

**Stanford Memorial Church
University Public Worship
June 10, 2012
Reflection by Adelaide Oneal '12 & Heidi Thorsen '12**

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

¹³ It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of^(b) faith, we also believe and therefore speak,¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself.¹⁵ All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

Homes: A Reflection

Heidi

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." When we encountered this passage from today's reading in 2 Corinthians we were struck by the relevance of the concept of home to our experience these past four years at Stanford. For both of us college has been a time away from the homes that we grew up in—familial homes, spiritual homes, physical homes. College has also been a time of building new homes—dorm homes, extracurricular homes, and again spiritual homes. After finding ourselves in the same home freshman year, Faison dorm, we discovered ourselves on the same journey to find a church to attend while at Stanford. One Sunday morning I decided to accompany Adelaide, then practically a stranger, to the Sunday morning service at Memorial Church. We began to attend University Public Worship on a regular basis. Four years later, we reflect on the different places we began and how Memorial Church became, for us, a new spiritual home.

Adelaide

My church experience had been stable for quite some time. I grew up and was confirmed in

Christ Episcopal church in Tuscaloosa, my hometown. There was never a question of if my family would go to church in a given week or which church we would go to. These were givens.

When I came to Stanford, I realized I had the opportunity to decide for myself if I wanted to find a spiritual home here, and I saw there were a lot of options on the table, if I did. I think I ended up at Memorial Church because it felt both familiar and strange. The organ music and the liturgies centered in the Book of Common Prayer made me feel as if I were back at Christ Church in Tuscaloosa. For this reason, University Public Worship was centering and comforting to me.

And yet, Memorial Church threw challenges at me, too. I was exposed to inclusive language in this church, and Heidi can attest that I am still getting used to it three years later. I was presented with prayers to the Great Spirit and politics from the pulpit, with Hebrew blessings and Bahai scriptures. It was startling. Sometimes disconcerting. But most often exciting.

I found my own traditions strengthened and changed by their juxtaposition with so many others, which has brought a new richness to my spiritual thinking and practice.

Heidi

For me Memorial Church was familiar-but-different in opposite ways. While both Adelaide and myself come from progressive theological backgrounds, things such as inclusive language and conversations uniting politics and religion felt more natural to me. My strongest memories of spiritual homes before Stanford reside not in any particular church building but in the car, as my father and sisters would pick apart a sermon on the way home on a Sunday morning.

I did not have a consistent church home growing up. When my parents divorced and moved to different cities my family visited a variety of churches before settling on a particular worship experience. Even then, we never stayed at a particular church for more than 3 years from the time I was about ten. Meanwhile, driving back and forth between my parents' houses on a regular basis, I experienced the concept of 'home' in general as something ever changing; always in transit.

While college is a transitory period for many people, I must admit that it provided my life with an unusual sense of stability. For the first time many years I lived in just one place for months on end-- not moving back and forth between parents' houses. Memorial Church provided a similar feeling of unparalleled stability. Though these past four years have been punctuated by periods away from Memorial Church-- summers and studying abroad-- this place still feels more like a spiritual home than any church I would identify with in my home town.

In some ways this is a very surprising observation. While the liturgies and melodies of Memorial Church were familiar to Adelaide, they were just about as far as possible from my diverse yet shockingly limited experience of evangelical worship. It's hard now for me to

remember the days when I scanned the Sunday morning program without any recognition of hymn titles. Apologies to those who may have been sitting next to me in the pews in those early days of sight-reading musical notes.

As unfamiliar as these traditions were to me, their strangeness was one of the earlier appeals of Memorial Church. Coming from a background that felt as if it was changing constantly, I was drawn to this drastic change from my own experience. But I stayed because I realized that Memorial Church was itself a place of change. A place of dynamic ideas responsive to events on campus and in the world. My time at Memorial Church has challenged me to be more aware of how my spiritual home fits into this greater context.

Home, it turns out, is often a place of change. Not the static abode I thought I was missing out on as a child. Our homes change as we are in the process of building them, refining the things that we believe in light of the people and ideas that surround us.

Conclusion

Heidi: We are reminded by the passage in 2 Corinthians 5:1 that our homes are built by human hands. We have labored to build our own spiritual homes, but we could not have built them alone. I would not have come to Memorial Church if Adelaide hadn't first suggested that I go with her.

Adelaide: And each of you has helped us to build our spiritual home at Stanford, whether you know us by name or have just smiled at us in passing. While we can take comfort in the fact that our eternal home isn't going to change, we can also take more practical comfort in the agency that we have to build our own homes while we are here living. And finally, we take comfort in the fact that we are not building them alone.

Blessing

May you never forget the places that you come from as you seek to build new homes. May you embrace those who are alongside you as you build. May you remember that God is always with you in the place that you call home.