

# The Threshold

Living Between Two Worlds

VOL. 2, ISSUE 1

March 21, 2010

*To be an open door to a life - changing grace.*

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**Sunday Worship**  
9:25 am in Sanctuary 1  
11:00 am in Sanctuary 2

## Event Calendar

Tuesday Prayer Meeting  
8:00 pm

Saturday Prayer Meeting  
7:30 am

Mar 27 Membership  
Class

May 2 Missions Service  
Auction

May 15 Ministry Banquet

May 28 Missions Send off

Sep 4-6 Church-wide  
Retreat

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## Breaking Ground

By Pastor Dihan Lee

It's an interesting phrase, "breaking ground."

I guess it's a term that describes the start of construction. And it's often accompanied by a ceremony, where important people stand in a line, wearing hard hats and wielding little silver shovels.

But the more I say "breaking ground" the more I picture the image of the ground actually "breaking," where the backhoe repeatedly plunges its shovel deep into the ground, excavating little mountains of soil.

That is, after all, what will take place. The earth has to make room for our future home. Our structure can't just sit nicely on the top soil. We have to dig deep. We have to tear up the ground and create space to fit the foundation and build properly.

It will be undoubtedly a loud, violent, messy process. And before the site actually starts looking like anything we can inhabit, it will begin with massive relocations of earth. Things will get flattened, smashed, torn down pulled apart. Huge holes will be dug. Other holes will be filled in. The ground will definitely be "broken."

I get the sense, however, that it's not only the "ground" that will need to be broken. There's another soil that needs excavating. After all, even if the earth makes room for our future

home, it would do no good if the soil of our hearts have not. What do I mean?

**To be an Open Door to a Life Changing Gospel.**

This is the vision of our church. We want, on any given Sunday, for our neighbors, co-workers, friends to walk through our "open" doors, hear the gospel, and be transformed. And I have been sharing with you that the reason we are building our home is so that we can have a place to live this vision out to our fullest potential. I still believe this. That's why I have the courage to stand before you and ask you to give, even in this economy. I'm absolutely convinced that we need our own space that we can design and control and have ownership over, so we can leverage it completely towards our vision.


Now our campus will need to be reworked. As I mentioned earlier, ground will be broken to make room. But the greater act of breaking will be internal. Think of all that God must break within us to make room for this vision—the apathy, the worldliness, the selfishness and materialism and racism and the constant inertia of comfort and convenience that keep us in our cliques [just to list a few]. What back hoe is strong enough to tear this stuff apart?

But unless these things are broken, we won't have any internal space to live out our

vision. And this space is more important than the physical. You can have the perfect space for a Gospel centered church, but in the end, the structure is just the trellis. Without the vine, the trellis is just a rickety frame. If we want the vine to grow, we need the Spirit to plow and break our hard hearts and make it fertile.

So "breaking ground," I see it more than just a ceremonial beginning to construction. I think it's an exhortation. This is a season where God wants to break our hearts so that we can actually live out our vision.

As you see the earth being excavated, and you see the campus physically changing, will you let it remind you of the incredible amount of work God has to do upon our hearts? As you undergo the discomfort of having no parking, will you let it remind of you of the discomfort we'll have to inevitably embrace as we learn to love the lost, care for the marginalized, and reach beyond our areas of comfort and familiarity? As you see posts and beams go up, will you pray that God will build this church—the people—in the same way?

"Breaking Ground." This is exactly what our church needs in more ways than one. May God lead us mercifully through this time. 

## THE FOYER

## What's Going on at ODPDC

- Please join us for prayer meetings every Tuesday at 8:00 pm in the second sanctuary and Saturday mornings at 7:30 am.
- For more information about ODPDC and membership, please contact Pastor John Cha at johncha@opendoorpc.org.
- Serve our neighboring community every third Saturday of the month with the Manna Ministry.



## Odpcec.net

Check out the new ODPDC website at [odpcec.net](http://odpcec.net). While you are there, please take a moment to fill out the new online directory in the Resources section. Highlights of the new website are:

- Weekly news updates
- Sermon download
- Building campaign update
- Interactive directory
- Ministry registration
- Church calendar
- Newsletter
- Church information
- *Coming soon:* online worship service

## Congratulations

### Weddings

- To Neal and Sarah Kim, married on November 11, 2009.
- To Ryan and Christeen Sizemore, married on February 6, 2010.
- To Nathan and Laena Lee, married on February 13, 2010.

### Births

- To Dan and Diane on the birth of their son, Gabriel Eun Sung Joo on November 2, 2009.
- To Gene and Christina on the birth of their daughter, Karalyn Youngji Chae on November 21, 2009.
- To Ji and Monica on the birth of their son, Brandon Merritt Kwon on November 29, 2009.
- To Sam and Jackie on the birth of their daughter, Ruth Soonjin Kwon on November 30, 2009.

- To Richard & Aileen on the birth of their son, Noah Nguyen on December 2, 2009.
- To John and Sueyon on the birth of their son, Ian Jun-Sok Moh on January 2, 2010.
- To Wes & Diena on the birth of their son, Colin Deok Johnston on January 5, 2010.
- To Walter & Jei on the birth of their daughter, Caitlin Alexis Kim on March 5, 2010.
- To Yooshik and Suna on the birth of their daughter, Abigail Heeun Seo on March 5, 2010.
- To Benji and Kathy Kwak on the birth of their son, Luke Hayoung Kwak on March 15, 2010.
- To Shinwoo and Heran Kim on the birth of their son, Jonathan Min Kim on March 16, 2010.

## Condolences

To Jeff Huang, on the passing of his mother.

To Alex Kim, on the passing of his father.

To John Park, on the passing of his father.

### Threshold Editors

Tina Mun  
Gene Lee

Jackie Kwon

Send us your submissions at [odpcthreshold@gmail.com](mailto:odpcthreshold@gmail.com).

## Meet our newest small group leaders!



**MARYLAND**  
Anna Park and David Cho



**BURKE / TUESDAYS**  
Pastor John and Leanne Cha



**CENTREVILLE**  
Tommy and Michelle Lee



**SOUTH RIDING**  
Steve Kim, Chris and Tina Cha

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Getting to Know Pastor Tae Gam



Tae grew up in Herndon and attended Virginia Tech where she met her husband David. After graduating with a BS in Psychology, God called her to attend Seminary and use her life to bring people into a closer relationship with Him. With a double Masters in Christian Education and Marriage and Family Counseling, she added a MRS degree in 2002 and married her college sweetheart. They have three children Kaitlyn (5), Alyssa (4), and Ryan (2) and lived near Atlanta, Georgia for six years until 2008 when they moved back to the area. She has worked as a counselor for a non-profit Christian organization helping women break free from addictions and later teamed up with three other women to form Ezer Counseling and Consulting which provided individual and family therapy as well as seminars and workshops throughout metropolitan Atlanta area. Tae is the newly appointed Fruitful Vineyard Children's Pastor.

### **Briefly describe your vision for Fruitful Vineyard Ministry.**

My vision for the Fruitful Vineyard Ministry (FVM) is to make genuine disciples. Not for it to be the kind of ministry that rebuked children away from Jesus, thinking they were a nuisance, but one that raises disciples who understand that the Kingdom of Heaven truly belongs to those with a child-like faith, for God often uses children to admonish and correct us. Our children have global power and influence. They have the potential to do great and mighty things for God

and live lives that are pleasing to Him. We who were raised by immigrant parents heard the same things over and over again all our lives. We were told that education was the answer to a good life. Our lives centered around academic performance, material wealth, and social status. We are now blessed beyond comprehension. I hope my children are successful in the future, but in what? Do I hope they will have many initials after their name? Money in the bank? Rub shoulders with the influential? FVM is a place where our children are educated, wealthy, and influential but not in the worldly sense. Our children will hopefully understand and believe that those things are all an avenue to spread the message of hope and forgiveness and to invite everyone into a relationship with God. In order to have that, the parents and volunteers must first be living that out in their own lives...so FVM is not just for preschoolers. It is a ministry for all those who are still on a milk diet and not yet solid food.

### **What do you do at home to raise your children to be followers of Jesus?**

I'm embarrassed to say that this is a hard question to answer. Whatever answer I come up with either sounds like I'm bragging or not doing enough. I'll answer honestly when I say that I hope as I live my life as a follower of Jesus and purposefully ask, listen, and act with my children, they will copy and imitate me. I try and think about what stage of life they are in and what biblical principles they need to experience right now. For instance, my two older children were going through this stage where they were seeing how big or how strong people were. That was the time to introduce them to how big and how strong God is—and for us adults, that means we're introducing God as Father and Creator. Right now they are examining what is true and false as they explore fairy tales, legends and folktales and have been

learning about Santa, the tooth fairy, leprechauns, and Disney characters. I tell them that I will do my best not to lie to them about what is true and false because I want them to trust that what I say is the truth. We talk about the valuable lessons we can learn from these characters, but that God is always the truth. All the years and money for my theological education can't compare to the education that comes from having to explain these things to my four year old child.


### **Are there any changes you'd like to make to the children's ministry?**

I don't know that it's time to prune back anything yet. The only change to the ministry right now is me. I plan to throw my heart and life out there for people and allow God to use me in whatever way He sees fit. Besides, the best way to implement change has nothing to do with other people and everything to do with you. If I am an agent of change, I will impact my surrounding environment. So I'll start here.

### **What would be the ideal Sunday school teacher for you?**

Jesus loved children and wanted to be near them and wanted others to learn FROM them. Someone who has the desire to be like that too. I would like someone who has an open and willing heart that's ready to experience the magic that happens when you invest in children.

### **What are some things you like to do with your family?**

Our family life is pretty low key. We play hide and go seek with the kids and my husband and I end up chasing each other through the house. We watch every VT football game in the fall. We love to ski in the winter. We celebrate holidays by carving pumpkins, dyeing eggs, stringing up lights, you get the idea. 

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Father-Daughter Ball

By Jack Quarles



*So I'll dance with Cinderella while she is here in my arms, Cause I know something the prince never knew...All too soon, the clock will strike midnight and she'll be gone."*

– Cinderella, Steven Curtis Chapman

We Open Door men who are already blessed by having wives we don't deserve, and daughters as well – were given another extravagant gift this year on the eve of Valentine's Day, in our church's first Father-Daughter dance.

The love, planning, and effort poured into the evening surrounded us on the first steps into the fellowship hall. The room was barely recognizable – it had been transformed into a ballroom worthy of an elegant wedding, with a draped ceiling, hand-made chandelier, soft lighting, statuary, and flowers everywhere. The dads themselves were also hard to recognize, as all forty wore suits, ties, and tuxedos reserved for rare events. Perhaps the girls were most in their element, seeming well-practiced in their gowns, fancy shoes, ribbons, and uncounted sparkles.

Our evening began with a welcome from the DJ and our pastors, photograph sittings, and appetizers covering the chocolate spectrum between M&Ms, chocolate-dipped fruit and marshmallows, and chocolate milk. These goodies may have added to the natural excitement of the girls meet-

ing up with their friends all wearing quasi-princess attire. Whatever the reason, clusters of girls in twos, threes and more gathered, giggled, and danced throughout the evening. These pictures will appear in slide-shows at dozens of weddings twenty years down the road.

After dinner, there was dancing. The DJ made sure that no daughter or dad could stay seated, and gave us a range of music that let some of the dads show their stuff in a way the daughters will never permit in the future. There were also sweet moments to hug the girls and dance with their shoes standing on ours.

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**The dance was not intended to be just a one-time event, but to bless a life-long relationship.**

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All the girls received a specially made hair-band, a candy ring, and chocolates. The Dads were given a copy of *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters* (by Mary Meeker, M.D.) about the unparalleled impact of the father on a daughter's entire life. Among other things, the book exhorts us to speak affirmations to our daughter. Our pastors – perhaps knowing many dads feel ill-equipped to communicate in that way – gently coached us through presenting a flower to our daughters, speaking blessings to her, affirming her, and praying with her. They also urged us to make a greater commitment to our wives and children, and the relationships in our lives. They reminded us that we are not isolated in leading our families –

God has provided this community of Open Door so that we can encourage and learn from each other.

For most of us it was a night of firsts and rare moments: the first dance for the girls, a chance to give her a rose, to focus on her without distraction for one whole evening, and to set the standard of what a date should be. But as our pastors exhorted us, many of these opportunities pass every day. The dance was not intended to be just a one-time event, but to bless a life-long relationship.

So while some memories of the Father-Daughter Dance will last a lifetime for the girls – the way the room looked, dancing with the other girls, the chocolate fountain, Dad's necktie – there are other memories that may fade quickly. When I told her I loved her; when I hugged her; when I spoke to her that she is a special and wonderful girl... may those words be no more memorable to her than breakfast or the wallpaper – because she hears them every day and knows they are always there. Only by God's mercy can I be that kind of Daddy, and only through being in a community that provides the fellowship and encouragement like we received on that beautiful night before Valentine's Day. 📖



## THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Ways to Serve and Grow at OPDC

Want to help ODPC become an open door to a life-changing Gospel? Then get involved in one (or two, or three!) of the ministries here at ODPC. We've listed the names of our ministries below to help you get started in your search.

If you'd like to learn more about a particular ministry, simply visit [www.odpcec.net/serve](http://www.odpcec.net/serve) and click on the "Sign-up Now to Serve" link, provide your contact information, and someone will contact you to get you started.



*Encounter ministries are designed to support Open Door's members as they encounter God's grace in various ways.*

### Welcoming Ministry

Like meeting new people? Help newcomers feel at home and ensure that new guests receive the necessary information to maximize their worship experience and connect with our church family.

### Praise Team

Have a heart for worship? Are you musically gifted or have an audio/video background? Serve the church by helping the Body enter into the presence of God through praise.

### Multimedia Team

Have a good design eye? Know your way around a computer or camera? Bring the gospel to life through key visual mediums, which include our website, videos, and graphic design.

### Hosting Team

Like greeting people? Help others worship effectively by setting up the worship environment within the sanctuary.

### Prayer Ministry

Enjoy interceding for others? Come and intercede for the church and for the world with other members of the body.



*Extend ministries are the channels to carry out God's grace to our local communities and around the world by teaching, training, healing, helping, feeding and sharing.*

### Manna

Serve the local community by providing food and clothing every third Saturday morning of the month.

### Justice Ventures International

Serve by strengthening people and organizations promoting justice around the world.

### Local and Global Missions

See page 7 for more information.



*Lives are transformed as people exchange God's grace with one another. Exchange ministries give us avenues to exchange that grace within our church family.*

### Small/Foyer Groups

Join a small group and follow Jesus in the company of other brothers and sisters. Or sign up to lead a group next year!

### Life Stage Ministries: Men's, Women's, College-Aged, Singles & Young Adults, Marriage and Family – Life Ministries

Find out ways to promote spiritual growth and build community according to your season of life.

### Klema

Embrace those with disabilities and reflect the heart of God by providing special Sunday school and family outreach programs to the community.

### Youth Group

Serve as a retreat counselor, bi-weekly bible study teacher, praise team member, missions leader or sports coach for students ranging from 6th grade up to 12th grade.

### Children's Ministry

Partner with parents in raising their children to love the Lord. Currently, teachers, childcare coordinators, praise leaders, and greeters are needed.

### Stephen Ministry

Need someone to talk to? Contact someone from the Stephen Ministry to receive high-quality Christian care if you are hurting or in need.

### Hannah's Hope

Struggling with infertility? Join a safe and confidential group with other women who are also struggling.

**Not sure how to serve? Then visit [www.odpcec.net/serve](http://www.odpcec.net/serve) and take the free, online spiritual gifts inventory to see how God can use your talents to build His Kingdom!**

## THE FIELD

## His Heart for Haiti

By Sara Choe

An earthquake struck Haiti only two months ago, yet already the story is dwindling in the news cycle. Let me be honest: had I not gone there myself, this pivotal event in an already desperately impoverished nation would've escaped my own consciousness, too. Alas, I did see with my own eyes the impact of the earthquake from the other side of the border. Your prayers and finances sent me there.

To briefly recap, Adventures in Missions (AIM), the same organization that sent me on the World Race, has been mobilizing people to the Dominican Republic (DR) and Haiti soon after the earthquake struck. As part of their first response, AIM wanted to send out a team of World Race alumni as a wave of Joshuas scouting out the situation and aiding in some immediate relief efforts.

Ten of us traveled together, six of whom were from the Alumni team. We arrived in the DR on January 21, and most of us returned to the U.S. on January 27 and January 29. AIM partnered with a Dominican missionary and his church, which already had its hands full caring for thirty orphans and had been making gallons of soup to distribute it twice a day, out in the streets and the hospital. We wanted to shift that burden from the shoulders of the young women to us so that they might rest.

We simply wanted to meet some of the refugees, numbering close to a thousand, hear their stories, and meet their practical needs where we could.

God gave us an opportunity to partner with Haitian Christian Mission (HCM) so that we were able to cross into Haiti. When we got to HCM, their storage room had filled quickly

with donations of food, so we organized that room for them. We also prayed for patients waiting to be seen by the medical teams, and helped the medical team triage patients.

Our last full day of ministry was spent back in the DR, where we served hot chocolate to patients and their families staying at a church that became a makeshift hospital. It was there that my team met a family and heard the incredible way that God kept them safe in the midst of the earthquake; a husband and wife became a family after giving birth to their daughter. The mother wasn't able to nurse their newborn baby and so two of my teammates searched for and bought formula.

And that's what we did in the DR and Haiti.

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**We forget that God is God and He knows what He's doing and that He chooses — He doesn't need — to use us. It's such an honor to be chosen and invited to partner with Him.**

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One thing I learned on the World Race was to release expectations. I bet even if I had seen with my own eyes the devastation in Port-au-Prince, I wouldn't be any more emotional than I was this week: I was surprised — and maybe this just shows that I hadn't completely let go of every expectation — to find that I wasn't emotionally overwhelmed.


Perhaps I was in that first stage of grief — denial. Or maybe, I believe, God guarded my heart for me so that I didn't have to. I think if I had tried to protect myself, I would've kept my distance. If God hadn't kept my heart for me, I'd have been paralyzed by the

pain.

I don't mean to say that what's happened to Haiti isn't heartbreaking — it is, and I had only seen and experienced in part the extent of the damage and need. And I wouldn't be offended if you read this brief account of what we did and think, "Seems like a waste of money for the little that they accomplished. Wouldn't it be best to send people who have actual skills to fix things? She doesn't even seem fazed by any of it; it must not have been so bad."

Here's what I'm still learning — we overestimate ourselves and underestimate Him. We see a need, put the onus of meeting it on our shoulders, and get stuck in a mentality of "all or nothing." We forget that God is God and He knows what He's doing and that He chooses — He doesn't need — to use us. It's such an honor — and quite frankly, really fun — to be chosen and invited to partner with Him. He does a bulk of the work anyway.

God is not simply repairing Haiti. The earthquake may have been symbolic of what He wants to do spiritually. God is going to make everything new. He wants to win over and raise up the next generation in Haiti; in order for that to happen, we have to help and equip the church leaders to be spiritual fathers and mothers to a whole country of people who are lost and confused. God is turning this nation back to Him.

St. Francis of Assisi, shortly before he died, told his brothers, "I have done what is mine to do. May Christ show you what is yours to do." Only recently have I come to appreciate his words. Whether we're asked to surrender a brown-bag lunch or lay an only child upon an altar as a sacrifice, it seems to me that obedience is simply accepting His invitation. I dare you to ask of the Lord what is yours to do, because I know He's already showing you. 

## THE FIELD

**ODPC Summer Mission Opportunities****MOBILIZE** through prayer and support and **JOIN** in service**Team The Gambia, June 26 - July 9**

For the past several years, ODPC has partnered with local pastors and missionaries to share the Gospel through medical clinics, Vacation Bible School, local church worship, and village evangelism. In 2010, as a testament to the power of unity and love of Christ within ODPC, an Inter-Generational Mission team composed of Korean-Speaking adults, English-Speaking adults and youth group students will share the love of Christ to the Gambia.

**Team China / NK Cram, July 17 - 30**

In 2008, ODPC first sent a team to Hunchun, China to help CRAM with its numerous projects, including serving the local workers by providing hard labor and baking bread for the needy. Some team members had the opportunity to enter NK to see CRAM's projects, as well as potential areas where ODPC could get involved. In 2010, the team hopes to continue to: increase awareness about China/NK and raise long-term workers in this strategic part of the country; assist, learn, and develop a long-lasting relationship with CRAM to reach this people group more effectively; help and encourage the local CRAM missionaries; and, share the love of God through deeds.

**Team Central Asia, July 1 - 15**

God is doing some amazing things in our missionary family's area. They have started a BAM (Business As Mission) initiative called the "Factory" that will provide training and discipleship to enable church plants throughout Central Asia. Our team will be helping with various needs around the Factory, including possible IT projects for the Factory and the greater missionary community. Our missionary family is also looking for teachers for a one year term at their missionary school, where our very own Grace Hong is serving.

**Team Washington, D.C. (Unique Learning Center), August 9 - 13**

The ULC family concludes their summer with a week of VBS at the Highland Retreat Camp in Bergton, VA, which is located in the Shenandoah Valley. Students maintain a busy schedule as they swim, take part in team sports, outdoor activities, arts and crafts and nightly chapel times. In 2009, ODPC's team was blessed by what God taught them as they loved and served the students. We anticipate even more blessing for our members as we commit to serving this summer.

**PRAY for ODPC Missionaries!**

**Deleted from Online Version**  
Please email [odpcthreshold@gmail.com](mailto:odpcthreshold@gmail.com) if you would like to receive a hard copy of this newsletter.

**Missions Service Auction**

May 2 at 5:00pm! Tickets are \$10. If you'd like to donate an item, email [missions.auction@gmail.com](mailto:missions.auction@gmail.com).

## THE CORRIDOR

## On Grieving

by Harry Choi

On October 17, 2008, my dad passed away after a long battle with cancer. My wife and I were able to spend the last few days with him in California before the Lord took him home. I still tear up whenever I think about the image of him at that time. This once vibrant and talkative man that I remember as my father had suffered a number of years from cancer, and by the end had succumbed to the illness to become utterly frail and helpless. His body was devastated from months of intensive chemotherapy and cancer so that not much more than wrinkled and aged skin was left on his bones. He couldn't eat and could barely drink. He was bedridden for months, so we had to change his diaper as if he were a baby and bathe him with baby wipes. He was heavily drugged to minimize the pain, and barely conscious enough to have a conversation. At times we had to move him side to side to try to get air circulating to his back and to reapply medicine and special band-aids to his tail-bone area, and he would quietly groan from pain. When I sat next to his head and leaned near him, his breath had the unpleasant odor of a dying man. By the end of his life, there was pretty much nothing that I could do but keep stroking his face and arm, telling him that I love him.

This I know without a doubt – my dad was blessed to receive Jesus Christ in his life decades ago, and he strove as best as he could to run the race that God had marked out for him until the Lord took him home for eternal rest. I also know, however, that there is nothing beautiful or sweet or saintly about the way death happens. The pain of seeing your loved one suffering and the grief of losing someone so dear to you is deep and long-running. Until my dad's turn for the worse in his last month, we were led to think and believe that after long and difficult treatments, God had answered our prayers and was finally turning his health around.

And so, after the dramatic turn for the worse that ended my dad's life, I went through a year-long deep valley of spiritual and emotional struggle, especially because of the way I saw him leave this life.

Over a year later, I had a business meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia, and had to drive for several hours by myself. In the middle of the long drive, I popped in a CD that I hadn't listened to in a long time. A song came on, and all of a sudden tears swelled in my eyes and the memory of my dad and his last few days flooded my thoughts.

The song's words were:

You are all  
big and small, beautiful  
And wonderful to trust in grace through  
faith  
But I'm asking to taste  
For dark is light to you  
Depths are height to you  
Far is near,  
but Lord I need to hear from you  
Be near, oh God, Be near, oh God of us  
Your nearness is to us our good  
Be near, oh God, Be near, oh God of us  
Your nearness is to us our good

This song encapsulated the state of my desperate mind at the time of my dad's passing. Although it was over a year later, the words echoing in my car brought back memories of the longing in my heart then – *Be near oh God, be near! Are you here, God? Are you here by my dad's side in his pain, do you hear his groaning? Are you seeing my dad's life ebbing away breath by breath? Have you heard my prayers? I know what the Word says. I've heard what friends have told me. I know what the years of Bible studies and sermons have taught me – that you are here with us in this walk through the valley. But, it doesn't seem to matter what my brain tells me to think. I am asking to taste.... Lord I need to hear from you, to feel your embrace. Be near, oh God, be near, oh God of us in this dark and painful moment of our lives...*

A saying goes, "time heals all wounds." I believe that. But, time is just a process and not the means of healing wounds. Rather, it is through time affording us the reminders of

God's very presence in our lives via circumstance or Word or prayers or testimonies – or a song – that healing takes place step by step.

We as a congregation are beginning to see our parents go through illness and fellow members grieve through losses like I have. Yet unless you go through loss in your own life, it's often difficult to understand the depth and the width of it. It's hard to fathom what it's like for those who have suffered a loss long before and after the wakes or funeral services in which we as a fellow community participate, and catch only a glimpse of the pain and grief. It's a long cycle, not something that you go through over a few weeks or even months. Often memories pop up in your mind at random moments in random places that cause you to think and think again about what the loss means to you and how our mind works to go through the grieving process. And as one who has experienced such a loss and is going through the process, I feel a special kinship and ache in my heart for those who experience similar loss – whether I know that individual well or not. I have a special place in my heart for a special prayer for the ones who are grieving – *be near, oh God, be near.*

I write these thoughts perhaps as a form of self-therapy. But, more than that, I hope that this can be taken as a reminder about the importance of you and me in the community of believers. Somehow God draws from our pains and experiences to enable us to relate more – several layers more – to those who are in similar stages, though several steps ahead or behind. I hope and pray that those of you who are grieving can relate and be comforted from my story. And whether you are grieving from the loss of a parent, infertility, feelings of inadequacy, a child with illness, the loss of a job, or any other situation in your life, I hope that we can be more open with one another to share our individual stories – as instruments of God's therapy of mending hearts, encouraging one another, and blessing one another in the community of Christ. 