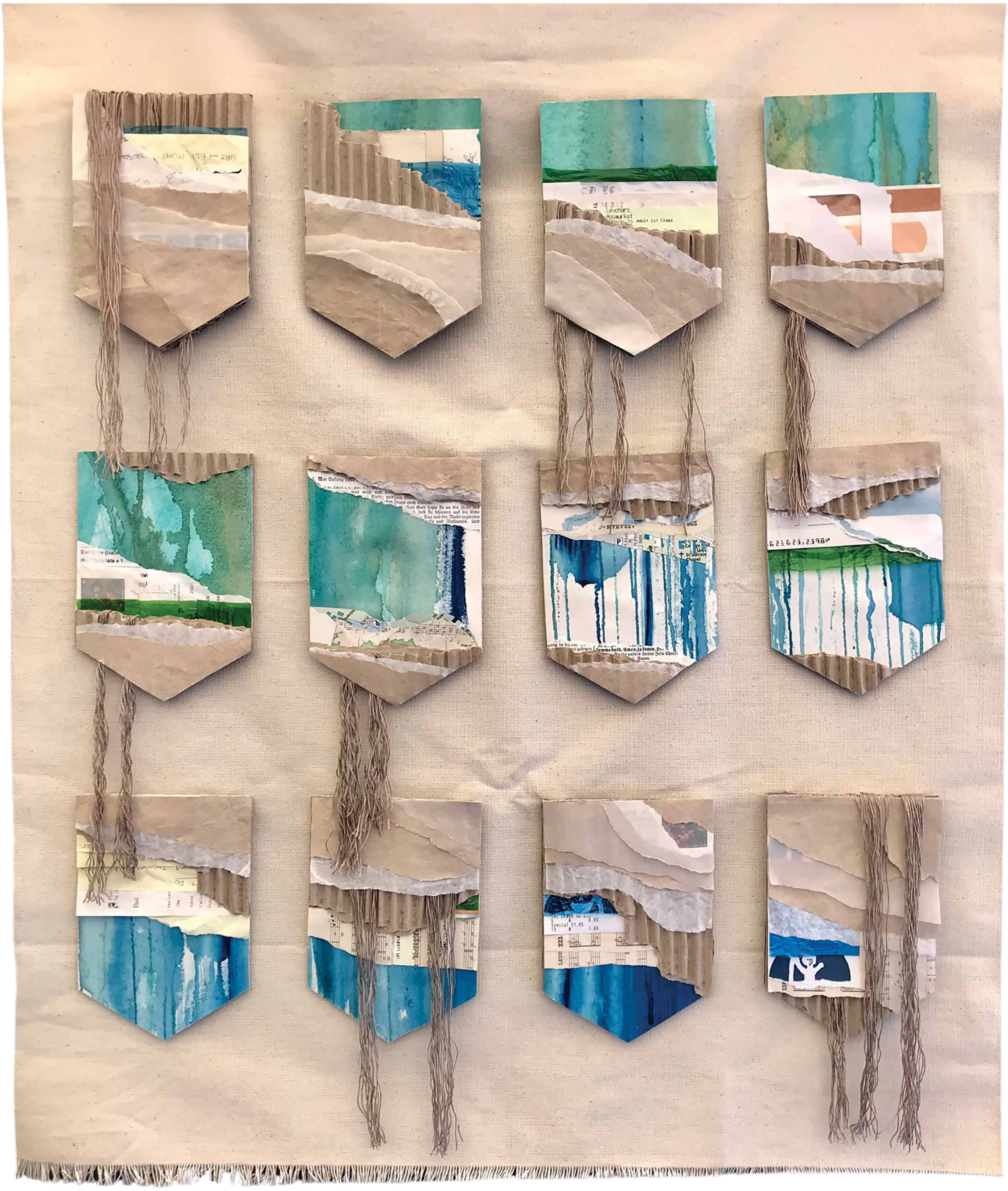
ISSUE #26 | RE-FORMING EVANGELISM

FULLER

STORY Sunita Puleo, picture above, builds bridges among people with the power of story and song *p. 18*

SCHOLARSHIP Fuller faculty and alumni explore what it means to "re-form evangelism" in today's world *p. 34*

VOICE Scholars and experts reflect on world Christianity, global missions, and interfaith engagement *p. 74*



+ Carry, Carry *by Melody Bellefeuille-Frost. Papers, ink, paint, thread, vinyl, canvas, plasters, stamps, sweet wrappers, 2023.*

Melody Bellefeuille-Frost (MAICS '16) is a Canadian artist from Ottawa, Ontario. Her mixed media collages explore themes of journeying and home on personal, intercultural, and theological levels. Referencing mapped and imagined places, she layers paper, pencil, ink, paint, tea, soil, thread, fabric, vinyl, canvas, and pocket-sized items gathered during travel. These materials are often juxtaposed and portable, having been gathered from and transported between various places. For Melody, artmaking is a method of navigating transience and rootedness, with collages becoming milestones or havens along the way. These new spaces invite viewers to contemplate their own journeys and the possibility of welcome in the world we share and in relation to God.

This issue of FULLER *magazine features images from across Melody's portfolio. Her first series of collages,* Itineraries for the Way Home *(2015–2016), was her capstone project during her MA in Intercultural Studies program, with an emphasis in Worship, Theology, and the Arts, at Fuller Theological Seminary. Her most recent artworks were made in Scotland and have been exhibited at Transept exhibitions (*Interface *[2022] and* Enfolding: A Study of Margins & Centres *[2023]), the Bield at Blackruthven installation (*Path of Light *[2023]), and the European Academy of Religion annual conference (*Religion from the Inside *[2023]).*

See more of Melody Bellefeuille-Frost's art in the closing cover, and on pp. 10–11, 32–33, 73, 93, and at melodybellefeuillefrost.ca.

FULLER

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Sunita Puleo by Karley Carrillo

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+ *Editor's Note*

I think often about a conversation I had with a friend several years ago. He'd been a Christian all his life but was struggling with his faith and found it increasingly unbearable to consider himself part of the church. He told me how his local church had hurt him deeply, and we talked about how the church as a whole has inflicted hurt on so many. To him, the church had become a force that tears down instead of one that builds up.

Jesus is supposed to offer *good* news to the world, he explained. Yet he felt like all the church had for his life were a host of *no*s rather than a resounding, welcoming *yes* into life with God and God's people. (He said this even as he acknowledged the reality of sin and the necessity of sanctification; resistance to deeper formation in Christ was not the issue here.)

Experiencing the church as a bearer of bad news is not an uncommon sentiment. Sadly, I likely don't need to share another anecdote of church hurt or trauma for an example or two to come to your mind, dear reader. But Jesus says, in the Gospel of John, that he has come that we "may have life and have it abundantly." Why did my friend feel as though the church offered *anything but* abundant life?

By God's grace, the story of the church across history still brims with the joy-filled witness and testimony of those who have found new life in Christ. By God's grace, the church has proclaimed the good news, and the good news has been embraced and has made lives new. By God's grace, God has chosen an imperfect vessel to carry a perfect gift. By God's grace, too, the Spirit steers us when we go wrong.

When we hear stories like my friend's—in our own lives and throughout world history—of the church falling short of proclaiming the gospel, we might recognize the Holy Spirit's voice inviting us onto a different path.

In this issue of *FULLER* magazine, guest edited by Soong-Chan Rah, we explore what it might mean for us to be faithful bearers of God's good news in and for our world today. From the way we plant churches to our engagement with music and the arts, from models of children's ministry to the task of reframing missiology in a globalized age, from our posture toward the unhoused to our relationships with people of other faiths, the writers in this issue offer fresh perspectives and insight into the church's call to evangelism. With the Spirit's guidance, may we re-form the way we share God's good news in faithfulness, obedience, and love. May we offer the world even a glimpse of the goodness and beauty of abundant life in Christ.

JEROME BLANCO
Editor in Chief

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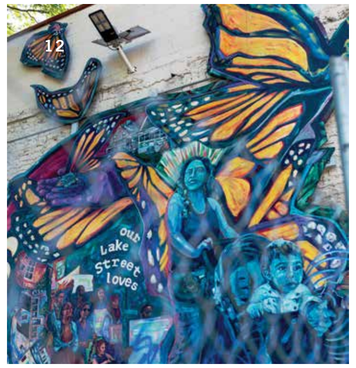

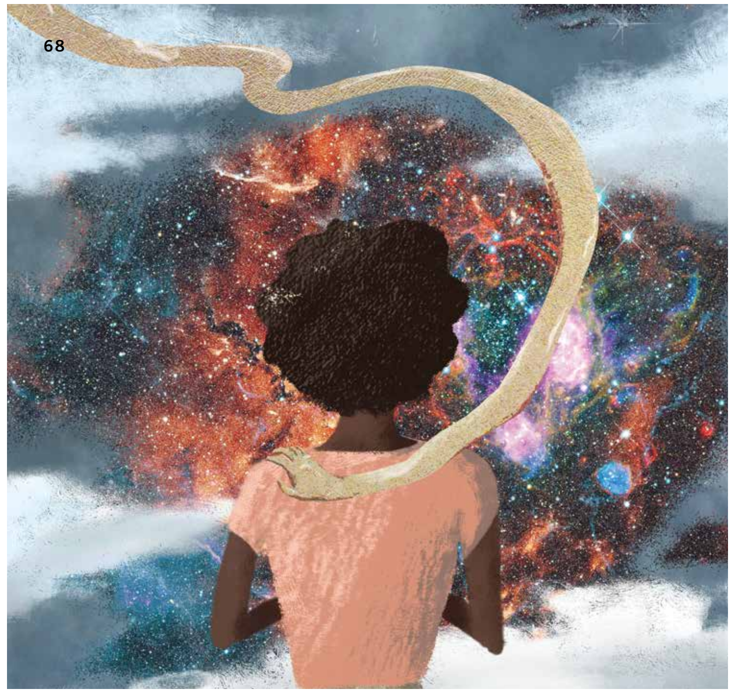

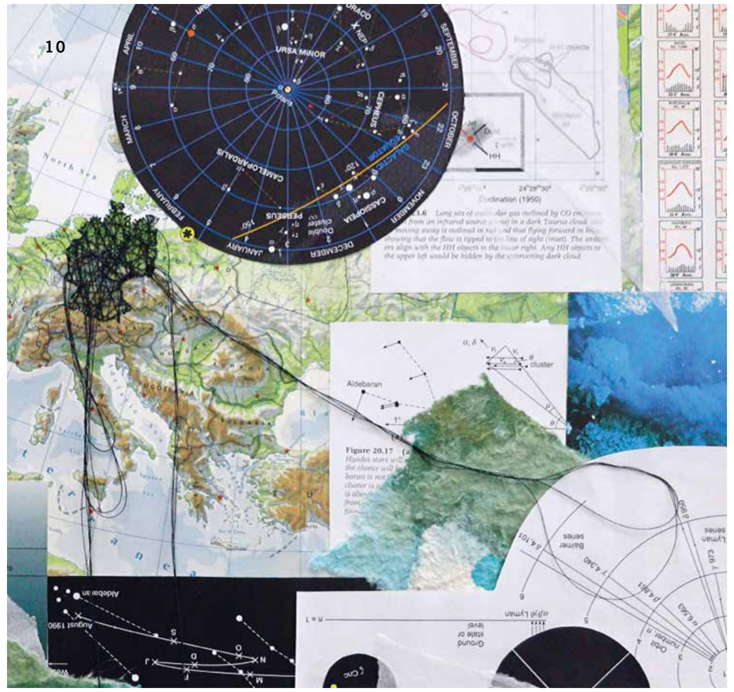

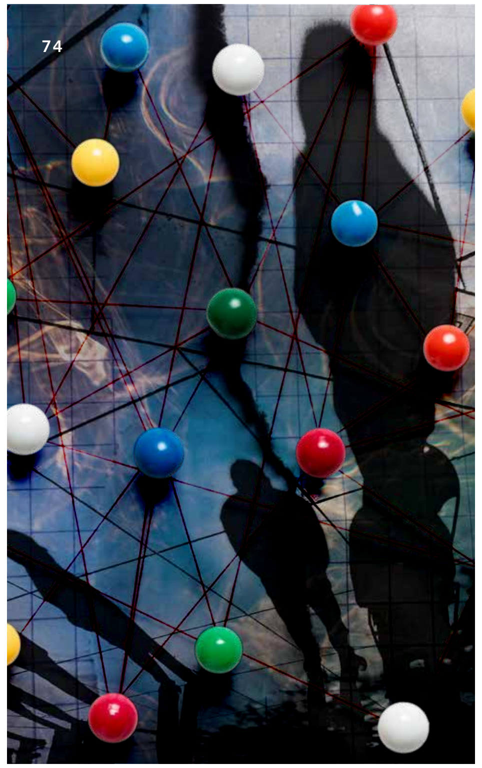

The Good News Is a Priceless Treasure

David Emmanuel Goatley, President

The idea of an "evangelist" precedes Christian usage. Armies who were successful in battle would dispatch evangelists to bring news of victory to the king long before Christian conceptions of evangelism.

Across the eras, Christians have dispatched "good news bearers" to declare victory over our enemies sin and death. Through Christ Jesus we have victory! This is, indeed, the best news that has ever been.

Problematic expressions of Christian evangelism due to cultural contamination in various contexts of power and privilege are clearly documented and well known. The fact that many have mishandled the word and what it should communicate, however, should not tempt us to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Many people have corrupted the word "love," for example, but many others know how lovely and life-giving it is to hear someone assert "I love you" and to feel loved. Too often people have carried culture in the name of Christ, given people the Bible and taken their land with guns, elevated one's flag above the cross, and more. Our challenge and call, however, is to rehabilitate good words that have been misused.

Karl Barth is credited with asserting that Augustine of Hippo contended that the church must always be reformed. Because sin is part of the human condition, we are too often prone to mishandling and misusing the marvelous things of God. The idea of evangelism is not exempt from our perpetual bumbling and bungling of beautiful concepts. We must be reminded, however, that regardless of how damaged the concept of evangelism may be for some, it is a wonderful manifestation of the saving gift of God when handled with carefulness and faithfulness. Although we are clay jars, we have a treasure from God (2 Cor 4:7). And the good news is a priceless treasure.

Las Buenas Nuevas son un Tesoro Inestimable

David Emmanuel Goatley, Presidente

La idea de un "evangelista" precede al uso cristiano de la palabra. Los ejércitos que triunfaban en la batalla enviaban evangelistas para llevar al rey la noticia de una victoria mucho antes de que los cristianos concibieran el evangelismo.

A través de las distintas eras,, los cristianos han enviado "portadores de buenas noticias" para declarar la victoria sobre los enemigos del pecado y la muerte. ¡Tenemos la victoria en Cristo Jesús! Ciertamente, esta es la mejor noticia que jamás haya existido.

Las expresiones problemáticas del evangelismo cristiano debido a la contaminación cultural en diversos contextos de poder y privilegio están claramente documentadas y son bien conocidas. Sin embargo, el hecho de que muchos hayan manejado mal la palabra y lo que debería comunicar, no debería tentarnos a "tirar al bebé con el agua de la tina". Por ejemplo, mucha gente ha corrompido la palabra "amor", pero muchos otros reconocen lo hermoso y vivificante que es oír a alguien declarar "te amo" y sentirse amado. Con demasiada frecuencia se ha transmitido cultura en nombre de Cristo, se ha dado a la gente la Biblia y se les ha arrebatado su tierra con armas, se ha elevado la bandera propia por encima de la cruz, y muchas cosas más. Nuestro reto y nuestro llamado, sin embargo, es rehabilitar las buenas palabras que han sido mal utilizadas.

Se atribuye a Karl Barth la afirmación de que Agustín de Hipona sostenía que la Iglesia debe reformarse siempre. Dado que el pecado forma parte de la condición humana, con mucha frecuencia somos propensos a manipular y utilizar mal las cosas maravillosas de Dios. La idea de la evangelización no está exenta de nuestras constantes formas torpes de usar conceptos hermosos. Debemos recordar, sin embargo, que a pesar de lo dañado que pueda estar el concepto de evangelización para algunos, es una maravillosa manifestación del don salvífico de Dios cuando se maneja con cuidado y fidelidad. Aunque somos vasijas de barro, tenemos un tesoro de Dios (2 Co 4:7). Y las buena nuevas son un tesoro de valor incalculable.

Mientras trabajamos para deconstruir ideas dañadas y reconstruir -o reformar- ideas

복음은 값진 보물입니다

데이비드 임마누엘 고틀리, 총장
(David Emmanuel Goatley)

'전도자'라는 개념은 기독교에서 사용하기 전부터 있었습니다. 기독교의 전도 개념이 등장하기 훨씬 전에도, 전투에서 승리를 거둔 군대는 전도자를 파견하여 왕에게 승리의 소식을 전했습니다.

여러 시대에 걸쳐, 기독교인들은 죄와 사망의 적을 상대로 승리를 선언하기 위해 '전도자'들을 파견했습니다. 예수 그리스도를 통해 우리는 승리합니다! 이야말로 역사상 가장 기쁜 소식이 아닐 수 없습니다.

권력과 특권의 다양한 맥락에서 문화적 오염으로 인한 기독교 전도의 문제점은 명확히 기록되어 있고 잘 알려져 있습니다. 그러나 많은 사람들이 그 단어를 잘못 다루었다는 사실과 그 단어가 무엇을 전달해야 하는지와 관련해 '벼룩을 잡으려다가 초가삼간을 다 태우는' 실수를 범하지는 않아야 합니다. 예를 들어, 많은 사람들이 "사랑해"라는 단어를 변질시켰음에도, 여전히 많은 사람들은 누군가로부터 "사랑해"는 말을 듣고 사랑받고 있음을 깨닫는 것이 얼마나 행복하고 기쁨을 주는 일인지 잘 알고 있습니다. 사람들은 너무 흔하게 그리스도의 이름으로 문화를 전하고, 사람들에게 성경을 나눠주고, 총을 들이대어 땅을 빼앗고, 십자가 위에 국기를 게양하는 등의 행위를 저질렀습니다. 그러나 오용되었던 좋은 단어들을 다시 세우고 회복하는 것이 우리의 도전이자 소명입니다.

칼 바르트는 히포의 어거스틴이 교회는 항상 개혁되어야 한다고 주장한 것으로 알려져 있습니다. 죄는 인간의 조건의 일부이기 때문에 우리는 하나님의 놀라운 것들을 잘못 다루고 오용하는 경우가 너무 많습니다. 전도에 대한 생각 역시 끊임없이 갈팡질팡하며 아름다운 개념을 엉망으로 만드는 인간의 행동에서 예외가 될 수 없습니다. 그러나 어떤 이들에게 전도의 개념이 얼마나 손상되었든, 전도는 신중하고 신실하게 다뤄졌을때 하나님의 구원의 은사를 나타내는 놀라운 표현이 된다는 사실을 상기해야 합니다. 우리는 비록 질그릇이지만 하나님의 보물을 가지고 있습니다(고후 4:7). 그리고 복음은 값을 매길 수 없는 보물입니다.

우리가 손상된 생각을 해체하고 하나님의 숨결이 깃든 통찰력을 재구성하거나 개혁하기 위해 노력할 때, 인간의 결핍에 압도되어 예수 그리스도의 풍성한 복음을 말과 행동으로 볼 수 없게 되는 일이 없기를 바랍니다. 존슨

As we work to deconstruct damaged ideas and reconstruct—or reform—God-breathed insights, may we not be so overwhelmed by human deficits that we cannot see the abundance of the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed. As Johnson Oatman, Jr. reminded us, "The world is hungry for the living bread."[1] ■

ENDNOTES

1. J. Oatman, Jr., "Lift Him Up," in *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism: An African American Ecumenical Hymnal*, ed. J. Abbington (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2018), 667.

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inspiradas por Dios, espero que no nos sintamos tan abrumados por los déficits humanos que no podamos ver la abundancia de las buenas nuevas de Jesucristo en palabra y obra. Como nos recordaba Johnson Oatman, Jr., "El mundo tiene hambre del pan de vida."[1] ■

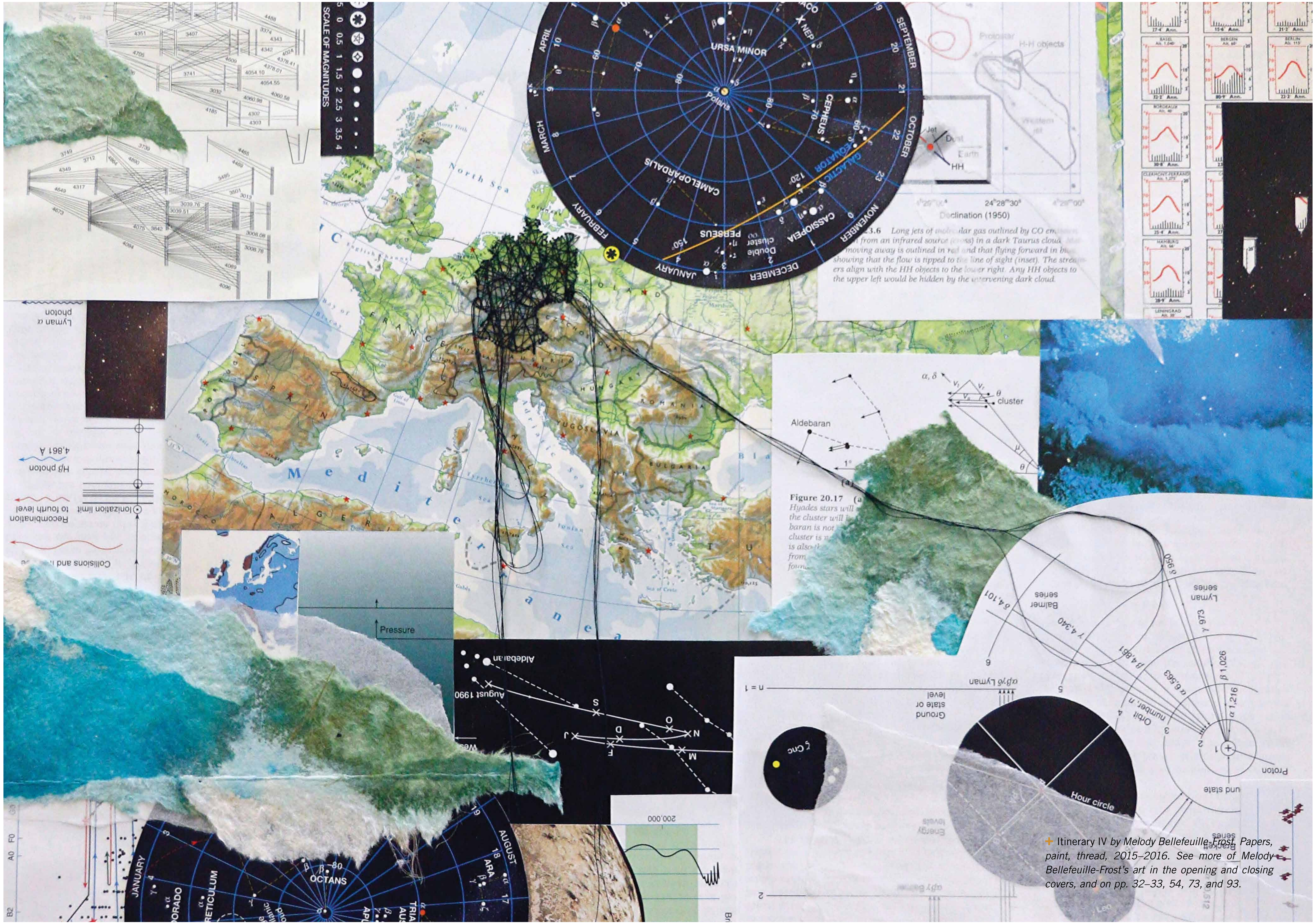
NOTA

1. J. Oatman, Jr. "Lift Him Up", en *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism: An African American Ecumenical Hymnal* ("Levantenlo", en Un Señor, una Fe, un Bautismo: un Himnario Ecuménico Afroamericano), ed. J. Abbington (Chicago, IL: GIA Publicacions, 2018), 667.

오트먼 주니어(Johnson Oatman, Jr.)가 우리에게 상기시켜 주었듯이, "세상은 생명의 떡에 굶주려 있습니다."[1] ■

각주

1. J. 오트만, 주니어. "그를 높이라," 한 주님, 한 믿음, 한 세례 안에서: 미국계 아프리카 대교구 찬송, 편집자. J. 애빙턴 (시카고, 일리노이: GIA 출판사, 2018), 667.


SCALE OF MAGNITUDES
URSA MINOR
CEPHEUS
CAMELOPARDALIS
CASSIOPEIA
PERSEUS
Double cluster
GALACTIC EQUATOR
APRIL
MARCH
FEBRUARY
JANUARY
DECEMBER
NOVEMBER
OCTOBER
SEPTEMBER
North Sea
Mediterranean
Aldebaran
Figure 20.17
Pressure
Hour circle
Proton
Lyman series
Balmer series
OCTANS
RETICULUM
AUGUST
August 1990

+ *Itinerary IV by Melody Bellefeuille-Frost, Papers, paint, thread, 2015–2016. See more of Melody Bellefeuille-Frost's art in the opening and closing covers, and on pp. 32–33, 54, 73, and 93.*

THE KEY IS PROXIMITY

As he works with and advocates for people experiencing homelessness, Kevin Nye calls the church into hopeful, mutually transformative community with unhoused people.

Written by **LIZ COOLEDGE JENKINS**
Photographed by **LINDSEY SHEETS**

Many Christians want to know what they can do to help unhoused people. We see that widespread homelessness is an ever-growing problem, and we want solutions. We want someone to tell us what we should do when we walk by an unhoused person on the street. But for nonprofit housing director, writer, and advocate Kevin Nye (MDiv '16), the answers to these questions do not transfer easily from one housed person to another. "I want to inspire people to action," Kevin tells me, "but I don't want to be prescriptive about what that action looks like."

Kevin wants Christians to become educated about the issues involved. He's a passionate advocate for policies that have been shown to best serve unhoused people: housing first, harm reduction, and trauma-informed care. "There's so much to know that gets confused—or intentionally discombobulated—to benefit some people over others," Kevin says. "There are a lot of myths out there that need direct confrontation." People may claim, for example, that poverty is caused by lack of effort or that addiction treatment should be required before housing assistance is offered. In his book, *Grace Can Lead Us Home: A Christian Call to End Homelessness*, Kevin dives deep into policy myths and best practices, based on both research and his own experience working in homeless ministry.

But the specifics of what to do? That depends on the person, on the communities we're a part of, and on the experiences of unhoused people in our cities. The key, according to Kevin, is proximity. If someone is asking how to get on the right path, the first thing to do, Kevin says, is to "get in relationship and

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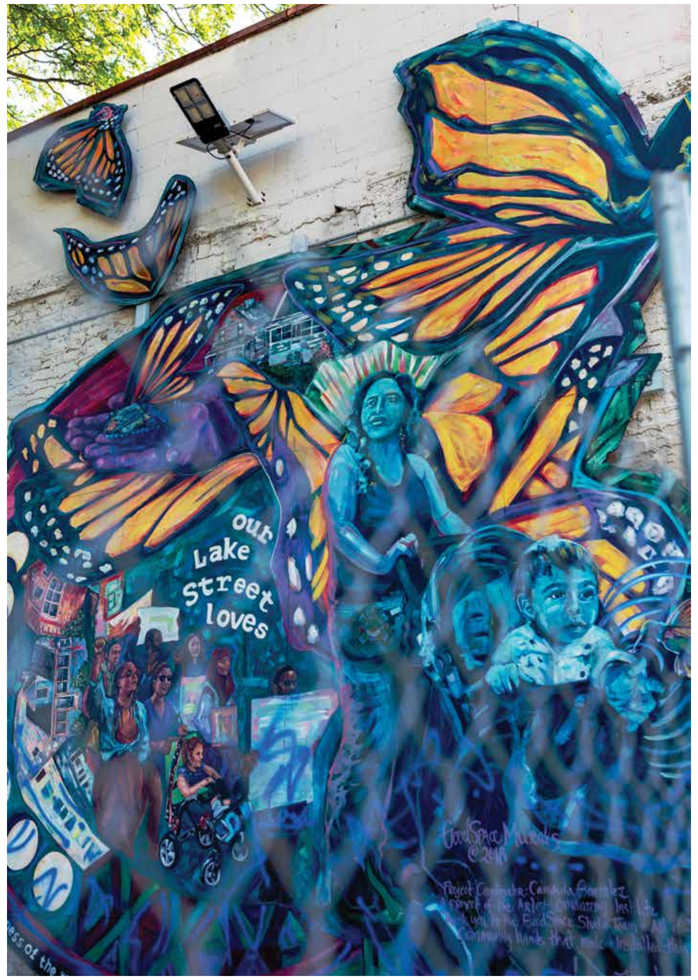


community" with people experiencing homelessness; then, "listen to what they're saying and do that."

Kevin aims to invite housed Christians into "solidarity and communion with people who are experiencing homelessness." Much of his work has involved creating spaces where people can do just that. For unhoused and housed people to meet and build authentic relationships, Kevin says, "you have to create spaces where everyone feels safe to be themselves." And he means truly everyone—both people experiencing homelessness and the staff and volunteers who show up with the intention of serving. Unhoused people are already in a vulnerable position, Kevin explains. After all, "asking for help is the most vulnerable thing you can do." People who show up to serve have to meet them there in that vulnerability—human to human, equal to equal. There's no "I'm of this type and you're of this type." We're all just human, together.

> "GET IN RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNITY [WITH PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS] . . . LISTEN TO WHAT THEY'RE SAYING AND DO THAT."

When Kevin served as a front-line worker at The Center in Hollywood, California, relationship-building often happened through a coffee hour where unhoused people could come, take a load off, grab a warm beverage, and spend time connecting with one another and with housed folks in an atmosphere of dignity. In *Grace Can Lead Us Home*, Kevin writes about an unhoused man named Mark who showed up regularly to coffee hour in total silence, only sharing his name with staff after several months. "Many programs," Kevin writes, "may not have allowed Mark to enter without giving his name." But at The Center, at coffee hour, Mark could be silent when he needed to be silent and speak when he was ready to speak. And, after a long time, he did begin to speak; sometimes "ask[ing] thoughtful questions" in group discussions, and other times "recount[ing] in near perfect detail the plots of movies he watched at the library." Mark eventually accepted healthcare services with great enthusiasm. But first, he needed time to just be.

In Hollywood, working directly with unhoused adults, Kevin spent his time offering people services while simultaneously building relationships of trust. He recalls building a friendship with one unhoused person there over a shared love of Marvel movies. This sort of real, mutual relationship is powerful. Through the friendships Kevin built, people sometimes eventually accepted some of the services offered, even if they refused at first. Other times, as people got to know Kevin and trust him, they started to tell him what they actually needed—even if that didn't line up with what The Center initially offered.

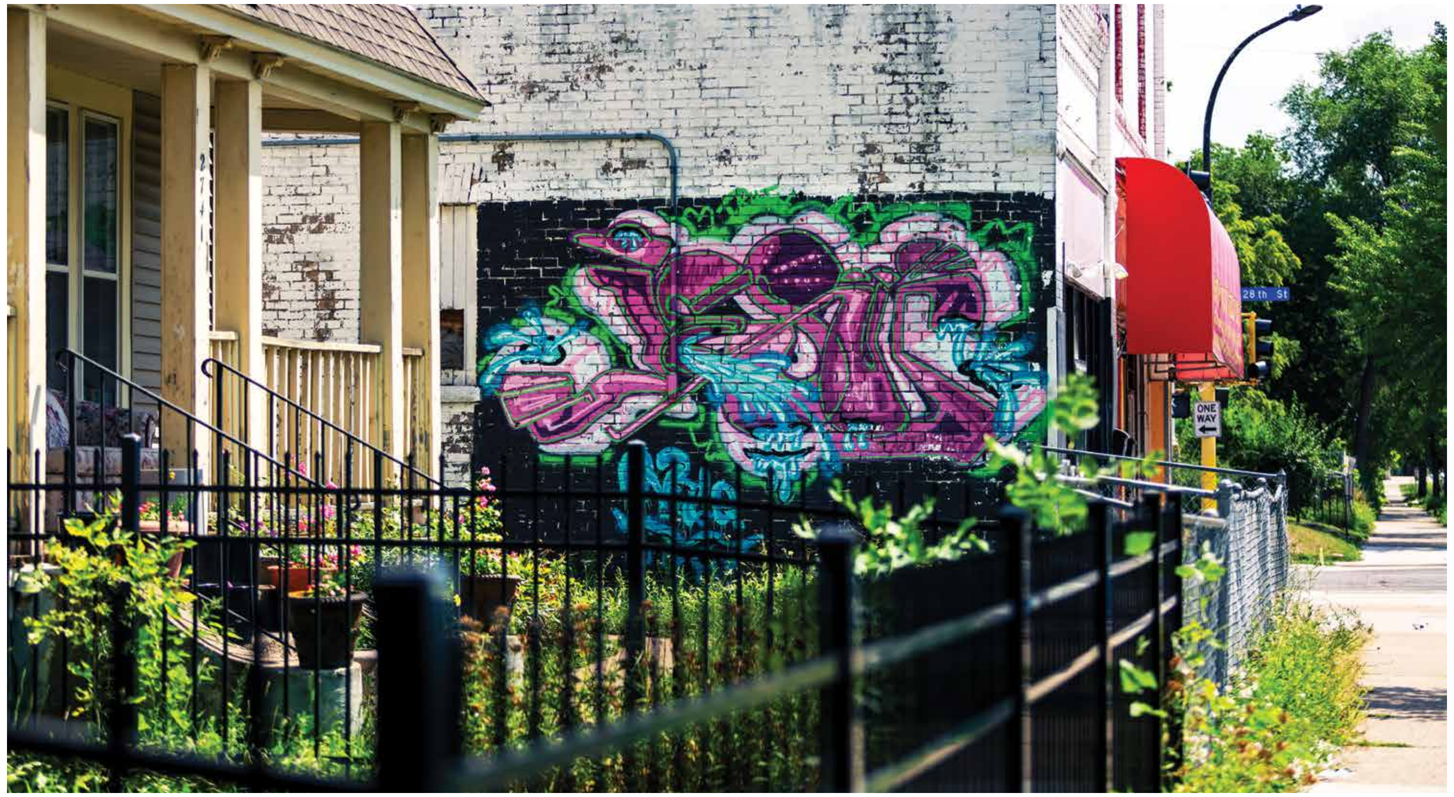
These days, Kevin's job—as the housing director of YouthLink, an organization addressing youth homelessness in Minneapolis—is less front-line, but the underlying principles haven't changed. He still spends time with the young people YouthLink serves whenever he can, building relationships marked by dignity and mutuality. Now that this is no longer his primary job description, it "requires an extra level of intentionality," but the effort is worth it. Kevin says, "I have to make sure for my own integrity and mental health that I'm still present and spending time with the people we're serving." Some days, Kevin finds himself duking it out at foosball with the youth—putting to work the skills he developed during his own youth group era. Other days, he makes time to play Yahtzee with a young person who enjoys the game as much as he does.

For Kevin, it's a matter of "finding shared joys." Whether Marvel movies or Yahtzee, these mutual interests humanize us; they bear witness to our shared humanity in a world where unhoused people and housed people rarely have positive interactions with one another and might seem to have nothing in common.

Ultimately, in both his nonprofit work with unhoused people and his advocacy work with churches, Kevin seeks to break down the barriers between "helper" and "helpee." If housed people want to build relationships with unhoused people, Kevin says, housed people have to "set aside their social position and the safety that gives them, and the barrier that creates." As an educated white man, Kevin wrestles with his own social position as he spends time speaking with church groups about homelessness. He recognizes the complexities of his chosen role as spokesperson. Actively inviting others to hold him accountable, he hopes to advocate in a way that is "validating and affirming of the experience of people who have experienced homelessness and the people who work with them." He is passionate about the issues involved but never wants to make himself the center of the story. People experiencing homelessness are "the experts of their own experience," he says. "They are the ones who know what they need on an individual level and a collective level."

For those of us who are not experiencing homelessness, then, it's a matter of learning to listen. "Transformation and progress," Kevin has learned, "have to be mutual."

MEXICANA
Taqueria



For unhoused young people, transformation might look especially dramatic. Kevin sees “the amount of life [these youth have] left ahead of them to bounce back and build a different trajectory.” He tells me his dream for the unhoused youth he works with: that one day they will be playing “two truths and a lie,” and they’ll say they were homeless for a while when they were 19, and “people will think that’s the lie.” People won’t believe that this was part of someone’s life story. The transformation was *that* monumental.

> “DOING THIS WORK CHANGED HOW I DO THEOLOGY, HOW I READ SCRIPTURE, AND HOW I UNDERSTAND GOD.”

It turns out that momentous transformation is not just for the young people Kevin works with; it’s for him, too. Over the years, as Kevin has built relationships with unhoused people, his theology has expanded dramatically. Kevin reflects, “When I first came into this work, I thought all of my theological and biblical education—and all that—was going to shape the way I do this work.” And in a sense, this has been true: Kevin’s coursework at Fuller certainly broadened his sense of God’s work in the world—such that he came to understand his work in homelessness as part of his call to ministry, not separate from it. His studies shaped his sense of vocation. But at the same time, Kevin found something else to be “even more true.” He says, “Doing this work changed how I do theology, how I read Scripture, and how I understand God.”

Working with unhoused people has changed Kevin. It has made him less interested in theologies centered in an academic world that doesn’t have much to say to people on the streets. The theologies he’s interested in now are ones that speak to unhoused people’s experiences in a tangible way. Because of the relationships he has built, Kevin finds himself “drawn to liberation theologies, because they offer a hope that’s based in community and based in the hearts and experiences of the marginalized.”

Kevin calls Christians toward this community-based hope. He invites us to expand our ideas of who our neighbor is, of whom we belong to, of what fellowship can look like. There are many things we can’t change, but we can—and must—live in ways that honor the dignity of every human being, especially those whose dignity so often goes unrecognized. Kevin doesn’t pretend this work is easy. But he keeps pursuing his calling to help unhoused youth see a good and healing path forward in their lives, and to help housed churchgoers see a good and healing path toward a different kind of relationship with unhoused folks.

Kevin won’t tell Christians exactly what to do. But he invites us to break down the helper/helpee divide. He encourages us to find shared joys, embracing our common humanity. And he lives his life as a model of mutual transformation. ■

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SHARING OUR SONGS

Guided by her passion for God and her love for music, Sunita Puleo builds bridges among people of different cultures with the power of story and song.

Written by **YOLANDA MILLER**
Photographed by **KARLEY CARRILLO**

Sunita Puleo remembers the first time she experienced the mystifying power of music to break down linguistic and cultural barriers. She was 15 years old, singing a jazz solo while visiting a coal town in the Czech Republic. “The local audience, accustomed to stoicism, sat straight and stone-faced through my jazz choir’s songs as we tried to woo them with our sounds,” she writes on her website for Fuse Integrative Arts. “During my short solo . . . I determined to make this older man in the eighth row smile. I sang my heart out in French, which I’m sure he didn’t understand. I emoted, I moved, and I willed my sounds to break through this cultural barrier that I barely understood. In the middle of the last line, a small smile spread across his face.”

Born to an Indian father and an Irish-English-American mother, Sunita grew up in Jackson Heights, one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in New York’s borough of Queens, the world’s capital of linguistic diversity. “My dad owned a sari shop in Little India, and the sounds of my early childhood are this mix of Ravi Shankar and Joni Mitchell,” she reminisces fondly. The din of a multitude of tongues and the variety of music on the street defined her experience of home. And these earlier years—marked by special memories like that moment in a Czech town—shaped her heart for connecting people across cultures.

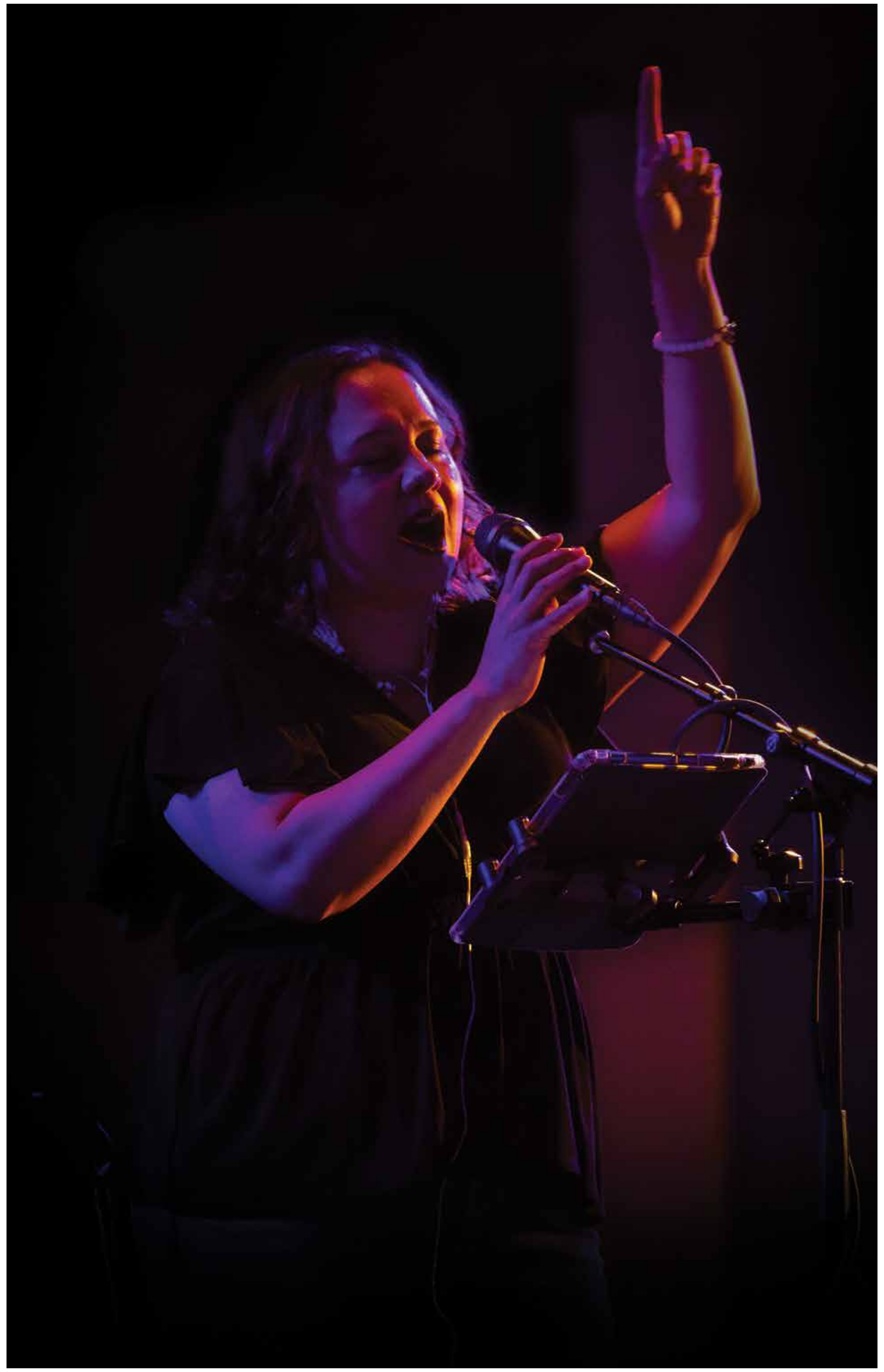
As a girl, Sunita had dreams of helping set the world right by becoming a Supreme Court justice. But in college, a seemingly trivial decision to add a voice major to her government and politics degree ended up radically shifting her trajectory. Her voice teacher, Joan Jurenas, was a Christian and eventually became a beloved mentor, nurturing the gifts God had planted in the young Sunita. “She had me sing with a pencil in my mouth, between my teeth, for about a year,” recalls Sunita. “It was because I had a really tight jaw, and I was really controlling of myself and my voice.”

Joan told Sunita, “Your job as a singer is to learn how to open yourself up and posture yourself so that the voice God gave you can come out.”

As Sunita learned to approach singing in a new way, she found that God was guiding her to approach her life this way too. She dropped her law major and pursued a career as a professional singer. She eventually fused her passion for singing and her heart for the world by joining the creative arm of The Navigators to develop a local community for musicians and creatives in New York City.

By 2014, she had married and had four children with her husband, James, who was pastoring in New York City when he decided to pursue an MDiv at Fuller. The family relocated to Pasadena, but when they arrived, Sunita found herself lonely and bored, and she applied to Fuller’s intercultural studies program—which she’d been quietly pining after for a few years. She says, “I ended up getting a scholarship and it was life-changing. For the first six months, I’d come home from class almost every day in tears of gratitude, so grateful that I finally had this chance to unite all the parts of me: to have a Christian education to integrate my faith with my singing.”

Roberta King, now senior professor of communication and ethnomusicology, became another treasured mentor for Sunita. “I took all of Roberta King’s classes and basically followed



her around," Sunita laughs. "She was singing with a Middle Eastern orchestra that met across the street from the Pasadena campus at the Masonic Temple and she said, 'Come with me!'"

This eventually led to Sunita initiating a project in Pasadena public schools with some of these Middle Eastern musicians, through which they built bridges among students of different cultures.

Sunita's years at Fuller, and her work with Dr. King, were formative in connecting her call to music with her passion for creating bridges between different peoples. Her time at Fuller culminated in her final project called the Fuse Music Project, which was a precursor of more that was yet to come.

The Fuse Music Project was not just another musical production, and it did not begin with vocal warmups and arduous rehearsals. Instead, the first rehearsals began with tea and the sharing of five women's stories. As they revealed their hearts and identities to one another, they began to share their songs. As they shared their songs, they worked together to build the harmonies and the movements that would weave their stories together into a single multilayered tapestry of sight and sound, even as it preserved each artist's distinct sound and stories.

On opening night, Sunita was unprepared for the audience's response. After one of the performances, people didn't only offer a standing ovation, but many were moved to tears. "They just wouldn't stop clapping and crying!" Sunita says. "I looked at another member of my cohort who was a pastor and said, 'What do we do?' She said, 'We're just going to hug them.' So we held people while they wept and told us their stories."

People shared story after story of how the experience had opened up memories of their own cultural background or stirred up questions about their past engagements with those of different cultures and how they could go deeper.

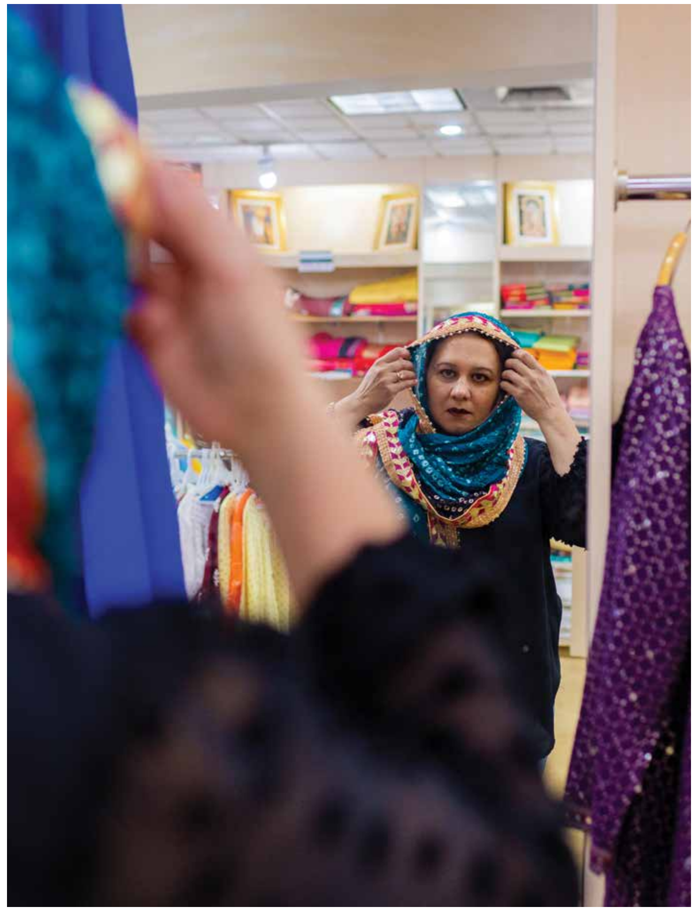
The experience was an epiphany for Sunita. "With the Fuse Music Project, I thought, 'Wow, my life has kind of come together.' I think it really solidified for me that this was something that was important, something that I really wanted to do." She began to imagine what it might look like to weave all her gifts together to extend the experience on a larger scale. A business coach helped her birth Fuse Integrative Arts, an experience-design consulting and team-building company that uses the performing arts to assist organizations seeking to develop unity among diverse members, as well as to forge connections among diverse creatives and artists.

Sunita's work is more elaborate than planning or leading music for worship services and conferences. She encourages bonding among diverse teams. Her philosophy is that the embodied arts work together with the rest of the content to bring a fuller experience and understanding to its participants. "When I'm helping to design a gathering, I help people grab onto the content with their five senses and not just with their minds," she says. This leads Sunita to invent a variety of creative embodied experiences in her different work contexts.

Sunita, who also serves as a co-city director of The Navigators in Chicago with her husband, is currently planning such an activity for an upcoming Navigators conference. She'll be hosting an international candy fest, where participants will bring candies that evoke childhood memories. They'll swap flavors as well as stories to help teammates develop, in an experiential way, a deeper understanding and appreciation of the people they're working with.

> "IF I BRING THE SPIRIT OF GOD WITH ME, AND I INTERACT IN WHOLENESS AND IN GENUINENESS WITH ANOTHER PERSON, WITH MY SONG, I BELIEVE THAT IS PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION."

Sunita's vision for Fuse stretches beyond Christian audiences, and an evangelist's heart beats at its core. She has a philosophy of mission that flows from a holistic and embodied approach to relationship. "What is the good news?" she says. "The good news is not just Jesus as the substitute for our sins. It's not just Jesus giving us honor or removing our shame. It's not just being folded back into the family of God. It's not just healing for the sick. It's not just healing for your soul. It's not just heaven. Jesus' good news is pervasive to every cell, every molecule, every relationship, every aspect of our being."



Communicating this good news, Sunita says, "happens at every level of interaction in our world. So, if I bring the Spirit of God with me, and I interact in wholeness and in genuineness with another person, with my song, I believe that is participating in God's mission." For Sunita, words may not always necessarily be the best point of connection. "People are really hungry for an experiential knowledge of God." Music can do this, she explains. "Sound is much more powerful than we give it credit for."

What Sunita has come to recognize is that she does not need to save the world; Jesus already has. But she has discovered that she is uniquely equipped and called to bring together diverse people in the world through the gift of music and the gift of being herself. She is taking her mentor's advice: "Open yourself up and posture yourself in such a way that the voice God gave you can come out."

Sunita says, "I posture myself as I walk in unity with the Spirit of God, as I allow Christ to fill my life, as I allow myself to align with God as expressed in God's Word. As I'm living my life in loving connection to God, I'll live my life in loving connection to others." For Sunita, the voice that comes out isn't just words, or even just music, but love in action. ■

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HOLY IMAGINATION

With a hopeful heart for the church's youngest generations, Meredith Miller invites the church into new ways of ministering to our children—helping them to encounter, to know, and to trust God.

Written by **JEROME BLANCO**
Photographed by **KARLEY CARRILLO**

"The goal of Christian parenting is to give our kids space, time, and experiences that will help them get to know God. It is not to train children to obey." An image bearing these words, styled in a sans serif font against a deep blue background, is pinned to the top of Meredith Miller's (MDiv '08) Instagram page. In the caption, Meredith expands on the idea: "Only if they know God can they decide God can be trusted. And only if they trust God can they respond to God in their choices and actions."

Meredith's Instagram page (@meredithannemiller) is a grid of resources on the topic of kids and faith. Scroll down, and you'll find posts on "how to correct what your kid heard about God" or the ways "faith formation is not like eating broccoli." Meredith's posts are witty, concise, well-researched, and theologically rich. Her short bio reads, "You don't need a seminary degree to talk with your kids about Jesus, but it's nice to have a friend with one!"

A key thrust of Meredith's work is to push against dominant old models of how we teach kids about faith—models that have proved ineffective and, at times, harmful. Instead, her focus is on helping kids know God. She's the author of *Woven: Nurturing a Faith Your Kid Doesn't Have to Heal From*, and she also produces a podcast called *Ask Away*, in which she and her sons talk through Bible stories together. Meredith laughs when she describes how these resources came about, because it all started when she wrote a few Instagram posts to offer her friends advice during the pandemic.

In March 2020, when lockdown began, many churches distributed Sunday school materials to families' homes. Meredith says, "Kids' curriculum was coming into my friends' houses for the first time. They've always taken their kids to church, where something happens in the room, and you pick up your kid and ask, 'What did you learn today?' All of a sudden, the curriculum came home, and some of these resources felt jarring to my friends."

She says, "They became aware that they needed to take a different role in their kids' faith. The resources weren't resonating. If anything, the materials made them a little concerned, and for good reason. A lot of the stuff that is available tends to be more moralistic than faith formational, and they hadn't seen that before."

But Meredith had. And this got her writing.

While she and her husband, Curtis (MDiv '08), are lead pastors of a church plant, Meredith's journey as a pastor has included decades in children's ministry. (She taught her first Sunday school lesson to fourth and fifth graders when she was 16.) Over the years, Meredith came to learn that most children's ministry resources are, problematically, steeped in moralistic therapeutic deism. In *Woven*, she explains that this framework teaches "religion is about being a good person . . . religion is meant to make me feel better . . . God is basically far away but might make an appearance now and then when I need help."

Moralistic therapeutic deism focuses on instilling morality in kids—teaching them to be good, to be obedient, and the like. Bible stories become vessels to carry that message. Often, Meredith says, this involves looking at people in the Bible as good (or bad) examples of particular virtues. David was courageous; Eve was disobedient; Abraham was faithful; Thomas was filled with doubt. But reading the Bible this way, Meredith points out, introduces a few problems—like focusing on people instead of God.

> "THE IDEA IS TO INVITE CHILDREN TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN ENGAGING WITH THE BIBLE AND IN FORMING THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD."

She tells a story from her early years in children's ministry: "A new curriculum company launched, and their framework was that every story exemplifies a virtue. But to read the Bible that way, you have to talk about the humans and whether they were or were not honest, or patient, or whatever. We started to realize we were sometimes shoehorning a virtue into a Bible story." She said to herself then, "I care about what this story is actually trying to say. And this is not it." Meredith says such a model misses the point: the Scriptures are meant to help us know God.

Meredith has worked as a children's pastor in different churches, assisted with research at the Fuller Youth Institute, and helped design children's curriculum at Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois. In all this, she's worked with others to develop a better approach: reading age-appropriate Bible stories with kids and discovering alongside them what the Scriptures say about who God is. The idea is to invite children to play an active role in engaging with the Bible and in forming their relationships with God. Meredith says it's easier than we might think. "Once you say 'God is this way, what do you think of that?' Every kid has an answer."

When Meredith and her colleagues made this shift at Willow Creek, they discovered a dramatic change. Sometimes, when Meredith described God a certain way, kids wholeheartedly agreed: "Yes, one time God did this amazing wonderful thing!"

"But," Meredith says, "It was also the first time a kid could say, 'That doesn't feel true, because . . .' And then they shared more of their own story." Kids began to offer Meredith glimpses into what they were going through at school or at home. "When they began to talk about whether God's character was showing up in their own life," she says, "they would share a lot more about what was uniquely happening in their own life."

The new approach also made more room for the wide range of children's particular experiences, cultures, and perspectives. Because older models teach moral formation in a singular way, they assume a single experience or context for every child in the room. Meredith says having kids more personally interact with the Scripture "helped us reach a much more diverse group of kids, in all sorts of ways. It felt more respectful of each of their unique contexts. They could show up as themselves. And it also felt like we were teaching the Bible better!"

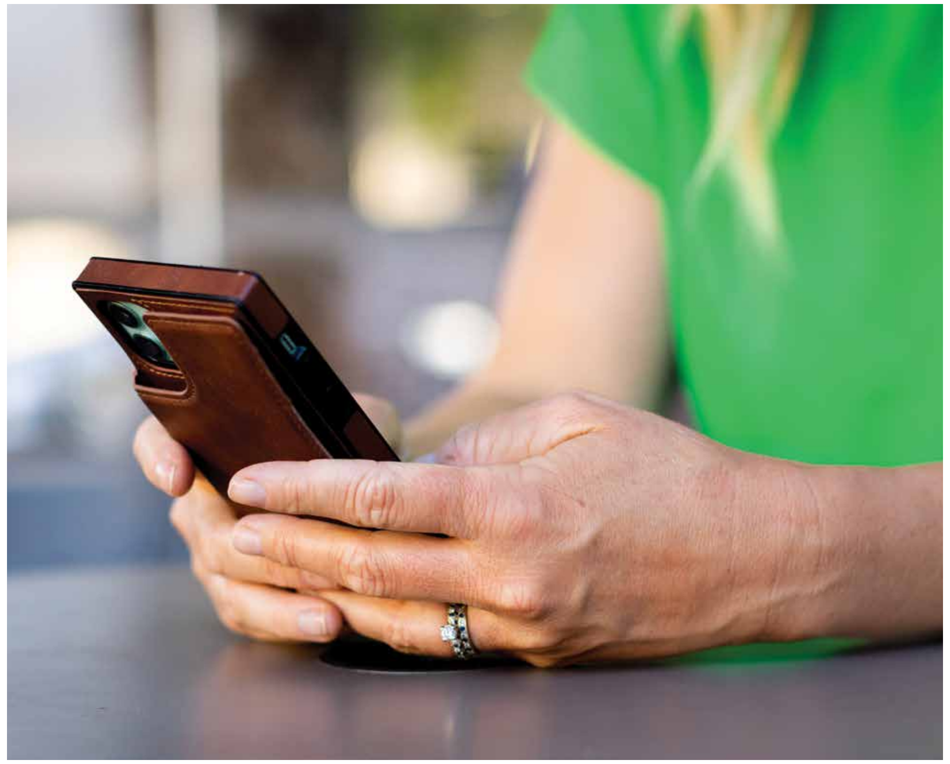
For Meredith, learning this new model of ministry involved its share of both challenges and fun: "It meant kids started saying zany things, but we were trying to practice saying, 'Tell me more about it!'"

Once, she posed the question about what David might be feeling before his battle with Goliath. She anticipated that the kids would say that David must be afraid or that David must be trusting in God's faithfulness. Instead, the kids said, "I bet he's thinking Goliath's really ugly. I bet he's thinking Goliath has hairy kneecaps." Meredith laughs as she recalls this, and says even the silly responses are worth celebrating. "In the old model, that wouldn't be okay, because you were supposed to always make sure it was right and meaningful. But they were engaged! They were joining the conversation! That engagement is a very real part of how they're being spiritually formed. It made the kids participants in the story. It brought the story to life. It made it memorable. It gave them space to explore. It felt like we were doing it together."

> "THAT ENGAGEMENT IS A VERY REAL PART OF HOW THEY'RE BEING SPIRITUALLY FORMED. IT MADE THE KIDS PARTICIPANTS IN THE STORY."

When the pandemic hit, Meredith's sons were five and seven, and she and Curtis had to figure out what their kids' spiritual formation might look like with churches shut down. So, she and her boys developed a practice. They'd go to a local church's outdoor prayer labyrinth, where they'd run and play for a while. Then, they'd sit down and read a Bible story. Sometimes her sons discussed it, sometimes they'd ask questions, and sometimes they just listened. After, they would prayerfully walk the labyrinth, before crossing the street for a treat at Starbucks. Meredith says, "They started to enjoy being told Bible stories again."

"We had to figure out what would work for them," Meredith explains. "For my kids, that isn't sitting around and contemplating God's love. They like stories, and they like to talk. But they don't like curriculum or devotional resources or faith picture books." She says she could've taken on the uphill task of molding them into "good" Christian kids. Instead, she says, "we figured out what mattered most, where they would think about their faith, what they would find fun, what they would be curious about. We made it up."



Moving away from old models, and prioritizing new ways that help kids know and trust God, requires what Meredith calls "holy imagination." She says no formula will ensure a child grows up to have a thriving and devout Christian life, but giving children the space to engage with the Bible for themselves gives them a chance to encounter God in meaningful ways.

Meredith laments how the church's slowness to move beyond an old way of doing things has impacted the faith—or lack of faith—of many young people. "We have a lot of love for kids that we have not yet channeled into creating something new for their sake. We care about them so deeply but haven't made the changes they need that would let them have time and space and experiences to get to know God in the real world they live in."

She recognizes that change can be challenging and requires intentionality and effort, especially because parents themselves have been raised by old models. But for the sake of young generations, it's worthwhile and necessary work.

"None of us knows what it's like to be young in today's world because we were young in a different world," Meredith says, "If we do not take all of our love and care and listen well to what young people are actually saying, when they leave the faith, we'll deserve that."

"But," she continues, "there is so much love and care from adults for our kids. That love can drive us forward toward something new. And even if there is a loud voice in your head from a model of the past telling you something new is not the right way, there is probably a quiet voice of the Spirit, right now, saying you should try it. Because the real kid in your life whom you love so much, might just come to life in a whole new way because of it." ■

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FAITHFUL CURIOSITY

Through an innovative church model centered on Bible reading, Mike and Viola Wu pastor a welcoming community that explores the Scriptures together—no matter where anyone is on their journey of faith.

Written by **JEROME BLANCO**
Photographed by **ANNA LEONG**

“People jokingly call us the ‘No Sunday, No Sermon Church.’” There’s a smile on the faces of Mike (MAT ’19) and Viola Wu (MAT ’19), church planters and pastors of The Journey in Kuala Lumpur, as they open up about their innovative ministry model. Formally launched in 2022, The Journey is a community with curiosity at its heart—where wrestling with Scripture with a genuine openness to the tough questions is a cornerstone value. And no, the Wus have no plans to start a Sunday service.

“You’re not really a church, right?” It’s a question they’re often asked, and Mike and Viola relish the conversations about faith, church, and God that come with their answer. “Isn’t that interesting?” Mike often says in response. “If our church was nothing but an express one-hour service on a Sunday morning, with worship songs, a sermon for 20 minutes, communion, and a closing worship song—if our church did nothing else but one hour on Sunday—you would think that was a church.” The Journey, however, meets throughout the week, in groups over home-cooked meals or online, where they dive into the Scriptures with one another. The church also hosts regular worship nights and organizes opportunities to serve the local community, particularly with Kuala Lumpur’s refugees. “We have all that,” Mike says, “but you think *that* is a church and *this* is not. I usually pause and say, ‘Isn’t that interesting?’ And that’s usually when people go, ‘Ah . . .’”

Planting a church in Kuala Lumpur took the Wus by surprise. Both from Australia, Mike and Viola had hopes of pastoring somewhere on the US West Coast after they graduated from Fuller. But as they discerned their next steps, they found God had other plans. “We both felt the Lord impress Asia on our hearts, somewhat to our dismay,” Mike laughs.

When God seemed to be leading them to Kuala Lumpur in particular, Mike and Viola visited Malaysia for the first time. Mike says, “I’d never been to another city, where the first time I stepped on the soil, I felt in my spirit, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.’ I know this is true of most cities in the world, but I’d never felt it in my spirit that way.”

Upon moving to Malaysia, the couple served at a large church for a few years, while they set about their plans to church plant. Throughout the process, Viola says they were intentional about remembering that “churches shouldn’t be competitors but rather colaborers with each other.” They understood that no single church can be “everything to everyone,” so their guiding question was, “What could we be doing that complements what the body of Christ is already doing?” They came to a realization that their role was to form a church specifically welcoming to the unchurched and the dechurched.

“Greater Kuala Lumpur has eight and a half million people, and on the best of Sundays, half a million people are in church,” explains Mike. “So, on the best of Sundays, eight million people, for whatever reason, can’t even be bothered to poke their heads into a church. That bothered us. We felt the Spirit leading us to do something.”

Mike, who is the first Christian in his family in at least 200 years, felt it important to create a space that would be open to the unchurched—especially in a country where only nine percent of the population is Christian. Similarly, Viola’s experience

of working in ministry for over a decade gave her a particular heart for those who'd once attended church but later walked away.

After undergoing her own healing after years of ministry, Viola says, “I realized my experience of having some brokenness from being in the church is not uncommon, and a lot of unchurched or dechurched people are dechurched because of what they've experienced at church.” She thinks about how easy it would've been for her to have left the church entirely and how this must be the case for countless people who've endured church hurt. “I want to bring empathy into this space and to help people who want to be part of a Christian community again but are carrying baggage or trauma of some sort.”

“I WANT TO BRING EMPATHY INTO THIS SPACE AND TO HELP PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BE PART OF A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AGAIN BUT ARE CARRYING BAGGAGE OR TRAUMA OF SOME SORT.”

The Journey needed to be a church for those at any point on their walk of faith—just as its name suggests. It needed to become a community where people could safely and openly engage with their questions about faith and the Bible. Viola says, “We're all on a spiritual pilgrimage, whether we're Christian or not.”

Central to The Journey's model are its Bible reading groups. “For the longest time, Scripture was read aloud, in community, discussed, and wrestled through,” Mike says. He and Viola remind us that individual, personal readings of Scripture—while holding an important place—are a relatively new development that came about many years after the printing press was invented in the 1400s. For centuries before that, Scripture was read aloud, together, side by side in community. The Journey wants to return to this shared approach.

Mike and Viola make a key distinction between Bible reading and Bible study, since traditional “Bible study” often involves a specified leader asking leading questions, which are often meant to lead to predetermined theological conclusions. In an Asian context in particular, in which rote education and a posture of “doing as you're told” is the norm, such approaches to the Bible don't allow for many of the questions and explorations readers may bring to it. Viola says this “hinders the nurturing of genuine curiosity.” Such ways of reading the Bible can then focus too much on morality—on “what is right, what is wrong; what I should do, what I should not do.” Mike says, “That's not a bad start, but hopefully, over time, we shift from morality to maturity.” The Wus say we need to recognize that the Bible isn't often as clear-cut or black and white as we may want it to be. Instead, they say, a lot of it is grey, but “God delights in inviting us to wrestle through the greys of Scripture and of life.”

At The Journey's gatherings, they take turns reading Scripture out loud, and then have a 75-minute discussion around three simple questions: Was there anything you found interesting? Was there anything you want to clarify or ask questions about? Did something touch your heart? These questions have made all the difference for many.

At one meeting, they read Genesis 3, and Mike mused, “I've wondered, ‘Why does God ask Adam, “Where are you?”’ Isn't God supposed to know where everyone is at all times?” It came as a surprise to some to hear Mike ask a question, because wasn't he the pastor? In a cultural context where questions can often mean doubting one's faith, The Journey offers an open and safe space that lets people jump into the text—and their faith—in a refreshing new way.

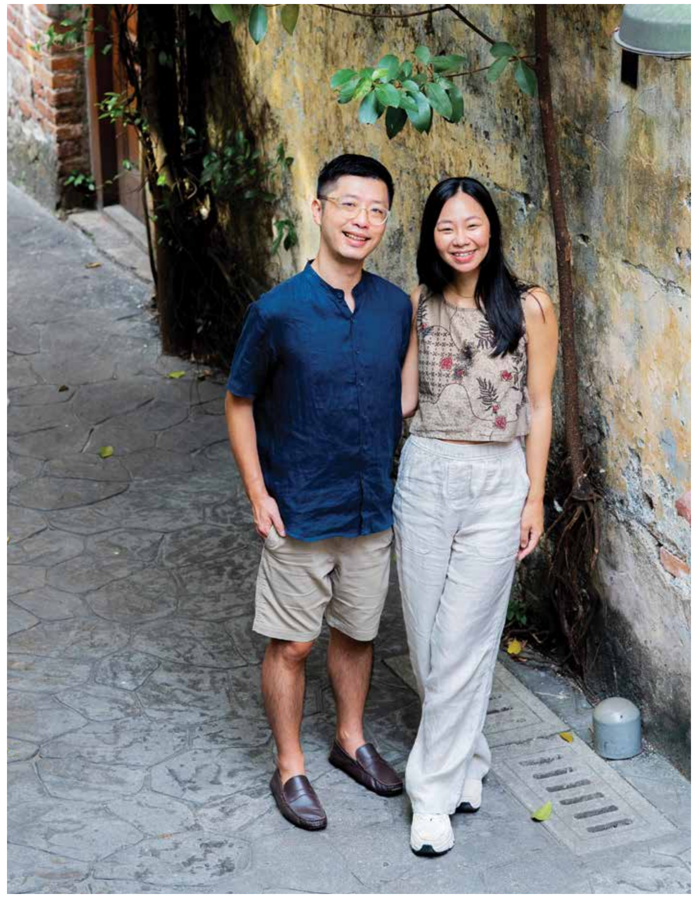
“IT REALLY MAKES OUR HEARTS SING TO KNOW WE'RE A SAFE ENOUGH SPACE FOR PEOPLE TO COME BACK.”

As Mike and Viola quickly discovered, it turns out that a simple missing ingredient in many churches is curiosity.

Viola tells a story of a woman who'd left church in her early 20s. She'd recently been growing curious about God again, and when The Journey appeared on her Instagram's suggested posts, she followed the account. She liked posts here and there for months until she finally mustered up the courage to visit. It'd been 12 years since she'd attended church. (Instagram, Viola shares, has been one of their largest sources of growth.) The woman's story isn't uncommon at The Journey. One of their regulars hadn't been to church in five years, another eight, and another nine. “It really makes our hearts sing,” Viola says, “to know we're a safe enough space for people to come back.”

With over 60 regulars a little over a year after their launch, Christian friends of Mike and Viola often ask, “How do you get non-Christians to read the Bible?” The answer has been surprisingly simple: “They're curious,” Mike says. “And we're a safe space where they won't be judged, and where there's no pressure to become a Christian.”

A pastor friend joked that the Wus have the fastest growing church in Malaysia. But they insist it isn't about numbers. If amassing a high number of attendees were the end goal, Mike says, a church can achieve that with the right strategies and marketing, “and, dare I say, it wouldn't even need God.”



But instead of numbers, Mike says, “The name of the game is faithfulness.”

He gives the example of the woman at the well: “If I were Jesus, about to start this global ministry movement, spending half a day with some random woman at a well would be such a waste of time. But Jesus reminds us of what meaningful ministry looks like.” The Wus have found that sometimes what is “highly inefficient” by the world's standards is what is most “effective in loving people in the kingdom of God.”

The Journey is committed to anyone who walks through the door, with curiosity and an open heart. Mike and Viola do their best to create a space of welcome and a place of healing. Whatever happens next, Viola says, “We hope it's not because of our wisdom but by the grace of God and the church's genuine love and curiosity to seek God on the journey.”

Mike says, in the end, it's ultimately out of their control who chooses to come to church and who chooses to follow Jesus. “What is in our control is how well we love the people who actually do show up—how we lean into those who walk through the door, becoming part of their journey, inviting their voices to the table, listening to their longings and losses, and discerning together what God is doing.” ■

JEROME BLANCO *is editor in chief of* FULLER *magazine and* FULLER *studio.*

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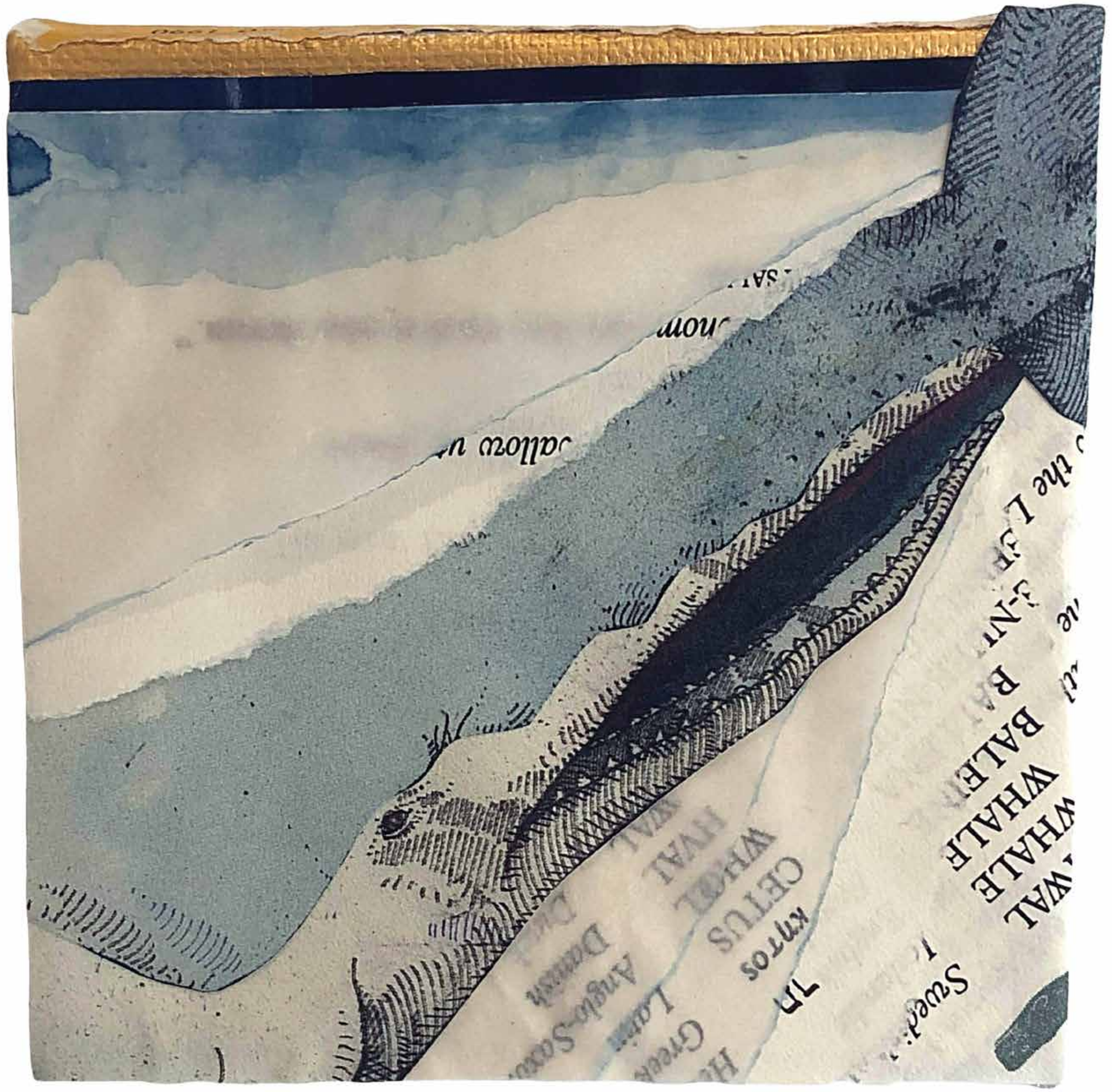
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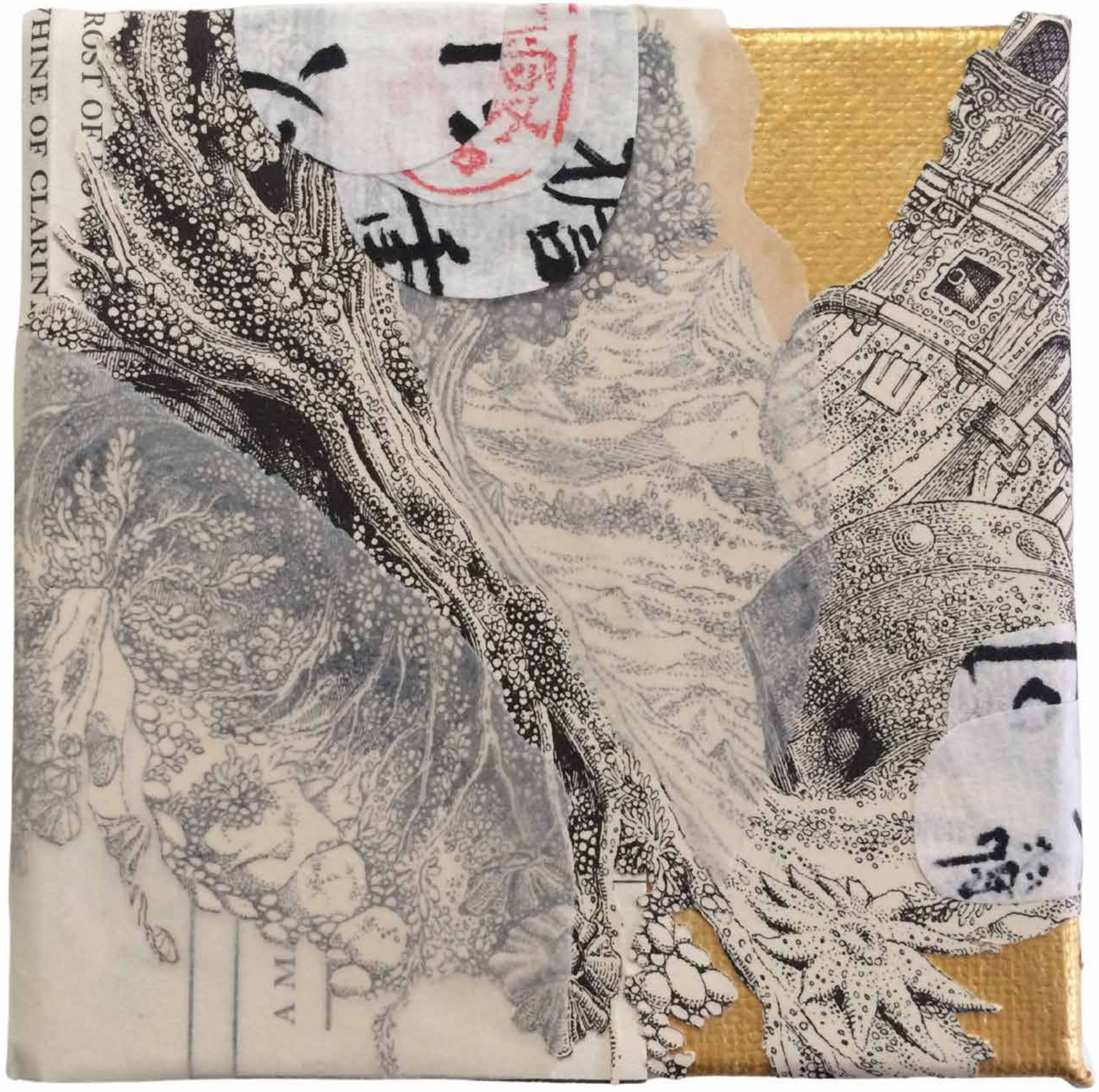
+ E by Melody Bellefeuille-Frost. Papers, paint, 2019. See more of Melody Bellefeuille-Frost's art in the opening and closing covers, and on pp. 10–11, 54, 73, and 93.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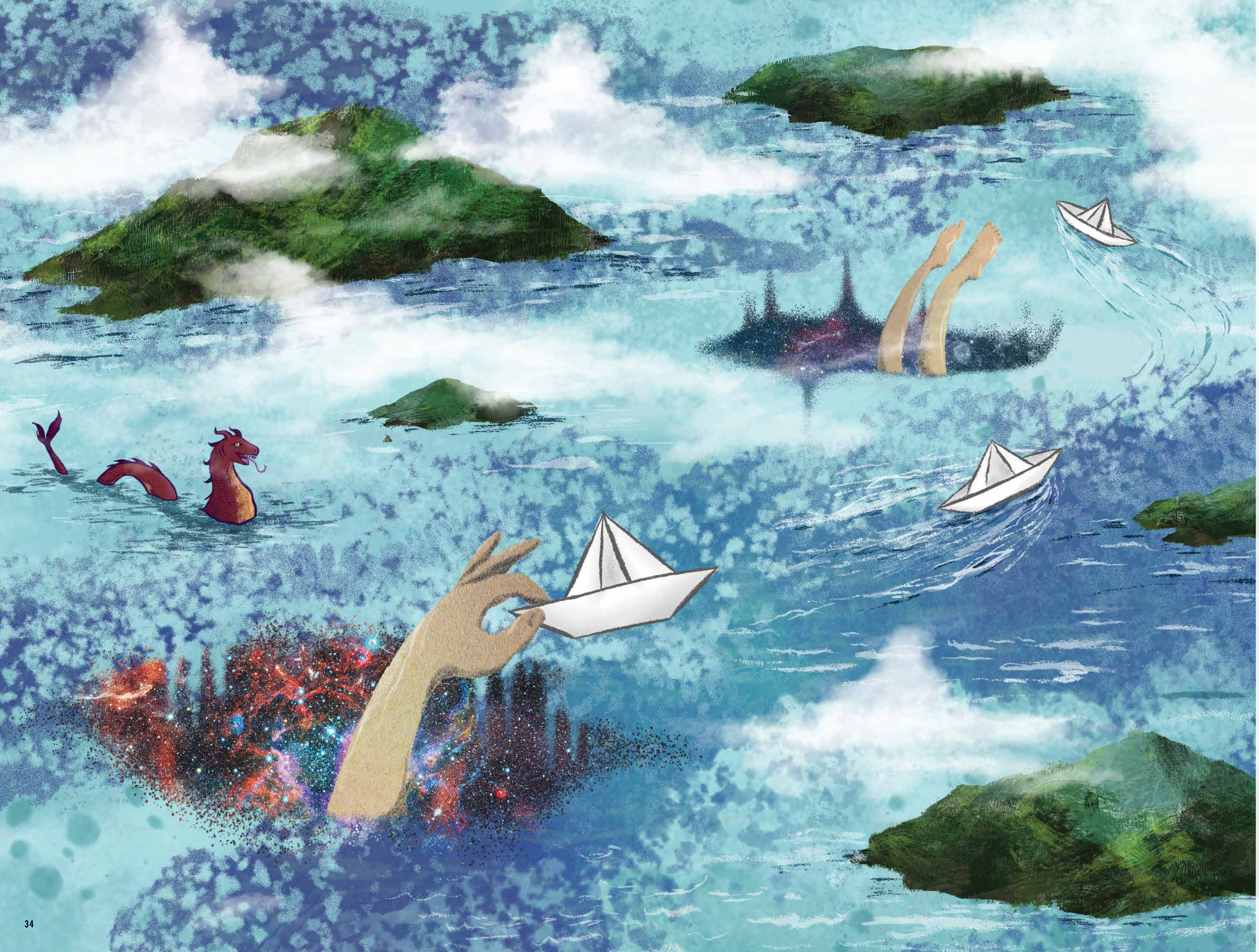
+ C by Melody Bellefeuille-Frost. Papers, paint, 2019. See more of Melody Bellefeuille-Frost's art in the opening and closing covers, and on pp. 10–11, 54, 73, and 93.



RE-FORMING EVANGELISM

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RE-FORMING EVANGELISM

Soong-Chan Rah

Soong-Chan Rah is Fuller's Robert Boyd Munger Professor of Evangelism. An ordained pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church, he has spoken widely on the topics of the witness of the church, cross-cultural ministry, and social justice at conferences, seminaries, Christian colleges, churches, and denominational gatherings on both the domestic and global level. He is the author or coauthor of over a half dozen—and many award-winning—books, including *The Next Evangelicalism*, *Many Colors*, *Prophetic Lament*, *Return to Justice*, *Unsettling Truths*, and *Forgive Us*.

In recent years, evangelism as a church practice has come under scrutiny. Certain Western-centric, patriarchal, racially and culturally insensitive expressions of evangelism have been mistaken as the norm in church life and are now being eschewed as no longer practical nor applicable in 21st-century US culture. While the practice of evangelism has been challenged, the need for communicating the evangel has increased. Many are leaving the church while still claiming faith in Jesus. Others are abandoning their faith altogether. Still others are questioning aspects of evangelism and Christian faith.

These expressions of disconnecting with Christian religion have been popularly labeled as "deconstruction." Often seen as hostile and potentially destructive to the church, the work of "deconstruction" may actually serve as a necessary expression of evangelism in a post-Christendom era. When "deconstruction" is more clearly identified and expressed as a theological and ecclesial process, it becomes a necessary prelude to move towards acts of "re-construction" or "re-formation" that could signal a more biblical, relevant, and applicable expression of evangelism in the contemporary context.

A question that drives our conversation: "Is evangelism passé—a remnant of a previous generation's efforts to spread its particular iteration and expression of Christianity?" The cultural and generational particularity of evangelism may result in the rejection of the basic idea of evangelism by the next generation of Christians. These challenges require the church to do the hard work of self-examination to discern what evangelism could look like. For some, addressing these issues has been defined as deconstructionism. But the challenge offered in this work is not simply to deconstruct but to reconstruct evangelism. In order to effectively address these challenges, we need to better understand these terms, which are often used haphazardly and require deeper academic reflection and insight.

Defining De-Construction

"Deconstruction" is the current in-vogue term used for any conversation critiquing the current state of Christianity. Applied to Gen Y and Gen Z, who are leaving the faith in large numbers and considered dechurched, the term has links to postmodern philosophy, which is often associated with an extreme anti-Christian, secular worldview. Deconstruction, therefore, has a strong negative connotation as a form of modern apostasy.

However, deconstruction as currently applied in the Christian context differs from deconstruction as it is technically defined in postmodern philosophy. The specific postmodern idea of deconstruction emerges from semiotics, the study of signs. Postmodern philosopher Jacques Derrida (whose academic discipline is semiotics and linguistics) offers seminal reflections on the postmodern project of deconstruction. Derrida captures the postmodern definition of deconstruction by stating, "The absence of a transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of significations infinitely."[1] Using technical language specific to the discipline of semiotics, Derrida explains how a sign (words and symbols) signifies a specific meaning based upon a system of language that assigns a signification (meaning) to the sign. Deconstruction removes or devalues the system of language, thereby, removing the limits to a definition of a specific word. In other words, words can mean whatever we determine them to be, not what an external language system determines them to be.

Derrida's academic definition reveals the specificity of the term "deconstruction" and its specific usage in semiotics and postmodern philosophy. Stanley Grenz summarizes deconstruction by asserting, "Derrida thus holds that meaning is never static, never given once-for-all. Instead, meaning changes over time and with changing contexts. . . . For Derrida, there is no 'outside the text.' All we have is the text itself, not some external meaning to which the text points. The 'book' is actually our 'reading' of the text. . . . But this means that the text is fluid. It has no fixed origin, identity, or end."[2] Deconstruction in its postmodern iteration, therefore, has a specific usage in a specific context. Postmodern philosophy removes authorial intent from the equation of meaning and interpretation and allows for the reassignment of meaning through removing specific signification of texts.

The specific and maybe extreme usage of the term "deconstruction" in postmodern philosophy is not what is happening with Gen Y and Gen Z. While there is great anxiety around the negative influence of postmodern philosophy on these generations, their acts of "deconstruction" do not emerge from an application of extreme postmodern principles. To associate the reflections and questions of younger generations (and others) with a catchphrase that has a specific meaning and usage is inaccurate and inappropriate.

Emerging and current generations are not deconstructing their faith, they are "de-constructing" their faith, which is more reminiscent of a "re-forming" of their faith. They may not simply be questioning the meaning of specific evangelical practices and ideas; they may be tearing down dysfunctional Western constructs that may be obstructing the work of evangelism. De-construction in its current expression among evangelicals, therefore, may be a necessary practice that opens the door for contextual applications of Christian faith that could positively re-form Christian faith in a relevant and applicable manner for the next generation of believers.

The Need for Re-Construction

The proper de-construction and subsequent re-construction and re-formation of evangelism is an appropriate response to our current social reality, both in the church and in the world. The subsequent generations' desire and need to de-construct the previous generations' expressions of evangelism (which may actually prove to be dysfunctional and irrelevant to the current iteration of Christianity) could be a positive step in the appropriate re-formation and reformation of our faith.

Evangelism as specifically expressed in US evangelicalism over the last 50 years has had a specific application because it spoke to a specific context: the modern, Western worldview. In a modern worldview that emphasized reason and rationality expressed in specific Western philosophical assumptions, such as Scottish Common Sense philosophy and linear and dialectical models of development, the modes and expressions of evangelism felt appropriate and relevant. The "Four Spiritual Laws" and "Evidence that Demands a Verdict" emerged from this linear and Western philosophical mindset. Such expressions of evangelism were contextual and had an underlying structure. While built on a foundation of Scripture and theological reflection, the contextual expression of reason and rationality as an open door to the gospel was specific to a cultural context. De-construction examines the false constructs here. In order to better understand these false constructs, context must be examined.

If the modern construct of reason and rationality drives our current evangelistic efforts, then the problematic elements of the modern construct can and should be called into question by subsequent iterations and expressions of Christianity. If the modern construct of rationality and reason resulted in the oppression of one race over the other because it seemed reasonable at the time, then the construct that led to these "rational" assumptions needs de-construction. If the modern construct makes certain patriarchal assumptions, then de-construction is necessary for the gospel message to be impactful for the next generation. The work of the church is not to reassign meaning without context (deconstruction) but to better understand context (de-construction) in order to better form relevant and applicable expressions of evangelism (re-construction).

De-construction of the dysfunctional expressions of evangelism and the re-construction of evangelism, therefore, is part of the necessary reformation of the church. As social contexts change, the church adapts to the changes. When Western society moved from the centrality of European empire to more democratic and republican forms of governance, the church adapted accordingly. As Christianity moves from a Western-centric demographic to a much larger global demographic, then the church adapts accordingly. It was an act of re-formation that renewed the church through the Protestant Reformation, de-constructing the dysfunctional expressions of the dominant religious powers and offering new paradigms for the spread of the gospel. It was an act of re-formation that renewed the church through the growth of global Christianity and the subsequent new paradigms that continue to emerge from this reality. The practice of de-construction is a necessary part of redefining and re-forming the church.

New models of evangelism are not necessarily a categorical rejection of the old models but rather an acceptance of the new realities in which evangelism now operates. New models of evangelism must move beyond cultural captivity and build on the historical and theological foundation of the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel message.

In a previous issue of *FULLER* magazine, I posited the challenge of a church that shares the gospel through a "truth possessed" versus "truth pursued" paradigm—where "truth possessed sets up boundaries that create a battle of ideas where the powerful prevail" while truth pursued "does not minimize the reality of truth . . . but calls for a humility that says that we don't own the truth but that God is the author of truth."[3] Old models of evangelism focused on a truth possessed approach: the church owns the truth and therefore the task of evangelism is simply downloading our version of truth upon the other. This approach, given the cultural context of modernity, resulted in severe dysfunction in the church. The truth pursued approach acknowledges the frailty of human existence. It acknowledges that the church's task is not to own the truth but to pursue the truth. And the pursuit of truth requires the humility of the church to de-construct, re-construct, and re-form. ■

ENDNOTES

1. J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 280.
2. S. J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), p144, 146.
3. S.-C. Rah, "The Evangelical Pursuit of Truth," *FULLER* 22 (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2022): 68–69.

RE-FORMANDO EL EVANGELISMO

Soong-Chan Rah es el profesor de evangelismo Robert Boyd Munger de Fuller. Pastor ordenado en la Evangelical Covenant Church (Iglesia del Pacto Evangélico), él ha hablado ampliamente sobre los temas del testimonio de la Iglesia, el ministerio intercultural y la justicia social en conferencias, seminarios, colegios cristianos, iglesias y reuniones denominacionales tanto a nivel nacional como global. Es autor o coautor de más de media docena de libros muchos de estos premiados, entre ellos *The Next Evangelicalism*, *Many Colors*, *Prophetic Lament*, *Return to Justice*, *Unsettling Truths* y *Forgive Us*.

En los últimos años, la evangelización como práctica de la Iglesia ha sido objeto de escrutinio. Ciertas expresiones de evangelismo centradas en Occidente, patriarcales, racial y culturalmente insensibles se han confundido con la norma en la vida de la Iglesia y ahora están siendo evitadas porque se considera que no son prácticas ni aplicables en la cultura estadounidense del siglo XXI. Aunque la práctica del evangelismo ha sido cuestionada, la necesidad de comunicar el evangelio ha aumentado. Muchos están abandonando la Iglesia mientras todavía afirman tener fe en Jesús. Otros están abandonando su fe por completo. Otros más cuestionan aspectos del evangelismo y la fe cristiana.

Estas expresiones de desconexión con la religión cristiana han sido etiquetadas popularmente como "deconstrucción". A menudo vistas como hostiles y potencialmente destructivas para la Iglesia, el trabajo de "deconstrucción" puede en realidad servir como una expresión necesaria de evangelismo en una era post-cristiana. Cuando la "deconstrucción" se identifica y expresa más claramente como un proceso teológico y eclesial, se convierte en un preludio necesario para avanzar hacia actos de "re-construcción" o "re-forma" que podrían señalar una expresión más bíblica, relevante y aplicable de la evangelización en el contexto contemporáneo.

Una pregunta que impulsa nuestra conversación: "¿La evangelización está pasada de moda—un remanente de los esfuerzos de una generación anterior por difundir su iteración y expresión particular del cristianismo?" La particularidad cultural y generacional del evangelismo puede resultar en el rechazo de la idea básica del evangelismo por parte de la siguiente generación de cristianos. Estos desafíos requieren que la Iglesia haga el arduo trabajo de auto-examinación para discernir cómo podría verse la evangelización. Para algunos, abordar estas cuestiones se ha definido como deconstruccionismo. Pero el desafío que se ofrece en este trabajo no es simplemente deconstruir sino reconstruir la evangelización. Para abordar estos desafíos de manera efectiva, necesitamos comprender mejor estos términos, que a menudo se usan al azar y requieren una reflexión y un conocimiento académico más profundo.

Definiendo la De-Construcción

"Deconstrucción" es el término de moda que se utiliza actualmente para cualquier conversación que critique el estado actual del cristianismo. Se ha aplicado para la Generación Y y la Generación Z que están abandonando la fe en gran multitud y son considerados fuera de la Iglesia, el término tiene vínculos con la filosofía posmoderna, que a menudo se asocia con una cosmovisión secular y anticristiana extrema. La deconstrucción, por tanto, tiene una fuerte connotación negativa como una forma de apostasía moderna.

Sin embargo, la deconstrucción tal como se aplica actualmente en el contexto cristiano difiere de la deconstrucción tal como se define técnicamente en la filosofía posmoderna. La idea posmoderna específica de deconstrucción surge de la semiótica, el estudio de los signos. El filósofo posmoderno Jacques Derrida (cuya disciplina académica es la semiótica y la lingüística) ofrece reflexiones fundamentales sobre el proyecto posmoderno de deconstrucción. Jacques Derrida captura la definición posmoderna de deconstrucción al afirmar: "La ausencia de un significado trascendental extiende infinitamente el dominio y el juego de las significaciones".[1] Utilizando un lenguaje técnico específico de la disciplina de la semiótica, Derrida explica cómo un signo (palabras y símbolos) tiene un significado específico basado en un sistema de lenguaje que asigna una significación (significado) al signo. La deconstrucción elimina o devalúa el sistema del lenguaje, eliminando así los límites a la definición de una palabra específica. En otras palabras, las palabras pueden significar lo que nosotros determinemos que son, no lo que un sistema lingüístico externo determine que son.

La definición académica de Derrida revela la conceptualización del término "deconstrucción" y su uso específico en la semiótica y la filosofía posmoderna. Stanley Grenz resume la deconstrucción afirmando: "Derrida sostiene que el significado nunca es estático, nunca se da de una vez por todas. Más bien, el significado cambia con el tiempo y con contextos cambiantes... Para Derrida, no hay un significado "fuera del texto". Todo lo que tenemos es el texto mismo, no algún significado externo al que apunte el texto. El 'libro' es en realidad nuestra 'lectura' del texto... Pero esto significa que el texto es fluido. No tiene un origen, identidad o fines fijos".[2] La deconstrucción en su versión posmoderna, por lo tanto, tiene un uso específico en un contexto específico. La filosofía posmoderna elimina la intención del autor de la ecuación de significado e interpretación y permite la reasignación de significado mediante la eliminación de la significación específica de los textos.

El uso específico y tal vez extremo del término "deconstrucción" en la filosofía posmoderna no es lo que está sucediendo con la Generación Y y la Generación Z. Si bien existe una gran ansiedad en torno a la influencia negativa de la filosofía posmoderna en estas generaciones, sus actos de "deconstrucción" no surgen de una aplicación de principios posmodernos extremos. Asociar las reflexiones y preguntas de las generaciones más jóvenes y otras) con un lema que tiene un significado y uso específico es inexacto e inapropiado.

Las generaciones emergentes y actuales no están deconstruyendo su fe, sino que están "de-construyendo" su fe, lo que se asemeja más a una "re-forma" de su fe. Puede que no estén simplemente cuestionando el significado de prácticas e ideas evangélicas específicas; pueden estar derribando construcciones occidentales disfuncionales que pueden estar obstruyendo la obra de evangelización. Por lo tanto, la de-construcción en su expresión actual entre los evangélicos puede ser una práctica necesaria que abra la puerta a aplicaciones contextuales de la fe cristiana que podrían re-formar positivamente la fe cristiana de una manera relevante y aplicable para la próxima generación de creyentes.

La Necesidad de Re-Construcción

La adecuada de-construcción y posterior re-construcción y re-forma del evangelismo es una respuesta apropiada a nuestra realidad social actual, tanto en la Iglesia como en el mundo. El deseo y la necesidad de las generaciones posteriores de de-construir las expresiones evangelísticas de las generaciones anteriores (que en realidad pueden resultar disfuncionales e irrelevantes para la versión actual del cristianismo) podría ser un paso positivo en la re-forma y reforma apropiadas de nuestra fe.

El evangelismo, tal como se ha expresado específicamente en el evangelicalismo estadounidense durante los últimos 50 años, ha tenido una aplicación específica porque se habló a un contexto específico: la cosmovisión occidental moderna. En una cosmovisión moderna que enfatizaba la razón y la racionalidad expresadas en suposiciones filosóficas occidentales específicas, como la Filosofía Escocesa del Sentido Común y los modelos lineales y dialécticos de desarrollo, los modos y expresiones de la evangelización se sentían apropiados y relevantes. Las "Cuatro Leyes Espirituales" y la "Evidencia que Exige un Veredicto" surgieron de esta mentalidad filosófica lineal y occidental. Tal expresión de evangelismo era contextual y tenía una estructura subyacente. Si bien se construyó sobre el fundamento de las Escrituras y la reflexión teológica, la expresión contextual de la razón y la racionalidad como una puerta abierta al evangelio era específica de un contexto cultural. La de-construcción examina aquí las construcciones falsas. Para comprender mejor estas falsas construcciones, se debe examinar el contexto.

Si la construcción moderna de la razón y la racionalidad impulsa nuestros esfuerzos evangelísticos actuales, entonces los elementos problemáticos de la construcción moderna pueden y deben ser cuestionados por iteraciones y expresiones posteriores del cristianismo. Si la construcción moderna de racionalidad y razón resultó en la opresión de una raza sobre otra porque parecía razonable en ese momento, entonces la construcción que condujo a estos supuestos "racionales" necesita una de-construcción. Si la construcción moderna parte de ciertas suposiciones patriarcales, entonces la de-construcción es necesaria para que el mensaje del evangelio tenga impacto para la próxima generación. El trabajo de la Iglesia no es reasignar significado sin contexto (deconstrucción), sino comprender mejor el contexto (de-construcción) para formar mejor expresiones relevantes y aplicables de evangelización (re-construcción).

Por lo tanto, la deconstrucción de las expresiones disfuncionales del evangelismo y la re-construcción del evangelismo es parte de la necesaria reforma de la Iglesia. A medida que el contexto social cambia, la Iglesia se adapta a los cambios. Cuando la sociedad occidental pasó de la centralidad del imperio europeo a formas de gobierno más democráticas y republicanas, la Iglesia se adaptó en consecuencia. A medida que el cristianismo pasa de una demográfica centrada en Occidente a una demográfica global mucho más grande, la Iglesia se debe adaptar de la misma manera. Fue un acto de re-forma que renovó la Iglesia a través de la Reforma Protestante, de-construyendo las expresiones disfuncionales de los poderes religiosos dominantes y ofreciendo nuevos paradigmas para la difusión del evangelio. Fue un acto de re-forma que renovó la Iglesia a través del crecimiento del cristianismo global y los nuevos paradigmas posteriores que continúan surgiendo de esta realidad. La práctica de la de-construcción es una parte necesaria para redefinir y re-formar la Iglesia.

Los nuevos modelos de evangelización no son necesariamente un rechazo categórico de los viejos modelos sino más bien una aceptación de las nuevas realidades en las que opera ahora la evangelización. Los nuevos modelos de evangelización deben ir más allá del cautiverio cultural y construir sobre el fundamento histórico y teológico de la proclamación y demostración del mensaje del evangelio.

En un número anterior de la revista *FULLER*, planteé el desafío de una Iglesia que comparte el evangelio a través de un paradigma de "posesión de la verdad" en vez de un paradigma de "búsqueda de la verdad"—donde "la verdad poseída establece límites que crean una batalla de ideas donde prevalecen los poderosos", mientras que la búsqueda de la verdad "no minimiza la realidad de la verdad... pero exige una humildad que diga que no somos dueños de la verdad sino que Dios es el autor de la verdad".[3] Los viejos modelos de evangelización se centraban en un enfoque poseedor de la verdad: la Iglesia es dueña de la verdad y, por lo tanto, la tarea de evangelizar es simplemente descargar nuestra versión de la verdad sobre el otro. Este enfoque, dado el contexto cultural de la modernidad, resultó en una grave disfunción en la Iglesia. El enfoque de búsqueda de la verdad reconoce la fragilidad de la existencia humana. Reconoce que la tarea de la Iglesia no es poseer la verdad sino buscarla. Y la búsqueda de la verdad requiere la humildad de la Iglesia para de-construir, re-construir y re-formar. ■

NOTAS

1. J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 280.
2. S. J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), p144, 146.
3. S.-C. Rah, "The Evangelical Pursuit of Truth," *FULLER* 22 (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2022): 68–69.

전도의 재형성

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최근 몇 년 동안 교회 관행으로서의 전도가 면밀한 조사 대상이 되었습니다. 서구 중심적이고, 가부장적이며, 인종적, 문화적으로 무감각한 전도 표현들은 교회 생활의 표준으로 오해되어 왔고 이제는 21세기 미국 문화에서 더 이상 실용적이지 않거나 적용할 수 없는 것으로 회피되고 있습니다. 전도의 실천이 도전받는 가운데, 복음을 전해야 할 필요성은 더욱 커졌습니다. 많은 사람들이 여전히 예수를 믿는다고 주장하면서도 교회를 떠나고 있습니다. 어떤 사람들은 자신들의 믿음을 완전히 포기하고 있습니다. 또 다른 사람들은 전도와 기독교 신앙의 양상들에 대해 의문을 제기하고 있습니다.

기독교 종교와의 단절을 나타내는 이러한 표현들은 일반적으로 “해체”로 지칭됩니다. 종종 교회에 대해 적대적이고 잠재적으로 파괴적으로 보여지는 “해체” 작업은 실제로는 포스트 기독교 시대의 전도의 필수 표현으로 작용할 수 있습니다. “해체”가 신학적, 교회적 과정으로서 더욱 명확하게 식별되고 표현될 때, 이는 현대적 맥락에서 보다 성경적이고 적절하며, 적용 가능한 전도의 표현을 나타낼 수 있는 “재구성” 또는 “재형성” 행위를 향해 나아가는 데 필요한 서곡이 됩니다.

우리의 대화를 끌어가는 질문: “전도는 이제 지나간 것입니까? 전도는 기독교의 특정한 반복과 표현을 전파하려는 이전 세대의 노력의 잔재입니까?” 전도의 문화적, 세대적 특수성은 다음 세대의 기독교인들이 전도의 기본 아이디어를 거부하는 결과를 가져올 수 있습니다. 이러한 도전은 교회가 전도가 어떤 모습일 수 있는지 분별하기 위해 자기 성찰의 치밀한 노력을 기울일 것을 요구합니다. 어떤 사람들에게는 이러한 문제를 해결하는 것이 해체주의로 정의되었습니다. 그러나 이 논문에서 제시하는 도전은 단순히 전도를 해체하는 것이 아니라 재구성하는 것입니다. 이러한 도전을 효과적으로 해결하기 위해서 우리는 종종 무분별하게 사용되며 더 깊은 학문적 성찰과 통찰력이 필요한 이러한 용어들을 더 잘 이해할 필요가 있습니다.

해체의 정의

“해체”는 기독교의 현 상태를 비판하는 모든 대화에 사용되는 현재 유행하는 용어입니다. 다수가 신앙을 떠나고 교회에서 이탈한 것으로 간주되는 Y세대와 Z세대에게 적용되는 이 용어는 종종 극단적인 반기독교적, 세속적 세계관과 관련된 포스트모던 철학과의 연결 고리를 가지고 있습니다. 그러므로 해체는 현대적 배교의 한 형태로서 강한 부정적인 의미를 갖습니다.

그러나 현재 기독교적 맥락에서 적용되는 해체는 포스트모던 철학에서 기술적으로 정의되는 해체와는 다릅니다. 해체에 대한 구체적인 포스트모던적 개념은 기호를 연구하는 기호학에서 유래합니다. 포스트모던 철학자 자크 데리다(학문 분야는 기호학과 언어학)는 포스트모던 해체 프로젝트에 대한 중요한 성찰을 제공합니다. 자크 데리다는 “초월적 기의의 부재는 의미의 영역과 유희를 무한히 확장한다”고 말함으로써 해체에 대한 포스트모던적 정의를 포착해 냅니다.[1] 기호학 원리에 특정하게 사용되는 기술적 언어를 사용하여 데리다는 어떻게 기호(단어와 상징)가 기호에 의미를 할당하는 언어 체계를 기반으로 특정 의미를 나타내는지 설명합니다. 해체는 언어 체계를 제거하거나 평가절하하여 특정 단어 정의의 한계를 제거합니다. 바꾸어 말하면, 단어는 외부 언어 시스템이 결정하는 것이 아니라 우리가 결정하는 모든 것을 의미할 수 있습니다.

데리다의 학문적 정의는 “해체”라는 용어의 특수성과 기호학과 포스트모던 철학에서의 구체적인 사용법을 드러냅니다. 스탠리 그렌츠(Stanley Grenz)는 다음과 같이 주장함으로써 해체를 요약합니다. “데리다는 의미가 결코 정적이지 않고, 결코 단번에 부여되지 않는다고 주장합니다. 대신, 의미는 시간이 지남에 따라 변화하고 변화하는 상황에 따라 변화합니다. . . . 데리다에게 ‘텍스트 외부’는 없습니다. 우리가 가진 것은 텍스트 자체뿐이지 텍스트가 가리키는 외부 의미가 없습니다. ‘책’은 실제로 텍스트를 '읽는 것'입니다. . . . 그러나 이는 텍스트가 유동적이라는 것을 의미합니다. 고정된 기원, 정체성, 목적은 없습니다.”[2] 따라서 포스트모던적 반복 내에서 해체는 특정 맥락에서 특정 용도를 갖습니다. 포스트모던 철학은 의미와 해석의 방정식에서 저자의 의도를 제거하고 텍스트의 특정 의미를 제거함으로써 의미의 재할당을 허용합니다.

신흥 세대와 현 세대는 자신의 신앙을 해체하는 포스트모던 철학에서 “해체”라는 용어의 구체적이고 아마도 극단적인 사용은 Y 세대와 Z 세대에게 일어나는 일이 아닙니다. 포스트모던 철학이 이 세대들에게 끼치는 부정적인 영향에 대해 큰 우려가 있지만, 그들의 "해체" 행위는 극단적인 포스트모던 원칙의 적용에서 나오는 것이 아닙니다. 젊은 세대(그리고 다른 사람들)의 성찰과 질문을 특정한 의미와 사용법을 가진 캐치프레이즈와 연관시키는 것은 부정확하고 부적절합니다.

신흥 세대와 현 세대는 자신의 신앙을 해체하는 것이 아니라 신앙을 “해체”하고 있는데, 이는 신앙의 “재형성”을 더욱 연상시킵니다. 그들은 단지 특정한 전도의 관행과 사상의 의미에 대해 의문을 제기하는 것이 아닐 수도 있습니다. 그들은 전도의 과업을 방해할 수 있는 기능 장애가 있는 서구적 구조를 무너뜨리고 있을 수도 있습니다. 그러므로 복음주의자들 사이에서 현재 표현되고 있는 해체는 다음 세대의 신자들을 위해 적절하고 적용 가능한 방식으로 기독교 신앙을 적극적으로 재형성할 수 있도록 기독교 신앙을 상황적으로 적용할 수 있게 하는 문을 여는 필수적인 실천일 수 있습니다.

재구성의 필요성

전도의 적절한 해체와 그에 따른 재구성 및 재형성은 교회와 세상 양쪽에서 현재의 사회 현실에 대한 적절한 대응입니다. 이전 세대의 전도 표현을 해체하려는 다음 세대의 욕구와 필요성(실제로는 역기능적이며 기독교의 현재 반복성과 무관한 것으로 판명될 수 있음)은 우리 신앙의 적절한 재형성과 개혁에 있어서 긍정적인 단계가 될 수 있습니다.

지난 50여년 동안 미국 복음주의에서 구체적으로 표현된 전도는 특정한 맥락, 즉 현대 서구 세계관에 호소했기 때문에 특별한 적용을 가져왔습니다. 스코틀랜드 상식 철학, 선형적, 변증법적 발전 모델과 같은 특정한 서양의 철학적 가정에서 표현되는 이성과 합리성을 강조하는 현대적 세계관에서 전도의 방식과 표현은 적절하고 적합하게 느껴졌습니다. 이러한 선형적이고 서구적인 철학적 사고방식에서 ‘사영법’과 ‘판결을 요구하는 증거’가 탄생했습니다. 그러한 전도의 표현은 상황에 맞는 것이었고 근원적인 구조를 가지고 있었습니다. 성경과 신학적 성찰의 기초 위에 세워졌으며, 복음을 향한 열린 문으서의 이성과 합리성의 상황적 표현은 문화적 상황에 따라 구체적이었습니다. 해체는 여기서 잘못된 구성을 검사합니다. 이러한 잘못된 구성을 더 잘 이해하려면 맥락을 검사해야 합니다.

이성과 합리성에 대한 현대적 구조가 우리의 현재 전도 노력을 이끌어 간다면, 현대 구조의 문제적 요소는 기독교의 뒤이은 반복과 표현을 통해 의문을 제기할 수 있고 또 그래야 합니다. 합리성과 이성의 현대적 구성이 당시 합리적으로 보였기 때문에 한 인종의 다른 인종에 대한 억압이 초래됐다면 이러한 “합리적”

가정을 주도한 구성은 해체가 필요합니다. 현대 구조가 특정 가부장적 가정을 만든다면, 복음 메시지가 다음 세대에 영향을 미치기 위해서는 해체가 필요합니다. 교회의 일은 맥락 없이 의미를 재할당하는 것(해체)이 아니라, 맥락을 더 잘 이해하여(해체) 적절하고 적용 가능한 전도 표현을 더 잘 형성하는 것(재구성)입니다.

FULLER 매거진의 이전 호에서 나는 “진리를 소유한” 패러다임 대 “진리를 추구하는” 패러다임의 비교를 통해 복음을 나누는 교회의 도전을 제시했습니다. 여기서는 “진리를 소유한 패러다임은 경계를 설정하여 강력한 자가 승리하는 사상의 전쟁을 일으키는”패러다임이며, 진리를 추구하는 패러다임은 진리의 현실을 최소화하지 않으나. . . 우리가 진리를 소유한 것이 아니라 하나님이 진리의 저자라고 말하는 겸손을 요구합니다.”[3] 전도의 오래된 모델은 진리를 소유한 접근 방식에 초점을 맞췄습니다: 교회는 진리를 소유하므로 전도의 임무는 단순히 우리 버전의 진실을 다른 진실에 앞서 다운로드하는 것입니다. 현대의 문화적 맥락을 고려할 때 이러한 접근 방식은 교회에 심각한 기능 장애를 초래했습니다. 진리 추구의 접근방식은 인간 존재의 나약함을 인정합니다. 또한 교회의 임무는 진리를 소유하는 것이 아니라 진리를 추구하는 것임을 인정합니다. 그리고 진리를 추구하려면 교회를 해체하고 재구성하고 재형성하는 겸손이 필요합니다. ■

ENDNOTES

1. 자크 데리다. 글쓰기와 차이, Alan Bass 번역 (일리노이주 시카고: University of Chicago 출판사, 1978), 280쪽.
2. S. J. Grenz, 포스트 모더니즘 입문서(Grand Rapids, 미시간: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 144, 146쪽.
3. S.-C. Rah, “진리의 복음주의적 추구”, *FULLER* 22 (캘리포니아 파사데나: 풀러 신학대학원, 2022): 68–69쪽.

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BEYOND COLONIALISM: RECONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN MISSION

R. Daniel Shaw

In a conversation with my friend John (who thinks in terms of ministry with gang bangers and homeboys), he made a startling statement: "Colonialism is all about sorcery."

"Really?" I responded in surprise.

"Yes," he said. "Sorcery is about manipulating power for the benefit of particular people at the expense of others."

"True," I said, "but as a characterization of colonialism, and by extension Christian mission?"

"Sure," John said. "Britain took poppies from China, processed them, and sent opium back to China—and other places. It was blatant hegemony. They did the same thing with minerals and ore from African mines: processed it and created economic tyranny by selling it back to the people at great markup. Such sorcery has been the hallmark of colonialism."

John's comments provoked my thinking about the role of missions in the world today. We rightly sought to proclaim "good news" but inadvertently communicated our way of thinking at the expense of equally valid ways to understand God's Word. How did we get from seeing sorcery in others to becoming sorcerers? How can we emulate Christ rather than proclaiming a foreign gospel? What follows are my musings on deconstructing colonialism and reconstructing the relevance of the gospel.

Setting the Context for Christian Mission

In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas helped post-Roman Empire thinkers process Greek ideas in light of Roman assumptions—a process very much impacted by Bible translation from Hebrew to Greek to Latin.[1] This set the stage for the Enlightenment. In its natural progression, Roman compartmentalization, philosophy, and science moved "modern" thinking from the transcendental to scientific objectification. That objects can be studied led to the scientific approach and research. Ultimately, if something can't be seen, it can't be quantified, and therefore can't be studied. Hence telescopes, microscopes, atom busters, and so much more were developed to make the unseeable seeable and thereby enable it to be studied, analyzed, and understood without the need for a "supernatural explanation." But taking this to its logical conclusion, ultimately, there are no objects; energy and matter blend—$e=mc^2$. Nothing really exists beyond its time and space. Everything is in motion. So-called chaos theory—Lorenz attractors with their movement around a center—and relativity prevail. Perhaps Hinduism was right all along: there is no reality—ooooommmmm.

This growing sense of meaninglessness pervades our thinking of colonialism as well. Sociologist Mave O'Collins noted a progressive development from colonialism (outsiders doing their thing), to neo-colonialism (insiders doing things the outsider way) to post-colonialism (insiders doing things their own way).[2] As people around the world have moved through the first two stages, a sense of meaninglessness arose. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz noted that bafflement, suffering, and injustice are all reactions to perceived chaos, which human beings overcome with religious ideology.[4] In *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*, Peter Berger, a sociologist, struggles with the way modernization—read: neo-colonialism—threatens us with fragmentation and loss of meaning.[4] Indeed, colonialism introduced an external

characterization that robbed people of their identity, as Chinua Achebe made so clear in his classic Nigeria-based novel *Things Fall Apart*.[5]

This loss of meaning is a major challenge in our era of globalization. An Enlightenment and colonial message brought to relational people, who process their feelings communally, has created a sense of meaninglessness in many contexts around the world.[6] Globalization is an enigma. But there is a biblical response available to us. In the prologue to his Gospel, John writes, "In the beginning was 'meaning'" (a focus on the depth of the Logos). The one who created everything and gave it meaning joined humanity, providing presence, power through the Holy Spirit, and "meaning" (John 1:14). God the Creator became Jesus the Jew. Incarnation as a theological principle dominates the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation—it is the story of the Bible.

O'Collins asks how such relational peoples can remain themselves while joining the "global" community, dominated by neo-colonial thinking. Similarly, we must ask how to move beyond colonialism and encourage people to be who they really are while also being part of our contemporary world and, by extension, the global church. Moving from Enlightenment and Modernity—with its focus on objects, products, and quantification—to a focus on relationship, process, and honor, is crucial in today's world.[7] God's desire is that human beings enjoy relationships with the people God has made and use that understanding to perceive their relationship with God. This is the first and second commandments in action (Matt 22:38).

Deconstructing Christian Mission

God created human beings to be, to live, and to think, and God gave them the capacity to follow their Creator's creativity. They have created cultures, "webs of significance [they themselves have] spun," as Geertz phrases it.[8] Culture, expressed as webs of experience, creates a way of doing things, of living life, and of judging others based on those experiences. Romans 2 suggests people are not able to measure up to their own socio-religious standards and therefore cannot expect to live up to God's laws—their culturally conditioned conscience condemns them. Their failure proves their fallen humanity, on one hand, and their need for external intervention (beyond human, scientific, and existential rationality) available only from God (Rom 3). As Paul demonstrates through the rest of Romans, human beings are created spiritual beings (Ps 8). Therefore, we innately try to realize our spirituality in ways that make sense, hence the creation of religion—searching for God.

Anthropologists have long been interested in religious beliefs and their expressions. In his treatise on how anthropology and Christianity have influenced each other, Timothy Larsen chronicles how anthropologists' descriptions of religious beliefs and practices are unconsciously a product of their own faith journey.[9] E. B. Tylor heralded African animism as grounds for the plausibility of Catholic doctrine[10] while James Frazer eschewed human sacrifice but made the slain God the focus of his famous *Golden Bough*.[11] E. E. Evans-Pritchard not only recognized Nuer mysticism as reflective of the biblical Hebrews but also the value of the Torah for his anthropological reflection on Nuer religious experience.[12] Mary Douglas found the Lele Pangolin cult "uncannily . . . like Christ," thereby connecting her life-long adherence to Catholicism with her anthropological research.[13] For Victor and Edith Turner, conversion to Catholicism could be viewed as a product of their attention to Ndembu rituals and the creation of communitas.[14]

Throughout their writing, these anthropologists regularly forefront theological themes. Larsen goes so far as to see anthropology and theology as "conversation partners," complimentary to each other rather than antithetical.[15] In fact, Evans-Pritchard categorically notes, for the Nuer, "meaning depends finally on an awareness of God and that men [sic] are dependent on him and must be resigned to his will. At this point the theologian takes over from the anthropologist."[16] As anthropologists sought to discover new expressions of God and the beliefs and values that drove such behavior, they recognized people's religious experience generally pointed to a holistic (more Hebrew) view of the relationship between the Creator and creation. The sacred and secular were united. Ironically, anthropologists, in general, cannot ignore God by virtue of the people they study.

In contrast, we who have engaged in mission have tended to absolutize God and present him in our own likeness. Missionaries brought an intellectual, theologically sophisticated, superhuman being that is unrecognizable and relationally distant. As it turns out, our spiritually aware "subjects" know things about the Creator we have lost—we have much to learn from them. Missionaries have encouraged people to substitute a set of conceptual frames unfamiliar to relational approaches subsumed by a majority of the world's people.[17] Those we seek to enlighten are often closer to the intentions of biblical writers than those who sought to explicate Scripture. We can expect to gain insight into God through an appreciation of human ideas about God.

Throughout the so-called age of reason, missionaries closely followed the leading edge of "civilization." Mission was closely tied to civilization, commerce, and Christianity. Missionaries went around the world pushing their brand of Enlightenment ideas to the rest of the world.[18] When missionaries tried to sell Enlightenment concepts to a relational world, people didn't get it. It did not make sense to them. Too often missionaries advocated forms of Christianity people dismissed as foreign and of no relevance to their lives and communities. Like the British pushing processed opium in China, missionaries have presented a way of thinking they believed to be true and made it so for everyone. Instead, people need to process the truth of God's Word in ways that match the complexities of their world.[19]

Reconstructing Christian Mission

Throughout colonial history, the sorcery my friend John described has prevailed. Western missionaries, with the globalizing influences they cherished, have rationalized their views and used their power to replace existing beliefs and practices with a religion that reflected a largely Western ideology. This brings us back to O'Collins's colonial progression. For the gospel to be "good news," we must present God's views in the particularity of a specific cognitive environment and then watch what people do with it. In this way the gospel is internally sustainable. The story of the Bible is all about God's way. And yet to be relevant and grab human attention, God connects his way with each society's way in order to reach everyone. That's what incarnation is about.

Missionaries, then, must be bearers of a message that makes sense but also reflects the totality of what it means for each faith community to be part of the larger universal church—one faith, one Lord. Somehow, we in the West must abandon Enlightenment thinking, eschew objectivity, and accentuate the application of God's Word to the reality of daily living. The practical demonstration of God's faithfulness within the reality of any lifestyle will grab people's attention. Rather than manipulating power for our benefit, no matter how well intentioned, we must release people to become who God intends them to be, people with a

culture and dignity for whom Christ died. While much of our way of viewing spiritual reality has biblical support, it is only one way, not "the" way. The gospel must reflect God's way so people can receive and process it in the dynamic context of human actuality.[20] Only when a relevant message matches a people's cognitive environment can they process the gospel and pass it on to others, within their context and beyond.

For example, my interaction with the Samo has been a dual journey of anthropological exaltation and missiological development.[21] As a Bible translator and an anthropologist, I sought to connect biblical truth to cultural truth as reflected in their mythology. The similarity of their myths to the Bible stories we translated led them to recognize God's preservation of truth despite the distance their ancestors had migrated from biblical lands to the heart of the island of New Guinea. As their mythology reveals, the "old man" put his foot in their mud, and now they know that old man was God. Their social structure led to introducing a term for God that forced them to recognize the humanity of their enemies and cease cannibal raids because God has authority over everyone. The structure of their three-day initiation ceremony and their healing rituals provided a way to organize their understanding of how and why the emergent church could honor God while maintaining practices that harbored deep spiritual expectations. And finally, their understanding of the role of the ancestors being reincarnated in each generation provided an appreciation for how God takes followers of Jesus to Heaven where they remain with God and are removed from the never-ending cycle of birth-death-and-rebirth. This reinterpreted understanding of "everlasting life" created a new awareness of "born again" that changed my own perspective of John 3:16. Along with the Samo, I too was being born again.[22]

By focusing on what God said, the Samo could apply what God intended, what Jesus modeled, and how the Holy Spirit empowered. As followers of Jesus, they became better members of their society rather than marginalized Christians. They demonstrated how others can move beyond our Western forms of Christianity. Jesus walked with the people, talked their language, and critiqued the religious views of the day from a biblical perspective. We who follow Jesus must do the same and thereby equip others to influence their world just as the Holy Spirit-empowered disciples (Acts 17:6).

Teaching Christian Mission

Teaching contemporary missionaries from around the world is our task at Fuller's School of Mission and Theology. Since Donald McGavran founded the School of World Mission in 1965, we have been a resource for multicultural education. Led by Alan Tippett, an anthropologist, and influenced by students from every continent, we have had the opportunity to apply our multicultural experience and learn from others. They took our cross-cultural courses home to have an impact on their people.[23] People must make sense of those ideas in ways that matter to them, not to us. Somehow, we need to give our students the freedom to move out of our boxes and encourage them to jump into theirs. The questions that emerge from their contexts are very different from ours, as Jean Marc Éla made clear for the Cameroon[24] and Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator explicates in his "Confessions of an Animist."[25] Similarly, Richard Twiss celebrates "rescuing the gospel from the cowboys."[26] As O'Collins notes, moving beyond colonialism is essential if people are to respond to sociocultural expressions (including their spirituality) in ways relevant to their time and place.[27] Only then can culturally imposed assumptions be incorporated with the global church. Enabling this to happen is the task before us at Fuller Seminary.

As my friend John agonized, we must move beyond our provincialism and our colonialism. Encouraging people to take God seriously is our purpose in mission-focused education. The interaction with every language, people group, and nation, learning from each other and experiencing God's presence as it has always been, is now, and will be, is our purpose and goal. May it be so as we learn from each other and come to know God in new and ever-expanding ways. ■

ENDNOTES

1. P. A. Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation* (Rome, Italy: Edizioni Di Storia E Letteratura, 2007), Sect. I.
2. M. O'Collins, *Social Development in Papua New Guinea 1972–1990: Searching for Solutions in a Changing World*, vol. 18 (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University, 1993).
3. C. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 100.
4. P. Berger and H. Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Vintage, 1973).
5. C. Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Greenwich, CN: Fawcett Publications, 1959).
6. Enlightenment thinking emphasizes individualism, hierarchy and power, quantification, judicial approaches, and shame—it is cerebral. Hence the four spiritual laws emphasize individual identity, sin as separation from God, Jesus as the answer to sin, and the need to individually accept Christ as Lord. This makes perfect sense on an American college campus. However, at the University of Papua New Guinea, the first question was, "What about my family?" Then the reasoning went to a caring God who is over everyone, and how does Jesus give meaning in the context of life? Is Christianity only about escaping eternal punishment? These collective, egalitarian, honor-based responses provide a stark contrast to conceptualization of the gospel brought by Western missionaries. In Berger's terminology they represent contrastive "plausibility structures" (P. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* [New York: Random House, 1969], 45ff).
7. D. R. Shaw, "Beyond Contextualization: Toward a Twenty-First-Century Model for Enabling Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 4, (2010): 211.
8. C. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 5.
9. T. Larsen, *The Slain God: Anthropologists and the Christian Faith* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014).
10. E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London, UK: Murray, 1871).
11. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London, UK: Macmillan and Co., 1894).
12. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1956).
13. M. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 1996). D. Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 4 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 95; see also 98–99. Emphasis added.
14. V. Turner, *Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970).
15. T. Larsen, *The Slain God: Anthropologists and the Christian Faith*, 225.
16. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*, 322.
17. P. Hiebert, *Gospel in Human Contexts: The Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).
18. Others have pointed this out (E. S. Miller, "The Christian Missionary, Age of Secularization," *Anthropological Quarterly* 43, no. 1, [1970]: 14–22 and L. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989], 211) leading to the conclusion that as missionaries covered the globe they were a major secularizing force.
19. Cf. R. D. Shaw and C. E. Van Engen, *Communicating God's Word in a Complex World: God's Truth or Hocus Pocus?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003).
20. R. D. Shaw, "Beyond Syncretism: A Dynamic Approach to Hybridity," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 42, no. 1, (2018): 6–19.
21. As a Bible translator and an anthropologist, I sought to bring the two disciplines together in a dynamic way. As a member of SIL International, I had the privilege of living with and learning from the Samo from 1969–1981. As our relationship grew, and we built trust, the Samo began to search the Bible we translated for answers to everyday questions that reflected their lifestyle and spiritual concerns. This reflection on the role of culture in the task of translating the Bible is the subject of a recent book (R. D. Shaw, *Singing Samo Songs: From Shaman to Pastor, Ritual Studies Monograph Series* [Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2022]). Our objective was to present God's message in a Samo way and enable Scripture to answer their questions in order to benefit their lives.
22. R. D. Shaw, *Singing Samo Songs: From Shaman to Pastor*, 22.
23. I tell my students to leave their class notes here but focus on the ideas and make them relevant in their ministry contexts.
24. J. M. Éla, *My Faith as an African*, trans. P. Brown (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).
25. A. E. Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018).
26. R. Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys: A Native American Expression of the Jesus Way* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015).
27. M. O'Collins, *Social Development in Papua New Guinea 1972–1990*.

A POSTURE OF CURIOSITY IN ART AND MISSION

Melody Bellefeuille-Frost

Melody Bellefeuille-Frost is a PhD Divinity candidate at the Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts (ITIA) at the University of St Andrews. Her research project compares images of Christ in European Jesuit and Japanese Christian art in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the aim of better appreciating the missiological themes apparent in the artworks. In 2022–2023, Melody was the ITIA Artist in Residence and led Transept, a postgraduate group of artists and theologians associated with the University of St Andrews and its wider community.

A Childhood Memory

The first craft I remember making was a decorative crescent moon. The materials lay on low tables prepared by my nursery school teacher, and I was curious about them. I worked with a large, curved, pink piece of construction paper hanging on a strand of off-white yarn. I covered the surface with glue—back and forth, back and forth—my teacher remarking about how much I applied. And then I sprinkled on heaps of green and blue glitter. My handiwork hung in the living room for years, and it is now carefully stored in a box of childhood mementos.

I often ponder the importance of this memory to my journey as an artist. I recall the weight of the materials in my little hands, and how determined and joyful my process was. Childhood crafts can be viewed sentimentally. But the hanging crescent, swaying as people walked by and shimmering in the afternoon light, came to suggest responsiveness and transition. I am prompted to ask: how do I relate to my materials now? What does making things continue to reveal? I've graduated from the crafting sparkles, but I still work with paper and glue in my mixed-media collages. I've also embraced the Holy Spirit's call for me to participate in God's mission as an artist and theologian, which took exploring the visual arts beyond a mere hobby or tool. The words of Maria and Brian Fee—professor and mentor, respectively, during my final year at Fuller—echo on: "Just keep making things." Becoming an artist-theologian began with childlike inquisitiveness and takes continued experimentation with and learning from materials. It takes receptiveness of imaginative, iconophilic stances toward the arts and God. It takes curiosity.

In this article, I explore the question: how do visual artists and the visual arts facilitate or embody evangelism? First, I consider a posture of curiosity and its relationship to God's mission and the arts. Contextual participation in God's mission takes curiosity, and artists are naturally curious. (I use the term "curiosity" rather than, say, "imagination" because the former implies a desire to learn before envisioning what can be.) Second, I examine biblical, historical, and contemporary case studies of curiosity and the visual arts. Third, I conclude that a posture of curiosity, as illustrated through the case studies, enables artists who are Christians to participate in the coming of God's kingdom—in the diverse, holistic activities of being in Christ, such as being loved by him, following him, and embodying the good news in our world, with hope that Christ is making all things new (Rev 21:5).

What Is Curiosity?

Let's be curious about curiosity itself, and how it relates to the arts and God's mission. Philosopher Elias Baumgarten defines curiosity as "a disposition to want to know or learn more about a wide variety of things." He continues, "The more one has this character trait, the more often or the more intensely one will on particular occasions experience a desire or urge to investigate and learn more about something."[1] He notes that the term "is rooted linguistically in the other-regarding activities of 'care' and 'cure' (from the Latin cūrāre, to take care of)" and is conducive to close relationships.[2] Applying Baumgarten's description of curiosity to the visual arts, when artists play with materials or study themes or gaze back at their work, they exercise a curious disposition. Furthermore, artists become familiar with particular media and often care about the process as much as the output, not to mention developing relationships with those who collaborate on and behold their work.

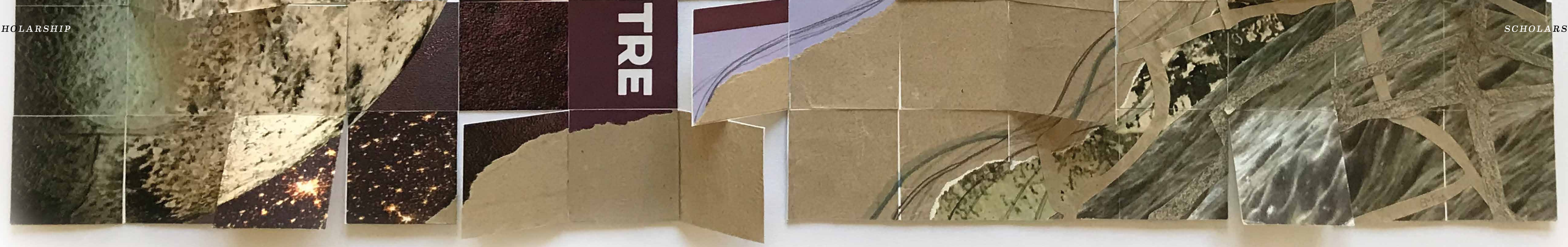
For an artist who follows Jesus, curiosity and care intertwine in loving God and the world he made, especially in anticipating the New. Theologian Jürgen Moltmann assumes a posture of curiosity in his approach to theology. He deems theology "a tremendous adventure, a journey of discovery," leading him to recognize the virtue of curiosity and to experiment or suggest rather than issue pronouncements.[3] This humble posture is apparent in Moltmann's approach to eschatology, which he describes as "imagination for the kingdom of God in the world, and for the world in God's kingdom."[4] If theology is a journey and God's kingdom is in the making, then it is faithful to be curious about such topics. Put another way, it is faithful to be curious about God's mission. God's holistic mission is to bring freedom, reconciliation, and transformation in our relationships with him, ourselves, each other, and our world.[5] The fulfillment of this mission is his kingdom come. Theology helps us to imagine and live into this reality.

Christians who are artists are uniquely gifted to carry curiosity about God's mission into their artmaking. Often, artists are honest about suffering and enchantment, and they can imagine and make toward healing and renewal. Art is a form of honest inquiry. It is a "wondering" that brings people "to the final wonder over the depth and breadth and height of God's goodness, or over the horror of injustice."[6] A posture of artistic curiosity observes everything from the natural world to the mysteries of God and wonders what can be asked, known, loved, disentangled, recreated. Curiosity, embodied in artmaking, leads to transformative encounters—with self, others, and God.

Neglecting curiosity is risky. First, there is a risk of disregarding the beauty, truth, and goodness that reflect God in the world. Conversely, to adopt a posture of curiosity is to be attentive to encountering God in any context, from historical Athens and Japan to contemporary arts communities, as we will see. Second, evangelism without curiosity risks our becoming detached and imposing. A posture of curiosity defies colonial attitudes that would erase and supplant others' spiritual journeys. A posture of curiosity accepts learning as a mode of engagement with other people and cultures, with attentiveness to how God reveals himself through beauty, truth, and goodness.

Curiosity in Scripture

Scripture abounds with curiosity. Moses spies a burning bush and remarks, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up" (Exod 3:3). The Psalmists express longing for God, praying, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?" (Ps 42:5, 11). The shepherds, having met the angels on the night of Jesus' birth, decide, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us" (Luke 2:15). Jesus, at 12 years old, sits among the teachers in the temple, "listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). The eunuch who would soon hear the gospel, believe, and be baptized, reads Scripture with Philip and asks, "About whom . . . does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" (Acts 8:34). Curiosity, in these instances,



involves asking good questions, exercising discernment, loving wisdom, and encountering God.

One passage that demonstrates the relationship between curiosity and the arts in particular is Acts 17:16–34.[7] Paul is waiting for his companions in Athens, a city full of curious people constantly telling and hearing of new things. When Paul, ever the evangelist, debates with the Jews, devout Greeks, and Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, they ask, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means” (vv. 19–20). Paul has been attentive to how the people of Athens think of and manifest religious belief. He observes, “I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you” (vv. 22–23). The Athenians are curious people, so curious that they make physical, material space for an unknown god. Paul, willing to engage with the artistic, religious expressions of Athenian culture, proclaims the existence of the Creator God, acknowledges humanity’s fumbling (perhaps curious, perhaps successful) search for God, and even quotes the sixth-century BCE poet Epimenides in reference to being God’s offspring. Following this exchange, those identified as Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others become believers.

The Acts passage suggests the importance of curiosity in conveying the gospel interculturally and artistically. A posture of curiosity predisposes the Athenians toward spiritual realities, including the existence of an unknown god. A posture of curiosity enables Paul to faithfully and creatively share the gospel of God’s kingdom when the Athenians inquire. Paul explains that God, who made the world and gives life, neither inhabits human shrines nor originates in human art or imagination (vv. 24, 29). However, he is not iconoclastic. Paul engages with Athenian religious visual culture. He leans into appreciating and recontextualizing the altar to the unknown god. And curiosity leads to encounter with God.

Curiosity in Missionary History

Curiosity continues through the history of the global Christian movement. The reception history of the Bible, and by extension its visual reception history, studies the ways in which people have interpreted biblical texts, as well as Christian iconography and images, in various contexts.[8] Here, I will consider the case of the visual reception history of the Salvator Mundi (Savior of the World) image type in Japan during the 16th and 17th centuries. This excerpt from missionary history recognizes curiosity in sharing and receiving the gospel.

From its inception in 1540, the Society of Jesus was committed to be missional, and Jesuits ordained as priests vowed to go wherever the Roman pontiff sent them.[9] Commentary on the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* expounds that Jesuits are trained “to proclaim and transmit the truth revealed in Christ” and that teaching “should be such that, accommodating itself to changing ways of speaking and thinking, and adapting itself to the diverse cultures of the whole world, it can continually revivify that faith in human hearts.”[10] Thus, Jesuits developed the missionary principle of accommodation (or inculturation), in which, idealistically and imperfectly, missionaries respected the intellect and imagination of local peoples and adapted the Christian message to their worldviews, enabling people to investigate, encounter, and respond to God on their own terms. This principle implies curiosity toward cultures and the contextual reception of the Christian faith beyond early modern Western Europe.[11]

Part of the Jesuit missionary method was to incorporate religious, devotional images into witness and worship. Francis Xavier, who became the first Jesuit missionary to Japan in 1549, set a precedent for the inclusion of the visual arts in the Japanese mission because he brought with him images depicting the Virgin Mary and Christ.[12] Since it was impractical to commission and transport religious images solely from Europe, artist-missionary Giovanni Niccolò joined the Jesuits and taught local Japanese students at the itinerant Seminary of Painters. The University of Tokyo now holds in its arts collection an oil on copper painting of the Salvator Mundi, dated 1597 and attributed to Jacob Niwa (Sacam Iacobus), a pupil of Niccolò’s. This painting depicts a half-length, three-quarter portrait of Christ holding a globus cruciger (cross-bearing orb) in his left hand and raising his right hand in blessing. His body and gaze turn to his left, and he wears vibrant red and blue robes that are hemmed in gold. His facial features are delicate. Thin rays of light appear to radiate from his head. Dark clouds border the image, lightening and parting to create the illusion of a bright, negative space behind the figure of Christ.

But one example in the reception history of Salvator Mundi iconography, Niwa’s painting appears to bridge cultures. The Salvator Mundi image type is characterized by depicting Christ holding an orb and raising a hand of blessing, as well as being of small-scale devotional size suited for personal or domestic worship. Niwa’s rendition was likely painted after a Flemish engraving by Hieronymus Wierix, a copy of which would have been transported by Jesuit missionaries from Western Europe. The brushwork is delicate, modelling the facial features and perspective after the Western European source. But also, Niwa’s aesthetic choices such as the striking robe colours resemble depictions of Buddhist deities or samurai, and the negative space of the background resembles expanses of gold leaf in Japanese folding screens.[13] The subtly hybrid nature of Niwa’s painting suggests curiosity toward both Christ as imagined by European missionaries and also Christ as reimagined in the Japanese context.

Additionally, Japanese artists carried Salvator Mundi iconography into other art forms, such as folding screens called nanban byōbu. These multipanel screens were made using ink, colour, and gold on paper. They depict elaborate scenes of Japanese-European exchange, such as the bustling port of Nagasaki, including Christians venerating images of Salvator Mundi in churches.[14] The inclusion of miniature Salvator Mundi images within the folding screens suggests that 16th and 17th century artists were curious and observant of intercultural exchanges. Artistic interpretations of the Salvator Mundi suggest that Jesuit missionaries and Japanese Christians considered Christ to be the Saviour of the world, and that other artists recognized the centrality of this image in Christian devotion.

Curiosity in Contemporary Ministry

Over the past two years, I have participated in and led a postgraduate group of multidisciplinary artists and theologians affiliated with the University of St Andrews and its wider community. The group’s strength lies in its openness: curiosity toward various ideas, hospitality toward diverse people, willingness to explore art and faith together. It has been a personal journey of deconstructing false ideas limiting what a community of theologians and artists can be and tending to a shared, hospitable space that reimagines what being a Christian and an artist looks like in relation to my community. The experience has been an opportunity for me to be curious and to care.

First, I was curious about how the group would take shape and what we would make. We decided to meet weekly to share works in progress, and we also held a creative spiritual retreat and an arts exhibition. During the exhibition, *Enfolding: A Study of Margins & Centres*, artists contributed multimedia works exploring marginalization and belonging. For example, in *Map to Somewhere*, I layered maps of Scotland, images of outer space, and packing paper. The surface was a grid, with sections cut and folded to bring dimension. I drew with pencil and marker to emphasize the organic shapes in contrast to the technical lines. Through this collage, I reflected on navigating between margins and centres, and on our proximity to “the other,” neighbours, and God. Fellow artists related margins and centres to identity, mental health, death, the earth, and the Eucharist. As Makoto Fujimura explains, “By Making toward beauty in the context of brokenness, through sanctified imagination, we are proclaiming God’s Good News. How? Evangelism is the proclamation of the New.”[15] The exhibition offered solidarity, illumination, and hope of belonging. It was oriented toward the New.

Second, I was curious about how I would grow as a minister as I cared for my academic and artistic community. Like the Athenians, the Apostle Paul, the Jesuit missionaries, and the Japanese artists who were curious about objects of religious visual culture and the arts more broadly, I was curious about my fellow artists and their artmaking. The group was comprised of Christians of various traditions as well as people who are spiritual but not religious. Common interest in art and faith sparked relationships. This was a community in which I could accompany people on their creative and spiritual journeys. I was able to see how artists and the arts facilitated and embodied evangelism. Rather than manufacturing evangelistic outreach, the group inclined toward sharing the slow, authentic process of artmaking and the theological reflections that prompted or arose from the work. And since artists glorify God simply by making things, simply by reflecting the imagination and creativity the Creator God imparts to us, curious accompaniment became witness. I noticed how theology and art happened simultaneously. I felt how artists and theologians blessed one another and the wider community. Artists uniquely, faithfully participate in God’s mission by facilitating and embodying curiosity through our lives and artworks.

Curiosity into the New

Through case studies from Scripture, missionary history, and contemporary ministry, I have illustrated a posture of curiosity related to the visual arts and

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+ Map to Somewhere *by Melody Bellefeuille-Frost. Papers, pencil, ink, 2023. See more of Melody Bellefeuille-Frost's art in the opening and closing covers and on pp. 10–11, 32–33, 73 and 93.*

God's mission. A posture of curiosity attends to what Scripture conveys about the Creator God, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ and is encountered through the arts. A posture of curiosity learns from historical, intercultural exchange, such as the Jesuit missionary movement and the Japanese reception of Christian iconography. A posture of curiosity reimagines what a hospitable community of artists and theologians can be as we together explore art and faith. As we angle toward "God's creative future," curiosity enables us as artists and followers of Jesus to participate in the coming of God's kingdom.[16] ■

ENDNOTES

1. E. Baumgarten, "Curiosity as a Moral Virtue," *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2001): 170.
2. Ibid., 172.
3. J. Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), xiii–xiv.
4. Ibid., xiv.
5. C. Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 26–27.
6. W. A. Dyrness, *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 99.
7. For a study of how early Christians interacted with multireligious contexts, including the instance in Acts 17, see W. A. Dyrness, *Insider Jesus: Theological Reflections on New Christian Movements* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016).
8. See M. Lieb, E. Mason, and J. Roberts, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
9. J. W. Padberg, ed., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts* (St Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 3, 205. See also J. W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 298–301.
10. J. W. Padberg, ed., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts* (St Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 156.
11. This is echoed in the work of D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 437. Bosch writes how, through experimentation and ongoing dialogue, "[m]ission as contextualization involves the construction of a variety of 'local theologies.'"
12. A. Curvelo, "Copy to Convert: Jesuits' Missionary Practice in Japan," in *The Culture of Copying in Japan: Critical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Rupert Cox (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 114–115.
13. J. W. O'Malley and G. A. Bailey, eds., *The Jesuits and the Arts*, 1540–1773 (Philadelphia, PA: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2003), 319.
14. See M. Sakamoto, ed., 南蛮屛風集成 (A Catalogue Raisonné of the Namban Screens) (Tokyo: Chuokoron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2008).
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THE CHURCH AND THE SPIRIT IN MEDIATED SPACE

Ryan K. Bolger

An interview with Ryan K. Bolger, associate professor of church in contemporary culture, by FULLER *magazine Editor in Chief Jerome Blanco.*

JEROME BLANCO: As technology continues to develop at increasingly rapid rates, can you summarize a key way technological advancement has transformed—and is continuing to transform—the church? And in particular, the church's theology of mission?

RYAN K. BOLGER: I would say that the biggest impact has been the relocation of church practice to mediated spaces. I am not talking about church services on Zoom in the post-pandemic era, which of course happened as well. What I am suggesting is that over the last 20 years or so, the local church has been decentered as the locus for day-to-day Christian practice. For example, it is commonplace for Christians to seek out Christian teaching, worship, prayer, fellowship, formation, and service opportunities online, most frequently through social media, podcasts, and the like. These are instances of "church" in a sense—two or three gathered (through media) in Jesus' name. Although most of us still attend a local church, much—or most—of our sustenance comes from outside the church service and local church community. Of course, this has happened before, through Christian books, radio, and TV, but more recently this trend has exponentially grown.

JB: What are the biggest challenges the church faces in living missionally in this technological age?

RB: Probably the biggest challenge the church faces today is how to address the deleterious effects of social media use on the day-to-day lives of our congregants. A big challenge is that none of these platforms are neutral, and wisdom is required to navigate their many opportunities and also their very real harms. Each platform also has its own agenda that is not necessarily consistent with Christian practice. We now know that Instagram deeply impacts the psychological well-being of its most heavy users, causing addiction in many—especially young teens. We now know how the algorithms were designed on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube (and others) to move us to anger or fear in order to increase our time spent on the app, profile us, sell our data, and then manipulate our responses. Even more maddeningly, much of the information generated is completely untrue. These destructive social media practices—alongside news media outlets as well—have ignited huge divisions in the American church overall as well as inside many of our congregations.

JB: What opportunities excite you as the church navigates this new landscape? How is mission taking new shape in positive ways?

RB: Pulling from both Christian and non-Christian online resources, millennials and Gen Z create a myriad of spiritual expressions to make sense of their world. The church today has the opportunity to meet this challenge by making their community and their resources ever-available in their lives, when they need it and in ad hoc ways. Churches need not be situated only in time and place but can be situated perpetually in (cyber) space and in their congregants everyday, mediated spaces. The church must do the difficult work of contextualizing these varied, mediated, and accessible resources in very simple ways with thought-through design. And if they do, then their people will no longer feel alone or unsupported in their everyday lives. Again, as mentioned before, this social engagement may be fraught, but if done carefully, with wisdom, many connections can be made. I've witnessed this most recently through TikTok!

JB: How might you encourage church leaders as they navigate the living out and proclamation of the good news amidst the changing technological landscape?

RB: Core to the Christian task has always been the contextualizing of our faith in new contexts. But, perhaps even at the most exciting moments, contextualization is most often incredibly challenging, as we are moved by the Holy Spirit to give up our sacred cows, our prior ways of doing church. Indeed, it is a sobering thought to consider that the local church now makes up only one node in the constellation of a Christian's spiritual life, and it is perhaps no longer the primary node. To contextualize, church leadership must reconsider how it is we lead and serve in a mediated and virtual world. Though our local congregations may be small, we might, at the same time, have many around the world who seek to share virtual church services and day-to-day resources and activities with us on many different platforms. Through a well-thought-out design of our ministry, while fully aware of the many challenges social media platforms present, we may be able to create face-to-face and online global resources and activities that sustain, strengthen, and inspire not only those who have previously been a part of our local congregation but also like-minded Christians throughout the world. We may be surprised how the Holy Spirit leads us to serve people we would have never met prior to the dawn of the Internet and social media. ■

Ryan K. Bolger is associate professor of church in contemporary culture. In addition to conducting research focusing on church and contemporary culture, he teaches classes on missiology, technological culture, church and mission, church planting, and church renewal. Bolger is the coathor of *Techno-Sapiens in a Networked Era: Becoming Digital Neighbors* and *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Communities in Postmodern Cultures* and is the editor of *Gospel after Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions*. He has published numerous articles and is a frequent conference speaker on church and culture.

CHURCH PLANTS AS EVANGELISM LABORATORIES

Len Tang

Len Tang is the director of Fuller's Church Planting Initiative. A Fuller alumnus and ordained pastor in ECO, he planted and pastors Missio Community Church in Pasadena, California. Tang is the coeditor, with Charles E. Cotherman, of *Sent to Flourish: A Guide to Planting and Multiplying Churches*.

As I was preparing to plant my first church outside of Portland, Oregon, I sought the guidance of a local pastor whose church was experiencing such tremendous conversion growth that it was spontaneously planting new churches in the area. The primary metaphor his church used as its inspiration was Lifeboat 14, taken from the story of the *Titanic*. In fact, in the lobby of the church building was a full-size replica of Lifeboat 14. The true story goes that as the *Titanic* sank on her maiden voyage and people were drowning in the ice-cold water, nearly all the lifeboats rowed away from those struggling in the water for fear of being swamped by survivors. Lifeboat 14, under the command of Officer Harold Lowe, was the only lifeboat that rowed back and ultimately saved five people from drowning. The pastor posed the question, "Is the church a leisure ship dedicated to the comfort of its passengers or a lifeboat devoted to rescuing lost people?"

Church planters on the whole are dedicated to launching as many lifeboats as possible. Evangelism is one of the fundamental purposes of church planting and one of the primary motivations of church planters, including myself. One of the most oft-quoted rationales for church planting came back in 1990 from Fuller's own Peter Wagner in his book *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*: "The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches."[1] (I just heard a planter use this quote in a podcast earlier this year.) Again in 2002, the late Tim Keller reaffirmed this line of thinking in his article "Why Plant Churches?," writing that "the vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for (1) the numerical growth of the body of Christ in a city and (2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city."[2]

Broadly speaking, both personal experience and studies show that new churches are far more effective at winning people to Christ than established churches. For instance, within the Southern Baptist Convention (the largest church planting organization in the US, planting between 600–800 churches per year), a 2018 report showed that church plants baptize more people per attendee than established churches—a 67 percent better attendee-to-baptism ratio.[3]

Whether or not church planting is the "most effective" or "most crucial" strategy for evangelism, this article will argue that it has been and will remain an absolutely essential element of the church's evangelistic witness in the world. Church planting often functions as the "R&D wing" of the church because of how much pioneering missional and evangelistic experimentation takes place through church plants as they practice new and creative forms of engaging a diverse and disruptive culture with the gospel. Church planters and their teams are often a combination of entrepreneurial and evangelistic. The "research and development" that church plants discern and discover are then meant to flow back into the wider body of Christ to help the church engage and impact the culture with the gospel more broadly—hence Keller's second point that planting contributes to "the corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city."

Now, it's important to note that this article primarily reflects the mainstream North American church planting world, which is typically white and Protestant. There are many churches planted by and for Blacks,

Latinos, and Asians in the US, and one of the realities is that many of those churches fly under the radar because they function quite autonomously, are often small, and are not necessarily part of established denominational structures that track and report results. In addition, global Christianity has clearly shifted to the global South, and so I am also not speaking to the thousands of churches planted by global Christians.

Why Are Church Plants More Evangelistic Than Established Churches?

It's helpful to identify why church plants are generally more effective in reaching people for Christ than established churches. In his 2019 book on congregational practices of evangelism, *You Found Me*, Rick Richardson surveyed and researched 4,500 North American churches. He identified that ten percent of churches are experiencing conversion growth (as opposed to transfer growth). He calls these congregations "conversion communities" and identifies three common characteristics: missional imagination, missional leadership, and missional congregational practices.[4] It's no coincidence these characteristics are precisely what healthy church plants are designed to cultivate.

1. ***Church planters are motivated by a missional imagination.*** Richardson describes recovering a missional imagination as becoming reenchanted by the power and beauty of the mission of Jesus, as well as recapturing a vision for the church as salt and light in the world. The vast majority of church planters I meet have a strong sense of "holy discontent," believing that an absolutely crucial aspect of the gospel of Jesus Christ is missing in the church. They feel indignant that a dimension of Christ's mission in the world is absent from people's lives, and it breaks their heart. And they believe that a fresh expression of the body of Christ can reach people for Christ that existing churches cannot.

2. ***Church planters are selected and trained for mission.*** Church planting networks and denominations actively seek out missional leaders with apostolic and evangelistic gifts to start new churches. Alan Hirsch has popularized the framing of the leadership gifts from Ephesians 4 as "APEST," an acronym for apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. Church planting movements intentionally recruit APEs—leaders with apostolic, prophetic, and/or evangelistic gifts. Church planting organizations often host formal multiday church planter assessments, designed to vet and "greenlight" APEs to start new churches. Church planters are also typically trained to do neighborhood exegesis and learn how to articulate and embody the gospel in their specific contexts. All these intentional processes tend to identify leaders who are gifted and burdened to share the gospel and lead people to Christ.

   Pastors of established churches don't generally receive the kind of vetting and training as church planters, and established churches tend to prefer and affirm the classic pastoral gifts of STs—shepherds and teachers. During the pandemic, anecdotally it seems that pastors with ST gifts struggled even more since many were forced to become televangelists (due to live streaming their sermons) as well as church planters (due to the need to freshly engage their physical and online communities).

3. ***Church plants function as "conversion communities."*** Church plants have a higher likelihood of becoming conversion communities because the church plant is birthed into existence out of a desire to impact their community with the gospel. Church planters are prayerful and intentional in selecting leaders who share the church's evangelistic DNA. Church planting teams often seek to live as a missionary community in which they fan out across a city to identify groups receptive to the gospel (the "missionary" part) and then seek to live and love one another such that they are embodying a countercultural and communal way of life (the "community" part). By contrast, it can often be difficult for established churches to reach beyond meeting the needs of the already-converted. (Though it must be noted that church plants eventually become established churches and must inevitably resist the same gravitational pull of focusing primarily or even exclusively on serving current members.)

Dysfunctional Church Planting Narratives

Unfortunately, the same evangelistic zeal that drives church planting organizations often leads to theological errors or methodological excesses. The shadow side of church planting is that the very things church planting leaders are gifted with may be the same things that can breed excess and exploitation. This is why the Fuller Church Planting Initiative (FCPI), which I lead, puts a huge emphasis on the spiritual formation of the planter and their team. Below are some of the dysfunctional narratives arising in church plants.

A Theological Issue: Triumphalism

Often, the language and imagery used in the mainstream church planting world is militaristic ("parachuting in," "taking a city for Christ") and triumphalistic. While the metaphors of multiplication and reproduction are certainly biblical, like the seed growing in good soil, they are balanced by the reality that the way of Jesus ultimately leads to the cross. The seed needs to first die in order to bear fruit. And even though many of us (myself included) believe that the multiplication of healthy churches is crucial to helping establish gospel movements, sometimes the language of multiplication and reproduction can simply be triumphalism by another name.

A Racial Issue: Colonialism

Evangelism used as a colonial enterprise is a dysfunction that shows up in church planting. Much of the mainstream church planting world still operates on what Toby Kurth calls "the white success story model," where the primary narrative has been that of a white, male, wealthy, suburban church planter (or to further the stereotype, a planter with facial hair and skinny jeans), who raises insane amounts of money to plant a large and growing attractional church. The racial reckoning that the evangelical church has been experiencing has meant that church planting movements are now recognizing that planters (particularly white ones) who move into a city without knowing and building relationships with the existing pastoral leaders and stakeholders often operate from a colonial rather than collaborative mindset.

An Economic Issue: Gentrification

A further implication of a colonial approach is that planters who are unaware of their social location or neighborhood dynamics can unwittingly contribute to gentrification. A common scenario is that white church planters will enter an urban core without a sense of who's already been ministering in that neighborhood or of what is happening economically. Then their church plants join the yoga studios and trendy cafes in gentrifying a neighborhood and deepening the economic inequities that generally fall along racial lines. Relocating a launch team to an urban core can raise housing prices and eventually drive out long-term residents, destabilizing the community rather than strengthening it.

A Psychological Issue: Narcissism and Celebrity Pastor Culture

The recent fall of many prominent church planters has highlighted the reality that church planting attracts and even affirms narcissistic leaders, and creates systems in which abuse of power is rampant because no accountability structures exist within highly autonomous church plants—even denominational plants. If the church grows, pastors are given more freedom and accolades even as the checks and balances diminish. At worst, a cult of personality arises and the church plant no longer serves as a missional outpost but a vehicle to advance the planter's personal brand and celebrity, potentially leading to scandals around the usual suspects of money, power, and sex.

Church Planting and New Ways of Holistic Evangelism

Even given the dangers inherent in church planting, by definition it is a crucible in which deconstruction must ultimately give way to reconstruction. Angst about evangelicalism must give way to a concrete expression of a community living on mission. So, what might be some of the new narratives, models, and practices that church planting can offer in proclaiming the good news of Jesus afresh to the next generation?

New Narratives

For decades, the imagination of US pastors and planters has been held captive first by the church growth movement's obsession with numerical growth (pioneered for better and for worse by Fuller Seminary's Donald McGavran) and then by fearmongering around church decline.

My friend Daniel Yang of Wheaton College's Church Multiplication Institute wrote an article titled "Beyond Church Growth and Decline," arguing that Gen Z "might be triggered by any vision that thinks the church can reclaim the culture, restore Sunday church attendance, and reverse religious decline by doing more of the same like previous generations." Instead, "Gen Zers need to feel that they aren't advancing the cause of a declining religion. They need to feel as if they're a part of what Jesus is doing to heal the nations. Whatever missional narratives emerge over the next few years, the most effective ones will likely feel less anxious, and instead feel more beautiful to them.”[5]

How might we highlight the beauty and radical inclusiveness of Jesus? For many, that beautiful new narrative must include a commitment to a racially diverse church that not only reflects the demographic reality that there will be no majority ethnicity in the US by 2044 but celebrates the beauty of a Revelation 7:9 fellowship. Part and parcel of that diverse church is a holistic understanding of the gospel that unites bold evangelism with a deep commitment to racial and economic justice.

And rather than exclude half the population from the work of evangelism and church planting, we must affirm the full inclusion of women church planters. These leaders tend to be inherently less prone to the excesses named above and more collaborative and empowering in their leadership style.

New Models

Church planting, like many startup incubators, is constantly engaged in experimentation, trying new forms of missional church and pushing the boundaries of traditional ecclesiologies. Some of these ascendent new models of church include:

Microchurches: Pioneered by movements like the Tampa Underground, these networks of small churches are hyper-focused on reaching a particular people group, such as women in the sex industry, foster parents and families, the homeless, men in recovery, and more.[6] Microchurches are highly flexible and adaptable and rarely involve paid pastors.

Multiethnic Churches: Given the rise of ethnic minority populations in the US (including an 81 percent rise in Asian Americans and a 70 percent rise in Latinos between 2000 and 2019 according to Pew), multiethnic churches are the church of the future.[7] This means that the next generation of church planters/missionaries will need intercultural competencies to proclaim and contextualize the gospel to multiple cultures. They will also need a commitment to coplanting with persons of other ethnicities to plant not just diverse yet monocultural churches but truly multiethnic churches that share both leadership and platforms. This also entails a concerted effort to identify, train, and coach planters of color—a major focus of our current work at FCPI.

Digital Churches: The term digital church comprises the COVID-style hybrid of physical and online church, fully online Zoom churches, as well as metaverse churches that exist primarily in virtual reality (VR) using VR headsets, digital avatars, and real-time interaction with other avatars. Digital churches can reach people with high skepticism about or lack of access to physically attending a church, and they can scale easier and faster than brick-and-mortar churches.

Renewed Practices

Ultimately, the work of evangelism happens when we actually “do the work of an evangelist,” as Paul exhorts Timothy to do (2 Tim 4:5). This means engaging not necessarily in new practices but in renewing our commitment to historic practices, including prayer, hospitality, and conversation.

Prayer: Put simply, the great movements of God begin with prayer—individual prayer to develop intimacy with Christ and communal prayer to till the soil of a city that the eyes of unbelievers may “see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4). One particular form of prayer evangelism to consider is prayer walks, where a church planting team walks the neighborhood to gain new eyes for their neighbors and to pray for spiritual breakthroughs in the hearts of people. Another form of prayer evangelism championed by my friends Alex and Hannah Absalom is simply to ask for opportunities to talk with people and ask them, “How can I pray for you?” Then while praying, listen for the Holy Spirit’s promptings that you may pray in power and lead them to Christ. Jared, a church planter in our current Church Planting Certificate cohort, shared this story from two weeks ago:

> *As I was at Sprouts grocery store tonight, I noticed a guy in his late 20s and felt like I was supposed to ask him if he wanted prayer. He wanted prayer for health and for his son, so I prayed a blessing over him and his son. I asked if I could share how Jesus changed my life and got to share my testimony. I asked if he wanted to believe and follow Jesus, and he said he wanted to. We had a powerful conversation and said he was feeling God while we were talking (he was visibly emotional) and that this was his third sign this month. All I had to do was simply respond to the Spirit at work in Sprouts!*

Hospitality: The Greek word for hospitality, philoxenos, literally means lover of strangers. If ever there was a time in the American church when we needed to demonstrate hospitality to those whose political persuasions, racial background, or sexual orientation is different from ours, it’s now. Much of the missional/incarnational stream of church planting puts hospitality at the center of evangelism—whether it is hosting people in our homes or simply creating contexts for people of diverse backgrounds to feel welcomed, accepted, and loved in Jesus’ name. (As my wife and I have hosted many neighborhood parties and gatherings over the years, my across-the-street neighbor Kelly once referred to me as the “mayor” of our neighborhood!)

Conversation: Conversations with credible Christians are the most powerful witness to most people who are not believers. So for most of us wanting to grow in evangelism, counting conversations rather than conversions is a good starting point. Let’s learn to engage in conversation with our unbelieving neighbors, colleagues, and fellow pickleball players. Pray for the Spirit’s leading. Learn to share your own conversion story in bite-size chunks. Even in a skeptical age, most people would accept an invitation to church from a friend.[8]

Missio, the church plant I lead in Pasadena, has sought to make dialogue and questions a central part of our engagement—particularly with the scientists at Caltech and in Pasadena. To reach our specific context, we host science/faith events on the Caltech campus and include a Q&A after each sermon to help them pursue truth. And when we baptized a Caltech freshman this past March, he brought about a dozen of his unbelieving friends to the service. Often evangelism begets evangelism!

Church planting is a means whereby a whole congregation can embody and express the good news of Jesus Christ in highly contextualized ways. For this reason, it will always be a significant and powerful learning lab and testing ground for the church’s work of evangelism. May the Spirit empower our work as evangelists through the work of missional leaders and church planters. ■

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UNDERSTANDING EVANGELISM IN RELATION TO PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS

Jose Abraham

Growing up in a Pentecostal family in India, I was taught that all those who did not believe in certain teachings of my church—whether Christians or non-Christians—were destined for damnation. Though the church was passionate about evangelism, we understood evangelism in the limited sense of preaching the gospel, going door-to-door, open-air meetings, tract distribution, broadcasting the *Jesus* film, sharing testimonies, and apologetic preaching. As everyone outside the church was considered the target of mission, our relationship with "the other" was limited to evangelizing and converting them to our church. With the rise of Hindu fundamentalism and the enactment of anticonversion laws in various provinces in India, such evangelistic activities came under severe criticism. In a similar vein, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin noted that Christians in the West were growing ashamed of the aggressive and crusading spirit of evangelism of European missionaries in the colonial period.[1] And the opportunities provided by global migration to engage with non-Christian friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens, coupled with a desire to become agents of reconciliation rather than aggression, made Christians in the West ambivalent towards evangelism as a whole.

While we are called to be bearers of the gospel for all humankind, there is much confusion regarding what evangelism is in the post-Christian era, especially in relation to people of other faiths. In this brief article, we will look at how we can have a robust understanding of evangelism among those of other faiths in today's world.

Evangelism and Culture in the Early Church

The term "evangel," or "good news," was used by the inhabitants of the Roman Empire to denote the "announcement of such events as the birth of an heir to the emperor, his coming-of-age, and his ascension."[2] However, early Christians, who called themselves evangelists, used the same term to declare the good news of God's reign and salvation brought by Jesus Christ. David Bosch argues that "evangelism is the core, heart, or center of mission."[3] Evangelism is announcing the transforming good news of Jesus Christ and inviting others to believe in it and to "become partakers in his Kingdom."[4]

Following the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, early Christians made disciples wherever they went. Jehu Hanciles argued that as soon as Christianity emerged in Jerusalem, it spread immediately to the rest of Asia, Africa, and Europe through the work of Christian traders and merchants.[5]

In my reading, the early Christian community very well realized the significance of culture and traditions for individual and community development. The early Christians, who were mostly Jewish believers, retained their old Hebrew worship forms. In other words, their identity in Christ did not require them to eradicate their Jewishness. They continued regularly going to the local synagogues and the temple but broke bread in their homes. For the early church, evangelism meant contextualizing the gospel in people's own languages and engaging with people's varied cultures. A key part of this involved challenging injustice and exercising radical acceptance of the marginalized in different contexts, which became hallmarks of Christian evangelism. In this way, the gospel of Jesus Christ became the good news for all.

Colonialism and Mission

With the rise of the Enlightenment and Protestant Reformation, however, a dichotomy was created between body and mind, religious and secular, and spiritual and material, which eventually placed religion as an activity of the mind. This had a great impact on evangelism and the ways the European church engaged with people of other cultures and other religions. The Euro-centric cognitive approach to religions privileged the verbal over the affective (and music over other art forms), and it redefined religious belief as an abstract and universal phenomenon originating from rational individuals. Religion was thus separated from any cultural roots, and religions were approached as monolithic traditions with grand narratives. Wilfred Cantwell Smith coined the term "reification of religion" to define this process.[6]

With colonialism, a European understanding of religion as a set of beliefs disconnected from domains of power became the norm for understanding world religions; this shaped our ideas of mission and evangelism. With the rise of the apologetic approach, in Christian encounters with people of other faiths, defending Christian doctrines was privileged over discerning what God was doing in other cultures and societies. As preaching became the prime mode of communicating the gospel, the process of inculturation being woven with the task of making disciples was frowned upon. Colonial mission and subsequent Christian traditions that emerged in Asia, Africa, and Latin America cultivated a rather negative attitude towards local musical traditions and artistic expressions. New converts were taken out of their cultural milieu and ushered into various traditions of European Christian heritage. Neglect of art was a major challenge that hindered holistic Christian witness in the modern period, argue Roberta King and William Dyrness.[7] Such an approach obliterated the cultural diversity of Christianity, which "reflects the image of the creator God," and prevented the gospel from taking deep root in local cultures and traditions and among communities of other religions.[8] Thus, with colonialism, Christianity became known in the Global South as the "white man's religion."

A New Approach to Evangelism and World Religions

According to Newbigin, during the colonial period, Christian missionaries, who engaged in evangelism with the support of European colonial rulers, understood Christian mission as a "crusade" and promoted a kind of "aggressive evangelism."[9] The colonial mission model has come under severe criticism in recent decades—especially its role in legitimizing European colonialism and downplaying the indigenous agency in the propagation of Christianity. In the wake of such a discussion on Christian mission, how should evangelism—particularly among those of other religions and cultures—be done in the postcolonial world?

One significantly important thing is our need to understand religions as discursive traditions, in contrast to Orientalists' approach to religions as monolithic traditions. Take Islam, for example. If, contrary to what we might learn from textbooks, Islam is not in fact a monolithic, trans-historic tradition, then how can we approach Islamic traditions? Building on the work of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, renowned anthropologist Talal Asad argues that we need to understand Islam, or any other religion for that matter, as hundreds of discursive traditions that are practiced by Muslims around the globe.[10] Their interpretations of the Quran, Hadith, and other authoritative sources are very much shaped by sociopolitical, economic, and cultural conditions. Discursive Islamic traditions are also formed in conversation with other religious traditions, cultures, and ideologies. As these conditions constantly change, their understanding of Islam also alters correspondingly. In this regard, it is essential to note the following words of Diana Eck: "Religions are not like stones passed from hand to hand through the ages. They are dynamic movements, more like rivers—flowing, raging, creative, splitting, converging."[11]

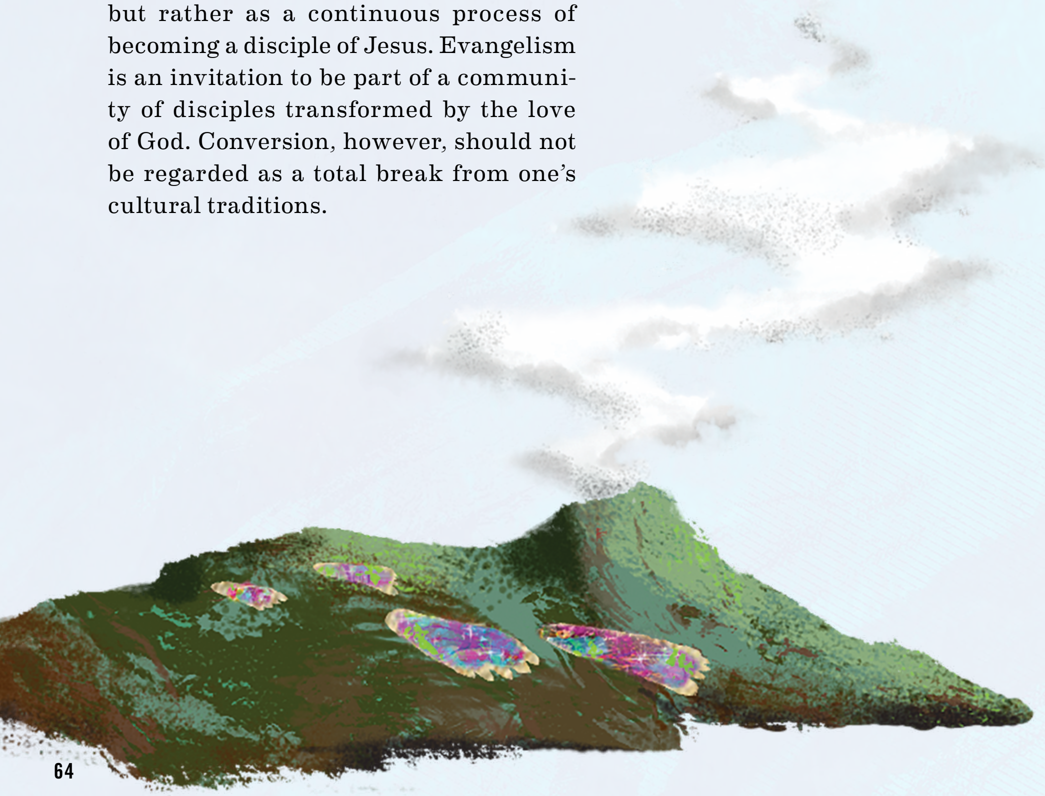
In my opinion, understanding Islam as a discursive tradition will help us account for both the unity and diversity among Muslims. Such an understanding will force us to pay greater attention to Islamic traditions practiced by Muslims in various contexts. The following words of J. Dudley Woodberry are significant in this regard: "Any meaningful dialogue with Muslims needs to start by walking with them, listening to them, and asking them questions."[12] The same should apply to our understanding and perspective of other religions.

Terry Muck echoes this sentiment when he argues that in order to contextualize the gospel, we should enter fully into the religious and cultural world of other people, "doing religious thinking alongside them, using their terms, asking their questions, using methods common to their way of thinking religiously."[13]

In what follows, I will explore a few approaches by which we might engage with people of other religions in such ways.

Evangelism, Culture, and "Insider" Movements

Scott Sunquist remarked that "evangelism is a call to belief, and by extension, it is a call to values, community and actions."[14] It is an invitation to turning away from the world and a turning to Jesus and falling in love with him. As we are called to make disciples and not converts, conversion needs to be understood not as a once-for-all event or goal but rather as a continuous process of becoming a disciple of Jesus. Evangelism is an invitation to be part of a community of disciples transformed by the love of God. Conversion, however, should not be regarded as a total break from one's cultural traditions.



Culture is what enables meaning, shapes sensibilities, and makes people comfortable with who they are. Culture is a set of subsystems that reflect the collective life of a community. It provides significance and goals for joint action. In my understanding, traditional models of mission follow the same logic as modern identity-making: by inviting people to take a new religious identity, we ask people to forsake all their preexisting ties and identities, thereby removing them from their sociopolitical and cultural traditions, which can be dangerous to new converts in many societies. For many Muslims, religious identity is strongly linked with all other aspects of life, so a change of identity would make it nearly impossible to remain a part of their own family, community, and society. Such believers should not be removed from their culture.

In this regard, and again taking Islam as an example, I would like to highlight the observation of Woodberry that Donald Larson, in an article entitled "The Cross-Cultural Communication of the Gospel to Muslims," developed the concept of "bi-passing" in which Muslims and nominal Christians of different cultural backgrounds can move directly into a "new humanity" (Eph 2:15) without either having to "pass" into the other's cultures and become culturally like them as precondition of becoming a Christian.[15] In my understanding, an insider movement among followers of Christ in other religious traditions—whether Muslim or Hindu or other—takes cultural issues into serious consideration. If someone believes in the redemptive work of Christ, then they should be allowed to be an "insider" to their families and socioreligious communities in order to witness their faith effectively. The key is to realize that there is no prescribed model for being a Christian socially, culturally, and legally.

Evangelism and Social Action

Sunquist notes that, in the past 20 or 30 years, many programs and books on evangelism have focused upon "community building and fighting against injustice."[16] If evangelism means bringing good news, there should not be any separation between evangelism and social action—the two essential elements of Christian mission. We cannot care only for the soul of the people without caring for the whole person. The Greek term for salvation, sozo, which means health or wholeness, implies that salvation is not limited to the spiritual needs of an individual but rather covers physical, emotional, and social needs. Sunquist writes, "It relates to all of a person, all relationships, and all of creation."[17]

In the 21st century, in a religiously and culturally pluralist world, we cannot understand the meaning of the gospel or engage in God's mission in isolation. People of other faiths are not only our target of mission; we need to partner with them.

Amos Yong argues that we must engage religious others at three levels of an "ortho"-triad: orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy.[18] At the level of orthodoxy, we engage the religious others intellectually in interreligious dialogue in order to compare religious scriptures and doctrines. Though we can be quite "successful" engaging others at this discursive level, often such engagement is the result of our passion for articulating and defending the truth of Christian orthodoxy. The orthopraxic domain invites us to engage with people of many and diverse faiths at the practical level. This includes "biblically and theologically responsible practices, actions, and behaviors, ranging from the various rituals we perform (e.g., baptism, the Lord's Supper) to the values we live out in the realm of social ethics (justice, mercy, prudence, etc.)."[19] At this level, we are invited to think about issues of the common good and envision and act together to create a just and equal society for all—Christian or not.

Evangelism in the Context of Migration and Hospitality

A defining feature of current globalization is the massive movement of peoples and people groups around the globe. Globalization and changes in immigration laws have brought diverse languages, cultures and religious traditions from around the world to the West. It diversified our societies and radically altered the landscape of cities and towns with the mushrooming of mosques and temples—not to mention ethnic restaurants and other similar spaces. Thus, Christians, not only in the Global South but also in Europe and the Americas, now live amid cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and others are our neighbors, colleagues, and fellow citizens making our workplaces and public squares much more diverse. The merging of cultures and meeting of religions are unavoidable, and ignoring religious others is no longer an option in our global village. Are we able to take the risk of being vulnerable by entering into the world of religious and cultural others?

Today, churches and Christian organizations cannot ignore migrants and issues related to migration. European and North American countries cannot sustain their economies without an uninterrupted flow of immigrants from the South. One pivotal question we need to ask is, how can we prepare churches and Christian organizations to shoulder the tremendous responsibility of serving millions of migrants, who come with their different religious and cultural traditions?

The meaning of hospitality is an important issue to be addressed in this regard. One question is about the role we want to play as the host to our guests. Do we want to serve immigrants on our own terms? Or are we ready to serve our guests on their terms? Are we ready to embrace them with their cultures and religious traditions, which may be foreign to us? Are we committed to being shaped by their cultures and traditions?

Hospitality is an integral dimension of interreligious encounters and dialogue. As Newbigin has noted, we often encounter religious others with the attitude that we have "nothing to lose but everything to give."[20] For Yong, genuine hospitality is an invitation to open ourselves up to the ideas and teachings of religious others. "Those in other faiths have beliefs and practices that can challenge or enrich—sometimes both—our way of thinking and living."[21] Hospitality assumes a humble posture to understand the world from others' perspectives and a commitment to be persuaded by others' ideas. So genuine dialogue is not risk-free; "the goal of dialogue is not to establish an agreement or to ignore the differences."[22] Rather, it leads to self-criticism and self-discovery, which produces "authentic transformation in both parties."[23]

Evangelism and Orthopathy

Finally, returning to the "ortho"-triad mentioned above: the third component, orthopathy, invites us to engage with religious others on the affective level. It is engaging others at the heart level "in a much kinder, humbler, and more loving, empathetic manner."[24] This level of engagement takes the moral significance of human passions, affections, emotions, and desires seriously.[25] Therefore, out of the three levels, it is the deepest level of interfaith engagement.

In a recent lecture, Yong elaborated on the meaning of the orthopathic dimension of hospitality in relation to people of other faiths.[26] We are motivated and driven by our bodies' affective dimensions—concerns, fears, worries, anxieties. Even though these pathic dimensions of our beings are subterranean, they powerfully impact our engagement with others and the world. We are driven affectively more so than we are discursively or intellectually. Orthopathic engagement in multifaith contexts involves embracing our own fears while confronting the vulnerabilities of religious and cultural others. So, we not

only share our faith with others but also develop the boldness to listen and hear the wondrous works of God in other cultures declared in other languages. Such an engagement is more meaningful and effective than entertaining ideas and doctrines at the ideational level. It challenges us to recognize the resources available in other cultures and traditions to deal with the issues and challenges of life. It motivates us to cross borders and enter into unfamiliar spaces to utilize these resources to deal with our own fears and vulnerabilities.

So, at the orthopathic level, when we connect with religious others at the heart level, there is an opportunity for mutual conversion and enrichment. Engagement with religious others at affective and pathic levels is even more profound than being open to the teachings of religious others (orthodoxy) and being willing to work with them on issues of common interest (orthopraxy). It is the deepest level of interfaith engagement because, at this level, we are continually transformed—in our way of life and in our loves, hopes, and desires—through mutual hospitality and persuasions.

May we engage with our neighbors of other religions in this way, and with an embracing recognition of their cultures, contexts, and their whole selves, as we continue to renew our understanding of evangelism in a post-Christian and postcolonial age. ■

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A FAITH OF CRISIS

Kutter Callaway

An interview with Kutter Callaway, associate dean of the Center for Advanced Theological Studies, by FULLER magazine Editor in Chief Jerome Blanco.

JEROME BLANCO: A key idea you write about is a resistance to viewing theism and atheism as polar opposites and instead understanding them as ends of a spectrum. In your and Barry Taylor's book, *The Aesthetics of Atheism: Theology and Imagination in Contemporary Culture*, you use the term "a/theism." How does this understanding transform the way the church understands today's cultural landscape?

KUTTER CALLAWAY: Actually, I think what I'm after is neither a stark polarity nor a spectrum along which people move but something else altogether: a perspective that stands completely outside the debates that the theism/atheism spectrum fosters. So as people of Christian faith look out at the landscape of contemporary society, what the concept of a/theism offers them is a way of approaching the broader world in which we live, and move, and have our being, not in terms of how certain cultural artifacts, phenomena, and practices might be understood as "more" or "less" theistic or atheistic but in terms of the re-sacralization of the whole of reality. The boundaries between sacred/secular, holy/profane, theism/atheism have become so fully blurred in today's cultural landscape that they lack any real purchase. And while some may lament this reality—indeed, many have—I see this blurring of boundaries as a unique opportunity for the church to enter into new spaces for reflecting on timeless questions.

JB: How does acknowledging and engaging with theism outside of the church in this way reshape our theology of mission?

KC: The most direct answer to this question is probably the most obvious, but I'll say it anyway. If people outside the church are engaging in theological practices and asking theological questions (whether they are "theists" or not), then our first instinct should not be, "Are they doing it correctly!?" but rather, "How might we join in?" My work with atheists and atheistic movements has convinced me that God is always already up to something in the world, and this divine activity started long before I arrived on the scene, and will continue long after I'm gone. So the only real missional questions I need to be asking myself are, first, "How do I participate in what God is doing in the world?" and second, "How can I be sure I don't get in God's way?

JB: On the flip side of this, what does an inward look at atheism within the church say about how we understand the church's missional task?

KC: I always like to quote G. K. Chesterton on this point. In his book *Orthodoxy*, he says, "When the world shook and the sun was wiped out of heaven, it was not at the crucifixion, but at the cry from the cross: the cry which confessed that God was forsaken of God. And now let the revolutionists choose a creed from all the creeds and a god from all the gods of the world. . . . They will not find another god who has himself been in revolt. . . . They will find only one divinity who uttered their isolation; only one religion in which God seemed for an instant to be an atheist."[1] I love this quote and this idea because, as I understand him, Chesterton is getting at two key points: First, at the heart of the Christian faith is a moment of atheism—of divine abandonment, doubt, and isolation. Second, it is this atheistic core of Christianity that serves as the most direct and immediate point of connection between the person of Christ crucified and the atheist. So whether we identify as "insiders" or "outsiders" to the Christian community, God knows the depth of our doubt and despair and skepticism because he was there too. And, at least from my perspective, this is the fundamental starting point for our missional task, because it not only admits our own doubts but also embraces all doubt by locating it within the life of God.

JB: With all of this in mind, what might evangelism or the proclamation of the good news mean in this era?

KC: I tend to talk about this not as having a "crisis of faith" but as forging a "faith of crisis." What I mean is that, first and foremost, we have to acknowledge that things have changed. Actually, change has changed. And one of the changes postsecular society has undergone is that many of the points of reference that Christians used to rely upon in their gospel proclamation have been eliminated. So we not only need to find new language and new methods of communication but an altogether new set of coordinates for helping people make sense of the world that has been handed to them. It's for this reason that, in my mind, a faith of crisis needs to begin in the catastrophic—in the traumatic real that defines so much of contemporary society. It also needs to imagine a new kind of openness to the world—an openness marked not by dogmatism and exclusion but by a creative embrace of the tragicomedy that is life. Finally, a faith of crisis proclaims the good news by acknowledging that some gods need to die. It is a response to the world that does not replace one powerful god (e.g., religion) with another (e.g., science) but rather takes up the posture of Jesus,

> *who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross! (Phil 2:6–7 NET)* ■

ENDNOTES

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Kutter Callaway is the William K. Brehm Chair of Worship, Theology, and the Arts; associate dean of the Center for Advanced Theological Studies; and associate professor of theology and culture. He is actively engaged in writing and speaking on the interaction between theology and culture—particularly film, television, and online media—in both academic and popular forums. Callaway holds two PhDs, one in theology and the second in psychological science, both from Fuller. He has authored and co-authored a number of books, most recently, *Theology for Psychology and Counseling: An Invitation to Holistic Christian Practice.*

TO BE THE GOSPEL: EVANGELISM INFORMED BY CHAPLAINCY, IDENTITY, AND EMBODIMENT

Jaclyn Williams

Jaclyn Williams is assistant professor of the practice of preaching and chaplaincy. An American Baptist-ordained minister and an Alliance of Baptists-endorsed chaplain, her current research interests include incarnational and embodied preaching, performing artist training as spiritual practice, and resiliency resources in pastoral and spiritual care practice. Additionally, she has worked professionally as an actor and has trained in classical ballet. As a preacher, chaplain, educator, and performing artist, Williams is always curious about what it means to holistically walk out a life of faith in all seasons. This curiosity fuels her time in research, practice, and teaching.

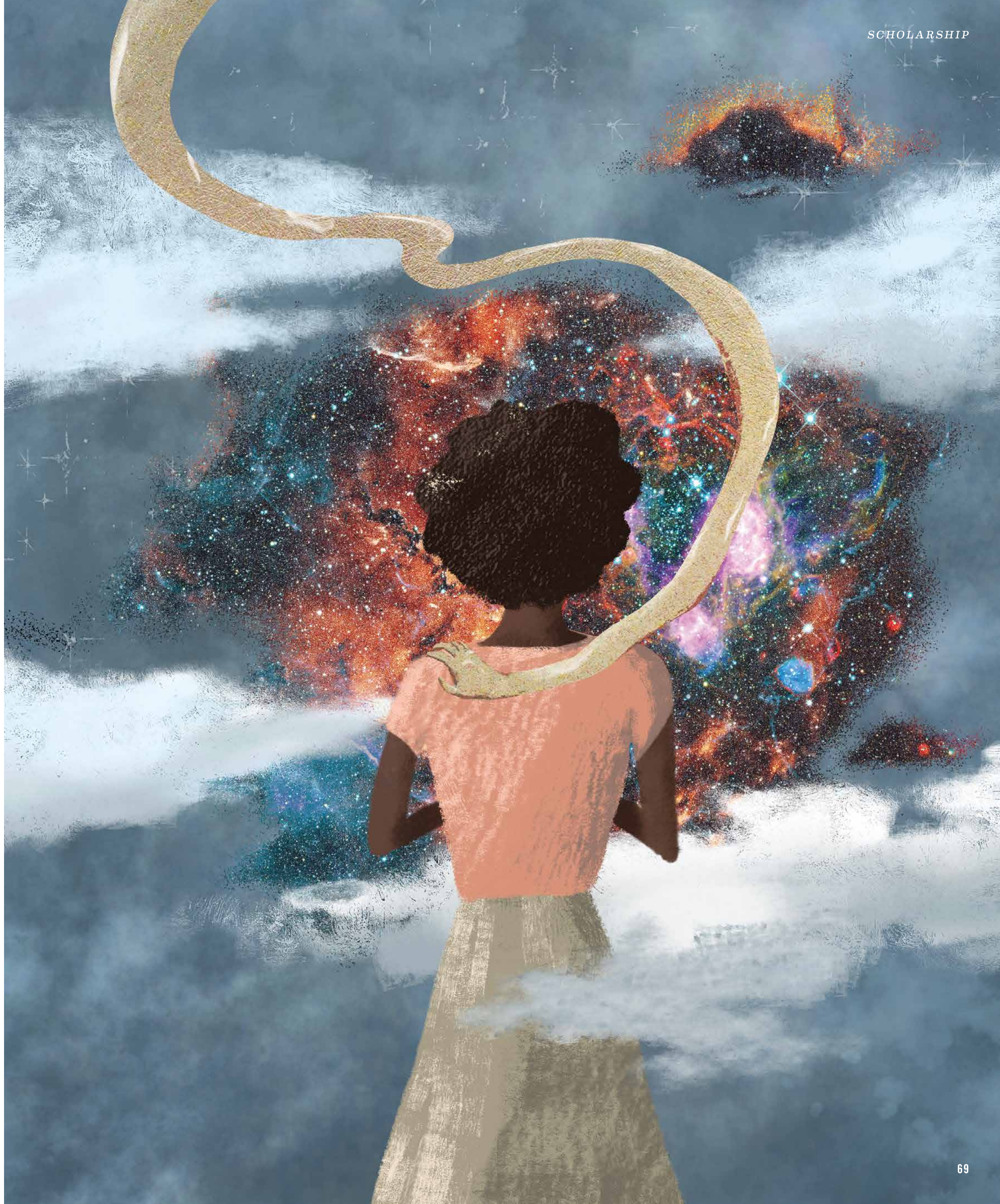
The word "evangelism" sends me back to a building decorated with a hodgepodge of couches, tables, and chairs. The new sanctuary of my childhood church was not yet completed, so the sixth-grade Sunday school class met in a temporary building. Apparently, sixth graders could be trusted to walk across the parking lot, and we felt every bit of that validation of our maturity. On one particular Sunday morning, we had a guest teacher. We'll call him Deacon Smith. He was not one of the "cool" deacons who looked the other way when he saw us crossing over to the donut shop down the street before Sunday school. He was one of the strict deacons whose voice was always stern and whose presence was intimidating. This particular morning, he had come to tell us that we didn't love Jesus enough.

Deacon Smith was a member of the street ministry evangelism team. The bulk of his time teaching that morning consisted of him presenting, in his stern voice, a litany of questions about our evangelism activities or lack thereof. He asked us to raise our hands if we prayed at the lunch table, if we asked our friends at school if Jesus was their Lord and Savior, if we were willing to give up our Saturdays to join the evangelism team as they went knocking on doors. No raised hands. Only avoidant eyes and low uncomfortable sighs and laughs. After a few moments of awkward silence, he exhaled and shook his head. "You all just don't love Jesus enough. And you don't care if your friends go to hell." More head shaking and a resolute, helpless shrug of the shoulders. The joy of the boundary-testing glazed donut had faded. The feeling of maturity gained in that walk across the parking lot was a distant memory.

On the surface, I was as indifferent to the weight of this message as my peers. At 11, we were just on the cusp of perfecting our laissez-faire teenage posture. But underneath the surface, I felt its weight. I was gutted.

Deacon Smith was a product of a particular paradigm. The paradigm encompassed societal, cultural, and ecclesial elements. He had been taught that the Great Commandment and the Great Commission are manifest in one way. He had been taught that sharing the good news of Christ was serious and severe business. I wish I could go back to the moment, with the grace of a more mature person, and see his heart amid the sternness. He wanted us to flourish, yet the message he preached made me flounder. I'm sure that my recollection of him is hugely impacted by the emotional and spiritual labor of the moment. Everything was black and white in my faith life then, but a part of me wanted to embrace something grayer. Something less defined was calling to me. Was sharing Christ a one-size-fits-all endeavor? Why did it feel as if my identity as a human being was at odds with this particular way of sharing Christ? At 11 years old, I did not have the holistic bandwidth to tackle these questions.

Gone are the days when I processed my faith based on black-and-white absolutes. I have found a space for a less defined pathway of sharing Christ. Commandment and Commission are foundational. How I define and experience them is much more expansive. This is a manifestation of how the Triune God continues to save. However, the tension remains in the body of Christ and for us creatures as we move through creation. Part of our identities—as human beings and as Christians—wants to tell the story of our salvation without a transactional distortion or agenda. We need pathways of recognition, reconciliation,



and redemption to reclaim the heart and release the hurt. So we ask, what can an honest and integrated way of authentically sharing Christ-love look like? My own practice as a chaplain has led me to think about how understanding both identity and embodiment helps us reimagine evangelism in a new way.

I wonder what was at stake for Deacon Smith? Along with the call to Commandment and Commission, there was an identity aspect at work. He was invested and convicted. We can make assumptions about how he had been formed in a particular theology of evangelism. Based on his tone and presentation, we can also assume that the stakes of not enacting this theology in a specific way had consequences in his mind. The stakes were high for him—stakes of kingdom and of sharing identity.

Our encounters with God, faith, and lived theology are convicting. Our experience of Christ shapes us, and our understanding of interpretations of Christ shapes us. Culture also forms us. The Holy Spirit's wind calls to us. As we vacillate between these influences, the discernment process can feel treacherous to our identity when it is tied to a transactional agenda rather than a sharing of Christ-love. The growing fruit is anemic when stakes and claims are planted in arid soil. The healthy, life-giving cells are too few. Identity begins to fight for air.

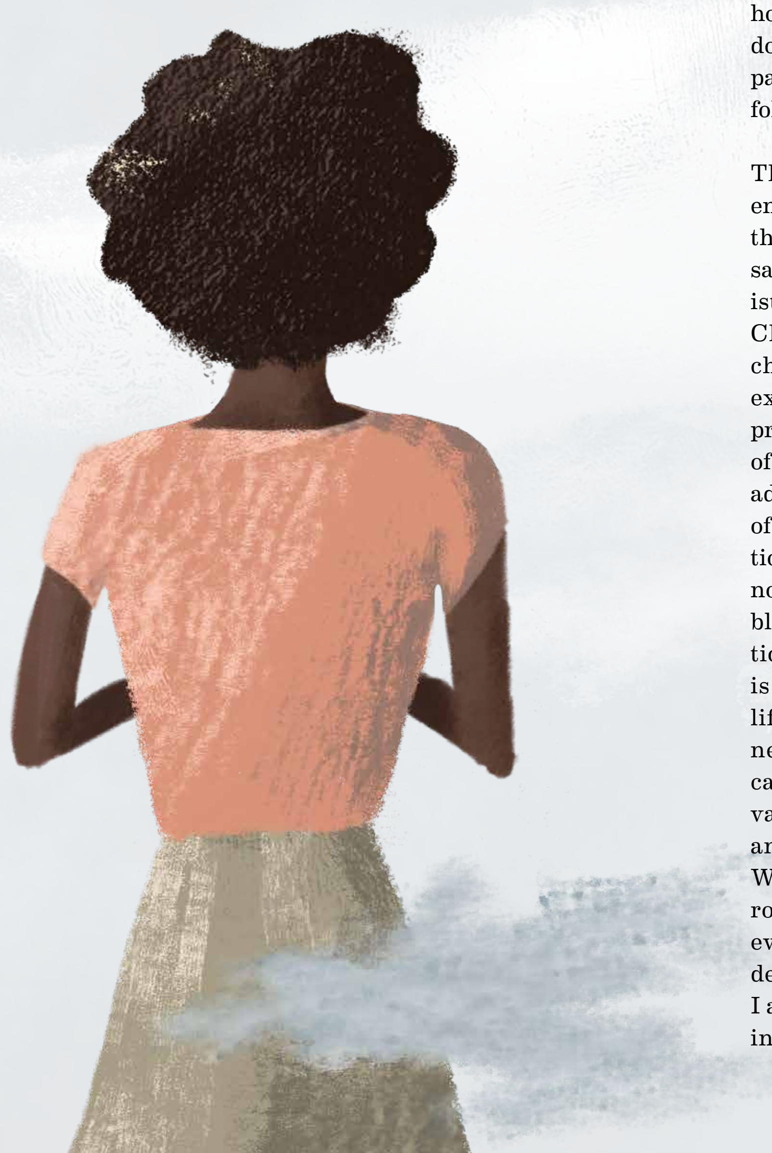
Taking the liberty to speak for myself and the other sixth graders in the room that Sunday morning, we could not articulate our fully realized selves. We could experience the tension of accepting or rejecting Deacon Smith's proposed action plan, but we did not know how to hold that tension. The stakes were hard to name because our sense of self was being formed. The core of our sharing-identities was being questioned, or so it seemed, and we were left weak. We were left with shame, indifference, and fear in response to another's conviction. We were consumed by these emotions. Even if we were to charge out the door and take to the streets as radical evangelists with the fervor of Paul, the space created for the theology and practice of evangelism was not sustainable. Shame preaches shame when traveling, unaware, from person to person.

Sharing Christ, vocally and viscerally, is an experiment in creating space and holding space with humility and love. We offer what we have received. We birth what we have nurtured. Humility and love were not what Deacon Smith led with on that Sunday morning. Subsequently, they differed from what we took as we left class that day. This is not a condemnation of Deacon Smith but of how evangelism was taught and practiced.

I've been a chaplain for over ten years. Identity work in self-reflection and self-awareness is at the core of chaplaincy training and practice. Chaplains investigate their own stories as a resource in helping others with this kind of investigation.[1] Chaplains learn to lean into self-reflection and self-awareness concerning their own life as a "living human document" in order to provide holistic care to others who want and need to do the same.[2]

Integration is a critical element of chaplaincy work. Chaplains integrate their individual beliefs and value paradigm within a caregiving paradigm that meets the care-receiver where they are and holds that space while engaging in interventions that invite wholeness. The goal is to do this work without an agenda, and we work hard to achieve that goal. Chaplains constantly function in action-reflection-action mode, moving with the moment as spiritual, emotional, and relational needs are assessed.

Evangelism, however, is not a tool in my chaplain tool bag. In fact, it is explicitly prohibited for board-certified chaplains. "Members shall affirm the religious and spiritual freedom of all persons and refrain from imposing doctrinal positions or spiritual practices on persons whom they encounter in their professional role as chaplain."[3] Yet, the presence of a chaplain is inherently a public expression of personal witness. Chaplains come from many different faith and cultural backgrounds. Who I am and what I believe show up in my caregiving practice. It is part of my job to know what I believe. Even though I do not evangelize, I embody Commandment. I hold Commission with an open hand. What does "making a disciple" look like in an expansive definition of teaching, leading, and following a Christ-formed life model?



The purpose of a chaplain's presence is to embody and enact their beliefs and values, thus creating spaces for others to do the same. Most chaplaincy contexts are pluralistic. Even those that work in a seemingly Christian context—such as education chaplains—cannot count on monolithic expressions of how faith is processed and practiced. The interventions and outcomes of chaplaincy assessment and practice are admittedly not geared toward the "change" of the care-receiver but toward "stabilization" within the circumstance. This does not mean a competent chaplain is merely blown by whatever wind the care situation necessitates. Instead, the chaplain is rooted in their spiritual lineage and life while adapting to the present holistic needs of the care situation. It is the capacity to go deeper into one's beliefs and values that allows a chaplain to see, hear, and honor the beliefs and values of others. With healthy holistic stakes, this same rooting brings Christ and speaks Christ even when verbal expressions are not the delivery method. As a Christian chaplain, I aim to "be" the gospel and know my role in the present moment.

When words and doctrine seem hollow and even cruel in a crisis, embodied manifestations of grace, mercy, and love represent Christ in a far more profound way. In a moment of crisis, the words often don't matter. What words can provide comfort when the fragility and vulnerability of life on this side of eternity has imploded upon itself? What are the words that make suffering "okay"? In my experience, my words are not the bridge between breaths seeking healing and hope. My embodied love and discipleship are the bridge. I am there to be with the people amid the crisis. "Being with" is a theological and practical stance. I share Christ through the giving of a cold cup of water, a shared sigh of frustration, an outreached hand, or a shoulder on which to lean. Of course, verbal communication comes into play, but the motivation behind the words is what I have consumed and offered from my beliefs and values. I know that I have been formed by my love of Christ and my life as a follower of Christ. This knowledge rests in my body. It is my body that shows up in the way that I provide care.

Mark 14:22–24 invites us, viscerally, into a message of evangelistic embodiment:

> *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."*

The bread and wine embody a new covenant of relationship. The act is the message. Paul exhorts us to reenact the message as a way of experiencing the relationship anew, with individual and communal reflection and awareness.[4] We hold that space, nurture that space, and act from that space of constant renewal.

In the words of body theologian Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, "A reorientation of Christianity must begin with a rediscovery of the body and its energies."[5] Perhaps the church, as we wrestle with re-engaging evangelism, can be guided by a chaplaincy-influenced embodiment framework of sharing Christ. Chaplains "show up" to the moment of discord and disconnect, having consumed, nurtured, and been formed by their beliefs and values. We not only carry the good news, but we also re-present the good news in tangible and intangible ways. We do our best to do this work with a humility that knows the care-receiver is the one who is shaping the agenda of the encounter. Yet the chaplain's identity is a part of the witness of how that care is crafted. My chaplaincy practice is shaped by embodiment as an answer to spoken and unspoken questions. Additionally, one cannot help but embrace an embodied way of questioning. Stakes of identity must be acknowledged and reconciled so that one does not operate from a place of anemic self-identity or narrowly defined role-identity.

Some years ago, when I was a very new chaplain, I found my body in a space without air. It was a conference room. A family was being informed that their precious child would likely not survive the night. Family members and the lead physician were seated around a table while the other hospital personnel stood around the walls—nurses, social workers, other physicians, and a lone chaplain. The room was filled with sterility and coldness. White coats, clinical language, and doom. The life in the room was being choked out with every syllable of the offered progno-

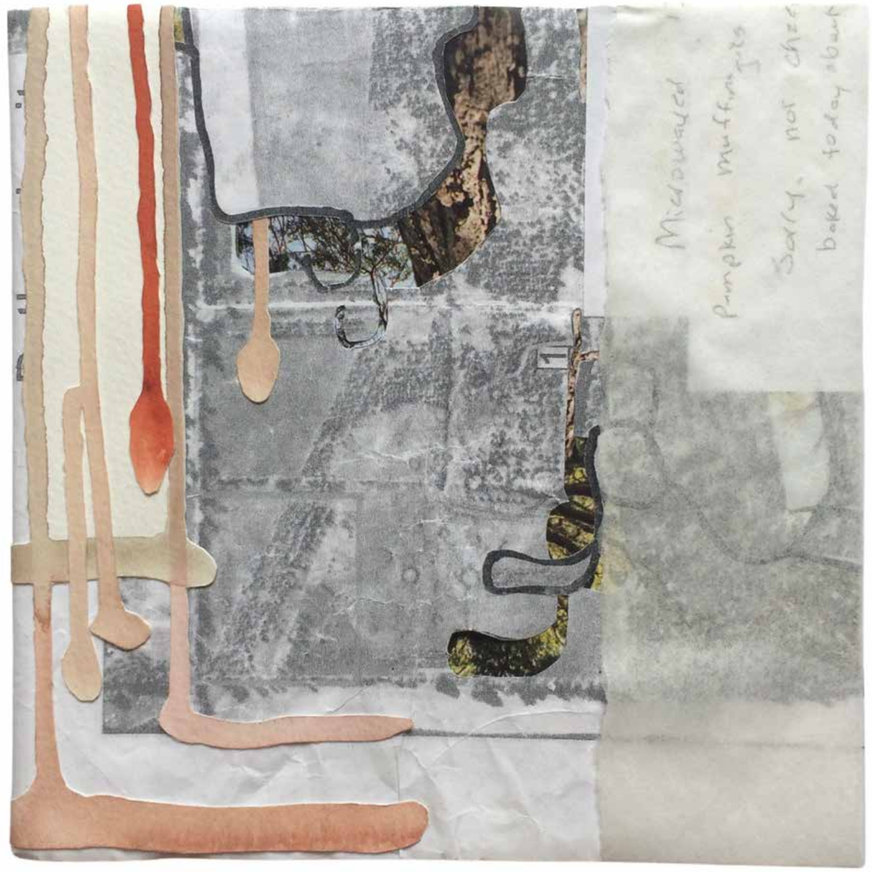
sis. In my soul, I felt helpless. In my spirit, I felt pain—the pain of breaking hearts. Through my experience of Christ at that moment, my body reacted. As the physician spoke, I took timid steps forward, propelled by an embodied belief of accompaniment in pain. In silence, I placed my right hand on the right shoulder of this mother, and I took a deep breath. I had not even introduced myself before this moment, and now I was standing at her back like a sentry. She did not acknowledge my presence or hand, and my mind went on alert. My brain said, "You've intruded! Retreat! There's nothing you can do!" My body would not let me retreat. Hand on shoulder, her choking breath inhaling and exhaling with my helpless breath. For a few moments, while the physician finished, the family asked questions and searched for hope. The mother did not ask any questions. As the meeting broke and the hospital personnel made their way to clear the room for the family to have a few moments alone, I took one final shoulder-touching breath and stepped back towards the wall. As I gathered myself and turned to walk out, planning to return in a few minutes to begin my "official" care of the family, the mother turned around and said, "Whose hand was that?" I met her gaze and lifted my hand. "You . . . helped . . . me breathe. Your hand helped me breathe." I walked a nightmare with that family that night. My body sensed the apparent path of sharing Christ when my mind was too overwhelmed to know the way.

Although the hoped-for outcomes of chaplaincy practice and explicit evangelism work differ, connections of identity and embodiment can be translated between the two. Part of the reorientation of evangelistic ministry should include expansive definitions of whom we are bringing to the work and how we are offering the work holistically.

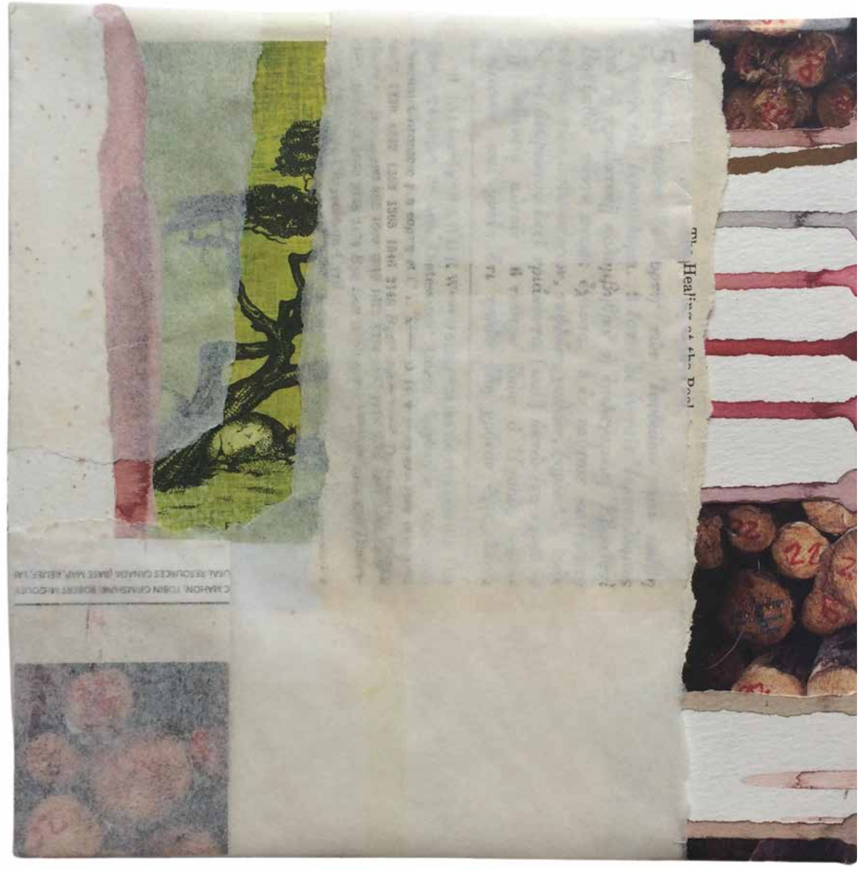
If I could return to that temporary Sunday school building, with its hodgepodge of arranged furniture, and meet with Deacon Smith today, I wonder if we might share our stories, bringing our identities and encounters of Christ into each other's experiences. I think the with-ness of that moment would speak to the gospel. I believe that simply through that sharing of being, we would see Jesus. ■

ENDNOTE

1. E. P. Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 152–153. Wimberly, a proponent of narrative pastoral care, provides a valuable framework for this interchange: "In my theology, the wounded-healer model embraces our identity and experiences and uses them in ministry. Thus, the call confirms our true identity and does not work against it. The alternative, however, disconfirms our identity and makes God hostile to our growth and development. This is to say that our personal experiences and gifts are the stuff God uses to enable us to minister to others."
2. A. T. Boisen, *The Exploration of the Inner World* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1952), 10. Boisen is an influential figure in Clinical Pastoral Education, and he is credited with introducing the concept of the "living human document," which is the idea that human beings can be read and understood as sacred texts.
3. "Professional Ethics," Association of Professional Chaplains, apchaplains.org, https://www.apchaplains.org/standards/professional-ethics. The Association of Professional Chaplains, of which I am a member and from which I am a board-certified chaplain, has a code of ethics that outlines the ethical behavior of the role and practitioners of chaplaincy. Each chaplain must recertify their willingness to adhere to these standards annually.
4. 1 Corinthians 11:23–34
5. E. Moltmann-Wendel, *I Am My Body: A Theology of Embodiment* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 57. Moltmann-Wendel's thesis is that the body and divinity are connected inherently. For her this connection necessitates intentional engagement, focused on the body, in public and private faith life.



+ *Haven II by Melody Bellefeuille-Frost. Papers, ink, paint, 2021. See more of Melody Bellefeuille-Frost's art in the opening and closing covers, and on pp. 10–11, 32–33, 54, and 93.*



+ *Haven III by Melody Bellefeuille-Frost. Papers, paint, 2021. See more of Melody Bellefeuille-Frost's art in the opening and closing covers, and on pp. 10–11, 32–33, 54, and 93.*

A Hopeful Missiology

WITH KIRSTEEN KIM

KIRSTEEN KIM is the Paul E. Pierson Chair in World Christianity and associate dean for the Center for Missiological Research at Fuller Seminary. Doing theology from the context of world Christianity and for missional purposes, she has research interests in the areas of theology of mission, pneumatology, world Christianity, Korean studies, and development studies. An editor and author of multiple publications, she is the editor of the book series Theology and Mission in World Christianity and is the author of *A History of Korean Christianity and Christianity as a World Religion*, written in collaboration with her husband and Fuller professor Sebastian C. H. Kim, in addition to many other works.

CHANTELLE GIBBS: ***You were recently installed as Fuller's Paul E. Pierson Chair of World Christianity. "World Christianity" is multifaceted and nuanced, but how would you summarize what it looks like today in the 21st century?***

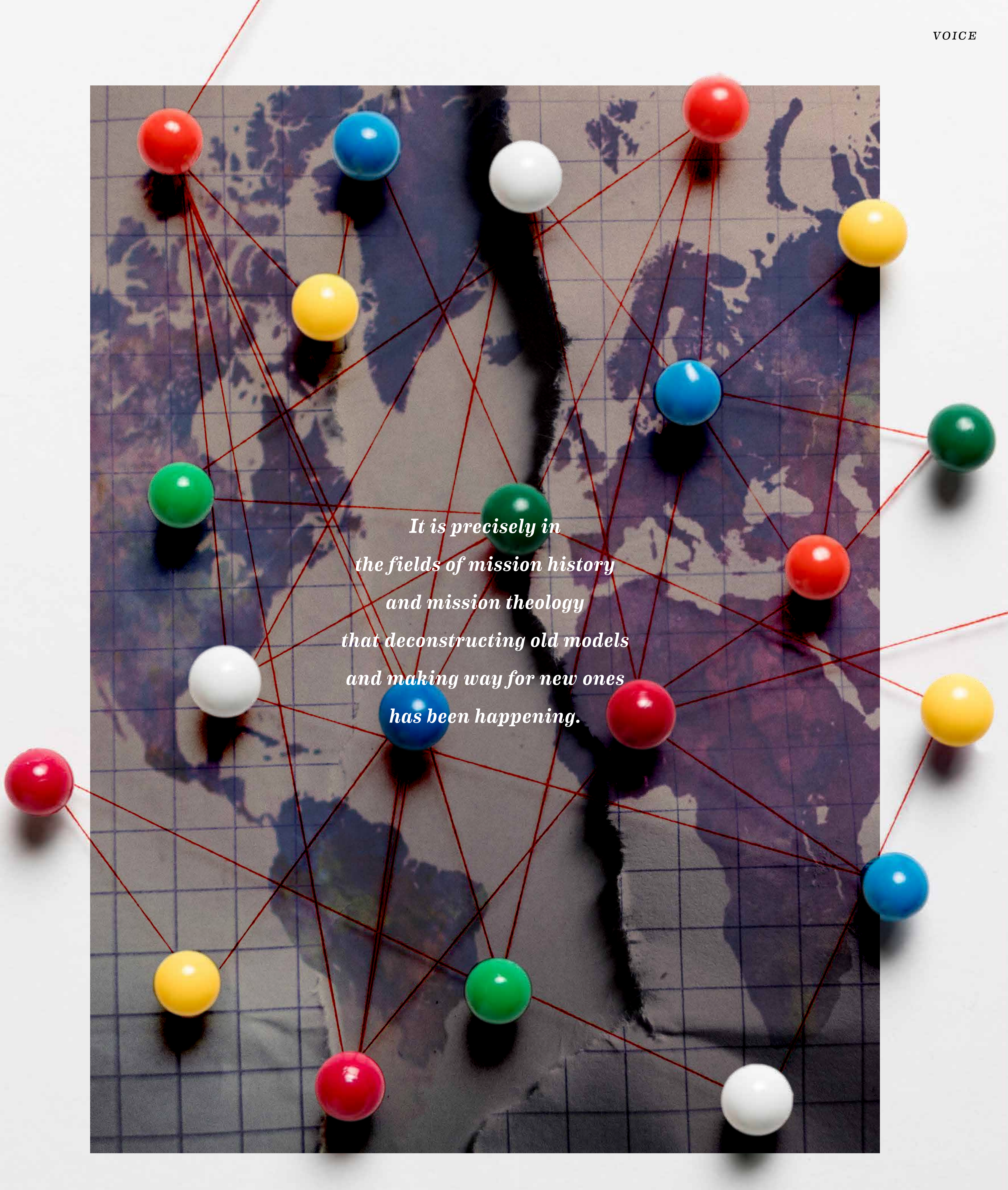
KIRSTEEN KIM: "World Christianity" in my title refers to two related things: first, to the fact that Christianity is globally widespread, locally rooted, and interconnected. It always has been, and it is now more so than ever. The early church spread in all directions from Jerusalem, into Judea, Samaria, Ethiopia, Asia Minor, around the Mediterranean, and to the capital of the Roman Empire, as we can read in the Acts of the Apostles. The data shows that, during the first millennium, the Christian population was far larger east of Jerusalem than it was west of it, spread across the Middle East and Asia along the trade routes all the way to China and India. Now more than two-thirds of the world's Christians live outside the West. The continent with the largest number of Christians is no longer Europe but Africa, with about a quarter of the world's Christian population.

Second, "world Christianity" refers to the study of the above phenomenon. In addition to analyzing the data, this academic field can be approached from several perspectives. Historical and social-scientific methods reveal different episodes in the Christian story and the different experiences of missions and Christian communities in varied contexts. Missiological theories like inculturation, liberation, interfaith relations, and personal and social transformation can help us understand the impact of Christianity on peoples and nations. The study of local or contextual theologies can reveal how the Christian faith is received by a community and how a church becomes locally rooted. Studies of globalization and ecumenics reveal how Christianity around the world is interconnected through global churches and networks, diaspora communities, and transnational agents, while also revealing inequities of the church worldwide.

The demographics of Christianity are an indication that the character of Christianity as a whole is changing. Theologically, as churches and Christian communities beyond the West grow in numbers, maturity, and well-being, issues and voices from the Global South and East, and from their diasporas in the North and West, are playing a larger role. But other aspects of Christianity take longer to change, such as the colonial legacy of superior attitudes by white Christians towards people who are racially, ethnically, culturally, religiously, and socially different. A leveling of the playing field in world Christianity has wide implications that may be hard for Western Christians to accept. The process of decentering the West to be part of world Christianity, rather than over it, is only just beginning.

CG: ***Speaking of decentering the West in world Christianity, a current dialogue within missiology is grappling with a deconstruction of old models to make way for new ones. What are the challenges in this task? What are the guiding principles?***

KK: Yes, indeed, it is—although not everywhere. In some circles, doing mission "as it has always been done" focuses on evangelism, church planting, and the unreached. Those who are rethinking mission are regarded as being disobedient to "the Great Commission" (meaning Matthew 28:18–20, interpreted in a particular way). In this view, mission is regarded as a task that must be completed by all means. Such missiology embraces the tools of the secular social sciences but rejects the study of history and theology. But it is precisely in the fields of mission history and mission theology that deconstructing old models and making way for new ones has been happening. These disciplines raise critical questions about what has been done



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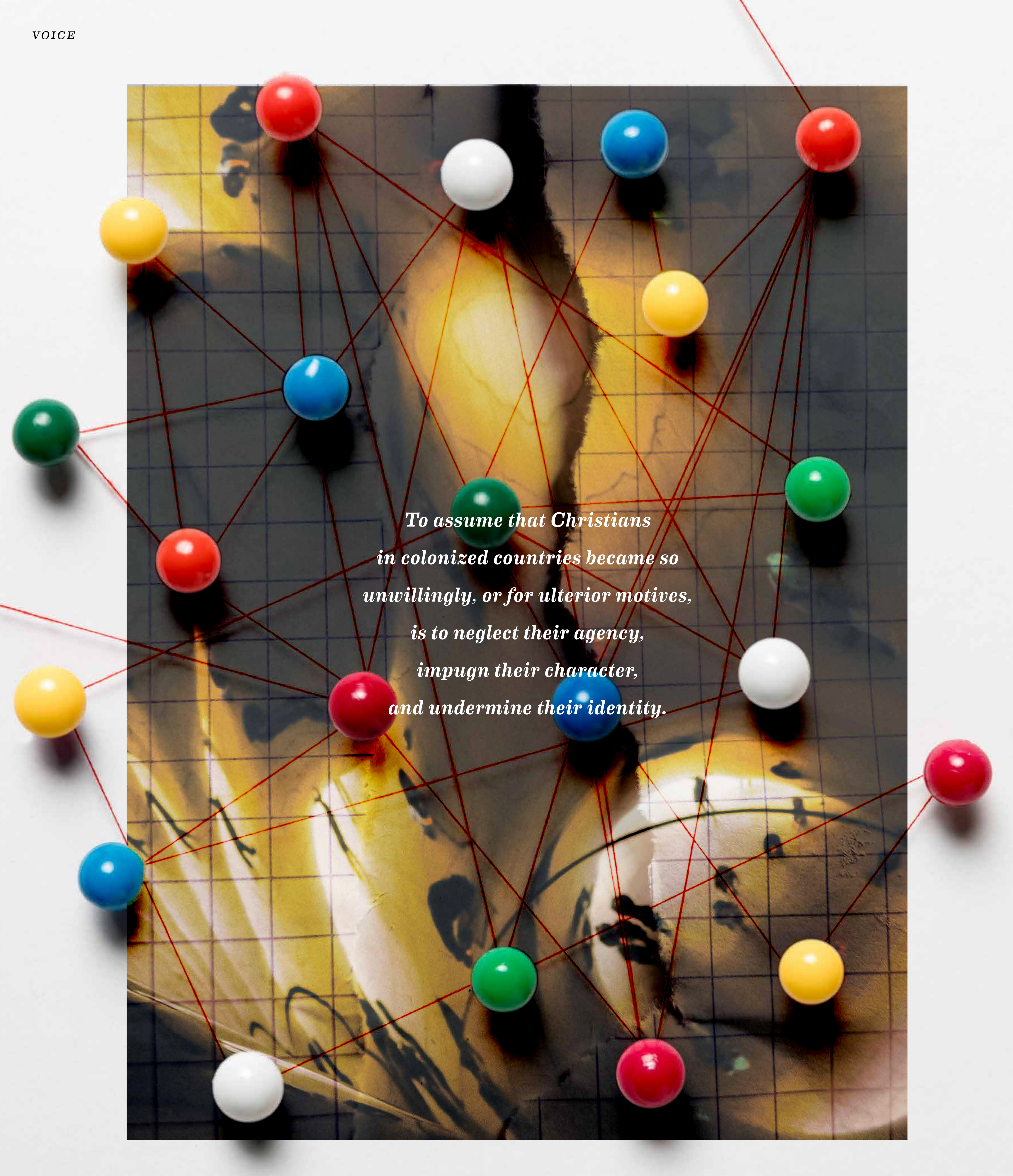

To assume that Christians in colonized countries became so unwillingly, or for ulterior motives, is to neglect their agency, impugn their character, and undermine their identity.

under the banner of Christian mission, the rationale for mission, and how it is carried out.

The deconstruction of mission history started towards the end of the European colonial era, in the mid-20th century, as churches that had been founded by European missions pressed for their independence and generally received it before their nations did. Independence leaders, many of them educated at mission-founded schools, nevertheless accused missionaries of complicity with colonialism, and even worse, "colonizing the mind" so that the colonized were stripped of their own culture and thought and became captive to Western modernity.

The relationship between mission and colonialism is complex. On the one hand, it is undeniable that, in the last 500 years, white missionaries and mission organizations have been complicit in atrocities encouraged by processes of colonization, such as the genocide of Native Americans, enslaving Africans, and the abuse of children in their care. Such failure is indefensible.

On the other hand, over so many centuries and in so many different regions, there have been many variations in missions and in the treatment of indigenous people. Although their work was made possible by the colonial world order, not all Western missionaries were close to colonizers; some missionaries challenged colonial policies and defended local people; others openly criticized Western culture and encouraged indigenous forms of church; and some supported independence movements. The recipients of missionary work express varying views. In many regions, Christians remember the reasons they converted, revere the first missionaries, and celebrate the early history of their church. To assume that Christians in colonized countries became so unwillingly, or for ulterior motives, is to neglect their agency, impugn their character, and undermine their identity.

Nevertheless, five centuries of the expansion of the European peoples across the globe, mostly bearing with them a sense of white supremacy and entitlement, has impacted most peoples of the world, formed the current world order, and shaped global networks—including the academy, dominating fields such as missiology. Acknowledging this reality makes deconstructing and reconstructing missiology an imperative.

It is important to critically examine how mission has been practiced and justified in order to reimagine it. This reimagining will be in accordance with Scripture, shaped by our understanding of God in Christ, and tested by the best of our knowledge of what is good for human beings.

CG: ***Based on your commitment to the teaching of missiology for a number of years, both at master's and doctoral levels, what would you name as the subject that has evolved the most?***

KK: I would say that there are two areas that have evolved the most in evangelical missiology: mission theology and integral mission.

From mid-century discussions of mission theology arose the paradigm of missio Dei—the mission of God or God's mission. Missio Dei is multifaceted. Taking its cue from John 20:21, missio Dei means that we participate in God's mission in Christ, rather than expecting God to support ours. If this is what Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit to do (John 20:22), then the church must be missionary—or missional—by its very nature. Furthermore, this theology applies to churches all over the world, not just the Western ones, so every church must be responsible for mission both in its own community and also to the rest of the world, making mission polycentric and a partnership activity between the world's churches. It is also necessary to be critical of missio Dei, given that it was formulated as a way of preserving a world missionary movement that was largely Western-led (although Majority World theologians were also integral to its development).

Nevertheless, the paradigm is changing not only the understanding of mission but also the way that it is done. If, by being baptized, we are participating in Christ's mission, and ultimately God's mission, then the way we do mission must be Christ's way. Mission should no longer be thought of as a defined task that must be accomplished by whatever means possible. Mission is integral to following Christ and to discipleship, as Matthew 28:18–20 also makes clear. I understand the recent reconstitution of the School of Theology and the School of Intercultural Studies (formerly School of World Mission) at Fuller as one School of Mission and Theology to be an expression of this truth. Mission is integral to formation.

Another area that has evolved in evangelical missiology is "transformational" or "integral" mission. Although colonial missions (but not all missions in that period) were holistic in the sense of attending to social concerns (education, healthcare, agriculture, etc.) as well as religious ones, the missio Dei paradigm, following the way of Christ, must be concerned for the whole person in context, all peoples, and the whole world.

However, "transformational" or "integral" mission arises more directly from two sources. One is the "mission as transformation movement" initiated by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, inspired by experiences in India, that encouraged evangelicals to embrace social responsibility by engaging in development activities. The other source was the "integral" mission pioneered by René Padilla and Samuel Escobar from Latin America that responded to calls for social justice and advocacy. Both were undergirded with biblical and theological resources, especially from the Gospels, and particularly Luke 4:18–20 where Jesus describes his mission as good news to the poor by release from captivity, blindedness, oppression, and indebtedness. Most of the students I teach at Fuller now take it for granted that mission includes concern for the poor and social justice.

CG: ***Earlier you touched on one of the focuses of "doing mission" as evangelism. What would you say is the biggest obstacle facing the church today in understanding its role in evangelism or an uncommon misconception about evangelism that you feel doesn't get talked about enough?***

KK: Evangelism is commonly, but not universally, understood today to be a subset of mission—that part of mission practice which verbally declares the message of salvation. This may be in the form of proclaiming, preaching, prophesying, persuading, publishing, or other dissemination, with a view to seeing people turn to Christ, join the church, and in turn evangelize others. Often evangelism is seen as primary, as an essential activity without which mission practice is suspect. Other aspects of mission, which may be grouped together as "social responsibility," are regarded as peripheral, optional add-ons by those who are less committed to Christian truth. I think it is unfortunate that evangelism has been reduced in this way.

I argue that, in order to understand evangelism and mission, we need to read the Bible, especially the four Gospels, and preferably also with Christians from other cultures and regions for a fuller understanding. Now, in the Gospels, I do not see in Jesus' own mission, or in what he taught his disciples, a division between "evangelism" and "social responsibility." Jesus approached people as whole human beings with bodies as well as souls. Insofar as his mission was the proclamation of a message, Jesus practiced what he preached and did what he taught, and he expected his disciples to do the same. His way of being in the world, as sent from the Father, was about more than conveying a verbal message or a set of beliefs. Jesus actually lived the gospel and embodied it in every aspect of his being. His mission made a difference not just in the lives of people who joined the church but also in the wider world for centuries until today.

In other words, if we look at Jesus as the archetypal missionary, evangelism and mission are coextensive. Sharing the gospel or the good news involves both. I find the term "evangelization," used synonymously with mission at the World Missionary Conference in 1910, useful to express this. Mission could be a secular term but evangelization expresses the process of transformation according to the good news (evangel) that is most fully revealed in and through Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate.

CG: ***So what has given you hope in missiology in the current landscape of world Christianity? Do you have a tangible story that you'd be willing to share?***

KK: In 1987, when I married Sebastian C. H. Kim (who is currently serving as the interim dean of the School of Mission and Theology) and moved to South Korea, I believed that our shared Christian faith would overcome the national and other differences that might divide us. By the grace of God, we are still together. In my life, I have lived and worked in different contexts—in the UK, South Korea, India, and the US. I have also been part of many global Christian gatherings through the Lausanne Movement and the World Council of Churches and in international academic conferences around the world. I have engaged with churches of all types: Catholic, Independent, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Protestant—evangelical and ecumenical. I have been experiencing world Christianity as a fact as well as studying it. My experience gives me great hope.

Most Christians do not have this privilege, and many are unaware that Christianity is not a Western but a world faith. But from my research and experience, translatability and receptivity are essential characteristics of Christianity that are demonstrated in the Gospels by Jesus, who reached out to all and whose message was received by people of many different backgrounds. They are encapsulated in the commission of Jesus to his disciples in each Gospel. These might be summarized as to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20), preach to all creation beginning in Galilee (Mark 16:7, 15–16), be witnesses to Christ from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Luke 24:48–49 and Acts 1:8), and live in the world as Jesus lived (John 20:21–23). This final injunction is the culmination of the story, coming after Jesus' resurrection, but its meaning is back-filled by each Gospel's account of Jesus' life and teaching.

In my experience, Christians the world over are trying to do what they believe Jesus expects of them, although, as in each Gospel, this may look different according to the context. There are vibrant Christian communities around the globe who care about one another and who want to work together for the sake of the world. ■

CHANTELLE GIBBS *is content producer and managing editor of* FULLER *magazine.*

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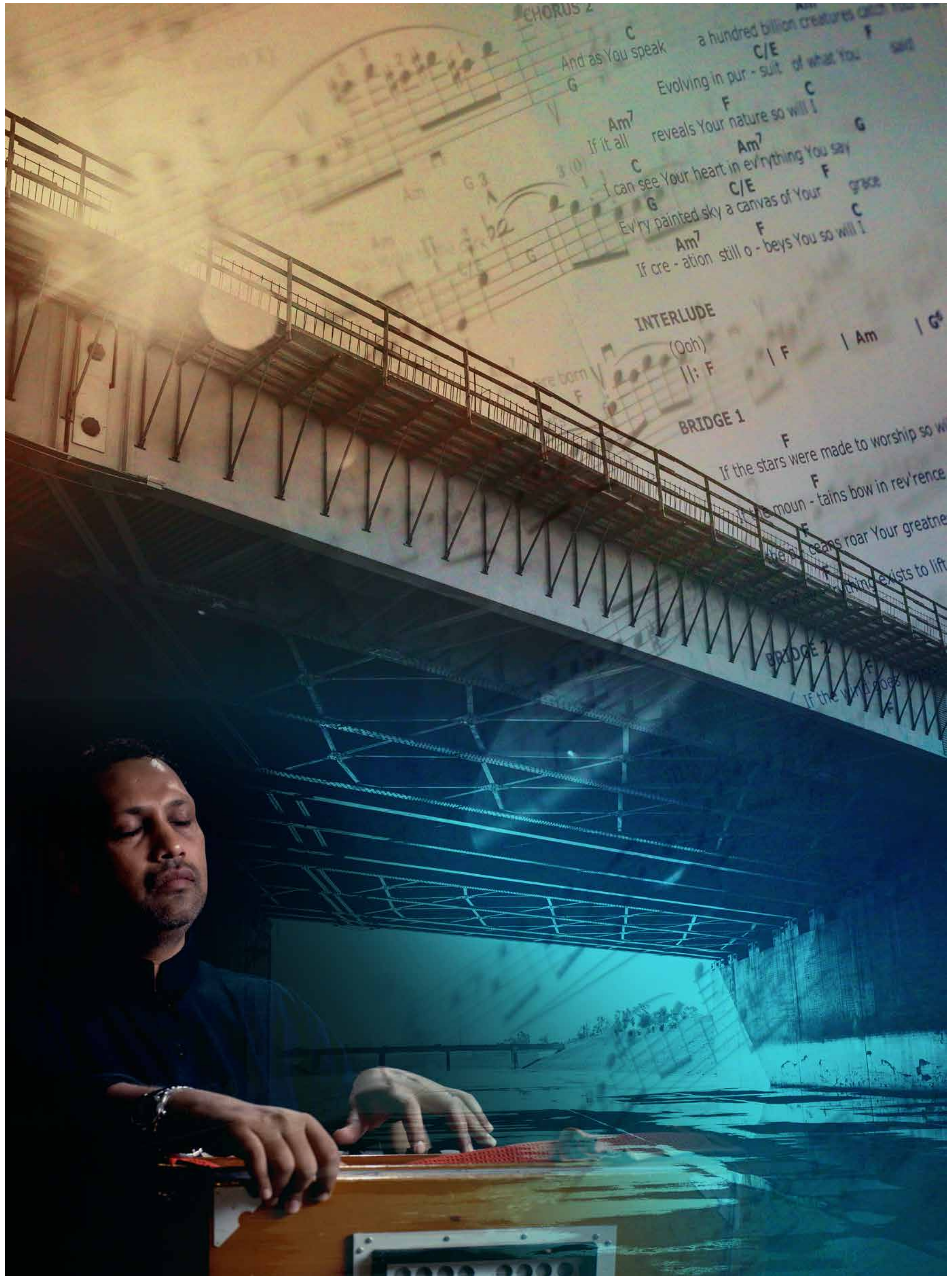

CHORUS 2
And as You speak
a hundred billion creatures catch Your
Evolving in pur - suit of what You said
If it all reveals Your nature so will I
I can see Your heart in ev'rything You say
Ev'ry painted sky a canvas of Your grace
If cre - ation still o - beys You so will I
INTERLUDE
(Ooh)
BRIDGE 1
If the stars were made to worship so w
If the moun - tains bow in rev'rence
BRIDGE 2

A Bridge of Worship and Song

WITH ERIC SARWAR

ERIC SARWAR (PhD ICS '21) founded the Tehillim School of Church Music & Worship in Karachi, Pakistan, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. He is also the lead pastor of Artesia City Church in Artesia, California, an Indian Pakistani congregation he started in 2015. He is the author of *Psalms, Islam, and Shalom: A Common Heritage of Divine Songs for Muslim-Christian Friendship.*

YOLANDA MILLER: ***Can you tell me about the Tehillim School of Church Music & Worship that you founded?***

ERIC SARWAR: The Tehillim School of Church Music & Worship is Pakistan's pioneer school of worship and music studies and is an interdisciplinary learning ministry center. Founded in 2003, the school educates, equips, and engages young leaders through in-person and online training, seminars, consultations, and symposiums, reflecting on areas of church music and worship. Our nationwide events include ecumenical gatherings for music and mission conferences, theological education consultations, leadership retreats, and interfaith engagements in Pakistan.

Tehillim is a Christian school that connects theology and art. Because the Pakistani context is an aural culture, we use music as a cultural and contextual approach to build bridges. I designed the curriculum and courses almost 15 to 20 years ago; now we are initiating online and in-person courses that expand our ministry to other areas of Pakistan. We'll not only serve practicing church musicians, but we'll also offer classes to theological seminaries.

YM: ***What is it like to have a school of church worship in a 96 percent Muslim country? Is persecution a factor?***

ES: Well, persecution is part of regular life in Pakistan. Persecution and marginalization on a personal and institutional level is a part of the package in that context. However, it helps that Tehillim is a totally local cultural endeavor. When I started it 20 years ago, I started it without any Western influences. There was no Western model, there was no Western funding. It was totally indigenous. I was born and raised in that country, and I had various Muslim friends who were in Muslim bands, in the entertainment industry, and in the education industry. But persecution persists. When I was the pastor of First Presbyterian Church on the outskirts of Karachi City, our church was attacked a couple times by people in the neighborhood. My wife and my kids were threatened at gunpoint. You see how my finger is crooked? That is the result of a tussle I got into, and I'm just glad I can still play my instruments.

Anyone can bring blasphemy accusations against you. People can accuse you if you are a Christian. But they can also accuse you if you're well off or they just don't like you. They can try to force conversions. That kind of fear is a regular part of life. That's why, generally, parents teach their children not to talk to anyone about religion, because once you do, you will be prone to blasphemy accusations. The interesting thing is, in Pakistan's private schools, which are mostly Muslim, 70 to 80 percent of the music teachers are Christians.

> ***Because the Pakistani context is an aural culture, we use music as a cultural and contextual approach to build bridges.***

YM: ***Wow! How is that the case?***

ES: Well, the schools need music teachers. And Christians have an advantage in that they've grown up singing and playing in the churches. In Islam and in the mosques, they don't use musical instruments because there is a myth that music is haram or illegitimate, although I have busted that myth in my book.

YM: ***I'm beginning to see how music can be a key tool in building bridges between Christians and Muslims.***

ES: Yes, but the majority of theological curricula and mission strategies are still under the Western influence. The Presbyterian Church, Anglican Church, Roman Catholic Church—all these churches in Pakistan are the byproducts of Western colonialism. The Western Protestant church under the Enlightenment brought Western models of mission to different cultures. Probably a century ago, that was workable, but in this day and age, it's not going to work. That's why Tehillim uses a cultural, contextual approach.

YM: ***What does the church need to do to change? What would be more effective today?***

ES: We must move away from an exclusive theology and aggressive methodology. Western mission from the past 14 centuries tried to put a square peg into a round hole. It was all about literary approaches and cognition. Missionaries were equipped with a Western mindset with Western approaches, and they applied these to non-Western contexts.

Christianity is not about Western religion but about Jesus. So our primary missional approach at Tehillim is using cultural arts, including music, dance, and theater, to develop a theological praxis, not from something outside our context, but in a way that reflects our culture, theology, and biblical understanding of the Christian message. There is a need to develop creative and dramatic musical and aural resources, which work in an orally literate context like ours rather than only using printed words and rational thinking. My critique of Western mission is that it has misunderstood the Muslim mind—or any aural culture, whether it's in Asia, Africa, or the Middle East. You must know your context, then see how you can engage people where they feel at home—then they won't see you as a foreign invasion.

YM: ***Can you tell me more about what you call "the Muslim mind"? What is it about the Muslim mind that Western missionaries deeply misunderstand?***

ES: The first misunderstanding is that all Muslims are the same. They are not. Radical or militant Muslims are only a small fraction of Muslims. They are visible, vocal, and violent, so the world pays attention to them.

Secondly, in my opinion, it is not always helpful to quote directly from the New Testament when you engage with Muslims. The apostle Paul quoted local Greek poets when he was engaging with people in the Greco-Roman context. He built a bridge, connected with the local culture, and then led them to the "unknown God." You need to develop a connection most of all. So in my approach, I start with Zabur, because the book of Psalms is non-confrontational, and every Muslim, from any sect or context, believes that the Psalms of the Prophet David is a divine revelation. Strangely, the Zabur has been neglected by Christian missions for the past 14 centuries as a path to Muslim engagement.

YM: So the Psalms are almost like a key that unlocks a path to Jesus for you in your work with Muslims?

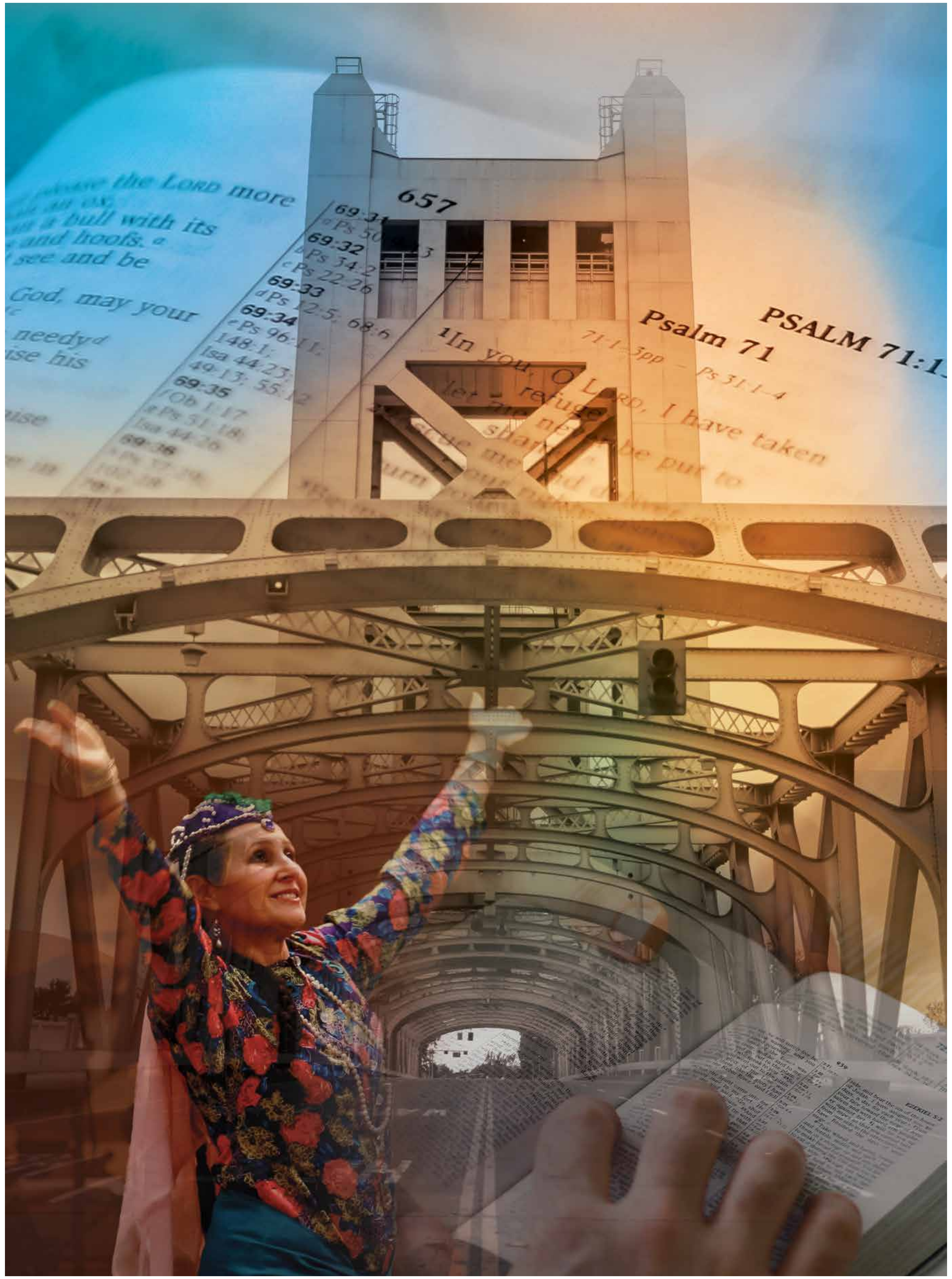
ES: Yes, that's what I believe. For 14 centuries, we have muted this powerful tool that God has given us—a musical, cultural, and global mandate to engage with the world. Even Jesus used this book with Jews and Gentiles, and the book of Psalms is quoted in the New Testament extensively. So that is my call: to put forth the challenge to not only read the Psalms with a theological or spiritual or even a linguistic or poetic lens. We also need to read Psalms with a missional lens.

YM: ***Can you give me an example of what that would look like?***

ES: One of my tools is the Punjabi Psalter, the Psalms translated into the Punjabi language and musically composed in Indian raga—an Indian classical music style—a century ago. The project was started in the 1890s by Presbyterian missionaries, and when the whole corpus of 150 psalms was finished, the entirety of it was 405 pieces of completely raga, locally embedded and composed music, translated into the local language.

> ***One of my tools is the Punjabi Psalter, the Psalms translated into the Punjabi language and musically composed in Indian raga—an Indian classical music style—a century ago.***

So, generally, wherever Western missions reached, they brought their own Western hymns and songs. But the Western musical invasion failed when they arrived in North India, especially in the Punjab mission. Why? Because we had our own more than 3,000-year-old, raga-based musical system, and it was part of our DNA. The sitar, tanpura, and our unique melodic structures are why sound is among Pakistan's and India's most distinctive identities. Ours is an aural culture, so the church and mission need to explore the sonic culture, our musical culture, to engage us.



The Psalms give us a text. But tune, or melody, is cultural. The song should be wherever you are. Use the maqam modal system if you are in a Middle Eastern culture. If you are in an Indian Pakistani culture, use the raga-based system. For example, Psalm 100 says, "People of the earth, come and praise God with gladness and sing a song to the Lord." But what kind of musical system are you going to use? You're not going to use Western classical music in a Pakistani context; you're going to use Pakistani music. So when it says, "sing a song," there's flexibility to use local music culture and your own heart music to praise the Lord with the words in the book of Psalms.

YM: ***That is beautiful! I hear you saying that Christian mission needs to reimagine the ways we bring the gospel to the world. You've demonstrated one way of doing that—through the use of local arts and a common point of intersection for Muslims and Christians in the Psalms. Do you have suggestions for what this looks like for those of us in the West?***

ES: We need to understand the future of global missions in the 21st century and beyond as diasporic and doxological. By diasporic, I mean this: Western Christianity is weakening. But God is bringing to the Western church Christian immigrants from around the world, who are coming with their cultures, values, and gifts of faith because they have had to be totally dependent upon God's providence and direct intervention. They have lots of stories; many of them are faith stories. Not only are they bringing gifts, but also, they are a gift. So rather than treating and looking at them as a kind of liability, recognize them and receive them as the gift they are. We need people and scholars and voices that are non-Western voices, voices of people of color, and internal voices from countries outside of the West because that's the future of the global church.

Psalm 100
A Psalm of thanksgiving.
Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.
Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.
Know that the LORD is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

The future of the global church and mission is also doxological. Why? Because that's the purpose of the church. Doxology is praising God—that's doxo. If you read the Luke-Acts narrative, where does the Luke narrative start? With Zechariah worshiping in the temple. So Luke begins with a worship encounter, a doxological encounter. Then he continues this theme—that's why the first three chapters are full of canticles: Mary's Magnificat, the angels' Gloria, and Simeon's song.

Jesus' first announcement is in the synagogue, and eventually, Jesus' departure and ascension see him giving an Aaronic blessing, raising his hands like a high priest. In Acts, the early church was continuously worshiping, praying, and then feasting on the day of Pentecost. Everything is centered around doxology, the worship encounter. We read Luke-Acts with a missional, historical, or theological perspective, but they are doxological books.

Then there's ethnodoxology. If you read Psalm 67, Psalm 98, Psalm 100, or Psalm 145, all of these Psalms portray a global expression of God's kingdom—all ethnicities, peoples, and nations giving praise to God. Whatever these immigrant churches bring is a gift; they're bringing the language, music, art, hymns, and everything, and it's all for the church, not just their church. This is why we need to revisit our theology of mission from a diasporic and doxological perspective.

> ***Psalms portray a global expression of God's kingdom—all ethnicities, peoples, and nations giving praise to God.***

YM: ***In what ways can we welcome the gift of the diasporic church?***

ES: That's very easy. First of all, don't patronize them. Sometimes, we see them as poor Christians—economically insufficient, educationally deficient—and a by-product of Western missions. But this current generation of Christians is not a by-product. They're raised and born in a Christian church. Many are fourth- and fifth-generation believers, raised and born in that cultural context.

Next, churches can make it their own personal responsibility to engage. Every church can connect with the Global South through missionaries and seminaries. And now God is bringing many immigrants and refugees seeking asylum from persecution right to their front door. Open your doors and give them spaces to worship in. This is a way even shrinking churches with empty rooms can support and help them grow. But provide them with the notion that they are not second-class or inferior citizens. Sometimes the host church thinks they are a liability to us if they're using our space.

But Revelation 5:9 gives us a vision of a global, multicultural church. In Acts, after chapter 11, there is no Jewish church story. The Jewish church disappears, and there is only a global church story. Why? Here's a lesson for the 21st-century church: if you are an isolated church—only white, only Black, yellow, brown, whatever—you will not be around for a long time. Because that's how God's kingdom works. It is constantly expanding, it's always vital and vibrant, and a mix of ethnicities.

YM: ***I've heard a critique of the movement to try to move towards multiethnic churches in the US: that they're multiethnic, but they're not multicultural. You might have people of different ethnicities, but they predominantly identify with the dominant culture. Or the church leadership and models are all defined by the dominant culture. So, like in Acts, how do we integrate the old with the new?***

ES: It's a new phenomenon. And first of all, we need to drop our superiority complex. I would say start with small steps because people get scared sometimes. I'm not saying change everything or integrate right away. There are cultural and language barriers and they would get lost if you did that. But the host culture needs to see immigrants as guests.

I propose inviting them and allowing them their space to grow. Just begin with getting to know them and engaging with them. Invite them to share their culture, food, music, and themselves at social gatherings or outreaches. Find opportunities tied to the Christian calendar, where they are invited to participate; have them bring songs from their culture to add to your worship service; or plug them into Scripture readings, prayers, and sharing their testimonies. Host a festival where you have some cultural engagement out in the community. Provide various avenues where you can find places for the congregations to overlap.

These are small ways you give them a place, an equal place, at the table. Because when you receive a gift, you don't hide it away, right? If you really see them as a gift, you'll cherish them, you know? ■

YOLANDA "YO" MILLER *leads spiritual formation groups for Fuller, the De Pree Center, and Soul Care in Boulder, Colorado. Learn more about her and her work as a soul coach at yo-miller.com.*

God on the Move

WITH SAM GEORGE

SAM GEORGE is the director of the Global Diaspora Institute at Wheaton College's Billy Graham Center and is the global catalyst for diasporas for the Lausanne Movement. He teaches and writes about global migration, diaspora missions, and world Christianity and is the editor of Fortress Press's three-volume Asian Diaspora Christianity series.

JEROME BLANCO: ***Earlier this year, you were a featured speaker at Fuller's Asian American Center's annual Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Celebration. Listening to your talk, I was struck by what you called an "omnidirectional, hyperconnected, hypermobile model" of missions. I'm keen to hear you share more about this. But before we jump in, would you share a bit about the work you do, to frame our conversation for our readers?***

SAM GEORGE: I currently direct the Global Diaspora Institute at Wheaton College's Billy Graham Center. We're involved in researching, writing, publishing, and consulting with and coaching leaders in the North American church to help them connect with the global church and understand how migration is reshaping Christianity worldwide. I teach both here in the US and in a few countries in Asia, Africa, and South America. So, I say I teach "global Christianity globally." My varied engagements line up with my role within the Lausanne Movement, where I serve as the global catalyst for diasporas. Studying migration and diaspora, understanding how those things are changing the trajectory of Christianity in the 21st century—that's what I do. I'm constantly traveling, teaching, and writing to understand God's work in the world and how we can be part of it.

JB: ***What is a key idea we should be thinking about when it comes to how migration and diaspora ought to shape or reshape our understanding of mission? Let me also briefly acknowledge that while FULLER has a global readership, our readers are primarily in the West, and especially in the US. So, perhaps, what I am asking about is a key idea that reorients a Western understanding of mission.***

SG: In Lausanne circles, we call migrants and diaspora peoples "people on the move." People on the move see God on the move. The idea of God on the move, we call *Motus Dei*. Unfortunately, we can have a very static imagination of God. Our conception of the doctrine of God and understanding of Christian theology have too often become, what I call, idols. We tend to idolize God; idols are static and immobile, and they make their devotees lifeless and immobile as they are. The prophet Jeremiah made a mockery of the idols of his times, saying, "They have legs, but they cannot walk" (10:5). Idolatrous societies are insular, and their sentiments are parochial, imprisoned to a locale. To have a dynamic understanding of a God who is living, who is active, and who is at work in the world . . . for that we need a theology that conceives of God in motion.

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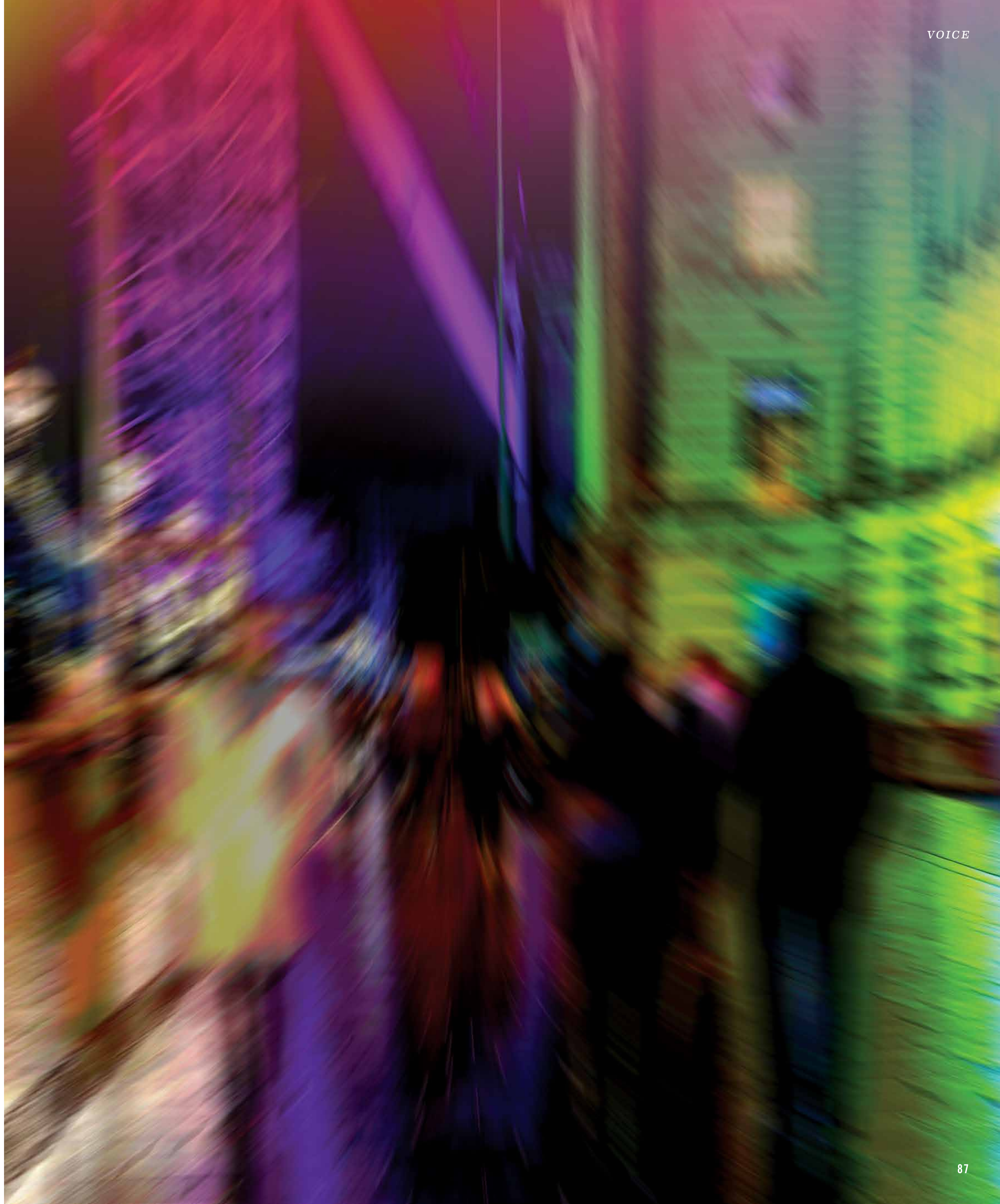
We tend to imprison God, especially in Euro-American Christianity. But it happened also when Solomon built the temple—this beautiful structure, the center of the universe. "Everybody from everywhere, come and make a pilgrimage here! Come to the temple!" And God was trapped in the Holy of Holies; you could only meet God there. God allowed his holy temple to be destroyed. But earlier, in Exodus, we see the tabernacle, God living among the people in a pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. And where the cloud goes, you're supposed to pull up your tents and start moving. So, mission is often about syncing our wandering steps with the God who's on the move.



Because at the very heart of our faith is a God who is living and moving. In Jesus, God moved into my neighborhood and pitched his tent and lived among us—I call this divine displacement. And he's still moving: Jesus Christ rose again. He conquered death. He isn't in a tomb, lying somewhere that we need to venerate or do a pilgrimage to, like in other religions. He's a living God—on the move. The Holy Spirit is moving over the land, over the waters, over cities and villages, across the street, and around the world. Christian doctrines need to be conceived afresh in motile and relational terms. Since migration is a theologizing experience, migrants are reimagining soteriology, ecclesiology, and missiology for this age of migration. And, eschatology is our final move to be with God forever.

JB: ***What does this idea of Motus Dei look like on the ground? How does a theology of movement play out in migrant or diaspora communities? Of course, I imagine this looks different for different peoples and contexts.***

SG: The Christian faith is diasporic at its core. Displacement is part of the biblical story all through the Old Testament and the New Testament—which are either written by migrants or about migrants. This is what we call "diaspora hermeneutics." Migration is the story of Christianity. Displacement is at the heart of it. Jesus was wandering about his entire ministerial life—"I have no place to lay down my head" (8:20). To his disciples, he said, "Come follow me." That means he was going somewhere. That's how he called his disciples. We become mobile people, because mission has motion at the heart of it. That's a sign of life.

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In North America, most of us are either immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Different waves of migrants from different parts of the world have formed and reshaped North American Christianity throughout its history. They interact with each other over decades and generations to renew and transform Christianity continually while also reengaging with the rest of the world with new vigor and connections. The United States is an immigrant nation, and American Christianity is diasporic at its core.

I see it as this big river. If you go along a river, every now and then, you see a stream coming in and joining, and every stream uniquely enriches the river and strengthens the flow. Great vigor and great energy happen when the streams join the river. But when fewer streams join the river, the river becomes shallow and eventually lifeless. Likewise, immigration enriches the American church. Two-thirds of immigrants to the United States are Christians, and they bring their distinctive culturalized Christianity, which catalyzes American Christianity. Because of immigration, the American church is more globally relevant and globally needed. We need to see how God is globalizing the American church with Christians from other parts of the world and how immigration reshapes American Christianity's involvement around the world.

JB: ***How would you describe the state of the river today? With increased migration and displacement globally—streams feeding into the river—how is missiology being transformed?***

SG: There has been a spectacular growth of the church in Africa, Latin America, and Asia in the last 50 years or so. In the language of Andrew Walls, there is a shift in the center of gravity of Christianity. Recently, I told the *New York Times*, "Christianity is looking more Black, brown, and yellow. It is not white as it used to be." At the turn of the 20th century, nearly 80 percent of Christians lived in Europe and North America. Now, almost 70 percent of Christians are living in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Countries in Africa are sending out missionaries all over the world. Korea, the Philippines, India, China, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Peru are sending missionaries. Missional engagement is not exclusive to the West. And even if they don't use the language of mission like the West, they expand Christianity to other people. Jesus said, "Go to the ends of the earth," and for many, the "ends of the earth" means the US. This shift is fundamentally about who represents Christianity and who does the mission work. A Nigerian can be a missionary in America because Americans also need to be saved.

We are reimagining our idea of "go" and "send" with a sense of mutuality. Go and come, send and receive, depart and arrive. When most Christians lived in Europe and America, all the missionary action came "from West to the rest." Today, it's a different era altogether. Now, mission happens from everywhere to everywhere. Mission has multiple centers and multiple directions—what we call *polycentric* and *omnidirectional* mission.

We are also entering into an age of hypermobility. More people are on the move than ever in history. Mobility enables connectivity, and connectivity allows for spiritual influences and spiritual connections across geographies, cultures, and time zones. In the 21st century, more people will move to more places, more frequently in their lifetimes, than ever before. Society, economics, world politics, development, oppression, wars, climate change, and ecological disasters—all of that will lead to more people on the move. We've seen the war in Ukraine pushing out millions of people. There are refugee camps in Greece and Syria. A record number of people are displaced today—110 million worldwide—and their displacement is shaping the future of Christianity.

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All of this doesn't mean the American church's role is reduced, but it is not going to be what it was in the 20th century. Then, we saw ourselves as a solo singer. Now, we are going to sing in a choir. We drove the mission "agenda" around the world, through agencies, funding, programs. Now, our fellow choir members are from Africa, Asia, South America. They all have different musical traditions and approaches to singing. What does it mean for all of us to be under God, the conductor? The Motus Dei conductor who keeps us all together? We have to come under the leadership of the Lord, who calls us to follow him, and create together this global sense of Christian community. Because in the process, God is preparing us for heaven—among a great multitude that nobody can number, from every tribe, language, nation, and people of the world.

JB: ***The image of a choir is a beautiful one, though I fear we're often not very good at singing together. The church seems to need a lot of practice. How do you think we can arrive at singing together well?***

SG: Doing life together with different people on a regular basis. Rubbing shoulders. Getting to understand each other. Because people are all different. We all operate on the subconscious level. We do things and say things because of who we are, how we're brought up, and which culture shaped us. There's no shortcut to relationship. We have to increase our intercultural competence, increase our understanding and empathy for each other. We can't project ourselves as perfect—with our power, titles, degrees, money, where we live—and we need to not see each other as perfect people. These kinds of things create more division. We need a kingdom mindset, and we need the Spirit to unite us. We need a great sense of grace and freedom to fail and let others fail. A sense of compassion, empathy, and, above all, love for other people. It doesn't come easy.

At the local church, in your home, in your neighborhood, in your classroom, cultivate that sense of global thinking and the ability to connect with people. A heart for the world and the sense that you belong to a global culture must be nurtured. Help people to interact with each other, hear one another's stories, eat with them, invite them to each other's homes, and expand your heart. To have a heart like Jesus that will connect with anybody and everybody at any time—that is part of discipleship. As a local pastor, my heart is that all of my people's hearts be transformed into the likeness of Jesus.

On a wider societal level, race, politics, and economics divide us. We have to break out of those divisions and be united under the leadership of Christ. That sense of spirit has to be nurtured and cultivated, and you have to be intentional about it. Otherwise, we go into our respective silos, and "everybody else is wrong." That's not kingdom thinking.

JB: ***Is there a final word of encouragement you have for the church at this time?***

SG: I think we are at a very crucial juncture in the history of Christianity, particularly here in the United States. In the second half of the 20th century, the American church and academia and scholars and practitioners and church leaders significantly contributed to the global church. Now, with the rise of the global church and growth in many different parts of the world, it is time to reconceive the American church's role. We are not at the head of the table, calling all the shots. We have to learn to serve alongside others and work together with people who are unlike ourselves. Together, we can accelerate mission work globally.

Seeing God as a God on the move will help us reconceive Christian missions in the 21st century—with a global framework and a postcolonial mindset. It's exciting. But we have to change quickly. And change is not going to be easy for everyone. I believe Fuller has a very unique role to play in helping people reimagine Christian mission and theology in the age of motion. I am excited. I am hopeful. I am seeing God at work. ■

JEROME BLANCO *(MDiv '16) is editor in chief of* FULLER *magazine and* FULLER *studio.*

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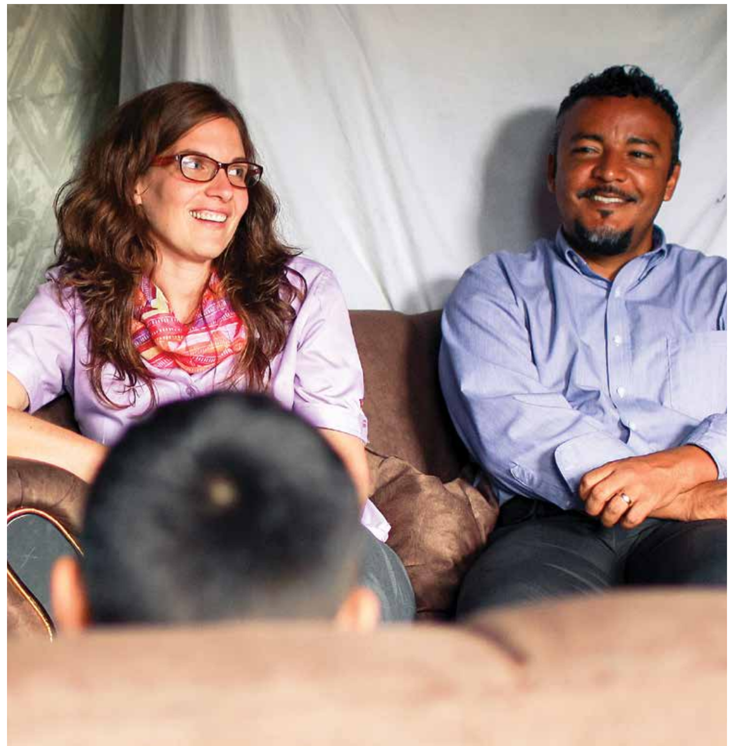

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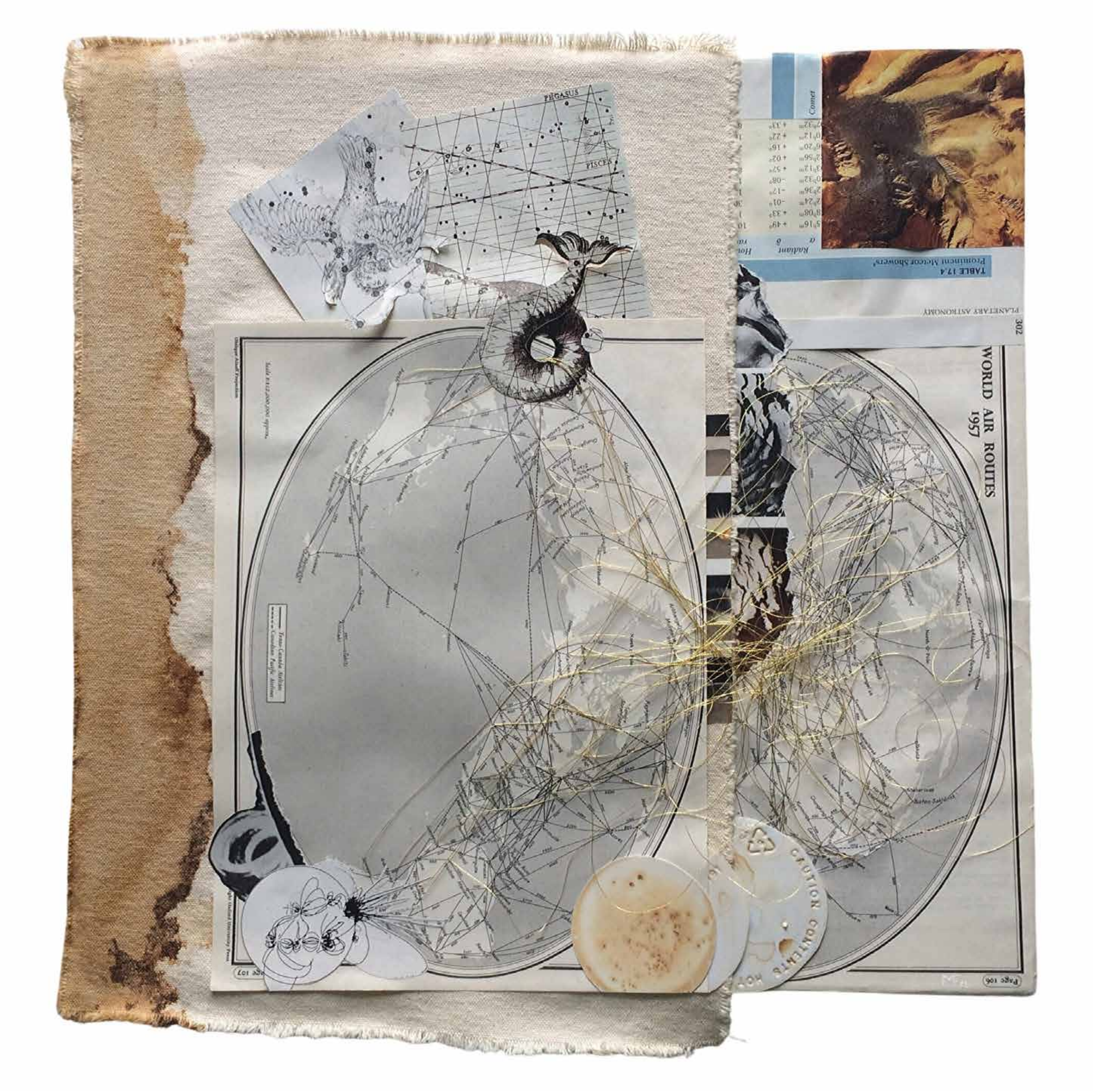

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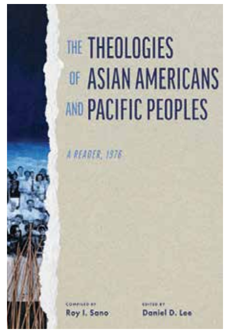

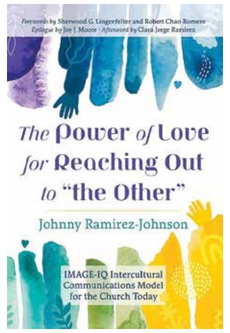

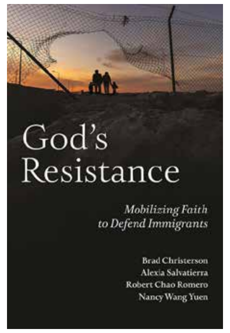

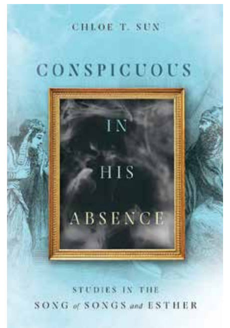

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Fuller es una institución de posgrado evangélico y multidenominacional que está comprometida a la formación de líderes globales para las vocaciones del reino. En respuesta a los cambios en la Iglesia y el mundo, Fuller está trasformando la experiencia del seminario tanto para los estudiantes tradicionales como para aquellos fuera del aula: ofreciendo una formación teológica que ayuda a los seguidores de Cristo a servir como líderes fieles, valientes, innovadores, colaboradores, y fructíferos en todo aspecto de la vida y en cualquier entorno. Fuller ofrece 19 programas de maestría y títulos avanzados - con opciones en español, coreano y en línea - a través de su Escuela de Misión y Teología y su Escuela de Psicología, y Terapia Matrimonial y Familiar así como maneras enriquecedoras y variadas de apoyo para la Iglesia en general. Más de 3,000 estudiantes de 83 países y 114 denominaciones se matriculan a los programas de Fuller anualmente, y los 45,829 ex alumnos se desempeñan como ministros, consejeros, maestros, artistas, líderes de organizaciones sin fines de lucro, empresarios, y en una variedad de otras vocaciones alrededor del mundo.

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풀러 신학대학원은 하나님 나라의 소명을 위한 글로벌 리더를 양성하는 데 전념하는 복음주의적이고 초교파적인 대학원 기관입니다. 풀러는 교회와 세상의 변화에 대응하여 전통적인 의미의 학생들과 강의실 너머의 학생들 모두를 위해 신학대학교 경험을 변화시키고 있으며, 그리스도를 따르는 사람들이 어떤 환경에서든 삶의 모든 영역에서 신실하고, 용기 있고, 혁신적이고, 협력적이며, 열매 맺는 리더로 봉사하도록 돕는 신학적 교육을 제공합니다. 풀러는 선교신학대학원과 심리학과 결혼 및 가족치료 대학원에서 스페인어, 한국어, 온라인 옵션을 포함한 19개의 석사 및 고급 학위 프로그램을 제공할 뿐만 아니라 광범위한 교회를 위한 풍부하고 다양한 형태의 지원을 제공하고 있습니다. 매년 83개국 114개 교단에서 3,000명이 넘는 학생들이 풀러의 학위 프로그램에 등록하고 있으며, 45,829명에 달하는 졸업생들이 전 세계에서 목회자, 상담가, 교사, 예술가, 비영리 단체 지도자, 사업가 등 다양한 직종에 종사하고 있습니다.

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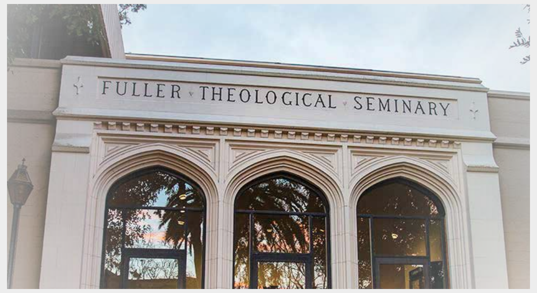

> ***"There would have been no way that I could support myself through the PhD program (without scholarship support). ... My workload is pretty heavy, but I feel reassured when I think about serving the people here with what I learned at Fuller."***
>
> - Gabriel Qi, PhD Clinical Psychology '20, who is a therapist in China

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BENEDICTION:
Global Vision

Fuller Seminary has often described its mission as forming global leaders for kingdom vocations. The seminary educates students about Christianity around the world because we believe that Christian ministry today requires this global outlook regardless of the student's vocation and context. When it comes to whole church communities, though, not many places exist to encourage this type of global vision. One of the few such places is the World Council of Churches (WCC)—a fellowship of 352 denominations from around the world that seek visible unity together, in dialogue and mission. Together, these churches account for around a quarter of Christians globally from Protestant and Orthodox churches.

Our seminary has a long history with the WCC.[1] In 1949, Fuller's first president, Harold Ockenga, hired the Hungarian Reformed minister Béla Vassady as the seminary's professor of biblical theology and ecumenics after Vassady helped found the WCC in 1948. Ockenga believed he would help Fuller prepare its students for ministry contexts around the world. Missions professor Donald McGavran's graduate assistant, Manuel Gaxiola, attended the 1973 Bangkok Consultation of the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). Gaxiola's report to McGavran influenced the development of the church growth movement. David Allan Hubbard, Fuller's third president, invited South African minister David du Plessis, a former WCC staff member, as resident consultant on ecumenical affairs. Hubbard soon after hired Cecil Robeck as professor of church history and ecumenics due to his contributions to the WCC. Robeck, at the Karlsruhe Assembly, served on a theological dialogue committee with Fuller MDiv alumnus Sotiris Boukis. Fuller's Paul E. Pierson Chair in World Christianity, Kirsteen Kim, previously served as vice-moderator of the CWME, a commission with recurrent contributions from Amos Yong and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen on interfaith dialogue. Daniel Lee, academic dean of the Asian American Center, more recently spoke at a WCC webinar on the history of racialized violence in North America.[2] And David Emmanuel Goatley was recently interviewed by the WCC for his involvement with the Council and his presidential appointment at Fuller.[3]

I was honored to have been one of the handful of Fuller community members and alumni at the 2022 WCC Assembly held in Germany. (Assemblies of churches are held every eight years in different countries; past gatherings were held in South Korea, Brazil, Zimbabwe, and Australia among others.) Present were around 4,000 denominational delegates, advisors, and NGO leaders who gathered to work towards overcoming their divisions and meeting the needs of the world. I attended as a steward, a youth member of the event staff who came from all around the world, and served on the communication team, which supported the 350 journalists covering the event in several languages.

The purpose of this Assembly was to plan the next eight years of the churches' work together in the WCC, and leaders of churches gathered to talk about the issues facing their communities. Sessions covered topics like creation care, theological dialogue, poverty, and statelessness. Each Assembly also devotes special attention to concerns that affect the host country, so the 2022 gathering held in Germany focused on the Ukrainian refugee crisis and on the Russian-Ukrainian war. While other regions of the world have watched the war unfold on the news, churches in Europe have watched it in their own backyard. The Germans I talked to spoke about the Ukrainian refugees they welcomed into their neighborhoods and their fears that the war could spill into other countries. The WCC is important in these conversations because of the Russian Orthodox Church's presence at the Assembly. A reason the Council exists is so that churches can work out their conflicts with each other in light of their common belonging to Christ.

A common criticism is that organizations such as the WCC suffer from bureaucracy or the inability to make much of a difference in the world and that the Council also struggles against a legacy of Western Christian dominance in setting theological and missional agendas for world Christianity. But WCC Assemblies and other similar events are among the rare spaces where believers can witness what it looks like for churches and institutions to strive for the kind of global vision for which Fuller forms its students. It is not enough to learn about Christians from other cultures and countries without finding ways to relate to and work alongside them equitably. Councils of churches are a way for communities to make systemic and financial commitments to work together, even when it is inconvenient. The global scope of the WCC lets churches make decisions together on matters that affect them all. Churches learn to pursue mission and evangelism, not as competitors but as colaborers. What would it look like to not only train individuals but whole church communities to have a global outlook?

+ *Joey Baker (PhD '23) is director of operations and research for the Global Christian Forum and secretary of the North American Academy of Ecumenists*

ENDNOTES

1. C. M. Robeck Jr., "Fuller's Ecumenical Vision," *Theology, News & Notes* Fall 2010 (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2010).
2. "100 Years After Tulsa Massacre, Webinar Remembers Victims," World Council of Churches, June 4, 2021, https://www.oikoumene.org/news/100-years-after-tulsa-massacre-webinar-remembers-victims.
3. "Rev. Dr. David Emmanuel Goatley: 'Ecumenusim and Global Engagement Are Essential to Who I Am," World Council of Churches, September 4, 2022, https://www.oikoumene.org/news/rev-dr-david-emmanuel-goatley-ecumenism-and-global-engagement-are-essential-to-who-i-am.

+ Itinerary IX *by Melody Bellefeuille-Frost. Papers, paint, tea, vinyl, canvas, 2015-2016. See more of Melody Bellefeuille-Frost's art in the opening cover and on pp. 10–11, 32–33, 54, 73, and 93.*

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+ *Sunita Puleo by Lake Michigan, on Chicago's Lakeshore Drive. Read Sunita's story on p. 18.*