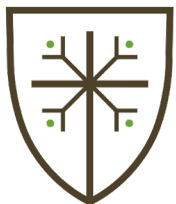




# NEIGHBORS

Knowing | Loving | Serving



ALL SAINTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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**PORTRAITS & STORIES • FALL 2018**



## NEIGHBORS

Knowing | Loving | Serving

In Luke 10, Jesus tells a lawyer to love his neighbor as himself. But the lawyer, "desiring to justify himself," asks Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus responds with art, by telling *a story* of how a Samaritan proved to be a neighbor...

This show's mission is simply to follow Jesus' example, to share our neighbors' personal stories and selected portraits by Kady Dunlap as a way to know them more deeply and learn how to better love and serve them as ourselves. These neighbors are both members of All Saints and people from our local community, including our Latino neighbors, who God has created in His image, loved in Christ, brought into our community, and called us to love. We hope that by reading these stories and seeing these portraits, God will help us all to know our neighbors, to be known more deeply in community, and to love and serve each-other and all of our neighbors as Christ, the true Samaritan, did.

## TANGIBLE WAYS TO HELP YOUR NEIGHBORS

Knowing | Loving | Serving

As this show evidences, "loving our neighbor" can take on many different faces. If you're interested in learning and doing more to serve neighbors within and outside of our All Saints community, please visit one of these sites:

[allsaintsaustin.org/neighbors](https://allsaintsaustin.org/neighbors)

[allsaintsaustin.org/esl](https://allsaintsaustin.org/esl)

[allsaintsaustin.org/care](https://allsaintsaustin.org/care)

# STORIES



## MY STORY

by Chrishaun Keller-Hanna

If returning to the Lord has taught me anything, it's that the Lord will call anyone to himself.

How do I know this?

Because he called me, a woman who He knew witnessed evil done in His name, a woman gloriously unencumbered by the concept of shame and more than willing to speak to abuse, suffering, injustice. Someone that isn't afraid of losing everything to confront those that take advantage and those that would defend and support abusers.

Or will go barefoot at every opportunity.

When He called me, I ran hard and fast. He sent the Hound of Heaven to drag me kicking and screaming right into the arms of All Saints.

I didn't understand why He sent me an hour from my home into a place I thought was vastly different from mine.

And then I met all of you. I saw that He did it because All Saints wasn't different. It was filled with stories I found all too familiar:

Stories of dreams, passions, struggles. Some thought they were the only one that felt that way. Others thought that their ideas were too crazy or just assumed that no one saw them or cared.

But the truth is that we are not alone, though it is so hard to open up and embrace someone else's pain.

He sent me because He gave me two gifts that have served me well - the love of a story and the ability to shut up and listen.

The more I listen, the more I know that the Lord truly wants everyone, with their quirks, flaws, struggles, secrets and our tendency to run as hard and as fast as we can from him.

And that Hound always catches you.

Thanks be to God.

ADOPTED  
by Caitlyn Allen

I wasn't born into the church.

I born into a different family. I was raised Catholic. I went to twelve years of Catholic school. First Communion and First Confession; meatless Fridays and stations of the cross; Hail Marys and Glory Be's. Catholicism taught me to love tradition, history, even mysticism in my faith.

If Catholic school taught me reverence for the Lord, Catholic camp taught me that relationship with Him was possible. In the summers my faith went beyond doctrine. It was where I was introduced to song and prayer and the heartbeat of the Holy Spirit. Every year, I'd meet God in the pine trees of East Texas.

Then the summer would end.

Off to college I went, and without the tethering of camp, I lost my way. Louisiana was tailgating and bars and Mardi Gras. The mess and the fun of it was gluttonous, and my loud life drowned out the Voice from the piney woods.

I graduated and moved to Austin. I started teaching, which killed my late nights. I moved in with my sister and started to remember myself. The Voice started to get louder and I realized how much I'd been missing it.

Not long after my move, I lucked out and met Phillip. His prerogative for getting serious was finding a church together. We were told about All Saints, which immediately satisfied this former Catholic and former Methodist. Eighteen months later, Tim married us.

I also lucked out by meeting Phillip's longtime camp friend, Amanda, early into our dating. We clicked and she invited me to her Bible study. To which I responded, "*Um, ok... what do you do at a Bible Study? Like, should I buy a Bible?*" I knew the books of the Bible but had never opened them up before. My unease was trumped by my need for friends, however, and girls who went to "Bible study" had to be nice, right?

Then at our first meeting, someone called God, "The Lord." And I was like, WHOA. *The LORD??* Who refers to Him that way? And in like, casual conversation?

Someone else talked about "their walk with Jesus." *They're going to kick me out*, I thought.

And then we ended by *praying out loud* for each other. Without a script.

I'd tasted an alive faith at camp, but this was a whole different level. I was accustomed to the gentility and privacy of my religion. These Christians made me nervous in their vulnerability, their Bible knowledge and clean lives.

I was intimidated, and yet curious about something I couldn't put my finger on at the time: their heartfelt desire to discover and live out God's love together *everyday*. So I kept going back. I stayed quiet for a long time, both absorbing their wisdom and afraid of voicing my own perceived inadequacy.

Then we entered into four years of infertility.

With that, curiosity about "The Lord" turned into a desperate hunger. I stopped thinking about *how* to know him and just *got* to know him. I devoured his Word. I soaked up Sunday sermons and Tuesday Bible studies. My prayer journal became my place of solace. I learned, ever so mercifully, how to walk with Jesus.

And those nice Bible study girls? They showed up the entire time. They encouraged me, they fed me, they walked with me, they prayed over and for me. They saw me at my most raw, in my weariness and grief and they cried with me. They made me laugh to and through tears.

They carried me, and in doing so became my people. Their husbands became Phillip's people. Meghan joined, met her husband Don, and now they're part of the people. The same goes for Phillip's parents. Our numbers kept growing, new friends added. This is our community. We are godparents and meal-bringers and emergency contacts and prayer warriors. My faith is no longer polite - it *bleeds*, covering the whole of my life.

When we adopted Mary Beth we testified in court, before a judge, that we'd "assume all the rights, duties and responsibilities just as if she was born to us." We promised to "love her forever, take care of her forever, be her parents forever."

I was adopted into this body of believers. Born into one good family, belonging to another. All Saints has assumed responsibility for me, dutifully caring for me in my suffering; and has loved me to my core, as if I'd always been a part of her.

And so I can - in a different and yet similar way - observe my own adoption alongside my daughter's, alongside all of my brothers and sisters in Christ. Because unlike Jesus, we are not born from God, and yet he loves us just as if we were. God has promised to love us forever, take care of us forever, be our Father forever.

We are born into our own good families, and yet belong to an even greater one. In other words, adopted.

## MY STORY

by Betty House

Growing up in Austin in the late 30s and early 40s felt safe. 45th street was the north city limits. 'Downtown' was from the river to the Capitol. Singsong was every Thursday and Sunday evening during the summer, and hundreds gathered on Sunday evenings sang hymns, sitting on blankets, on the slope of the Hillside Theater. On the way home after the Singsong we past Butter Krust Bakery and took in the fragrance of baking bread.

As children we were not in danger riding downtown or to Shipe Swimming Pool on the bus. A neighborhood friend and I walked together six blocks to and from school throughout elementary school.

We always knew where the car keys were as they stayed in the car ignition with the windows rolled down. No fear of theft.

Truly a different time than now. I so appreciate having experienced that time.

My great aunt took me to the University Baptist Church Sunday morning and night, as well as Wednesday evening. My Auntie introduced me to the Lord Jesus and I had a heart for the Lord.

She invited me to Girls Auxiliary, where I learned Scripture, as well as to Girl Scouts.

Few people moved away in my early years, so I went from 1st grade through 12th grade with many of the same people. I still have contact with people from my First Grade Class.

Things changed abruptly in the 6th grade when my parents died in a car accident on the way to the Texas - OU football game at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas.

My Auntie moved in with my older sister and me. Life was changed irreversibly.

The Lord has kept His hand on me through my years of anger and rebellion and has gently brought me back to Himself in the least painful way that I would come.

He has introduced me to many people through the years who have cared for me, prayed for me, and guided me. I think of Charles and Elaine Shepson, Sr. Rebekka of the Sisters of Mary, Mertice Wilson, Darv and Carol Smith, Ney Bailey.

There have been many more. He knows them all by name and will bless and reward them. Thankfully.

God is my Father and I am His child (M. B.). It is true.

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I want to thank you, for taking the time to read my story. When I was 18 years old, I moved to the United States and I started working at a restaurant and also searched for another job. I was working a lot, like 18 hours a day!

Later on, I got married and had three children, who are American citizens. We are working hard for them, to provide them with a better quality of life. I wake up at 5 am every day, to prepare breakfast, take them to school and then go to work.

I like to pick up my kids from school and also help out other single moms by picking up their kids also. Sometimes, they don't even pay me, but it's alright because I like to help them.

Right now, we are facing a very difficult situation; we are victims of fraud and we are very fearful of the deportation situation that is going on now, because we don't know what can happen to our children and we don't want to go back to our country because life is very hard in my country.

# MY STORY

by Mary Katherine Wilson

## Start: Death & Darkness

Then: Isaiah: *"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."*

I was an IV meth user living on the streets of Austin for 3 years. I attempted suicide multiple times during this time. I was 52 and had tried every form of approach to life from Atheism to Quantum Physics and Shamanism (I was trained and practiced as a Native American Medicine Woman.)

Not only had I struggled with decades of debilitating suicidal depression, I suffered from severe PTSD, terrible paranoid delusions, hallucinations, and other advanced psych symptoms including 'losing time' or MPD (Multiple Personality Disorder) also known as DOD (Dissociative Identity Disorder).

My history includes an overwhelming amount of death – 19 people over about 25 years, many of them traumatic deaths where I was there when it happened or identified the body afterwards. I was raised by an abusive, alcoholic mother after my father died when I was 3.

My history also includes a lot of rape and molestation, which started when I was 4 ½, when I was raped and left for dead in a newspaper bin in Houston. Thus the PTSD & a life long search for answers, hope, & truth.

By the time I came to Park Hills Baptist Church, I had given up on being able to find truth on my own. I believed that I was too damaged to know truth if it hit me in the face. I had convinced myself many times, over many years to believe in partial truths & systems of truth that I fabricated, which would fall apart when another tragedy struck my life, leaving me to believe that either real Truth didn't exist or that I was incapable of finding, believing or trusting anything again, even real Truth.

I relied upon meth to keep me alive as I no longer had the will to go on. When I tried to get off the meth – I attempted suicide again – repeatedly.

I met a schizophrenic in a psych ward here in Austin on one of those attempts. Park Hills was trying to help him get off the street and some of their help spilled over onto me. I came to church ONCE – to say, "Thank you." That's when I noticed ... there was something different about these people. Their kindness to me and between themselves was odd. They had a sense of calm and peace about them, and when they were kind instead of feeling like they were doing something between me and them, it seemed like they were doing something for me but it was coming from their relationship with their God. I was impressed with whatever lie they were believing because it was so dramatically demonstrated in their behavior and countenances. I figured I was "high", but I wasn't coming back anyway, so who cared?

That Thursday I had another terrible bout with suicidal depression & I remembered that the only time that week I felt ANY hope or relief was at that 'funny' church with those 'funny' people. So, I went back JUST ONE MORE TIME. The first Sunday, the sermon seemed dry and so much of it was straight out of the bible that I was bored. Which only made my surprise that much more profound when I found tears running down my face during another recitation of the bible. This time I didn't get high right before coming to church, so I couldn't blame this difference I perceived in these people on drugs. They still seemed different and like they were full of some kind of peaceful power that came from their belief in God and His word. This started an eight month progression of me continuing to visit both Park Hills & All Saints, who held an evening service at Park Hills. I continued to live on the street, frequented psych wards and continued to do drugs. Many kindnesses were shown to me from the people at Park Hills and All Saints, including fellowship with David Lutes & the worship team as I would come and listen to them practice singing before the service – often wearing the same cloths for a couple of months in a row, weighing 40 pounds less than I do now and sporting blue hair for a while, then no hair when I shaved it all off. Why would these kind people, who seemed to have good lives and their acts together, associate with me AT ALL? Why didn't they just shun me? Call the cops? Blame me? Yell at me? Why did they seem to be more concerned about my soul and what I believed and my search for truth than any of the superficial things about me that sent EVERYBODY else running in the opposite direction? Why weren't they tired and out of patience with the failings & failures of a 52 year old homeless, drug addicted woman? I was! So was anyone else who knew me.

I remember hearing a sermon at All Saints from the book of Jonah, about Jonah being a blessing in spite of himself. Jonah did everything wrong, and yet God used everything he did to show the world and Nineveh, God's glory and power to save. This gave me hope. God was still glorified in Jonah, though he did everything wrong because of God's power working in him. I began praying that God would work in me to do whatever it took to bring me to Him. To get me out of the way. To break through my brokenness however He had to – because I could do nothing.

I was deeply affected by a sermon at Park Hills from the Book of Ruth. "But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried."

I came to see that getting off the street, getting help from these two churches, getting off of drugs, even saving my physical life from suicide were all secondary considerations. I clearly saw that what all these people had was something I wanted and desperately needed, but I was also convinced I couldn't figure it out or will it for myself. It made me feel sad to be around these people since I felt I wasn't able to have what they had, yet I couldn't stay away from them and from church. If I couldn't have the Truth, at least I could be close to the people that had it, and be around the Word which seemed to be so important to them. Little did I know that God was planting the seeds of Truth in me through that very Word, which IS INDEED alive & active.

He was watering that seed through many prayers, biblical lyrics to beautiful hymns, conversations and interactions with many believers from both churches. On August 14th, 2014 – eight months after I first came to church, ONCE to say, “Thank you.”, God lifted the veil from my heart and mind and allowed me to see the meaning of ‘Redemption’ in a vision of Jesus, and gave me the power to turn to Him in true repentance and faith. The meth addiction was lifted in that same instant, but the depression & psych issues were not. Three days later God gave me the courage to turn myself into a psych ward for rehab and treatment for people with PTSD and suicide issues. Though I turned myself over to their care and followed their prescribed methods and steps to free myself from the street, drugs and suicide attempts, I made it clear that becoming a Christian, learning and living out the Word and living in the Truth at last, for the first time in my life was my now & forever chosen path of recovery.

I was baptized almost exactly a year after I had my conversion experience. I have been living with a church family from Park Hills for four years now. I just recently went back to work and God provided a job as the Park Hills Admin Asstistant, which means that I spend all my time at work, working for God’s people, surrounded by His word and His chosen shepherds, surrounded by the people of God, who love me and whom I love very much. I study the bible as much and as often as I can. I disciple three young women from our church and am disciplined by multiple others. I have an interest in becoming a Biblical Counselor at the ripe old age of 56, I have learned all the classic Baptist Hymns in the last few years and I sing regularly as part of the PH praise team. I’m taking guitar lessons so I can also play all the hymns at the drop of a hat when God gives me the opportunity to share Him through praise and worship, as was shared to me by David Lutes and others. It has been very hard for me to write so little on these pages as I could speak of my God, my Rock, my Fortress, my Refuge and the horn of my salvation all day. But I have prayed that God was the one directing my words so that you who are reading this are reading His words and not mine. I pray that you can sense and feel His presence in my testimony and that you will be encouraged, uplifted, edified and brought near to Him. For someone who spent so many decades in death, darkness, hopelessness, sin and despair – it’s interesting that the word most often used to describe me now is this one: “Joy”.

“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” 1 Peter 1:8-9

End: The Stunning Beauty of Jesus and .... the unexpected.... “Joy Inconceivable”



## PORTRAIT PIECE

by Colin Eddings

I was born with a great inheritance: Parents who loved me and taught me about God from my earliest memories. And like any spoiled child, I took it for granted.

After college, I served in the Marine Corps and did a couple of deployments. In Afghanistan we participated in a war that's now called "Endless". A place of 133 degree temperatures, sandstorms that were impressive from a distance and awful up close, general lack, and perennial war. Our goals felt unclear, but the stakes were immense. Some young men had never visited a neighboring state before joining the military, and then died for walking or driving on patches of dirt that looked to me just like all the others. Often there was no enemy to shoot at, and nothing to do but call a helicopter. Back then I never said it out loud, but huge red capital letters filled my mind: WHY?

Speaking only for myself I never witnessed the kind of heroism I expected. There really wasn't room for that kind of thing and even the word itself is poisoned for me. But there were a few brighter moments at least. An impossibly positive attitude when the rest of us had sunk into despondence beyond depression. A friend sacrificing the only precious thing he had for me—a meager allotment of sleep that he wouldn't get to catch up on for seven months. A crude joke in the worst moments when nothing could be done but laugh. I developed a short routine of praying and reading a small Bible beside a hasty bomb shelter. Not to better myself, but because I needed it. That was the first time I ever felt what it meant to be "fed by the Word".

I'd heard the phrase, but before then, never understood it. And then eventually I got to come home.

I wish I had a way of understanding and describing the chaotic experience—to package it as wisdom for myself, or a listener—but I didn't get that. Still, I can't help trying to cram life experiences into a logical forward progression. Imagining my future self as an old guy with a grown son and little grandchildren, telling a story that guides them toward something helpful. We'll see.

I like to write because I love stories, disruptive essays, books, and ideas that are hidden, unbelievable, and true. I am filled with an unsettled and distracted urge to live inside them. I think that's because stories are experiences. You can hear truth a thousand times in factual or statistical form without ever really *knowing* or understanding it. But with a story you get inside someone's life. The empathy is near complete—you can feel what they feel and digest meaning that was inaccessible in its bald form. I hope to write a story that powerfully animates a significant moment and moves readers like it was their own. Great writers do that for me! And with a Christian inheritance, to remember that God's action fills the narrative, even though I don't understand how. He's been there with me always, in every place. I don't want to not notice Him anymore.

## AN IMMIGRANT STORY

I am a single mom, with a son. We left Honduras fleeing the terrible violence that invades my country as well as the lack of employment. I wasn't able to provide for my son, so I decided to migrate with him to this country. We were coming with the hope to have a better life here, but it hasn't been easy. Ever since we left Honduras and we traveled through Mexico, our journey was filled with dangers, we almost died asphyxiated when we were locked in trailers full of other immigrants and we didn't know where we were going, if it was daytime or nighttime, and with nothing to eat. We were in such a vulnerable situation, they could've taken us anywhere and taken advantage of our situation, like it has happened in many cases.

Living here in the U.S. hasn't been easy either. My son and I, we both have suffered for being immigrants, we have been discriminated, and my son has been bullied for not being able to speak English and for his legal status, as an undocumented child.

All I ever wanted was to have an opportunity for a better life, to be able to work and do things right. I didn't come here to hurt anyone, I just want to be able to work and to provide for my son.

## MY STORY

by Chris Rodriguez

I grew up attending church but, at 17 decided to stop attending. My biggest influences were rock' roll, sex, alcohol, and drugs. That began a long and dark path in my life. I went from one unhealthy relationship to another and was always chasing the high. From 17 to 37 I was drunk and high almost every day of my life. I had friends overdose, get arrested, and I myself got arrested.

I came out to Austin from San Francisco running from the world I knew. I wanted to recreate my identity. I was trying to do it on my own and not realizing I needed to create my identity in Christ. I was drinking around the clock and blacked out drunk multiple nights a week. There was a captain driving the ship but, it wasn't me.

After almost drinking myself to death, one morning I fell on my knees and cried out to God for help. I asked God to remove the sickness in my heart and break the chains of my addiction. In my moment of desperation He heard me. He told me, "Get up!" I arose from the floor of my apartment, wiped the tears from my face, and knew that something divine had just happened. It was something that science can't explain.

I got sober and began daily readings in my Bible. I wanted to see if there was actual power and truth in Gods word. It was then that my life took on radical changes. I went into Birds Barbershop for a haircut and met my wife. I ran into an old childhood friend who was a pastor at All Saints who I hadn't seen in over 20 years. I witnessed the birth of my son and my wife and I are expecting another. We are now members at All Saints and I have the honor and privilege of playing music on the worship team. All of these events were orchestrated by the hand of God.

Being part of the worship team has given me a great sense fo the community and what it means to serve. Sharing with my brothers and sisters on stage every week is such a blessing. I thank God everyday for the work He has done in my heart. I thank God for the work He has yet to do! My prayer is that I will continue to learn what it means to fully trust in God, to better understand the depths of Christ's love, and to see myself and others the way Christ sees us; as His treasure.

## MY STORY

by Garrett Lathan

"The total lack of relationships causes anxiousness and worry...One feels free in relationships of love and friendship. It is not the absence of ties, but ties themselves which set us free. Freedom is a word which pertains to relations par excellence." -

Byung-Chul Han

Most of my life has been a search for inclusion. Needing inclusion has been a blessing and a curse, and yes I really mean that, even though it may seem like an odd thing to say. Children are naturally asking the question, "Do I belong here?" And I was raised in a home with lots of unavoidable and confusing conflict. Some of my earliest memories are lonely ones, memories where I can even remember asking myself out loud, "Do I belong here?" This is the central question I find myself asking in the Church and it is the main question my "life of faith" always seems to be asking. I'm still here in the Church, because a long time ago, the pastor that founded it, Bill Boyd, literally came running after me. Many years ago at college, I felt like I didn't belong in the Church, I was too addicted to porn, too weird, too damaged, too uncomfortable in the presence of all these other people who I felt like weren't like me, and if they knew me...well, that'd be the end of our relationship. So I ran away literally...I got up and ran away from a bible study, and Bill ran after me. And that was the beginning of something really beautiful in my life. There, if only for a moment, Jesus was so close to me, feet running after me, hand upon my shoulder, a voice saying 'Garrett, what's wrong?,' inviting me to reveal a little of that which I wasn't sure I could reveal, but knew I had to. I'm still here because, over time I learned that Jesus doesn't just call me to a one sided honesty, but instead he leads the way, running after me with the most intimate and vulnerable parts of his humanity, His Body and His Blood. If my life is me asking the question, "Do I belong here?" I quickly hear Jesus saying, "I go to prepare a place for you." I am free today and continue to find freedom in that deepening intimacy with Jesus through the Church and its members (Jesus' hands and feet), through the Eucharist, through worship, and by finding freedom in the ways God includes me when I didn't (and still don't) think it is possible for Him too. That question of do I belong here persists, but it no longer meets silence on the other side.

## OUR STORY

by Missy & Asher Wood

My wife Missy and I started our family in Nashville, TN. About 10 years later, in July 2016, we moved to Austin. We had felt God calling us to Austin, even though we had loved our house, schools, friends, jobs, and church in Nashville. We knew we'd always have our core friendships in Nashville, and we gave up the rest of the good in Nashville for a chance to make Austin even better. Arriving here, we were happy to be closer to family, and hopeful for the other pieces of our story to come together. We put our heads down and worked hard in our jobs, while also renovating our home and watching closely how our kids adjusted to new schools and new friends. We were thankful, but still mindful that we couldn't instantly replace great friends and a church that fed us so well.

Without much expectation, we initially visited All Saints as a mechanism to spend time with my brother Fulton, his wife Brooke and their daughter Bergen. We were pleasantly surprised to find the church growing on us already. The service felt like a great mix of our last two churches in Nashville - similar in teaching and liturgy. People were friendly, and we were pleased to find connection here and there with folks. As All Saints moved over to the new building, we felt great about how the new space physically encouraged worship and fellowship, and we were excited about how we saw the arts having such potential in this new space.

Missy and I are both artists, and we see art being a big thing also for our kids - Gaia (11), Presley (9) and Marlon (5). In many ways, art and church have been separate outwards pursuits for us, even though inwardly, they are intertwined. After all, art is philosophy made manifest. At All Saints, we were glad to meet other creative people and people who loved the arts. We enjoyed getting to have a close friendship with David Lutes and hear more about the church's vision for how the arts can enhance the community both inside and outside the church walls. The monthly art luncheons provided a great opportunity to go deeper with others and appreciate what all people have going on creatively. Missy and I were excited to exhibit some art in the narthex gallery for a bit, and she's been working as a volunteer to help curate exhibitions. We continue to see growth in the church, for us personally, as well as for how the arts is playing a vital role to how others can serve and be served.

Madeleine L'Engle said, "Jesus was not a theologian, he was God who told stories." We're excited to see how our story has landed us here in Austin, called us to know and be known, to serve and be served in the communities in which we find ourselves. The Lord is in the telling of this story, and he's in it with us, showing us how to be ourselves.

## MY STORY

by Monica Tornoe

No matter what your background is, being an immigrant is hard. You leave your family and friends. You leave your culture. You leave the landscapes and places you love. You leave home. In many ways you leave yourself and are forced to create a new person in a new land.

I am an immigrant from Guatemala, and moved to the United States, 15 years ago. Fortunately, I had good education and had learned English while I was at school in Guatemala, so the language wasn't a barrier, but here I felt that I lost my identity. I felt like I was nothing when I moved here--I was no longer a lawyer. I was simply an immigrant with an accent. I was no longer Guatemalan. Wherever I went people assumed I was Mexican. I felt the stereotypes. People assumed I was here illegally, assumed I didn't speak English, assumed I was uneducated. And this was difficult for me. So, finding a place where you are not stereotyped, not discriminated by your cultural background and for having an accent when speaking English, is hard. So, my longing and my heart's desire here has always been to be included.

God heard my prayers and through mysterious ways, I ended up in All Saints, where I felt not only welcomed, but immediately included and loved. At first, I was surprised, confused and skeptical, but here I have made so many good friends and have felt so loved by the community and amazing staff, that I don't have room in this paper to mention them all, and out of fear of leaving someone out, I won't. And not only that, but they have welcomed my family as well, my projects and ideas, we have done programs including the Latino community and now we started the ESL program, women's study, who's my neighbor events, and more to come, and I see the whole community coming alongside, the way that God intended it to be. It's just beautiful and it makes my heart overflowing with joy. I feel blessed and loved by this community at All Saints that truly has not only welcomed but included, strangers and aliens, like they did with me, my family and friends. God bless you all!

# **PORTRAITS**

*by Kady Dunlap*

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