

# **Awakenings 2025: Wholeness & Beauty in the Life of the Church**

*Day 1 (Thursday) Plenary Session Notes*

## **Opening Session: Thursday, March 06th, 1:00pm – 2:30pm**

- “Lean into this theme, even if it’s a stretch.” — Miriam Swanson
- “We are not yet whole; we are fragmented. We long to be made whole.”
- “May the Holy Spirit tend to all our fragmented pieces, bringing wholeness.”
- “I am a body that is breathing... We are souls with bodies that house God.” — Juliet Liu



- **Lisa Rodriguez-Watson**: “*Cherry Trees and Ashes: A Vision for Wholeness and Beauty in the Life of the Church*”
  - I love how Lisa greets everyone in her family, from the churches we are in and she’s come from, and from a particular social location. ~CK
  - “None of us have arrived here on our own. We all have been shaped by where we are from.”
  - I’m not sure there is a more timely theme than “Wholeness & Beauty in the Life of the Church.” It is timely to have this conversation in this DMV Metro area at the start

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of this year. **In the midst of all that is being undone, we need a focus on wholeness & beauty in the life of the church.**

- If pastoring for you is anything like its been for me, it's been difficult, even grievous. We all could use encouragement to be the Church in our day.
- Nursery Rhyme that is timely for this cultural moment: "Humpty Dumpty" It's a simple rhyme that tells a truth about our world today: *That some things seem beyond repair when they break.* The weight of fractured societies can leave us wondering: Is restoration even possible?
- We don't just see the brokenness, we feel it. We long for a way forward.
- Rather than repair, kings and empires wield power to further their own gain, extracting with precision that fuels the empire and brings desolation for the weak.
- **Empire is no solution for the brokenness of our Humpty Dumpty world. But the Church...**
- **But the church, when we live into the fulness of our mission, when we live as the church standing against and subverting the power of empire with the good news of Jesus, who welcome the stranger and clothe the naked and visit the stranger.... This is when rupture turns the corner to repair. Healing becomes evident. Beauty is brushed onto the canvas of chaos. When we live as the Church, we are living witness to the KOG, and where love rebuilds what sin and empire have torn apart.**
- Rev. 7:9-10 — A yearning for wholeness and beauty.
- We are to be signs and foretastes of the Kingdom of the scattered.
- My husband Matthew Watson is an introvert with the gift of hospitality.
- We are gathering people who bear God's image, reminding them of God's grace in a fragmented world. When we open our homes, we are offering a foretaste of God's ultimate reunion.
- **You are the antidote to the world's fragmenting. And your work is holy work.**
- It can be easy to lose signs of the holy in the midst of the mundane.
- **My favorite part of cherry blossom season is the budding season. Everything we need for peak bloom is already in the stem – it simply hasn't bloomed yet. The cherry tree has everything it needs for full bloom.**
- When we co-labor with God, we have everything we need to bring forth Kingdom beauty and wholeness in our contexts.
- **Are you in a budding stage? Don't worry, the bloom is coming...**

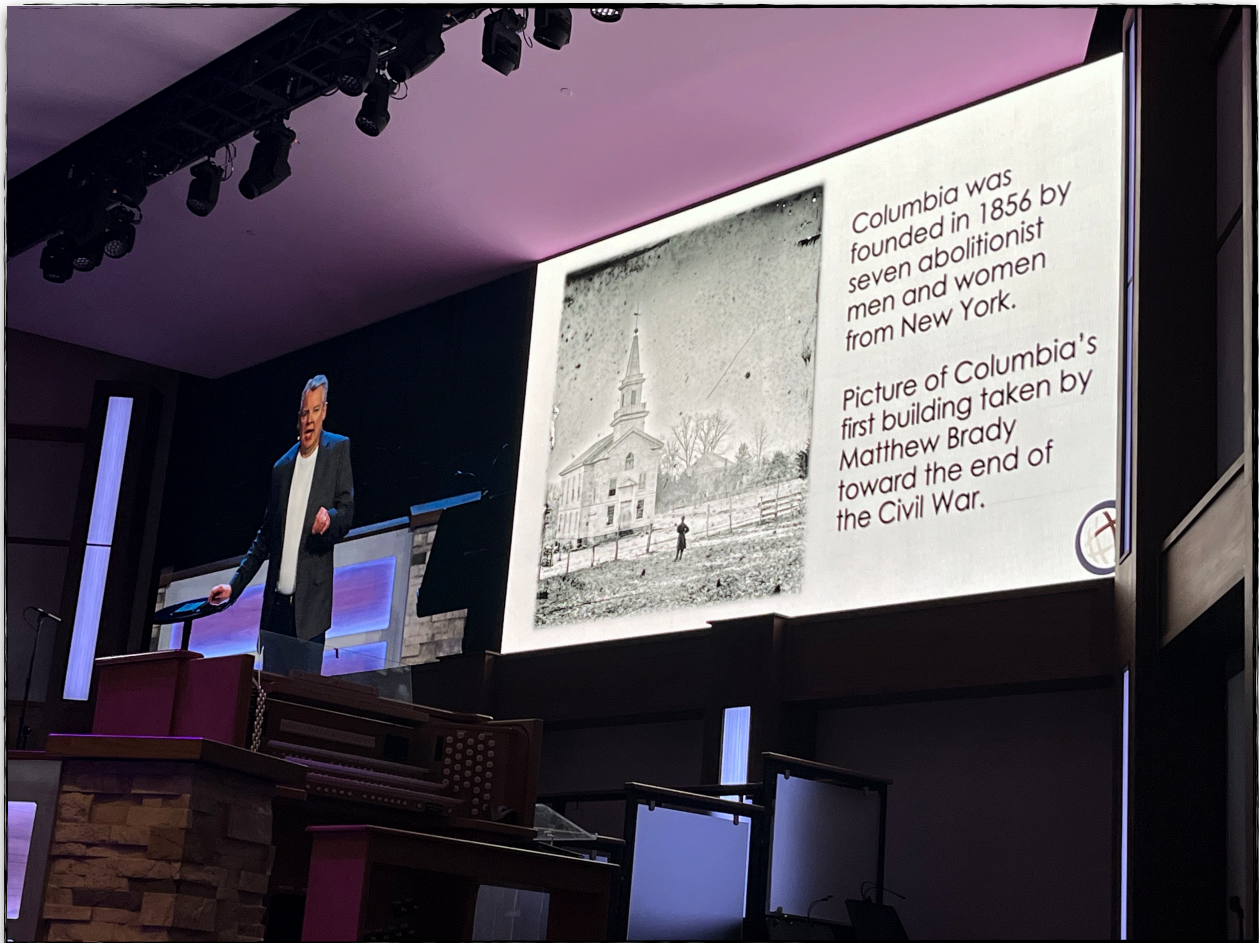




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- You are uniquely called to your work. Everything is in you for this work, for your time. God has called YOU to this work.
- The lesson of the cherry blossoms is that God equips and calls us for the work God has for us to do.
- Ex 3:12: “*I will be with you*” — God to Moses
- God’s presence and power with and within us is the game changer.
- “*He’s got the whole world, in his hands...*” A hymn for today.



- **Jim Baucom**: “*The Great Re-Commission*” // “*The Mission of Wholeness & Beauty*”
  - One of the original founders and chairs of the Board with Missio, and the Lead Pastor of Columbia Baptist Church (our host church).
  - I am a practitioner and this is where I practice.
  - “*Welcome to the Swamp...we Swamp Creatures are so glad you are here!*”
  - I arrived to a congregation that was stuck in the middle. The transition had become normative.

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- **I am stuck in the middle with you all. What are the right questions to ask in this moment? “Whither the Great Commission of Jesus Christ?” “To what place or state are we going?”** (whither definition)
  - whither | '(h)wiTHər | *archaic or literary adverb*
    1. to what place or state: *whither are we bound? | they asked people whither they would emigrate.*
      - what is the likely future of: *whither modern architecture?*
    2. to which (with reference to a place): *the barbecue had been set up by the lake, whither Matthew and Sara were conducted.*
      - to whatever place; wherever: *we could drive whither we pleased.*
- **“As you go, make disciples of all the nations...”** (Matthew 28:19 accurate Greek)
- We live in a day where we want to know exactly what we are doing, where there has to be a strategy and plan. Where we have to encounter and respond to the great transformation of this coming moment...we have to be like the apostles, and take one step, and then follow in faith.
- Ralph Winter’s History of Mission (*Jim is not a huge fan of this approach*)
  - 0-400: Winning the Romans: Evangelizing the empire of the Caesars
  - 400-800: Evangelization of the Barbarians.
  - 800-1200: Evangelization of the Vikings.
  - 1200-1600: Evangelization of the Saracens/Muslims.
  - 1600-2000: Evangelization of the Ends of the Earth.
- We saw ourselves as soldiers, marching into war “Onward Christian soldiers.” We saw ourselves as conquistadors, carrying a flag and bible with us everywhere.
- Now David Barrett says we are in this global discipling era. The problem is no one told the church this.
- David Barrett’s History of Mission (*Jim appreciates this perspective much more*)
  - 30-500: The Apostolic Era (Luke and Paul)
  - 500-1750: The Ecclesiastical Era (Cosmas Indicopleustes and Francis Xavier)
  - 1750-1900: The Church Growth Era
  - 1900-1990: The Global Mission Era (Modern Missionary Movement)
  - 1990 Forward: The Global Discipling Movement
- The Modern Missionary Movement:
  - Philosophy of Mission: Evangelize the HEATHEN and so win the world of Christ.
  - The Role of the Local Church: Provide for the sending agencies, pray for the missionaries, and recruit new missionaries.



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- The Role of the Denomination: Send missionaries and educate the masses about mission (promotion/fundraising).
  - Jim critiques each one of these pieces.
- The Church's role in this day was an ancillary role, a sideways role, as most of them were in actuality dying on the Vine.
- Getting Back to Disciple-Making
  - The Modern Missionary Movement
    - A united effort in a disintegrated world.
    - Global concern in a provincial context.
  - Post-MMM (Transition)
    - A disjointed effort in an (partially) integrated world.
    - Local concern in a global context.
  - A Global Discipling Movement
    - A unified effort in an integrated world.
    - Global concern with local contextualization.
- The Global Discipling Movement
  - Philosophy of Mission: *"As you go into all the world, make disciples."*
  - The Role of the Local Church: Discipleship through incarnation at home and in partnership throughout the world.
  - The Role of Networks: Connect local churches and provide channels for global partnership.
    - **Missio is a network that works together towards a common goal.**
- The Global Discipling Movement
  - A reintegration of justice and evangelism
  - Respect for/  
appreciation of other  
cultures and  
empowerment of  
indigenous churches.
  - An eagerness to  
learn from  
indigenous churches  
in other cultures  
(and our own).
  - Equipping  
participants in the  
local church for the  
task of discipling  
locally and globally.



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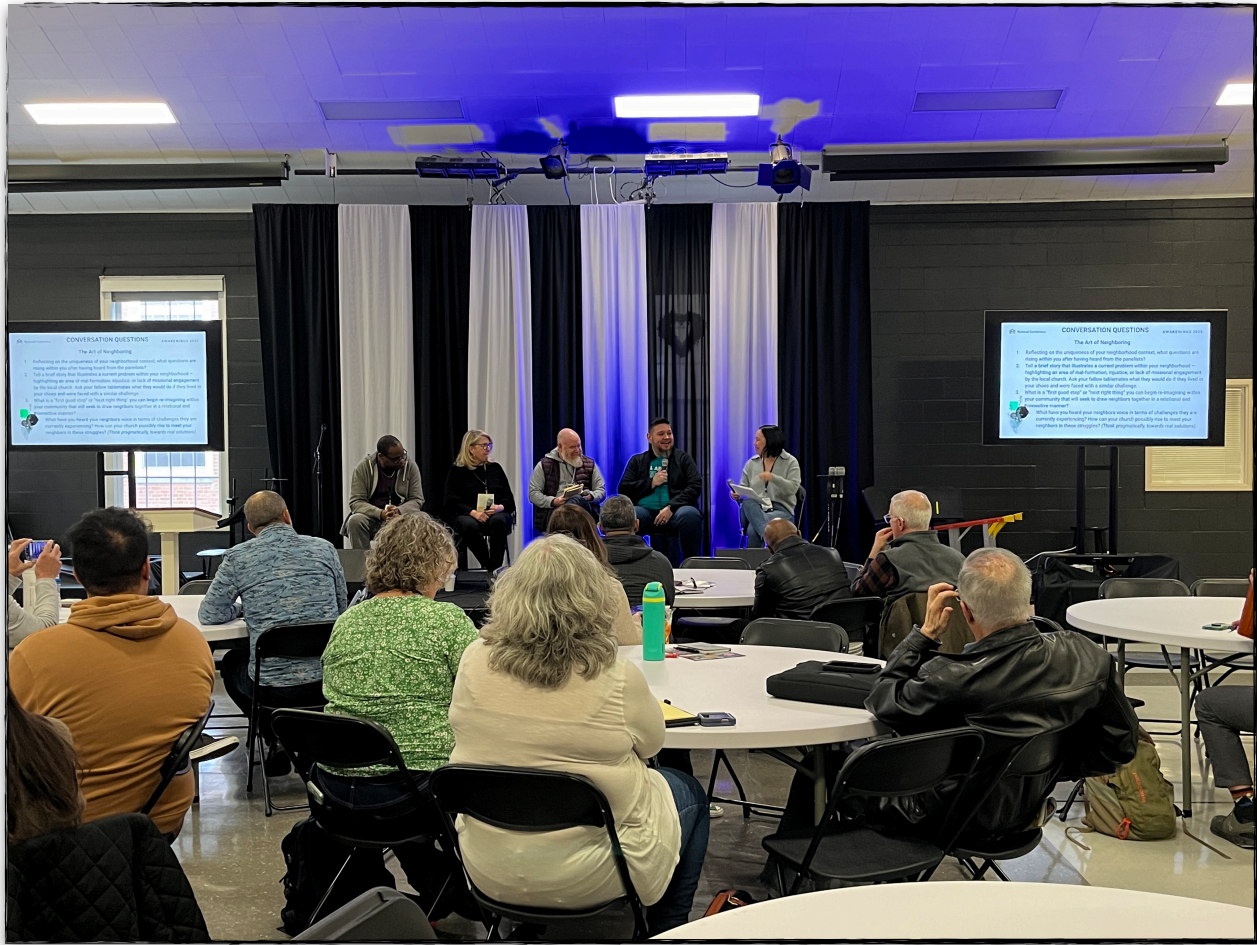
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- *When churches get stuck in the middle, they tend to become ‘missionary vacationers.’* They go somewhere impoverished and consider it a holiday that they are serving the Gospel overseas.
  - Three Guiding Principles
    - Focused: Doing it right rather than quick
    - Transformative: Outcome based input
    - Just: Out best for the others’ good
    - Isaiah 58:6-12
      - Columbia was founded in 1856 by seven abolitionist men and women from New York. Picture of Columbia’s first building is taken by Matthew Brady toward the end of the Civil War (Brady was a famous Civil War photographer).
      - Matthew Brady is looking at a transition point beyond the first Falls Church. Brady is looking at the slave-holding state church. These planters planted their church right next to the slave-holding lodge and said “we are planting our church here.” This is boldness — in their context, this is the gospel that needed to be shared.
      - John D. Read — Columbia’s First Pastor — Martyred by Mosby’s Rangers in 1864 for teaching black men, women, and children to read, write, and do math. Buried in the ‘False Church’ cemetery.
      - This gospel got too big for that spot.
  - **ABCD Approach: Asset-Based Community Development**
  - *“I held an orphan in my lap. I don’t need to know my own neighbors.”*
  - ***“We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.”*** — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to German clergy in April 1933
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# Awakenings 2025: Wholeness & Beauty in the Life of the Church

## *Day 1 (Thursday) Plenary Session Notes*



### **Conversation: *The Art of Neighboring* (Thursday, March 06th, 2:45–4:15pm)**

- **Conversation Panel: Jody Faig, Jonathan Brooks, Matthew Watson, Terry Ishee, Andrea Ackermann (Facilitator)**

#### Conversation Questions:

1. Reflecting on the uniqueness of your neighborhood context, what questions are rising within you after having heard from the panelists?
2. Tell a brief story that illustrates a current problem within your neighborhood – highlighting an area of Mal-formation, injustice, or lack of missional engagement by the local church. Ask your fellow stalemates what they would do if they lived in your shoes and were faced with a similar challenge.
3. What is a ‘first good step’ or ‘next right thing’ you can begin re-imagining within your community that will seek to draw neighbors together in a relational and connective manner?
4. What have you heard your neighbors voice in terms of challenges they are currently experiencing? How can your church possibly rise to meet your neighbors in these struggles? (*Think pragmatically, towards real solutions*)

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For 27 years neighboring looked like deep connection in our neighborhood in Austin, TX. We lived in our neighborhood for 19 years in the same house, deep connection, HOA, PTA president, etc. Now, living in the Roanoke Valley, I am serving as a missionary on campus at Roanoke College specifically working with college athletes. — Terry Ishee

I pastor a church that is a mile from where I live. Christ City is deeply rooted in its neighborhood, a parish congregation. 70% of our congregation has lived within walking distance of our church. Demographically younger, multi-racial. **How do we help younger folks not just consume from the city, but contribute from the city?** Personally, how do we intertwine our lives with the lives of those who live on our block? **How do we help our congregation see their houses as a potential ‘geographic center of their neighborhoods?’** — Matthew Watson

**We live a parish lifestyle for the good of the neighborhood.** Our context is urban in downtown Alexandria, VA. **Prayer and proximity and interruptions are key to the art of good neighboring.** I hover in prayer over the corners of my city. I pray over every street, where I know my neighbors, and where I don't. Wholeness and beauty is real. Some of us can't think about neighboring until we find wholeness and beauty. Maybe our neighborhoods can give to us what we need. — Jody Faig

**Neighboring is God opening my eyes to see the beauty and the brokenness happening in my community and to see them in a new way.** Inglewood is my training to see the world as God does. This is living with your bi-focals on. My name is a question, “*Pastor J?*” **Neighboring right now looks like getting out of the role of pastor, and becoming an actual neighbor again.** — Pastor J (Jonathan Brooks)

**Neighborhoods are not places to do ministry, but places to live.** ~ Pastor J

**Neighboring isn't a separate thing we do from living (Something I've heard from you all).**  
— Andrea Ackermann

**If you are going to be a good neighbor, proximity is key. You have to be seen.** — Terry Ishee

Air conditioning and garage door openers/attached garage door homes have a sense of convenience in them. These have affected neighboring quite deeply. **Place, if you are going to take it seriously, has to be walked within. Let your neighbors know when you are going to be around. What does it look like to create place in a location where you are a regular? Place is where you create proximity; but also where you create presence with people.**  
— Terry Ishee

**We always must return to exegiting our neighborhood. We can live in a place for a long time, and the neighborhood we live in can look totally different than it was before.** I am not



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looking to change location or vocation, but I am now in different season of ministry (and life) — and so is my city. How do we listen to stories of folks that are no longer part of my community? They are a part of a story of a place that has been going on for a long time. — Matthew Watson

See your neighborhood in a new and fresh way. — Jody Faig

To be on mission is a craft. How are you honing the skills of your craft? — Terry Ishee

**What is the role of mutuality in neighboring?** — Andrea Ackermann

**“The power of with” The word ‘with’ changes almost any sentence. You can go serve your neighbors, or go serve ‘with’ your neighbors. Jesus’ model was to be with — to put on human flesh and move into the neighborhood.’** — Pastor J

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*Day 1 (Thursday) Plenary Session Notes*

**Thursday Night Session: Thursday, March 06th, 7:30pm – 9:30pm**



- **Rev. Enid Almanzar:** *“The Church and the Mission of God: The Messy Middle”*
  - I’m an old-school Pentecostal girl with fire in her bones.
  - This topic is much needed in these times. Never has it been more necessary than now to grab ahold of a vision for beauty and wholeness.
  - **Beauty and wholeness is not about the environment or circumstances. It is not confined by what constricts us, but rather what liberates us in the middle of our pain. True beauty is not found in the freedom from our pain of it, but in spite of it.**
  - We must see beauty now, right where we are, in the messy spaces and places where we find ourselves. It is seeing beauty in the prophetic lament. In the places of our righteous indignation, of our righteous laments.
  - We are not a people to be colonized under the insidious grasp — we are a people of hope.
  - Those are our spiritual roots -- both powerful and prophetic. If we fast forward to what is ahead of us, there is another beautiful tableau in Revelation.
  - In this season, we are invited to join God in mission.



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- It's our unique ability to find beauty and wholeness in these messy middle places that should mobilize us, sending us forth in these messy middle times.
  - Luke 17— 10 lepers healed, only one turns back.
  - We are those people that are spiritually sick. In Jesus we can find a true wholeness, the true healing we seek. But first, we need to do our part.
1. **We need to walk out our faith.** *“Go and show yourself to the priest”* (Jesus tells the lepers this) *“As they went, the healing took place. The miracle was manifested.”* We have to show our faith by walking it out. “It’s time to walk it out — the least of these are under attack.” It’s time to practice what we preach. Pick a verse — of 2000! — that mentions poverty and justice, and walk it out! ***It’s time to get up, lace up our Jordans, and walk it out! God is saying ‘go first, and I’ll do the work on the way.’***
  2. **We need to embrace the power of the pivot.** Luke 17:15. ‘Kaiastic structures’ — a sequence of events are developed and then repeated in reverse order (introverted parallelism). A pivot takes the leper from a downward spiral and shifts them in the opposite direction. This man came back to Jesus and let his voice be heard. There is a similar pivot in our journey — a fulcrum, a pivot point that will propel us forward with powerful intensity. When we least expect it, we have the strength to lift our own voices! Once you embrace the power of the pivot, you don’t need the comfort the crowd — you’ll be strong enough to speak up on your own! Embrace the pivot and LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD.
  3. **We will find wholeness when we return to our places of pain.** The 10th leper was a Samaritan — a foreigner — an outcast. He had it worse because of his ethnicity. He found the courage to return to his place of pain and isolation. **Finding wholeness isn't a linear process. It is a dynamic process catalyzed by our courage to meet God in our places of deep woundedness.**
- We are the ecclesia — called to be a light in the darkness of this world. WE CANNOT hold back or shrink back. Oscar Romero — **“Each one of you has to be God’s microphone.”**

