

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

*Day 2 (Friday) Plenary Session Notes*

**Saturday Morning Session: Saturday, March 08th, 9:00am – 12:00pm**



- **Conversation:** *“Unity in Diversity and the Journey to Wholeness”*
  - **Conversation Panel:** Miriam Swanson, Oneya Okuwobi, Mariah Humphries, Jonathan Brooks, Lisa Rodriguez-Watson (*Facilitator*)
  - An organized lie will always defeat a disorganized truth. (*Jonathan Brooks*)
  - **Question:** What does the journey towards wholeness & beauty look like for you?
    - **I live with a theology of discomfort that the American church needs to pursue more. When Christians are pushed to the margins and aren’t in positions of power, we experience how deeply God is actually in charge. When we pursue Empire, we falter.** I see the Church thriving when we are in the shadows and back-end. We need to stop pursuing the limelight and become the Church again. Our best work is done historically when we are

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amongst the marginalized. We need to pursue the Kingdom and not Empire. (Mariah Humphries)

- **There has to be an acceptance of not just a theme of repair, but reparations as a Kingdom tool.** We need to stop talking about white supremacy as a ghost in the room (Defining Reparation: “*White supremacy is theft — theft of truth, wealth, and power.*” — Duke Kwon and Gregory Thompson, Reparations) What if we just give it all back? (Jonathan Brooks quoting Dr. Jennings)
  - **There is no justice without repair.** We pursue unity by standing ‘10 toes down’ into our diversity. We end up with ‘obnoxious peace’ (the visual absence of conflict but deep inner turmoil). (Oneya Okuwobi)
  - Here’s what I’m hearing you share: (Lisa Rodriguez-Watson):
    - **Embrace discomfort** (from Mariah Humphries).
    - **We have to work at repair and reparation** (from Jonathan Brooks).
    - **Be open to conflict. Silence is not peace, so let’s be open to conflict as a pathway to peace.** (from Oneya Okuwobi).
    - **Watch and learn from the younger generation. Let’s learn from those who are already doing this** (from Miriam Swanson).
  - Question: Share your vision of wholeness & beauty for the Church.
    - **As a Black woman, there are few spaces I can be a whole woman in the Church. For me, wholeness looks like being able to stop dividing all of these conversations** and have a serious reflection and then action on the forces of things that we take for granted as we consider human flourishing. We can do radical things — we simply need to have imagination for it. (Oneya Okuwobi)
    - My vision is simple — Luke 19, the story of Zaccheus (Jonathan Brooks)
    - **I want this panel to be younger next time (I am 36 and have toddlers). I long to see Church leadership in platform and power building to be more inter-generational as decisions are being made.** Some people don’t know they have been made yet (Miriam Swanson).
    - **I long for us to be one but not the same. There is a lot of unity amidst our diversity.** I would love for our churches to be more full by being more diverse. Being one does not mean being identical. “*The original inhabitants of this land that you call native, if you acknowledge them at all*” (Mariah Humphries quoting Dr. Jennings’s 3rd ‘What If?’ poem).
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- **Makoto & Haejin Shim Fujimura**: “*Beauty and Justice: Missional Life*”

### **Makoto**

- “We are God’s *poiema* (poem), created in Christ Jesus to do *ergon* (triathlete work) (Ephesians 3:20)
- Usually *poiema* is translated craftsmanship, workmanship, etc. “*Be a doer of the faith*” James 1 — you are to be a POET of the word - found 3,000 times
- We are to craft our imagination to sanctify it. When we inhabit our dreams in our own lives, the world should see poetry. Jesus is poetry.
- **A theology of making emphasizes somatic (body) knowledge. It is a theology of doing something with our hands / body.**
- **If you win culture wars, you lose. Because you win by demonizing the other side. You do so by poisoning the soil with toxic chemicals. This scarcity mindset, Darwinian struggle, is not going anywhere. We need to change the metaphor entirely.**
- God’s Imagination Is.
- Are we living in someone else’s nightmare, or do we have the agency to create the future that we are called into by God?

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- None of us can say we have the upper hand, because we are all in Babylon in exile. As God has instructed, in exile in Babylon, we are to plant trees and gardens, get married, and become an agent of renewal within our cities (See Jeremiah 29). Our cause is to be peacemakers. We fly into the eye of the storm where God is.

### Haejin

- God shared the tears of Christ with us in prayer (*the sense they have when they were praying for us — this is the spirit they have sensed for our conference*).
- God’s justice has a spectrum of colors and shapes.
- **Suffering carves through the floor of what you thought was the basement of your soul. It will carve through that, and reveal another layer underneath that.**
- “*We are either to be broken, or to be broken open.*” — David Brooks
- **America is a little ember right now — we need a new spirit of *ruah* (breath). Embers in the ashes of a campfire. Embers will become a flame only if they are breathed into.**
- **To choose to be broken open, that our flawed humanity will be made new — we need this sanctified imagination. This is the process of ‘Kintsugi:’**
  - **KINTSUGI**
    - Kin = gold
    - Tsugi = mend, connect
- **Kintsugi does not hide the fractures of the past. We don’t fix the fractures, but make something new out of the fractures. Every fracture is an opportunity to make something new.** Some fractures take generations to be mended (Kintsugi tea masters sometimes hold onto fractured ceramics for generations before they are repaired — we actively behold (with a sanctified imagination) what the broken pieces could become. The Kintsugi is a co-created new creation happens through the original ceramic maker, and the laquer-maker who uses the Kintsugi process to make a broken ceramic whole and new again.

