

# THE CRY

*for Submission*

word  
MADE  
flesh

*An Advocacy Journal*  
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We celebrate *Submission* to Jesus, each other, and the poor.

THE CRY is an **advocacy publication** of Word Made Flesh that invites readers to **learn and share** in the **stories of our friends** who suffer under poverty and injustice.

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From the Editor

With such joy and gratefulness, we close 2018 with this issue of *The Cry* on our Lifestyle Celebration of Submission.

Submission is, on the surface, a complicated word for many of us. I learned about submission in contexts where being submitted was a forceful thing. It meant blindly following authority, surrendering without joy, and seeing the self as unimportant.

And it is true — submission often involves a painful process of dying to self; it won't always feel joyful. Yet, if we look at the very construction of the word, we find much to celebrate because submission points us to the life Christ lived out and the life He has joyfully invited us to.

The Latin prefix *sub* means “under,” “below,” “beneath.” The most basic definition of *mission* is an important assignment carried out through actions. From this breakdown, *submission* takes on a new meaning: to celebrate submission is to celebrate the carrying out of our important assignment of being under, below, beneath. I find this echoed in the following verses of Scripture:

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition... Rather, in humility value others **above** yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, rather, **he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*** (Philippians 2:3-7)

Christ's mission was to carry out the will of His Father, who so loved the world He sent His only Son to redeem it. Christ in His incarnation embraced the “sub-ness” of the human experience, submitted to it, and then valued humanity *above* himself — to carry out the mission of Love. In coming down, Christ carried out his mission faithfully and *lifted* us (from *below, as a servant*) up to peace, joy, hope, righteousness, new life.

We find that submission was never meant to be a harmful or even a self-

deprecating action. Christ even redeems the term itself, and causes it to be a vehicle for hope, redemption, advocacy, and to give life.

Jesus then passes this submission, this assignment of loving the world from below, on to us in the Great Commission. He invites us to co-labor with Him, to carry out with Him the mission of Love throughout all of the nations.

Christ-like submission gives space for God's Spirit to work through and among us. It has the power to change the world. Our desire is that this issue of *The Cry* would inspire all of us to consider the ways in which we can be more submitted to Jesus, to each other, and to those in vulnerable and oppressive circumstances. What could God do if we leaned in just a bit more into submission?

In the following pages, you'll find a few possible answers to that question. Our Word Made Flesh folks around the world daily practice submission and do life with people who are experiencing extreme hardships. You'll hear some of their stories and ways that God works faithfully through submission, bringing great rewards, new life, transformation, and re-ordering. You'll be invited to submit to Love, and to further carry out submission in your own life.

May this issue of *The Cry* bring great hope to you. I pray that this would be a beautiful season of celebration, and that 2019 would be a wonderful new year for you.

**JORGE CASTORENA**

Editor, *The Cry*



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# From the Executive Director

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be *used to his own advantage (exploited or grasped)*; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant (*slave*), being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. -- Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

We are not God. Yet, we are exhorted to have the same mindset as God. What is this mindset? It is a mindset that chooses servanthood over equality; it is a mindset that chooses to focus on the good of others sometimes to the penultimate detriment (even death!) of self.

At times we are like the disciples of Jesus who put the cart before the horse and also often seem to manage to forget vital points. In Matthew 18 the disciples come and ask Jesus, “who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus calls a nearby child to come over among them and then relays, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Yes, God as Father exalts God as Son because of the Son's mindset of self-giving Love and the person who takes on the vulnerable orientation of a child is named as among the greatest in heaven, but such gifts secondarily and dependently accrue essentially to those who are no longer driven by the desire for such gifts. The gift of chosen service becomes its own reward.

Word Made Flesh (WMF) professes *Submission* as one of its Lifestyle Celebrations. It is affirmed that WMF celebrates submission to Jesus, to each other, and, poignantly, to people suffering the scourge of impoverishment. ([wordmadeflesh.org/about](http://wordmadeflesh.org/about))

The idea of *celebrating* submission can be disconcerting due to the concept of submission often being associated with egregiously negative qualities of this world such as debasement, humiliation, disempowerment, and other oppressions. However, Gospel submission is not about this. Gospel submission is ultimately about dignity, affirmation, humility, and empowerment of self and of others.

We now find ourselves quickly and deeply into Gospel counter-cultural, “upside-down Kingdom” (where the last shall be first and the first last, and etc.) orientations. Healthy submission is not something foisted upon another person; rather, it is a principle that is voluntarily chosen in order to gift others. This is why John the Baptist can write about Jesus“...For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3: 29 & 30) Voluntarily chosen submission as part of vocational trajectory can offer deep internal satisfaction

of soul as we are so poignantly taught through Psalm 23's depiction of the Lord as Shepherd/ Caregiver who lovingly offers His people restoration, goodness, comfort, a home, and more. As with John the Baptist, voluntarily chosen submission can almost inexplicably provide one with great joy.

Healthy, Gospel submission is not necessarily about moving oneself into a position of social marginalization (though this could transpire), rather it is more about maintaining a posture of interconnected vulnerability and humility in whatever role/position one finds oneself.

For instance, in the Gospel of Luke chapter 7 we find a “foreigner” and “outsider” in a position of leadership who approaches Jesus in a healthily submissive posture requesting a gift of healing from the Lord. The outsider is not just any outsider, but happens to be a centurion -- a ranking member of the occupying power's military guard that is actively oppressing Jesus' own people. This centurion seemingly already has more than three strikes against him considering who he represents, what he does, and the particular position of power that he holds in the midst of it all. Yet, Jesus hears his request and engages it. There is intriguing variation in how this story is relayed in other texts, but in Luke we find that the Centurion has asked Jewish elders to come to Jesus on his behalf to share his request. The Centurion did not stay distant out of pride, but instead followed this protocol of sending others out of submissive respect for Jesus. He sought to acknowledge the importance of Jesus' position and person.

The elders were willing to agree to meet Jesus on behalf of the centurion because of the care that the centurion had already consistently shown for their people. The centurion, through care, had transformed from being simply a organizational representative of a distant power to becoming a known person in his own right. In fact, the passage says that the elders say of the centurion, “he loves our people.” The Centurion's request for healing is not primarily for himself, but is for a cared for slave in his household. Upon hearing the request, Jesus agrees to come to the aid of the man in need. Yet, as Jesus is on the way, this already remarkable passage takes a couple more remarkable twists. We read,

“when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed.



*Walking to retrieve clean water.  
(Courtesy WMF Archives)*

For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.” When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.”

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So, we find that Jesus heals the man in need without ever coming to him. Still, most surprisingly, we find that Jesus lauds a military leader of an occupying power at a scandalous level -- “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” Why does Jesus offer such magnanimous praise? It is the quality of the centurion's submissive humility that Jesus finds extraordinary.

Beyond seeing the incredible breadth of God's inclusive Love in this passage, we also can importantly take note that submission is not necessarily antithetical to either leadership or to holding positions in society that have forms of power associated with them. What we can come to understand is that healthy submission is primarily related to the posture that one takes in the midst of whatever one is doing wherever one finds oneself for the sake of others.

As we truly walk the path of submitting ourselves to God, we will find that we will begin to follow in His footsteps. Following God's example will naturally

*(continued on p. 5)*



*Tending to the community garden  
after school. (WMF Romania)*



(continued from p. 4)

and healthily lead us toward compassionately submitting ourselves to others around us – particularly, to those in great need.

In this edition of *The Cry*, you will encounter stories, reflections, and other content that seeks to sift through the concept of submission in order to better lead us into celebrating submission. My prayer is that you will find new ways to allow this spiritual discipline, this Lifestyle Celebration, to saturate your life and to further influence the lives of others.

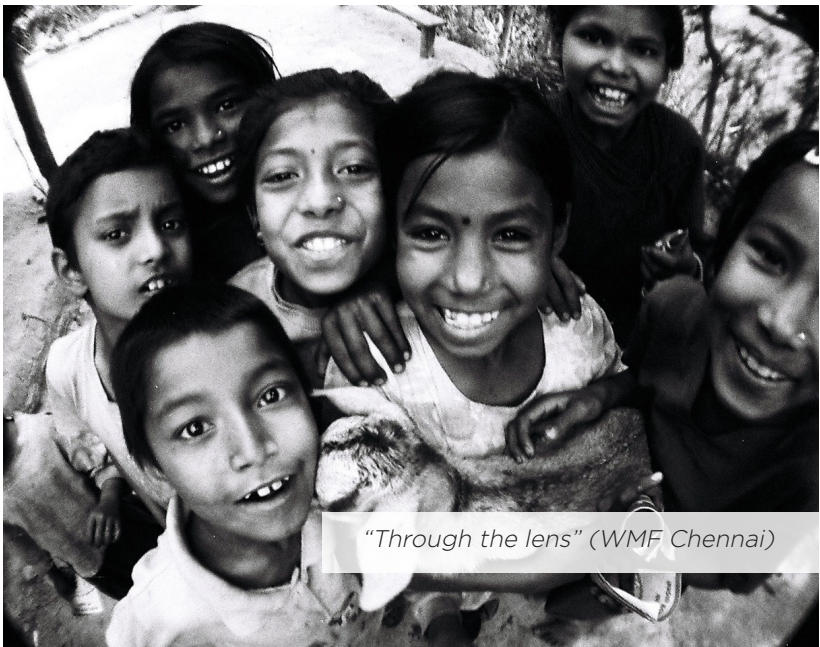
Let us remember:  
God opposes the proud...but shows favor to the humble.”  
Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you...Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (James 4:6, 7, & 10)

Let us also, remember, as Bob Dylan reminds us in “You Gotta Serve Somebody” from his *Slow Train* album:  
But you’re gonna have to serve somebody, yes  
Indeed you’re gonna have to serve somebody  
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord  
But you’re gonna have to serve somebody

I pray that we will all serve (submit ourselves to) the Lord with gladness...For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endures to all generations. (Psalm 100)

Grace and peace,

**CLINT BALDWIN**  
Executive Director, Word Made Flesh



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THE **CRY**

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**Thank you.**



# Submission: In Giving, We Receive

By Teah Maxwell Dugbeh, *Field Staff, WMF Sierra Leone*

*In a world where more and more people seek to get more than they seek to give, be one of those people who offer love and support to those who need and ask for it. Look for opportunities to give to those in need. To put a smile on someone's face. Give and life will give back to you tenfold. Be one of those people who give with an open heart without expecting anything in return.*

Growing up in a polygamous family, Jeneba was her father's only daughter. Her mother was forced to leave because she was contending with three of her father's wives. When Jeneba's mother left the house, Jeneba did not go with her because her father did not allow it. So, Jeneba stayed with her father and her stepmothers in the house. It was not easy for Jeneba as it was such a very large family. Every day there were countless abusive words and fights among themselves. Jeneba had to do most of the chores for all three of her stepmothers every day before going to school and after school, and she did it all without complaining.

Next door to Jeneba's house was a small church which used

to host our children's Good News Club. Because the church was next door to Jeneba's house, she would sneak away at any opportunity she had to go and meet her friends around the neighborhood. The Good News Club was an escape away from all the endless conflict, abuse, and fighting in her house. It was a risky act for her to do, because she knew if she was caught by her father who was the head of the Muslims in that community or by any of her stepmothers she would be in serious trouble.

Jeneba had a friend named Esther who was the daughter of the pastor of the church near Jeneba's house. Because of their friendship, Jeneba liked going to the church every week.

Esther was the one who constantly advised Jeneba to always remain steadfast in the things of God no matter the situation. She was always advising her to be there to give a helping hand to her family no matter the challenge or circumstance and to always remember the teachings they received at the Good News Club and encouraged her to put them into practice. One thing that she constantly told her is that Jeneba should learn to give freely without expecting anything in return and would



Recovering from a flood near WMF Sierra Leone. (WMF Archives)

The Good News Club was an escape away from all the endless conflict, abuse, and fighting in her house.

always say that "The hand that gives never runs dry." Jeneba developed a beautiful heart of giving. She would make sure that she shared whatever little she had with her stepfamily.

Jeneba grew up this way, through primary school until high school and she always prayed quietly when things were not going well with her. Esther sometimes helped Jeneba with her school homework and Jeneba would do the same thing for her brothers and sisters at home but she always kept her church attendance a secret from everyone at home. Jeneba was also forced to go the mosque with her family. She was afraid of what might happen if she refused, so she remained submissive to her father. But Jeneba kept going to church and prayed silently in her home.

When Jeneba's father passed away suddenly, there was no one to take care of her and provide for her needs. Esther's father decided to support Jeneba because of the intimate friendship between Jeneba and Esther. Jeneba's mother later came home and Jeneba went on to become the architect of peace between her mother and her stepmothers, and their family lived out in reconciliation. Even when they were all together

SIERRA LEONE

 @wmfsierraleone

Jeneba made sure that she continued serving her stepmothers and also helped them with their work. She remained humble to her stepbrothers and stepsisters and helped them with their school work. And they began to live happily together, with less quarreling, abuse and fighting as was common in the past.

Sometimes, submission can be difficult. But Jeneba's story shows that we never know what our faithful submitting to God and others will look like, even in the midst of trials. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him and seek to give selflessly. May we be inspired to carry out lives of healthy

submission and giving, whether or not we ever see a return this side of heaven. May we trust that in our submission, God is faithful.



## ABOUT TEAH:



Teah Maxwell Dugbeh is the Good News Club and Frisbee Coordinator at Word Made Flesh Sierra Leone. He also works with the Vulnerable Person Protection Department to address abuse cases in Kroo Bay.

Teah was born in Liberia and came to Sierra Leone during the 1991-2012 Civil War in the sub-region. After several years of serving in a local church, he finally answered God's call to be the senior pastor of New Life Assemblies Church in Kroo Bay. He has faithfully and intentionally been serving at WMF-SL since 2012 as a volunteer, servant team member and now staff.

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Courtesy WMF Archives (Sierra Leone)



# Ashira Workshop

By Harper Swords Oprea, WMF Romania

I spot Irina down the street on my way back to the Center from the market, and quicken my pace to catch up with her. She's pushing a dusty, rickety baby stroller with a lumpy garbage bag in the seat. Having run into her like this on several occasions in the past, I know that the bag is filled with cans, bottles, and scrap metal she's collected that morning with the intention of selling it for a few lei. There's a chill in the air and I notice her strong hands are swollen a bit from the cold. We exchange hellos and I remind her about her sewing lesson later that day. She smiles and assures me she'll be there, and I believe her as she has yet to miss a lesson.

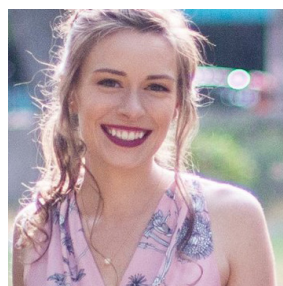
A few hours later, Irina walks through the door, hand-in-hand with her youngest child, a three-year-old boy. She apologizes and explains she didn't have anyone to watch him today. "No problem," I say, "he can sit next to us; I'll get some crayons and some Legos for him." I help the little guy onto a chair and get him set up with a snack and something to color. Irina takes her place at the sewing machine on the opposite end of the bench and I pull up a seat between them. For the next hour, I lean from one side to the other, switching between supervising Irina and trying to keep her son entertained. Just as he reaches the limit of his patience, she finishes the bag she's been working on, and we celebrate together. I know he doesn't fully understand the weight of what she's accomplished, but someday he will.

Irina is one of four women enrolled in our new project: Ashira Workshop. Over the next six months, she will continue to receive training to develop her sewing skills and knowledge of personal finance, and complete seven more bags (which

you can purchase here!). In May, she will invite her family to a graduation ceremony where we will recognize her achievements and honor her and the other graduates with diplomas and their very own sewing machines. My prayer is that after that day, I will never again meet her on the street collecting metal in the cold, but instead, to meet her in the market buying materials for the products she designs and sells to provide for her family. This is the image that sustains me these days; the image that I pray is on the heart of each of the women enrolled in this course, to help them persevere and see it through.



Sewing at the Ashira Workshop



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## ABOUT HARPER

Harper was born in Billings, Montana in 1993 and became a Christian in 2008 when friends invited her to a high school church group. She was inspired by Jesus's radical message of grace and reconciliation and especially what she interpreted as God's preferential option for the poor and vulnerable; consequently she knew she would spend the rest of her living out this prophetic message by serving and living among those at the margins. She went on to study social work at George Fox University and spent a semester abroad learning about missions, community development, and international social in Word Made Flesh Romania's study abroad program. After graduating a year later, Harper returned to join this community as a full-time staff member in 2016.

While living and working at a home for women in crises each summer during college, Harper fell in love with the work of assisting new mothers (often teenagers) develop secure attachments with their babies and confidence in their worth and parenting abilities. The joy and significance she felt in this work led her to conclude that it is her vocation. She is currently studying to become a doula so she can provide competent pregnancy and postpartum assistance to families in the Valley community. In the future she hopes to participate in developing workshops for job-skills training and a preschool in this neighborhood as well.



# "Mother and Son"

(Working Title) Art and reflection by Karisa Keasey

Jesus submitted to his Father as God incarnate to experience life just like us. He also submitted to his very humanity. He experienced every stomach drop, every headache, every tear and heart break — AND WAS VICTORIOUS. (John 16:33)

Submit means to trust fully. And if we are going to make it, we need to trust ourselves to our Father who came here before us and created our inmost being. As a parent cares for their child's every little need, as the Virgin Mother cared for her defenseless baby wrapped in swaddling clothes on a manger, so our Saviour cares about us.

*Psalms 121:3 "He will not let you stumble;  
the one who watches over you will not slumber."*

SEE MORE OF KARISA'S WORK AT



[KARISAKEASEY.COM](https://www.karisaKeasey.com)





# Submission as Re-Ordering

By David Chronic, *Director of Operations*

Submission. It is a contentious notion. The very word frequently invokes a reaction. It is often promulgated by those in positions of authority to bolster their power. When submission is demanded, we tend to resist. Yet, in our lives in this world, submission is a given for everyone. We are situated within a certain order, within particular structures of power. None of us chose to be conceived, to be born or to be part of the family in which we were placed. No one chose their time to be alive. Our location of birth, our culture, language, education, government, religion are largely givens and assumed. We may not choose to submit to these hierarchies and circumstances, but submit we do. As we grow into adulthood we may be provided with more choice, but even as adults we are situated within orders that are not of our own choosing. Although our American libertarian predilections may cause us to react against any form of hierarchy, imposed or chosen, it exists nonetheless. How we think, talk, value and live are largely dictated by the overarching dominant worldview, culture and paradigms of our time. To live and to engage in our society, we must submit to this order – though our submission may be largely unconscious – and by submitting we perpetuate the existing order... or disorder. How do we become aware of our submission? How do we become critically conscious of the order or disorder in which we submit?

“Disorder” is an apt description for most places in the world. Florina\* is a beautiful, loving, generous and gifted 11-year-old girl who has been coming to our Community Center in Romania for the past 4 years. Florina was born into a poor family with three siblings and parents who struggle with alcoholism. Caught up in the thrall of addiction, the family is unkempt, the two-room home is always extremely messy, and the children are usually neglected. Florina tries to maintain her few belongings, although dirty and worn-out, so that she can go each day to school. When she is not at school or at the Center, she will often go to the park by herself to play – something particularly dangerous for children in our urban context. While we see joy and resilience in Florina, the marks of dysfunction and abuse are also evident. In a very real sense, Florina’s life tells the tale of submission gone awry. A disordered life in a disordered family in a disordered society. The hierarchy that was supposed to care for and protect Florina has largely failed. Submission for Florina means subjugation. Florina is subjugated to marginalization, exploitation and increased

**The only fully  
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place to which we  
submit is God.**



*Children helping to gather firewood for a bonfire (WMF Romania)*

vulnerability. What may be worse is that her personality and gifts are limited in their development and capacity to gift back to the world. How do we act so that this disorder is limited and a better order imagined and cultivated?

In Christian perspective, our submission to the disorder in the world is part of the Fall – when relationships with God, humanity and all of creation were thrown out of whack. Sin, evil, Satan, suffering and death are all powers, signs, and consequences of the disorder. Through the coming of God into the world in the Son, the Messiah, the Re-Ordering has begun. The eternal Son becomes human, experiencing subjugation and the inflictions of evil and death in order to break their power; and the Father raises him up to the highest place in order to heal the disorder of sin and to swallow up death (Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:54-57). The Re-Ordering is the reconciling of all things to Godself in Christ (2 Cor. 17-21). In Christ, we are being re-ordered (Eph. 4). The Spirit of the Re-Ordering is poured out on the world so that we can experience the re-ordering and begin to submit our lives and being in this world to the Re-ordering (Rom. 8). The Spirit is awakening our conscious to

all to which we submit and inviting us to into an entirely new worldview, culture and paradigm. The promise is that this work is being done and will move forward until the Father is all in all (1 Cor 15:20-28; Eph. 1). That is the Re-ordering. In Christian terms, submission is participation in the Re-Ordering.

Of course, our visions of a re-ordering may be criticized for being idealistic. The critics ask: How, in the face of the Fall and the brute realities of our world, can we practice submission? Who gets to say what is healthy re-ordering and what is disorder? Won’t our practice of submission create new hierarchies of disorder? These questions do not have easy answers. Here I will simply conclude with four suggestions of principles that can guide us and our communities as we take steps toward submission to God’s re-ordering.

**1. Our submission is firstly to God.** Living under the shadow of the Fall, we all participate in hierarchies of exploitation, exploiting some and being exploited by others. The only fully safe person and place to which we submit is God. In doing so, our inner lives are re-ordered. It is in and through our submission to God that we learn and create space for healthy submission to one another. This is what John intimates when he says that our fellowship with one another comes through our fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3).

**2. The result of our submission is the fruit of the Spirit.** Submission in the re-ordering looks like love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23). If this is not what our submission looks like, then it must be critiqued and transformed.

**3. Submission should always be subject to negotiation.** Those benefiting from the power-structures of the status quo may re-act rather than comply to a new ordering. But subjugation of one is ultimately the dehumanization of all. The invitation to the Re-Ordering is, in the final instance, the restoration of everyone. As we grow in our walk with God and our understanding of loving one another, we need to continually debate our practice of submission. Our present submission should be evaluated in light of the future promise of the New Creation. The relinquishing and retaining of our will, desires and power should result in health, flourishing and peace.

**4. Our reflections on and practice of submission should start in relationship with those who are subjugated.** As we submit to God, our lives are less ordered around serving ourselves. That is, rather than submission looking like the loss of will, it should be the use of our will for justice, peace and love. Rather than simply renouncing power, submission may be the use of power for inclusion, empowerment, nurture and growth. And this is where re-ordering may touch the life of Florina and her family, who, in the first place, are a gift from God to

## INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

us, offering us a possibility to move from self-centeredness. And we can be a gift for Florina. Helping her to be known. Caring for her. Showing a non-rejecting love to Florina’s parents. Affirming all the good that they are doing amid their challenges. Finding creative ways to support the family and bring healthy social accountability. Creating a space of safety and love. Securing resources for Florina so that she and her family are more empowered to discover the better future that God has for them. Inviting Florina and her family to move from disorder to submission to the lifegiving order offered by God. This is what our submission can look like. In Christ, the Re-Ordering has begun. In small ways and through much struggle, it is becoming our experience.



*Every year, WMF Romania organizes a children's summer camp in the mountains.*



### ABOUT DAVID

After serving in WMF Romania for 20 years, David Chronic recently moved back to the US to serve as the Director of Operations for WMF. Alongside his wife Lenuta, David worked among vulnerable youth and poor families, providing education, counseling and mentoring through Day Centers, Community Centers and community development.

He studied international relations at the University of Nebraska at Omaha through which he received a scholarship to study in Romania and Moldova. While living in those two countries, David developed relationships with children living on the streets and children abandoned in the state institutions, which would pave the way for his long-time work in Eastern Europe. Recently, David has contributed articles and chapters on cross-cultural mission among the poor to qideas.org, Living Mission: the vision and voices of New Friars, and Child, Theology and Mission.

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# Submitting to Love

By Miriam Méndez, *WMF Board Member*

When you hear the word submission, what comes to mind? Power over someone or something? Manipulating someone to do what you want? The Cambridge Dictionary defines submission as an act of allowing someone to have power over you. It is also defined as the act of accepting the power or authority of someone else. If we are honest with ourselves, people are not excited about someone else having power over them or having to accept the power or authority of someone else. Especially when that power or authority is oppressive and restrictive. This kind of submission usually comes with rules that can strip away your dignity, leaving you feeling defenseless with limited or no possibility of freedom.

But for this article, I want to talk to you about a different kind of submission. One of the nine *Lifestyle Celebrations* of Word Made Flesh is *Submission*. But here, the word submission is not an act of lording power over someone or something, but it is an act of celebration...the act of celebrating Jesus, each other and the poor.

So as I thought about what that kind of submission looks like it was Paul's prayer to the Ephesians that came to mind. Paul's prayer is an act that calls us to submit to love.

***Submitting to love invites us to pray and love each other.*** When I was ordained into the ministry, I was told 13 words that I will never forget, for they continue to challenge and sustain me today. The words are, "Miriam, in ministry you cannot pick and choose whom you are going to love." And let me tell you sometimes it will be and it has been challenging to love others and even to love yourself. Yet Jesus reminds us of the greatest commandment of all "to love God and love others." We may find it difficult at times, but we must keep in mind one thing—that we are all created in God's image. We need to allow ourselves to see God's image in that brother or sister and to help you love even in those challenging and hurtful times. So when we pray we need to remember to pray for all of humanity, not simply those whom we feel comfortable with. We are called to pray for the rich and poor, male and female, young and old, of every race, tribe and culture, social status, economic status, and educational status, etc... And as we pray, God gives

us the wisdom to go beyond our own interests or concerns of our own limited circle.

***Submitting to love invites us to be rooted and grounded in love.*** "And I pray that you, being rooted and established—grounded— well founded in love (v. 17b). The apostle Paul uses two metaphors — agriculture and construction. Being rooted carries with it the ideal of life, sustenance and nurture. When a tree is severed from its roots it will die. It may look like it is alive, but after a while the leaves begin to turn brown, the branches turn gray and the tree begins to rot and eventually dies. A root system is essential to bring nutrients to a tree, to keep it healthy and strong. And just as a root system is essential to a tree so is the foundation essential to the building. In my brief research on foundations, I found this definition... "Foundations do not typically contribute to the architectural esthetics of the building. Yet without suitable foundations a building will not function effectively, it will be unsafe and its architectural merits will fade rapidly. The foundations are the most heavily loaded structural element of the building. They are constructed in largely un-seam conditions and their integrity is reliant on the quality of workmanship of constructions."

I am reminded of a story I read about a young man who was a member of a religious Order who came to Mother Teresa complaining about all the work that the Abbot of his community was demanding him to do. He felt that he was being diverted from his call. He said, "My call is to serve lepers — I want to give my life to serving lepers," and Mother Theresa looked at him with a smile and said to him, "your call is not to serve lepers— your call is to love Jesus."

My friends, we can get caught up in the tasks and forget to love the One who called us! We must be attentive to the One who keeps asking us, "Do you love me?" In his book, *In The Name of Jesus*, Henri Nouwen reminds us that by asking this question, we can "keep ourselves from being pulled from one urgent issue to another and from becoming strangers to our own and God's heart."<sup>2</sup> When we are called to love Jesus "it is not enough to be moral people, well trained people, eager to help others and have the ability to respond creatively to the burning issues of our time."<sup>3</sup> Yes, all of this is important. But the question we need to ask ourselves is, "are we people who have a desire to dwell in God's presence, to listen to God's voice, to look at God's beauty, to touch God's incarnate Word and to taste fully God's infinite goodness?"<sup>4</sup> Do you love me? Is not so much about what we have accomplished, but are you in love with Jesus? Do you love me? Remember, we were created from love, for love, to love.

***Submitting to love enables us to work "together with all the saints."*** It is in our nature to often feel that we need to control every situation and to take care of every task, and to fix all the problems. Remember, these words: "together with all the saints." Our work is not to be done alone, but in community. Ministry is a communal and mutual experience — "together with all the saints." Jesus sends the twelve out in pairs (Mark 6:7); "For where two



Group activities at summer camp.  
(WMF Romania)

or three meet in my name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18-19-20)

Over and over again, I have discovered how hard it is to be truly faithful to Jesus when I am alone. We need our sisters and brothers to pray with us, to speak with us about the spiritual task at hand, to challenge us to stay pure in mind, heart and body.

And it is there, "Together with all the saints, that we will learn to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

***Submitting to love is an invitation to trust and know the heart of God.*** Submitting to love is an invitation to trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding/insight. Yes, we are to do our part, but we also must let God do God's part! Trust God to fill us with all the riches and understanding that the situation warrants or requires. Submitting to love gives the opportunity to respond to conflicts, tensions and issues in a way that compels us to bring healing, reconciliation, hope and new life wherever we go.

Submitting to love is an invitation to know the heart of God. We are called to be people with a deep spiritual formation and transformation — formation in the mind of Christ, who did not cling to power but emptied himself, taking the form of slave — and transformation, involving the whole person, body, mind and heart so that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Remember we cannot do it alone. God, working through us will allow us to "accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine."

***Submitting to love is an invitation to celebrate Jesus, each other and the poor.*** In his book, *The Beloved Community*, Charles Marsh states, "Behavior pleasing to God makes a simple claim: caring for the lonely and the poor and being a people attentive

to the "fatherless and the widow in the affliction." Let us throw ourselves into humdrum tasks and the ordinary work of mercy and justice."<sup>5</sup>

Word Made Flesh has thrown itself to the work of mercy and justice by caring, serving and living among the poor and lonely, the fatherless and widow. May we continue to be strengthened by God for the ministry He has placed in our hands.

God has surprised Word Made Flesh in many ways. Let God continue to surprise us. Let God continue to guide us. Let God take complete residence in our hearts, minds, bodies and soul. May we be strengthened internally through the Holy Spirit. To God be the glory, in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. The power comes from God and the glory belongs to God. Amen and Amen.



## ABOUT MIRIAM:

Reverend Miriam Méndez is the Executive Minister and Senior Regional Pastor - Elect of The American Baptist Churches of New Jersey (ABCNJ), a network that has 285 member churches and approximately 70,000 members. She is a preacher, teacher, administrator, church planter and an advocate for justice. Before her role with ABCNJ, she served for 15 years as adjunct faculty at George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Portland, Oregon in the areas of spiritual leadership, reconciliation and prayer.

Her educational training includes a B.S. in Business Administration from National Louis University, Lombard, IL, Masters of Divinity and Spiritual Director certificate from Portland Seminary, Portland, Oregon and a one year residency of Clinical Pastoral Education in a level one trauma hospital in Portland, Oregon.



A generous donation to WMF Brazil allowed for an outing to see play in Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.slideshare.net/bakhtzamin/foundation-29063799>

<sup>2</sup> Henri Nouwen, (1997). *In the Name of Jesus*. New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Co., p. 28

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Marsh, Charles. (2005). *The Beloved Community*. Cambridge, MA: Persius Books. p. 213



# Meet our Staff

## WMF STAFF



Laura Haugen  
International Office Manager

Laura grew up as a missionary kid in Peru and Argentina, which has given her a heart for the world. She was drawn to Word Made Flesh because of their holistic vision for incarnational, restorative, and sustainable ministry with communities around the world. As International Office Manager, Laura is honored to collaborate with local and international staff members and partners to help increase WMF's collective Kingdom-impact.

Laura graduated from Indiana Wesleyan University in 2015 with a Bachelor of Social Work and from Asbury Theological Seminary in 2018 with a Master of Arts in Leadership. Laura and her husband, Matthew, live in Wilmore and enjoy traveling, going on walks, hanging out with friends, and discovering new great places to eat (one of their favorites being Metropolitan Donuts in Lexington).

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Shelby Renfro  
Field Director, WMF Rwanda

Shelby grew up just outside Portland, Oregon. She was raised by two incredible, encouraging parents and a loving church community who challenged her to seek Jesus with her whole heart from a young age.

Shelby had the opportunity to travel several times to both Kazakhstan and Mexico as a teenager where she was deeply moved by the injustice and poverty that she witnessed in those places. During her senior year at George Fox University, she spent a semester abroad in Kigali, Rwanda where her worldview was forever changed. She graduated from George Fox with a B.A. in International Studies and a passion for seeking peace and justice in her daily life.

Shelby has been working with Word Made Flesh since May of 2014 as an intern in the US office, and later on a Servant Team with WMF Romania before returning to Rwanda 2015 to start a WMF community in Kigali. She is currently finishing her graduate studies in Global Development and Justice through an online program with Multnomah University. Shelby has been living, working, and eating goat brochette in Rwanda since November 2015.

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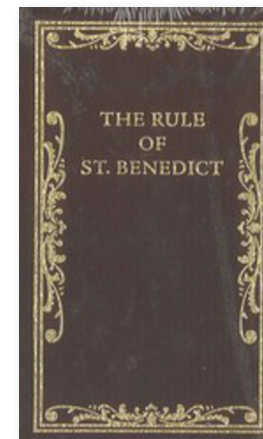
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# ON SUBMISSION

As we reflect on this lifestyle celebration, we invite you to explore some of our staff top picks from media and resources that deal with the topic of submission.

## LEARN MORE

### Read



**ST. BENEDICT** intended his *Rule* to be a guide to Christian monastic life. Based on the key precepts of humility, obedience and love, its aim is to create a harmonious and orderly religious community. This book of precepts was written for monks living communally under the authority of an abbot. He lays out in practical steps how to become more humble and how to practice submission to authority and to community. Benedict's legacy remains vibrant — though written about 1,500 years ago, his *Rule* is still a current source of inspiration and a key work in the history of the Christian church.

### Watch



**THE MISSION** depicts the true story of two Jesuit missionaries — a man of the sword (Robert De Niro) and a man of the cloth (Jeremy Irons) — who defied European colonial forces to save a Native tribe from slavery in mid-18th-century South America. Amidst the themes of violent persecution, redemption, and penance the film shows how the two Jesuits, in love and devotion, submitted to the process of mission and to the people they had committed to serve.

From the film:

*"If might is right, then love has no place in the world. It may be so, it may be so. But I don't have the strength to live in a world like that..."*

### Listen



**BOB DYLAN'S** first release during his "gospel" period eventually went on to win the Grammy for Best Rock Vocal Performance by a Male in 1979. The song asks listeners to consider the various possible roles they play in their lives and Dylan communicates a simple truth that we are all serving something or somebody. There's a nudging for us to be more intentional in our submission, and to serve God with purpose.

*Still, you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes  
You're gonna have to serve somebody  
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord  
But you're gonna have to serve somebody*

### Contemplate Quote by John Bunyan

**"THE PEOPLE** of the Lord in humility are to lay themselves and their prayers, and all that they have, at the foot of their God, to be disposed of by him as he in his heavenly wisdom seeth best. Yet not doubting but God will answer the desire of his people that way that shall be most for their advantage and his glory. When the saints therefore do pray with submission to the will of God, it doth not argue that they are to doubt or question God's love and kindness to them. But because they at all times are not so wise, but that sometimes Satan may get that advantage of them, as to tempt them to pray for that which, if they had it, would neither prove to God's glory nor his people's good."

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# Submitting to Transformation

By Andy Baker, *Regional Coordinator, South America*

Nearly 15 years ago, WMF Bolivia began renting a building in the red-light district of El Alto. It was our dream to offer hospitality to women caught in the sex trade. Our relationships in the brothels had reached a plateau, mostly because of the environment and the quantity of men on the streets. Soon a friend from the streets suggested Casa de Esperanza (House of Hope) as a name for our drop-in center.

Four years later, WMF Bolivia was able to purchase the House of Hope with the support of several friends. For years we didn't know what was on the ground floor of our building, as it had always been rented out to an auto parts store. We knew the approximate size of the space, but we could only imagine what was inside. Many of us had dreams for the space until we opened that door.

I remember the day vividly. We pried and pushed and eventually made our way in. Before us was a damp, greasy storage room. What was once the focus of our dreams and imagination soon

became known as “the dungeon,” a place in desperate need of transformation.

Walking the streets of El Alto and the red-light district has a similar feel. One's initial reaction to the streets is heavy, a startling slap of oppression and spiritual darkness. The brothels are filled with the profanity of men; their search fueled by lust is blatant, an attack on all of one's senses.

*Transformation is the  
result of repeated  
submission over time.*

But after walking into brothels on a weekly basis, we often find ourselves feeling numb—we've developed a sort of spiritual coping mechanism. The music, the images, the reality all create defenses within us. The transformation of

this place seems like too lofty a dream. So we have learned to ask for spiritual sensitivity to the reality around us, for God's “eyes to see” and “ears to hear.” Developing God's eyes and ears are a part of our journey as we minister in Christ's name. And we're beginning to recognize that our journey is a process of transformation, and one that must be rooted in submission.

Transformation is the result of repeated submission over time. It welcomes the process of life and not just the end goal. Transformation allows us to walk through fire, to be tested and tried. It is much less something that we do and more a relinquishing of that which was undoubtedly false anyway. Transformation gives us new eyes to see and new ears to hear.

When Christ exhorts His followers to hand over their lives, He is essentially offering them the gift of transformation. He is inviting them to embark on a journey toward something much greater and more beautiful than that which is tangible. Today, we, too, are invited into this same process. But we are slow to submit to this process of transformation. Caution or our egos often trumps godly wisdom, and there is an apparent clash between our knowing and our doing.

Even as “missionaries,” we WMF staff are not exempt from the process of transformation in our own lives. Many of us started as young idealists ready to change the world for Jesus, and we have found over time that it is our submission to the message we preach that allows us to be transformed as well.

The irony of the Christian story is that Christ offers both love and suffering on the cross. It is a crucified God who gives us the opportunity to submit to and embrace the process of transformation in our own lives. When we move from a fear-based life, which for many is overwhelmed by suffering, to a life of love, we become human. We begin to feel, we begin to see, we begin to live and love.

All of us started this journey looking like a greasy old cellar. But just as our building was transformed into a House of Hope,



*(Above) Enjoying the view of the mountains in El Alto, Bolivia (WMF Bolivia) (Opposite) A woman carrying her child on her back (WMF Bolivia)*

we can be transformed. As God's love begins to make its way into our dark hearts, we are given life. When the darkness is overcome by truth and when we submit to transformation, our true self begins to shine. Transformation is God's continual loving gift over time to His creation. May we find courage to embrace the journey and humility as we offer love to others.



## ABOUT ANDY

Andy grew up in northern Pennsylvania. Raised in a Christian home, his testimony is one of God's grace. His parents modeled a relationship with Jesus Christ, and at age six Andy made that decision personally. Also at a young age, he attended mission conferences where God began to open his eyes to the global need for God's love. Following high school, Andy attended Asbury College where he earned a BA in Psychology and a minor in Christian Ministries. Andy met Andrea at Asbury College, and they married in 1997. In 2001, they moved to El Alto, Bolivia to begin their service among the poor. After researching the area, they decided to focus on women in prostitution, where they found a gaping need. They live in Bolivia with their four sons Elias, Luke, Owen and Asher. Andy Serves with the International Office as Regional Coordinator for South America.

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“If God gave it to me, we say, “It’s mine. I can do what I want with it.” No. The truth is that it is ours to thank Him for and ours to offer back to Him, ours to relinquish, ours to lose, ours to let go of – if we want to find our true selves, if we want real Life, if our hearts are set on glory.”

—Elisabeth Elliot

## Lifestyle Celebrations

**Intimacy** We celebrate intimacy with Jesus to be our highest calling and our created purpose.

**Simplicity** We celebrate simplicity as a privilege in identification with Jesus and the poor.

**Obedience** We celebrate obedience as our loving response to the grace of Jesus.

**Submission** We celebrate submission to Jesus, each other and the poor.

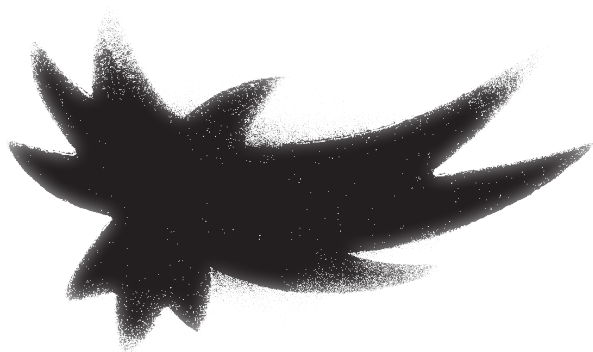
**Humility** We celebrate humility before God and humanity.

**Brokenness** We celebrate brokenness as our responsibility in ministry among the broken.

**Community** We celebrate community as a means for discipleship and service.

**Suffering** We celebrate suffering as a willing sacrifice in serving Jesus.

**Service** We celebrate service as an expression of our fellowship.



THE **CRY**

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