

# THE CRY

*for Intimacy*



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We celebrate *Intimacy* with Jesus as our highest calling and our created purpose.

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.

To request a quarterly subscription, contact us at 1.859.388.4646 or visit [wordmadeflesh.org/the-cry](http://wordmadeflesh.org/the-cry)

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From the Editor

It is always a humbling experience to publish yet another issue of *The Cry*, because believing so much in an organization and then getting to in part curate its storytelling content is a true and intimate gift. We receive these stories and go through processes of revision and editing; we lay each page out, choose photos and add graphics. We interact with the content, and inevitably put ourselves in the pages as we artfully place design elements where they look best and seem to tell the stories well. After a while, one becomes intimately familiar with each page, with every face, with every story. This issue, and every issue of *The Cry*, is fully known.

These few pages of storytelling and reflection have always been special to me, but it wasn't until this issue on Intimacy that I pondered something new: *as clay is to the potter, so is a publication to its editor.*

I suddenly sensed an invitation to be fully known by the One we can call the Great Editor — the Author and Perfecter of our faith. He takes our lives and brings them through processes of redemption, bringing out Himself in us and making something even more beautiful out of our stories. This is intimacy, to place ourselves fully in God's hands and trust that we are safely held and being led to glorious transformation.

We celebrate such intimacy because this is the context through which Jesus encountered us. Immanuel came and moved into the neighborhood to fully know us. Then He made intimacy with God possible for all eternity by His death and resurrection. Because of who He is and what He did, we are now invited to fully know the One who fully knows us. This reality is a driving force of our faith — that the Creator of the universe wants to grow in intimacy with us motivates our hearts to lean into deeper relationship with Him.

What's more, this increase in intimacy with God implores and empowers

us to pursue relational intimacy with others, and this motivates the continuity of the Great Commission. Out of our connectivity with the Lord comes the overflow of love, compassion, and mercy that make true pursuit of people possible. In John 17, Jesus prayed to the Father asking that He would make the disciples one just as He and the Father are one. Oneness is God's standard for intimacy, and this call to oneness is one that the Body of Christ has often struggled to comprehend and commit to.

But when I look upon Word Made Flesh and the stories in the following pages, I am encouraged to see a group of people seeking to dive deeper into relationship with God and then share of this intimacy with those He has connected them to. We are merely a piece of God's Kingdom, and yet I see oneness at work among us, and I earnestly pray that He would continue to make us one as the Trinity is one. As we look towards this intimacy, toward putting ourselves in the hands of the Great Editor to be fully known, and are led to oneness with God and one another, let us remember the promise found therein:

*"I pray that they will all be one, just as You and I are one — as You are in me, Father, and I am in You. And may they be in Us, so that the world will believe You sent me."* (John 17:20)

**JORGE CASTORENA**  
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# From the Executive Director

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to [other translations: “rebuked”] them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16 (NRSV)

We remember, God “do[es] not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.” In humility, through providing access for others we too find our way to the heart of God

Like the human children in this passage, we also are spiritually God’s children. God desires our presence as much as God sought the presence of the children in this passage. This passage is meant to lead us further toward him! The Lord desires togetherness with us. As the book of James reminds us, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.”

**“...there is always enough of God to go around; all who seek the Lord will find Him.”**

Over and over again, Jesus didn’t just say things, he did things. So, at the end of this passage, to showcase what he meant, Jesus scoops children into his arms, lays hands on them and blesses them. Today and everyday, as children of God and like the children in this passage, we are held in the arms of God and blessed by the Lord

through the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit.

Such love!! Such intimacy!!

Twice in Deuteronomy 31 Moses reminds Joshua and the Israelites and again in Hebrews 13 we are reminded that



Camp activities for team building during summer break (WMF Romania).



A mother and child in their home near WMF Argentina. (WMF Archives)

God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

In Matthew 28 Jesus declares, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

In John 14 we read, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth...you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you...you will see me...you are in me, and I am in you...we will come to them and make our home with them...the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

As per that well known verse of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave...” God loved. God gave. God loves. God gives.

As you read this issue of *The Cry* focusing on our Word Made Flesh Lifestyle Celebration of Intimacy, I hope that you sense the inexhaustible, unquenchable love that God has for you. God wants to know you, to walk with you, to remain by your side, to be your friend.

As God’s ambassadors in the world, we seek to be like the Lord. We seek to share unconditionally the offered Love that is based simply on a person’s existence. All are invited. None are forgotten. There

is room for all. Each and every soul is invited for who they are – not for what they should do, have done, or might do – as a priceless, unreplicable bearer of the Image of God.

Overall, the point of all the centuries, all the violence, all the drama, and everything else is simply about once again being able to experience the safe, refreshing, intimate, loving fellowship of walking with God in the garden in the cool of the day.

Even in some of the hardest places in the world, by God’s grace, the folks of Word Made Flesh are making space for hearts to once again experience garden walks with God. I hope you too are experiencing such garden walks in your heart and sharing the fruit of these walks with others.

Remember, seek to make space for others to find their way to God and you too will find yourselves held in the loving embrace of the Lord.

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# Showing Up

By Laura Haugen, *International Office Manager, Wilmore, KY*

I sat eating at the table feeling anxious as my turn to share was approaching. It was our first House Fellowship group meeting. My introverted side came out, or maybe it was just an excuse for the shame and fear attached to vulnerability. I have always struggled with perfectionism and people-pleasing, so being able to be real about my own insecurities, shame, and struggles with comparison has left me silent too many times thinking that I must be the only crazy person wrestling with these things. Because I grew up in a ministry family and care deeply about the thoughts of others, I gravitate toward perfectionism. Being in this house fellowship setting made me realize that in other church settings it is much easier to hide.

Some churches have the trendiest music, programs, and of course the best coffee; but many times people can sit next to one-another in a dim-lit sanctuary and barely know each other's names. As Christians we often proclaim the importance of community and vulnerability, and yet we don't know our neighbors, see our coworkers outside of the office, or gather with church members any time other than Sunday. Community, authenticity, and vulnerability have simply become buzz-words (at least within the American Christian context). In essence, we seem to have cheapened the potential and opportunity for spiritual formation. What is left is a shell called "community" which lacks any form of intimacy. In our instant digital age,

people are more than ever longing for true intimacy and connection. However, although we are more connected to one another than ever before in history, we are lacking intimacy.

Intimacy and vulnerability does not mean sharing all things with all people. It means sharing with those who have earned the right to hear our story because hearing our story is a privilege.<sup>1</sup> One of my favorite authors, Brené Brown, a research professor of social work, has spent the past two decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. Her work has deeply impacted my life as I wrestle with shame, fear, and vulnerability and what it looks like to have the courage to "show up." In her documentary, *The Call to Courage*, she states, "Vulnerability without boundaries is not vulnerability. And you don't measure it by the amount of disclosure. You measure it by the amount of courage it takes to show up and be ourselves without knowing the outcome."<sup>2</sup> Showing up and being ourselves without knowing the outcome takes immense courage. This ordinary and yet extraordinarily transformational courage allows us to experience intimacy and vulnerability.

Intimacy in community is messy. In my life, I seek to be a peacemaker but as I result, I also tend to avoid conflict. Although desiring peace and harmony is not bad in and of itself, I've realized that avoidance of conflict can create a sense of fake intimacy with others, glossing over problems or not being fully vulnerable and authentic. We all long for intimacy, yet we're terrified of being exposed for who we truly are. Intimacy requires vulnerability and showing up even though the outcome is unknown. Jean Vanier speaks about this refining nature of community by noting, "Community life is there to help us, not to flee from our deep wound, but to remain with the reality of love. It is there to help us believe that our illusions and egoism will be gradually healed if we become nourishment for others. We are in community for each other, so that all of us can grow and uncover our wound before the infinite, so that Jesus can manifest himself through it."<sup>3</sup> Intimacy reminds us that we are in this journey together. Imperfectly, but together. Upon further reflection, I believe I felt uncomfortable at our

first House Fellowship meeting because I knew that being part of the Body of Christ in this way was going to take risk without knowing the outcome. It would mean risk sharing my own insecurities and what others may think about me. I didn't need to share everything about my life with everyone present, but I did need to have the ordinary courage to step out and be seen by others.

Our House Fellowship meets weekly in a home and our time together centers around a meal as we share how we've seen God at work that week in our lives. We wrestle with what it looks like to abide more deeply in Christ as individuals and as a community as well as how to live more missionally within our contexts. We sing, pray, and practice rhythms of spiritual formation together. As a community we support one another through the ups and downs of ordinary life as we grow together in habits of discipleship and mission.<sup>4</sup>

Being part of this House Fellowship has helped me realize that intimacy with God increases our intimacy with others, and intimacy with others increases our intimacy with God. We are not meant to do life alone, and we were created for connection. Connection with our Creator and connection with our community. Connection that requires risk and courage to show up without knowing the outcome. May God give us the grace to step into greater intimacy with Him and others despite the risk.

<sup>1</sup>Brené Brown. *The Gifts of Imperfection*. (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2010), 47.

<sup>2</sup>Brené Brown. *The Call to Courage*. (Netflix, 2019).

<sup>3</sup>Jean Vanier. *Community and Growth* (Revised Edition). (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2003), 330.

<sup>4</sup>Inspire Movement. "House Fellowship." InspireMovement.com. <https://inspiremovement.org/house-fellowship/>

## ABOUT LAURA

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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# Abundant and Intimate Life

By Ali Frazee, *Community Care Facilitator, WMF Bolivia*

**PSALM 27**

The Lord is my light and my salvation—  
so why should I be afraid?

The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger,  
so why should I tremble?

When evil people come to devour me,  
when my enemies and foes attack me,  
they will stumble and fall.

Though a mighty army surrounds me,  
my heart will not be afraid.

Even if I am attacked,  
I will remain confident.

The one thing I ask of the Lord—  
the thing I seek most—  
is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,  
delighting in the Lord’s perfections  
and meditating in his Temple.

For he will conceal me there when troubles come;  
he will hide me in his sanctuary.

He will place me out of reach on a high rock.

Then I will hold my head high  
above my enemies who surround me.

At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy,  
singing and praising the Lord with music.

Hear me as I pray, O Lord.  
Be merciful and answer me!

My heart has heard you say, “Come and talk with me.”  
And my heart responds, “Lord, I am coming.”

Do not turn your back on me.  
Do not reject your servant in anger.

You have always been my helper.

Don’t leave me now; don’t abandon me,  
O God of my salvation!

Even if my father and mother abandon me,  
the Lord will hold me close.

Teach me how to live, O Lord.  
Lead me along the right path,  
for my enemies are waiting for me.

Do not let me fall into their hands.  
For they accuse me of things I’ve never done;  
with every breath they threaten me with violence.

Yet I am confident I will see the Lord’s goodness  
while I am here in the land of the living.

Wait patiently for the Lord.  
Be brave and courageous.  
Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.



Word Made Flesh Bolivia Women’s Retreat

## BOLIVIA

“The vision of WMF Bolivia is to seek abundant life for those affected by prostitution. Since 2001 our staff has been a tangible presence in the red-light district and among our sexually exploited friends. Over the years our staff team has grown and our outreach efforts have increased exponentially, but the daily ministry challenges are much the same. Walking among prostituted women is a very heavy burden - listening to the many accounts of abuse and poverty and attempting to carry our friends’ stories with compassion and grace, all while trying to maintain a posture of hope and light in the face of great darkness and destruction.

The staff of WMF Bolivia is currently comprised of 24 very brave and beautiful, yet very human people. While ministry can be mundane and monotonous as with any job, seemingly out of nowhere the weight of ministry among the sexually exploited can weigh down on our staff like a ton of bricks. The darkness is thick, the challenges overwhelming, and the once great hope we held is very nearly snuffed out completely. It’s because of this very real threat of vicarious trauma and total burnout I am so grateful that WMF as a mission has always recognized the need to care for our staff. The area of Community Care exists because we know our efforts of sharing Christ’s love with our friends in prostitution will always fall short if we neglect our own need for abundant life in Christ. While we seek wholeness for our staff on every level, this holistic wellbeing begins and ends in our relationship with Christ.

In this season I have grown to love Psalm 27, as it shows David’s tangible struggle to hold on to hope in the face of great hardship. David is acutely aware of the darkness surrounding him, yet rather than wallowing in the hopelessness of his situation, he is determined to remember the goodness of the Lord and his eternal promise to be present with his people.

*Do not let me fall into their hands.  
For they accuse me of things I’ve never done;  
with every breath they threaten me with violence.  
Yet I am confident I will see the Lord’s goodness  
while I am here in the land of the living.*  
Psalm 27:12-13

In community, our only hope of withstanding the burden of ministry is to maintain the conviction that God is with us, that He is our refuge, and that the Holy Spirit advocates for us before our many adversaries. Our community clings to this hope through staff retreats, weekly devotionals, days of communal fasting, personal retreat days, and ministry accountability partners. This year, as we renovated our ministry center, we discerned whether or not to keep a designated chapel space for our staff. Our coordinators team decided the chapel was a sacred room that we couldn’t sacrifice amidst the many other demands for space. While it’s hard to find times of solitude and prayer in the daily chaos of ministry activities, our staff knows the chapel is a sacred space that’s always available when they need to seek God’s face and remember his constant presence and protection.

*Hear me as I pray, O Lord.  
Be merciful and answer me!  
My heart has heard you say, “Come and talk with me.”  
And my heart responds, “Lord, I am coming.”*  
Psalm 27:7-8

It’s clear to me that as a community and as an entire mission, our only hope of continuing in ministry among the vulnerable is to constantly pursue intimacy with our Father. May this sweet intimacy with our Heavenly Father be the yearning of our hearts and our highest ministry calling.



**ABOUT ALI**

Ali has served with WMF Bolivia since 2013. She married her Bolivian husband in 2017 and they are expecting their first child any day now. They are excited and freaked out about trying to be the best parents possible. They find great hope in this promise, “Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.” Psalm 27:10

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# *The Intimacy of Trust*

By Brian Gillespie, *WMF Advisory Council Member*

**T**hroughout our daily lives we all have relationships with those we try to serve. Perhaps this is through helping professions such as teaching or medicine. Or maybe we are very involved in our community or in our church. Many of us are raising children in our homes. Those relationships can often bloom into friendships. However, navigating those relationships can be challenging since by nature, those relationships can be delicate. At the heart of these relationships is trust and gaining trust from those you are trying to serve is imperative in building successful relationships.

To build trust there must be room for truth. Those of us that work with children (or those who have children of their own) can attest that children have a remarkable ability to tell the truth no matter what. As I greeted one such enthusiastic child one morning, I exclaimed, “Wow, you have grown so much in a year.” He replied, “Wow, Dr. G so have you!” In that one statement, this child bluntly informed me that I needed to return to a healthier lifestyle of diet and exercise.

To have trust there must be consistency. What children crave in their relationships is consistency. As a pediatrician there are children I have seen their entire lives who take years to build up the nerve to share things with me. Sometimes we need not do anything except be available. Oftentimes, we try too hard to get at the heart of a matter and, in the end, create obstacles. As a parent, I find myself doing this with teenagers. Sometimes, a powerful moment in a relationship is made possible from years of creating judgment-free spaces for our teens. God calls us to be still to hear His voice. This can be applied in our relationships with others as well. 1 Samuel 12:16: “Now then, stand still and see the great thing the Lord is about to do before your eyes.” In our close intimate relationships with others, sometimes we try too hard. With teenagers I have worked with, I have found myself trying for months to get to the root of anxiety and depression to no avail. Yet, many times, when I have turned the conversation to a sore throat or a stomach ache, the

unexpected source of that anxiety is revealed. In discussing neutral matters teenagers will often unexpectedly share about intimate issues such as questioning God’s existence, suicidal thoughts, and depression.

Trust, truth, and consistency may be what we try to bring to these relationships. However, some of the greatest lessons we learn in life are from the ones we are trying to serve. Decades ago, long before I had my own children, I did medical missions in India. I learned from the family of a leper who had been cast from their village that the love of a parent can transcend all medical tragedies. I learned a hug is more healing and more powerful than medicine. Even though we think as parents, teachers, and doctors that we are to serve and help children, we need only to look at scripture to see how God has used children to illustrate many lessons and perform miracles.

Children are by nature trusting and eager to learn from those around them. God often has used children to carry out His mission. When Jesus asked the boy with the five loaves and two fish for his lunch he did not hesitate to do what was asked of him. When the Syrian General Naaman heard about the prophet Elisha and that he might heal him from leprosy, it was his servant girl who gave him this information. So he went to Elisha and requested healing but when Elisha told him to wash in the Jordan River seven times, he was infuriated. Again his servants, (and possibly the same servant girl), were the ones who convinced him to do what was asked of him. It was through this relationship with those who were serving him that he was healed.

As we carry out our duties with work and family, perhaps we can slow down and see we have already completed much of the hard work involved in those relationships. By standing still God is able to navigate His purpose without us getting in the way. By slowing down and standing still God can use these relationships in our lives to further His relationship with us.



## **ABOUT BRIAN**

Brian Gillespie is a pediatrician in Lexington, Kentucky where he has practiced for 14 years. He has spent time on short term medical missions to Africa, Asia and central America. He is a graduate from Asbury University, West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, and the University of Kentucky pediatric residency program. Brian and his wife live in Nicholasville, Kentucky and have three children.

*Photo taken in WMF Chennai during tutoring time.*

**TO BUILD  
TRUST  
THERE MUST  
BE ROOM  
FOR TRUTH.**



# Meet our Staff

## WMF STAFF



David Chronic  
WMF Director of Operations

David Chronic began his role as Director of Operations in 2018 having served in Romania with Word Made Flesh beginning in 1998. During his senior year of high school, David became a Christian and sensed a calling to cross-cultural mission and especially to the poor. 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. God opened doors for David to remain in Romania for 20 years.

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. 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. He and Lenuta live in Wilmore, KY.

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Adina Daniela  
Social Worker/Programs Director,  
WMF Romania

Adina came to know WMF Romania through volunteering and having friends within the community for over a decade now. She was invited to join the team as a Social Worker in 2017 and she's been implementing social services programs ever since, organizing community events for the children, visiting the families, social counselling, getting the parents involved, working with the educators in periodically evaluating the children progress etc.

Adina is responsible for implementing the organizational policy for preventing abuse of vulnerable persons (VPPP), for training the staff and volunteers with WMF methodology and for representing the WMF organization in communicating and reporting to the local State authorities and other entities in Galati.

Growing up in a Christian Orthodox family in the last days of communist Romania, and following years of searching for the meaning of life and for God's purpose with her life, Adina is now part of a local Orthodox Church community. She is currently finishing her studies for a Master's Degree in Orthodox Spirituality and Social Studies at the University of Galati.

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# On Intimacy

## LEARN MORE

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 intimacy.

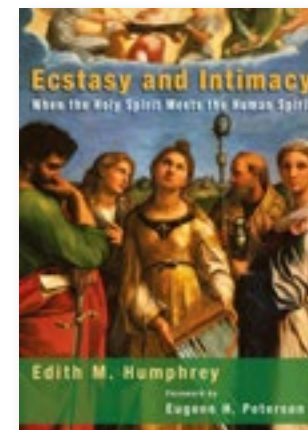
## Read



**CHARLIE MACKESY** offers inspiration and hope through the unlikely friendship of the 4 title characters — The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse. Written in the vein of *The Giving Tree* and *The Alchemist*, Mackesy's new book is childlike and explores the poignant, universal lessons we learn when we do life together in intimacy. You can look out for the book's release in October 2019.



**BRENNAN MANNING** presents the idea that we tend to hide behind an "impostor" — a mask we put on to show the world and God that we are perfect, believing that this is the only way to be loved. This appears to work when life seems to be going well, but when difficult circumstances arise we are often exposed or left with broken identities. In *Abba's Child*, Manning calls us to put away these masks and to be fully known by God and others, positing that such vulnerability is the only way to receive our true identities as God's children and live fulfilled lives.



**EDITH HUMPHREY** offers an authentic Christian spirituality rooted in the Trinity, in the ecstasy ("going out" of oneself) and intimacy (profound closeness with another) marking the relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Laced with narratives from her own life and backed with Scripture and texts from the Christian tradition, *Ecstasy and Intimacy* uncovers the ways in which God's intimate, trinitarian life informs all human communion.

## Observe Reflection by Clint Baldwin

The painting "Between Us" by Melanie Weidner portrays heart-shared stories intimately connecting people while weaving heavenward-like sacred incense. C.S. Lewis in *The Four Loves* wrote, "Friendship...is one of those things which give value to survival." The Celtic church in Gaelic called the deepest friendship *anam cara* (soul friend).

The Holy Spirit is our ultimate Anam Cara. Guided by the Comforter and wanting to "give value to survival," let us seek to cultivate friendships inspired by Jesus' words in John's Gospel, "...Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends..."

## Contemplate "A Short and Easy Method of Prayer" (1685) Jeanne Guyon (1648-1717)

"WHAT is prayer? Prayer is a certain warmth of love. ah but much more. Prayer is a melting! Prayer is a dissolving and an uplifting of the soul. This warmth of love, this melting, this dissolving, this uplifting causes the soul to ascend to God. As the soul is melted, sweet fragrance begins to rise from it. These fragrances pour forth from a consuming fire of love...and that love is in you. It is a consuming fire of love in your innermost being, a fire of love for God."





# Joyful Journey of Intimacy

By Cami Goble, *Regional Coordinator, Europe & Africa*

SIERRA LEONE



“I have never been so joyful, or so exhausted in all my life!” This has been my heartfelt response to “How are you?” in recent months.

The joy is intoxicating as my husband Alan and I find ourselves delighting in our recently adopted son, Joey. His bright eyes and cute giggles always bring a smile to our faces. We love it when Joey octopuses his limbs towards us both as he sleeps between us at night. We laugh as Joey enthusiastically\* chases our cats around our flat in his walker. And we admire his cappuccino skin that seems to glow luminescent at times.

Another aspect of this overwhelming joy is the increased intimacy I am experiencing in this journey of motherhood. I feel closer to God, more aware of myself, a more expansive awareness and sense of belonging in creation, and a greater sense of connectedness and compassion towards others.

*\*I love the etymology of this word: **God within!***

## GOD

The immense love God has poured into my heart for Joey has helped me fathom Daddy God’s love for me as well. My mind and heart are always on Joey. Is he safe? Is he eating enough? Is his nappy dry?

My love doesn’t change when Joey roughly yanks my hair or vomits all over the clean clothes I just put on. Joey can’t clean up his toys yet or help me in any way. He can tip over a precious brimming bucket of water and pull all the books off the shelf, and I still love him dearly. When people on the streets of Freetown call him “devil child” I feel protective rather than doubt Joey’s identity as a child of God. I ponder afresh Nouwen’s teaching about how God’s love is not based on what we do, what we have, or what others say about us. I get this incredible truth in my gut now.

I just love Joey for who he is. PERIOD. God loves me for who I am. PERIOD. God loves you for who you are. PERIOD. Can I truly receive that? Can you?

In the first chapter of Sacred Companions David Benner suggests the root of Christian love is the faith to believe one is deeply loved by God. Returning again and again to that great love is our true spiritual work.

As I experience this intense caring for Joey, while at the same time acutely aware of my own failings and foibles, God’s love has become more real to me. If I, so imperfect, love Joey this much, how much more is God capable of loving each of us, his beloved children (Matt. 7: 9-11 and 10:29-31)? Truly, like Housefires sing, we have a GOOD GOOD FATHER.

## SELF

Before I had Joey I was an intense, task-oriented, Type-A, Enneagram 1 who loved to be productive and tick tasks off my never-ending list. I wondered if I was a direct descendant of biblical Martha. I felt behind the eight ball, attempting to do more, be more, trying to prove to myself and others that I am competent. This fear-based compulsion crushed much joy out of my life. Now, I have a tiny infant that struggles to eat and often pukes. For the past 18 months, I have spent countless hours slowly syringing milk into Joey’s mouth, during the day, and throughout the night.

Now, I understand the value of presence more. My presence calms Joey. It helps sooth his anxieties so he can eat. It helps him sleep. Perhaps because of his abandonment, Joey is frequently startled awake. Yet if I am present, touching him, he will immediately return to sleep – the sleep he vitally needs to grow and develop. So now one of the most important things I can do is lay with him so he can sleep.

In the same way, in these quiet moments with Joey I have become more aware of God’s presence comforting me, dispelling my fears, and freeing me to just be still and abide in His love, like Martha’s sister Mary.

“The supreme gift that anyone can give another is to help that person live life more aware of the presence of God.”

## CREATION

In the slowness with Joey, I can hear birds above the clamor of honking traffic and yelling hockers-of-wares. I revel in the kingfisher’s call. It fills me with great hope, like a candle illuminating a dark room.

Joey’s tiny body trembles with glee at bath time, exuberantly splashing water everywhere and reminding me just how marvelous water truly is. Then, as I walk and sing Joey to sleep, I revel in kaleidoscope sunsets – vivid pink grapefruit to peach to soft butter yellow, making the air glow. “...And I think to

myself, what a wonderful world.” (Louis Armstrong) I am so grateful to be a part of it.

## OTHERS

My cold callous indifference and illusions of independence melt into love.

Welcoming Joey has also reawakened my compassion and sense of connection with others. Now when I see wee children idly playing in the filthy rivers of Kroo Bay, I instantly think, “That could be Joey!” I want to take them home, clean them up, cuddle them, and put them in school. The young men with their backs straining to drag the reeking trash carts through Freetown could be Joey too. With an ache in my heart, I admire their humble diligence, and wish for them a better future. The myriad of bedraggled homeless men and women, struggling with mental illness and aimlessly wandering, bring tears to my eyes as I realize afresh they have a mommy too.

## CONCLUSION

I wonder, “Is the essence of all of this joyful intimacy, connection, and awareness what God is inviting each of us into with scriptures like Jer. 22:16 and James 1:27?”

“He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?” declares the Lord. (Jer. 22:16)

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (James 1:27)

<sup>1</sup>David G. Benner, Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship and Direction (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), Preface and Chapter One.



## ABOUT CAMI

Cami moved to Freetown in 2003. Since then she has been working among Lighthouse youth, and assisting with the Good News Club in Kroo Bay. During her sabbatical in 2010, she met Alan Goble at the Iona Christian Community in Scotland. They were very happily married in September 2011. Cami serves with the International Office as Regional Coordinator for Europe and Africa. She also loves to dance, swim, cook, bake, read, hike, and watch birds.

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*Cami and her son Joey with WMFSL Lighthouse graduate Beatrice and her very precocious adopted daughter. (Courtesy Alan Goble)*





# The Celebration of Intimacy

By Maren Telsey, WMF Board Member

Foot washing in WMF Peru. (Right) WMF Bolivia men's retreat.

A professor in grad school once shared a quote by Maya Angelou, “People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel.” His words calmed my anxious self who was months away from sitting with clients as a mental health therapist, afraid that I would freeze and stare blankly at the brave souls who entered my office, stumbling over my textbook responses.

The reality is that despite thousands of hours sitting with clients as they share stories of pain and woundedness, those words still guide me. Thankfully, advancements in neuroscience also support this notion that presence matters. In 1992, scientists in Italy made a discovery that would confirm likely what we’ve experienced for generations: Mirror Neurons. This team discovered that our brain’s electrodes fire when we do different things, but more significantly also when we observe others. In practicality, mirror neurons help us understand why we squirm in agony when we see others experience pain, for

“I understand intimacy as the space in which we are seen and known and safe.”

example. This discovery slowly built momentum, opening up conversations about how this shapes communities and cultures as we are in proximity with one another. For me as a therapist and follower of Christ, this is significant as I attempt to fine-tune my empathic muscles, and feel more deeply what others feel. We are created for intimacy.

In my work, I am honored to foster intimacy with my clients as I strive to hold space for their voices to be heard. I understand intimacy as the space in which we are seen and known and safe. It’s not simply knowing the bullet point facts about a person, but knowing their particularities. This process takes time, trust, and creating a nonjudgmental space. In my work, for example, intimacy looks like knowing the patterns of avoidance, or an awareness of the fear a certain smell evokes. Intimacy is felt as we sit in silence, where grief and loss speak loudly on their own. Intimacy flourishes as I disappoint a client, and they still return the next week, committed to the process. Intimacy is felt in the trust when a client discloses the pain of abuse.



And intimacy goes before the joy of a new job, a week of sobriety, or a newly established boundary.

I find great hope in the belief we don’t do this laborious work of intimacy alone. Intimacy is formed by the Holy Spirit expanding and making room for our most honest selves—where lament, anger, joy and fear can be expressed, and tolerated, and witnessed. We, in all of our forms, are not too much for the Spirit.

Across the world, our communities are providing space for individuals who often go unseen and unknown, to be

seen and known. Thanks to years of consistency and trust, intimacy is being experienced all around the world--from the Kids Clubs in Sierra Leone, to the brothels of Bolivia, to the after school programs in Moldova, to the health projects in Papua New Guinea, and even in my therapy office in Tacoma, WA, people are courageously allowing their true selves to be known through stories, or simply being with another. The beautiful gift that comes when we invite all parts of another to be seen and known, is the Spirit also reveals new parts of our own selves to be seen and known. We are created to be impacted by others--not as isolated beings--but built with intimacy in our wiring.



**ABOUT MAREN**  
Maren Telsey grew up in Minnesota, and was first introduced to the work of Word Made Flesh as a student at Bethel University. Maren was drawn to the unique incarnational model of Word Made Flesh, with its emphasis on mutuality and its pursuit of the beloved community. She holds a Masters in Counseling Psychology from The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology, and has worked as a teacher in public schools, a L’Arche community, community mental health, and as the Director of Community Care with Word Made Flesh. She currently works as a therapist, specializing in children and families.

Maren has lived in various places—growing up in Minnesota, but spending significant time in Denmark, South Africa, Peru, New Orleans, South Korea, and currently resides in Tacoma, WA with her husband and daughter.

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## Knowing Each Other by Our Real Names

By Kara Chambers, *Programs Coordinator, WMF Bolivia*

“No one has ever believed me before.” There is trust in intimacy.

“I can’t believe I finally said that out loud...that feels so good!” There is freedom in intimacy.

“There are still so many things that are scary and worrying, but I know I can accept God’s peace and love within me.” There is transformation in intimacy.

In the social work world, we talk a lot about how people change, heal, and grow. There are textbooks full of different theories and approaches, suggestions for different populations and different diagnoses, best practices for varying needs and preferences. While I hope to grow in wisdom and expertise in a professional sense, my own experiences as well as investigative studies increasingly reveal that one of the primary indicators for a person to be able to overcome challenges and to resist the detrimental impacts of trauma in the first place, is relationship. But relationship doesn’t simply mean being able to name a few people in your social circles; it’s the real and raw, “I’m not okay

and I have no idea what to do, but I know that you’re here.” And it goes both ways — it’s the other person saying, verbally or otherwise, “I don’t know what to say, but I’m sorry this is so hard and I’m not going anywhere.” Relationship reaches its full potential when it is built upon trust, mutuality, grace, and the courage to challenge for good. That is when we see relationship turn into intimacy.

In the Word Made Flesh Bolivia community, we have the honor of getting to walk alongside survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, and the restoration process is no small feat. It all begins with the start of a relationship, often in a local health center or at the door of a woman’s tiny room in an over-crowded brothel. It begins with a smile and eyes happy to see her, a genuine, “How are you?,” and, “Would you feel comfortable telling me your name? Whichever name you prefer to share!” At this point, though intimacy may not yet be present with a woman, we depend on our intimacy with the Lord. Every time we go out to the streets, it’s an opportunity to look for Jesus in disguise, and the only way we will know how to recognize God in her is first in intimacy with Christ. I ask Jesus to help me

“*Relationship* reaches its full potential when it is built upon trust, mutuality, grace, and the courage to challenge for *good*. ”

to see her as treasured and loved as she really is, to remember her name and face and maybe a piece of her story for the next time our paths cross. If not, it is only through my intimacy with Christ I can trust that whatever she is facing, she is not alone and it doesn’t depend on me.

Sometimes a woman bravely invites us into her process. When we work to heal the darkest parts of our stories which have become twisted up into our identities, though, the ugliest parts of ourselves tend to come out. We start becoming defensive, manipulative, attacking, or withdrawing, all in an effort just to keep surviving. But something incredible happens when we start to feel safe, when we know each other by our real names, and when we feel genuinely known. We gain the freedom to start laying it all out, albeit slowly, and when we’re received with love and acceptance, we gain the courage to keep doing it, day by day, as we keep walking toward restoration.

The best part of all, though, is when intimacy moves from just trust and freedom within our ministry center walls and expands deeper and wider. We see women take their own steps to know Jesus intimately, as their first and deepest Refuge available whenever, wherever. We see women who were once distrusting and attacking stand up and hug their peers in therapeutic groups. We see adolescents asking their mom for forgiveness after screaming out their hurt in aggressive ways.

We rejoice in our friendships here at Word Made Flesh Bolivia. Take a look again at the three quotes with which I opened this article. A survivor here in our community has told me that the real power of intimacy comes after those first two quotes are realized within the self and when we can fully lean into the third.



(Above) Women in a therapeutic group working together.  
(Left) WMF Bolivia staff bearing the red “X” of the End It Movement, an effort to end human trafficking worldwide.



### ABOUT KARA

Kara Chambers is from the Pacific Northwest, but also feels at home working with Word Made Flesh Bolivia. She is serving as the Women’s Program Coordinator with the incredible survivors and staff of WMFB and believes in the restorative power of laughter, dance, a good cry, and friendship.

### CONNECT WITH KARA:

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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.

“The more we know Him, the more we will desire to know Him. As love increases with knowledge, the more we know God, the more we will truly love Him. We will learn to love Him equally in times of distress or in times of great joy.”

—Brother Lawrence,  
*The Practice of the Presence of God*



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