

# ZU Magazine



ISSUE 2 | NEIGHBOR



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Neighbor.

Here at Azusa Pacific, “community” is talked about so much that it’s almost a cliché in itself to bring up this school’s obsession with it right before delving into the topic. That being said, here I dive.

As one of the university’s cornerstones, the importance of community is reinforced to students every day. We hear about it in chapel, in class, in emails from the school — everywhere except the places it should come from.

When it comes down to it, community isn’t something that can be forced from the top down — it’s got to come about organically. It’s got to come from the individuals within the group. It’s got to come from us.

Maybe instead of asking what it means to be in community, maybe we should ask ourselves what it means to be a good neighbor.

In this issue’s stories, we explore that question. Some stories examine current social issues through this lens. Others tackle the issue by showing what it means to be a bad neighbor. Another story looks at the issue from the perspective of the ultimate neighbor himself: Fred Rogers.

The textbook definition of community is “to live with a group of people in the same place, or to share a characteristic with a group.”

APU’s definition of community is “a richly diverse people who value the worth of each individual ... [it’s] to encourage, equip, and enable each student to fulfill his or her great potential, and in turn, encourage, equip, and enable others.”

To us, it’s to be a part of something larger than yourself. It’s about coming together to discover what you stand for, both collectively and individually.

It’s our hope that you, reader, will join us in considering what it means to be a part of a community and what it means to be a good neighbor.

Yours,  




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# THIS ISN'T THE NEIGHBORHOOD FRED ROGERS BUILT

BY CARLI RICKER

*"It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood/  
A beautiful day for a neighbor/ Would you  
be mine?/ Could you be mine?"*

**Those** are the first words children were greeted with when they tuned in to watch "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." The wildly popular television show ran from 1969 to 2001 and was hosted by Fred Rogers; the ultimate neighbor.

Both on and off camera, Rogers embodied the essence of what being a true neighbor meant: to love and help one another. And he extended this idea of being a good neighbor to his viewers, where his legacy lives on.

Admittedly, I didn't grow up watching "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," as I was a bit too young to see the show in its prime. But my older brothers watched it almost religiously as kids, and through their entertainment, I learned about the show and Rogers' mission to spread kindness and empathy to all.

And as a child, it was pretty easy to accept Rogers' message, as I saw the world as nothing more than a giant neighborhood. Everyone was a potential new friend or playmate and all fights could be mended with a sincere "sorry" and hug. But, as I look around at the culture today, the values of a neighbor are more of a rarity.

People often steer away from interacting with anyone who differs from them, whether it be politically, religiously or based on who they love or how they identify. If they're different, they're not worth the time. People now live in fear of those who dare to challenge their beliefs or views and become

***"And even though an issue or problem might have no direct impact on you, it's our obligation to be a neighbor and help as we can."***

fearful of what they don't understand. We are not the people Mr. Rogers encouraged us to become.

As children, Rogers worked tirelessly to try and develop us into the best versions of ourselves. This included lessons of recognizing and validating our emotions, showing kindness and patience and helping others however we could. Rogers believed in children, which is why he made it his life's work to teach them how to properly love and care for each other.

Before I go on, I want to make two things clear: First, I am not saying Rogers was a perfect person. Like all of us, he had his flaws and moments of anger and imperfection. Second, I'm not claiming he has all of the answers when it comes to achieving world peace. We won't fix the world by binge watching "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood."

What I am saying, though, is as children, it was easy to believe and carry out Rogers' version of what the world should be. But, with age comes the harsh awakening that the world around us is deeply flawed and, at times, unfairly cruel. So, what made us forget what Rogers so dutifully taught?

In his book "The World According to Mister Rogers," Rogers says, "It's very dramatic when two people come together to work something out. It's easy to take a gun and annihilate your opposition, but what is really exciting to me is to see people with differing views come together and finally respect each other."

When faced with an opposing view, Rogers recognized that it's easier to become defensive and fight back, or to simply turn away and refuse

to listen. But, that's not what a neighbor would do. A real neighbor would take time to engage and would try to find a new perspective with a different idea or view.

That said, there is a distinction that must be made between tolerance and enabling behaviors and thoughts that further oppress others. And even though an issue or problem might have no direct impact on you, it's our obligation to be a neighbor and help as we can.

In the same book, Rogers shares that "All of us, at some time or other, need help. Whether we're giving or receiving help, each one of us has something valuable to bring to this world. That's one of the things that connects us as neighbors — in our own way, each one of us is a giver and a receiver."

At the end of the day, I believe people want to be more united than divided. But, fighting against injustices and trying to fix every problem the world faces can often feel like an endless, unwinnable battle.

The issues plaguing and dividing our world are challenging and have deep roots in even more complex ideologies. This can often lead people to wonder where and how to begin mending the world back together.

This is why one of the best places to start is back in the neighborhood Rogers created so many years ago. A place to become our best, to grow more empathetic, to spend more time listening rather than talking and to show others they are loved. Let's work to rebuild the neighborhood Rogers laid the foundation for.

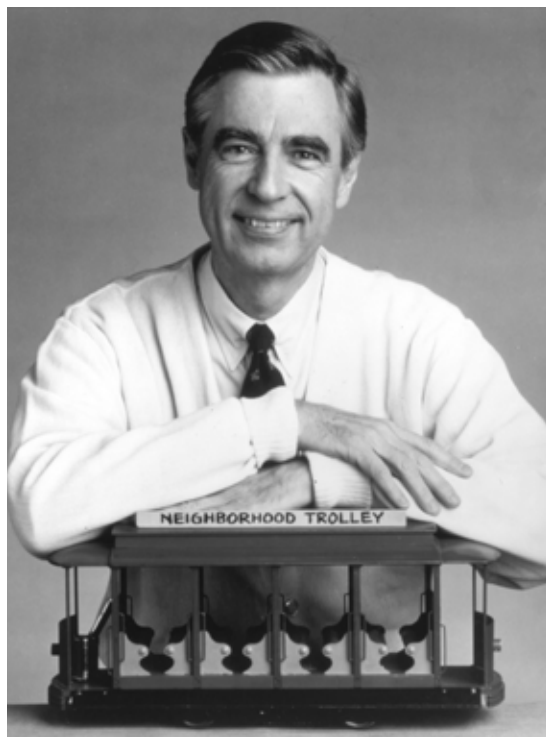


PHOTO COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES



# CHILDREN WON'T KNOW HOW TO CLIMB TREES

BY KELSEY ARVIDSON

*Why iPads should leave the dinner table*



PHOTO COURTESY OF KELLY SIKKEM / UNSPLASH

**At 7 years old,** days are filled with imaginative games about fairies and dragons. A backyard that might just be a lawn with trees to anyone else, is a big castle or animal-filled jungle to young eyes. Children run through the streets in their own world of adventure. But, the future is grim because soon, with technology, children won't know how to climb trees.

The next generation of parents are in an influential position. They can change the role that technology has on their children. Our parents were blind to the dangers of technology because new products were constantly being made and it was impossible to keep up. As a result, the consequences of staring at a screen for hours

was unknown, but they slowly deprived us of moments of creativity. Let's dissect the science behind the ever-growing rise of screen time.

"High users of screens were more likely to lose their temper, less likely to calm down when excited, and less likely to switch tasks without anxiety or anger," a ScienceDirect case study focusing on children uncovered. School is challenging enough in junior high, and adding psychological factors that stem from screen use is a difficult feat for young minds.

It's common to hear that raising happy children will help them grow into happy adults. Technology is hindering the joy from childhood and taking away the ability to have original

thoughts. There are 24 hours in a day. This time can be spent outside, or with family and friends. But, the average screen time for children and teens is seven hours a day, according to CBS News. However, self awareness can play a role in minimizing screen time.

The ability to make decisions becomes clearer with age, and the amount of screen time children utilize will be their own choice. The goal is to help them build foundational tools to avoid being sucked into Netflix for hours upon hours. Actions are easier said than done, and recognizing the intent behind these technological changes is crucial.

Parents also play a part in this active change. Over the past 10 years, there have been monumental changes within parenting tactics; however, some concepts remain the same. For example, parents of the past and present aim to get their kids in and out of the grocery store without too much ruckus. But, the tactic that's changed is bribery. Bribery itself is not a new concept, but it has switched from giving a child a candy bar to handing them an iPad. Neither act is to be judged; sometimes getting through the cereal aisle necessitates the giving of chocolate, and sometimes it means handing over an iPad.

Despite the toils that come with the looming role of technology, change is possible. Right now, the rising amount of research warns against the quick-paced advancements in entertainment and everyday functions. We can choose another direction: that will not sacrifice a playful and creative childhood – a direction that strays away from the screens that are at the center of our worlds. There are arguments across the board about future advancements. Some say that technology is a positive thing to implement into all lives.

Technology has created a platform for both educational and social purposes. Programs have slowly been implemented into schools, and children have opportunities to explore the internet — a place with all the answers. As with anything, there are pros and cons to the situation. Ideally, if screens are being used at school, then the home can provide other activities and distractions.

Our understanding of a child's brain advances as time goes on, and so does a parent's ability



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNIE SPRATZ / UNSPLASH

to adapt to the information. There is a fine line between being consumed by technology and utilizing it as a tool for future decision making.

There are life-altering advancements with technology with education, medicine, communication and more. Monitoring its impact and balancing time management is crucial for loved ones to learn together, because adults are not exempt from the screen draw. Healthy habits created at a young age will hopefully translate into a healthy lifestyle in later years; however, children often mirror those around them. Sometimes adults don't practice what they preach. We should try and set examples by putting down the phone, reading a book or going outside. These actions can set a realistic expectation for the young eyes watching.

Future generations of kids should use any spark of imagination they have to go outside and explore — and the response to technology is in our hands. So go climb a tree.



# I SAT IN A PARKING SPOT TO SAVE IT FOR A FRIEND. WHO'S AT FAULT?

BY ANNA SAVCHENKO



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LIZ GAETA AND ABI AYALEW



**Have** you ever guarded a broken bathroom door for a friend to make sure no one walked in on them sitting on the toilet?

I did a similar good samaritan gesture on Sept. 30, only it was a parking spot in the University Village (UV) residential complex.

It was a chilly Monday evening. I got let out of class early and was sitting on the couch of my apartment devouring an acai bowl and lemon black tea from

Tru Bowls. My roommate told me she had to drive somewhere but didn't want to go because she knew she would lose her parking spot for the night.

"I can hold it for you," I suggested.

She didn't think I was serious, but I proceeded to explain to her the logistics of the operation: I would literally sit in her parking spot and hold it for her until she returned. She told me I didn't have to, but I had already thrown on a flannel and was walking out the

front door with my laptop, phone and iced tea in hand.

The Department of Campus Safety's Vehicle Code does not contain any language that prevents students from physically holding parking spots for others. However, I did not possess this information at the time.

So, I waved her off as she pulled out of the garage she was parked in.

Soon after, several contenders pulled in to attempt to park in the spot I had made camp in. Some would linger to see if I caved. Others would bang their heads against their headrests in disappointment. After all, they were given a taste of hope, and the only thing standing between their parking spot victory was me. But, I persevered and continue to stand my ground.

I thought I would make it through those 10 minutes until a white car tried to pull into the spot I was guarding. It lingered longer than the others did. I looked down at my blank laptop screen, pretending to appear unphased by the car's engine. It took the car a while to finally start moving again, make a loop out of the parking garage and drive away.

I thought that was it. I internally cursed my roommate out in the hope that this would make her return faster. But, the white car beat her to it.

It pulled in again, this time without the abrupt break of a rookie. The girls inside rolled their tinted windows down and started telling me that I was not allowed to hold parking spots for people.

As the journalist I am, I questioned the source of that information. I proceeded to tell them that this practice is not forbidden by the residential guidelines of UV. I was bluffing, but I could sense they were too, so I played along with it.

After a back-and-forth, the only answer I could offer them was, "I'm sorry, there is nothing I can do about it." One of them was on the phone. My heart skipped a beat as I entertained the thought of her residential advisor being on the other end of

the line. But, they wouldn't let it go, and proceeded to tell me that my friend could go park in the East Campus parking lot and walk over to UV. That's when my blood boiled a little and I blurted:

"You think I'm waiting here for fun?"

I guess my sarcasm did the job. They pulled out, and the very next car was my roommate's. I relayed my experiences to her and we laughed it off. What I didn't expect was for my one-liner to end up in the Facebook group "Overheard at APU" in a comment to a photo of me sitting in the parking lot, laptop and iced tea in hand.

Even before I sat in that parking spot, I knew I may not have made the best decision. But, I was doing it for my friend precisely because I didn't want her to have to walk in the dark by herself. Not all have experienced this, but it's scary to walk alone in Azusa, especially at night.

Campus Safety advises students who are struggling to find parking in their own residential lots for the night to park in lot H on West Campus, and either take a trolley back to East Campus or request a ride from Campus Safety. But, we don't need to lie to ourselves. We know the trolleys are inefficient and take forever to arrive. And even if we do request a ride from Campus Safety, there is still a window between the time you made the call to when they actually arrive to your location.

This is the reason why I sat in the parking spot. Not because it makes for a good laugh or for the five seconds of fame I got on "Overheard at APU." I did it because as females, we simply do not feel safe on the campus or in the area that our university is located in. APU's parking spot deficit, especially in the residential areas, certainly makes matters worse.

So, instead of pointing fingers and starting a petition against people that hold spots for others (I am not the only one who has done so), let's focus our attention on the bigger problem at hand, which is that APU is not doing enough to make us feel safe on our own campus. It sure makes for a less popcorn friendly discussion, but at least it will be a step in the right direction.

# MOTIVATED BY BROTHERHOOD

BY REID CONANT

*Azusa Pacific men’s soccer success is motivated by togetherness, faith and diversity*

**The significance of athletics is immense;** it serves as a common language between teammates and coaches and it brings people together. The perfect example of this is the Azusa Pacific men’s soccer program. Head coach Dave Blomquist and assistant coach Andriy Budnyy have created a culture that is unlike many others.

Soccer is widely considered the most popular sport in the world. This sport serves as the



PHOTO COURTESY OF ABI AYALEW

common language for the APU team, whose members come from a variety of diverse countries. The Cougars have players who hail from Brazil, Spain, Ghana and Germany; and many other players have backgrounds from countries such as England, Uganda and Mexico. The phrase, “soccer is the world’s game,” has never been more true than with Azusa Pacific’s team.

“Soccer is just one language, and we all speak it,” said James Ndubueze, junior forward. “That’s the beauty of it and the reason why its the best sport in the world.”

Not only does soccer serve as a language for the players, but it allows fans and other students to connect as well.

“It’s great seeing and having talent from around the world,” said senior midfielder, Arturo Astorga. “Soccer is a sport that brings everyone, fans, coaches, even players together just by having the same love for the sport.”

The diverse backgrounds and people allow the team to connect to one another as people and as teammates. The relationships and bonds the players have been able to make on the field, have allowed the brotherhood to continue after the team steps off the pitch. Simply put, the game means much more to this team because of the relationships they’ve built with each other.

“Our relationships off the field, I think, is the reason why we play so well with each other,”

PHOTO COURTESY OF ABI AYALEW



said Astorga. “Everyone sees each other as a brother and that means being there for each other no matter what.”

As mentioned, this team comes from many diverse countries across the world with various perspectives and backgrounds. However, these backgrounds are also rooted in faith.

“Without God, we wouldn’t be number one in the nation right now,” said Gregoire Diep, sophomore midfielder. “Our goal is to show our gifts and talents to give glory to him.”

Being able to share faith in God has made their bond and purpose as a team that much stronger. This serves as an inspiration to us all, as their humility shines through providing opportunities to honor God as a team on and off the field.

This atmosphere of brotherhood has also paid off when it comes to winning. This season, they carry a perfect record of 13-0 (as of now) and are ranked as the No. 1 team in all of Division II. It all starts with the leadership this team has, starting from the top down.

“The coaches want us to figure stuff out on and off the field as a team,” said Diep. “They give us, especially the leaders on the team, a lot of responsibility, which helps us grow as a team and individually, too.”

The team is firing on all cylinders because of their chemistry. It’s that underlying motivation of relationship that the Cougars have fed off of that keeps them pushing towards their ultimate goal this season. And, after finishing in the top 16 last season, the team has even higher expectations for themselves this year.

“We all know what our goal is,” said Ndubueze, “Which is to attend the Final Four National Tournament.”

This team is driven by many things, including the common language of soccer, diverse perspectives and backgrounds and faith. And their closeness as a team makes each time they step out on the pitch together more significant than the last. It certainly will be intriguing to see just how far the Cougars’ strong brotherhood can take them this November.





PHOTO COURTESY OF SIENNA HICKS

**Even** if we have different views than our neighbors, we can still get along and mutually respect each other. You never know what you might have in common with someone or why they are the way they are. People end up in the same place different ways, and you can't assume someone's identity without getting to know them. Helffenstein and Jones discuss the importance of respecting our neighbors, and how you can learn and grow from having an open mind.

### Chloe Helffenstein

Chloe Helffenstein is a sophomore double majoring in public relations and honors humanities at Azusa Pacific. She came to terms with her identity after high school when she realized she wasn't straight. She then went on to research more information about identities. Helffenstein realized that she most identified with pansexuality because it's about falling in love with a person and not a gender.

"Pansexual is a non-constrictive identity, and I've always been someone who doesn't like being put into a box, so its great," said Helffenstein.

Helffenstein doesn't date based on gender, she doesn't love based on it either. Instead, she loves everyone equally and gets to know them before making any conclusions. As a pansexual woman, she has chosen to love all, and in turn deserves love.

# CAN YOU LOVE ME, TOO?

BY SIENNA HICKS

*What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself? Chloe Helffenstein and Johnathan Jones, two queer students at Azusa Pacific University, share how they love and want to be loved.*

Her high school in Colorado lacked diversity, so it was harder for any minority group to have the resources to grow. This caused her to neglect her sexuality until after she graduated and left that space where she wasn't able to explore other aspects of her identity.

"There wasn't really any freedom to explore your identity, or, you know, be able to talk to other people that have similar identities or experiences," said Helffenstein.

Having that safe space to get to meet people who you can relate to and grow with is essential for any young person. Yet, for people of both the LGBTQ+ community and Christian community, that space is usually hard to find, and those identities are usually stifled.

But, here at APU, she finally started to find a community within her friend group and in Tapestry, an LGBTQ+ program on campus; She's discovered the support she didn't have before.

"Especially at a place like APU, it's really great to have support and allies within a Christian community," said Helffenstein.

Until her newfound support, Helffenstein struggled with loving her neighbors, as she didn't feel supported. She also found it difficult to love her identity, but through this new space, all she

asks for now is for people to be open to learn, and to eventually love. This can be put into action through a dedicated effort to learn.

"Having an open mind and open conversations is one of the most important things to practice," said Helffenstein.

### Jonathan Jones

Another story of discovered support and love comes from Johnathan Jones, who is a junior double majoring in Christian ministries and honors humanities at APU. Jones uses all pronouns and identifies as gay and/or queer.

When Jones came out to his parents at 18 years old, they were very accepting. They reminded him that sexuality is fluid and to not be afraid of reidentify over time. Here, he was loved and accepted, and because of that, he was able to grow in his identity.

However, further discovering his identity within scripture was much more difficult. Jones found that in his studies, "There was a very different understanding of what sexuality and gender identity were [in biblical times]. They weren't as socially constructed as they are now in western society," said Jones.

Through his understanding, the Bible doesn't talk about queer or straight romance. It doesn't talk about how or who we should love, but instead, primarily focuses on marriage and loving those around you no matter what.

His peers also don't judge him for his beliefs or say he is any less Christian. Instead, they want to understand why he believes what he believes. He has found an accepting community, even in a very religious space, and has a mentor that helps him learn and grow within this area.

When asked about how people at APU deal with his sexuality, he said he gets asked a lot of questions about what it has done for his faith; how has it affected his relationship with the Church; what his theology is; or how he came to the place he's at now. Jones said he doesn't mind the questions and answers them honestly

because they aren't asked in a hostile way. He has learned to accept the curiosity and wants to teach others how to become more accepting of others.

In the future, Jones said he wants to create a network of housing for queer teens that are experiencing homelessness. He plans to use what he's learned in school, and by being an RA, to nurture and help these children.

Jones also attends New Abbey, an affirming church in Old Town Pasadena, where a lot of students from APU have chosen to participate in because of its inclusivity. The church's website says that "The communion table invites all of humanity exactly where they find themselves to join in the journey with Jesus." Jones, and other queer students from APU, craved the community and teachings that New Abbey provides.

However, something that Jones believes halts progression is "welcoming theology."

"The term welcoming theology is the concept of hating the sin, loving the sinner — where they view anything outside of heterosexuality or being cis-gendered as sinful, but the individual is still worth love," said Jones.

Jones clarified that this theology is actually harmful to queer people, as it can cause more pain than good, because it isn't fully accepting or understanding. Instead, it pushes people under the rug. People should be able to unconditionally love all of someone, without hating the sin, Jones explained.

These two courageous students have no hate in their hearts, but instead love and understanding. And through their stories, we can better understand how to love our neighbor.

Helffenstein asks that people have empathy towards the LGBTQ+ community and to be respectful to whoever you meet, even though they might be different from you. Jones asks that people would listen to others, especially if they are talking about their sexuality. When it comes down to it, they are asking that you would love others.

# THE BEST COMFORT FOOD FOR YOUR NEXT GATHERING

BY CHANNING REID

**With the fall season approaching**, the holidays are officially upon us. As temperatures continue to drop and days decrease in length, no special celebration or gathering can occur without some good ol' fashion comfort food. With a name that's pretty much self explanatory, these particular dishes may not be exactly healthy, but will surely make your heart feel happy. Whether you are hosting a party, going to a potluck or are in charge of dessert this year for Thanksgiving, these recipes come with little hassle and will make your palate dance with delight.

## Grilled Cheese Dippers

Grab the tomato soup! Let's add a twist to this classic sandwich, shall we? These dippers are the perfect appetizer to have at any get-together. All you need is bread, butter and cheese! Simply butter up one side of the bread, add your cheese on the other side and roll it up. Then, put your stove on medium heat and place the dippers on your skillet, rotating them side to side as they turn slightly brown on the edges. The entire recipe can be found at Delish, including how to make your own creamy tomato soup. Yum!



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHANNING REID

## Baked Spaghetti

Spice up your original spaghetti and meatball recipe by putting it in the oven, allowing the flavors to melt (literally) together. For this dish you will need:

16 oz. spaghetti  
1 lb. ground turkey  
1 packet of Lipton Onion Soup Mix  
24 oz. Prego Traditional Italian Tomato Sauce  
¼ c. half & half  
1 c. shredded monterey jack and cheddar cheese  
2 tbsp. olive oil  
Salt and pepper for taste

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit and cook the spaghetti according to package instructions. Then, cook the ground turkey in a skillet on medium heat, mixing in the soup mix. Once the turkey is fully cooked, add the tomato sauce and half-and-half and let it simmer on low heat. When the pasta is al dente, drain the water and lather it with olive oil in a medium size baking dish. Then, mix in the ground turkey and tomato sauce, and sprinkle the cheese on top. Bake for 20 minutes



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHANNING REID



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHANNING REID

## Toffee Rice Krispie Treats

Time for dessert! Rice Krispie treats are undoubtedly the easiest snack to make for a sweet tooth, but with this secret ingredient, you'll find yourself going back to your pantry for more! Toffee adds an interesting kick that melts in your mouth and is perfect for fall. Here is what you need:

6 c. Rice Krispies cereal  
1 c. toffee bits  
¼ c. unsalted butter  
1 package of mini marshmallows

Butter up a 13 inch by 9 inch pan and mix the cereal and toffee bits in a bowl. In a saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter and marshmallows until it forms into a sweet and creamy mixture. Then, pour the mixture over the Rice Krispies and toffee bits in a pan, and stir it to coat the cereal completely. Refrigerate or let it cool down to room temperature, cut them into squares and enjoy!

There is nothing better than enjoying each other's company with a tasty meal. Although these dishes are not an every day thing to enjoy, finding the right recipes and saving them for the appropriate occasion will bring everybody to your kitchen. Here's to the holidays and indulging!

## Scalloped Potatoes

There is so much you can do with potatoes, but this dish is a classic and creamy way to please your taste buds. With just garlic, butter, half-and-half, salt, pepper, nutmeg and yellow finn potatoes, you'll have a tasty creation that will perfectly accompany your main entrée dish. Peel the potatoes into thin slices and mix the seasonings and half-and-half on the stove. Then, combine them in a casserole dish and bake in the oven for one hour. Head over to Food Network for detailed instructions!



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHANNING REID



# NOT-SO-NEIGHBORLY

BY CORA O’SULLIVAN

*Roommates, thieves and stolen money. Oh my!*

***This is the story*** of how I became an (even more) broke college student.

Before transferring to Azusa Pacific, I went to Whitworth University for my freshman year of college. I was excited to finally move away from home and experience all the “college things,” especially having a roommate. But, I never thought I would have to confront my roommate with an unfortunate accusation.

Most incoming freshmen live with someone new, and I was no exception. But, not everyone has to be Nancy Drew to solve a thieving scandal.

I met my freshman roommate on move-in day. Let’s call her Emma. Everything went well in the beginning. We weren’t close friends, but we got along just fine. And we were both pretty quiet,

so we didn’t talk all that much, but we were polite and didn’t have any issues – until the middle of September.

I remember the exact day it happened. I was at choir when I got a text from Emma. She said that when she returned to our dorm, all of the money and gift cards in her wallet was stolen. She sounded distressed and worried, which caused me to anxiously anticipate the end of choir rehearsal so I could head back and check my wallet.

Sure enough, all of my cash was gone, too. I immediately got nervous. Getting robbed the first month of freshman year was not on my to-do list, and now there was a thief on the loose.

Emma and I made a deal to double-check our door was locked at all times and to be more careful about where we put our stuff. For a couple of weeks, everything was fine and nothing had gone missing. My worries faded and I didn’t think about it anymore.

But, the beginning of October came and things started disappearing again: earbuds, cash, gift cards, etc. Something wasn’t adding up. We always locked the door, and one of us was usually in the room when the other wasn’t.

After expressing my concerns to my mom, she gently suggested that it could be Emma. I had thought about this possibility before, but I had disregarded it immediately; Emma and I were on good terms. There was no way she was the one stealing.

Around my birthday, I got some extra cash. I was still anxious about the thief, so I never left my purse in our dorm unattended.

But one time, I arrived home and greeted Emma, who was sitting at her desk doing homework. I had plans to study with a friend, so I dropped off my purse and left. But, for some reason I had a weird feeling right when I closed the door. About

five minutes later, I decided to run back really quick, just to check. I didn’t know what I was looking for, I just felt like I should.

Emma hadn’t left the room when I returned, and I decided to check my wallet, and sure enough, the cash was all gone.

My stomach sank. I could hardly believe it. Now I was certain that Emma was the one who was stealing my money.

It’s easy for me to give people the benefit of the doubt, but it was hard for me to come to terms with this situation. The person I was living with felt that it was okay to go through my stuff and steal it just because she felt like it.

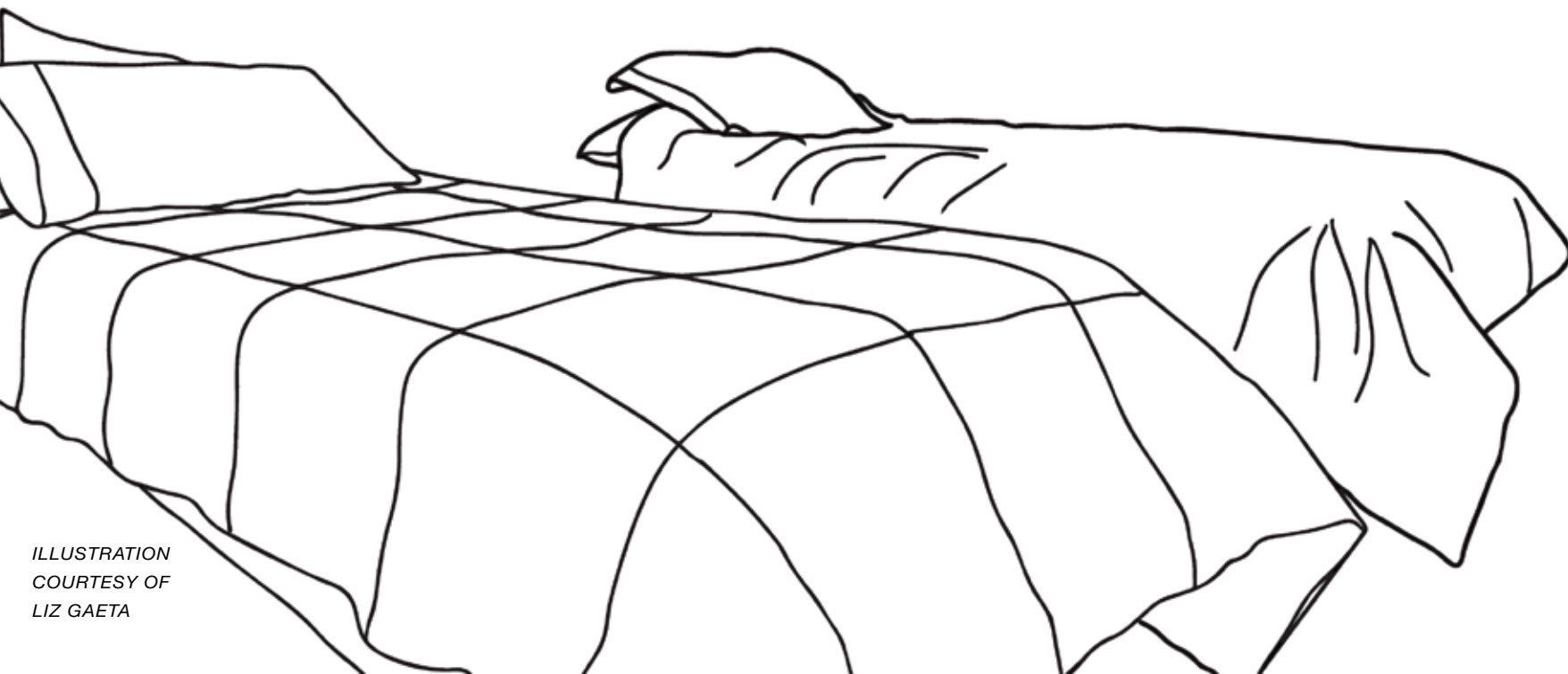
I felt awful and set-up; this was a complete invasion of privacy, and all the trust that we had was gone. She even had the audacity to send that text in the beginning to place the blame on someone else.

My mom and I made a plan to catch her in the act. Using a powder I bought online, I dusted it over a \$20 bill and placed it as bait inside my desk drawer. Once the powder comes into contact with water or sweat, it stains skin purple. Lo and behold, the money went missing, and Emma’s fingers were unmistakably purple.

Conflict is not my strong suit, but I knew I had to talk to her about the situation. And, even when I did, even with the evidence from the powder, she denied it.

After meeting with my RA, we amicably decided she would move out. And, in a completely unrelated incident, she ended up being expelled for illegal drug use. I guess I know now where my stolen money was going.

Living with a stranger brings all kinds of new experiences — some more exciting than others. If anything, it has taught me that it’s not too hard to be a good neighbor to those around you. Just don’t steal from your roommate. It’s that simple.



# MARVIN GAYE'S MASTERPIECE WAS FOR HIMSELF AND HIS COUNTRY

BY JORDAN GREEN

**On May 21, 1971**, soul singer and songwriter, Marvin Gaye, released his seventh studio album, "What's Going On," with Motown Records. Straying from his original roots as a showman, Gaye changed his style to develop more socially-aware music, which sought to change the perspectives of American citizens.

The album itself is one of the most critically beloved records ever. On Rolling Stone's list of the "500 Greatest Albums of all Time," Gaye's masterpiece is ranked sixth.

"Gaye has designed his album as one many-faceted statement on conditions in the world today, made nearly seamless by careful transitions between the cuts," said Vince Aletti of the Rolling Stone following the album's release.

It's clear that Gaye's voice is his bread and butter. His powerful tone and sensual voice gave him the title of the "Prince of Motown." Yet, in "What's Going On," it is Gaye's message that stands out.

The album was Gaye's first attempt at a concept album, which is a compilation of songs and melodies that are meant to portray an overall message, theme or narrative. The record starts with a sound bite of a party in which there is a reunion amongst family members. It is later learned in the first song of the album, titled "What's Going On," that the party was meant to represent a reunion between a returning Vietnam soldier and his family.

A moment such as this happened in Gaye's life. His brother, Frankie Gaye, fought in the Vietnam War; their reunion influenced Gaye to construct the concept album.

The entire piece is told from the point of view of a Vietnam veteran. Yet, it is not solely an album about the war that redefined the '60s and early '70s. Themes such as environmental consciousness, the continued injustices of African Americans and the suffering of impoverished black neighborhoods are prevalent.

What makes Gaye's concept album so special is that the theme correlates with the most difficult point of his life.

As a Motown icon, Gaye felt restricted under the Motown formula that allowed him to find mainstream success, and he had the urge to expand as a musician. He was also struggling in his personal life. His marriage with Anna Gordy was falling apart, and the death of his close friend and singing partner Tami Terrell affected him greatly.

In addition, the country was experiencing hardships of its own. The Vietnam War was continuing to exacerbate the American public. Not only were people on the battlefield losing their lives, but people calling for action on the streets were dying. Gaye was concerned with the dangerous trends America faced, and little to none saw a light at the end of the tunnel.

"My phone would ring, and it's Motown wanting me to start working and I'd say, 'Have you seen the paper today? Have you read about these kids who were killed at Kent State?' The murders at Kent State made me sick," stated Marvin Gaye when reflecting on the album's purpose. "I couldn't sleep, couldn't stop crying. The notion of singing three-minute songs about the moon and June didn't interest me. Neither did instant-message songs."

Gaye was releasing music that encouraged change within his home country, but it also represents the more broad theme of community. In Gaye's case, his community was the black individuals who lived in the roughneck neighborhoods of struggling inner-cities. He was the voice for these people during a daunting time when hardly anyone was able to provide their perspective.

To take a closer look at this idea, look at the lyrics of the ninth track of the record entitled "Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)."

"This ain't livin'/ No, no, no/ Inflation no chance/ To increase finance/ Bills pile up sky high/ Send that boy off to die/ Make me wanna holler."

Gaye attempted to give a clear representation of the lives of the lower class, the dangers they are forced to face (especially during a time of war) and the complications that make their financial state even more frustrating.

So, yes, Gaye made a political statement that causes people to consider the struggling African American community. But, when dissecting the album further, you can see that Gaye ultimately showed the importance of community and the love and compromise it can bring.

He says in the first track, "War is not the answer/ For only love can conquer hate." This idea was certainly true in 1970, but it can also be applied to the conflicts that plague our nation today. It has become more and more clear that love can be discerned through communities coming together and building a strong foundation. This is precisely what Gaye is pleading for in his work.



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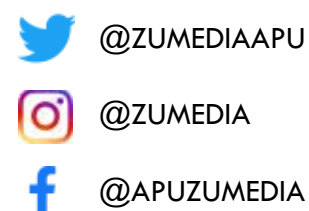
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## MISSION STATEMENT

ZU Magazine is a publication of ZU Media, a multi-media student voice of undergraduate Azusa Pacific University. Our stories seek to bring people together while impacting our readers. We provide narratives, inquires and dialogue in a Christian academic setting that value individuals' stories as well as community concerns. Our writers are student journalists interested in crafting articles that connect with readers and challenge them to grow as people. challenge them to grow as people.

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*In a partnership with Global Citizen, singer Hozier speaks with artists and campaigners about how to take action and change the world.*

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**READ:** CALL DOWN THE HAWK BY MAGGIE STIEFVATER. (RELEASE DATE: NOV. 5.)  
*Spinning off the Raven Cycle series, Maggie Stiefvater's take on YA fantasy continues to be gritty, nuanced and elegant.*

## TO DO LIST: EDITORS' PICKS

BY ZU MAG STAFF

# THE EPIDEMIC OF FAKE

BY JESSE FRIEDMAN

***At Azusa Pacific***, the term “community” is ingrained in everything we do. It is one of our four university cornerstones. It appears 15 times in the about section of the APU website. Along with “so good,” “so much yes” and “intentional,” it is an inescapable platitude flung to and fro as if it still carries some semblance of weight. I fear it no longer does.

The battle fought here is not against the word “community,” though. Despite its overuse on campus, it is a perfectly fine word. According to the New World Encyclopedia, the term “community” was originally derived from combining the Latin prefix con-, meaning “together,” and the root munis, which relates to performing services. Performing services together is a beautiful characterization of what APU ought to be, and the term “community” captures this well.

The problem, rather, lies in ourselves. We must answer a vital question: As often as we say the word, are we truly embodying community with our fellow students on campus every day? In the latter portion of Matthew 23, Jesus proclaims seven woes over the teachers of the

Law and the Pharisees — people who spoke of righteous acts but did not practice them lovingly. Christ refers to them as hypocrites six times in that passage, occasionally using other colorful descriptors to help make his point: “blind fools,” “blind guides” and “brood of vipers.” Christ spent a significant portion of His time on earth detesting hypocrisy. May we not be guilty of the same thing.

Unfortunately, genuine community is lacking in society now more than ever. According to a 2018 study by Cigna, nearly half of American adults sometimes or always feel alone and/or left out. Moreover, the study found that Generation Z is the loneliest generation alive. Sixty-nine percent of Generation Z respondents said they feel like no one really knows them well. In other words, college students are one of the loneliest demographics that exists.

Pretending these statistics don't permeate our Christian campus would be ignorant, reckless and deadly. I have had friends leave APU because they couldn't find genuine community on this campus. I have read online reviews claiming that APU students are judgemental,

entitled and fake. Unfortunately, I have even experienced disingenuous friendships myself. As with our lofty university slogan, “God first since 1899,” even as we proclaim the goal we strive after, may we never stand idle and pretend we have already reached it. We must fight to put God first every day, and we certainly have not done so without fault for 120 years. Living in godly, selfless community with one another is equally ambitious, and can only happen through selflessness, sacrifice and never ceasing prayer.

However, hope is far from lost. While fake friendships surround us every day at APU, so do friendships that radically embody the love of Christ. While I have seen the ugly consequences of broken relationships, I have also had friends on this campus drop everything to meet me in my time of need. I've had people I didn't know offer me words of encouragement that changed me from the inside out. I have sung songs at the top of my lungs with brothers and sisters who love Jesus more than I do.

It may be hard to see, but Christ is here because His people are here. He is able to transform our university if we will

stepup and allow him to. So, where do we start?

Perhaps the better question is how do we start, and the answer is small. Genuine community is not primarily built at mixers, ice cream socials or dance rallies. It is built in dorm rooms, classrooms and unintentional run-ins on Cougar Walk. It is built in the dining hall when you sit next to that freshman who's sitting alone again. It is built on the trolley when you don't avoid making eye contact with the person next to you.

I will be the first to admit that I fall dreadfully short of the community-builder Christ calls me to be. I have asked “how are you?” without truly caring about the answer. I have failed to reach out to people I knew needed it. I have forgotten about people I once called my friends.

As a Christ-centered community of college students, we are uniquely positioned to end the epidemic of loneliness that has afflicted our generation. I challenge you to reach out to someone new today — like, actually. Step out in faith, and let God use your willing heart to transform our campus. We are in this together.

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# THE NEW TEAMS OF L.A.

BY MICAH ROTH



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PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL REAVES / GETTY IMAGES

*The L.A. Rams and Chargers now share the same city*

**Los Angeles** hasn't had their own NFL football team since the Rams left in 1995 for St. Louis Missouri. But, L.A. is a very desirable market for an organization due to the population and money flow throughout the city. In 2016, the city's wish came true when the Rams moved back to L.A and again in 2017 when the Chargers uprooted from San Diego. This made Los Angeles a two-team city.

Ah, finally. The Rams have come back home. Imagine growing up as a kid in the '70s and '80s: The Rams are your team — but then they announce that they will be moving to St. Louis, a state with no homegrown Rams fans. The move was tough, but 2016 marked a homecoming for the ages.

Missouri-born Rams owner, Stanley Kroenke told Sports Illustrated, "that the move was 'extremely hard,' but 'when you look at the rational, economic side, what was expected of us made no sense.'" The disunity between the city of St. Louis and the Rams organization made it an easier move for the owner.

Then came 2017 when the San Diego Chargers announced they, too, would be moving to L.A. It seemed like a risky move for the Chargers to run away from the city they called home for so many years.

In San Diego, the Chargers only had one Super Bowl appearance in the 1994-95 season; they lost and have not been able to bounce back since. The Chargers' front office felt the need to inject new life into the organization. Owner Dean Spanos proposed dozens of new stadium ideas to the city of San Diego, but due to zero political backing, and troubles with public financing and site issues, the organization decided to do what was best for them and move to L.A.

The Rams and Chargers are now both based in the Greater Los Angeles area. But, how is it sharing a city? Luckily, L.A. has a population close to 4 million, which means there are more than enough fans to go around.

As an organization, The Rams also increased their value from \$1.4 billion to \$2.9 billion when they

moved to L.A., according to Forbes. In an L.A. Times article, "John Vrooman, a sports economist at Vanderbilt who studies the NFL, estimates the Chargers would bring in \$75 million more in annual local revenue by playing in L.A."

Did the moves pay off? For the Rams, definitely. In St. Louis, they were an average team through much of the 2000s. But, with the hiring of Sean McVay at the start of the Rams' second year in L.A., the organization bounced back. McVay took the team to the Super Bowl just two years later. The Rams are now a dominant team in the NFL. Crazy what a new city can do for a team.

Los Angeles has not only been a terrific move for the Rams but also for the Chargers ... mostly. At first, the move looked dreary. Fans in San Diego started burning Chargers gear when the move was announced. They totally disowned their team, and unlike the Rams who had a previous fan-following in L.A., the Chargers had no one.

The Chargers also moved to a smaller stadium venue, the StubHub Center. The stadium only holds 30,000 people compared to other NFL stadiums that hold upwards of 60,000 people. This, combined with the worry of a potential lack of fanbase, made the move a controversial one.

Beyond these initial doubts, the Chargers have proven the move successful. Last year marked one of the best seasons for the Chargers in years, ending with a 12-4 record and making it to the second round of playoffs. Unfortunately, they lost to the New England Patriots who went on to win the Super Bowl that same year. The last time the Chargers made the playoffs was in 2013, and before that, 2009. The move to L.A. can be credited for crafting a new identity for the Chargers, helping them create a winning culture like never before.

Los Angeles is now home to two neighboring teams who are both succeeding since their moves. The teams will also be moving to the new \$5 billion SoFi Stadium in 2020 in Inglewood, Calif.

These two winning teams will share the newest, most advanced stadium with a capacity of more than 100,000 people. The stadium and winning cultures of the teams will mark a new era for the NFL and Los Angeles as the new football capital of the world.

# CULTIVATING DIVERSITY

BY CHEYENNE JIMENEZ

## Diversity.

The buzzword used by colleges and universities to appeal to prospective incoming students. I can see it now: a college welcome pamphlet with the most “diverse” students on the cover — a black, white, Asian and Hispanic group of friends laughing and smiling, like they don’t have a care in the world.

But, is that an accurate portrayal of what diversity on college campuses look like? I’d say no.

During my freshman year at Azusa Pacific, I felt underrepresented on campus. As a first generation Hispanic female, I found it difficult to find and connect with other students like myself. I was a bit disappointed that the university was not as diverse and representative as the welcome brochure made it out to be. I can’t say I was overly surprised, though, considering the university’s demographic statistics. But, why is the demographic so polarized?

In fall 2018, the National Center for Education Statistics reported 37 percent of undergraduate students at APU were white, 33 percent were Hispanic/Latino, while 10 percent were Asian, six percent were black or African American and a mere one percent were Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

Fortunately, when compared to the same report conducted in fall 2017, the Hispanic percentage grew by 3 percent and Asian percentage by one percent. However, the percentage of black and Native Hawaiians remained the same.

Clearly, the 4 percent difference between Hispanics and whites is not too drastic; however, the combined 17 percent of every other ethnicity compared to the combined 70 percent of Hispanic and whites, is alarming. If I felt underrepresented as a freshman, with the Hispanic to white ratio somewhat even, I can’t image how underrepresented other minority groups feel.

In the 2016-2017 school year, APU conducted a Diverse Learning Environments Survey, which intended to assess student perceptions and experiences of campus climate, institutional practices and student learning outcomes. The institutional data surveyed students’ sense of belonging on campus, which measured the extent to which students feel a sense of academic and social integration on campus. Only 51 percent of men and 50.5 percent of women said they felt a part of the campus community. When asked about perceptions of the campus’ commitment to diversity, those numbers fell, with 45.3 percent of men and 46.1 percent of women perceiving the university as diverse.

With statistics like these, what has the university done to accommodate and integrate students of color?

The Student Center for Reconciliation and Diversity currently supports and sponsors seven ethnic organizations on campus: Armenian Student Association; Asian Pacific American Student Organization; Black Student Association; Latin American Student Association; Pacific

Islanders Organization; Indigenous Peoples Circle; and Kapamilya, the Filipino Student Organization.

Ethnic organizations are intended to bring about a sense of belonging on campus — a home away from home where students of the same ethnicity can gather and engage in community. While ethnic organizations are certainly necessary, I wonder if the university should be doing more to support and represent students of color.

“I feel our ethnicity is underrepresented in terms of administration and [professors], but more importantly in terms of campus culture,” said senior marketing major and president of BSA, Malachi Smith.

“APU definitely recognizes the importance of addressing diversity issues, but I feel they often don’t address them in the correct way. I feel that in the interest of public peace, transparency suffers, and that can make us feel like [they are] being vague, making an attempt to sweep certain issues under the rug, which may not be their motive, but it’s often interpreted that way,” continued Smith.

Alexxis Hernandez, junior psychology major, is a first generation Hispanic student. Hernandez believes that APU could be doing more in terms of marketing and retention.

“APU needs to reassess how they are marketing to students of color,” said Hernandez. “Recognize where students of color are going and try to mimic that or incorporate those aspects into APU, because obviously other schools do a better job of it. Rather than trying to find an immediate solution, let’s ask better questions. Also, realize that you can’t market to students of color, and then leave them hanging once they are here.”

Hernandez suggests examining ethnic diversity from a different perspective.

“When you think of retaining cultural diversity, you have to look at it differently,” continued Hernandez. “You have to ask, ‘Do students of color feel comfortable expressing themselves fully on campus? Or do they feel like they need to conform, confined to APU’s generic style?’”

I don’t mean to undermine all the work APU has done to cultivate ethnic diversity; they have made strides, and continue to make strides, in terms of diversity within my four years attending APU. What I am saying, though, is that there is still a long way to go. The solution? I have no idea. But, awareness and recognition is half the battle to making APU the inclusive community it strives to be. As long as the students of APU continue to fight for ethnic diversity and representation, then APU will be one step closer towards reflecting God’s kingdom on earth.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DON ROSS III / UNSPLASH



# HOW TO BE A “COUG SAMARITAN”

BY LUKE EGGERS

## ***Azusa Pacific is a “God First” university***

located just a few miles from the bright lights of Los Angeles and all the city has to offer. Though L.A. is a premiere location for a robust college experience, nearly 60,000 of its residents are currently homeless or struggling with homelessness. A recent census revealed that the homeless population in the community of Azusa is around 320, a dramatic increase from the 23 homeless reported in 2015. Christian students at APU are challenged by their faith to help those less fortunate, and it seems they don’t need to look far to do so.

Many students at APU feel called to take action in an effort to alleviate homelessness and spread the gospel to down-and-out members of their community. Most fail to take the right steps in getting involved due to lack of awareness of the resources they have available to them. Students with the heart of a good Samaritan, as described in Luke 10 of the Bible, need only the opportunity to serve, and this article aims to help them find a few means of doing so.

## **Center for Student Action**

The Local Engagement branch of the Center for Student Action is a great place to start for APU students with a desire to get involved serving the homeless. Their “Experience L.A.” program immerses students in the beautifully diverse and complex city they call their college home. A major component of the three-day outreach is community service. Organizations like Midnight Mission and Union Rescue Mission on Skid Row have partnered with APU to provide an opportunity for students to volunteer, doing things like distributing meals and participating in other wellness programs they offer.

APU has other ways students can serve. As recently as Oct. 25, APU held a canned food drive competition called “Cougars CAN.” Students, alumni and faculty had the opportunity to form

teams to bring at least 25 canned food items to a “can-struction” event to compete for prizes. All the collected food was distributed to local food pantries and church ministries. APU is also in the early stages of developing a community garden, an on campus garden purposed with providing fresh produce for donation to those without access to it. The majority of homeless people are forced to live off of cheap, unhealthy meals. The campus garden will provide healthier options for those who need it most.

Austin Welty, the local mobilization coordinator for the CSA office, firmly believes in the programs APU has partnered with. Welty has found the most impactful thing interactions students have with the homeless to be what they learn about homelessness at the macro level. They can begin to understand the root causes of homelessness and circumstances that often lead to it. Coming into close contact with those who have been marginalized by society dramatically impacts their worldview, especially if they develop a relationship with them. “The homeless are people,” Welty says. “At the end of the day, there are going to be programs that exist to provide some of their basic needs, but you can provide a relationship to them where they feel like someone actually cares about their circumstances once you hear their story.”

## **Local Church Ministries**

The majority of local churches have opportunities for homeless outreaches in the Azusa community. The homeless are deprived of basic shelter, but often struggle to have enough food and clothing to sustain themselves as well. Foothill Community Church has an ongoing ministry called Clothing Closet. Students can direct attention to those homeless residents who are in need of warm clothing and make other resources accessible to them. Christ Church of the Valley in San Dimas has partnered with God’s Pantry, an organization



PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM PARSONS / UNSPLASH

dedicated to sharing the gospel by providing homeless families with meals. Cornerstone Bible Church in Glendora is also partnered with an ongoing food ministry that serves the local homeless population. Because homelessness is such a prevalent issue in the L.A. community, almost every church in the area can help students get connected and serve.

## **Get Creative**

Students are always encouraged to volunteer at organizations who are wholly dedicated to reaching the homeless on a consistent basis, but there’s no right or wrong way to get involved. Anyone who feels called to use their talents or passions to serve is encouraged to find a creative way to do so. Welty cites a story of a young hair stylist who volunteered at a local church’s homeless ministry providing haircuts for

people who couldn’t afford them. He often asks students, “How can [you] be creative in a way that combines [your] individual skills, talents and passions and also meets the needs of someone [you] wouldn’t think of off the top of [your] head?” Whether making clothes, cooking homemade meals or cutting hair, anyone can help someone in need with a little creativity.

Welty encourages those who do not choose to serve to at least take the time to educate themselves. “The more that people are familiar with the resources their city offers homeless, the more they can serve in that capacity and direct homeless to those resources,” Welty said. Students who are, themselves, incapable of aiding the homeless should certainly be aware of programs that are capable of doing so.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JONATHAN KHO / UNSPLASH

# A SHARED BATTLE

BY RUBY MCAULIFFE

*Baby Luke, a new member of the family, brings about a chain reaction of community*

**Aug. 4, 2019.**

That was the day a 6-pound, 12-ounce world-changer was born. Since his first breath, he shook my world for the better and brought along a chain reaction of community. This world-changer is my little cousin Luke.

The story begins on day two of Luke’s life. At 3 a.m. he was rushed to the neonatal intensive care unit and diagnosed with Group B Strep Infection. The infection attacked his little lungs and spread to his bloodstream. And, as if that wasn’t heart-stopping enough, Luke’s oxygen levels dropped to 20 percent that night. Doctors swarmed him, manually pumping air into his tiny body, keeping him alive minute by minute, second by second.

“That day when he almost died, having that community of nurses and doctors was huge, because as a mom ... having the baby almost die and not being able to do anything to save him, you realize God really puts people in your path, and in the baby’s path, to carry out what needs to be carried out,” said Luke’s mother, Amy Barajas.

At dawn, a text lit up my screen sharing the news within a family group chat, and suddenly, the family knew what was going on.

As each family member saw that initial text, we began to clear our schedules, both mentally and physically, to be there for our loved ones: my mom called off work and immediately met the Barajas family at the hospital; my aunt began to create a schedule for fixed meals; and my grandparents got on their knees and began to pray.

We were afraid and unaware of what was next, but we knew we needed to love, support and meet their needs.

Luke’s journey was far from over — he was put on a breathing machine and intubated in a clear, enclosed capsule, shut away from noise and touch. Earmuffs blocked out sound, a blindfold shut away light and he couldn’t even be held. But, the communal necessity began to grow even further. This time on social media.

Amy began posting updates about Luke using the hashtags “#prayersforbabyluke” and “#notrace.”

“If two or more are together in His presence, He is with them, and that’s what I felt coming through social media,” said Amy, when speaking on the power of prayer. “The more people we shared [Luke’s story] with, the more people were praying, and God’s glory was exalted through that.”

This social community spread far and wide, and as Adrian Barajas, Luke’s father, says, “[It] was crazy to get messages and comments from Ireland and different parts of the world and from people we didn’t even know and parents that had gone through this ... We knew we weren’t alone in this situation.”

Through patience, perseverance and prayer, the atmosphere began to shift. A week later, Luke began to breathe on his own and the tubes that lined his 20 inch body began to slowly fall away.

But, as life continually leads us down unknown roads, a spinal tap revealed that Luke’s infection had spread to his brain. He was diagnosed with meningitis and seizures. A couple of days later, an MRI showed that the meningitis had caused severe damage to the brain, putting Luke in jeopardy of never being able to walk, talk or eat.

This served as another chance for community.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUBY MCAULIFFE

“We had all the family over and told the family about the MRI results, and they [said they would] be there for us, and everyone rallying together around us to pray helped us have some peace ... and helped us feel like we weren’t carrying the whole burden by ourselves,” said Amy.

During that gathering, a verse echoed by my aunt flooded the home:

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2.

God never intended for us to go into combat alone. He strategically placed individuals within our lives — from family, to those across the globe, to doctors — to help establish a foundation of support.

“Normally, I don’t let people in, but because of the circumstances, heaviness and sadness, I couldn’t bear it on my own — I broke down,” said Adrian. “[God] takes our pain and suffering, and he knows, as humans, it’s important to have others there. By sharing the burden, God brings comfort.”

After 34 days in the NICU, Luke conquered meningitis and was finally able

to go home to mom, dad and big sister Amelia.

When heart-breaking realities such as Luke’s story daunt our lives, it can seem easy to shut out the world. But ,we have another choice: to allow God to intercede through others and share our burdens. Through that, a flame of kinship is ignited within the community.

“I didn’t notice how such a tiny human could affect people so profoundly, and that was God’s hand over him,” said Amy. “There is something there — it’s not all bad news.”



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# WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

BY MICAELA RICAFORTE

As we were discussing the theme of “neighbor” for this issue, I was reminded of the passage in Luke 10 (NIV) where an expert in the law asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus reminded the man of what was written in the law: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself.”

But, wanting to justify himself, the man asked him, “And who is my neighbor?”

Instead of answering him directly, Jesus launched into a story.

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds ... he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expenses you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

What makes Jesus’ message all the more poignant is that the Hebrews of Jesus’ day looked at the Samaritans as enemies. The point of the parable is that the “neighbor” you are supposed to take care of might be very different from you — but it’s still your obligation to help them.

It’s hard to imagine that the current American policy of separating families and imprisoning children in detention camps is something that complies with this Biblical direction. On Oct. 24 of this year, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a report examining trauma at the border and the cost of inhumane immigration policies.

The report found that, “Functionally, what has resulted from the Administration’s policies is the separation of more than 2,700 migrant families and children, massive overcrowding of poorly run detention facilities that lack resources and fail to uphold basic standards of medical and mental health care, the forced return to Mexico of over 11,000 migrants waiting to be heard on asylum claims, and other conditions that give rise to concerns of civil and human rights violations. These policies put the lives of migrants and their families in danger and at times resulted in their needless deaths.”

These policies are a far cry from Jesus’ command for us in the Bible. All throughout Scripture, God commands his people to look after each other. Just as God cared for the Israelites when they were wanderers, He has always commanded his people to look after those on the margins of society — the leper, the stranger, the hungry, the oppressed, the widow and the orphan.

Leviticus 19:33-34 reads, “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.”



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Today, it’s not hard to see the modern equivalent. As long as we share the same planet, we are all neighbors. But, in our region of Southern California specifically, the crisis at our borders directly confronts us. Refugees from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras are migrating toward Mexico and the U. S. to escape poverty, violence and political instability.

Many migrant caravans traveling from Central America end up camping on the streets of Tijuana, Mexico for months, hoping to apply for citizenship or asylum, or just looking for any way to get across the border. Independent journalist Jorge Ventura interviewed those living in the migrant camps last year.

“After interviewing many migrants from the caravan ... one thing is for sure. They want the people in the U.S. to know that they are not gang members or people that want violence,” Ventura said. “They just want to escape a very bad situation in their home country and are looking for a second chance.”

Migrants spoke of the dangerous gang rivalries in Honduras, particularly between the MS-13 gang and the 18th Street Gang. “In our country, there is a lot of corruption. Day after day, the government, the people, it makes it corrupt,” said Christian Ramos, one of the migrants interviewed by Ventura.

Why is this happening? Taking a look at the recent history of those countries, it’s not hard to see that the United States’ intervention has played a key role in creating the political instabilities within their government.

For decades, the United States has undermined democracy and stability in Central America through economic trade and military intervention, creating vacuums of power that become perfect breeding grounds for political corruption, drug cartels and human trafficking. Since 2004, a free trade agreement between the U.S. and five Central American countries called CAFTA-DR has restructured the those countries’ economies and guaranteed their economic dependence on the U.S. by weakening domestic industries through the influx of both agricultural and industrial goods, and by creating massive trade influxes.

Accepting refugees, particularly from South and Central America, is not only our country’s moral obligation and in line with Biblical commandments — some have even gone so far as to argue that it might be better described as a matter of reparations.

As neighbors, it’s not enough for us to spout inclusive rhetoric — that’s not enough to spark true change. We must continue to exercise our right to free speech, question the fundamental logic of the need to strengthen borders, and advocate for those who are experiencing injustice.

