“Our cities need to work for everyone; they need common ground to come together. For people of faith, this work comes from a deep conviction about what it means to seek the shalom of the city: it means not separating physical change from spiritual change.”

—NICOLE HIGGINS (MA ’10, STORY ON P. 12)
Makoto Fujimura is director of Fuller’s Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts; see more of his work on pp. 76–77 and 98–99. Painted at Brehm | Fujimura Studio in Pasadena, California, Silence and Beauty was completed with the help of Fujimura Fellows, a mentorship program that empowers students to embody Culture Care values. This diptych exists at the intersection of silence—including the novel of the same name—and the ways exile shapes creative practices. Explore these topics more online.

Silence and Beauty by Makoto Fujimura, 7' x 12' diptych, minerals, gesso on canvas, 2016
This scripture from Jeremiah is the right reflection for this significant time: it’s been 70 years since our seminary’s founder, Charles E. Fuller, launched classes in Pasadena. To honor that 70th anniversary, we are sharing resources from our archives throughout the year that celebrate the history, scholarship, accomplishments, and impact that define the Fuller legacy. Though I have only been at Fuller for four years, I find these resources and reflections very moving as a member of the institution that Charles Fuller gave so much of himself to serve.

In the 1940s, Fuller was reaching thousands through his popular radio broadcast, The Old Fashioned Revival Hour. When he dreamed of spreading the gospel even further through a new school that would train young evangelists, his friend Harold John Ockenga, a pastor and theologian, encouraged him to broaden that vision. The church, he said, needed pastors who were intellectually sound and culturally attuned as well as solidly evangelical. When the two men and four other evangelical scholars met to pray about this vision, they heard God’s strong call—and Fuller Theological Seminary was born, a “center for evangelical scholarship” that would resist separatism and be a force for the renewal and broadening of evangelicalism. In September 1947, Fuller Seminary’s inaugural group of 39 students attended classes in the kindergarten Sunday school rooms of Lake Avenue Congregational Church—sitting in child-sized chairs as they learned from a charter faculty of theological giants: Everett Harrison, Carl F. H. Henry, Harold Lindsett, and Wilbur Smith.

Jeremiah 33:3 was Charles Fuller’s life verse when he started his radio program in 1934, and later when he opened the doors to Fuller Seminary. It is an appropriate scripture to guide us as we celebrate this anniversary and look forward to new opportunities for Fuller’s future. We are strategically rettooling for a different world: offering fully online degree programs, rethinking regional campus functions, and restructuring the seminary around four areas—graduate programs, leadership formation, mission advancement, and operations—to strengthen our organizational effectiveness.

Chief among this season’s innovations is the new FULLER Leadership Platform, which will facilitate learning and formation in a variety of formats—from professional certificates to cohorts, classes, and more in addition to our traditional degrees. As always, whether through formation groups, centers of innovation, consulting, or career development, Fuller’s world-class scholarship consistently drives all we do.

For me, it has been important to remember the courageous and creative leadership of those who have gone before us at Fuller, pressing into the seminary’s rich history in ways that will guide us in responding to the needs of the church and our world in the future. As we enter into a new season burgeoning with possibility, I am trusting God to show us great and mighty things for another 70 years.

I am trusting God to show us great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” (Jer 33:3 KJV)
12 Start with Coffee
Nicole Higgins addresses the social divisions of Orlando through grassroots organizing—springing from a network of local coffee shops.

18 The End of the World as She Knew It
The suicide of her father sends Erin Dunkerly on a path of shock and grief, with a commitment to work toward prevention.

24 This Is What It Means to Wash Someone’s Feet
A passion for mental health and the homeless leads Ana Wong McDonald to help create holistic services on Los Angeles’s Skid Row.

28 Limping Toward Sunrise
Kutter Callaway reflects on his chronic spinal pain and the difficulty of finding faith in the midst of suffering.

32 In Transit
Aaron Moore’s winding journey takes him to unexpected transportation work in the high desert—and a vocation that uses all of his gifts.

THEOLOGY

38 The Shalom for Which We Yearn
W. Yvonne Mark LaBertton, Guest Theology Editor

40 Shalom as Wholeness: Embracing the Broad Biblical Message
Leslie E. Allen

44 The Church in a Time of Conflict: Bringing Shalom to Persons in Situations of Internal Displacement in Colombia
Lisseth Rivas-Pérez

50 Embodied Shalom: Making Peace in a Divided World
Jer Swigart

52 Kerygmatic Peacebuilding as the Practice of Biblical Shalom
Martin Accad

60 Shalom Justice
Githa R. Githa

66 Shalom as the Dual Approach of Peacemaking and Justice-Seeking: The Case of South Korea
Sebastian C. H. Kim

70 Passing the Peace: A Pneumatology of Shalom
Patrick Otun

DEPARTMENTS

78 Scripture
84 Wisdom
90 Preaching

VOCATIONAL VOICES

Johnny Ramírez-Johnson
Missiologist

Kédon-Sangan
Missionary

Conversing Conversations

Content available online
fuller.edu/studio

Contents of this issue

Visit fullersstudio.com for additional content and resources.
¿El Shalom de Quién?

Whose Shalom?

La idea del Shalom no es una fantasía ideológica. De hecho, es una palabra que nombra lo que ya es verdadero tanto del carácter como la intención de Dios. El Shalom muchas veces parece como un sueño atractivo y elusivo. Mientras que contiene algunos de nuestros anhelos y esperanzas más profundos, el Shalom es al mismo tiempo deseado pero también frustrado. Desde un mundo al que Dios llamó “bueno” y “muy bueno,” la intención para nosotros es vivir en, encarnar y nutrir el Shalom junto a Dios.

¿Cuándo? ¿Dónde?

Vivir en la tensión de “qué es” y “qué será” es el fundamento de la vida diaria para las personas que siguen a Cristo. El Shalom destaca que se nos ha dado un antecipado, pero no el fruto final. Por eso, vivimos la determinación y los medios por los cuales Dios persigue la creación del Shalom en la larga narrativa de la historia de Dios con Israel. En muchos momentos, la historia se mueve como lo hace debido a que Dios promueve el Shalom aun cuando Israel lo subvierte. Abraham, Moisés y David conocen las promesas del Shalom de Dios, y cada uno cuida y socava esa esperanza. Los profetas declaran el gran anhelo de Dios por la rectitud y la justicia – elementos vitales del Shalom – pero lo hacen en el contexto de la preocupación de Israel con sus propios sueños erróneos. La lidelidad de Dios de la salvación del mundo en la segunda persona de la Trinidad es la promesa de Shalom que promete a Israel y que es aún más inapelable para las gentes del mundo en el tiempo del Cordero, Jesucristo. La visión de Shalom de Dios que el Cordero, Jesucristo nos promete es el final, el fruto que Dios deseaba dar a Israel, y el fruto de su promesa es el Cristo, el Redentor.

The beauty of the vision itself may explain why shalom often seems like a tantalizing and elusive dream. While containing some of our deepest longings and hopes, shalom is at once deeply desired and never fully experienced. It describes what God’s grace intends, while the ordinary world of discord, violence, and broken relationships rolls unrestrained. Shalom? By all means. Where? Where? Living in the tension of “what is” and “what will be” is the ground of everyday life for followers of Jesus. Shalom underscores that we have been given a foretaste but not the final fruit. By faith, we see the determination and means by which God pursues the making of shalom in the long narrative of God’s story with Israel. At many points, the story moves along as it does because God promotes shalom even as Israel subverts it. Abraham, Moses, and David know the promises of God’s shalom, and each tends to a vision of what is and what is not idealist fantasy. It is not an impossible fantasy. It is the Shalom together with God.

La belleza de la visión en sí misma puede explicar por qué el Shalom muchas veces parece como un sueño atractivo y elusivo. Mientras que contiene algunos de nuestros anhelos y esperanzas más profundos, el Shalom es al mismo tiempo deseado pero también frustrado. Desde un mundo al que Dios llamó “bueno” y “muy bueno,” la intención para nosotros es vivir en, encarnar y nutrir el Shalom junto a Dios.

¿Dónde? ¿Por qué?

La esencia del Shalom no es un proyecto futuro. En el plan de creación de Dios la promesa es una realidad. En el plano de redención de Dios, la promesa es verdad. En el plano de creación de Dios no hay futuro. No hay ensueño de futuro para Dios. El Shalom es el Shalom que Dios ha hecho realidad. La belleza de la visión en sí misma puede explicar por qué el Shalom muchas veces parece como un sueño atractivo y elusivo. Mientras que contiene algunos de nuestros anhelos y esperanzas más profundos, el Shalom es al mismo tiempo deseado pero también frustrado. Desde un mundo al que Dios llamó “bueno” y “muy bueno,” la intención para nosotros es vivir en, encarnar y nutrir el Shalom junto a Dios.

¿Qué es? ¿Cómo?

La belleza de la visión en sí misma puede explicar por qué el Shalom muchas veces parece como un sueño atractivo y elusivo. Mientras que contiene algunos de nuestros anhelos y esperanzas más profundos, el Shalom es al mismo tiempo deseado pero también frustrado. Desde un mundo al que Dios llamó “bueno” y “muy bueno,” la intención para nosotros es vivir en, encarnar y nutrir el Shalom junto a Dios.

¿Qué es? ¿Cómo?

The idea of shalom is not an idealist fantasy. It is not an impossible fantasy. It is the Shalom together with God.
hacia Israel es un anticipo del Shalom, pero nunca la realidad final. En la vida, muerte y resurrección de Jesús, experimentamos la encarnación máxima del Shalom de Dios. Solo ahí tenemos el testimonio supremo de que el Shalom no es una fantasía idealista, sino más bien la vida tangible y esencial que desinteresadamente y extravagante hace el Shalom presente y posible por medio del amor. He aquí una evidencia cruda que el Shalom debe sanar -nos, pero más que eso, para que el Shalom sea establecido, debe superar nuestro insistencia en nuestros propios términos en vez de los de Dios. Queremos Shalom en la ausencia de nuestros enemigos, por ejemplo, mientras que el Shalom de Dios solo es posible en compañía de nuestros enemigos, también.

Es justo ahí, en medio de la inesperada, inesquecible integridad y santidad del Shalom de Dios, que nuestras visiones egoístas de Shalom deben morir y ser reemplazadas. Jesús no ofrece el Shalom de nuestra invención, o un Shalom que es una proyección de nuestras políticas o sociología o personalidad. Se nos ofrece una nueva humanidad hecha de cada tribu y lengua y nación. Se nos ha llamado a un nuevo reino donde la justicia y la paz significan la muerte del prejuicio, la mezquindad y el privilegio.

La realización del Shalom de Dios permanece elusiva – tal vez hasta fantástica – porque rechazamos los requisitos del Shalom. No queremos bajar los brazos. No queremos paz sino es la clase de paz que queremos. No queremos comunión y bienestar a menos que lo tengamos a nuestra manera y en nuestros propios términos. Eso no es el Shalom que Jesús vino a hacer. Mientras el nuestro es un sueño incumplible, el Shalom de Jesús es una realidad en la cual nos reusamos vivir. Así que, ¿cuál Shalom buscaremos?
Nicole Higgins (MA ’10), standing in front of a map of Orlando at CREDO, a coffee shop and nonprofit that works to heal divisions in the local community.
Walking into CREDO in Orlando, Florida, is not so different from walking into any other coffee shop. The buzz of grinding coffee beans fills the air; pastries tantalize from their case on the counter. Depending on which of CREDO’s four locations it happens to be, there might be professionals grabbing a drink en route to a meeting or artists sitting at a table collaborating on their latest project.

The difference starts to reveal itself when the barista asks, “How much do you want to pay for your coffee today?” Prices range from $2 to $4—buyer’s choice. Customers are introduced to their coffee as much for its story as for its flavor. Café de la Esperanza, for example, was grown and sun-dried in the Quiché region of Guatemala, an area once ravaged by a 36-year civil war, the barista explains. Each coffee plant is hand-cultivated, pressed, and sold at fair wages to protect workers’ rights and bolster the economy. With the addition of this narrative, degrees of separation between coffee grower and coffee drinker start to dissolve. A seemingly small decision can bring a personal connection, explains CREDO staff member Nicole Higgins [MACCS ’10] with unconcealed delight: “We’re inviting people to be stakeholders on a global issue at a very local level.”

Nicole is all about fostering personal connections, doing so with a degree of enthusiasm that’s contagious. Those connections begin first thing in the morning as she greets regular CREDO customers by name, and they extend into work that reaches far beyond selling coffee. In her role as “Rally Director,” Nicole energetically leads an effort that distinguishes CREDO from other cafés much more than their story sharing and name-your-own-price approach: she helps CREDO partner with and “rally” community members to bring positive social change to downtown Orlando. Partnerships have included a bike rally with the Parramore Kidz Zone, monthly trash pickups with Keeping Orlando Beautiful, and mentoring kids alongside the Boys & Girls Club. Nicole’s love for personal connections comes to the fore as she mobilizes “Rally Makers”—individuals and organizations who pool their resources and expertise to nurture new social enterprises in the city.

For Nicole, working at CREDO fulfills a deep passion to “seek the welfare of the city” through physical and spiritual renewal. Her own journey, in fact, mirrors CREDO’s mission statement:

“...a tendency toward apathy” —and moved across the country to join the Christian advocacy group Sojourners in Washington, DC. Yet
after a year doing work there that focused on higher-level, structural change, she felt the pull toward something else. “I was itching for the grassroots life,” she says, but wasn’t sure what that would look like. She returned to her hometown of Orlando for a time of transition, wanting to discern what this next thing might be that she felt called to but couldn’t yet define.

A friend and fellow Fuller alumn, Matt Winkles, stepped in with an answer. He told her about a coffee shop his brother-in-law, Ben, had started in downtown Orlando, with the goal of not just serving coffee but looking for ways to bring social change to the city. The idea excited Nicole: “I thought, ‘Man, I love community work—let’s change Orlando!’ When I told Ben I really aligned with CREDO’s mission, he said, ‘Cool, but can you make coffee?’” Nicole realized her first role with CREDO would mean staying inside to run the coffee shop—but it was an important step toward impacting the city.

“I came to see that, at CREDO, everything starts in the coffee shop—getting to know our customers and making the personal connections that could help us make a difference in the community,” she says. After two years, as those relationships grew and CREDO expanded the breadth of its work, Nicole took on the newly formed position of Rally Director—which indeed takes her out into the community daily to nurture social change.

Now she starts her day with a coffee at CREDO, but may later be found meeting with a donor who wants to support a new social enterprise, helping organize a cooking class for neighborhood kids, or working with local leaders to put on a community parade. CREDO’s work in the community goes in lots of directions, but that suits Nicole just fine. “Eight years after I first fell in love with community work I’m actually doing the things I set out to do,” she says, “but it looks different than I imagined.”

In many ways, what Nicole does is exceeding her imagination: building relationships at a grassroots level in ways that can make a bigger structural impact. One project she’s excited about focuses on downtown Orlando’s Division Avenue—a street that has historically and literally divided racial and economic groups in Orlando. Nicole is working with her contacts to host a dinner that will bring together local residents, elected officials, and even the mayor to discuss the social impact of this street. “People have talked about renaming the street, but isn’t that just a cosmetic fix?” Nicole asks. “We need to address some of the more fundamental issues in the neighborhood, have the longer conversation about it, and this dinner will help do that.”

“CREDO is in a place to move forward conversations like this because we’re part of so many different networks of people in Orlando now,” she says, “I can approach a local chef, or others I know who host dinner parties, and say hey, you’re really good at this—would you like to help? I ran into the chief of the fire department last week and said, by the way, we’re doing this dinner on Division Avenue—can we use your kitchen? It’s just a block away!” With her brilliant smile and unrestrained enthusiasm, Nicole undoubtedly gets a “yes” much more often than not to requests such as these. As she wholeheartedly embraces projects like the Division Avenue discussion, Nicole feels, for the first time since she was at Fuller, a strong desire to settle down and stay in one place. But this time her life’s momentum is helping her carry out the work she feels called to. Rather than overcoming its force, it is time, she feels, to give in to its pull.

For Nicole, this means learning to carry out the last part of CREDO’s mission statement—to seek the welfare of not only the city and world, but also herself. She is letting herself be impacted by the community around her: forging deeper connections with her neighbors, learning to both give and receive support. She is discovering that working toward the welfare of the city is a mutual endeavor, a partnership that strengthens both parties. When asked what one thing she has learned about God through her time in Orlando, Nicole answers with the same passion that is evident in the work she does: “When it comes to God, there’s room for everyone.”

“A life of impact usually starts with steps so small they seem silly: so small that the momentum of our life always seems to carry us away from them. It’s only when we rally together that we’re able to overcome that momentum, reject our tendency toward apathy, and impact our city, world, and selves for good.”

—CREDO Mission Statement

CHRIS MILLER (MDiv ‘11), storyteller, is the senior Scripture engagement writer for American Bible Society in Philadelphia.

LINDSEY SHEETS, photographer, is a video and audio editor for FULLER studio.

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—CREDO Mission Statement

CHRISTINA MILLER (MDiv ’12), storyteller, is the senior Scripture engagement writer for American Bible Society in Philadelphia.

LINDSEY SHEETS, photographer, is a video and audio editor for FULLER studio.
Rick Dunkerly was a free spirit. He was an idealist and an agitator. He wrote poems and letters to the editor. He rescued Collies and rooted for the underdog. He taught Bible studies at his church and dove deep into the book of Revelation. He dearly loved his four daughters. But he was not well. At times, he struggled with alcoholism, diabetes, and depression; he struggled to maintain family relationships. He lost a decades-long career post and saw his long marriage fall apart. He worked part-time here and there, but the income wasn’t enough. He made several suicide attempts. In his final months he became homeless, living in his car and in motels or staying with friends.

While working at a call center he was robbed at gunpoint, the assailant cornering him in a men’s restroom. He was prescribed ten sessions of counseling and the event was considered to be resolved.

Two months later, on August 6, 2006, Rick drove himself to a dog park in San Dimas, California. He sat behind the wheel, pulled out a gun found in his friend’s dresser drawer, and shot himself. He was 59.

Suicide stories like Rick’s provoke complex feelings in each of us, a disquieting mix of grief and anger and helplessness. We ask ourselves what could have been done to avoid this. Lacking answers and recourse, some conclude that nothing could have changed the early ending to Rick’s life; he was one of those who needed the most help but wouldn’t take it. Erin Dunkerly [MAICS ’03] would disagree with those assumptions.

Rick was Erin’s father and her best friend. She was devoted to him, and he to her. One Christmas before he died, she sneaked into his apartment when he was gone and delivered a Christmas tree, complete with ornaments, lights, and a tin angel holding a banner that said “Peace.” He pried the halo off that angel and kept it on display all year long.

The two of them remained in close contact while Erin studied at Fuller’s Pasadena campus in the early 2000s. Erin intended to go into the field of international development after graduation—but at Fuller, as she worked first for the provost and then the Brehm Center, she began to recognize her own administrative gifts. She would often meet with her father over a meal, brainstorming about next steps in his future and smiling at his contrarian quips and political wisecracks. Yet, while the next steps in her vocational journey remained foggy, there he sat in front of her, clearly needing support himself. At times there seemed to be a reversal of roles between parent and child. Once she had to intervene by dismantling his car engine when he threatened to drive drunk from Whittier up to Pismo Beach. She lent him money when he couldn’t make ends meet.

The day her father died, before she learned what happened, Erin felt strange—almost a premonition she would later attribute to a primal and profound bond between parent and child. Having entered law school after Fuller, she was busy externing for a federal judge, and it had been about a month since she and her dad had last spoken. With her 30th birthday a week away, she thought about how she wanted to see him, maybe go to a movie together. But she decided she’d call him the following day.

Late that night, Erin’s doorbell rang. “Police!” said a voice from outside the door. The voice belonged to a woman who was in fact a death investigator from the Los Angeles Coroner’s Office. She broke the devastating news to Erin and spoke with her for about 30 minutes, tactfully asking questions to rule out the possibility of a homicide. Reflecting on the experience, Erin noted, “It’s really amazing how your brain and body work during a moment like that. The shock of it all. After the investigator explained what had happened, I asked, ‘Well, is he okay?’”

That night, Erin, still reeling from shock, had to tell the rest of her family. She phoned her mother and sister, who lived up in the Pacific Northwest, and then had a friend drive her through midnight’s blackness to both Whittier and Simi Valley where her two younger sisters lived. Later that week she
“But those left behind after a suicide—we have already lost our loved ones, and we are just trying to prevent others from sharing in that same pain.”
bolstered her bantam frame with oversized courage and went to the coroner’s office with a friend to reclaim the possessions found on her father’s body. She went to an evidence yard in San Dimas where they had preserved his car exactly as it was found. The radio was still on; the blood remained. She and her family parsed out a suicide note that ended: “I was too tender for this world.” In reflecting on the experience, Erin writes, “My father shot himself, and the bullet hit everyone. It hit me, my sisters, my mother, our extended family, his friends, and radiated to others. It’s frightening. It’s bloody. It’s stigmatizing. It was the end of the world as I knew it.”

Why would Erin disagree, then, with the notion that suicides cannot be prevented? Because, as she got involved with suicide-prevention organizations such as All Saints Pasadena’s Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, she learned that view was simply not true. For every person who commits suicide, there are numerous others who have seriously considered but avoided taking their lives. (See sidebar to learn more.)

Erin believes that a community in action can make the world tender enough for people like her father to go on living. They can individually and collectively give tin angels that bear peace for the rest of their life. When asked to reflect on her father’s death in light of her faith, she explains, “You know that the grief will remain, surging and subsiding, for the rest of her life. In reflecting on the experience, Erin writes, “I knew it.”

After graduating from Loyola Law School, Erin became a defense-side civil litigator for a firm in South Pasadena. As she represents public entities, her work has taken her back to the same building where she retrieved her father’s possessions after his suicide—and painful memories return. She knows that the grief will remain, surging and subsiding, for the rest of her life. When asked to reflect on her father’s death in light of her faith, she explains, “You know, this story is not a clean narrative. I identify with the theologian Frederick Buechner, whose own father killed himself when Buechner was just a boy. In one of his books he says, ‘Adolf Hitler dies a suicide in his bunker with the Third Reich going up in flames all around him, and what God is saying is the wages of sin seems clear enough. . . . But what is God saying through a good man’s suicide?’ I don’t really know what God is saying, but I know he’s working through it. Even in the midst of the worst crisis, if I listen, I hear, ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’”

Suicide is preventable. Addressing the warning signs may save in three words: “I know starts with understanding some of the facts.”

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States. More than 40,000 people die by suicide in the United States annually—meaning that, on average, there are 112 suicides per day.

Nearly 30 percent of those who die by suicide have a mental disorder at the time of their deaths. Biological and psychological treatments can help address the underlying health issues that put these at risk.

In 2015, the highest suicide rate was among adults 45 to 64 years old. The second highest was in those 85 years or older. Younger groups have had consistently lower suicide rates than middle-aged and older adults.

Men die by suicide 3.5 times more often than women, and race’s accounted for 7 of 10 suicides in 2015.

Half (50 percent) use a firearm. Two-thirds of all gun deaths in America are suicides.

For every suicide, there are nearly 300 people who have moved past serious thoughts about killing themselves.

For every suicide, there are nearly 80 who have survived a suicide attempt, the overwhelming majority of whom will go on to live out their lives.

If you are concerned about someone you know, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255.
When Ana Wong McDonald (PhD ’99) was a young girl growing up in Hong Kong, her grandmother would walk her to school every day through streets marked by suffering and poverty. “There was one old woman who was always carrying a heavy pole across her shoulders with baskets on it,” she recalls, “and a man with leprosy who had lost some of his limbs—my grandmother often stopped and gave him food.” Witnessing this had an impact on young Ana, and a seed of compassion was planted.

Decades later, in the early 2000s, another of her daily walks caused that seed to sprout in Ana. Working as a community psychologist for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Center in Hollywood, Ana parked in a staff lot several blocks away from the Mental Health Center in Hollywood, Ana reached out to the nearby Hollywood Presbyterian Church to help address the need for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health services. Ana formed Hollywood HealthCare Partnership, an informal gathering of a dozen community organizations to provide medical, spiritual, social service, and comprehensive support with mental health services, to help address the suffering holistically, and collaborating to make them happen.

Ana got a chance to take that vision to a new setting in 2009, when The Salvation Army in West Los Angeles offered her a new position. “They’d traditionally provided just ‘three meals and a bed’ to homeless, disabled veterans, but now wanted to offer more comprehensive support with mental health services,” she says. When they asked Ana to lead that effort, “I knew it was something I had to do.” She developed their clinical program from scratch, building a team of two dozen clinicians and 30 interns and overseeing treatment programs that came to serve 2,500 homeless vets every year.

Psychology was not always Ana’s field. For the first 17 years of her professional life she was a musician, teaching piano and serving as choir director at her church. Her students and choir members, though, saw her as more than a music teacher, often coming to her for advice about personal problems. “At church, people would sometimes approach me and ask, can we talk?” Ana remembers, and after a while, she became the church’s unofficial lay counselor.

“People at church started telling me, ‘You really need to study psychology!’ As I thought about it, I agreed—but knew it had to be a strongly Christian program.” Ana decided to pursue a PhD at Fuller’s School of Psychology because, she says, “Fuller had the depth of integration I was looking for. I didn’t want to be a psychologist who is a Christian. I see myself as a Christian first and foremost, then a psychologist. My faith lies at the core of all I do.”

Longtime professor of psychology Richard Gorsuch became Ana’s mentor and deepest influence. “It wasn’t just because he was a research guru,” she says of the late professor; “it was the small things. In my first year, I remember a research colloquium where a student came late; Dr. Gorsuch gave that student his chair and sat on the floor. It was things like that—his humility, his servant heart—that spoke volumes to me, even more than his academic brilliance.” Dr. Gorsuch continued to be a mentor and a friend to Ana long after she graduated, and she keeps a small pillow he brought back to her from an overseas mission trip in her office, to remind her of him and his influence. “He hiked up a mountain for over eight hours to minister to and live among people in regions without electricity, running water, or transportation,” Ana recounts. “His sacrifice and model for serving the needy impacted me deeply.”

Today Ana carries that influence to her newest post, at Los Angeles Christian Health Centers (LACHC) on LA’s Skid Row, where she is again doing what she loves: building a more collaborative, holistic program for the primarily homeless clientele they serve. Hired in 2015 by Wayne Aoki, her former professor at Fuller and then-director of LACHC’s mental health services, Ana knew she was in the right place when Wayne took her to lunch at the Los Angeles Mission across the street. “When I walked into that cafeteria with 80 or 100 homeless people, I sat with them, ate with
them, looked into their faces—saw all the suffering, the need, the potential there—and I thought, I’m home. This is where I belong!”

Now, as LACHC’s mental health director herself, Ana is working with others at the clinic—medical doctors, dentists, social service providers—to find a deeper level of healing for the emotional trauma nearly all their clients bring through LACHC’s doors. “A child might come into the clinic with asthma, and we’ll often find out her symptoms stem from forces in her family environment—abuse, seeing domestic violence,” she explains. “We need to communicate across disciplines and address problems like these together—to look at the whole person.”

Holistic support also means, for Ana, doing whatever needs to be done for a client. That might be, at the end of a counseling session, looking up bus timetables and giving step-by-step directions to the elderly, visually impaired client who has a court date the next day and doesn’t know how to get there. Or it might be, when a client shows up in a thin t-shirt on a cold winter day, walking him across the street to the LA Mission and helping him find a jacket to wear. “It’s not part of therapy or treatment, but this is what it means to wash someone’s feet,” she says with conviction in her voice. “If you’re going to be in ministry, you do what it takes to help the person in need.”

Committed as she is to footwashing, Ana is most enlivened when she’s building a program that multiplies that commitment—programs that lead many people to heal, thrive, wash one another’s feet, and continue doing so whether she is present or not. Most telling, perhaps, is her joy in relating a story from her days at the Hollywood Mental Health Center, where she instituted an optional weekly spirituality group for clients to explore issues of faith. One member, a young girl with a history in the sexual industry, shared with the group that a man had offered to give her a salon makeover in exchange for her to meet him in his apartment. “The other women in the group listened to her respectfully,” Ana shares, “and very lovingly, one of the women said, ‘Well, I’ve been fixing my daughter’s hair and makeup for years. Come to my house—I’ll fix your hair for you and do your makeup.’ And then another woman said, ‘I’ll bring pizza—we’ll make it a women’s night!’”

“That group came together around her to gently tell her, you don’t need to do those dangerous things, we’ll be there for you. They did this on their own accord, without me,” says Ana with visible delight. “It was beautiful to watch it unfold.”

Ana has another childhood memory of her grandmother that turned out to be providential. When she was four years old, her grandmother told her she should be a doctor one day, because “it’s always good to help heal people,” she recalls. “After that I remember praying, ‘God, help me to grow up to be a doctor, like my grandmother said.’ God was faithful,” Ana says now with tears in her eyes, “even to the prayer of a four-year-old.”

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I am sitting in what could be the waiting room of any neurosurgeon’s office in the country. Trying to look “normal” and to distract myself from the searing pain in my body, I scan the room. In one corner, a man engages in an important business deal on his cell phone. I imagine him to be a powerful executive meting out daily tongue-lashings to interns and inept junior colleagues. But the forceful, even authoritative tone of his voice is belied by his posture. Whereas the volume of his rant would suggest a wildly gesticulating speaker, he barely moves. Sitting only in the most abstract sense, his back is contorted into a grotesque arch with the top of his head flat against the wall—his chair serving only as a platform where his paralyzing pain plays out.

To his left, another man has abandoned his seat altogether and is on his hands and knees, calmly attempting to read a magazine while rhythmically shifting his body back and forth to mitigate pain. The periodical he attempts to read rests serenely on the chair he is no longer able to occupy. Just then, the elevator dings and a woman in a wheelchair emerges from behind the stainless-steel doors. I do not know her, but I know the hollow look in her eyes that comes with being consumed by pain. An unyielding force appears to have swallowed her whole.

Much like my waiting room neighbors, I too suffer from chronic pain. For more than a decade now, I have been living with a degenerative disc disorder and spinal stenosis, which means that the narrowing of my spinal canal and the herniated discs in my neck radiate severe pain to my back, chest, shoulder, arm, and hand. On good days, the pain is manageable. I am able to sit at my computer, go to the gym, and even pick up my daughters with only mild discomfort. When my symptoms become slightly aggravated, sleep is elusive. I am sometimes able to manage a few hours of rest each night by carefully situating myself in “Daddy’s bed”—the name my daughter has given to the chair into which I collapse after succumbing to prescribed narcotics.
On bad days, though, the pain is unendurable. Imagine a bad muscle cramp mixed with the "pins-and-needles" sensation of an arm that has lost circulation. Then, imagine being lit on fire from the inside out. When this happens, I can neither lie down nor sit down without exacerbating the symptoms. Not too long ago, I experienced a particularly bad flare-up that lasted for months. I was exhausted with everything: tried of hurting, of sleepless nights, of being a burden to my wife and children. Most of all, I was tired of the world—tired of hurting, of sleepless nights, of being a burden to my family. Even on the best days, I also feel alone, not to mention completely broken. I resonated with Dostoyevsky’s words in The Brothers Karamazov: “It isn’t that I refuse to acknowledge God, but I am respectfully giving him back my ticket to a world like this.”

I find I have very few places where I am allowed the freedom to express this level of fear and doubt. Much like the uncertainty it produces, pain is not “normal” in the contemporary Western world. It is a sign of weakness. It is an aberration. The chronic nature of my pain also weighs the uncertainty it produces, pain is not “normal” in the context is not an easy kind of painlessness, but a hard-earned victory. In an important sense, then, regardless of what ails each of us, we all inhabit a waiting room filled with people who, just like us, suffer from a chronic condition. No human life is without pain, not even the one lived by the human who was also God. Which is exactly why, when suffering has taken us to the end of ourselves, when we are completely undone by our pain, we are able to enter a sacred space where the boundaries between heaven and earth evaporate. In that most precious of spaces, our bodies are not alleviated of pain, but re-created in and through it. And, much like Jacob, what emerges from this context is not an easy kind of painlessness, but a hard-earned victory—one that weathers our chronicity, our unscathed from an agonizing encounter with God. For Jacob, the experience is forever memorialized: the name change, the new identity, the transformed life. For us, it is often on Jacob’s “fresh start”—on his new name and his new outlook on life. This interpretation does make sense. After all, it feels good to think about the way Jacob went from a conniving, backstabbing brother to the father and namesake of God’s chosen people. We like that story. But it’s not the whole story, for it fails to account for the fact that God’s blessing of Jacob cannot be separated from his inescapable struggle with chronic pain. Just like his shiny new name, Jacob’s limp paints an unsettling picture for us. On one hand, very few individuals have encountered God as intimately as Jacob did on that night. On the other hand, I would venture a guess that even fewer have lived the rest of their lives with the kind of physical, psychological, and spiritual trauma that resulted from that encounter. No one, it would seem, walks away unscathed from an encounter with God. Nevertheless, Jacob’s agonizing encounter with Yahweh has the potential for serving as a kind of icon. The nation of Israel forever memorialized Jacob’s chronic pain by avoiding meat taken from the sicken of the lamb (Gen 32:32). In other words, rather than attempting to “manage” or even “fix” the reality of chronic pain, the community of faith took this anguish up within its worshipping life and, in doing so, constituted both the pain and themselves. On a fundamental level, they became a community defined by their suffering. I often wonder what would happen if the Christian community did the same. What if we not only created space for others to hurt/doubt/cry/fail/scream/question, but also incorporated the line experience of chronic sufferers into our personal and communal forms of life? What if their stories became our story? This might not generate a great deal of certainty. But the good news is that, when it comes to being the people of God, we’re not after certainty; we’re after communion.

“"No human life is without pain, not even the one lived by the human who was also God."”

I often find myself looking for Jacob in my own story. How difficult is it for me to fathom your thoughts about me, O God! How vast is your sum total! . . . Even if I counted counting them, I would still have to contend with you. ([Ps 134:2–3 NET])

When my own moments of pain seem to stretch into infinity, the word “faith”—whatever it may in fact mean during times of normalcy—becomes a far more complex and even terrifying proposition. In the course of a single pain-filled hour, I have lost my faith and found it anew more than once. But that is the convoluted beauty of it. Just like wrestling at the Jabbok, pain not only forces me to confront all the doubts and fears that lurk just beneath the surface of my meticulously constructed facades, it also exposes me to a depth of intimacy that doesn’t seem reachable by any other means. In an important sense, then, regardless of what ails each of us, we all inhabit a waiting room filled with people who, just like us, suffer from a chronic condition. No human life is without pain, not even the one lived by the human who was also God. Which is exactly why, when suffering has taken us to the end of ourselves, when we are completely undone by our pain, we are able to enter a sacred space where the boundaries between heaven and earth evaporate. In that most precious of spaces, our bodies are not alleviated of pain, but re-created in and through it. And, much like Jacob, what emerges from this context is not an easy kind of painlessness, but a hard-earned victory—one that weathers our chronicity, our unscathed from an agonizing encounter with God. For Jacob, the experience is forever memorialized: the name change, the new identity, the transformed life. For us, it is often on Jacob’s “fresh start”—on his new name and his new outlook on life. This interpretation does make sense. After all, it feels good to think about the way Jacob went from a conniving, backstabbing brother to the father and namesake of God’s chosen people. We like that story. But it’s not the whole story, for it fails to account for the fact that God’s blessing of Jacob cannot be separated from his inescapable struggle with chronic pain. Just like his shiny new name, Jacob’s limp paints an unsettling picture for us. On one hand, very few individuals have encountered God as intimately as Jacob did on that night. On the other hand, I would venture a guess that even fewer have lived the rest of their lives with the kind of physical, psychological, and spiritual trauma that resulted from that encounter. No one, it would seem, walks away unscathed from an encounter with God. Nevertheless, Jacob’s agonizing encounter with Yahweh has the potential for serving as a kind of icon. The nation of Israel forever memorialized Jacob’s chronic pain by avoiding meat taken from the sicken of the lamb (Gen 32:32). In other words, rather than attempting to “manage” or even “fix” the reality of chronic pain, the community of faith took this anguish up within its worshipping life and, in doing so, constituted both the pain and themselves. On a fundamental level, they became a community defined by their suffering. I often wonder what would happen if the Christian community did the same. What if we not only created space for others to hurt/doubt/cry/fail/scream/question, but also incorporated the line experience of chronic sufferers into our personal and communal forms of life? What if their stories became our story? This might not generate a great deal of certainty. But the good news is that, when it comes to being the people of God, we’re not after certainty; we’re after communion.

"No human life is without pain, not even the one lived by the human who was also God."
Aron Moore’s books seem so out of place at the Victor Valley Transit Authority that his coworkers renamed his office “the library.” Books on philosophy and “the beauty of the infinite” lean next to transportation manuals, a collection of ancient Near Eastern pottery sits on the shelves above his computer, and a Bible lies open on the desk. Aaron enjoys the curiosity of his colleagues, since it often turns into an opportunity for conversation about subjects that give his work meaning. “When we get to questions of ultimate value,” he says, “I can often talk to them on a deeper level in ways they hadn’t thought about before.” What does theology and philosophy have to do with transit planning, they ask? Aaron looks around his office and answers—everything.

As a student at Fuller, Aaron [MAT ’11] had plans to be a professor. Obsessed with theology and philosophy, he spent most of his time in the library, preferring reading to friendships with his peers or professors. He soon realized, however, that Fuller wanted to make him “a whole person,” and that the community around him expected him to integrate his books with real relationships. “Academics is a valuable pursuit, but I started to see I was using it to prove my importance and self-worth,” he recalls, instead of being present with others.

Around that time, Aaron took a missiology class with Bill Dyrness, professor of theology and culture, that reoriented the way he understood vocation: “He taught me that ministry is about opening up opportunities for people to see God’s love rather than bringing anything to them,” he says. It was an important shift—rather than serving others out of his own strength, Aaron was learning he only had to be present, look for opportunities, and join in. After the class, he decided to balance his studying by volunteering at Fuller’s food bank, a weekly food distribution service for the local Pasadena community. It was a step toward “impactful, relational ministry” that would come to shift the momentum of his life.

Every week in the parking lot next to Carnell Hall, the hands that turned the pages of theology books also learned to sort vegetables and day-old bread. “Volunteering at the food bank pulled me out of just being a student of theology and into becoming a practitioner of my faith,” he remembers. “It was an important place where we could treat people with dignity even at their most vulnerable time.” As he befriended regulars at the food bank, it wasn’t long before he noticed a pattern as to why they sometimes didn’t show up. When people missed a week, they almost always had the same reason: they couldn’t afford the transportation to get there. Their absence troubled Aaron and became an epiphany: “Services don’t matter if you can’t get to them.” Helping people get access to services they needed could be its own form of ministry, he thought, and if people were falling through the gaps in a densely populated city like Pasadena, Aaron wondered about the area he came from in California’s high desert, where cities were sparse and the distance between them even wider.

Under Aaron’s direction, his team has donated cars to churches and nonprofits who then use the vehicles to connect people to health care, after-school programs for children, or even church services on Sunday. They have developed a driver reimbursement program that refunds costs to volunteers who drive others in the community to appointments and other services—a program with the added benefit of encouraging neighbors to meet one another. “We’re trying to get people engaged in their communities, and that’s one reason I love

in transit

2017 | ISSUE #9 SHALOM 33
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When one patient was late to a doctor’s appointment, he remembers, the volunteer driver went inside to advocate for him; transportation became a means for supporting a friend in need. For another, the transit service not only helped her make her appointments, it decreased debilitating anxiety so she could have a better quality of life at home. When Needles, California, lost a 99 Cent Store and Dollar General—the only source of inexpensive food for many—Aaron’s team developed a rideshare program so that families could carpool to nearby towns. Even though the costs were low, they discovered people couldn’t pay for the service, so they developed financial cards that worked not only as payment for ride-sharing but also as a solution to banking needs. “Seeing the community receive that added benefit was satisfying,” he says.

Running errands, shopping, and doctor visits are “basic things we take for granted, but they’re things people can’t do without transportation,” says Aaron. Without access to transportation, people find that struggles with seemingly unrelated social issues become exacerbated. The longer he’s worked in this field, the more Aaron has realized that transportation is at the center of many community challenges: poverty, mental health needs, isolation, health care access. “In ministry, of course you want to spread the gospel, but you also want to care for the physical needs,” he says, sharing a conviction that came from studying neuroscience and the soul with Warren Brown, professor of psychology, and Nancy Murphy, senior professor of Christian philosophy. “This world matters. Bodies and the needs of bodies in this world matter.”

As the programs have grown, Aaron has started presenting at council meetings and other nonprofits to share what he’s learned and to advocate working together to build a “web of services” for the community. Ultimately, the value of these transportation services is more than just lending vehicles or creating new programs. For Aaron, it’s about creating access to services that strengthen communities and help people live meaningful lives.

Few people set out to work in public transportation, he points out. “Most of my team started out doing something else, but we saw a community need,” he says. “I know I’m doing exactly what God has called me to do even though I never anticipated doing it.” Looking around at his books, he knows the transit office is precisely the place to bring theology and relationships together. “Reading Mark Labberton’s book Called was confirmation of my choice,” he remembers. “It was an affirmation that Jesus wants us to function and work in a practical manner to meet people’s needs and show them his love.”

Driving across the desert, praying with a coworker in the break room, reading Scripture in his office—they’re landscapes converging into a single mission field Aaron is grateful to traverse: “I see my work as an expansion of Christ’s body and the church. It may be an impossible vision, but I want to see a day when everyone can get to where they need to go.”
"I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of
the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the
sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety."

Hosea 2:18
For which we yearn

Que tanto anhelamos

우리가 꿈꾸는 샬롬

마크 래버튼

THE SHALOM
FOR WHICH WE YEARN

by Mark Labberton
Guest Theology Editor

In its broadest definition the Hebrew word shalom means “wholeness,” with a crucial element of that wholeness being “peace.” Yet the word contains a longing that transcends mere definition, a profound hope shared across the world by individuals, communities, and whole nations. Though a complicated concept, no matter whether it is nuanced theologically, spiritually, politically, or sociologically, this all-too-elusive thing called shalom is a nearly universal desire.

As Fuller Theological Seminary marks its 75th year in the fall of 2017, this theme seems an obvious one to consider in a world ravished by violence and hunger for shalom. Nations, regions, tribes, religions, institutions, families, and individuals are intensely aware of its absence, and of the unmet desire for a deep and pervasive sense of well-being plipo by the sentiment profound and penetrating of bienestar that evokes "peace." Yet the word contains a longing that transcends mere definition, a profound hope shared across the world by individuals, communities, and whole nations.

To be sure, this is a complex concept, but it is one that is shared by all nations, all communities, and all individuals across the globe. While it is difficult to define, it is a deep and pervasive sense of well-being that is desperately needed today.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ comes to and for this very kind of world. The essays in this section present a biblical vision of gospel shalom as it relates to the pain, suffering, and vulnerability for which it is so deeply needed. It is sacrificial love worked out in the midst of struggle, demonstrated by the Maker-of-Shalom who understands human anguish and came in mercy and justice to set things right.

This issue of FULLER magazine considers this shalom from many different dimensions—from different theological disciplines and out of varying social, ethnic, and political worlds, forming a series of windows or doorways through which we can glimpse this peace for which we yearn. Together, they provide just the sort of rich, thoughtful engagement that reflects Fuller’s history—as well as a commitment to drink from the well of our biblical faith, and to love a world parched for the living water of shalom.

우리가 꿈꾸는 샬롬

마크 래버튼

THE SHALOM
QUE TANTO ANHELAMOS

Por Mark Labberton

En su definición más amplia la palabra en hebreo significa "plenitud," con un elemento crucial de esa plenitud siendo la paz. Sin embargo, la palabra contiene un anhelo que transcende la mera definición, una esperanza profunda compartida en todo el mundo por individuos, comunidades y naciones enteras.

A pesar de ser un concepto complicado, no importando si es teológicamente, espiritualmente, políticamente o sociológicamente tratado, esta cosa tan elusiva llamada shalom es un deseo que persigue a todo el universo.

Ya que el Seminario Teológico de Fuller cumple sus 70 años en el otoño de 2017, este tema parece ser uno obvio a considerar en un mundo devastado por la violencia y hambriento de shalom. Naciones, regiones, tribus, religiones, instituciones, familias e individuos están intensamente conscientes de su ausencia y del deseo incommensurable de evocar —algo que contenga todos los extremos de la vida.

El maestro es un mundo de turbulencia global, terrorismo vicioso y violencia fortuita. Luego de décadas de hostilidades comprobadas en muchas partes del mundo —aunque marcado por la guerra, injusticia y abuse— las narrativas embrionarias de inestabilidad y ataque desenfrenado parecen ser cada vez más normativas. Para la persona más pobre y marginalizada, tal vulnerabilidad es profundamente familiar. Que una franja más amplia y más escolarizada de personas alrededor del mundo ahora enfrenta un miedo más grande a diario por la incertidumbre y el ataque es un cambio significativo.

El evangelio de Jesucristo viene para y por esta clase de mundo. En los ensayos en esta sección se puede encontrar una visión bíblica del evangelio de shalom a medida que se relaciona al dolor, sufrimiento y vulnerabilidad para la cual es tan profundamente necesario. Es amor sacrificado ejecutado en medio de la lucha, demostrado por el Creador-del-Shalom que entiende la angustia humana y vino en misericordia y justicia para arreglar las cosas.

Esta edición de la revista FULLER considera este shalom desde diferentes dimensiones —desde diferentes disciplinas teológicas y de mundos sociales, éticos y políticos variantes, formando un conjunto de ventanas y puertas por las cuales podemos vislumbrar esta paz que anhelamos. Juntan, proveen solo el tipo de involucramiento rico y reflexivo que refleja la historia de Fuller —así como el compromiso de beber del pozo de nuestra fe bíblica y a amar al mundo sediento por el agua viva del shalom.
Leslie C. Allen, who has served on the Fuller Seminary theology faculty since 1983, is currently senior professor of Old Testament. His commentaries on the Hebrew Bible he has written include Jeremiah in the Old Testament Library, Psalms and Ezekiel in the Word Biblical Commentary, and “Choricisms” in The New Interpreter’s Bible. He has also published extensively in various books and scholarly journals. In addition to mentoring PhD students, Dr. Allen teaches courses on the Hebrew Prophets, Writings, Psalms, and Lamentations, and is involved in theological associations in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

As an Old Testament professor, I find it gratifying that a Hebrew word has passed into Christian currency. It occurs advantageously in the New Testament, and is involved in mentoring PhD students, Dr. Allen teaches courses on the Hebrew Prophets, Writings, Psalms, and Lamentations, and is involved in theological associations in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

Shalom as Wholeness: Embracing the Broad Biblical Message

Leslie C. Allen

Inclusiveness is the very point being made in the Defenestration of that sense. There is a time for war, and a time for peace [shalom],” Ecclesiastes 3:8 tells us. A related meaning is physical well-being of persons or communities, and “peace” is a particular and common denominator of those statements properly. I found his wider approach convincing. When Isaiah 40-55 became one of my Hebrew set texts and I reviewed the evidence that it was composed by a prophet living nearly two centuries after the historical Isaiah, I took it in stride and un-derstood that the Holy Spirit had inspired his work for inclusion in the larger work. Later I welcomed in principle Breward Childs’s “canonical approach” and recognized in him a kindred spirit. For many years I taught a PhD seminar, “Critical Approaches to the Old Testament,” which I always began by comparing the task of critic to that of the setting, character, and growth of Old Testament literature and can provide the necessary tools to appreciate its canonical value.

Yet the spiritual side of the Old Testament has frequently been overlooked. For some years I taught an elective course on “Spirituality of the Psalms.” At my previous institution, the course was part of the curricular load for six years, where my approach was to touch how to think and live like a good Jew. I came to carry this perspective into my PhD magazine. I became an avid reader of his articles and books to see where he stood on various Christian and biblical issues and why. Later I met him and would occasionally write to him, his example stimulating my own thinking. The nature of the Bible as revelation was something I needed to sort out. I read B. B. Warfield and was impressed by the array of self-defining statements from the New Testament! A solution presented itself. Instead of a three-year degree the uni-

versity offered the option of two half-degree programs, each taking two years. So after two years I switched to Hebrew and Aramaic studies, and eventually was allowed to com-plete that particular degree program in a fifth year. My vision was to be a lay preacher, preaching the whole Bible, while to make ends meet I would get some “tent-making” job, as Paul did, following the practice of Jewish rabbis. But what and where?

My Hebrew professor wanted me to teach in a secular university, but no position was cur-

rently available. Years before he had been in a similar situation, and taught at a seminary in Cairo until a position opened up back home. He urged me to go abroad and promised to be on the lookout for me at home. So I wrote to a theological college in London that trained missionaries as well as pastors, and in fact included somebody like me in their Old Testament department. The college encour- aged its faculty to enroll for a part-time PhD degree in University. When I was halfway through the program, the anticipated letter from my professor arrived. I felt it had to say something about the subject, it would mean going my part-time study, which was not permissible for British univer-
sity teachers, and I was finding its rigorous intellectual demands inadvisable to equip me for teaching. Second and more important, by now I was teaching at a secular university as a poor alternative to seminary-type teaching that prepared students already committed in principle to Christian service. So I stayed where I was, and I crossed sea and land to teach at Fuller as an Old Testament professor.

My tent-making job turned into Christian service as a sort of evangelist for the Old Testa-

ment, in fact as an anti-Marcionite. Marcion was a Christian heretic in the second century AD who discovered the Old Testament, believ-

ing that the New had utterly superseded it. He considered the God of the Old a different deity from that of the New, the one that Christians should worship, I suspect that many Chris-
tians and even pastors have implicit Mar-

cionite tendencies, still paying lip service to a whole Bible, but drawn in practice to the easier option of turning to biblical books that from the start were written by Christians for Christians. The other option has not meant cutting myself off from the New Testament. My lecture courses on Old Testament books have contained at the close a relevant New Testament component and along the way New Testament parallels. My overall task is to unfold and explain the Old Testament primarily in its own terms and secondarily as preparation for the New. In both cases I am walking in step with God’s ongoing rev-
elation. In 2012 I was pleased to be invited to teach a course in Fuller’s Korean IMin program with the title “Biblical Theology of the Old Testament for Pastors.” I liked that word “biblical.” It gave me the opportunity to link the Testaments. Later I turned the course into a book.

Academic/Spiritual

As a student my role model was one of my ancestors, the brilliant theologian James Ussher (both Testament scholars at Manchester Uni-

versity, F. F. Bruce. Coming across his bal-

anced “Answers to Questions” in a monthly

ISSUE #9 SHALOM
3:16, one wonders if preachers have ever read wrath is demonstrated providentially in the Old Testament classes, teaching students places within a whole portrayal. 

Pastors under the general editorship of Lloyd John and Paul were building on the broader foundation of the Old Testament in speaking about God’s wrath. Of course, it is by no means silent about divine love. Just to give one instance, Lamentations 3 moves comprehensively from God’s “wrath” to “the abundance of his steadfast love” in verses 1 and 32. Divine wrath and love are not paral-lel terms. Love is a regular attribute of God, whereas wrath is a moral reaction to human wrongdoing in the name of justice. Without human provocation there would be no wrath, only love. God’s wrath validates the passionate zeal of the Christian champion of human rights. In a creedal statement at Exodus 34:6 God is said to be “slow to anger,” reluctant to exercise it. It does not come naturally; in fact, it causes God grief, according to Hosea 11:8–9. In Exodus 33:11 the Lord God declared, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live.” This text is echoed in 2 Peter 3:9. But, to cite Romans again, Paul warned against trading on this patience rooted in God’s natural inclination and ending up victims of divine wrath (Rom 2:4–5). To be true to the Bible, its double messages should not be obscured.

**DO NOT ANSWER FOOLISHLY** "ANSWER FOOLS"

In 2015 Fuller sent me to China to spend a semester teaching at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. I told the students how fortunate they were to have in their cultural heritage the concept of yin and yang, which describes two opposite entities operating in tension. Western rationalism, conversely, is tempted to simplify truth into a single entity as logically sensible. So those of us who are Westerners react with consternation to the contradictory advice in Proverbs 26:4–5: “Do not answer fools according to their folly. Answer fools according to their folly.” We cannot give a shoulder-shrugging explanation that it does not matter which course one takes; each policy is backed by a good reason why one should do it. Circumstances alter cases. Both recommendations are true, but not at the same time. The book of Proverbs comes from wisdom teachers, and I like to imagine the amicable scene of a wisdom seminar. The teacher has assigned rival policies for two of the students to debate. Under which the second? Then it would be open to the class to weigh in. Good training for potential wisdom teachers! There are times when there is no automatic right or wrong answer. Life can be complex, with a variable set of factors, and so careful discernment is needed for the right advice to be reached. Sometimes in my preaching I tell the congregation the sermon may not be right for some of them. If so, they are to put it in a mental attic to dust off for future use when it is relevant, or pass it on to a friend for whom it does apply right now.

CHALLENGE/ASSURANCE

I like to sum up the Bible’s message to believers in terms of these two words, and both perspectives are necessary if it is to be defined adequately. This truth hit home in a lesson a Jehovah’s Witness once taught me. We were having a lengthy discussion about the place in Christian preaching and he knew his Scriptures well. On a number of aspects of our respective traditions neither of us could convince the other he was wrong; each came back with counter-arguments. At the close I felt it would be courteous to find something we could agree on. “Isn’t Romans 8 a wonderful chapter?” I said. He thought for a while and said, “No, I think it’s a scary chapter.” I wondered how on earth he could say such a thing. I thought of so many verses in chapter 8 that spoke to me in an assuring way, verses I had often heard preached on in evangelical circles. We parted without further discussion.

Afterwards I looked the chapter up to find out what he meant. Part of verse 13 leaped out at me, though others could have done so too. "I cannot remember hearing a sermon on that text. My sparring partner and I were both half right and half wrong. He heard the threat of death and I heard the promise of life. I heard the assurance and he heard the challenge. Has the choice something to say about our two religious traditions? The lesson is that both aspects must find a firm place in Christian preaching if it is to be true to the Bible. Paul in his goodbye sermon to the elders from Ephesus summed up his three years of ministering to their church like this: “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:27). The Greek has “all,” as the KJV translates. I like “whole,” which modern translations use. It reminds me of the basic meaning of shalom and its importance for the Bible.

ENDNOTES

1. Unattributed translations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.
2. NIV quotations are taken from the 2011 edition.
I was born in Medellín, Colombia, and at the age of 16, left with a broken heart. My heart continues to break over the plight of my home country. Colombia’s long and complicated armed conflict between guerrillas, paramilitaries, and government security forces has inflicted undeniable pain and left far-reaching scars. Last year, however, I returned to my beautiful and conflict-ridden country in pursuit of reconciliation and peacemaking. Accompanied by colleagues and armed with tools, I went with a mission to partner with the local church in learning how to bring shalom to those suffering from the aftermath of the 53-year-long conflict.

Colombia’s protracted internal armed conflict has displaced nearly 7.2 million people. It now ranks as the country with the largest number of internally displaced peoples (IDPs) in the world, surpassing even Syria’s IDP numbers.1 As in most armed conflicts, the most vulnerable bear the cost. Children and their mothers make up the majority of those forcibly displaced by war in Colombia and number in the hundreds of thousands. Ethnic minorities—including indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups, especially those in the countryside—have disproportionately suffered the devastating consequences of this bloody, cruel, and protracted conflict. I find that many don’t know much about the devastating effects of internal displacement, or even what internal displacement is. An internally displaced person is anyone who has left their own country’s borders and that country’s law, and that country’s protection, that leaves them without a home, has no one to go to. Others lack resources to return or are reluctant to do so because they have no confidence in the peace and security conditions. Many have endured displacement for years or even decades.

Brutal violence, terror, and forceful removal from one’s land and property have thrust thousands of Colombians out of their hometowns and farms. The land they occupy is inextricably linked to the lives and livelihoods of many Colombians. Yet their land and its raw materials are too often seized for political or profit gain, with its inhabitants seen as nameless obstacles. Uprooted and seeking refuge, IDPs often go to the cities and end up on the margins of urban settings where they meet with other forms of violence and exclusion. IDPs are usually cut off from their regular jobs, healthcare and sanitation systems, schools, security, and even the economic and social support. As a result, IDPs are among the most vulnerable populations, often remaining in danger long after their displacement, with the continued and deepening absence of opportunity for a dignified life.

Despite limited peace agreements were signed in November 2016, many Colombians and international humanitarian agencies argue that Colombia has not entered a post-conflict era yet. The country continues to struggle to bring dignity and integration to its vast numbers of IDPs. Even in zones where the armed conflict has ended, the majority of internally displaced persons are unable to return home because of displaced local economies. Many have lost their homes and land and have no one to go back to. Others lack resources to return or are reluctant to do so because they have no confidence in the peace and security conditions. Many have endured displacement for years or even decades.

TRAUMA AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN TIMES OF ARMED CONFLICT

As a Colombian and clinical psychologist, I worry about my country, for I know well the ill and far-reaching effects of trauma resulting from forced displacement. A traumatic event is that by perceived and life-threatening terror that renders the victim helpless at the potential loss of one’s life or loved ones. Uncontacted IDPs—especially those in the countryside—have thrust thousands of Colombians out of their homes in search of safety, often remaining in danger long after their displacement. Domestic, sexual, and other forms of gendered violence force displaced women are particularly vulnerable in the aftermath of the 53-year-long conflict. However, severely injured, the church can offer a voice and space for emotional recovery and integration of IDPs. Violence against women also holds a central place in Colombia’s history of armed conflict. Despite much progress, social expectations have long relegated women to an inferior status. It is no surprise, then, that women often become the targets during armed conflict. Despite much progress, social expectations have long relegated women to an inferior status. It is no surprise, then, that women often become the targets during armed conflict. Domestic, sexual, and other forms of gendered violence force women—many with small children—to flee their homes in search of safety. Displaced women are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses and are likely to experience further victimization in their flight and resettlement.

THE CHURCH AND SHALOM IN A TIME OF CONFLICT

Shalom is one of the most outstanding and relevant biblical-theological concepts for human life. It goes beyond harmony, well-being, and prosperity to encompass a fundamental relationship with the Creator, oneself, society, and nature. This biblical peace must not be confused with the more trivialized and cheapened type of “peace” that many associate it with. On the contrary, shalom includes the intentional development, repair, and reconciliation of relationships with God and our fellow human beings (Matt 5:9; John 14:27; 16:33). Further, the biblical concept of shalom calls for a healthy relationship with the land and its resources, a relationship that is deeply broken for so many Colombian IDPs. Not only is the church commissioned to live out and experience shalom but also to share and impart it. “The children of God” must always and in every place be “peacemakers” (Matt 5:9).

In Colombia’s current historical moment, the church must act boldly and wisely. Substantial evidence documents the vital role played by faith leaders in facilitating the emotional recovery and integration of IDPs. The 48 million inhabitants of Colombia are predominantly Christian: 79 percent Catholic, 13 percent Protestant, 2 percent other, and 6 percent with no religious affiliation. These statistics alone highlight the important position the church and faith leaders can have in promoting the health and well-being of IDPs. Throughout history, the Colombian church has had an unquestionable convening power. As a Colombian woman and Christian social scientist, I urge and seek to help Colombian faith communities to address gender-based violence and trauma of IDPs among their people.

The church must address gender-based violence head on from its pulpits and in its daily proclamation of the kingdom of God. Even in the face of historically rooted, gendered trauma, the church can offer a voice that counters mainstream narratives and seeks social justice. Our ecclesiology must use a gender-sensitive approach to break down silence around gender violence, and trauma. The church of God-given mercy to bring shalom, I believe churches are called to provide a range of interventions to IDPs—from offering basic physical necessities to caring for spiritual
Faith communities have not always been within their congregations. It is a daunting task, yet our efforts must address the overall vulnerability and needs of the IDP. Churches must themselves be welcoming places where trauma survivors find life-giving relationships by enfolding them. The church is a community based on our theological position—that the ongoing abuse, yet many people still seek overall vulnerability and needs of the IDP.

Communities of faith must learn and understand the processes and mechanisms associated with trauma, the consequences of exposure to violence, and means of healing. The trauma that IDPs have endured—whose memories wake them up some nights in an anxiety-ridden sweat—must be heard and brought to justice, and during a recent visit to my country I began, along with Colombian and foreign psychologists, to explore the impact of trauma on faith leaders’ own mental health and ministry. Approximately 2,000 pastors and ministry workers in the Medellin area—Colombia’s second largest city, with one of the highest numbers of IDPs—participated in a five-hour workshop to promote education about trauma and gender-based violence. Topics included the multidimensional consequences of trauma: psychological, social, and spiritual. We discussed the impact of trauma on family roles and relationships, sexual trauma, abuse reporting practices, and the role of pastors and ministry workers in minimizing the occurrence of rape and gender-based violence toward women.

Social science and church partnerships for bringing about shalom
It is time for the church to heed new findings of the social sciences to inform its moral imperative to bring shalom to IDPs. A plethora of excellent resources with particular focus and data on IDPs is available from both local and international agencies dealing with internal displacement. Among many Colombian resources, the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement provide useful tools and best-practices frameworks in dealing with IDPs. A renewed theology of integral missionology, enriched by empirical social-scientific analysis, can mobilize local churches to nurture the holistic human flourishing of Colombian IDPs.

Social science and church partnerships for bringing about shalom

Complex multidimensional social problems require multidisciplinary solutions. Peace-making efforts in Colombia must be insatiably woven into multilayered national and global efforts that are laced with patience, endurance, creativity, love, and deep belief in God’s ultimate plan for redemption and reconciliation. Bearing in mind the complexity and gravity of the internal displacement problem in Colombia, a seminary in Medellin, Fundación Universitaria Seminario Bíblico de Colombia (FUSBC), one of the largest in Latin America, has been intentionally engaging theologians and faith leaders in formulating an appropriate church response. Supported by a generous grant from the Templeton World Charity Foundation, many professors are engaged in a large research project entitled “Integral Missionology and the Human Flourishing of Internally Displaced Persons in Colombia.”

This research project has been designed from a participatory action research perspective that seeks to empower IDPs and promote self-reliance by engaging them as planners, implementers, and beneficiaries. I celebrate this approach: as an inquisitive and observant teenager, I remember being very put out by the fact that my denomination was mostly managed by foreigners. I would rant about how our theology and even our modes of worship were colonized. Going back to Colombia today, I fear that I would end up doing the same—forcing what I assume to be brilliant solutions onto someone else’s problems. I have been humbled by the efforts of the Colombian church and Colombian theologians to

needs, with support that includes resettlement, integration, and legal protection. Churches must themselves be welcoming communities to IDPs, providing them with life-giving relationships by enfolding them within their congregations. It is a daunting task, yet our efforts must address the overall vulnerability and needs of the IDP.
remain true to our roots, to pay attention to our unique cultural history and underpinnings, and to engage both local and international help. It has been inspirational and transforming to partner with internally displaced persons and with Colombian theologians, sociologists, economists, lawyers, psychologists, and educators—all armed with their unique expertise and views, all coming together to bring forth their best God-given gifts to bear witness and to bring about shalom in a time of conflict.

God moves in mysterious ways. Large movements of people also bring opportunities for healing and reconciliation. As I work with FUSBC and Fuller, I bear witness to the many willing Christian servants who move beyond borders, using their Christian consciousness, theology, and the knowledge of their disciplines, to push these peace conversations into different spaces in the Protestant church in Colombia. We are attempting to learn from and support pastors and faith leaders working with IDPs and to amplify the voices of IDPs who seek justice in their own individual cases, but also, more broadly, for all who are seeking shalom. I saw my diverse and brave clinical psychology doctoral students—Josi Hwang Koo, Byron Rivera, Miko Mechure, Stephanie Banuelos, Marissa Nunes—and my American, South African, and Colombian colleagues wrestle with the horrors of armed conflict in their attempts to create spaces where the church can bear witness to the suffering of IDPs. I chuckled yet was deeply moved when my Fuller colleague, Dr. Tommy Givens, observed that he had never participated in a research project that required so much crying. These brave Fuller students and colleagues—Colombian and foreign alike—and their attempts to learn, support, and accompany the Colombian Protestant church in peacemaking efforts among IDPs have given me a glimpse into the depth and magnitude of the meaning of shalom.

Going back to Medellín—to the seminary where my father taught for several years and to the playgrounds where I formed unforgettable memories of community, good friends, laughing, and eating mangos—all felt surreal. Multiple times I had to stop to take it all in. I was overwhelmed to see God’s integral and transcendential peace—shalom—at its best in my own life. Here I was, the Colombian in diaspora in the United States, returning to my country of origin, making peace with my past, having the privilege to contribute my grain of salt and little sparkle of light to the peacemaking process, blessed to be part of God’s grand master plan to bring shalom to humanity. Indeed, no borders limit God—and his peace transcends all understanding.

ENDNOTES


3. Internal Displacement Division of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). See also the websites of the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (www.refugees.org), Refugees International (www.refintl.org), and www.reliefweb.int.

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

—Jeremiah 29:7
EMBODIED SHALOM: MAKING PEACE IN A DIVIDED WORLD

Jer Swigart

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carvo, as I was only embarking upon my peacemaking journey, I sat with a mentor on a porch overlooking the Rocky Mountains. We were in a fairly new conversation about shalom. Playing devil’s advocate, he pushed on my every thought about peace: what it required, what it looked like, whether it was the same as justice or something far more.

The conversation, equal parts exhilarating and discouraging, zeroed in on the point with one question: “What do you mean when you speak of peace?”

I didn’t know what to say.

Recognizing that his young mentee was in a necessary moment of disequilibrium, my mentor smiled, sat back, gently nudged toward the meadows and aspen groves and to the mountains looming in the distance. With a seasoned sarcastic, he said, “This is peace, is it not?”

On the one hand, I couldn’t help but agree. My experience in that moment matched what I had learned about peace as a young, white, evangelical faith leader: I was in a beautiful place, relaxed, on a spiritual retreat, and among good friends. There was no conflict that I could see, hear, or read about. All seemed “right” in the world—or at least on the porch of that particular cabin.

But on the other hand, I knew that peace meant something far more than the general experience of tranquil stability or absence of threat. I knew that the very moment of “peace” we were experiencing in the mountains was likely, at the same time, a moment of terror for countless friends around the country and world.

I knew this because I arrived at the moun- tains having just left encounters with pain. A month prior, I had been in the epicenter of the very complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict where I had experienced firsthand, the trauma of this decades-old struggle. Just a week before, I had been in the borderlands between San Diego and Tijuana where I had encountered the trauma of Central American migrants, Latinx deportees, Haitian asylum seekers, and Syrian refugees. Closer yet, I had just traveled to the mountain lodge from my home in San Francisco’s East Bay where the divide between the black and white communities was growing dangerously wide and where conflict between my neighbors was destabilizing the neighborhood.

While I was at ease on that porch, my life and work had me in the thick of conflict in my own neighborhood, within my country, and throughout the world. My experiences had convinced me that the peace God waged in Jesus resulted in something far bigger than a sense of calm and stability for the privileged.

But to define it? I was stumped. After lis- tening to my silence, my mentor offered this counsel:

Everyone defines peace differently. The vision for peace that you have is holistic and has the potential to inspire people of faith to embody it in ways that will change the world. But your definition needs to flow from the Scriptures. Start with the cross and then work to define what it is that you’re hoping to bring to life in the midst of our divided world.

Identifying the cross as the starting point of theological exploration was something I had never been encouraged to consider. As I had only ever encountered the story of God from a chronological perspective, I had come to understand the cross as the continuation of the violent, warrior God motif of the Hebrew Scriptures. My Christian upbringing had led me to understand the cross not as a place of peace but as a tool of torture, wielded by a wrathful God, and focused exclusively on my sin.

Imagine, therefore, the moment when my mentor took me through the Gospels to Colossians 1:18–19 and face-to-face with a cross that declares the extravagance of God’s restorative wingspan. It was there I realized that not only did the cross redeem the human soul, but it also heals broken identities, renewes creation, mends divided relationships, renovates and replaces unjust systems, and repairs international conflicts.

Peace, then, as defined by the cross, is the restoration of all things. It is the holistic repair of severed relationships, the mending of the jagged divides that keep us from relationship with one another. According to Colossians 1, the implications of the cross were comprehensive and conclusive: God had waged a de- cisive peace in Jesus, and it had worked. That meant that God is the Great Peacemaker and restoration is the mission of God.

Accompanying the emergence of shalom’s elusive definition was a more expansive understanding of who God is, whom God is for, and what God accomplished in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I had discovered a God who sees the humanity, dignity, and divine image in every human being. Here is a God who sees our pain and our plight and, instead of remaining distant or walking away, chooses to immerse himself into the radical center of it. Here is a God who, from within the complexities of our conflicts, con- tends for our flourishing in costly, creative ways. Ours is a God who stops at nothing to see restoration spring to life.

While all of that is true and exciting, we’re left with a new set of questions. If God’s peace was so decisive, then why do we yet live in a world divided by pain, misunder- standing, fear, and hatred? Why does conflict seem to rule the day? Why are our neighbor- hoods saturated with violence-fleeing refugees and our prisons disproportionately filled with people of color?

Turns out, the unveiling of shalom’s defini- tion was not the finish line—it was simply a new beginning. The very next destination along the way was 2 Corinthians 5:18–20 where Paul, reflecting on what the cross and empty tomb had accomplished, identifies us as the reconciled beloved who are commis- sioned as beloved reconcilers. While God’s peace was decisively waged in Jesus, God’s peace becomes real in the world when we embrace our vocation as everyday peace- makers.

As we become women and men who, like God, learn to see the humanity, dignity, and image of God in every human being and immerse ourselves into the world’s divides, intent upon listening long, and contend for others’ flourishing in collaborative, costly, creative ways, we actively join God in usher- ing in the restored world that God is making. Our physical presence and practice in sync with the Spirit of the Resurrected One cause the presence of the cross to become the ongoing embodiment of God’s restorative mission—his shalom—here and now.

Shalom takes years, is always costly, shows up in myriad forms, and usually surprises us when it arrives. It looks like my friends Ben, an Israeli Jew and Meira, a Palestinian Muslim, who both lost family members to the conflict. They are former enemy-neigh- bers who now refer to themselves as a family co-creating a mutually beneficial future by teaching the children of their divided land to choose love over fear and reconciliation over revenge. It looks like my Egyptian-American friend Catherine, who offers artistic avenues for healing and reconciliation for incarcerated kids. Shalom looks like my Mexican friend Samuel, who created a simple set of raised garden beds in Tijuana called “border farma” to remind recently deported men of their dignity and value through the creation of jobs. It looks like my friends Bethany and Matt and Sandra and Kevin, who have chosen to rescue kids from the foster care system and become family with them.

The shalom God is making and that we get to be a part of ushering in looks like a world where sisters and brothers no longer kill their sisters and brothers and where women and children are no longer exploited for the pleasures of men. The shalom God is making is one in which senseless gun violence no longer produces dead kids in our streets and in which immigrants and refugees no longer hide in fear in the shadows of overcrowd- ed apartments. It is a world where human beings no longer exist in cages, where addiction no longer has power, and where hunger and thirst no longer plague humanity.

This shalom is possible only because God waged peace in Jesus and it worked. Joining the Spirit in making that peace real in our world is the adventure to which we’ve all been called.
CURRENT PEACEMAKING PRACTICES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In our current world, it is usually assumed that those who fight a position of power have the responsibility to call conflicting parties to the negotiation table. Peace brokers, such as the United States, European countries, Russia, or some other “strong nation,” will engage in diplomatic gymnastics to prepare conflicting parties for negotiations through the “Track I” approach—via professional diplomats or governmental authorities. Each of the parties in the conflict, in the meantime, makes every effort to gain a stronger hand, usually by taking greater hold of what they know their enemy wants (whether land, control, influence, demands, arms, or power), so that they would have a stronger position at the negotiation table. This approach, however, usually leads either to temporary truce or to no deal at all. It is often a sinister power dance between parties mostly driven by self-interest and ambition. No permanent peace has been brokered in the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations through such Track I diplomacy, from Camp David (1978) to Madrid (1991) to Oslo (1993), or of any other countless attempts. Similarly, little advance has been made in the Syrian conflict beyond temporary cease-fires, across a series of Geneva and Astana talks, from 2012 to the present.

In the case of Lebanon, the Taif Accord of 1989 is the Track I achievement seen as the state of well-being into which God invites his people in fulfillment of his part of the covenant with them. The Israeli people are promised God’s shalom on condition that they remain faithful to him, keep the Sabbath, and obey his commandments (Lev 26:1–3). Under these conditions, they are promised that “the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit,” that he will “grant peace in the land,” that they will have victory over their enemies, and that he will increase their numbers and keep his covenant with them. And crucially from an Old Testament perspective, God promises, “I will put my dwelling place among you … I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people” (Lev 26:1–2). When Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest, he affirmed: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” adding that the second is “like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt 22:37–39). Clearly, Jesus agreed that our faithfulness to God’s will is the heart of the covenant and the core condition of our experience of God’s shalom. But he established as well the second commandment at the same level of importance. We cannot affirm that we truly love God if we don’t also love our neighbor.

In the Old Testament, the realization gradually emerged that Track I diplomacy was no longer sufficient to bring about permanent, long-term peace between nations. Joseph Montville, a peace researcher, in his book, “The Way Ahead,” has written: “We have seen, cannot love God, whom they have never seen” (John 4:20).

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus refers to peacemakers as the “children of God” (Matt 5:9). It is hard to think of any higher status than this in our understanding of the standing of the New Testament teaching on peace. I discovered that God’s peace is a state of well-being into which God invites his people in fulfillment of his part of the covenant with them. The Israeli people are promised God’s shalom on condition that they remain faithful to him, keep the Sabbath, and obey his commandments (Lev 26:1–3). Under these conditions, they are promised that “the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit,” that he will “grant peace in the land,” that they will have victory over their enemies, and that he will increase their numbers and keep his covenant with them. And crucially from an Old Testament perspective, God promises, “I will put my dwelling place among you … I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people” (Lev 26:1–2).

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KERYGMATIC PEACEBUILDING AS THE PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL SALAM

Martin Accad

Martin Accad is based at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS) in Beirut, Lebanon, where he founded the Institute of Middle East Studies. He teaches on Islam, Middle-Eastern Christianity, and Christian-Muslim relations both at ABTS and at Fuller Seminary, where he serves as an associate professor of Islamic studies. He is also co-founder of and senior fellow at the Institute for Multi-track Diplomacy and Global Affairs. Dr. Accad has contributed many articles and chapters to international academic publications and is currently working on a book on Christian-Muslim relations.
This is not to say that Jesus wished for his community to remain ever small, though in number. He often warned about the “yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt 16:6) and that of Herod (Mark 8:12), and later his disciples understood that he was referring to their teaching (Matt 10:12). In Luke’s Gospel, the yeast of the Pharisees is used as a reference to their hypocrisy (Luke 12:1). Paul uses the yeast metaphor in similar ways, warning the Corinthians that their boasting is like yeast that will corrupt the whole dough (1 Cor 5:6), and the Galatians that the false teaching to which they are falling prey, like yeast, “works through the whole batch of dough” (Gal 5:7). But the more significant use of the metaphor in the New Testament is for positive reference. Similar to his use of the mustard seed metaphor, Jesus uses it to describe the irresistible power of his kingdom message. In Matthew 13:31–33, Jesus uses the parables of the mustard seed and of the yeast in parallel, to capture the imagination—as he often does—of both men and women. Both the sower and the baker are thus able to understand the power of his message. Though small and apparently insignificant, children of the kingdom, both women and men, are invited to transform their reality, to invite many into the kingdom and both ways, to God’s face, will not be abandoned him as a result of his ritualistic failure. He is still here, close to him. He questions him, beginning with a description of his state: “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?” (v. 6). God addresses Cain in this way as a sort of consolation. His botched sacrifice has neither cast him away from God’s face, nor does it necessitate anger and shame on his part. Cain is simply invited to correct his path: “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” (Gen 4:7). In this primordial encounter between Genesis’ third human person and God lies the embryonic presentation of human history’s most recurring and ever-present problem: religion at the heart of conflict. Cain has just failed to please God through his religious ritual, and he is sure of it. His brother Abel, conversely, has also just performed a ritual upon which, we are told, “the Lord looked with favor” (v. 4). To the ill-prepared reader, God’s attitude toward each of the sacrifices seems rather arbitrary, even capricious. Why should Cain’s offering of “some of the fruits of the soil” (v. 4) be received less favorably than Abel’s offering of “fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock” (v. 3)? There are few clues in the text to help us understand God’s stance, and I will not dwell too long on this question here. I will focus, instead, on the symbolic meaning of the sacrifices. Both sacrifices were acceptable in the Israelite tradition, yet only the blood sacrifice was valid for the forgiveness of sins. From an Israelite perspective, the Cain and Abel story seems to stand as an affirmation of the Israelite religious ritual, in exclusion of other religious rituals of surrounding nations. Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil, “we read in verse 2, so each naturally brought to God the fruit of their labor. From an immediate reading of the text, they could hardly have done otherwise. Likewise, most of us will die with the religion in which we were born. I did not choose to be born Christian, and neither did my neighbor choose to be born Muslim. Some of us quest and question religious matters more actively than others, even shifting religious allegiance in certain cases, and Genesis 4 affirms that not all ways to God are the same. From the overall perspective of the Hebrew scriptures, the narrative is likely best understood as an early signal promoting the centrality of the sacrificial system in Israelite religion. But though the cultic message of the narrative is important, this particular passage seems to be more interested in the human response to the existence of other “paths,” rather than in the correctness of the ritual. My intention is not to minimize the importance of correct worship ritual, but to focus on the message of this particular passage. This brings us face to face with Cain, a man who was “very angry,” and whose “face was downcast.” What we learn from God’s address to Cain in verses 6 and 7, first of all, is that God had not abandoned him as a result of his ritualistic failure. He is still here, close to him. He questions him, beginning with a description of his state: “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?” (v. 6). God addresses Cain in this way as a sort of consolation. His botched sacrifice has neither cast him away from God’s face, nor does it necessitate anger and shame on his part. Cain is simply invited to correct his path: “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” (Gen 4:7). In the pursuit of truth is certainly important. Theologians and philosophers of religion should and will continue to explore truth. People of faith will continue to invite others into the good news of the message of which they are convinced, presenting as best they can the coherence of their faith system. But besides this noble task of affirming “orthodoxy,” which is passionately argued in the affirmation of Abel’s offering and the rejection of Cain’s, the more important challenge
Building Peace through Hospitality

In Henry Nouwen’s classic work The Wounded Healer, he identifies the virtue of hospitality as the most suitable metaphor of ministry in our wounded world. He argues that “hospitality makes anuous disciples into powerful witnesses, makes suspicious owners into generous givers, and makes closed-minded sectarians into interested recipients of new ideas and insights.”

Through the Institute of Middle East Studies at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, we have been working to cultivate hospitality for the past 14 years in the area of interfaith dialogue. Muslims, who were largely absent from the life of the seminary since its inception in 1960, have become our core teachers, guest lecturers, and conversation speakers. They have also become our regular hosts, offering us hospitality when we take students to attend mosque prayer and hold conversations with imams as part of their study of Islam.

Two years ago, we began taking further steps by launching a pilot project in peacemaking among Christian, Muslim, and Druse young people, called khebrt w melih. The name of the initiative means “bread and salt,” a symbol of sharing a meal in the Arab world. It carries strong connotations of hospitality and implies that when a meal has been shared, it becomes much harder to separate us or to sow enmity between us. Small groups of a dozen young people from different faith traditions come together in various regions of Lebanon and are invited to speak to each other about their faith, following a set of guidelines that encourage good listening and dialogue. 

Khebrt w melih offers a unique opportunity to young people, both Christian and Muslim, to witness clearly to each other about their faith and its power and relevance in their everyday life.

This year, we are launching a set of multitrack initiatives for building peace at the heart of churches and mosques. Through a growing network of leaders who have become friends, faith communities will be invited into each other’s spaces of worship to ponder together their feelings, attitudes, and conflicting narratives. They will seek ways, together, to develop a greater sense of a “common good” in the complex setting of Lebanon. In parallel, we are seeking to bring our own evangelical constituency to a place of peacemaking. We are learning how to find healing first in the one who bears the wounds of self-giving God who, in Christ, not only remains, alongside them, in the presence of God’s gracious face? It is easy, when reading this narrative, to identify with the victims and to condemn the aggressor far too quickly and dismissively. This is where Miroslav Volf’s insight is particularly helpful.

For within primal history, the story about a murderous “them” is a story about a murderer “us.” Cain is “them” and Cain is “us.”... The story takes the perspective of the victim not only to condemn the perpetrator, but at the same time to confront the tendency of the victim to turn into perpetrator.

If we condemn Cain too swiftly, without taking the time to ponder our own negative and exclusive attitudes toward our brothers and sisters of other faiths, as abominable as his act was, we will quickly give in to self-righteousness. By identifying too strongly with Abel, we risk inadvertently turning into Cain. But then when we take the time to ponder the mark that God put on Cain as a protection from harm (3:15), we begin recognizing ourselves in Cain, and we begin to give heed to God’s invitation that we should “rule over” our anger and shame, and respond to his plea that we be “brother’s keeper” (4:9).

Our exploration of the concept of peace in the Bible brings us before Christ’s invitation to his followers to be peacemakers. Rogged down as we often are by conflict within our churches, we can understand Christ’s call as if it applied primarily to in-house conflict, easily overlooking his call that we are to be about bringing biblical shalom in society at large. As we have struggled with this reality at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut, we have been reflecting on what it means to be peacemakers while at the same time holding onto our distinctive calling of witnessing for reasons for the mission of God in the MENA region. This has led us to coin the expression “kerygmatic peacebuilding.”

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be catalytics for peace at both the grassroots and national political levels. The challenge, however, is not so to take on the peacebuilding methods of the world that we forgot the uniqueness of how Jesus has redefined peace and peacemaking. The gospel warns us about blending to the point of “soaking” our saltiness,” about lighting a lamp only to “hide it under a bowl.” Jesus claims that the peace he gives us is a different kind of peace when he says, in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

This is where the word kerygmatic comes into peacebuilding. Kerygmatic peacebuilding distinguishes itself from mainstream peacebuilding in that it embraces Jesus’ model, method, and ultimate outcome of peacebuilding. To this we now turn.

Repositioning the Church as a Kerygmatic Peacemaker

The challenge that presents itself to us as Christ-following peacemakers is this: How are we called to the reality of pluralism that, like Cainid, we are not to let “brother’s in a violent expression of exclusiv- ism? Or will we heed God’s call to “do what is right,” to follow his model of peace as the greatest peacemaker—and to see God’s face in the face of our “brother” as we seek to establish truth, justice, and peace in the world?

The church in the MENA region is so wounded that it will fail to practice its role as peacemaker and reconciler unless it learns how to find healing first in the one who bears the wounds of self-giving and “crushed for our iniquities” (Isa 53:5). Our wounds too often drive us away from our Muslim neighbors, our heart contributes to fear, and as a result we develop bitter represen- tations of the “other” and only listen to our own narratives.

The church globally needs restoration and healing when it comes to its relationship with Muslims. We need to begin with a confession of our own inadequacies if we are to become reconcilers in our societies. Until we do that, we will remain too blinded by our sense of rage, fed by our own version of the narrative of Christian-Muslim history.

I am convinced from my work in the formation of leaders for the church in the MENA region that the greatest threat to the future of Arab Christianity is not Islam, but rather the perception that Christians have too often become so toxic and hazardous that they are having a long term negative impact on the ongoing health of the church. And I worry that our self-perception as victims will enable us to break the cycle of violence and prevent our wounds from be- coming a source of healing rather than of a festering stench.

Kerygmatic peacemaking is rooted in our self-giving God who, in Christ, not only re- vealed his willingness to become vulnerable before the cross, but also took that vulnerabil- ity and offered it to all the world to himself through a selfless life that led him to his death. The cross becomes central again for the church’s kerygmatic peacemaking, not one that carries connotations of crucifying, but rather one that carries connotations of heal- ing. When the church truly learns how to usher in God’s salvation in the world, the cross becomes a sign ofxs, and the resurrection of Christ becomes the manifestation of a direly needed hope.

Endnotes


9. Volf, Exclusion and Embrace, 93.
"He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples: they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." —Isaiah 2:4
SHALOM JUSTICE
Cllfon R. Clarke

Sitting in a crowded airport waiting for a delayed plane, I tuned in to a heated debate raging on the television just above my head. I heard someone say: “Violence is a natural reaction for people who are brutalized. We must not focus on the reaction but on the cause of the reaction.” As I gathered my attention, I realized that the response came from a black activist who was asked to condemn the violent clashes that followed the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson. The rebuttal from the TV host, who seemed energized by the raw emotion of his guest, was swift: “I hear that, but why can’t they protest peacefully?” More conversation followed, but the guest’s initial comment stuck with me throughout the course of my journey.

Speaking just weeks before his assassination, which catalyzed rioting across America, Martin Luther King Jr. offered his thoughts on the type of civil unrest that devolves into violence and losing:

“Violence is a natural reaction for people who are brutalized. We must not focus on the reaction but on the cause of the reaction.” As I gathered my attention, I realized that the response came from a black activist who was asked to condemn the violent clashes that followed the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson. The rebuttal from the TV host, who seemed energized by the raw emotion of his guest, was swift: “I hear that, but why can’t they protest peacefully?” More conversation followed, but the guest’s initial comment stuck with me throughout the course of my journey.

Speaking just weeks before his assassination, which catalyzed rioting across America, Martin Luther King Jr. offered his thoughts on the type of civil unrest that devolves into violence and losing:

It is not enough for me to step forward to condemn riots. It would be morally irresponsible for me to do that without, at the same time, condemning the contiguent, intolerable conditions that exist in our society. These conditions are the things that cause individuals to feel that there are no other alternative than to engage in violent rebellions to get attention. And I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard.

The MEANING OF SHALOM

According to Old Testament scholar Perry Yoder, shalom has three shades of meaning. First, it refers to a material and physical state of affairs. This is important because shalom, far from having an abstract and intangible connotation, has to do with the physical well-being of a person or persons. Examples of this are seen in Genesis 37:14, where Joseph is asked by Jacob, his father, to check on the shalom of his brothers and of the cattle. Shalom, however, is not only shalom concerning the well-being of a person but also speaks to situations in general: “Are things the way they should be?”

Shalom refers to the healthy relationship and connection of individuals and of their family is the first priority of shalom in the present and possibly for health-giving relationships between people and nations.

The shalom generally invoked is one of abundance, blessing, and freedom from danger, disease, war, and poverty. These are the natural correlates of shalom. Checking on someone’s physical shalom and that of their family is the first priority when meeting them, especially when you are asking someone’s physical shalom and that of their family is the first priority when meeting them, especially when you are asking

The prophets knew clearly that God’s help and restoration of their nation was predicated upon justice being done in the land and oppression removed. Passages like Isaiah 5:1-7 and Jeremiah 23:5-6 distinctly mention the presence of justice/righteousness as a mark of hope for the future. The reason prophets like Amos and Jeremiah proclaimed such messages of doom in the face of looming captivity was because of the degree of social injustices among God’s people. They pleaded for the exercise of justice and expressed indignation at the sight of oppression (Amos 5:21–24; Jer 22:1–17), which accounted for the absence of shalom in the present and possibly for the future. For the prophets at least, shalom-making is working for justice and righteousness, which is at its core a quest for health-giving relationships between people and nations.

The third and final major use of shalom is the moral or ethical one. Here there are two important moral distinctions. First, shalom is the opposite of deceit or speaking lies. To seek shalom is therefore to love truth and walk in integrity. Psalm 37:37 speaks of a “man [or woman] of shalom”—a

The passage asserts that shalom will be the result of righteousness/justice. We see this pairing of righteousness and shalom also in Psalm 52:7, which is a cry to God for deliverance from adversaries who are oppressing the petitioner. At the end of the Psalm, we read:

Let those who desire my vindication shout for joy, and be glad, and say, “Great is YHWH who delights in the welfare of his servant!”

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The shalom generally invoked is one of abundance, blessing, and freedom from danger, disease, war, and poverty. These are the natural correlates of shalom. Checking on someone’s physical shalom and that of their family is the first priority when meeting them, especially if you have not seen the person for a while. I experienced this during my time in West Africa. Whenever I would visit the homes of friends, they would first give me a glass of water to ensure that my physical shalom from the journey was cared for, and then they would talk about the well-being of my wife, children, and extended family before getting to the purpose of my visit.

The second shade of meaning according to Yoder is one linked to social relationships. Shalom refers to the healthy relationship between nations, society, and family groupings (Lv 26:3; Exod 34:6). To answer these questions, I will briefly sketch the Bible at what it talks about peace. I will look at the Hebrew meaning of shalom, with particular focus on the Old Testament prophets at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion in the 37th BC.

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Let those who desire my vindication shout for joy, and be glad, and say, “Great is YHWH who delights in the welfare [shalom] of his servant!”
Shalom’s second moral meaning is blamelessness or innocence: to be without guilt. Why were calls for peaceful protest in the face of brutality so readily dismissed by the activists? I would like to suggest two possible reasons. First, it seemed that peace, or shalom, meant to many a more avoiding of physical violence at all costs. One ought to refrain from lethal force and oppose those who use such overt violence to challenge an existing oppressive social order. On the surface, such rhetoric appears incontestable, especially from a Judeo-Christian viewpoint. Yet it seems inconceivable to those who bear the crushing weight of the prevailing order that structures of oppression will ever be lifted off their shoulders without struggle and even violence. From their point of view, peace advocates are useless idealists far removed from the misery and existential structures of death that prevent human flourishing or shalom.

To summarize, shalom speaks to material and physical conditions, to the quality of our relationships, and to moral behavior. In short, shalom defines how things should be; it is the music that indicates we are living in harmony with God, our material world, and our relational world. To grasp how shalom relates to our situation today, it is important to keep these three aspects in mind. Walter Brueggemann captures the goal of shalom beautifully when he notes, “The central vision of world history in the Bible is that all of creation is one, every creature is one, every creature in community with others, living in harmony and security toward the joy and well-being of every other creature.”

SHALOM, MORE THAN PEACE

Our three aspects of shalom are linked critically to ethics, behavior, and practice; they are not merely abstract constructs. The kind of peace shalom represents, says Randy Woodley, is active and engaged, going beyond the mere absence of conflict. This takes us back to the conversation I heard at the airport, between the black activist and TV host about the clashes that resulted from the death of Michael Brown: “Why can’t they protest peacefully?”

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Second and more important, the binary characterization of peace as merely the opposite of violence, and as a value that condemns attempts to change the status quo by force, seems perverse to oppressed persons—whether on the streets of Ferguson or under any other oppressive regime across the world. They, after all, feel daily the violence of existing hostile conditions, and see the benefits of this violence accruing to the very people who preach nonviolence to them and urge them to the moral higher ground of “peace.” They experience the present economic and social order as oppressive and murderous—leaving many landless, homeless, hungry, unjustly incarcerated, and, above all, in deadly fear and voiceless about their destiny. By no means do I sanction violence as a justifiable response to these or other miscarriages of justice. I seek rather to draw attention to the fact that the violent reaction of the oppressed is merely a re- jection to the perceived systemic violence to which they are subjected day after day. They ask, “Is it not those people who, while advocating nonviolence for us, benefit, at least indirectly, from the violence that victimizes us daily?”

FALSE PROPHETS OF SHALOM

Like the false prophets in the days of Jerem -iah and the impending fall of Jerusalem, these modern-day false prophets and peace advocates rush to a shallow and skewed idea of peace, seeking to rearrange deck chairs and tables on a sinking ship. They neutralize those sounding the alarms, branding them as troublemakers and enemies of peace. They pacify the people with what Martin Luther King Jr. called in another context “the fierce urgency of now.” They declare peace and safety when sudden destruction is looming. Not that they are against justice or necessarily have evil intent, but their understanding of shalom is dangerously defective. It is flawed because the foundation upon which they seek shalom is also flawed and built on “fallow ground” (Jer 4:3).

For the true ancient prophets in Israel, justice was indispensable for shalom. So they condemned social injustice and oppression. For the false prophets, however, peace was merely defusing conflict without addressing the cause, forcing harmony without dealing with the social disom -inance and proclaiming security without pressing for justice. They proclaimed a cheap shalom that placed no demand on their daily lives or called them to repen tance, and they ran roughshod over the three foundations of shalom. First, on the material level, though some people prospered—a sign of shalom as material well-being—this prosperity flourished side by side with misery and poverty. The rich lavished themselves with affluence while the crisis of hunger outside their doors went unheeded. Second, this economic and material inequality fractured social relationships. The rich oppressed the poor for their own material gain, and, in doing so, profited from their misery. Their prosperity gave them the outward appearance of shalom, which they held to be tacit divine approval for their position of power—a state of affairs that damaged social relationships (Amos 3:9–11).

Third, the legal system and political process was not working with integrity and due process. The moral and ethical foundations upon which the practice of shalom was built were flouted with impu nity. As Isaiah (10:1–2) puts it, they were making unjust laws to support their own interest, with catastrophic consequences for the poor and powerless. They chanted the poor through lucrative bribes of legal officials, which created an unfair advan tage for the wealthy and led to gross mis carriages of justice. THINGS ARE NOT AS THEY SHOULD BE!

The essential difference between the true and false prophets was their view of whether proclaiming shalom brought about justice and prosperity (the position of the false prophets) or whether justice and prosperity was a prerequisite for shalom (the position of the true prophets). If shalom referred to a state of well-being or “okayness,” the promise of shalom being worked for justice and for the poor would lead to the protection of the poor and to justice. If shalom referred to a state of well-being or “okayness,” the promise of shalom being worked for justice and for the poor would lead to the protection of the poor and to justice. If shalom referred to a state of well-being or “okayness,” the promise of shalom being worked for justice and for the poor would lead to the protection of the poor and to justice. If shalom referred to a state of well-being or “okayness,” the promise of shalom being worked for justice and for the poor would lead to the protection of the poor and to justice. If shalom referred to a state of well-being or “okayness,” the promise of shalom being worked for justice and for the poor would lead to the protection of the poor and to justice.
could never cover up things that were not okay." This is the point behind Enkidu’s harsh critique of the false prophets who proclaimed shalom when there was no shalom, thereby lulling the people to sleep with a false sense of security—as he put it, whitewashing a wall that was about to collapse (Ezek 13:10–31). Are those who make peace the highest good of whitewashing in that they think we can have peace in spite of oppression, racism, exploitation, and injustice? Could this be what the black activist mentioned above was alluding to by making the comment, “Peace is a luxury we do not have”?

In the face of massive protest and rioting it is safer to focus on peacemaking and surface gestures of equality, yet these provide a smokescreen for the cancer of injustice that lies beneath the surface. This was the bait Dr. King refused to bite in his context of these three evils that today’s search for shalom is most challenging. We ask ourselves, what does shalom look like when a young black teenager is shot dead in the streets and his body is left sprawled on the cold concrete for hours? Or when a young white man sits quietly in a historic black church during a Bible study and then kills nine black parishioners?

Do we speak about shalom when racism is a moral catastrophe, most graphically seen in for-profit prison complexes and targeted police surveillance of black and brown people? When arbitrary uses of the law—in the name of the “war on drugs”—are as evident now as they were then: the power of greedy oligarchs and avaricious prison tycoons to maintain an unjust and oppressive system and lift up those who are as living with a sense of right and wrong. In particular, the judicial courts had a responsibility to provide equity and protect the innocent. Shalom justice requires that we challenge the corrupt and unjust laws and practices that oppress and discriminate on the basis of race and class.

The social and relational piece is related to “love mercy.” Here mercy is the Hebrew word hesed, which means “loyal love” or “loving-kindness.” Along with justice, mercy are as evident now as they were then: “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” These three insights are related to the three key foundations upon which shalom is based—the material and physical, social and relational, and moral and ethical. Beginning with the moral and ethical, “to act justly” would have been understood by Micah’s audience as living with a sense of right and wrong. In particular, the judicial courts had a responsibility to provide equity and protect the innocent. Shalom justice requires that we challenge the corrupt and unjust laws and practices that oppress and discriminate on the basis of race and class.

Shalom is the end of coercion. Shalom is the end of oppression. Shalom is the freedom to rejoice. Shalom is the courage to live an integrated life in a community of coherence. These are not simply neat values to be added on. They are a massive protest against the central values by which our world operates.

God is for shalom and, therefore, against sin. In fact, we may safely describe evil as any spoiling of shalom, whether physically (e.g., by disease), morally, spiritually, or otherwise. The work of shalom is therefore not merely the coming together of token representatives of the strong and the weak, grasping hands and singing “Kum ba yah”—but rather, to adjust Cornel West’s words, “Justice is what love looks like in public,” to say, “Justice is what shalom looks like in public.” Riots and violence are by no means acceptable or effective means of pursuing shalom, but they are symptoms that “things are not as they should be.” In the absence of shalom and in the face of oppression and injustice, the questions that dogged W. E. B. DuBois until the end of his life still perplex us today:

How shall Integrity face Oppression? What shall Honesty do in the face of Deception.


In his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech in 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. outlined the most perplexing evils of our time—and they are as evident now as they were then: sexual, racial, economic, and cultural injustice, poverty, and war. It is in the context of these three evils that today’s search for shalom is most challenging. We ask ourselves, what does shalom look like when a young black teenager is shot dead in the streets and his body is left sprawled on the cold concrete for hours? Or when a young white man sits quietly in a historic black church during a Bible study and then kills nine black parishioners?

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SHALOM AS THE DUAL APPROACH OF PEACEMAKING AND JUSTICE-SEEKING: THE CASE OF SOUTH KOREA

Sebastian C. H. Kim

Sebastian C. H. Kim is executive director of the Korea Studies Center and professor of theology and public life at Fuller Seminary, coming through New York St John University in the UK, where he held the chair in Theology, World Christianity, and Politics. Kim’s scholarship focuses on public theology, world Christianity, Asian theologies, and peacebuilding; he has authored A History of Korean Christianity in Asia, a project funded and taught world Christianity at the University of Cambridge. Dr. Kim’s scholarship focuses on public theology, world Christianity, Asian theologies, and peacebuilding; he has authored A History of Korean Christianity in Asia, a project funded and taught world Christianity at the University of Cambridge.

S halom, usually translated “peace,” is a key theme in the Hebrew Bible. It refers to general well-being in all areas of life, including what is written by Yeshua the Messiah: “Peace be with you” (John 20:26). It is peace (Judg 4:6). Biblical scholars point out that shalom has a “public significance far beyond the purely personal.” It also has social and political dimensions. Moreover, the “divine covenant of peace” includes righteousness, or justice (Exod 20:12; Ps 85:10). As Christopher J. H. Wright explains, the kingdom of God—as expected by Israel and preached by Jesus—means both “true peace for the nations” and also “justice for the oppressed.”

In the New Testament the kingdom of God is described as righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom 14:17), and Christians have the missional responsibility to seek and establish all of those by the grace of God. The Cape Town Commitment of the Lausanne Movement in peace studies, present in its key theme in the Hebrew Bible. It can be understood not only as the existential state of being in peace and being “without war” (peacekeeping) but also in the transformative power of righteousness (justice). In this sense, the meaning of shalom needs to be understood not only as the existential state of being in peace and being “without war” (peacekeeping) but also in the transformative power of righteousness (justice).

Kim’s scholarship focuses on public theology, world Christianity, Asian theologies, and peacebuilding; he has authored A History of Korean Christianity in Asia, a project funded and taught world Christianity at the University of Cambridge. Dr. Kim’s scholarship focuses on public theology, world Christianity, Asian theologies, and peacebuilding; he has authored A History of Korean Christianity in Asia, a project funded and taught world Christianity at the University of Cambridge.

We see that the concept of shalom contains the tension between peacebuilding and justice-seeking. The connection between justice and peace is recognized by secular scholars. Johan Galtung, perhaps the most well-known researcher of peace studies, presents models of conflict, violence, and peace. He defined “negative peace” as the cessation of direct violence and “positive peace” as dealing with structural and cultural violence as well.

In this short article, I will discuss the relationship between peace and justice, drawing on insights from peace studies as well as biblical reflections. I will then show how some Christians in South Korea under the rule of military-backed governments addressed the tension between peacebuilding and justice-seeking, and argue theologically for their integration as part of the mission of shalom.

JUSTICE AND PEACE WILL KISS EACH OTHER

We see that the concept of shalom contains a strong message about our engagement in society with a just attitude toward our fellow human beings (Amos 5:7; 8:12; Ps 33:5). In this sense, the meaning of shalom needs to be understood not only as the existential state of being in peace and being “without war” (peacekeeping) but also in the transformative power of righteousness (justice). In this sense, the meaning of shalom needs to be understood not only as the existential state of being in peace and being “without war” (peacekeeping) but also in the transformative power of righteousness (justice).

Peace is more than the absence of war: it cannot be reduced to the maintenance of a balance of power between opposing forces nor does it arise out of despotic domination, but it is appropriate and called “the effect of righteousness” (2Sam 22:37). It is the fruit of that right ordering of things with which the divine founder has invested human society and which must be actualized by man thriving after an even more perfect reign of justice. Shalom requires the dual approach of peace-making and justice-seeking.

Who are those who are working on peacebuilding and conflict resolution agree on the integral nature of the two components of justice and peace. However, there is always the question of priority: whether peace or justice is most important in the process of building trust and resolving conflict in a sustainable way?

In the case of protracted war, Todd D. Whitmore, in his discussion of this issue, questions what he sees as the priority of justice over peace in Catholic social teaching and argues that negative peace could be a precondition for justice. He points out that starting with justice is a problem since the various parties are all accountable, and it is almost impossible to achieve positive peace until hostility is brought to a halt. So he concludes that, on the balance, the practical priority must be on the negative peace.

Conversely, Pauline H. Baker insists on the importance of seeking justice in the peace, building peace process. She identifies the tension between peacebuilding, which involves conflict resolution, and justice-seeking, through establishing democracy and human rights. She regards those working for peacebuilding as “conflict managers” and those seeking justice as “democratizers.” However, she argues that “peace is no longer acceptable on any terms. It is intimately linked with the notion of justice. Conflict resolution is not measured simply by the absence of bloodshed; it is assessed by the moral quality of the outcome.” She further emphasizes the importance of public accountability and basic human and political rights and criticizes the “conflict managers” as seeking short-term solutions, insisting that a solid democratic foundation provides a better chance of sustainable security and peace.

The above discussions are focused on approaches that balance justice and peace. One can say that, in a conflict situation, justice without peace leads to a fragmented and fragile situation that will continue to perpetuate injustice, and peace without justice is often used by those of power to continue to exercise their oppression over victims of the conflict. Justice and peace must “kiss each other.” However, very often the situation demands sacrificing one dimension to the other. In the complexity of human society, there is no absolute justice—the concept of justice is fluid and relative. Justice for one group or individual may be injustice for the other party. Justice can be misused for secularism, communalism, partisanship, and so on. “Justice for all” is an ideal concept, which in reality is always challenged by individuals and groups who differ for whatever reason.

At the same time, peace can be misused for militarism, and justice can be misused for public accountability and stability, which are priorities for those in power. Often temporary measures for keeping peace can be acceptable even if those measures show weak moral and political foundations (1961–1988), South Korea faced various political and economic challenges, poverty and inequality in society, government-induced human rights abuses, and confron- tation with communist North Korea. In this period South Korean churches were deeply divided theologically and in their relationship with the state. The government’s justification of human rights and democratization. These Christian theologies captured many people’s imaginations. They raised in the churches, and also in the wider society, issues of poverty and exploitation. They refused to accept the argument of the government and large companies that the labor rights and conditions of ordinary workers and farmers could be sacri- ficed with the justification that they would eventually reap the benefits of general economic development. They also rejected the argument of the government and large companies that the labor rights and conditions of ordinary workers and farmers could be sacri- ficed with the justification that they would eventually reap the benefits of general economic development.
people who believe that peace can be achieved without discussing justice. He insisted that the basis of peace could only come with the achievement of “true justice” in Korea—that is, when people were liberated from exploitation, with democratization and human rights restored. He argued that when we discuss peace, we have to talk about sharing of material wealth on the basis of our faith that every- thing is under God’s sovereignty and author- ity. As the early Christians shared their food with one another, so we should share what we have with others. He related God’s kingdom to the concept of a food-sharing community.13

This concept of sharing food was highlighted in the poetry of Kim Chi-ba:

Rice is heaven
As you cannot possess heaven by yourself
Rice is to be shared

Rice is heaven
As you see the stars in heaven together
Rice is to be shared by everybody

When rice goes into a mouth
Heaven is worshipped in the mind
Rice is heaven

Ah, ah, rice is
To be shared by everybody.14

Against protests by the opposition party, the military-backed government tried to per- suade the people to support its rule on the basis of peace, security, and prosperity. This is understandable, since the government was facing the enormous challenge of national reconstruction after the Korean War, in the face of a continued perceived threat from the North. The government argued that, in order to maintain security and see economic prog- ress, peace, and well-being, citizens would have to sacrifice themselves. They asked people to sacrifice economic justice (fair dis- tribution, workers’ rights, working conditions in factories) and political justice (aspects of freedom of speech, civil liberties, political opposition activities) for this end. Since over- coming poverty and maintaining security were critical issues for South Koreans, who still vividly remembered the Korean War that cost nearly 3 million lives in the early 1950s, South Koreans were prepared to accept limits on civil liberty for the sake of main- taining security. And many church leaders also supported the government’s efforts. However, successive governments gradually took advantage of this willingness to suppress opposition parties and groups and began to abuse their power. Through a series of emer- gency acts, any civilians could be arrested and charged without going through proper trial processes. There were numerous cases of human rights violations as many were accused of associating with the North.

The majority of the South Korean church leadership tended to hold an anti-commu- nist position due largely to the persecution of Christians in North Korea. Many of the Christian leaders in the South had fled from this. During large Christian gather- ings throughout this period, the association of Christianity with anti-communism was very explicit, and this close identification is still strong among many older Christians. Members of this generation also regarded the adoption of a capitalist market economy as a necessary measure, at least temporarily, and they believed that, despite injustices, it would eventually lead to benefits for the poorer economy grew. Korean Protestant churches themselves adopted competitive approaches to gather congregations, which resulted in the rapid growth of megachurches in large cities. With hindsight, however, it seems that, in the debate over the emphasis on peace and security on the one hand and justice and human rights on the other, in the Korean case, people were too easily persuaded that peace, secu- rity, and well-being must take precedence. Movements for civil and human rights were eventually successful, overthrowing the mil- itary-backed government in 1987. Since then, South Koreans have enjoyed growing soci- etal peace with a greater measure of justice, although the larger issues that protesters also raised—peace and justice for the Korean Peninsula as a whole is as yet unresolved.

My argument drawn from this South Korean experience, as well as from biblical and so- ciopolitical sources, challenges the notion that peace must take priority over justice. This article supports the idea that the two seemingly opposed ideas should be applied in equal measure. If one is pushed to prioritize one should choose justice rather than “negla- tive peace” in order to achieve lasting peace. Justice is not a value-free concept and differs from one group to another. In the Korean context, the twin aspects of justice-seeking and peace-building were vital in the struggle to meet the challenging economic and polit- ical problems in the era of military-backed governments.

INTEGRATING JUSTICE AND PEACE

This conclusion is also supported by political philosophers. Although there are shortcomings in his argument, John Rawls made an important contribution to integrating justice and peace in conflict situations. He chal- lenged John Stuart Mill’s approach to the utilitarian concept of justice for the common good of the majority of the members of society. Rawls saw “justice as fairness,” which derived from the rational choice of individuals in a fair setting, resulting in a distributive prin- ciple that benefits the least advantaged. His theory is based on two-aims: maximizing the liberty of the individual (provided it does not impinge on others’ freedom) and providing disadvantaged people with the best opportunities possible.15

I would like to go even further concerning the integration of justice and peace, pointing out that this question is also related to the ideological standpoint of any philosophy or theology. Does it support the status quo, or does it represent the interests of the minority, the poor, and the oppressed? Justice is not only fair treatment for all, but active support of the weak, oppressed, and poor. That justice requires not only impartial treatment or equal opportunity is another conclusion of biblical studies. Justice is not merely a legal matter but one of active compassion. Ac- cording to Walter Zimmerman, justice in the Hebrew Bible is “never blind justice: It is always understood as an aspect of open-eyed compassion . . . divine demand for compassion towards the weak and the poor.”16 Conver- sely, compassion demands justice, as the Cape Town Commitment puts it: “love for the poor demands that we not only love mercy and deeds of compas- sion, but also that we do justice through exposing and opposing all that oppresses and exploits the poor.”

The Korean experience of the struggle for democratization in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrates the key importance of conceptualizing and practicing justice and peace together, as the scripture “justice and compassion will kiss each other” implies. Shalom is most commonly trans- lated as peace, but it is not achievable without compassionate justice. Our missionial commitment to God and
to others for actualization of the kingdom of God in our midst requires our active engage- ment in the dual approach of peacemaking and justice-seeking.

ENDNOTES


PASSING THE PEACE: A PNEUMATOLOGY OF SHALOM

Patrick Oden

In 1947, a new movement began that sought to be more attentive to the whole message of Scripture, not only in content but also in method. A group of people got together, Paul Ochse at their head, but I am convinced we are at a key crossroads and in need of a new vitality. Such a reorientation can’t be about establishing defensive boundaries or making strategies to take the fight to our demographic opponents. That is the way of Rome of Empire. Instead, if we are to continue as a renewing movement, we need to return to our initial goals of putting our focus on Christ’s call for us and the Spirit’s power in us. This evangelical call includes an emphasis on peace. Fortunately, this peace is part of Christ’s promise for us in sending the Holy Spirit.

In John 14:16, Jesus sets the stage for his departure. His leaving is not loss but gain. It is good because it will inaugurate a transformative experience of the Spirit. It is good because it will initiate a transformative experience of life and hope. This life is one of love; the hope is that there will be peace. As Jesus puts it in 14:27, the promised Spirit will “teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.” In the next verse, he emphasizes the element of peace: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Let not your heart be troubled, and do not let them afraid.”

We cannot just stop at these verses and then pursue these themes with our own tactics and strategies, as if Jesus left us with a set of vague recipes, as if the gospel were a set of statements with which to agree. The gospel is not just a set of doctrines; it is a way of being, an orientation in life. These verses on the Spirit and peace are intentionally connected and part of the promise of Jesus to the people of God, the new promise of the arriving kingdom. The peacemaking Spirit passes the peace to us and we pass this peace to those around us. The gospel is an invitation to peace. We are to be peacemakers.

This peace has three movements, each interconnected and mutually informing. First, we experience peace from God. Next, we experience peace with our own self; and then we can pass this peace to others. This is a peaceful and well-intentioned cycle. In this experience and expression of such peace we can regain a fuller sense of what it means to be evangelical.

PEACE FROM GOD

The term peacemaking has often become limited to a narrow definition: peace as the absence of violence. Indeed, this is not surprising, since generally people originally used the words shade and shade in this way. Peace was the rare interlude between the constancy of war. Scripture, however, invests more meaning in shade, and this meaning extends into the New Testament. Peace, in a biblical sense, involves wholeness and completeness, an experience of well-being that comes in experiencing God’s presence and extends outward. As Nicholas Wolterstorff puts it, “To dwell in shalom is to enjoy living before God, to enjoy living in one’s physical surroundings, to enjoy living with one’s fellow, to enjoy life with oneself.”

Only peace with God allows for thorough peace in any other way.

Yet peace with God seems an impossibility because of brokenness and suffering on one side, and privilege and ego on the other. Some cannot find it and others do not want it. These distortions are a result of sin and, in its core, opposes peace. Indeed, Cor- nelius Plantinga defines sin as “deplorable dis- turbance of shalom.” It’s not supposed to be this way, of course. “God is for shalom,” as Plantinga puts it, “and therefore against sin.” God is against sin, but for us, loving us and inviting us into a peace that comes through a justifying faith in Jesus Christ, an emphasis Paul makes in Romans 5. This is good news precisely because it offers rest and hope in a world that too often denies those possibilities. It is good news because this is the Spirit’s work, and not within our own power. “It is,” Sarah Coakley writes, “the Spirit’s in- terruption that finally enables full human participation in God.”

Having been invited, we invite, which is the orienting call for evangelism. This emphasis on evangelism was indeed a hallmark of the early decades of Fuller Seminary, with Fuller professors often spending significant time on their own or with students engaged in spreading the Good News in all sorts of places. Shalom does not stop with this, however. Peace with God leads into a new experience with the Spirit in our own lives, something even many Fuller faculty struggled with as they sought to do the Lord’s work in their own energy.

PEACE WITH OURSELVES

The peace we have is the peace we pass. If we lack peace within, we cannot pass the peace elsewhere. Can we lose this peace once it is given? It seems troublingly so. The orientation in peace is an orientation in the Spirit, the Spirit’s power is given to us, the Spirit of holiness is also the Spirit of Sabbath. “I’ve had to remind myself of this again and again.”

This experience with peace is a beginning of liberation, a liberation of perceiving oneself entirely, seeing the self in the context of God’s self. In the peace with God that comes from the Spirit, we are led to a new encounter with all of reality, where there is no “no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female.” This peace is part of the Spirit’s freedom for us, an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit that is renewed in the fruit of the Spirit. In the Spirit, we become truly alive, as the source of life is the power of life guiding and empow- ering our every step. This is generally called sanctification, but it might better be called enfolding. We begin to see as God sees, love as God loves, hope with God’s hope, and that
This experience of enlivening peace itself work from God that transforms us so that who find identity in God and confidence in with us. We who experience peace with God, we are to reenter the alternative narratives Pursuing peace apart from participation in the Spirit is a work from God that transforms us so that we become a resonating presence of peace in, with, and for this world.

Pursuing peace apart from participation in the Spirit can be dangerous because good goals can shelter destructive motives. In his book on the Holy Spirit, Moltmann writes:

An empty person will expect filling from a context and incorporeal patterns of restriction to protect their experience. Passing true peace must derive from the work of the Spirit, rather than other motives or goals, as Moltmann goes on to emphasize. At the same time, such activity must indeed take place, as the Spirit always fills in order to enact transformation in a context. As John Wesley said, “First, God works; therefore you can work. Secondly, God works, therefore you must work.” We are filled so as to be involved in this world that God so loves. This is good because the places that need peace are places that are not able to forge their own version of peace, and often such peace seems impossible. Likewise they cannot give us peace in response. We do not need to give in order to receive; we give what we are given by the Spirit and find our meaning sustained in the Spirit’s work. This is why such peace is truly good news in real and living ways. God carries the burden of this peace and establishes this peace in his own self, and this peace enables peace to be possible for the whole world, people and nature together. Peace that is expressed in the power of the Spirit is thus certainly not passive. Peace can and should be disruptive. Not everyone wants peace; indeed, some thrive in the chaos. The early Christians, for instance, offered a contrasting way to the world and the world responded with persecution. “But it is mainly the dregs of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us,” Tertullian wrote. “See how they love one another, for they themselves would sooner put to death.” Even in the persecution, the early Christians resisted the temptation to fight back. In this, they participated in a developing movement of the Spirit that brought more and more into this field of peace, responding to this world in real ways that brought life and hope.

CONCLUSION
In John 14, we encounter Jesus on the other side of the crucifixion. Now resurrected, his work is indeed finished as well as inaugurated in a new way. On the evening of the first day, Easter, Jesus appears to the gathered disciples. As John relates in verse 21, “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” This chaotic restatement of his promise in John 14 emphasizes that Spirit and peace go together. Now that it is time for the giving of the Spirit, the disciples can and should be disruptive. Not everyone wants peace; indeed, some thrive in the chaos. The early Christians, for instance, offered a contrasting way to the world and the world responded with persecution. “But it is mainly the dregs of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us,” Tertullian wrote. “See how they love one another, for they themselves would sooner put to death.”

But like the Israelites in the wilderness, the church has often lost sight of God’s promise and sought resolution in less sufficient ways—war, control, division, negation, fracturing the unity of the Spirit back into divided factions and competing demographics. This is our present danger as we wrestle with our present danger as we wrestle with our identity as evangelicals in today’s world. If diverted, we can easily fall back into triumphalism or apathy and become fractured. We must also avoid both an idealized anthropolog and an individualized piety, the old dangers of liberalism on one side and fundamentalism on the other. If we lose our way, if we try to derive peace from our experiences in this world or an isolated religiosity, we lose peace with others and with ourselves, and we lose peace with God. Only the peace from God in the Spirit leads us into the to-and-fro of love, as Jean Vanier puts it: a love expressed in real relationships and real communities oriented towards reconciliation in all ways that the Spirit offers. This is why shalom is a spiral, leading us around and upward together. Life with the Spirit is truly a dance of peace.

Rather than conflict, we have peace. Rather than chaos, we have peace. Rather than frustration or anxiety or domination, we have peace. This is not the peace of the world, but a deeper peace, a lasting peace, a thorough peace. It is not just the ceasing of violence and war, it is more: it is an entering into a

PEACE FOR OTHERS
Peace that is with us is the peace that is sent with us. We who experience peace with God, who find identity in God and confidence in God’s work in our lives, extend this peace to others. The holistic work of the Spirit is a work from God that transforms us so that we become a resonating presence of peace in, with, and for this world.

Anyone who wants to fill up his own hollowness by helping other people will simply spread the same hollowness. Why? Because people are far less influenced by what another person says and does than the activist would like to believe. They are much more influenced by what the other is, and his way of speaking and behaving. Only the person who has found his own self can give himself. What else can be given? It is only the person who knows that he is accepted who can accept others without dominating them. The person who has become free in himself can liberate others and share their suffering.”
rhythm with the Creator of all that is, and living in light of this rhythm. This is truly, thoroughly, good news. This is the gospel, in which we discover not just a message about heaven but a message about all of reality, a reintegration into life with God that transforms our very experience of this world and leads us to resonate this experience back into this world. It is this peace Jesus promises to us. It is this peace that Jesus passes to us in the Spirit, and it is in participating with the Spirit that we pass this peace to others. This is the continuing call of a fuller evangelicalism.

Because Spirit and peace arrive together, peacemaking should be definitive for contemporary approaches of evangelism, for understanding of sanctification, for engagement in social activism and advocacy. These have long been part of Fuller Seminary’s institutional story—key elements of the “good ship Fuller” that have kept us afloat throughout the turbulent cultural seas of the last 70 years. Indeed, each of our three schools can be seen as specializing in one of these areas while seeking thorough integration together with them all. This gives us a significant role in leading evangelicalism back into shalom, as we train women and men for leadership and participation in this world in light of the gospel. The promise of peace is not elusive but indeed a promise that was inaugurated with the giving of the Spirit. We need to be reminded and to remind others what Jesus taught, incorporating wisdom about “all things” and reemphasizing the element of peace again and again in all our pursuits.

May this peace be with you.
May we be people who, wherever we are, also pass this peace to others.

ENDNOTES
1. This is an extremely streamlined description of what happened. For a more detailed account see George Marsden’s great book, Reforming Fundamentalism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). Over time, the prefix was dropped in most cases, and the movement is more commonly simply called evangelicalism now. However, the prefix is helpful in distinguishing between historical and global forms of evangelicalism.
2. By “fuller” I am intending the contemporary understanding of “being more full,” not the older, traditional term applied to those who prepared cloth. Though it does not take too much of a stretch to include this latter meaning in a figurative way, I’ll not venture into that tub.
5. Cornelius Plantinga, Got the Way It’s Supposed to Be (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 15.
7. See Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism, 91.
8. Ibid., 193, notes, “Carnell and Roddy were only the best known cases from what over the years was a distressingly high number of serious psychological crises or breakdowns among Fuller’s faculty.”
10. See, for instance, Isaiah 6:8–11–14.
11. See Galatians 5.

“For thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I extend peace to her like a river, And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream: And you will be nursed, you will be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees.’”
—Isaiah 66:12

| FULLER MAGAZINE | FULLER.EDU/STUDIO | 74 |
Golden Vision – Agape by Makoto Fujimura, private collection, gold and mineral pigments on kumohada, 3’ x 6’, 2015

Mako’s work has been within the traditional Japanese painting style known as nihonga, a contemplative painting practice using pigments from natural sources. As numerous layers of pigments accumulate over time, the colors take on a vibrant, multidimensional quality, evoking the qualities of a Christian life—such as agape, the concept represented here. See more of Mako’s art on pp. 2–3 and 98–99.
There is an undeniable strangeness about much traditional exegesis. Yet the more we ponder it and weigh the intentions of our predecessors, the more we may find that their strangeness is also strangely familiar. That strangeness may harbor surprises for us about the past, and it may offer unlooked-for readings of Scripture that draw us out of ourselves into other Christian minds and other epochs of Christian churches and Christian culture. We need such encounters and such conversations. We may return from the past unpersuaded, but we will not return unchanged.

John L. Thompson, professor of historical theology and Gaylen and Susan Byker Professor of Reformed Theology, from his book Reading the Bible with the Dead. Read more from the Thompsons online.

The practice of reading Scripture is not about learning how to mold the biblical message to contemporary lives and modern needs. Rather, the Scriptures yearn to reshape how we comprehend our lives and identify our greatest needs. We find in Scripture who we are and what we might become, so that we come to share its assessment of our situation, encounter its promise of restoration, and hear its challenge to serve God’s good news.

Marianne Meye Thompson, George Eldon Ladd Professor of New Testament, from a lecture on her completed commentary on the gospel of John—available online.

“A commentary is a seasoned work of a lot of reflection and teaching. . . . What it tries to do is to give my understanding of the gospel as I read it and as the words run—the way the narrative goes—what is this gospel about? What is it bearing witness to?”

Joel B. Green, provost and dean of the School of Theology, from his essay “Cultivating the Practice of Reading Scripture,” available for download online. Pictured: The Payton family Bible belonging to Grace Fuller, wife of Charles E. Fuller, the founder of Fuller Seminary—a reminder of Fuller’s historic and continual commitment to Scripture.

“The practice of reading Scripture is not about learning how to mold the biblical message to contemporary lives and modern needs. Rather, the Scriptures yearn to reshape how we comprehend our lives and identify our greatest needs. We find in Scripture who we are and what we might become, so that we come to share its assessment of our situation, encounter its promise of restoration, and hear its challenge to serve God’s good news.”

Christopher B. Hays, D. Wilson Moore Associate Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Studies, in Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East. Hays leads an immersion course, Experiencing the Land of the Bible, on site in Israel; read more from him online.

What does it mean to give proper attention to the ancient Near Eastern nature of the Hebrew Scriptures? Minimally it means reading other ancient Near Eastern texts. The Scriptures are exceedingly ‘respiratory’: they breathe in the culture of their times, and breathe it back out in a different form. To the reader who learns to breathe the same air—the one who becomes familiar with the context—it is increasingly hard to believe that he or she once read the Bible without. Reading the Hebrew Scriptures in context is intoxicating, like breathing pure oxygen: everything is clearer and sharper, and the energy is immeasurably higher.

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John L. Thompson, professor of historical theology and Gaylen and Susan Byker Professor of Reformed Theology, from his book Reading the Bible with the Dead. Read more from the Thompsons online.
THE IMMEDIACY OF THE WORD

“A seminary education will teach us to attend to the context of 2,000 years ago, but there’s sometimes a danger in which an overemphasis on the context behind the text doesn’t allow us to appreciate the living and dynamic character of the text. There’s an immediacy in which the Bible stories are also maps for our stories. The Pentecostal testimony allows us to experience the living and dynamic character of the Word of God as it addresses our existential conditions today that can only be complemented by an understanding that seminary gives us of the world behind the text.”

Amos Yong, director of the Center for Missiological Research, reorienting the study of Scripture from a historical document to a dynamic encounter in the present. Watch more of his reflections online. In the image above: Bread for the Journey, by Jonathan Ashe, depicts the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending on a modern city, bringing the historical event of Pentecost into the present day. Commissioned by Urban Doxology, a reconciling music and arts ministry, the work was projected on walls during the 2017 Culture Care Summit. Learn more online.

LIVED-HERMENEUTICS

“The way the church lives out its corporate life in the world and the form that life takes constitute a hermeneutical activity—the people of God interpret Scripture by the way they shape their life together. In this sense, there is no timeless or universal essence the church must express; rather, under God it constitutes itself afresh in each generation—it must become, theologically, a real presence.”

William A. Dyrness, senior professor of theology and culture, from his book Poetic Theology. Read an excerpt online.

SOLA SCRIPTURA

“Every drop of scripture dilates the eyes of our hearts, Exposing both healthy and sick parts. So when we refuse to engage or let it transform our minds, The only other option is to live life as though blind. These written words are set apart from all others Because they teach us how to be better neighbors & strangers, leaders & followers, fathers & mothers. It is scripture alone that makes the life of the faithful clearer, It is scripture alone that guides the life of every believer.”

Jeanelle Austin (MDiv ’13), operations director for Fuller’s Pannell Center for African American Church Studies, and Philip Allen Jr., pastor and poet, in an excerpt from their five-part spoken word piece commissioned for the Five Solas Project. Commissioned by the Brehm Center’s Fred Bock Institute of Music directed by Ed Willmington, this project, which celebrates the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, interprets the five commitments of the reformers (here, “sola scriptura”) through a variety of artistic forms. Learn more about the five solas—and hear spoken word, solo piano, and more—online.

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THE IMMEDIACY OF THE WORD

“A seminary education will teach us to attend to the context of 2,000 years ago, but there’s sometimes a danger in which an overemphasis on the context behind the text doesn’t allow us to appreciate the living and dynamic character of the text. There’s an immediacy in which the Bible stories are also maps for our stories. The Pentecostal testimony allows us to experience the living and dynamic character of the Word of God as it addresses our existential conditions today that can only be complemented by an understanding that seminary gives us of the world behind the text.”

Amos Yong, director of the Center for Missiological Research, reorienting the study of Scripture from a historical document to a dynamic encounter in the present. Watch more of his reflections online. In the image above: Bread for the Journey, by Jonathan Ashe, depicts the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending on a modern city, bringing the historical event of Pentecost into the present day. Commissioned by Urban Doxology, a reconciling music and arts ministry, the work was projected on walls during the 2017 Culture Care Summit. Learn more online.
“Since all readings of Scripture employ theological assumptions about God and how we learn of his purposes, we should welcome the opportunity to explore how from theological options from other places and times. Since we all belong to a common body of Christ, we should welcome the opportunity to read Scripture with these other believers. This engaged and faithful reading of Scripture seems more attractive to non-Western Christians than the barren space where the diversity of interpretations enriches a shared life of faith.”

“Teaching Sunday school at my church pushes me to be in Scripture; to read theology, and to keep thinking about my own vocation as a psychologist in relationship to those things. It puts me in conversation with people on a weekly basis around Scripture—oftentimes people who disagree with me and who I disagree with. I’ve realized over time that it’s shaping in me the virtue of hospitality.”

“The more we take on Scripture, the more we take on the life of Christ, who remember we who we are. I’m not just Scott; I’m Scott redeemed by Jesus Christ; Jesus is breathing his very breath into me—I am a different person. That’s a challenge for all of us: to not let our eyes scrape across the pages but to drill down and to really memorize and learn passages of Scripture. When Scripture comes to you because it’s been memorized, it’s powerful. But Scripture has very little power in our lives to transform us and others if it’s not within us.”

“By gathering together as a community and reading Scripture together, people can go through the whole Bible in well under two years. It is my belief that the Communal Reading of Scriptures project will help the church learners how to feast on the Word communally, to be fed and nourished by the God who speaks to his children through the Word.”

“Learning the Bible with the Dead: What You Can Learn from the History of Exegesis That You Can’t Learn from Exegesis Alone
John Thompson (Westminster John Knox, 2015)
“Wisdom from above! It comes in many forms. All of them involve firm dependence on God, without whom all of life will turn foolish. . . . Nothing we do, in word or deed, shows as clearly that we have learned wisdom’s high lessons as when we pray. Wisdom begins with the fear of God; the fear of God begins in prayer.”

David Alan Hubbard, Fuller’s third president—for whom the Hubbard Library (pictured) is named—in The Book of James: Wisdom that Works. Speaking at the dedication of the library in 2009, Marianne Meye Thompson, George Eldon Ladd Professor of New Testament, said of Dr. Hubbard, “For him, ‘Christian’ was the noun and ‘intellectual’ the adjective, and not the other way. Intellectual work and academic endeavor were to be put into the service of the church and ministry, and this is what David taught and modeled.” In this spirit, imagery of the library is used throughout this section that reflects on wisdom in its many forms—all in the service of the church.

**Voices on Wisdom**

“Wisdom and word are particularly apt figures in the development of Johannine Christology since neither wisdom nor word was considered a being or entity separable from God, such as an angel or prophet, who may choose to do God’s will or not. Both wisdom and word refer to something that belongs to and comes from God, something inward or peculiar to God that is external ly expressed. . . . To speak of Jesus as God’s word is to say that he is God’s self-expression, God’s thought or mind, God’s interior word spoken aloud, or in John’s description, made flesh.”

Marianne Meye Thompson, George Eldon Ladd Professor of New Testament, from John: A Commentary. Listen online to her reflect on the process of writing the commentary.

“Human minds are not sponges. . . . It’s more like a landscape or an ecosystem where certain things are going to grow in certain places but not others; certain ideas are going to be easier for human minds to process than others. These natural propensities that undergird religious thought are part of the ordinary equipment that humans have regardless of culture. . . . Human minds are a fertile soil for plants we might call ‘religious.’ Culture gets to decide which plants are going to grow to a certain extent, but the plants are going to grow.”

Justin L. Barrett, professor of psychology and chief project developer for the Office for Science, Theology, and Religious Initiatives (STAR), reflecting on the ways wisdom, religion, and cognitive science intersect. Watch more online.

“Philosophical reflection is sustained by that which religion in its own way seeks to realize: love—the love of God, the love for God, and the love of human beings for one another. When brought together in disability perspective, wisdom and love are neither merely theoretical notions nor theological speculations, rather, they become the stuff by which philosophical reflection is supposed to be transformed so that the world might be changed.”

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Amos Yong, director of the Center for Missiological Research and professor of theology and mission, in his essay “Disability and the Love of Wisdom.” Read more on able theology online.

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WISDOM + SUFFERING
“The mood of Job and Ecclesiastes is questioning. And the key expression of that questioning is their concern with death and with suffering, for these are two key human experiences, which threaten to subvert the confidence of wisdom. To put it another way, if wisdom cannot embrace these realities, if it cannot speak to these, then it subverts its own capacity to speak to anything else.”
 John Goldingay, David Allan Hubbard Professor of Old Testament

WISDOM + INTUITION
“African proverbs . . . offer observations that are true as general rules but may not fit every case. The wise person is the one who knows intuitively which proverb carries the content and nuances most appropriate to a given situation.”
 Stan Nussbaum, staff missiologist at Global Mapping International

WISDOM + NEUROPSYCHOLOGY
“Wisdom is a concerted function of the entire brain (and body). It involves judging truly what is right or fitting and being disposed to act accordingly. The impact of specific forms of brain damage or abnormal brain development on judging and acting helps to enlighten us as to the various neural systems and cognitive abilities that contribute to the wisdom of persons.”
 Warren S. Brown, professor of psychology and director of the Lee Edward Travis Research Institute

WISDOM + KNOWLEDGE
“Wisdom is, at least partly, an aspect of the kind of intelligence on which adults principally rely—the intelligence that is maintained and/or increased throughout a major portion of adulthood. This part of wisdom is a form of reasoning that relies on a large body of knowledge that is built up through a disciplined regimen of learning over an extended period of time: it is a kind of expertise.”
 John Horn, late professor of psychology at the University of Southern California, and Hirono Masunaga, professor of educational psychology at California State University, Long Beach

WISDOM + EMOTION
“Emotions play a crucial epistemic role in the moral life in their function of recording information. We can think of them as modes of attention enabling us to notice what is morally salient, important, or urgent in ourselves and our surroundings. . . . If emotions are antennae, they are antennae that can record with urgency and heat. Emotional data tend to leave tracks deeper than those of cold reason.”
 Nancy Sherman, professor of philosophy at Georgetown University

WISDOM + YOUTH
“Wisdom is that domain of human experience that is concerned with the pragmatics of living. All the more important to adolescent development, it is wisdom that presents pragmatic guidelines for living against a context of transcendent meaning and purpose.”
 Jonas L. Forese, Ewan and Frank Freud Professor of Marital and Family Therapy, and Linda M. Wagniere, former faculty member and associate dean of the School of Psychology

WISDOM + MAXIMS
“Maxims have become an established tradition of human language and moral education precisely because they help young learners to store concepts in the mind more efficiently. In this way, maxims serve as metaphorical ‘clothes hangers’ on which to hang concepts—especially concepts that address ideals of self-motivation and moral behavior.”
 Arthur Schwartz, professor of leadership studies at Widener University, and F. Clark Power, professor of education at the University of Notre Dame

WISDOM + SELF-DENIAL
“Wisdom’s emphasis on self-relinquishment . . . is noteworthy not because it is part of wisdom, but because it appears to be emphasized by wisdom because it is part of the human condition. The mystery is not just that some wisdom traditions assert [meaning], but that human beings actually do widely pursue scientific, artistic, and religious meaning at the expense of physical deprivation, social isolation, and even death.”
 Jeffrey Schooss, professor of biology at Wheaton College

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The façade of the Hubbard Library opens like a book—evoking, through its transparent and illuminated windows, the committed search for wisdom inside. The quotes on these pages come from Understanding Wisdom: Sources, Science, and Society, a Templeton Foundation–funded book edited by Travis Research Institute Director Warren Brown. Templeton Press has graciously granted us permission to reprint many of the articles in FULLER studio—read more online.

PROVERBS 4:7
“THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM IS:
ACQUIRE WISDOM;
AND WITH ALL YOUR ACQUIRING,
GET UNDERSTANDING.”
KRISTA: Wisdom is recognizable and measurable; it’s interactive. You don’t just say “He or she is a wise person,” but you know them by the effect they have on the world and on those around them. In this generation, there is this new longing to connect what you believe and who you are, this language of integrity and authenticity and transparency that has been introduced into our vocabulary as a reflection of that longing. And wisdom does that—it embodies these things we now are recognizing as so essential if we want to be whole.

MARK: I often think of wisdom like a series of sinews that tie flesh and soul and body and mind together in that way you’re describing. It’s an integrated word; it’s never an isolated or autonomous experience. It’s about congruence and communion and connectedness and participation and vision—all those things are brought together.

“Discerning calling is the long, complicated combination of convictions and context, of passion and prayer, of knowledge and need that seems to tap us on the shoulder and call forth from us an invitation into a process of self-discovery and humility, of taking up and laying down, of embracing and letting go that over time forms a deep, confident conviction that, of all things there are to do in the world, ‘This is mine to do.’”

Tod Bolsinger, vice president and chief of Fuller’s Leadership Formation Platform and assistant professor of practical theology, in his essay “Formed, Not Found,” available online.

KRISTA and MARK DISCUSS WISDOM ON CONVERSING

“BIBLICAL WISDOM IS THE TRUTH AND CHARACTER OF GOD LIVED IN CONTEXT.”

Mark Labberton, president

Resources

- Unspoken Wisdom: Truth My Father Taught Me
  Ray Anderson (Wipf & Stock, 2013)
- Understanding Wisdom: Sources, Science, and Society
  Warren Brown, ed. (Templeton Foundation Press, 2009)
- Walking in the Dark: Step by Step through Job
  Daniel Fuller (Eerdmans, 2010)
- Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs for Everyone
  John Goldingay (Westminster John Knox, 2014)
- Beyond Futility: Messages of Hope from the Book of Ecclesiastes
  David Allan Hubbard (Eerdmans, 1976)
- The Book of James: Wisdom that Works
  David Allan Hubbard (W Publishing Group, 1990)
- The Wisdom of the Old Testament
  David Allan Hubbard (Messiah College, 1992)
- Roofs of Strangers: Ecclesiastes through the Lens of Contemporary Film
  Robert Johnston (Wipf & Stock, 2011)

Available Classes

- Job and Human Suffering with various faculty
- Wisdom Traditions in the Old Testament with various faculty
"As demonstrated by the cross, God speaks a Word that takes on a body—the created community born by Christ himself. The Word has become incarnate. It desires to have a body and thus moves inherently toward the church by its own gracious initiative and power. Preachers are called to follow the free and gracious movement of the Word through the scriptural witness and into the life of the church for the sake of the world."

Michael Pasquarello III, Lloyd John Ogilvie Professor of Preaching, speaking at his installation on the sacramental nature of preaching. Dr. Pasquarello helps oversee Fuller’s PhD in Worship and Preaching; learn more and listen to his installation address online. Picture at right: Evelyne Reisacher, associate professor of Islamic studies and intercultural relations, preaches at InterVarsity’s 2015 Urbana conference. Hers is one of many voices on Fuller’s new podcast FULLER sermons—available on iTunes, Google Play, and Fuller.edu/Studio.

"The integral task of preaching, therefore, is to help the church see that God’s words and actions in Scripture are consistent with God’s active presence today. In doing so, preaching inspires believers to join and participate in God’s unfolding theodrama."

Ahmi Lee, assistant professor of preaching, from her dissertation “Toward a Theodramatic Homiletic.” Listen to her preach on the FULLER sermons podcast.

"Perhaps they expected that it would be just another service—the ritual would be performed, including the reading of the sacred texts, and they would nod their heads in approval as the young preacher read from an ancient passage. What they did not expect was that the Word of God would be fulfilled in their hearing, that God would become present in the Word, that the yesterdays of their cultural prejudices would be recast into the today of the Spirit, and that they would be invited to dance to the Spirit’s invitation to celebrate the wideness of God’s mercy."

William E. Pannell, professor emeritus of preaching, from “Expecting to Know the Mind of God Through Preaching the Bible,” originally published in Theology, News & Notes. Read this essay and more from Dr. Pannell online.

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“Our calling is to allow the biblical text or passage to have its full impact on us. As passionate preachers we have the privilege of living in the passage and letting it speak to us before we speak about it to the congregation. We can lead others only so far as we have gone ourselves; we cannot give away what we don’t have. Truth and reality, faith and experience, discovery and application, never should be separated.”

—Lloyd John Ogilvie, preacher and longtime friend of the Fuller community, in his classic book A Passionate Calling. Learn more about the Brehm Center’s Ogilvie Institute for Preaching online.

“Local congregations need a strategy to reinforce the preacher’s message, keep God’s Word fresh in people’s minds, and provide mechanisms and structures for feedback and accountability. Having heard God’s Word, people need help so that they may allow it to continue to impact their hearts and lives.”


“There is for me a way of preaching that loosens itself from the heightened rational faculties we are all so good at and enters into a simplicity of focus, freedom, relinquishment, and abandonment in which I as a preacher am not preaching at people, not for people, but we are together in the moment, in the Spirit. And while I may be the one speaking, I have become the voice of us all, and the voice of Jesus Christ who is for and among us all.”


“It is time for those of us who preach to reimagine our task as one that contributes to a process of repairing, reconciling, and renewing a global community that has been torn and bruised by the ongoing imperial tug of war. It is also time to celebrate what God has done and is doing to bring good out of a troubled human history.”

—Sarah Travis, minister of the chapel at Knox College, in her book Decolonizing Preaching: The Pulpit as Postcolonial Space.

“The task of the preacher is to listen to the Word with a humble reverence, anxious to understand it, and resolved to believe and obey what we come to learn and understand. At the same time, we preachers listen to the world with critical alertness, anxious to understand it just as intimately, and resolved not necessarily to believe and obey it, but to sympathize with it and to seek grace to discover how the gospel relates to the world.”


“Set within the context of worship, the sermon has a unique opportunity to offer a transformative tuning note that can help interpret and orient the congregation’s corporate actions and witness as well as guiding individual members in personal discipleship.”

—Joni S. Sancken, assistant professor of homiletics at United Theological Seminary, in her book Stumbling Over the Cross: Preaching the Cross and Resurrection Today.

“The work of making connections in gospel address makes no claim to exhibit exhaustive political, social, cultural, or economic analysis. It only claims to see the lines that run from structures to bodies, from macroprocesses to the tears and cries of individuals or groups of people. … Those who speak this gospel word know that public space is holy space, where a God made flesh walks among the crowd.”


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"Preaching has to flow from a walk—a walk that’s authentic, that’s real..."

"The real power of preaching does not lie in the personal characteristics of the speaker or the skillful way in which the sermon is crafted and presented, but rather in the work of God’s Spirit. Faith rests in divine power rather than human wisdom. Human words do not have the ability to spark the attentions of the congregation..."

-S. Albert Tate, pastor of Fellowship Monrovia, reflects on pastoral authenticity with President Mark Labberton on Conversing, a podcast in which he interviews a broad spectrum of leaders on issues at the intersection of theology and culture.

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For the last three years, Dr. Wong has served Fuller as research processes administrator and as an adjunct professor for the School of Teaching at the Fuller Southwest campus in Arizona, Dr. Turns brings a clinical and research specialization that centers on families raising contextual theologies.

Previously taught at the University of Cambridge and Union Biblical Seminary in India. His scholarship interests include public theology, world

Doing theology from the context of world Christianity for missional purposes, Kim brings a deeply experienced

Dr. Kim joins Fuller after serving as full professor at Leeds Trinity University in her native UK, with prior experience that includes teaching

BRIE A. TURNS

SEBASTIAN C. H. KIM

MATTHEW KAEMINGK

CLIFTON R. CLARKE

EUIWAN CHO

NEW FULLER FACULTY

Assistant Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy

Executive Director of the Korean Studies Center and Professor of Theology and Public Life

Assistant Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy

Assistant Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy

Associate Dean, Pannell Center for African American Church Studies and Associate Professor of Black Church Studies and

Assistant Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy

Assistant Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy

NEW FULLER FACULTY

EUIWAN CHO

Assistant Academic Director for the Korean Doctor of Ministry Program and Associate Professor of Christian Ministry

Dr. Cho joined Fuller in 2017 as an assistant academic director and theological mentor of the MDMin program, having previously served as the Korean DDMin director and a faculty member at Luther Rice University/Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. He also served as senior pastor of Novatine Korean Baptist Church in Tennessee for six years.

CLIFTON R. CLARKE

Assistant Director, Panel Center for African American Church Studies and Associate Professor of Black Church Studies and World Christianity

Coming to Fuller from Regent University School of Divinity, Dr. Clarke, an ordained bishop in the Church of God, brings scholarly, pastoral, and mission expertise to serve Fuller’s vision to form global leaders for kingdom vocations. He has pastored and taught theology in South Korea and India. Done theology from the context of world Christianity for missional purposes, Kim brings a deeply experienced

Assistant Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy

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NEW FULLER FACULTY

Relevant member with broad experience in psychology, he focuses on his research in the Historical tradition and Contemplative traditions.

SEBASTIAN C. H. KIM

Executive Director of the Korean Studies Center and Professor of Theology and Public Life

Loading: Fuller’s new Korean Studies Center. Dr. Kim comes from York St John University in the UK where he served as 127 years, having previously taught at the University of Cambridge and Union Biblical Seminary in India. His scholarship interests include public theology, world Christianity, Asian theologies, and peacebuilding.

DANIEL D. LEE

Director, Center for Asian American Theology and Ministry and Assistant Professor of Theology and Asian American Ministry

For the last nine years, Dr. Lee has served in various roles to establish the Asian American Center and develop Asian-American courses and programs. Trained as a Presbyterian minister with broad ministry experience, he focuses on his research in the Historical tradition and Contemplative traditions.

SEAN M. LOVE

Assistant Director of Clinical Training and Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology

Dr. Love administers clinical field training placements for students and works to help them develop professionally, as also assisting practicum sites in providing quality training. His research interests center on the influence of trauma on spirituality and consciousness, and he has written for lay audiences in this area.

BRIE A. TURNS

Assistant Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy

Teaching at the Fuller Southwest campus in Arizona, Dr. Turns brings a clinical and research specialization that centers on families raising a child with an autistic spectrum disorder. She has published extensively on this topic and has conducted trainings for mental health professionals on families with special needs.

ALISON G. WONG

Assistant Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy

For the last nine years, Dr. Wong has served as research processes administrator and is an adjunct professor for the School of Teaching. As a medical family therapist, she focuses her clinical work and research on pre-suicide behavior and helping couples and families coping with medical issues.
In the Christian calendar, the Feast of Epiphany celebrates the incarnation and gifts of the Magi. This painting both references the holiday and becomes its own form of epiphany—an evoking of wisdom, gift, and grace.

See more of Mako’s work on pp. 2–3 and 76–77.
What is Fuller?

Fuller Theological Seminary is one of the world’s most influential evangelical institutions, the largest multidenominational seminary, and a leading voice for faith, civility, and justice in the global church and wider culture. With deep roots in orthodoxy and branches in innovation, we are committed to forming Christian women and men to be faithful, courageous, innovative, collaborative and fruitful leaders, who will make an exponential impact for Jesus in any context. Fuller offers 17 degree programs at 7 campuses—with Spanish, Korean, and online options—through our Schools of Theology, Psychology, and Intercultural Studies, as well as 20 centers, institutes, and initiatives. Approximately 4,000 students from 90 countries and 110 denominations enroll in our programs annually, and our 43,000 alumni have been called to serve as ministers, counselors, teachers, artists, nonprofit leaders, businesspersons, and in a multitude of other vocations around the world.

El Seminario Teológico Fuller es una de las instituciones evangelísticas más influyentes del mundo, el seminario teológico más grande y una voz principal para la fe, la civilidad y la justicia en la iglesia global y la cultura en general. Con más de 1,000 estudiantes de más de 90 países y 110 denominaciones en nuestro programa anualmente, y nuestras 43,000 alumnos han sido llamados a servir como ministros, consejeros, maestros, artistas, líderes no lucrativos, empresarios y en una variedad de profesiones alrededor del mundo.

¿Qué es Fuller?

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After their conversation, Andy took new photos of Kheing, with her friend beside her, making her story for Andy. “Paektra was a living sermon,” he says, “showing the way of Jesus to Kheing and bringing ‘church’ to her whenever they meet.”

The children weren’t always so eager to help Kheing in this way, and it was a young woman named Paektra who first noticed her walking alone past neighborhood kids who were teasing her. The moment inspired Paektra, the kids stopped. “In Cambodia, kids with disabilities are often left behind or purposefully excluded,” Andy says. “It’s the balance of power, having an older person with respect in the community standing up for her made all the difference.” Because of Paektra, Kheing was now surrounded by a new circle of friends—friends who were eager to befriend her and translate her story for Andy. “Paektra was a living sermon,” he says, “showing the way of Jesus to Kheing and bringing ‘church’ to her whenever they meet.”

“Something fell into place that I hadn’t understood until that moment,” he remembers. “She was reading lips.” Andy realized that Kheing was deaf, and it was a sacred moment to watch the other children work so hard to mine and translate for her. “The crowd of peers doing whatever it took for them to communicate with her,” he says.

After their conversation, Andy took new photos of Kheing, with her friend beside her, making the sign for peace.

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Fuller Seminary’s online MA in Theology is for those who want to learn from outstanding faculty practitioners—from anywhere in the world—to more effectively serve and communicate God’s Word in any setting. Students can apply what they’re learning directly to their context of service, and tailor their program to an area of interest like theology and the arts, ethics, youth and culture, or many others. Whether students want to prepare for future advanced study or sharpen their theological understanding for any calling, the MAT’s respected formation is within reach.

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