative approach to death, including suicide—but there are best practices that span the diversity called in the intercultural world we step into. Their cultural experience with and practices of grief could be starkly different from my own. There is no normative approach to death, including suicide—but there are best practices that span the diversity called in the intercultural world we step into.
Beloved Son, with him I am well pleased.”

One of the most important things we can say and do to help someone feel safe and secure is to remind them of their core identity as God’s beloved son or daughter.

BE A VOICE OF HOPE
As we walk with individuals through their grief, we can speak of God’s hope and future in their lives as a first step in helping them work through pain. A ministry of presence gives space for their pain without promising that everything will be okay. From my training in suicide intervention, response, and prevention, here are a few examples of things we can say so that our ministry of presence brings hope rather than harm:

“I am so sorry that you are going through this. I am here with you now; you are not alone.”

“I may not know exactly what you are feeling, it won’t always be this way. Together we will find you the help you need.”

“Below are some guidelines that will help us as we walk with others who are grieving the loss of their loved one:

1. OFFER A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE. We can embody the peace and presence of God by being present with others, sitting with people in the midst of their pain, creating safe places for others.

2. DON’T BE AFRAID TO ASK THE QUESTION, are you okay?”

3. IT’S NOT OKAY, but it won’t always be this way. Cliches we use with others can bring more pain. The fact that this individual was in pain and took his or her life changes the loved one’s life forever. Yet things won’t always be this way. Eventually loved ones begin to rebuild life after loss.

4. RECOGNIZE GUILT, SHAME, AND ANGER. As we care for people, they may feel like they could have done something. Going down that road won’t bring them back. The person made a decision and took their own life. The emotions people feel are real, and we need to create healthy space for feelings such as guilt, shame, anger, and sadness to be expressed. Be aware that some cultures practice within an honor and shame construct.

5. HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF THE DEATH. IMPRINT. When people see or experience something traumatic, the brain takes a picture of what has been seen or what can be imagined. That death imprintingers. Smells, sights, and sounds might cause the memory and pain from that event to be recalled. Be patient and sensitive with others when this happens and prepare them for this experience.

6. OFFER WALKS THROUGH THE MULTI-FACETED REALITY OF GRIEF. This includes helping others assess their process in dealing with loss and death and engaging in self-care practices. Recommend articles and books on loss and grief.

7. AS A CARE PROVIDER, BE AWARE OF AND WALK THROUGH YOUR OWN GRIEF. Care-givers also need to process their grief and engage in self-care. Walking with others through their grief can result in compassion fatigue for the care-giver.

8. BEGIN BUILDING, OR STRENGTHENING, A PARTNERSHIP OF LOCAL CARE-GIVERS. A person contemplating suicide may feel lost, overwhelmed, hurt, confused, alone, and disconnected. All people have needs for attachment, affirmation, and a sense that their lives matter. Do not commit to walk with them and remind them they are not alone. When faced with disappointment and rejection, feelings may deceive people into believing things are worse than they really are and may convince people that there is no hope. Suicide becomes a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Sometimes the best thing we can do—and perhaps the most consistent support we can offer—is to give people an anchor of hope as we walk with them through their pain.

SUCIDE PREVENTION
Mary Glen

Being aware of the risk factors and indicators for suicide can help us come alongside those who might consider taking their own lives. Potential risk factors include drug or alcohol abuse, isolation, family changes, a family history of suicide, experiences of loss, neglect, or abuse, incarceration, and exposure to trauma. Indicators to watch for in friends or loved ones are behavioral changes, feelings of hopelessness, a lack of value or purpose—and, most seriously, an expressed struggle with suicidal thoughts or development of a suicidal plan. If someone asks you to keep a secret about his or her contemplation of suicide, that is a promise you can neither make nor keep.

Here are some things we can do to help individuals dealing with depression and suicidal thoughts: be present, be calm and safe, actively listen, ask questions, don’t judge, accept their feelings, be compassionate, and understanding, remind them of your care for them, reassure them that there is help, help develop a plan with them to get help (e.g., connect them with other resources; go with them to meet with a counselor). A person contemplating suicide may feel lost, overwhelmed, hurt, confused, alone, and disconnected. All people have needs for attachment, affirmation, and a sense that their lives matter. Do not commit to walk with them and remind them they are not alone. When faced with disappointment and rejection, feelings may deceive people into believing things are worse than they really are and may convince people that there is no hope. Suicide becomes a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Sometimes the best thing we can do—and perhaps the most consistent support we can offer—is to give people an anchor of hope as we walk with them through their pain.

RESOURCES
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 / suicidepreventionlifeline.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: www.afsp.org

Ask Suicide-Screening Questions: Toolkit: www.centerforempathy.org/suicide-screening-materials


ENDNOTES

2. One study revealed that teens under 18 who lost a parent to suicide were three times more likely to commit suicide than children and teens with living parents. See “Children Who Lose a Parent to Suicide More Likely to Die the Same Way,” suicidepreventionlifeline.org, April 23, 2010; www.suicidecenter.org.

3. In some cultures, loyalty to community and tradition can be valued above individual feelings. Anthropologist Ruth Benedict says that in a guilt culture, you know you are good or bad by what your conscience feels, but in a shame culture, you know you are good or bad by what your community says and whether it honors or excludes you. A guilt culture is driven by the individual, and a shame culture is driven by the community. See I. Fish, “Guilt and Shame,” Psychology Today blog post, September 20, 2016; www.psychologytoday.com.

4. REMIND OTHERS THAT GOD IS WITH THEM. In the midst of the loss and pain, we must remember and remind those we are caring for that God is always with us. Psalm 31:7 says, “You are my hiding place; you shall preserve me from trouble; you shall surround me with songs of deliverance.”

5. SPEAK OF GOD’S HOPE! Even when hope is elusive, it is there and encourages others—and us—to see what is ahead.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
Albert Y. Hsu, A Grief Observed, C. S. Lewis, A Year of Seven Moons
New Hope Grief Support Community: www.newhopegrief.org

Jerry Sittser, A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss

고독한 고태한 우울감에서 탈출하기 위한 구조

한국의 그리스도인 중 많은 분들이 고독한 우울감을 겪고 있습니다. 이는 그들이 교회와 사회에 적응하기 어려운 일상적인 역경들로 인해 초래된 현상입니다. 이 같은 고독한 우울감을 종합적으로 관리하고 해소하기 위해서는 다음과 같은 요소들이 필요합니다.

1. 친구와 가족의 지지
   많은 사람들이 외부로부터의 지지를 통해 우울감을 극복할 수 있습니다. 친구나 가족과의 소통은 자아 존중과 성장의 기회를 제공하며 우울감을 해소할 수 있습니다.

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   긍정적인 자기주도적 행동은 우울증을 완화하는데 도움이 됩니다. 예를 들어, 노트북에 긍정적인 생각을 적어두는 것이 도움이 될 수 있습니다.

이와 같은 요소들이 결합하여 작동함으로써 우울증을 극복할 수 있는 길이 열리게 됩니다. 많은 사람들이 이러한 요소들을 통해 스스로의 우울증을 관리하고 극복할 수 있습니다.
명령이 많습니다. 주님은 우리에게 서로 사랑하고(요 13:35), 서로 받아들이고(롬 5:14), 서로 충고하고(롬 15:14), 서로 죄를 고백(약 5:16)하라고 명령하십니다. 뿐만 아니라, 느내리기 좋은, 서로 비판하거나(롬 14:13), 서로 비방하거나(롬 14:13)하는 것도 우리가 받은 주님의 생명의 원칙에 적합하지 않습니다. 그래서, 어떤 이들의 도움을 받아야 할 것은 필요로 인해, 만약자로 기뻐하며 고난을 받기 원하는 사람들이 모두 자기 중심적이고 우월감에 젖은 고독한 시기를 의미합니다. 하지만 이에 대한 전제는 ‘우월감에 젖은 고독’이라는 말이 필요되지 않습니다. 이런 우월감에 젖은 고독은, 구원의 공정성에 대해 주님의 교훈으로서 잘 지혜롭고 순명한 것으로 본 바 있으며, 이에 대해 다음과 같이 말하고자 합니다.

HAN AND SAKIM

Most generally speaking, Han is a concept of suffering. It is a “deep sense of suffering that is usually accompanied by anger.” 1 It is “unresolved emotions” that result from “psychosomatic, interpersonal, social, political, economic, and cultural oppression and repression.” 2 It has long been interpreted as an example of international Korean history, 3 “embedded down at the bottom of the unconscious” 4 of its people. Such Han, built on a deep sense of suffering, is a “deep sense of suffering” found in Korean art, thus using it to shape the consciousness 5 of its people. Such Han, built on a deep sense of suffering and feeling of oppressions, has impacted the way Koreans grow inward with Han and choose to put the concept and experience of Han in relationship with the concept of kimchi.

SAKIM AND SUFFERING ALONE

Now, let me discuss how the concept and experience of Sakim has impacted the way that Koreans grow inward and choose to put the concept and experience of Sakim into association with the concept of kimchi. For good kimchi to be made, it needs to be kept in pits in the ground for at least a month. During this time, the authentic kimchi grew outwardly offensive. One of the most extreme examples can come in the form of retaliatory crime.

It is with these definitions and implications of Han that I proceed to ask the following question: Is Sakim a unique Korean concept and experience? Though many believe it to be, I would argue otherwise.

Han has been characterized as “unjustifiable suffering.” 2 More specifically, it is the “collapsed pain of the heart” that emerges and usually remains subdued after the collapse. 7 It is “unresolved emotions” that result from “psychosomatic, interpersonal, social, political, economic, and cultural oppression and repression.” 8 It has long been interpreted as an example of international Korean history, 9 “embedded down at the bottom of the unconscious” 10 of its people. Such Han, built on a deep sense of suffering, is a “deep sense of suffering” found in Korean art, thus using it to shape the consciousness 11 of its people. Such Han, built on a deep sense of suffering and feeling of oppressions, has impacted the way Koreans grow inward and choose to put the concept and experience of Han in relationship with the concept of kimchi.

The process of fermenting kimchi is unique to them. Other nations and other peoples may have impacted the way that Koreans grow inward and choose to put the concept and experience of Han in relationship with the concept of kimchi.
Deeply marked by its history of persecution, with those who suffer and even suffer for Korean church, and many—both in leadership and culture. Specifically, when stepping outside the framework of religion, the ultimate goal is to embrace this and stay in isolation until God sovereignly pulls us out of it. Nonetheless, we should not overlook our mission to communal suffering—suffering together in and with Christ, and suffering together with one another within the larger body of Christ. Suffering reveals who we really are. Inviting others to come and help us when we suffer, therefore, requires humility. Humility needs to be learned and it cannot be learned in isolation. For one to overcome hubris, he or she needs to be connected to others. After all, one cannot be humble when standing alone. We need one another to be humble and experience what it takes. To be humble takes courage, courage to become vulnerable and be seen as vulnerable. Similarly, trust needs to be learned and it cannot be learned in isolation. The relational realities of the life of the people of God should be restored within the Korean church in both seasons of joy and suffering. They should be challenged and supported to “approach the throne of grace with confidence” so that they may find grace as they mutually and interdependently participate in one another’s sufferings (Heb 4:16).

TOWARDS A LIFE OF RECIPROCITY IN HUMILITY
In Scripture, we see the people of God in relationships in both times of joy and suffering. In the Old Testament, for instance, we see Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and Joshua both rejoicing and suffering together in the world (Exod 15:1). In the New Testament, Jesus, who calls us “out of estrangement and into a redemptive relationship.” Korean Christians need to realize that we are not called to be solitary Christians in suffering. After all, it is impossible to come to Christ without coming into fellowship with his body. We have not only the Sphere who helps us in our weaknesses (8:20), but also have one another to carry our burdens (Gal 6:2) and help us find grace (Heb 4:16). It is always heartbreaking to see leaders, though called to share God’s grace, manage to live a life in superficial relationships. They may teach others about suffering in Christ while dealing with unresolved questions and issues on their own in isolation. The relational realities of the life of the people of God should be restored within the Korean church in both seasons of joy and suffering. They should be challenged and supported to “approach the throne of grace with confidence” so that they may find grace as they mutually and interdependently participate in one another’s sufferings (Heb 4:16).

CONCLUSION
The Korean church has been faithful in supporting those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep (Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 12:26). However, under the influence of Han and Sakim, Korean Christians in general—and leaders in particular—are becoming accustomed to suffering alone, isolated from the rest of the body of Christ due to their pride, reluctance to acknowledge their need, and lack of vulnerability. This may begin with good intentions of not wanting to burden others. However, it can grow to be a blind spot that eventually leads to “priding suffering alone.” Voluntarily choosing to suffer alone may not necessarily begin with an intention to become self-centered or self-seeking. Nonetheless, if one continues to fail to conclude the need to be helped, one can grow self-confident and self-glorying. It is my earnest prayer that more and more Korean Christians and church leaders will move from taking pride in suffering alone to humbly allowing others to suffer with their sin of pride. Sincere hope is that the Korean church model how God’s people in suffering can help and be helped in vulnerability to find grace as they participate in Christ’s suffering in and for the world.

ENDNOTES
THE HOLY, EXQUISITE MUTUALITY OF SHARING SUFFERING AND JOY WITH OTHERS

Jude Tiersma Watson with Chris Albisuere

I first moved into a vibrant yet struggling immigrant neighborhood in central Los Angeles in 1988, responding to an invitation to join God in a forgotten corner of LA. The neighborhood was then only known, if at all, through media images of gangs, drugs, and violence. The sights, sounds, and smells of this new place—taco trucks, vendors selling-date or corn on the cob, and a courtyard where kids played together while moms laughed and chatted—drew me in. It was only as I lived here longer and began to put down roots that the stories of struggle and pain began to emerge—stories of personal and family pain, but also of the need to flee homelands where violence threatened the lives of children and adults. I had not known what to expect, and was surprised by my neighbors’ gracious welcome and, over time, the deep ways my own life and faith would be shaped and transformed through sharing life together in our neighborhood.

A few years into this journey, Roxana, one of the girls I was mentoring and who had her own life of struggle, introduced me to Chris Albisuere. Recently arrived from Central America, having fled north when he feared for his life, Chris was lost, lonely, and desperate. He wandered the streets of LA on a skateboard, writing his name on walls to find relief from the unrelenting pain in his life. “Writing on walls was my aspirin,” he said. Chris began sharing his life with me. Every week he had more stories of pain and trauma that had never been known. We spent hours together: Chris talked while I listened prayerfully, holding his story, the groundwork made holy because God was present with us and between us in the sharing. We could not have imagined 25 years ago the deep sense of bonding and belonging we would come to share, the exquisite mutuality of the relationships among all of us, including myself. Chris and I now have three beautiful children that call me Oma. But at that time, it felt like a great risk into a deep unknown, with no certainty where the journey would lead. Recently Chris and I reflected back on those years.

CHRIS: I think what I found in Jude was a person that I can trust. She would just silently sit or cry with me. When I talked, I didn’t really have a name for the trauma. It was sexual abuse, physical abuse, being independent since I was five when I lost my two younger brothers—my best friends—in an earthquake.

When I met Jude, there was a big war between gangs and graffiti writers on the streets of LA: a lot of people were dying. So it was just a critical time for me to either leave or die on the streets. And I think that I found someone that I could trust and that would listen to me. . . . I remember she would say, “Do you mind if I pray for you?” at the end, and it was kind of interesting and weird for me. I never had that happen in my life. But I think I let it happen and I didn’t realize until now that it was God at work at that time in my life.

JUDE: One of the things that was striking was how your posture actually changed. I remember meeting you at a Carl’s Jr. You were so uptight, and you have left? So you are in a crisis. But you know, John and Jude were patient with me, and I asked John so many questions and he just said, “I don’t have the answers for that.”

CHRIS: Right. There’s shame. You know when pain happens to you there’s a certain amount of shame and like nobody cares. I’d carried that for almost 20 years in my life and nobody had ever said, “Let’s talk about this.”

JUDE: I felt really honored that someone would share their story with me. It also felt like a risk. Chris started getting in touch with his anger, completely understandable anger. Jude, really, about the things that happened to him. I remember asking God, “Did I meet Chris just so I could visit him in prison for the rest of his life?” I was very aware that he could have been killed on the streets, or he could have done something to someone and regretted it his whole life. He had that much rage.

It was never a question for me, but an awareness I lived with. . . . Now we can look back on those years: we talk about the good times and how we have the kids, but at that time it was hard.

CHRIS: It was; I remember talking about the good times and how we have the kids, but at that time it was hard.

JUDE: Meeting Chris led to a pretty big faith crisis. At the beginning, he was really grateful to God because God rescued him. I could listen to Chris and go home and wrestle. I learned to pray in much deeper ways than I ever had. I grew up in an immigrant family, and we had our own issues as a Dutch immigrant family. But this was something that hit my life for the most part. I had a fair bit of privilege in my life that I recognize now.

Jude: One of the things that was striking was how your posture actually changed. I remember meeting you at a Carl’s Jr. You were so uptight, and you

It was a struggle and it’s still a struggle of faith, but I do believe that God is good. God is a merciful God, and he is in the suffering.

I came to see that suffering, our own and others’, is the cost of love. I had moved into a neighborhood as a neighbor; we are called to love our neighbors. I came to see that the call to love your neighbor is also a call to suffer together. When we love deeply, we
We shared life and meals together. My while I was drowning in my struggle to this fellowship of sharing in suffering goes during this season, my comfort also came will suffer deeply as well. And the joys that this was a communal journey of going deeper with God in the midst of ministry. Through developing deeper formation practices, I came to see that understand faith and suffering “out there” was not enough. I began to see my need for increased self-awareness. What did I bring to this context? How did my own culture and social location impact what I saw, how I interpreted reality, how I felt and acted? I had moved to a social location very different from my upbringing, but what did I bring with me? What cultural expectations about life and faith did I carry? When John and I married in 1995, his differing lens as an African American continued to help me see my blind spots, reflecting to me my middle-class expectations for control over my life. Becoming more aware of who I was and my own need for healing, I was able to better separate the trauma of others from my own pain. Being open to what I carried with me from my own history and culture also challenged my Messiah-complex thinking. Our theology may not allow us to say we are the Messiah, but in ministry, we can act as if we think we are. Although at times we may meditate on God’s love to people through our presence, we have to be clear that we are not the saviors. And it goes the other way, too: God’s presence is mediated to us through those in our ministry context. This is the mutuality of life and ministry.

Father Gregory Boyle refers to this as his movement from “savior” to “savor.” We might come into ministry with some illusions of being a savior, but we learn to savor the relationships, the sharing of life together. Exquisite mutuality comes from our own willingness not only to share the pain of others, but also to enter the vulnerability of our own pain being exposed. We do not suffer alone but as part of the diverse beauty of the body of Christ.

ENDNOTES
1. This phrase is borrowed from Father Gregory Boyle in Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 171.
2. This conversation is made up of selected sections from a recorded interview with Chris Albasure, August 18, 2018.
¿DOLORISMO O ORTOPATOS? LA CONCILIACIÓN DE LAS EXPERIENCIAS DE DOLOR EN AMÉRICA LATINA

Alexia Salvatierra

¿Dolorismo o ortopatos? Esta es la pregunta que se plantea con frecuencia en el estudio de los movimientos religiosos y espirituales en América Latina. La teología latinoamericana de Dios y la teología de la liberación ofrecen dos enfoques alternativos que abordan el sufrimiento y la vida de las personas.

Dolorismo se refiere a una teología que asocia el sufrimiento con la gloria de Dios. En este enfoque, la resurrección de Cristo es el momento en que Dios glorifica el sufrimiento de sus fieles. La teología de la liberación, por otro lado, sostiene que el sufrimiento es un medio para promover el cambio social y el poder de Dios en el mundo.

El dolorismo de América Latina ha sido igualmente culpable de reforzar una base teológica para la sumisión a la violencia. Esta visión del dolor como una oportunidad de crecimiento y transformación ha sido alimentada por una ideología del sufrimiento que ha sido absorbida por muchas iglesias.

Sin embargo, el ortopatos, que busca un enfoque más equilibrado y equitativo, ha sido menos común en América Latina, a pesar de que el sufrimiento es ampliamente reconocido como una parte integral de la experiencia de las personas en esta región.

La teología de la liberación, por otro lado, ha sido más receptiva a los enfoques que abordan el sufrimiento como un medio para promover el cambio social y el poder de Dios en el mundo. Esta visión ha sido alimentada por la idea de que el sufrimiento es un medio para promover el cambio social y el poder de Dios en el mundo.

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After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, he said to Eliphaz from Teman, “I’m angry at you and your two friends because you haven’t spoken about me correctly as did my servant Job. So now, take seven bulls and seven rams, go to my servant Job, and assure him an entirely burned offering for yourselves. Job my servant will pray for you, and I will act favorably by not making you fools of you because you didn’t speak correctly, as did my servant Job.”(Job 42:7-8)

How exactly did Job speak correctly about God? Job does not stop at “the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21) after his catastrophic misfortunes. While Christians often reference and even sing about this almost superhuman act of worshipful surrender (consider the popular worship song “Be Your Name”), it is simply not how the story actually goes. Job literally spends the next 34 chapters accusing God of injustice, seeking to take God to court, and calling for someone to vindicate him against God and his friends, who try to talk some sense into him (Job 3-37). Job’s friends reason with him that the Lord is the almighty, all-wise, all-just God and that Job’s righteousness does not stand a chance at the divine presence. Just confess that you are wrong. Job In God’s holy presence, who can stand? All we can do is repent and obey!” They sound God-inspired; their words could be set right next to the Psalms and we might not be able to even tell the difference. This view is quite popular. In the history of doctrine, we see how a pious theologian Karl Barth, in his critique and break from the liberal theology of his professor, zoomed in on the problem of anthropocentrism. 4 The liberal theology of his time perceived God’s whole existence deceived itself into thinking that we can speak of God simply by speaking of humanity in a lead voice. This theological tradition emphasized humanity and its experience at the expense of God.5 To speak of it in Jewish philosopher Martin Buber’s categories of I and Thou, they made God into a simple reflection of ourselves (I and 2). Other traditions have erred by making God an object for our management (I and 2). But God must be Thou, a person who must be recognized as wholly other.

Job addresses himself to an Almighty God with whom he can argue, be angry, and be dis-appointed. Job’s Lord is a covenantal God, a God who both condescends to us and raises us up so that together we can have a covenantal relationship. On the other hand, Job’s friends believed that God was merely interested in our subservience. This is the heart of God’s judgment upon Job’s friends. Job knew God, while they misunderstood him.

This idea of God is a completely different way of thinking. God is not just a superpower that we can invoke to get what we want. God is a God who wants it all; God wants love. Job, rather than Job’s friends, as speaking correctly about God?

The book of Job is a genuine covenant interaction in the Psalms. Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann argues that in the absence of lament and protest like Job’s, God is only surrounded by “yes-men and women” who end up living a faith of “denial, cover-up, and pretense.”4 If God is everything and we are nothing, we can only become a “false self” with a “bad faith that is based in fear and guilt and lived out as resentful, or the self-deceptive works of righteousness.”5 In the end, we do not know a God of theism, an omnipotent God, meaning that our God revealed in Christ is a God of humanity. In Jesus Christ there is no isolation of humanity from God and of God from humanity,” he said, and this is a result of God’s free and sovereign decision.6 As Christians, we do not know a God of theism, an abstract deity beyond human interaction, but rather the covenantal God who has elected to be with humanity from all eternity, a God of humanity.

Exploring this idea of a “genuine covenant interaction” in the Psalms. Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann argues that in the absence of lament and protest like Job’s, God is only surrounded by “yes-men and women” who end up living a faith of “denial, cover-up, and pretense.”4 If God is everything and we are nothing, we can only become a “false self” with a “bad faith that is based in fear and guilt and lived out as resentful, or the self-deceptive works of righteousness.”5 In the end, we do not know a God of theism, an omnipotent God, meaning that our God revealed in Christ is a God of humanity. In Jesus Christ there is no isolation of humanity from God and of God from humanity,” he said, and this is a result of God’s free and sovereign decision.6 As Christians, we do not know a God of theism, an abstract deity beyond human interaction, but rather the covenantal God who has elected to be with humanity from all eternity, a God of humanity.

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and lament, of talking back and taking up space in the relationship. When we are not able to own and express our disappointment, frustration, and anger towards God, but instead repress them, a number of negative consequences occur, including distance from God. While he is speaking more generally, Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall’s insights about the impact of a society’s inability to acknowledge suffering serve as a guide to the dynamics that occur on three levels: personal, communal, and social.

First, lack of lament towards God can result in the inability to accept and articulate personal suffering. Often, the repressed will use spiritual language, praising God and witnessing to God’s healing, all the while holding the deep pain within. Just as Job’s friends believed, this repression is considered spiritual and pious as though it is what God wants.

Second, not only do we fail to process our own suffering, but we will fail to enter into the suffering of others. A lack of genuine covenantal interaction between us and God directly impacts the kind of communal life that we can have together. If I repress my own suffering with the spiritual language of repentance, trying harder, or “blessing the name of the Lord,” then that is precisely the advice that I will give others as well. And when they fail to do so, I will judge them like Job’s friends judge Job. It’s easy to believe that our faith is about serving God no matter what, without doubt, faith struggles, or anger and disappointment, then we must all present a false self to each other as we do to God. In such a world there is no community, only a pseudocommunity where we hide behind our pious masks.

Third, according to Hall, this false self and a misunderstanding of self-denial leads us to search for an enemy whom we can blame—a misunderstanding of self-denial leads us to seek outwards and identify the demon elsewhere. In such a world there is no room for true ownership of our place. What are the common errors (and rare wisdom) that can be found in the story of Job? I have found this truth about the importance of talking back to God to be one of the most profound theological lessons critical of my presumptions on God. Many Asian Americans have a cultural heritage of honor and respect for our elders. In some cases this heritage is a great treasure, while in others it creates a suffocating oppression. Either way, the idea of expressing anger and disappointment to God sounded shocking to me. Also, given all the pressures to be a “model minority,” succeeding in a White normative world, Asian Americans can feel like they should be law-abiding overachievers—not a very good context for lament or protest. Precisely for these reasons, when the importance of talking back finally sunk in as truth, I realized what kind of a god God is. Discovering that God is, I changed.

We often think that the theological contributions of a particular context are limited to those insights given to us by our cultures or situations. However, this is a shallow understanding. Often the greatest theological contributions of our context come from the struggle with our context. Because status, relationship, and honor can matter so much in certain Asian American contexts, I have found this gospel according to Job to be my testimony as an Asian American theologian. We must realize “the infinite qualitative difference” between God and us. Only then does God’s monumental act of covenant seeking begin to become amazing grace and good news.

The story of Job teaches us that doubt, protest, and lament are all integral to biblical faith, even when they seem counter to much of our spiritual intuition or cultural narrative. At times, God invites us to “faithful” challenge and dissent. Of course, we shouldn’t do this flippantly. However, when life makes no sense, it’s important to know that God is bigger than our anger, disappointment, and doubt. We can talk back to God in an authentically I and Thou fashion. Though initially confusing within my Asian American context, ultimately it is redemptive and God-honoring to discover, paraphrasing Luther, that “the curses of God’s people can sound more pleasant in God’s ears than their hallelujahs.”

ENDNOTES

1. Whatever Barth’s limitations in other areas, evangelical scholar Bernard Ramm notes that his contributions to demonstrating classic Reformed theology must be acknowledged, especially given that fundamentalist and evangelical scholars of his time did not do so. See B. Ramm, The Evangelical Heritage: A Study in Historical Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 111.
2. Jürgen Moltmann discusses the idea of affirming God at the expense of humanity iniframe and having humanity at the expense of God in whom we are opposed to a truly covenantal God revealed in Christ. See J. Moltmann, The Crucified God (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 249–252.
5. Brungermann, 103–104.
9. The original quote attributed to Martin Luther, but made popular by Dietrich Bonhoef-ter’s reference, is, “The hate of the godless man can sound more pleasant in God’s ears than the hallelujah of the praise.”
COMPOSING A LAMENT FOR THE PERSECUTED: SUFFERING WITH THE SUFFERING CHURCH

Edwin M. Willmington

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10)

I connected with Open Doors USA (ODUSA)—the growth and the College of the Colossians, to meet people—those who are around the world who live in situations of Christian persecution. Through ODUSA, I came upon the written words of Alain Mac Mafian and his book, Faith That Endures: The Essential Guide to the Persecuted Church, that became a guide for me. 6564

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find hope through their suffering, and often discover a strengthening of faith. In fact, per-
secution is not always viewed as a negative
by those who suffer, with many seeing it as
a part of their call to follow the mission of
Christ. Tim Keller asserts that “suffering can
strengthen our relationship to God as nothing
else can.” This is supported by the fact that
high rates of persecution tend to coincide with
high rates of new conversions to Christianity.
History has proven many times that outward
persecution may be a positive catalyst for a
latent church.

There is an inherent tension in grasping for
strands of hope in the face of immense suf-
ferring because of one’s faith, a tension that
finds its example in the cross of Jesus Christ.
Yet the cries heard in the psalms of lament
may be a glimpse of the ultimate result of the
church’s mission: a grand picture of all tribes
and tongues gathered, with no more tears or
sadness, no suffering or persecution, and the
Lamb of God as the sole focus of worship and
adoration. What a great vision of hope!

Knowing that hope is both present in suf-
ferring and the conclusion to it, I wanted to
weave words of hope and expectation into
Consolation for the Suffering. In his letter to
the Romans, the Apostle Paul asks a series of
honest questions that are relevant to today’s
accounts of persecution.

What, then, shall we say in response to
these things? If God is for us, who can be
against us? Who he God did not spare his own
Son, but gave him up for all—all—how
will he not also give us all things? Who
will bring any charge against those whom God
has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who,
then, is the one who condemns? No one.

Christ Jesus who died—more than that,
who was raised to life—is at the right hand
of God and is also interceding for us. Who
shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or
famine or nakedness or sword? (Romans
8:31-35)

There is also a strong, convincing answer for
all the questions raised.

No, in all these things we are more than
conquerors through him who loved us. For
I am convinced that neither death nor life,
neither angels nor demons, neither the
present nor the future, nor any powers,
neither height nor depth, nor any thing else
in all creation, will be able to separate us
from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus
our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)

At its conclusion, Consolation for the Suffering
provides a hymn that sends us into the reality
of the persecuted and helps us to be people
who will not lose sight of their request: “Please
pray for us; please don’t forget us.”

God of justice, love and mercy,
With compassion, let us care;
May your kindness set them free. 12

May your strength be ours to share.

Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or
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May your strength be ours to share.

Additional Resources

Login to listen to selections from Consolation for the Suffering, and watch testimonies from Fuller community members on what it’s like living as Christians under persecution at fullerstudio.fulлер.edu/conciliation-for-the-suffering.

The Consolation for the Suffering audio recording and DVD of the concert premiere are available at jubalhouse.bandcamp.com.

Ronald Boyd-MacMillan, Faith that Endures: The Essential Guide to the Persecuted Church


Nik Ripken, The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrection

Endnotes

1. S. W. Sunquist, Understanding Christian Mission: Participa-
tion in Suffering and Glory Grand Rapids, MI: Baker
Academic, 2013.

2. H. G. Hunter, C. M. Robeck Jr., eds., The Suffering Body: Responding to the Persecution of Christians (Wilton

Guide to the Persecuted Church (Lancaster, U.K: Sover-
ign World Publishers, 2006).

4. Open Doors USA publishes the World Watch List, which
often updates about current statistics, conditions, and
trends related to Christian persecution. The World Watch
List provides a map showing the areas of the world where
Christian persecution is rated from “High” to “Extreme.”
The list provides information about the source of perse-
ecution in each locale and also covers current major trends
in the area of world persecution. It is a changing, dynamic
list, and as of this writing the list highlights three growing
edges of persecution in the world: the spread of radical
Islam, the rise of religious nationalism, and the increasing
intensity of persecution in Central Asia. There is a special
note that Afghanistan has been added to the list of places
where high persecution is taking place.

5. See www.opendoors.org/christian-persecution/.

6. J. C. Long, “Reth Mawet: More Than This: Examining the
Real Situation of Martyrdom,” in John Mark Minnsides,


8. “Consolation for the Suffering: Stories from the Perse-
cuted Church” on FULLER studio, fullerstudio.fuller.edu/
consolation-for-the-suffering/.

9. A. Grant, A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching Out to God in the

10. E. Peterson, foreword to A Sacred Sorrow, II.

11. T. Keller, Walking with God through Pain and Suffering

Consolation for the Suffering (Skyhaven’s Staff Worship
Music, 2010).
Sarah Ashley Hill

I am a Black, Christian woman. I am a wife, mother, advocate, and psychological assis-
tant. I am a daughter of the Black church and a student of Western psychology. I have
often felt I was living in two worlds, and as
the product of both, I have the privilege
of translating between those worlds and
serving as an advocate and ambassador
from within.

In my clinical and outreach work, I regu-
larly have the privilege of meeting someone in the eyes and asking questions like these and saying, “That is trauma.” It always comes as a revelation, a paradigm shift in how they view their world and the things that have happened to them.

Trauma and suffering wreak the most havoc in the dark, when unseen and undiscussed, disguised in typicality and silenced by stigma. Our first steps are to name the trauma, to call a spade a spade and shine a light into the darkness. My dissertation research revealed the importance of shifting perspectives about trauma through language. First, in increas-
ing awareness, we can begin to label and identify that which is traumatic. Breaking

Some of the steps ministry leaders can take
when they serve in churches impacted by
complex trauma include:

- **Define trauma:** Understand the defi-
cence of trauma within the church, and how
it is manifested in the lives of those who
experience it.
- **Create a safe space:** Encourage trust and
openness by creating a safe space for
people to share their experiences.
- **Educate church leaders:** Provide training
and resources on trauma and its impact.
- **Support ongoing trauma awareness:**
Conduct ongoing training and education on
trauma to ensure church leaders are
equipped to respond effectively.

As advocates and ambassadors for traum-
aic healing, we must continue to work
actively and tirelessly to see a world where
trauma is recognized and addressed with
compassion and understanding.
As we work in our churches to reveal the truth of suffering and normalize talking about it, a recognition of pain and trauma—what it is okay for Black people to proclaim. Local pastors proclaim the freeing power of God’s truth. For decades, they have also led the way in changing that which isn’t right, beautiful, lovely, or true in our communities. As a result, programs encouraging physical health offered by Black churches have been more successful than other community public health efforts.5

Several easily digestible resources for basic information on trauma exist online.6 For decades, they have featured in our pulpits to shed light on the hidden pain of trauma. I recognize that pastors are members of the congregation and help-seeking, we can mobilize our church bodies to ensure we are providing support in the most helpful ways. In the first two sections, I highlighted what ministry leaders can do to begin to help the suffering by naming the truth about trauma and pro-actively offering help. I recognize that pastors are often so overwhelmed with wearing multiple hats that they may have nothing left to give. But a healthy church can use the human resources that exist in the church body to create a network of support. It is important to realize that in many churches, these networks naturally occur and already exist. Here, I specify how we can help empower parishioners to help right where they are, diffusing the responsi-bility and lessening the individual burden. When I gave birth to both of my children, many members of the church responded in supportive ways. Some of the support was systematic (a gift card from the church, given to all new parents), but most of the support was a little help from individual members. Someone brought me food after my 24-hour labor left me unable to walk and my husband knocked out from exhaustion. Another person came to sit with me at home when my husband returned to work, and actually put food in my mouth while I bounced a fussy baby on an exercise ball. When families have babies or when somebody dies, our commu-nities rally to provide support. Everybody provides a little help, and the family is able to survive through a tough transition. I wonder what I would look like if we responded to those in mental health crises with the same practical support. What if we brought meals to those in a major depressive episode and unable to get out of bed? What if we drove people to their therapy? What if we provided them with medication? Could we even have eyes to see them, perhaps sitting quietly, almost invisibly, on the fringes of society?

Our people are suffering, and they need-lessly suffered for too long in silence. We can empower those working in the trenches with the information they need to identify the sources of suffering. We can shatter stigma as we proclaim our right and responsibility to seek out our mental health, by a variety of means, including therapy and medica-tion. We can empower ourselves as the local church body to see and support each other in every practical way. We can be the hands and feet of Jesus to those who are suffering.}

**ENDNOTES**

1. This article is a response to information thoroughly explored and developed in my dissertation. Specific refer-ences are detailed and can be found in that manuscript. Some additional specific references are listed here in the endnotes for examples. See J. A. Hill, “The Role of the Local Church in Addressing Trauma in African-American Communities: An Exploration of Relevant Empirical Literature” (PsyD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2017).


"People have always resisted whiteness from the very beginning. People have always resisted the loss of a life in place, resisted being designated racially, resisted being commodified, resisted being forced to live inside of a global system of exchange, death, and money, and resisted as long as they could the relentless systems of education and evaluation that supported these things. And they did it by drawing on the only tool they had available: their identities.”

† Willie Jennings, Fuller trustee, and associate professor of systematic theology and Africana studies at Yale Divinity School, speaking at the 2017 Missiology Lectures on “whiteness” as a sociocultural framework

"I tell a lot of Asian American students that, even though your family might have come in the last ten years, you become a part of a larger group of people. Your history goes back 150 years in America because you become a part of this Asian American experience. It’s the whole Asian American racial experience. The fact that different ethnic groups come together and form the Asian American identity. I know so many Asian Americans who are relatively recent immigrants that weren’t there in the 40s, who don’t really think about Japanese Internment as their story. They feel like, ‘that happened a long time ago, it doesn’t really matter,’ without realizing the fact that the past is always with us. It’s not just my family history. I’m part of this bigger story.”

† Daniel D. Lee, assistant professor for the Center for Asian American Theology and Ministry and assistant professor of theology and Asian American ministry, reflecting on a trip with members of the Fuller community to the Japanese internment camp in Manzanar, California, pictured here as an exhibition of a guard tower that loomed over the camp

"This content is quoted from ongoing conversations taking place throughout the Fuller community. Visit this focus section in FullerStudio for links to full videos, articles, and more.

The ability to see is connected to the ability to love. If you don’t see me, you can’t love me. If it seems to you to be something close to Chinese, even though I am Korean-American, and you only have categories for Chinese and cannot see who I am—you can’t love me either.”

† Daniel Lee, assistant professor for the Center for Asian American Theology and Ministry and assistant professor of theology and Asian American ministry, on the often neglected Asian American experience, in his address at the 2017 Missiology Lectures

"There were some who believed the clergy needed to be there to bring God to the Ferguson uprising, but I met Black Jesus at Ferguson. I met the dark-skinned Jewish carpenter who was birthed by a teenage, unmarried woman in the hood. And I was reintroduced to this Jesus who was constantly bringing disruptive fire to the systems and powers, using the prophetic truths of Scripture, acts of healing, and deep commitments to the poor and the marginalized. I found anew the dark body who was unfairly arrested, convicted by a kangaroo court, sentenced to die, and then executed by the empire of his day. This Jesus, the prophet, the healer, the liberator, the organizer, the evangelist of both individuals and systems, was already hanging out in Ferguson when we showed up. So it wasn’t like we was bringing Jesus, it was more like Jesus was waiting for us to get there. And it was this Jesus who I heard declare, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ This Jesus invited me to follow him.”

† Michael McBride, lead pastor of The Way Christian Center and national director of Urban Strategies and LIVE FREE, on the Black church and resisting structures of white supremacy, at the 2018 Black Public Theology Symposium

"Toda la teología es contextual, y nuestra comprensión de nuestro llamado estará marcada, ¡inevitabilmente!, por nuestra historia, nuestro hogar, nuestra gente, nuestra cultura. Y eso es parte de la maravilla y belleza de ser el cuerpo global de Cristo, donde algunos de los puntos ciegos de una persona pueden ser detectados por otra persona porque tenemos ojos para verlos.”

"How can we say that we know ourselves without understanding our context? How can being a Christian and being Asian have nothing to do with one another given how we have been created in our own particular histories. You can’t escape the fact that race has been so central to our formation as a country. I think it is deeply theological. It’s historical. It’s sociological. It’s cultural—it’s all these things. It’s the water that we swim in.”

† David K. Yoo, professor of Asian American Studies at UCLA, on race and politics, in his talk at the Public Discipleship event hosted by Fuller’s Center for Asian American Theology and Ministry

"All theology is contextual, and our understanding of our calling will be inevitably marked by our history, our home, our people, our culture. And that is part of the wonder and beauty of being the global body of Christ, where some of a person’s blind spots can be detected by another person because we have eyes to see them.”

† Ruth Pádilla DeBorst, vice-rectora académica, Comunidad de Estudios Teológicos Interdisciplinarios, speaking at the 2018 Centro Latino Lectures on transcending church walls
The kneel-ins during the Civil Rights Movement

“Salvation and whiteness. These terms point to a history that we yet live within. Whiteness as a way of being in the world has been parasitically joined to a Christianity that is also a way of being in the world. It was the fusion of these two realities that gave tragic shape to Christianity in the new world at the dawn of what we now call the modern colonialist era, or as scholars like to call it, colonial modernity.

It is precisely this fusing together of Christianity with whiteness that constitutes the ground of many of our struggles today. The struggle against aggressive nationalism is the struggle against the fusion of Christianity and whiteness. The struggle against racism and white supremacy, and some aspects of sexism and patriarchy are the struggle against this fusion. The struggle against the exploitation of the planet is wound up in the struggle against this joining. So many people today see these problems of planetary exploitation, of racism, of sexism, of nationalism and so forth, but they do not see the deeper problem of this fusion. Which means they have not yet grasped the energy that drives many of our problems.”

Valene Cooper, associate professor of religion and society and Black church studies at Duke Divinity School, speaking about segregation in the American evangelical church at the 2018 Black Public Theology Symposium

Cinco siglos de una historia cargada de cierto colonialismo y colonialidad, de proyectos de modernización, de proyectos occidentalizadores que nos tienen hoy en cierto nivel de vida donde se nos llama algunas veces a los países de Latinoamérica países en vías de desarrollo o países del tercer mundo. Entonces, esa separación, esa jeraquizia nos llevan a nosotros a experimentar la vida desde un lugar muy particular. Unos le llaman el margen, otros le llaman la periferia, otros le llaman la pobreza. Yo estoy pensando de un término diferente, un término que le llamamos transoccidentalidad, que es el aceptar que somos occidentales por un lado, pero que somos no occidentales por el otro y en ese encuentro somos más que todo eso. Yo creo que el teologar así nos hace a nosotros repensar, repensar para vivir de nuevo con formas diferentes. El repensar no sólo significa revisar los procesos históricos que nos han dado a nosotros identidad, que nos han dado a nosotros una condición social. Sino que el repensar implica también el recrear.”

“Five centuries of a history loaded with coloniality modernization projects, and Occidentalism have left Latin American countries today at a certain standard of living typically referred to with the labels of developing or ‘third-world’ countries. So, that separation, that hierarchy leads us to experience life from a particular place. Some call it the margin, others call it the periphery, and others call it poverty. I am thinking about a different term, a term that I call ‘trans-Occidentalism,’ which alludes to the fact that on the one hand we are Westerners, but on the other hand, we are non-Westerners, and both at the same time. In such a collaging encounter, we are more than any one of these two. I believe that doing theology out of this paradox makes us rethink—rethink to live again in different ways. To rethink does not only mean to review the historical processes that have given us identity and a description of our social condition, but it also implies to recreate.”

Oscar García-Johnson, assistant professor for the Center for the Study of Hispanic Church and Community, and associate professor of theology and Latinx Studies, on FULLER studio

“Theologically speaking, whiteness will not be overcome through uncritical reassertions of tradition but in learning to accept by grace a marginal seat at Christ’s table. It is only in the decentering of whiteness that white particularities will be included in the body of Christ in a redemptive manner.”

Andrew Draper, assistant professor of theology at Taylor University and senior pastor of Urban Light Community Church, on vulnerability and repentance, in his talk at the 2017 Missiology Lectures

Are you going to make space for me, too? Is your ethic and your framework going to make room for my life, too, and my thriving?”

Oscar García-Johnson, assistant professor for the Center for the Study of Hispanic Church and Community, and associate professor of theology and Latinx Studies, on FULLER studio

Valene Cooper, associate professor of religion and society and Black church studies at Duke Divinity School, speaking about segregation in the American evangelical church at the 2018 Black Public Theology Symposium

“This kneel-ins during the Civil Rights Movement failed because even if you could get Black bodies inside a segregated white church, you could not force the church’s white members to treat those Blacks like Christians. Nor could you do anything to make so openly racist congregations a desirable place for Blacks or anyone committed to interracial fellowship to want to worship there.”

“EXCLUSION”

Willie Jennings, Fuller trustee, and associate professor of systematic theology and Africana studies at Yale Divinity School, on uncoupling the Christian faith and “whiteness,” in his lecture at the 2017 Missiology Lectures

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“EXCLUSION”
I'm many things: I'm a woman of color. I'm a foreigner. ‘You have something to contribute.’ I see that Jesus did.

If you don’t know the narrative for a young girl in Nicaragua, for a man to empower a woman, he was amplifying my voice in ways that now I’m starting to understand. He was amplifying my voice and saying, ‘You have something to contribute.’” I see that Jesus did the same thing. He amplified the voices in the margins.

Have you ever asked the question, why does Jesus ask the blind man, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ That’s a question that has annoyed me from Jesus. I want to say, ‘Well, Jesus, he is blind. He wants to see.’ He wants to be healed, and he wants to see. He sits me down and says, ‘You’re going to sit down next to him. We’re giving out medicine and medical help.’ He said, ‘If you don’t understand something he says, look it up. I’m going to come back and pick you up at the end of the day.’ Imagine a 10-year-old just sitting there. And it started nurturing English was not as good as I’m speaking right now, but want to say, ‘Well, Jesus, he is blind. He wants to see. If you go too far in the direction of unity, this kind of uniformity, you lose everything.

I think Paul was imagining a space of belonging when he said, ‘there is neither Jew nor Gentile.’ But the process isn’t neat; it doesn’t expect any institution, Fuller or otherwise, to suddenly arrive at inclusivity. But there is a commitment to the process. Recently, we launched Fuller.edu/Inclusion, to illustrate this process—the strategies and efforts that aim toward greater inclusivity at Fuller. Reading about inclusion plans and strategies may feel as odd as reading about circumcision practices, but both are deeply theological. Both are grounded on the conviction that God is forming a people who belong together. The whole process—discovering particularities, naming exclusion, and imagining inclusive spaces—in the work of those who partner with God to cultivate that belonging."
Christena Cleveland, associate professor of the practice of organizational studies at Duke Divinity School, on the importance of mutual relationships, in her lecture at the 2015 FULLER Forum

"Vocation involves looking at how our membership in the body of Christ infiltrates all that we do, both in the church and outside the church. So, identifying first and foremost as someone who is part of the larger family, but also someone who's uniquely positioned in that family because of demographic characteristics—age, gender, sex, or race. But it could also be giftedness, and thinking. I'm part of this larger body. I have my unique viewpoint, now how am I supposed to live out that unique gifting and viewpoint in every aspect of my life?"

Kara Powell, executive director of Fuller Youth Institute, on her passion and call to work with young people, on FULLER studio

"It’s young people that I’m passionate about, it’s young people that I pray for, it’s young people that I weep over. My passion for the last 20 years has been related to young people, first as a youth pastor, and now working with the team at the Fuller Youth Institute. What we are trying to do here is turn research into resources. As a parent, as a leader, so many times I feel like I’m guessing. I’m just hoping for the best with the young people in my family, or in our church. And at this point, my vocational calling is to take the amazing research that Fuller and others are doing, whether that’s theological research or more empirical, social science behavioral research, and turn it into practical tools so that parents, grandparents, leaders—anyone who cares about young people—we don’t have to guess so much. We have better answers."

Erin Dufault-Hunter, assistant professor of Christian ethics, on her desire to reinvigorate the ethical imagination of the church, on FULLER studio

"I think of my vocation in terms of what do I do in my daily living, to both make a living, but also, what’s my role in the body of Christ? I think that part of what I do is turn up the heat in situations. I don’t like conflict, but I don’t shy away from it. And I’ll often push into things—I’m created that way. That’s part of how I articulate what I’m doing as a professor. In my discipline of ethics, I’m trying to take things that often have become rather dull, and turning up the heat in a person’s life to say, how do you think about that in a way that’s not just about a rule but is about a God who is actively involved in the world? Part of my growth as a Christian and as a woman of faith and as an academic is knowing how to do that in ways that aren’t about me. I’m not really the fire. I’m attending to that. I’m attending to the crucible that is the church or is the world in which God is active. Yes, I’m stoking the fire, but I’m not actually the one who’s doing the work."

This content is curated from ongoing conversations taking place throughout the Fuller community. Visit this Voice section on FullerStudio for links to full videos, articles, and more.
“Saying yes to the angel Gabriel was a risky response. Mary’s pending marriage would have been in jeopardy if Joseph decided to rescind his decision to marry Mary at the age of their pregnancy. This would have placed Mary’s life at risk, as dying in childbirth was a real possibility. Mary’s yes to the angel was a sacrificial yes. It was a yes despite her own needs. It was a yes despite what made sense. It was a yes for the sake of others.

As women, we encounter elements of sacrifice when it comes to our vocational lives. A yes to staying at home with children can be a yes despite her own needs. It was a yes despite what made sense. It was a yes for the sake of others. Whatever the task before us, whatever the next season God calls us to, we are affirmed in our identity in Jesus Christ and assured that the Lord is with us. God’s invitation to us is accompanied with a reminder that we too are highly favored and that, like Mary, the Lord is also with us.”

Ellen Hong (MDiv ’03), in FULLER magazine issue #11

“What drew me to seminary was not what drove me in seminary. The precocious child of a pastor, I tried to preach at a young age, copying what was heard in church and fitting into the expectations of the influencers at home, in high school, and later, in the philosophy and religion department of my college. I went to seminary as a preacher’s son who was continuing along a path that key witnesses to my childhood and adolescence expected me to walk. Calling was wrapped in my community’s expectations of who I should become.

What drove me in seminary was different. I entered seminary without knowing what to do with the budding awareness, begun in college, that things were not right with the world and that I should get involved in changing what was wrong. Attending Martin Luther King’s funeral in 1968 pushed me to consider the disparities between rich and poor, blacks and whites, the lot of the marginalized and the terrible toll of the Vietnam War. How should I fit this winces into the winceskins of ministry I brought from home? A desire to integrate a commitment to the fight for justice with my understanding of ministry and a yearning to understand my own psyche required differentiation from my upbringing and developing specific skills I needed to help troubled people. Working for justice and showing God’s mercy were the twin streams that fed my inner sense of calling. Understanding of the inner life and transforming pain and conflict into self-acceptance and harmonious relationships felt consistent with my gifts and my sense of what I was called to do.

How then must I label this hybrid, mishmash career? Is there coherence in the disparate activities of shaping the minds and sensibilities of psychology students, relieving the suffering of troubled people, and creating a culture of compassion and critique in a school of psychology while occasionally preaching in a little church in northwest Pasadena? My desire is that my work and that of our graduates show God’s unending and unmerited mercy to broken people. It is my hope and prayer that I will have strength to work for justice and share God’s mercy through my remaining days.”

Winston Gooden, dean emeritus and Edwin and Frank Fried Professor Emeritus of Psychotherapy and Spirituality, in FULLER magazine issue #1

“En este momento de mi caminar cristiano yo entiendo mi llamado a la misión divina como la de ser un puente. Tengo el privilegio de ayudar a gente conectar con su llamado divino a través de la educación teológica y el apoyo pastoral. Como puente también me toca conectar a gente con oportunidades, conectar a personas de diferentes culturas, etnicidades e idiomas, con algunos de los otros y conectar a personas y organizaciones con visiones comunes para que puedan servir a Dios y a otros en maneras nuevas y creativas.”

Juan Martínez, professor of Hispanic studies and pastoral leadership, on FULLER studio
“Vocation is not about ‘finding’ a particular thing to do, but being formed by God to meet the needs of God’s kingdom.”

“Before you start looking for some new idea, for some other place you should go, tell me about what you’re seeing of God in front of you now. Do you understand how to recognize God’s revelation of God’s self in every sphere of your life? Tell me about when you notice the Spirit moving in a staff meeting, tell me about when you notice glory in a better-written memo.

For design prototypes, from a spiritual point of view, we have language for this already. ‘Test the spirits.’ You take this counsel you’ve received, and you put it out there a little bit. In my case, you go have a bunch of cups of coffee with people and say, ‘What do you think?’ ‘Come and see,’ Jesus would say. That’s a prototype. So let’s go out there and get in the boat and give it a try and see what happens, and if God confirms, we can keep going, and if not, then we can step back a little bit. Prototyping is the raw material that you’re supposed to bring to the potluck party with the Holy Spirit. You’ve got to give God something to work with.”

Dave Evans, adjunct lecturer in the Product Design Program at Stanford University, a management consultant, and cofounder of Electronic Arts, in FULLER Formation’s “Reframing Vocation” lesson. FULLER Formation is an online tool to foster faith formation with guided material created and curated by Fuller’s faculty and centers for innovation. For more information, go to Fuller.edu/Formation.

If you’ve grown up in the church, you are probably familiar with one specific definition of vocation. Vocation is often defined as the thing that you are supposed to do with your life. It is often considered one particular path that is meant to be your career, your job, or your primary identifier for your life. It is also something that God has planned out for you. Your goal is to simply search for it and find it. Or, in some cases, you wait for God to tell you what your vocation is or reveal what it is going to be.

We have a different definition of vocation.

Christian vocation is responding to God’s call faithfully in the places and communities in which God has placed you. Vocation is not as much about doing a particular thing as it is being in communication with God through the Holy Spirit to meet the world’s deep needs through your particular skills and talents. Vocation is not about ‘finding’ a particular thing to do, but being formed by God to meet the needs of God’s kingdom.”
A theological school is about formation, Fuller what it is. write fast and joyfully, and my life is more or where students and faculty come to a main campus and participate in a transformative theological education. And eat street tacos together.

I love words more than the average person. I write fast and joyfully, and my life is more or less a constant stream of messages to various deep, transformative relationships.

This content is curated from ongoing conversations taking place throughout the Fuller community.

In-person education is a creation of a faithful core community of learners who make Fuller what it is. Maybe the day will come when videoconferencing will allow you to convey things effectively with a nod or a glance—but we're not very close yet. Nor can I imagine an online seminar adjourning to the local pub after a colloquium.

It has been said that a large, introductory survey course is a case where online education is every bit the equal of in-person education. This is not only at the doctoral level at Fuller; a fair number of upper-level courses are small enough that you finish a quarter feeling a bit like family. Maybe the day will come when videoconferencing will allow you to convey things effectively with a nod or a glance—but we're not very close yet. Nor can I imagine an online seminar adjourning to the local pub after a colloquium.

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In-person education is a creation of a faithful community. For a seminar like Fuller, that certainly means faith in God; but it also means faith in a communal mission. Like a lectern is a dramatic stage. As a student, I experienced many stirring lectures, after which we spilled out of the room buzzing about what had happened. I try to create those same moments, and I have students tell me that they're happening.

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The Preaching Lab was created a rather ugly space for preaching that bore the odd name, the “Preaching Lab.” Labs are spaces where bold experiments can happen safely. Students gamely strap on goggles and gloves, then dive in and try things. One dares to let its poem of lament stand as it unanswerable, a sermon left unixed, with no tidy bow. One shares a story of a damaged, bitter marriage season that felt like living in the valley of dry bones, surprising herself with its rawness still. “Pardon my tears,” she says, and as she ends, she’s met with hugs and prayers. We lack Bunsen burners, but this lab has sparked laughter, tears, and even transformation. This unadorned space so often becomes holy ground, and to be present in those moments is magical.

My role is to cultivate a gracious learning community that makes risk-taking safe. I strive to model that elusive Pauline cocktail of truth infused with love in my own feedback to students. Because seminarians tend to be kind, I am often pushing them to add more truth to the love in their feedback to each other. When a student hears in real time that his or her illustration inadvertently excluded listeners of one gender or socioeconomic level, I often see them visibly blush. They hear real pain in the voice of their classmate; they see it written on her face. The preacher swallows hard, awkward silence descends, and I must let it linger, for something important is happening in the shared silence. There is a heightened awareness that preaching can wound even as it intends to heal, and a firm resolve to do less of that wounding.

By contrast, in my online courses, students reply in written comment boxes over several days, and preachers are not required to reply to their feedback, so we never really hear whether any given critique landed, or simply glanced off with negligible impact. We never got to hug or pass Kleenex or spontaneously pray after class in the hallway. While real care can be expressed online, I do love the visceral expression of it that happens in our “lab.”

And the lab experiments astound me! This past quarter in a preaching practicum that emphasized creativity, students sprinkled sermons with liturgical dance, rap, and an African American traditional Love Feast. I encouraged them to integrate personal testimony, and many students said they only offered their art or their harder stories late in the quarter, after trust had been built by our shared time together. We needed to log time together in the lab before we dared to combine the chemicals in ways that catalyzed these surprising new substances. It is an immense honor to open the doors of the Preaching Lab, hand out the goggles, and see what the Spirit will do when students are let loose with the Living Word.

Lisa Washington Lamb, visiting assistant professor of preaching

Embodied Learning in a Digital World

We heard from Fuller voices reflecting on online community in Issue 1.0. This time, four faculty members share why they value the unique experience of in-person education at Fuller.

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There are certainly benefits to online programs that allow learners the convenience of structuring their studies around family, work, or other commitments. In this case, then, study and learning is an added dimension of activity, arranged around case, then, study and learning is an added make to even carve out the time for such minimizing the sacrifices learners have to an endeavor: time away from rest, or from the other nonnegotiables. There is no that such time is “carved out” from the existing schedule; in short, attending online means attempting to insert theological allowing in some respects a more focused approach to theological study, one more conducive to the kind of manner—meaning, from the ground up. Such shakeup inevitably invites new schedules and rhythms, allowing in some respects a more focused approach to theological study, one more conducive to the kind of renewing of the mind that can only happen through an intentional approach to cultivating and reembodying such virtues. Second, an in-person program of study has long been the traditional format since one of its primary advantages—that of inserting learners in an embodied way into a community of inquiry—remains unrepli- cable in the online platform. True, we now realize that online education generates its own digital community, and it is also increas- ingly the case that many learner-oriented events held by educational institutions are streamed live so that more of the activities of educational institutions are accessible to remote learners. From a content delivery perspective, the gap between traditional in-person and digitally mediated learning is almost closed.

On the other hand, after events, online learners log off and return to their regular routines. Geophysically present learners, however, could opt to follow up more personally with speakers or panelists, or choose to interact further with other attendees, even over a meal. Major communities of inquiry, certainly here at Fuller, schedule multiple lectures, symposia, colloquia, and other scholarly activities to come to the course of the term. Those who are geophysically present enter into and build re- relations with others—faculty, staff, other learners, and guests of the institution—in ways not possible for online learners. Traditionalists have always highlighted the immersive character of the historic seminary experience, which effectively baptizes learners into the multidirectional conversations through which the life of the mind is lived out across the institutional environment. In sum, content delivered in classes online is neither fixed nor unmoving. Quite the opposite. It’s a kind of divine residence that is dynamic and highly adaptable, oriented towards God’s presence with God’s people in the midst of their concrete, on-the-ground experiences, which almost always involve movement and dispersion. In fact, if Israel’s history is any indication, it isn’t until the people of God attempt to isolate and constrain the presence of God’s shokmah that they run into trouble. In the Exodus accounts, God tabernacles with Israel in the wilderness, demonstrating God’s loving faithfulness through residence that is always (perhaps necessarily) on the move (Exod 13:20). Yet the temple, originally conceived and constructed as a way of celebrating God’s incomparable glory, eventually became symbolic of Israel’s misguided attempts to contain, control, and domesticate an otherwise wild and unmanageable God. Put differently, Israel’s mistake was to reduce God’s distributed presence to a permanent residence.

As a theologian who teaches more theology classes online than in person, I also find it in- conceivable to imagine a Fuller Seminary that is not leading the way in distributed learning. Delivering high-caliber seminary education to pastors, therapists, and ministry leaders in their local context is a part of Fuller’s DNA from the very start. Rather than require students to engage in an intellectual endeavor disconnected from the particular communities to which God had called them, Fuller created regional campuses where students could access theological education without having to uproot themselves from their ministry context. I am a proud alumnus of the Colorado regional campus, where I learned my MAT while serving teenagers and young adults in Colorado Springs.

I now serve in a role in which I am teaching theology to pastors, missionaries, and industry leaders throughout North America and all around the globe. From my physical office in Pasadena, I am able to have a diverse and diffuse network of human beings otherwise known as the body of Christ. Yet, even when we don’t share the same residence or inhabit the same geophysical space, the Spirit still gathers with us because that’s simply who God is—the same God who pitched a tent with Israel in the wilderness and took on flesh in the incarnation and will one day take up residence with us.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: “Look! The residence of God is among human beings. He will live among them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have ceased to exist.” (Revelation 21:3–4)
Gutenberg’s printing press made it possible to mass produce the written word for the first time in history. Literacy became attainable for life than the printing press. Both technologies have had a greater impact on human devices have had a greater impact on human 

The parallels are significant: the introduction of the printing press and digital technology argued that the personal computer and smart time in history. Literacy became attainable for made knowledge more readily accessible to people around the world. Learning should be interactive and engaging, as opposed to passive. Learning is inherently social, whether that refers to the instructor-learner relationships or peer relationships among learners. Instructors should have clear objectives, and learners should have opportunities to measure themselves against those objectives on a regular basis. Learners should have opportunities to apply their learning to real-world problems and see how their theories match the practical application.

Fuller is committed to hybrid education, taking advantage of the strengths of both in-person and online learning. Online education allows Fuller to make our instruction more accessible. Rather than asking people to come to us, which can be expensive and logistically difficult for many of our learners, we can go to them. And by sending our research and resources to us, which can be expensive and logistically allows Fuller to make our instruction more

The thing that Fuller is the first to join the whole online conversation and moving toward this new type of learning. Our MA in Global Leadership (MAGL) faculty did a great job of curating the way to make sure that formation was always protected. The faculty were intentional with their students and how they designed their courses, and they’ve made it what it is today. Since then, a majority of our master’s programs now offer an online option. And with that early foundation we had with the MAGL, the faculty have carried that intentionality into these new courses as well.

One concern that we often come across is the idea that Fuller is becoming a ‘solely online school.’ Online is a phenomenal modality and many students really enjoy that, but there are also students who really enjoy learning in the classroom. Fuller is still going to be a campus school, now with an online component as well. So the idea that students will be able to take either side, take courses on the ground or on the web at any point in their degree, is something that we hold at a high value and that we always want to protect.

Fuller’s Program Options

I’ve led an eight-week workshop on composition and grammar every quarter for two years, and when I taught an online version for the first time this summer, I had more online students complete the curriculum and be more interactive in this one workshop than in the previous two years combined. Students were emailing me, they were getting in touch with each other, they were more responsive and open to optional assignments—all because of the online forums. They felt comfortable being vulnerable and making mistakes because they saw each other’s work, and they had more time and space to contemplate their words.

This is a new era of students. Our current students are taking it a little bit slower, they’re saying, I want to make sure that I can still take care of my family and engage in life and ministry, but I want to do this Fuller thing, as well—I want to grow; I want to get my degree. I want to advance the kingdom, and I can do both if I do it online. I like to joke that they are at home taking their online courses in their pajamas, but that’s only because they’ve spent a full day working, a full day serving in ministry, a full day taking care of their families and providing, then only at 11 o’clock at night when everything is all put away and everything is quiet, they can finally sit down and engage with their classes. So, yeah, they’re sitting in their pajamas, but only after being some of the most productive and powerful movers in their own communities and workplaces.

Online learning is something that students have actually been asking for, for years. This is not just Fuller deciding to try something new or trying to experiment with a new modality.

A NEW ERA FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

About 15 years ago, Fuller was one of the first to join the whole online conversation and moving students toward this new type of learning. Our MA in Global Leadership (MAGL) faculty did a great job of curating the way to make sure that formation was always protected. The faculty were intentional with their students and how they designed their courses, and they’ve made it what it is today. Since then, a majority of our master’s programs now offer an online option. And with that early foundation we had with the MAGL, the faculty have carried that intentionality into these new courses as well.

The thing that we have strived for at Fuller is to make sure that the faculty and student interaction is always preserved. Unlike other online schools, where the courses are built for them—they’re canned, they’re automated, and the faculty are often removed—Fuller has gone the exact opposite direction in that process. The thing that makes us distinct is that our faculty are the ones hand-designing their courses for each term so that students can grow.

One concern that we often come across is the idea that Fuller is becoming a ‘solely online school.’ Online is a phenomenal modality and many students really enjoy that, but there are also students who really enjoy learning in the classroom. Fuller is still going to be a campus school, now with an online component as well. So the idea that students will be able to take either side, take courses on the ground or on the web at any point in their degree, is something that we hold at a high value and that we always want to protect.

+ Rachel Paprocki, managing editor of the Fuller Writing Center, originally quoted in “Voices on Online Community” in Issue #10

+ Jeff DeSosa, director of digital learning, Fuller Leadership Platform

A CAMPUS SCHOOL WITH AN ONLINE COMPONENT

+ Tommy Lister, executive director of the Office of Teaching and Learning

Online learning is something that students have actually been asking for, for years. This is not just Fuller deciding to try something new or trying to experiment with a new modality.

This is a new era of students. Our current students are taking it a little bit slower, they’re saying, I want to make sure that I can still take care of my family and engage in life and ministry, but I want to do this Fuller thing, as well—I want to grow; I want to get my degree. I want to advance the kingdom, and I can do both if I do it online. I like to joke that they are at home taking their online courses in their pajamas, but that’s only because they’ve spent a full day working, a full day serving in ministry, a full day taking care of their families and providing, then only at 11 o’clock at night when everything is all put away and everything is quiet, they can finally sit down and engage with their classes. So, yeah, they’re sitting in their pajamas, but only after being some of the most productive and powerful movers in their own communities and workplaces.

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Fuller Seminary is pleased to introduce a new learning experience, FULLER Formation. FULLER Formation is designed to foster Christian formation in everyday contexts. Learn how to integrate your faith and work, discern God’s calling in your life, and develop formative practices as a Christian leader.

Learn more at fuller.edu/formation

Conversing podcast
President Mark Labberton hosts this podcast, speaking with a broad spectrum of leaders on issues at the intersection of theology and culture—from public radio host Krista Tippett discussing wisdom to Yale Divinity theologian Willie Jennings reflecting on race.

Photo: Fuller’s Chapel Team discuss with President Labberton the significance of diverse representation in worship.

FULLER curated
This podcast gathers the best conversations happening at Fuller Seminary—drawing from lecture series, conferences, panel discussions, special events, and more—and reflects the eclectic, rich quality of Fuller’s intellectual and spiritual life.

Photo: A panel discussion at the Black Public Theology Symposium, held at Fuller in Fall 2018. Hear some of the sessions from the symposium on FULLER curated.

FULLER studio
From an exclusive conversation with Bono and Eugene Peterson to stimulating roundtable discussions with Fuller faculty and community members, FULLER studio produces, curates, and offers a wealth of video, audio, and written resources—free—for all who seek deeply formed spiritual lives.

Photo: Makoto Fujimura, director of Fuller’s Culture Care Initiative, speaks on a “Theology of Making,” and how the arts and imagination play an integral part in the Christian life.

Find these resources and more at fuller.edu/Studio

PHOTO: Fuller’s Chapel Team discuss with President Labberton the significance of diverse representation in worship.

FULLER theological seminary

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Three distinct channels for delivering high-caliber Christian scholarship

Before founding Fuller Theological Seminary in 1947, Charles E. Fuller was reaching millions of people through his Old Fashioned Revival Hour radio show, which was broadcast over 650 radio stations. Starting Fuller Seminary was his way of extending the reach of the gospel message by training evangelists and missionaries to be sent out across the globe. Today, Fuller still prioritizes its global reach, finding innovative ways to deliver content from world-renowned faculty to as many people as possible.

Fuller’s original offering of residential theological education has expanded over the decades through the establishment of regional campuses and online degree programs. Three years ago, FULLER studio began creating original, free resources for anyone seeking a deeply formed spiritual life. In Spring 2019, the Fuller Leadership Platform launched its first digital learning experience, FULLER Formation, providing guided formation based on content from Fuller’s faculty and centers for innovation for learners who do not need or want a traditional seminary degree. A second digital learning experience, FULLER Equip, will be available later this year and will focus on leadership and professional development.

As the landscape of higher education shifts under our feet, Fuller is finding new ways to realize its vision of forming global leaders for kingdom vocations. Now individuals across the world can discover the free online resources of FULLER studio, access formation learning experiences and professional development through the Fuller Leadership Platform, and attend Fuller Seminary for rigorous theological degree programs.
As we prepare for the move to Pomona, we’ve invited all Fuller alumni to share some of their fondest memories from the seven decades we’ve spent in the buildings that make up the Pasadena campus. See more reflections and photos, and share your own stories, at fuller.edu/building.

**LET THE BUILDINGS SPEAK**

When I had my first tour of Fuller’s Pasadena campus as a prospective student, our guide walked us by the Prayer Garden. She pointed at its cement walls covered in ivy and said that many students find the green, dinging, and returning of the ivy to be an apt metaphor for the changing seasons in their academic careers at Fuller.

Over the next three years as a residential MDiv student, her comments ring true. I can remember walking through campus from our apartment on North Oakland Ave., coming and going from classes, and passing the Prayer Garden, seeing the ivy dry and brown as fall became winter. Perhaps the most memorable and evocative image is entering into the Prayer Garden’s sacred space, through ivy-draped doorways, in both dry and vibrant seasons, sitting on the cool concrete and watching the light play through the stained glass cross, and listening to God in the silence, or filling the space with harmony as I participated in one of the many Taizé services we held in that space. It reminded me to turn toward God, who was always near and faithful to me many Taizé services we held in that space.

—Luke Hyde (MDiv ’06)

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―Luke Hyde (MDiv ’06)
Their day ends in the plaza marking the Azusa Street Revival, a time in the city’s history that saw a great movement of the church through the Spirit. Circling up, they breathe out the old way of thinking,” he says. “A new and unpredictable path.”

World War II. And injustice is a present reality as well. As they pass federal buildings, Mary points to the immigration prison that looms close behind. Los Angeles, she says, has “God has already been doing amazing things here,” Dave Scott says in reflection. Yet for all the good that’s made up the city’s narrative, it has its sins, too. Mary identifies the spot together we seek your peace in this place.”

The group begins at Homeboy Industries, an organization that supports formerly gang-involved and previously incarcerated women and men. The next stop is the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. The faculty accompanying her are Chris Blumhofer, Erin Dufault-Hunter, Susan Maros, Mike McNichols, Johnny Ramírez-Johnson, Dave Scott, and Alice Wong—members of the faculty formation-Groups that meet regularly over the course of the year.

With the skyline in the foreground, Mary frames the day ahead, an urban retreat into LA. The cohort usually retreats to the nearby Mission Dolores or Descanso Gardens, places of stillness and natural beauty. Today’s outing is different. “We’re here,” Mary explains, “to engage with what integrated peace looks like in the city.” For the faculty gathered, listening to the stories the city has to tell is the first step.

The group begins at Homeboy Industries, an organization that supports formerly gang-involved and previously incarcerated women and men. The next stop is the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, where Father Alexis Smith describes the church’s desire to be a gathering place for people of different religions. At the foot of the county’s Hall of Justice, they hear from Sgt. Irene Miller about law enforcement in LA.

The group listens as each venue adds context to the urban landscape around them. In response, they pray. At each location, they pause to recite the words: “Jesus, together we seek your peace in this place.”

“God has already been doing amazing things here,” Dave Scott says in reflection. Yet for all the good that’s made up the city’s narrative, it has its sins, too. Mary identifies the spot. across the street from the district attorney’s office where indigent defendants were once caged. Walking through Little Tokyo, one can’t escape the memory of imprisonment during World War II. And injustice is a present reality as well. As they pass federal buildings, Mary points to the immigration prison that looms close behind. Los Angeles, she says, has trained itself to become a city that forgets. Erin Dufault-Hunter says, “I’ve been a much better peacekeeper in the world.”

Irene, the only LA native of the group, stands by Chris Blumhofer, a recent arrival from the East Coast. Yet each faculty member present recognizes that they have a part to play in the city’s life and peace. Looking at the new architecture sprouting up around older buildings, Johnny Ramírez-Johnson notes the city’s ongoing transformation. “It breaks the cycle of thinking,” he says. “It’s new and unexpected every day.”

Their day ends in the plaza marking the Azusa Street Revival, a time in the city’s history that saw a great movement of the church through the Spirit. Circling up, they breathe out their prayer once more: “Jesus, together we seek your peace in this place.”


Who Is Fuller?

Fuller Seminary is an evangelical, multi-denominational 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 15 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 210 denominations enroll in Fuller’s degree programs annually, and our 44,000 alumni serve as ministers, counselors, teachers, artists, nonprofit leaders, businesspersons, and in a variety of other vocations around the world.

¿Quién es Fuller?

Fuller Seminary es una institución evangélica y multi-confesional que se compromete a formar líderes globales para las vocaciones del Reino. Respondiendo a los cambios en la iglesia y en el mundo, Fuller está transformando la experiencia del seminario tanto para los estudiantes tradicionales como para los que están más allá del aula: proporcionando formación teológica que ayude a los seguidores de Cristo a servir como fieles, vaeros, innovadores, líderes colaborativos y fructíferos en toda la vida, en cualquier contexto.

Fuller ofrece 15 programas de maestría y de grado avanzado—con opciones en español, coreano y en línea—a través de sus escuelas de Teología, Psicología, y Estudios Interculturales, así como formas ricas y variadas de apoyo para la iglesia más amplia. Cerca de 3.500 estudiantes de 80 países y 210 denominaciones se inscriben en los programas de estudio de Fuller anualmente, y nuestros 44,000 ex-alumnos sirven como ministros, consejores, maestros, artistas, líderes en organizaciones sin fines de lucro, empresarios, y en una variedad de otras vocaciones alrededor del mundo.
Doxology I: Holy Grail
by Dao Zi. Wash-ink painting. 55"x28", 2017. See more of Dao Zi's work on pp. 2–3 and 11.
During his first quarter at Fuller's Northwest campus, Rick Reynolds (p.18) started passing out pizzas to Seattle's homeless as a volunteer with a group called Operation Nightwatch. After more than three decades with the organization, he's learned a lot about recognizing the image of God in the poor. "They're all created in the image of God, and that's the thing: I want people to look, and not just look past."