

# THE CRY

*for suffering*

Word  
MADE  
flesh

*An Advocacy Journal*  
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We celebrate *Suffering*  
as a willing sacrifice in  
serving Jesus.

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

Every issue of *The Cry* explores one of our **Lifestyle Celebrations**, a set of core values that inform and help guide our work and faith-walks around the world. For the full list of these Lifestyle Celebrations, see the back cover.

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From the Editor

We gladly and sober-mindedly embrace what seems to be an unsolvable paradox: the celebration of suffering.

To understand the joy intrinsic to suffering we must first recognize the inevitability of suffering itself. This world of ours is fallen and broken, and sin begets sin — even death. No matter where we find ourselves, what our conditions and vulnerabilities might be, we cannot escape this darkness. The people Word Made Flesh serves with and among experience severe suffering due to marginalization, poverty, and oppression. Yet those of us who find ourselves more comfortable are certainly not exempt; we merely can afford the luxury of hiding our wounds.

Thankfully, Scripture reveals to us that “no creature is hidden from [God’s] sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13). The writer of Proverbs put it this way: “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.” (Proverbs 15:3).

It is the unfortunate reality that evil and good are present simultaneously, and that’s the point: how can we know Light without having seen darkness?

The joy and victory is that darkness does not faze Christ. In the midst of suffering, our God sees into the depths of our souls and responds with compassion. We must not reduce the Gospel to a salvation from punishment and eternal damnation. The Gospel, the Good News, is that Gracious God indeed heard our cry of suffering and pain. In response, with great Love, He became flesh and embraced broken humanity to heal us of the suffering brought on by sin. Through Christ’s suffering, the Father offers to us resurrected life. It’s this life that lays down for others in love and awaits with joy the promised eternity where suffering will be no more.

Our assurance is that Jesus is revealed by way of suffering, because He is the one who suffered for us and suffers with us. We are encouraged to fix “our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2) and we submit to suffering knowing this is the path we must take to become like Him. The joy set before us is that we will find Him and receive Him, just as He found and received us.

So, Word Made Flesh folks go into neighborhoods and communities embracing the suffering of the cross that people might find hope and joy; that the way of suffering would lead people not into more darkness, but into the Hope and Light of Christ already at work where they are. As you will find in the following pages of this issue of *The Cry*, we do not gloss over suffering in sharing the Gospel — we embrace it. We suffer with and among our communities, and together find such joy and much to celebrate because of it.

My prayer is that by reading this issue you would be inspired as you take up your cross and walk with Him on this way of suffering. May we sense Him there in the tension — suffering with us and celebrating that we get to know Him and each other through our wounds.

JORGE CASTORENA  
Editor, *The Cry*



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# From the Executive Director

“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after Me, let such a person **deny himself and take up their cross and follow Me.** For whoever would save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” – Matthew 16:24-26 ESV

“That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, **and the fellowship of His sufferings,** being made conformable unto His death;...” – Philippians 3:10 KJV

Christ calls us to a way of life that can at times appear to be largely nonsensical other than through belief in the Resurrected Jesus and the truth of His promises.

The Gospel of Matthew relays Jesus telling his disciples, “If anyone would come after Me...” The “if” is vital. Would you come after Jesus? Why?

E. Stanley Jones, in his book *Christ and Human Suffering*, writes about Christ’s magnanimous compassion. It is the great Love of Christ that allows us to answer the question of “if” that is put to us in Matthew chapter 16 with affirming assent.

Jones writes, “...at the cross his love judges my hate, his all-inclusiveness judges my narrowness, his self-sacrifice judges my selfishness...[Christ] would expel suffering by taking suffering, would expel sin by becoming sin...Here was to be manifested a new type of power — the power of overcoming evil with good, hate by love, and the world by a cross. It was the power of

turning the other cheek, of going the second mile, of giving the cloak also, of drawing [people] by dying for [people].”<sup>1</sup>

Hope for the world and hope in our hearts arises via the grace-filled, redemptive ways of the Suffering Servant (see: Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-7; 52:13-53:12).

Christ’s compassionate choosing of suffering on our behalf resonates deeply with our souls. His actions bring poignant authenticity to His words; both His actions and words resound within us.

Jones writes, “[Christ] could not teach [people] to sing who bear crosses unless He allowed His own voice to be hushed on a cross.”<sup>2</sup>

Christ’s voice was hushed for a moment in order that the ongoing crucified peoples of the world might know salvation via the solidarity of the Crucified God. [for further exploration, see Jürgen Moltmann’s seminal theological work on this matter – *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*]

Not only does Jesus choose to bear the general sufferings of humanity, the Lord takes on each of our own sufferings.

We are called to seek to be like our Lord in heart, methods, and all ways. This evokes Philippians’ “the fellowship of His sufferings.” Scripture is replete with the emphasis that seeking to be like Jesus will require us to volitionally choose the difficult way of compassion. For instance, 1 Peter 2:21 (NIV) shares, “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”

In Christ’s name, we too — as each is specifically so vocationally called — must seek to bear the general sufferings of humanity and the particular sufferings of those with whom we have personal relation. Galatians 6:2 (ESV) articulates that we are to, “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” As with Christ, there may well be times our own voices are momentarily hushed so that others might also sing.

Of course, we do not take up Christ’s cross — we are not Messiahs. Yet, as disciples, like Christ we are each called to take up the cross that bears our name. The life of a disciple is meant to point beyond itself to the Messiah. Can others see Christ through you?

E. Stanley Jones reminds us through a poem he shares that our vision can and in many ways should be obscured, our hearts rent, and our voices silenced as we see the suffering of humanity. Lament is our first appropriate response to suffering. As the scriptures tell us, we are to mourn with those who mourn (Rom. 12:15).

“I want to sing lyrics, lyrics,  
Mad as a brook in spring;  
I want to shout the music  
Of flushed adventuring.

But how can I sing lyrics,  
I, who have seen today  
The stoop of factory women  
And children kept from play?

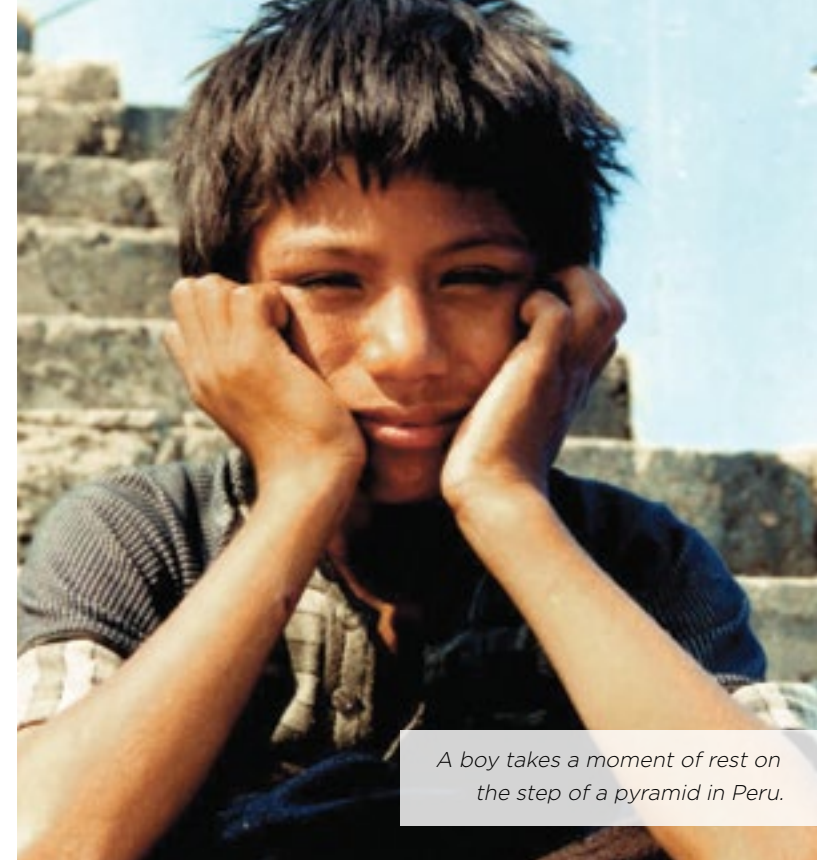
And on an open hilltop,  
Where the cloak of the sky is wide,  
Have seen the tree of terror  
Where a black man died?  
[Relatedly, see James Cone’s important work,  
*The Cross and the Lynching Tree*]

I want to sing lyrics, lyrics,  
But these have hushed my song;  
I am mute at the world’s great sadness,  
And stark at the world’s great wrong”<sup>3</sup>

However, Jones also reminds us that it is through the way of the cross — by the lament arising from the *Via Crucis* — that disciples emerge able to sing “the song of the Lamb,” to sing the song of the Resurrected One with harps that God has given to them (Rev. 15:2&3).

This issue of *The Cry* engages Word Made Flesh’s encounters with suffering around the world. You will read things that will evoke sorrow within you. This is important. It is appropriate to lament the hardships and wrongs that people suffer.

However, thankfully, lament is not the end. Lament is the way to joy! But it is vital to remember that joy without lament is



A boy takes a moment of rest on the step of a pyramid in Peru.

ultimately false as it fails to take into account the tension within which we celebrate at any given moment in this world; joy without lament wrongs again those who unjustly bear wrong all around the world.

The Song of the Lamb is indeed our eternal promise! Yet, for now, when we celebrate we celebrate in the tension of being part of “the fellowship of His sufferings,” of recognizing that “if one member suffers, all suffer together...” (1 Cor. 12:26 ESV).

Friends, as an understatement, suffering is a hard thing; as disciples, it is something that we must seek to healthily navigate our whole life. Suffering must not become the road to despair, but rather the road to redemption. There are no easy answers for how to do this. May the Lord give us strength.

In closing, I leave us with a word that the Lord has left for us:

“I have told you this, so that you might have peace in your hearts because of Me. While you are in the world, you will have to suffer. But cheer up! I have defeated the world.” (John 16:33 CEV)

CLINT BALDWIN

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A group of boys enjoy getting their photo taken in Kroo Bay (Sierra Leone).

<sup>1</sup> Jones, E. Stanley (1933). *Christ and Human Suffering*. New York: The Abingdon Press. (pp. 144-145)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 146.



# SUFFERING OVER THE LONG HAUL

Lights illuminate the night landscape of El Alto,  
Bolivia near our community center.

By Cara Strauss Contreras,  
*International Sales Coordinator & SutiSana Co-Founder,  
WMF Bolivia*

One afternoon a few months ago, I had an opportunity to jump into a quick battle and fight suffering head-on.

I was running errands with my daughters when a teenager with a duffle bag swung over his back stopped me and asked if I could spare some change for food.

His name was Jesús. Sometimes God isn't too subtle when He chooses to wrap Himself up in the guise of his suffering children. Jesús was one of millions of Venezuelan refugees and economic migrants who are flooding into any South American country that will take them. For a month he had been walking, hitch-hiking, and working odd jobs with his brother and two cousins (one of them pregnant) through Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and finally Bolivia, escaping the violence and economic devastation at home and clinging to the promise of possible work at a mechanic's shop owned by a distant uncle in Argentina.

I found it way too easy to sweep aside my extensive to-do list and invite all four of them over for dinner. It was their first day in Bolivia and they had nowhere to stay, so we spent all evening making calls to find them shelter, packing them bag lunches for the next day, and drawing them maps to places that might be able to help.

The whole evening was fun, almost festive, and quite exciting. It's a dizzying shot of white savior adrenaline to be able to provide food, water, and shelter in a couple short hours, then fall asleep feeling like the world is a little better because of me. See, while I've thrown my life into relieving the suffering of women and children trapped in prostitution, the daily reality of staying in the draining fight for each woman's slow transformation doesn't have the glitz and glam of a quick fix for my Venezuelan refugee friends.

And while there is nothing wrong with providing the instant relief of suffering that Jesus calls for in Matthew 25, I must stay conscious of how easy and thrilling it is to ignore my lengthy and monotonous responsibilities to do it. I have an amazing job, helping run the social enterprise SutiSana that offers employment and opportunity to sexually exploited women who would never find that elsewhere. There is absolutely nothing I would rather do with my life. And yet, the daily grind and details of making this work possible can become, quite simply, boring.

The hardest part of suffering is staying in it over the long haul when it becomes mundane. Like sharing in the suffering of my friend trapped in an emotionally abusive marriage, no matter how many months or years it takes her to confront it. Or sharing in the suffering of another friend going through a long, excruciating divorce.

Staying and sharing in the suffering demands stillness over action, which is paradoxically exhausting. It doesn't boost my ego. It doesn't help me sleep well at night. It doesn't usually lend itself to exciting stories and clean, happy endings. But sharing in suffering over the long haul is what I believe the apostle Paul is talking about when he says to the church in Colossi, "I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church." (Colossians 1:24 NIV)

These days, I still try to help any Venezuelan refugees that continue to flood through my neighborhood. But I'm not quitting my day job. I'm committed to staying in the two-steps forward, one-step-back journey of every woman employed by SutiSana over the long haul. That's the fight I'm called to daily.



## ABOUT CARA:

Cara grew up as a daughter of missionaries in Ethiopia. While attending John Brown University, she began to fully pursue Christ and was first exposed to WMF. Later, through an internship in Bolivia, she was discipled into a deeper understanding of God's heart for the poor and a love for women caught in prostitution. After serving for two years in El Alto, Bolivia as the Servant Team Coordinator, Cara met and fell in love with Mache. They were married in 2010, the same year that Cara co-founded SutiSana: WMF Bolivia's social enterprise that offers dignified employment to survivors of prostitution. Since 2010, Cara has thrown herself into the growth and development of SutiSana. Mache and Cara now have two daughters, Ariana and Zoe

BOLIVIA



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# Bearing Witness

By Mikayla Greenwell, *Field Director & Community Care Facilitator, WMF Romania*

When we see the kids and families that come to our center face abuse, trafficking, exclusion from school, parents that have had to leave the country, chronic health problems, trauma, or malnourishment, it makes no sense why we would celebrate suffering. No child should have to suffer from hunger, no woman should have to suffer the fear and pain of staying in an abusive situation. To celebrate such suffering seems terrible. We cannot celebrate this and God does not celebrate this. Yet, when understanding this as a lifestyle celebration we state that ‘we celebrate suffering as a willing sacrifice in serving Jesus.’

We are committing to true compassion, which is defined as “suffering with.” We see this example in the life of Jesus. In fact, Jesus’ whole life and mission involve accepting powerlessness and revealing in this powerlessness the limitlessness of God’s love. Here we see what compassion means. It is not “a bending toward the underprivileged from a privileged position; it is not reaching out from on high to those who are less fortunate below; it is not a gesture of sympathy or pity for those who fail to make it in the upward pull. On the contrary, compassion means going directly to those people and places where suffering is most acute and building a home there.” (Henri Nouwen, *Compassion*). When we celebrate suffering, we are committing to not turning away from the pain that we fear so much, but rather, choose to be with those that are suffering, even if we do not know what to say.

The story of Viktor Frankl is a powerful example of how suffering cannot and should not be elevated, but instead, we are called to bear witness against those that cause suffering. Frankl tells of his struggle with meaning and hanging onto life in a concentration camp, where suffering was acute and unavoidable. One observation Frankl makes describes how more people in the concentrations camps died from lack of hope rather than lack of food or

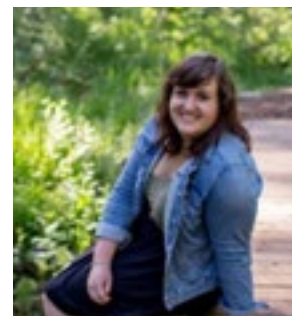
medicine. But first he asserts that suffering in and of itself is meaningless. In this way, he doesn’t spiritualize suffering, but looks at it squarely. However, he does assert that meaning can be found in this suffering. He describes his experience of suffering in every way. He speaks of physical pain, but mental and emotional suffering were just as acute.

In his story, Frankl takes up the call of “bearing witness” to the horrors of the Holocaust, lest anyone forget what humans can do to one another, and also leads the reader through how hope and holding onto life was possible. When the human body is totally broken down, the mind and spirit are greatly taxed and stressed, but it is possible to maintain and find meaning and love. Holding on to these things made it possible to survive at all.

After his liberation from the concentration camp, he dedicated his life to studying meaning, and studying how people find meaning even in suffering. This meaning can come by creating or doing a work, by encounters with others, and by our attitudes toward suffering.

Ultimately, Frankl shows that he is a survivor of concentration camps but can “bear witness to the unexpected extent to which man is capable of defying and braving even the worst conditions conceivable.” (Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*). We seek to be witnesses, and to bear witness to Christ, who is already at work in the lives of the families and children around us. We bear witness to the healing that occurs in creating something, in restored dignity, in the encounter with the incarnate Word of God.

We do not desire suffering, but we desire to be with those that are suffering, and to not be alone in our own suffering. In this way, we celebrate the compassionate God that came to be with us in our suffering, with the promise that one day we would suffer no more.



## ABOUT MIKAYLA:

Mikayla Greenwell has been a part of the Word Made Flesh Romania community for 2.5 years. She graduated from George Fox University and moved to Romania in November 2016 after studying abroad with Word Made Flesh and leading 3-week teams to Romania in the summer. She is also attending Fuller Theological Seminary online and is one semester away from receiving her Masters of Divinity degree. She enjoys a good cup of coffee, being with people, and traveling.

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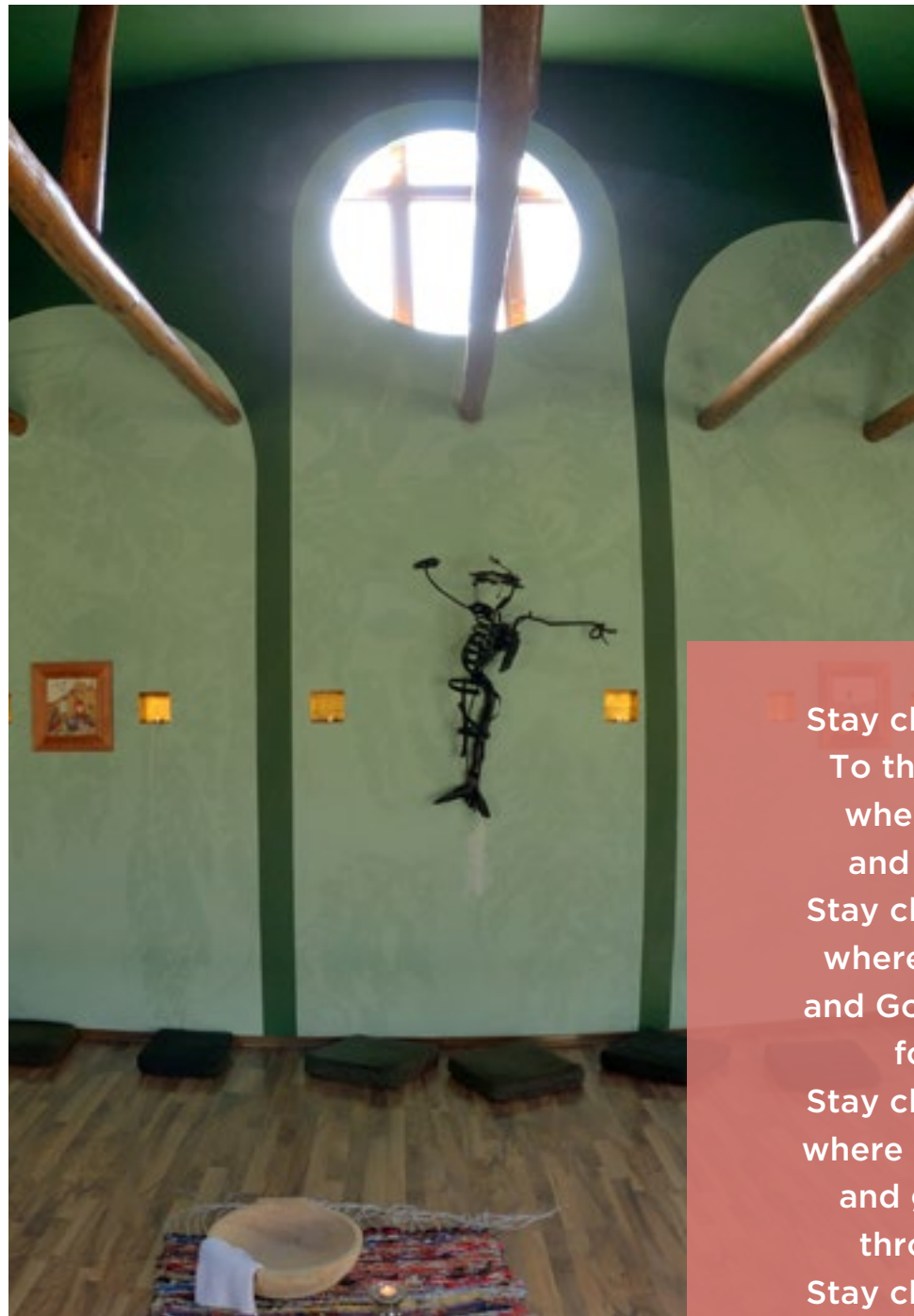


A WMF Romania staff member helps push a young girl on the swing during playtime.



# Stay Close to the Cracks

By Christine Aroney-Sine, WMF Advisory Council Member



(Above) The chapel in our WMF Romania community center.

Stay close to the cracks,  
To the broken places,  
where people weep  
and cry out in pain.  
Stay close to the cracks,  
where God's tears fall,  
and God's wounds bleed  
for love of us.  
Stay close to the cracks,  
where the light shines in,  
and grass pushes up  
through concrete.  
Stay close to the cracks,  
where wounds  
open doorways  
to healing and wholeness and life.

(Right) *The Gift of Wonder*  
Look for Christine's new book  
from Intervarsity Press. Click  
on the book cover to view on  
Amazon.

When I walk along the pavement I love to stop and examine the cracks where seeds have lodged, germinated and taken root. Sometimes a veritable garden of tiny wildflowers emerges as green shoots reach for the sky. I watch in amazement as they push aside the asphalt and allow light to penetrate more deeply, encouraging even more growth. Yet I realize too that this pushing through concrete could be quite a painful process for the little seedling. The resilience and strength these small plants show is incredible.

It is in the broken places of our society when pain and suffering abound that we see this same kind of resident growth. And it is often painful growth that makes us feel we are pushing through hard impervious concrete. It requires compassionate suffering and as we willingly sacrifice our comforts, seeds do germinate and plants emerge.

Compassion is a deeply rooted instinct expressed in a child before it is a year old. Those of us who believe in a compassionate, caring and loving God shouldn't be surprised by this. Compassion is in God's DNA and I think it is in ours too. We are created to be conduits of divine love and as that love flows from us in compassion and kindness, we are changed and God's image is restored both in us and in those who receive our compassion.

Sometimes however compassion moves us beyond our comfort zones into places of suffering and sacrifice. We are called to compassionate suffering, a willingness to sacrifice our comforts and agendas for the greater joy of serving Jesus and seeing lives transformed.

We need compassion for our own healing. The prayer on the opposite page was inspired by the song "Anthem" by

the late Canadian songwriter and musician Leonard Cohen who sings "There is a crack in everything/That's how the light gets in." When we are confronted with pain and suffering it is so that we can reach out in compassion and shine light in the darkness. It's in the cracks, in the broken places of our lives and our world, where violence flares and pain cries out, that healing can happen. When we respond

to brokenness with compassion we don't just bring healing to others, we take steps towards our own healing and wholeness.

The resilience and strength that is required in all that are involved is awe-inspiring. Father Greg Boyle in *Barking to the Choir* writes that "standing at the margins with the broken reminds us not of our won superiority but of our own brokenness. Awe is the great leveler. The embrace of our own suffering helps us to land on a spiritual intimacy with ourselves and others. For if we don't welcome our own wounds, we will be tempted to despise the wounded."

I don't think anything rejoices the heart of God more than when we show compassion to the most vulnerable and neglected in our society. When we stay

close to the cracks, come face to face with those who need our caring concern, take time to listen to stories of those who have been abused or share a meal with a woman wearing a burqa. Let's allow our hearts to ache with the need to respond. This is where compassionate suffering is needed. This is where the love of God can flourish through our willingness to sacrifice in our service to Jesus, the one who through compassionate suffering came to make all things whole again.

(This article is adapted from *The Gift of Wonder* by Christine Aroney-Sine. Used by permission of Intervarsity Press P.O. Box 1400 Downer's Grove IL 60515)



## ABOUT CHRISTINE

Christine Aroney-Sine facilitates the popular contemplative blog Godspace. In her new book *The Gift of Wonder* (IVP March 2019) she explores characteristics like play, curiosity and imagination that shape us into the people God intends us to be.

Christine is Co-Founder of Mustard Seed Associates. She recently retired to focus on writing and speaking. In a former life, Christine trained as a physician in Australia, practiced in New Zealand, and developed and directed the healthcare ministry for Mercy Ships.

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# Meet our Staff



Tad Glibert  
WMF Malawi

Tad is the third of four children and was born and raised in Mount Vernon, Ohio. He grew up in a Christian home but did not have a true, authentic relationship with Jesus until his freshman year of college.

Tad played soccer at Indiana Wesleyan University and majored in Secondary Math Education. Throughout college he was able to see how God could use sports to minister to others, going on soccer missions trips to Brazil and New Zealand. Upon graduation, he moved to Chicago and earned his Master's degree in Sports Administration from Northwestern University. He has worked as an assistant basketball coach at Northwestern for the past five years.

Tad has traveled to the Grace Center in Malawi in the summers of 2017, 2018 and 2019 with Circle of Hope International (COH). After experiencing an armed robbery at the Grace Center in 2018, Tad and his wife Karly felt like God was calling them to serve and love the people of Malawi full-time. As a WMF Malawi staff member, Tad will be working with the COH staff and school administrators, athletic teams and serving as a father figure for the boys' orphanage.

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## WMF STAFF



Emma Crocker  
WMF Sierra Leone

Emma grew up in Northern Ontario, Canada in a Christian home with two younger sisters. She decided to follow Jesus at the age of 15 and began the most amazing journey of her life. Emma loves sharing about the love and the lasting joy that only Jesus brings with those around her.

Emma attended Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, and graduated with her Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Through her university fellowship, Emma's passion for evangelism and outreach grew. She had the opportunity to serve with Word Made Flesh Sierra Leone in 2016 through an internship (after attending a mission's conference called Urbana in 2015 in St. Louis, Missouri) and fell in love with Freetown. After coming back to Canada in 2016 to finish her schooling, Emma felt the Lord telling her to return to Sierra Leone to serve long-term.

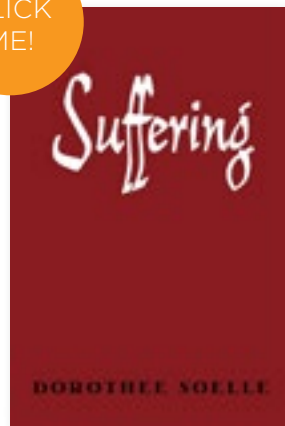
Emma is passionate about marginalized populations being heard, providing healthcare education, justice, women's/children's ministries, and worshipping God through music. When not surrounding herself with people (as a Myers-Briggs ENFP), Emma can be found journaling or enjoying any outdoor space. She is so excited to serve in the community of Kroo Bay.

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# On Suffering

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 suffering.

CLICK ME!



## Read

**DOROTHEE SOELLE** unpacks and demystifies suffering in this renowned work about the meaning of pain and the God who suffers with us. Soelle was a German theologian and philosopher greatly influenced by Bonhoeffer. She pushes back against the common thought that God is, at best, distant from suffering and, at worst, the cause of it. Instead, she argues that God is in the midst of suffering, and that the meaning of pain is to find Him in it. She asserts that suffering, when understood correctly and experienced with Christ, has a powerful way of uniting humanity, allowing us to struggle together toward healing, freedom, and joy.



CLICK ME!

## Listen

**SARAH MCLACHLAN** and students from her school of music recorded a moving interpretation of the Prayer of St. Francis. Francis' life and work have greatly influenced the work of Word Made Flesh, and this particular depiction of perhaps his most famous prayer powerfully pairs resonant words with the voices of children. The staging of the video underlines the tension of Light and darkness that is navigated in suffering. Click on the image to watch on YouTube.

...Where there is hatred let me sow love  
Where there is injury, pardon  
Where there is doubt, faith

Where there is despair, hope  
Where there is darkness, light  
And where there is sadness, joy...

## Observe

On an international office staff retreat, we were grateful to view this painting, titled "Thrones for the Twelve," that hangs in the gallery and museum of The Upper Room national headquarters in Nashville. Painted in 1962 by Howard Ellis, the work depicts the Last Supper against a crimson backdrop. The disciples are seated around Jesus, each (except Judas) with a halo around their heads like Jesus'. The center point of the painting is the bread and wine, perhaps implying that central to being a follower of Jesus is to partake in His suffering; to share with Him and each other the broken bread and the poured-out cup. The silhouettes of the table and the 13 figures create a black crown — reminding us that through and because of the darkness of suffering, we are crowned with Hope and partake also in Christ's life and resurrection.



## Contemplate

"No Greater Love,"  
Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

"**SUFFERING** will never be completely absent from our lives. So don't be afraid of suffering. Your suffering is a great means of love, if you make use of it, especially if you offer it for peace in the world. Suffering in and of itself is useless, but suffering that is shared with the passion of Christ is a wonderful gift and a sign of love. Christ's suffering proved to be a gift, the greatest gift of love, because through his suffering our sins were atoned for... Suffering, pains, sorrow, humiliation, feelings of loneliness, are nothing but the kiss of Jesus, a sign that you have come so close that He can kiss you."

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# Touching the Wounds of the World

Update by David Chronic,  
WMF Director of Operations

**WORD MADE FLESH'S** lifestyle celebration of suffering continues to be a stumbling block to some and foolishness to others. Still, we commit ourselves to the celebration of suffering. The courage to enter and commune with the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus creates the intrinsic possibility of intimate knowledge and experience of the power and joy of the resurrection. The desire at the heart of this lifestyle celebration is to participate in the life of God that reaches out and touches the wound of the world. Touching the wound of the world may hurt; but by embracing wounds, they may heal.

Word Made Flesh intentionally engages deep wounds all over the world. Let me give you three vignettes:

## FREETOWN

Sierra Leone's rich and complicated history includes a recent regional war that destroyed infrastructure, displaced people and forced urbanization. The WMF community began to build relationships with youth that found themselves living on the streets after the war and in a densely populated slum community called Kroo Bay, built at the low elevation of the city. We have been present through the life-threatening floods that wrack the slum every rainy season. We have navigated serious health issues like the Ebola epidemic. This year we witnessed a fire sweep through the slum, ravaging homes.

In this place, the WMF Sierra Leone community seeks to love, serve and accompany youth, destitute families and young children in Freetown, specifically in Kroo Bay. Through relationships, education and discipleship, we endeavor to spread God's light, hope, wisdom, and peace. About 35 children come during the week to our Center for tutoring help and a hot lunch. Almost 40 youth participate in the Lighthouse discipleship and leadership program. **Over 300 children come every Saturday for the Good News Club for singing, a Bible lesson, first-aid care, a high-protein source and prayer.** We are also doing education in Kroo Bay to prevent sexual violence. And we provide job training to provide sustainable options for those who have so few.

## CHISINAU

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new independent nation states were established — one of which was the Republic of Moldova. With a blend of ethnicities, primarily Romanian and Russian, that are often in tension, Moldova has been trying to forge its own sense of national identity. As they try to develop, they have faced the loss of massive emigration to Russia and to Western Europe. And the scars of the USSR remain, evident in the deprived rural communities and the urban orphanages.

The Word Made Flesh community began by building relationship with children in the largest orphanage in the



(Opposite) Lesson time at WMF Sierra Leone. (Left) Two girls help tend to the community garden at WMF Moldova.

country and developing educational and mentoring opportunities for them. Word Made Flesh Moldova seeks to serve Jesus among those most vulnerable children and their families, supporting their sustainable development and offering them stability, acceptance and love. **There are over 30 children who attend our Community Center activities.** We have also developed mentoring programs for youth in rural communities. And we have begun forming a response to the new phenomena of children living on the streets.

One of our boys dropped out of school, ran away from home, went to the streets to beg. Recently, we received him back at our Community Center, but because he dropped out of school, we have had to create a special educational program for him. We are seeing fantastic changes in him, which is deeply encouraging. His sister, who had been begging, returned home as well and is participating in our Community Center. She is also regularly attending school.

Life is especially difficult for young, single and unschooled mothers. We have supported a couple of them with young children to pay their rent. A mother of twin girls has battled problems with alcohol and unemployment. We have helped her find a job, and she is now much more stable and providing a safe home for her girls.

## CHENNAI

The first WMF community is located in India, which was one of the first projects in south Asia to address issues of pediatric AIDS. Our community has created home and family for those who have lost their parents and those who face serious health challenges. Our staff are the father, mother, sisters and brothers to the children. **Today there are 23 children in our family; almost 90 children have been raised in our home since it began.** They carry the wounds of lives cut short, the struggles of kids growing up, and the joys of life together. Recently, on top of all the energy needed to care for the children, they have had to navigate legal bureaucracy and requirements.

Two of our children came to us as infants after losing their parents to HIV. These two girls have grown up, completed schooling and basic theological education and are now settled in their own families, doing full-time ministry.

Two others came to us as infants with HIV. After 18 months, we saw them restored to perfect health and are now grown young women married and expecting their first babies. We look back and thank God for providing them life, and a safe environment through WMF

Chennai to come to such a beautiful phase of Life.

Recently, one of our hearing-impaired teens stood over the sick bed of one of our teens with HIV who was battling for life, and prayed in sign language for healing. It is a gift for us to see these precious orphans caring for each other and praying for each other. **What more could we ask? The teen with HIV recovered suddenly.**

### SCRIPTURE SUMMONS:

"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). In our communities, following Christ's footsteps does not always mean suffering persecution, but rather entering painful contexts and intentionally engaging those with deep wounds. And here we find ourselves drawn into the wounds of God, which are not simply painful but transformative, not only destructive but creative. From the cross, Jesus initiates a new family: "Dear women here is your son" (John 19:26-27). We too, precisely in the place of suffering, discover that a new family is being forged, that we have new brothers and sisters, new daughters and sons. By touching wounds, we experience the foretastes of resurrection: love, forgiveness, healing, new family and restoration.



Transitioning from one site to another during WMF Chennai's VBS.





# The Celebration of Suffering

By Ashley Brown, WMF Board Member

The children of WMF Romania at play with water. (Right) A young boy at work in his village in Sierra Leone.

I would consider my calling to be a healer, to practice resurrecting broken bodies, hearts and lives in conjunction with my community. But as I have entered into a new phase of my calling as a nurse, now working within the ICU, I have realized that sometimes we are unable to fix the damage that has compounded within someones body.

Often when I receive a patient, there is never any guarantee that they will make a full recovery, if any recovery at all. We work tirelessly to do everything for a patient if that is their wish, or their family's wish. But in the midst of caring for the patient that is in front of me, I have also recognized that it is often the family that needs caring for as they struggle with the reality of potentially letting their loved one go.

Because of this, in the last few weeks, more than any other time in my life, I have begun to understand the meaning of solidarity, and suffering with. It has also given me further insight into the beauty of Emmanuel, the suffering God with us.

Like so many of the Jewish people hoping for Jesus to come and overturn the Roman government and bring about the restoration of God's kingdom, I forget that God's love and truth often is not manifested in the ways I think it should be. So often I look for the miracle, the full recovery, and the complete restoration of a person or situation.

And while God is in all of these things, it is also good to remember that God is in the hardship and suffering as well.

Christ was sent to us as a reminder of this. Born to parents who found themselves in the heart of poverty, our creator came in human form into the heart of suffering. And when he left, he left in the same way: on a cross in the midst of two suffering people, who may have been as unfairly treated as He was in this world.

It is in meditating on this that I have been reminded that my calling is not just in healing but in walking with those who are suffering, even when I know that they

...our creator came in  
*human form* into  
the heart of suffering.  
*suffering.*

may never see complete healing on this earth. As I look into the tear-filled eyes of my neighbor, I remind them that I am with them as they make the decision to remove the breathing tube and medications that are keeping their loved one's body alive. I breathe in the pain, and hope that I breathe out grace and mercy when I cannot fix what is unfixable. I hold fast to the knowledge that Christ breathes with us in this very moment of suffering, and there is healing in this presence as well.



## ABOUT ASHLEY

Ashley Brown was born and raised in Boise, Idaho. She attended George Fox University while working towards her Bachelor of Science in Molecular and Cellular Biology. During this time she had the opportunity to study abroad in Rwanda and took part in a month long internship at the hospital in Rwamagana. This confirmed her desire to work as a nurse with the hope of eventually working in the international medical field.

After coming back to the States, she attended Creighton University where she received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing and has since been working in a surgical cardiac unit in her hometown of Boise. She hopes to pursue a Doctor of Nursing Practice in the near future.

Outside of work, Ashley enjoys dancing, reading, listening to records, pottery and drinking good coffee. Ashley is more than excited to be joining the passionate team at Word Made Flesh. More than anything she desires to journey alongside people of all nations and walks of life, and in doing so learn to live out the love, justice and mercy of Christ.

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# Encountering Jesus in Suffering

By Mary Grimm, *Translation & Literary Consultant, WMF Papua New Guinea*

There is a story a friend of mine once shared that has never left me and continues to resonate on my journey with Christ.

My friend’s conversion came about in a strange way. He was sitting in church not really listening to the sermon when he slipped into a sort of dream.

He was running through woods toward a gleaming castle in the distance. The woods abruptly ended in shoreline. The castle was on the other side of a deep sea.

Without hesitating, he dove in and began to swim, always looking to the castle before him. But no matter how hard he swam the far shore never seemed any closer. His strength failed him. He floundered and began to sink. In terror, he struggled to reach the surface but to no avail.

Then in his dream, he saw Jesus coming to him with arms reaching out. Jesus took both his hands, looked straight into his eyes, and together they sank. Down, down, all the way to the bottom. He never took his eyes off that face. The moment they touched the bottom of the sea, they were standing together on the shore where the beautiful castle stood.

Years after hearing his story, I continue to meditate on it. When we are struggling — drowning — we all hope for Jesus to take our hands and pull us out. When we hear of others experiencing suffering, we pray for God to deliver them from it. In my own life, it was not until I encountered death up close and personal that I began to understand suffering differently. Not until I found myself in the darkest, lowest chasm of my being did I stumble upon Jesus’ footprints there. That discovery at once jarring and peircingly sweet took me into a different chapter of my faith.

I used to believe the cross was a poor icon for the Church. After all, we serve a risen Lord. Now, I believe that to be a part of the body of Christ means to take part in His suffering. Only suffering has the power to inform our hearts and bind us in true compassion to humanity. Only suffering takes us beyond the veil, our fear of getting hurt, into the stunning vulnerability of our Creator. Only suffering can prove to our hearts what we claim with our lips: God is Good.

Without this missing piece we are forever feeling the disconnect between the powerful, Holy One and the state of humanity, often creating and sustaining such incredible pain. It is only in

“ I *suffer* what they suffer  
that I may *know* them...”

meeting Jesus there, in the valley of the shadow of death, that we truly glimpse the depth of his sacrifice and intercession for us. He has not failed us. He has not abandoned us. He feels every pang, vibrates to every cry. His heart and hands, feet and sides, bleed for every harm perpetrated on us and by us. His courage and humility are shocking. The Almighty God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, splays Himself out for us to love or hate, adore or despise. This Love is beyond my comprehension.

*“unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone...”*

So when God says “Go,” I go.

I go and struggle, even as my neighbors struggle. I suffer what they suffer that I may know them and in knowing, love them. My weakness gives them boldness and opens me to their mercy. My conduct in pain bares the mettle of my faith to their eyes and to my own soul. I celebrate the privilege of suffering, not for its own sake but for the sake of joining with my Savior in intercession and healing. When my arms go to wrap tight around my hurt and shield me from pain, I look to Him and see His arms spread out wide. Vulnerable. Fearless. Triumphant.

Now as I dare to open my own arms wide, I begin to find the space for others that I lacked before. My love begins to breathe and bloom in the unfathomable present-ness of God. And my soul catches a breathtaking glimpse of that Joy for which my Jesus, our Jesus, endured the cross.

*“By His stripes, we are healed.”*

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



A moment of connection in PNG.



Benjamin Grimm at work with a neighbor from their villlage.



## ABOUT MARY:

Mary Grimm is passionate about encountering God in His Word, His created world, and the people He loves. She felt God’s call to missions at the age of 14. Beyond education or training, the best preparation was and is learning to love the person in front of her. She and her family now live in a remote village in Papua New Guinea where they are learning how to love their community well.

## CONNECT WITH MARY

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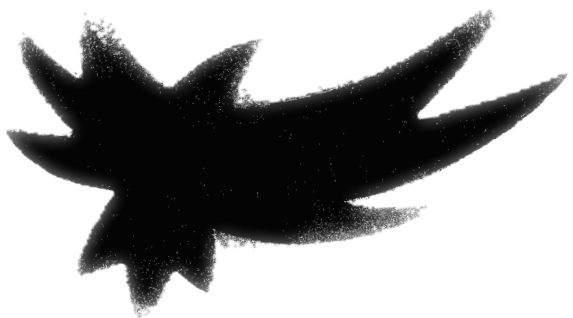
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“We want to avoid suffering, death, sin, ashes. But we live in a world crushed and broken and torn, a world God Himself visited to redeem. We receive his poured-out life, and being allowed the high privilege of suffering with Him, may then pour ourselves out for others.”

—Elisabeth Elliot



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## *Lifestyle Celebrations*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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