



# Home



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For he was looking  
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whose architect and  
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(Heb 11:9-10).*

*By Andrew Comiskey*

**'ALWAYS FORWARD, never back.'**

St. Junipero Serra

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, but from the start journeyed to Jerusalem where His Cross catapulted Him home. The servant is not greater than the Master. As soon as we are born, we too start for home.

Thirteen years-ago, our family left California for Kansas City; we reversed the direction of my parents who came to Los Angeles from the Midwest 60 years earlier. Like them, Annette and I reveled and bristled at the changes we faced in our new culture.

A gift to me was our new house. Like a tree house set in rich foliage, we from the desert lands watched nature rise and die and rise again. For the first time! During one Thanksgiving, I looked out at the lovely lean trees and wept. I asked

God why the sorrow and He said simply: 'This is not your home.'

I loved our house, was grateful for it, but began to see that it was only a station in a relay. I relate to Abraham who by faith 'obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents...For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God' (Heb 11:8-10).

In tents, looking forward. Is a house just a tent? I am the only person I know who can return to his childhood home where his vital 92-year-old mother still lives. I often visit, and could eulogize the place, nesting in nostalgia. I resist the temptation. Yes, my early home was a secure place and yes, it was a launching pad manned by

both parents who never clung or manipulated and who always urged us onward. Their credo—‘Go where you must’—served Annette and I well.

We moved almost annually during the first 15 years of our marriage as we sought to navigate Los Angeles, graduate programs, and a growing family. Having settled in Orange County for a decade prior to the move to Kansas City, we assumed our ‘tree house’ there was the last move of many. When Annette made it clear that the house was no longer working for her, I struggled to listen. It took some time for me to realize that our house was not our home: a lovely house yes—yet only a tent that would be exchanged for others as we moved homeward.

I write this article from a rental house one-fifth the size of our previous one as we await another house that we will move into before Christmas. On a small table before me rests a crucifix with figures of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus in the foreground. Bethlehem’s child born to die a shameful death in Jerusalem: no other way for Him and us to return home to our Father—Lord of the ‘city with foundations’.

How then do I understand my journey home? I recognize four ways:

First is in my secret place with Jesus. Daily I fix the eyes of my heart on Him. Wherever I live, a small cross hung or set anywhere in view becomes a simple altar to the one true God—Father, Son, Holy Spirit. It reminds me that my happiness rests upon ‘undivided devotion to Jesus Christ’ (1 Cor 7:35). Put another way, my heart is becoming His home. It all depends on keeping my eyes fixed on Him through contemplation and Scriptural meditation. Cultivating intimacy with Jesus now prepares me to live with Him in eternity.

## *I am grateful for glimpses of home that I have discovered in every tent along the way.*

Secondly, the Eucharist. I praise God for my Catholic faith and the centrality of Jesus embodied in the host. Daily I kneel before the altar where I witness the opening of the tabernacle and Jesus re-presented as the Lamb that was slain. As I partake in this act of worship, I am changed. From within, Jesus orients me toward His Father, toward home. It does not matter if the homily flares or fizzles; His mercies are new daily. And though I most appreciate Mass at my local parish, I can partake of this worship anywhere around the world. I need not know the words. The Word is made flesh and broken for us in any language, and of Him I partake hungrily. I dwell with Him now at His altar as I await dwelling before the Lamb forever (Ps 84: 1-4).

Holy meals could digress into selfish spirituality if not for mission, my third point. This is the goal of Desert Stream Ministries: to equip wounded ones for the journey home. Anyone in a Living Waters group learns to offer the gift that (s)he is to others over a lifetime. That occurs as one lets go of lies, integrates what is true and beautiful, and grows in imperfect, joyful self-giving. We help one another to walk confidently with a limp. Thank God for Annette, my best walking partner in mission which brings me to marriage, my fourth and last point.

My main calling is Annette, with whom I made a lifetime vow with my body, indissoluble. We compose what the Church calls a domestic church, a house church, wherever we live. We are a ‘common good’, which refers to the river of life that wells up naturally from our communion. Beginning with our kids. For them we pray together daily, asking the Father to protect and make them fruitful as they walk homeward. My entire adult life has been defined by sharing houses with Annette; her face pervades every memory. It is a joy to walk together toward home with this truest of tent partners, until death parts us.

As I approach 60, I am increasingly aware of this death. I watch the disorientation of the widow or widower and taste the grief to come. Yet I also remember that marriage is not the end of the line. Our union points beyond itself to a great wedding feast when we consummate union with the Lamb. There every marriage will bow the knee before the only one that matters (Mt 22:30; Rev 7: 9-17; 21:1-5).

I am grateful for glimpses of home that I have discovered in every tent along the way. That includes every house of worship. Each one goads me on to stay true to the One with whom I will share full communion in the ‘city with foundations.’ I look forward to being home at last; in the meantime, I will give all to help others find their way home too. Thank you for supporting Desert Stream Ministries. We will stay true to our mission to dig deep wells of Living Waters where persons can be equipped to resume the journey home. **DSM**

# My House

By Annette Comiskey

**THE MEANING OF HOME** for much of my life was ephemeral. I was an avid reader so “home” would conjure up images of the March house in *Little Women* or the harsh but loving reality of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s prairie life.

My reality was different. We changed homes all the time. Don’t get me wrong—I had a good family: two loving, supportive Christian parents and two much older siblings who often included me in on their teen-aged adventures.

But because of my dad’s job we moved a lot. By the time I graduated from high school we had moved 8 times (and I had attended 8 different schools!) I faced the hard reality of being the new kid in the classroom every couple of years. I kept friends at arm’s length knowing we would soon leave.

It was also in my home when I was sexually violated at the age of 4 by a distant relative. I learned quickly that loving, caring parents were not enough to keep home a safe place.

Other peoples’ notions of home became a refuge for me. In addition to the aforementioned books, I learned and lived through fleeting images of home derived from Nancy Drew, Sue Barton RN and the Bobbsey Twins. I also sought ‘home’ in sitcoms like ‘Leave it to Beaver’ and ‘Love Lucy.’

These images of home may have helped me a little but they did not heal me. I needed God, but my broken history impacted my relationship with Him. Though I loved God, I didn’t want to get too close; I was damaged goods. I strove to be a good Christian but never felt that God wanted to draw near to me. I rarely felt at ease with myself, and was anxious of not being in control of my circumstances.

In my 20’s, God began to reveal Himself to me through a pastor who spoke of the love of Jesus in deeply personal, grace-filled ways. And the healing power of the Holy Spirit began to restore the wounded and detached parts of my heart. I was on the ground level of Living Waters as it developed in our new church; there I began to discover the language and community of healing.

I grieved the harm done to me by intentional sin (abuse) and

the collateral damage, however unintentional, of my dad’s many career moves. As I learned to trust people and receive healing prayer, God healed my heart.

I invited God into areas of my life where I had previously kept Him at bay. He filled my heart with His merciful love. I realized that being with Him meant being at home. Home was neither an unsafe nor transient place; it was also not living life through my beloved fictional friends. My understanding of home— my sense of being— was restored through the mercy of Jesus.

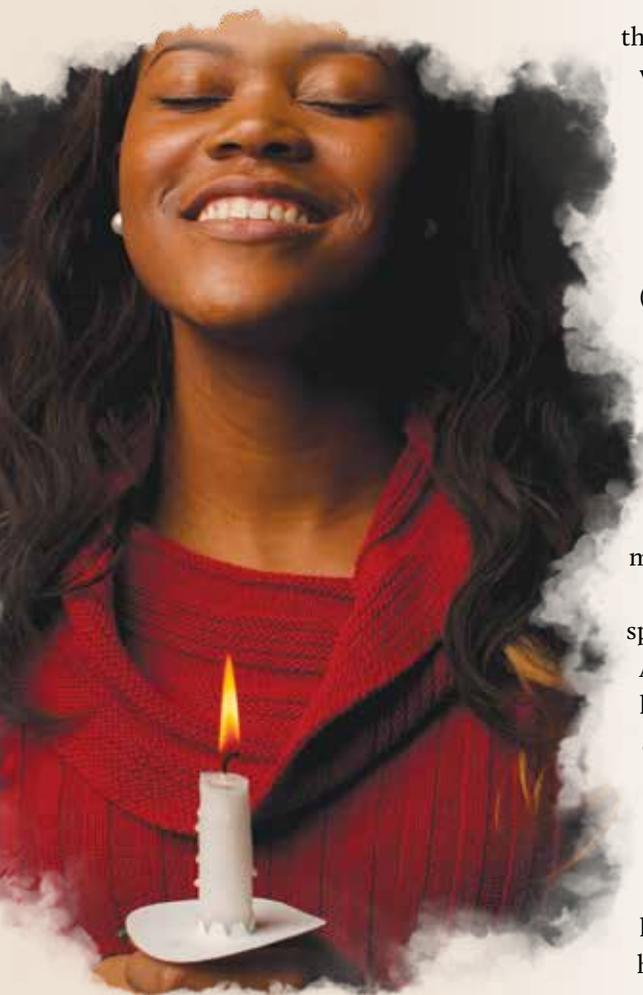
My house is a very, very big house! *“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”* John 14:2-3 **DSM**



# Let Not Your Heart be Troubled

By Ann Armstrong

Yet Scripture paints a picture of the God who comes near and dwells with us here and now, before we reach heaven.



*'LET NOT YOUR HEART be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many homes; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you' (Jn 14:1-2).*

Recently I taught on Chapter 3 in the Living Waters Guidebook, 'Responding to the Father's Love'. I spoke about the home within that God's love creates, a place of comfort, security, rest, peace, hope, joy, and more! That such a place exists may seem nebulous and even fantastic.

Yet Scripture paints a picture of the God who comes near and dwells with us here and now, before we reach heaven: 'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me' (Rev 3:20). We just have to ask.

Many years ago I remember taking time each morning to have tea with Jesus. I sat in the quiet and stillness of the new day, appreciating His presence there with me. In those special moments, I *knew* glimmers of home.

I continue to try to keep this special appointment with the Lord. As an alien en route to my true home, I need the peace and grounding these times of quiet bring. Those moments give me hope and empower me for the journey.

Christmas can highlight the limits and lack in the places we have called home. One usually expects to spend the holiday with

family at one home or another. I chose to do so for many years, traveling to be with my parents and other family members. I am thankful for many aspects of these visits, especially now that both my parents are no longer living. Now more than ever I must be creative in fashioning a home for myself at Christmas.

Not long ago, I decided to spend the holiday with friends in California. These men and women are members of my spiritual family, ones I primarily met through the ministry of Desert Stream and Living Waters. They know me well, better than my family; being with them brings me much life and joy.

These and other friends exemplify the best of LW and the community I have been given through the ministry: honest, merciful, funny and deeply devoted men and women. Lovers of the Cross and the Kingdom, I thank God for such good walking partners. They remind me I am not alone in this journey of life.

Even the gift of family and friends who love me well enough fails to bring the peace and security I experience with the Lord. Thomas Merton speaks of the tragedy that our love cannot be enough for each other. The pain and loneliness of this human failure can become a door that opens to more of Jesus, the sufficient, acceptable measure for now. Enough until I reach the home the Lord has prepared for me. **DSM**

# His Lead, My Home

By Abbey Foard

A FEW YEARS AGO while still living in Atlanta GA, I became increasingly restless. I had lived in Atlanta over a decade; up until that point I felt assured that I was “where I was supposed to be.” I loved serving there alongside great friends /cohorts in life and ministry. These new feelings unsettled me and made me wonder why I no longer felt at home in the place I had, in faith, made my home many years before.

I began praying—*Lord, either you need to rekindle my vision and purpose for being here or I need you to make it clear that I should move.* For many months I heard nothing and my frustration grew. I wondered if I would have to live indefinitely in this restless place. Some deep relational losses and disappointments felt like the proverbial icing on the cake! I struggled to believe that God intended good for me, succumbing at times to feeling forgotten or overlooked in my areas of yearning. Where was my home?

After months of wrestling I finally heard a still small voice. The Lord spoke to my heart: *Abbey, you don't have all the information yet. Translation: Chill out girl! I AM faithful and I will tell you what you need to know when you need to know it.* Something in my heart settled. I was still craving the knowledge of what was next, but I finally felt an assurance that at the right time, God would reveal His plans and purposes. My part was to grow in faithfulness where I was, yet also to remain expectant for what was to come.

I can't say I walked perfectly through this season, but in those months my faith grew in unique ways. I rekindled love with the Lord that reminded me of my early faith walk—years where I was quick to move and operate in faith and obedience without too much attachment to things I had “built.” I began to trust afresh that the Lord had more for me and that He would lead me well. And at just the right time, He opened a wonderful new door at Desert Stream.

Having now spent just over a year in Kansas City (after 12 years in Atlanta), I have reflected on what makes a place “home.” I've realized that for me a sense of home comes in being true to God's plans and purposes for my life. Of course home is made more beautiful by the tangibles of houses and jobs and relationships but my truest home is the place of “being” in the center of Lord's will. I'm reminded of Jesus' words that His bread was to do the will of His Father who sent Him (Jn 4:34). In this way, my home is where He is and where He leads.

God often precedes transitions with a little bit of restlessness. He reminds us that our earthly “homes” (whether cities or buildings or jobs or some relationships) are only temporary. He positions us intentionally in each season, but then artfully and compassionately prepares us to root deeper in Him in seasons of external change. Restlessness alerts us to trust Him more than we trust the familiar

structures of our lives. We're invited afresh to be more rooted in Him than we are in our earthly attachments. Our roots go deeper into Jesus as we loosen our hold on anything that does not have eternal significance.

For me, my new home in Kansas City allows me to deepen roots in my true home—Jesus. Planted here, I've drawing upon deeper waters that are causing me to grow in Christ in new ways. As my soul grows in deeper fellowship with Him, a particular song by Jonas Park resonates for me:

## I Am Yours (First Love)

You are my first love, You are my only One.

Lord there is nothing else for me. Where else can I go? You have my heart alone.

You are the only home I need. **DSM**

# At Home, Alive

By Dean Greer

*I HAVE SET BEFORE you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live. (Deut 30:19)*

In spite of the good life God has given me, I found myself longing for home a few years ago. I was weary in doing well. Like Paul, I was longing for my heavenly dwelling (2 Cor 5:2); I remember praying: “This has been good enough, Lord. I am grateful for all you have done. If you want to take me home, it’s been a good run.” I wasn’t asking Him to end my life, but I was resigned if He did. The spirit of death was becoming my friend.

The spirit of death has often taken advantage of the HIV virus that infects my body. It attacks and threatens the hope I have. Through shame, self-hatred, sloth, or personal disqualification, the enemy knows my vulnerability and uses it to distract me from the life He has purposed for me. I am very aware that the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy (Jn 10:10). When I notice despair ‘calling’ me, I renounce the spirit of death and re-align myself with the Spirit of Life in me. Some days are better than others.

In 2014, I wound up in the hospital with a near-death episode of pneumonia; it was threatening to destroy my heart, literally. I remember one moment most clearly: a frantic episode when all of the ICU staff rushed to my room to tend to me. Death never came so close.

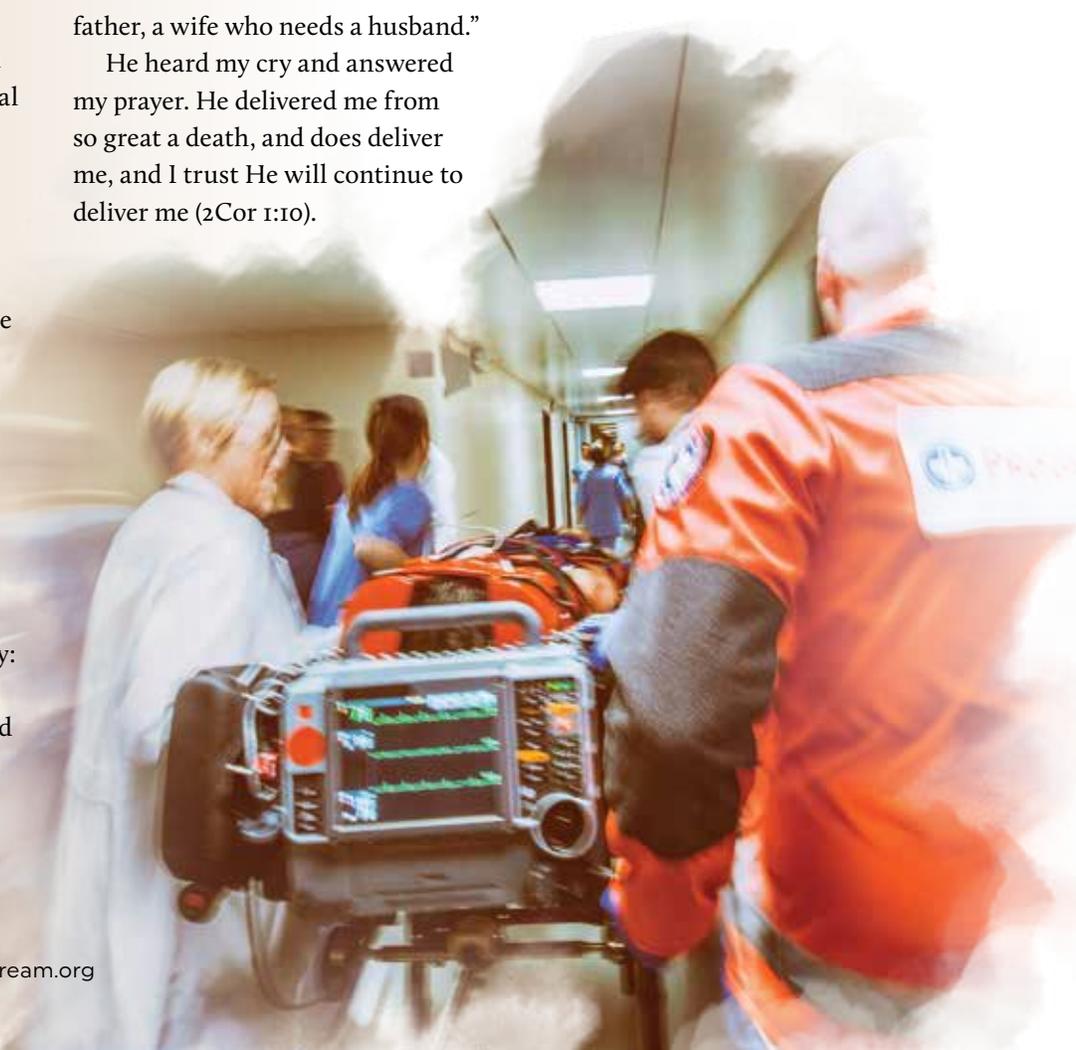
*God’s grace compels me to steward the gift of my life...I know He makes a way for His purpose to be fulfilled through me.*

In that moment, before the Lord, I fought for my life. “I’m not ready to go home; I have a home here that needs me. I have a son who needs a father, a wife who needs a husband.”

He heard my cry and answered my prayer. He delivered me from so great a death, and does deliver me, and I trust He will continue to deliver me (2Cor 1:10).

I’ve been grateful ever since. God’s grace compels me to steward the gift of my life. I know it is He who has given it. I know He gives it for a purpose. I know He makes a way for His purpose to be fulfilled through me.

I continue to seek His will for my life; I align myself to it. I continue to renounce the spirit of death and choose life. I’m aware that I was made for another home and my soul groans for that home. My time here is preparing me for the Home that awaits. Now I choose life so that I and my family might live! **DSM**



*How* lovely is your dwelling place,  
Lord Almighty!

*My* soul yearns, even faints,  
for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh cry out  
for the living God.

*Even* the sparrow has found a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may have her young—  
a place near your altar,  
Lord Almighty, my King and my God.

*Blessed* are those who dwell in your  
house; they are ever praising you.

*Blessed* are those whose strength is  
in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

*As* they pass through the Valley of Baka,  
they make it a place of springs; the  
autumn rains also cover it with pools.

*They* go from strength to strength,  
till each appears before God in Zion.

*Hear* my prayer, Lord God Almighty;  
listen to me, God of Jacob.

*Look* on our shield, O God;  
look with favor on your anointed one.

*Better* is one day in your courts  
than a thousand elsewhere;  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the  
house of my God than dwell in the tents  
of the wicked.

*For* the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
the Lord bestows favor and honor;  
no good thing does he withhold  
from those whose walk is blameless.

*Lord* Almighty,  
blessed is the one who trusts in you.

PSALM 84 NIV



# Corporate Corner

By Annette Comiskey

I HAVE LOOKED FORWARD to becoming a grandmother since I was sixteen-years-old. My niece, Christie, was born that year. I loved being an aunt more than anything else in my life until I married and had my own children. I could see the great benefit my mom had as a grandmother—all the love, none of the responsibilities. What could be better!

In 2015, I became a grandmother. It was not how I imagined. Our grandson, Luke, lived a very brief life. The grief of losing my beloved Luke was enormous. The heartache of seeing Nick and Meghan (son and daughter-in-law) grapple with the loss of their son was deeper than any sorrow I have ever faced.

I see my life as “before Luke” and “after Luke”. This doesn’t mean I live in a perpetual state of grief, but I understand how quickly life can change. Rather than the joy of seeing his life develop, I found comfort only in knowing Luke was in the arms of his eternal Father. Yet I still grieve that he is not in the arms of Nick and Meg.

I became a grandmother again twice this fall. On October 3rd, Nick and Meg had a little girl, Elizabeth. She lived two weeks longer than Luke but still went quickly into the arms of her Heavenly father. Too quickly. This has been a stunning loss of for our family. No couple should have to go to the hospital twice and come home each time with empty arms. This loss is a hard one to reconcile. The Lord could have given us life, but death won. I cling to the scripture “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor 13:12). I don’t understand why Elizabeth is gone but I know God to be good and true and I cling to that truth.

On October 18th my son Sam and his wife Chelsea had their first child, Jacob Andrew. The emotion I felt when I heard his first cry was overwhelming. I held Jacob a few hours after his birth. He is perfect (as are all grandchildren)! My tears of joy intermingled with tears of sadness for what we lost with our other two grandchildren.

Jacob’s birth does not cancel out the sorrow of death. I hold sorrow in one hand, pure delight in the other. It is easy for me to see how one son’s life as a father will proceed. For another son, I hold onto my faith in God. God alone can fill the loss and ease the sense of aloneness in our hearts. I am sorrowful, yet ever rejoicing (2Cor 6:10).

*“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Revelation 21:4*



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## Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

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