



September 14, 2026

May our thoughts and prayers be flowing to and for Margie Osborn and Jack Harnish as they are out of state with their siblings who are in the midst of significant health crises.

I am 'subbing' for Margie on this date and fortunately have the newsletter from Disciples Divinity House, University of Chicago, which Scrib receives due to his parent's long-time connections there. Scrib handed me the newsletter saying that the 2026 Convocation address by Thandiwe Dale-Ferguson might speak to me. It did and I pass it along to speak to you too. This is a longer Faith Matters than usual. Take a breath, take more than a moment to savor it and apply what you hear to yourself and to our St. Andrews community.

Matthew 6:25-34

"Roots and wings: The gifts of belonging

We are well acquainted with worry, but we belong to something larger than our fears. More of my worry than I'd like to admit is about the very things Jesus addresses in our pericope from the Sermon on the Mount: food and clothing.

...And then, of course, there's life to worry about. Safety, chores, rent, car maintenance, childcare costs, college savings.

Yes, worry and I know each other well. Sorry seems a natural response to ever-changing circumstances. To the many things I cannot control. To uncertainty. Whether you face the mundane unknowns of living life or the particular and profound uncertainties that a transition {such as graduation} brings, the reality is that uncertainty marks our lives.

Faith leader Cameron Trimble writes, "Modern society tells us that uncertainty is something we should fix. If we just work hard, save, invest wisely and make good choices we'll finally be safe...

But life doesn't work that way. Markets go up and down. Governments change, industries vanish... Storms happen." Institutions that were once the cornerstone of communities slowly disappear. We age. Relationships shift and end. History disrupts our plans.

In today's socio-political reality, what once felt like vague apprehensions have coalesced into certain and predictable uncertainty, decay, even collapse. What, we may wonder, will the

world look like in five years? Ten? Fifty? What will our country look like? The church? Our own lives? Those of our children, the next generation to whom we are collectively responsible?

Trimble points us to the wisdom of the mystics, the prophets, and Jesus. “They didn’t find a way to avoid uncertainty. Instead, they found something deeper to rely on,” she writes. When Jesus says do not worry about your life, he reminds his listeners that life is fleeting. Nothing lasts forever. Change happens. Uncertainty is guaranteed. He invites his listeners to find something deeper to rely on.

Thankfully, we need not venture far for evidence of the something deeper to rely on; we need not look far to see that we belong to something larger than our fears. Look at the birds of the air. Consider the lilies of the field. Pause. Breathe. Attend to the attestation of creation. If God so feeds the birds if God so clothes the lilies, have faith, for like these winged and rooted siblings, you too belong.

The question of belonging has long been a salient one for me. My earliest memories encompass the rolling hills of KwaZulu Natal, the smell of the cookfire in my best friend Thembi’s kitchen, the sound of Zulu, like a spoken song. The place was my home, yet I was an obvious outsider: a wealthy, white, Western child living illegally in rural South Africa at the height of apartheid.

When I was six, my family moved to small-town New Hampshire where, suddenly, I looked the part of an insider. I learned to bury the many pieces that betrayed my unbelonging; my name, my fluency in Zulu, the pieces of my culture that I didn’t get from my parents. I got good at fitting in.

“Fitting in,” explains social scientist Brene Brown, “is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be in order to be accepted. Belonging, on the other hand, does not require us to change who we are; it requires us to be who we are.”

Look at the birds of the air. Consider the lilies of the field. They do not seek to be any more or any less than exactly what they are. They live their belonging.

One of the gifts of this place, the Disciples Divinity House, is the invitation to cultivate and experience belonging: to explore, to discover, to be exactly who we are. My first memory of the House is from thirty-two years ago at its centennial celebration. I remember a giant bowl of strawberries and singing Siyahamba at the chapel service. It was a song I’d sung countless times in South Africa, and the words still tasted like home. In that moment, as I sang a familiar tune in my other mother tongue, I felt not only belonging in this place but an assurance of my belonging in and with and to the Divine.

Graduates, of all the things you’ve learned and of all the gifts you take with you from this place, the gifts of belonging are perhaps the most important. You belong to this community, to one another - a learning you’ve cultivated as you’ve shared bathrooms, cooked and cleaned in the kitchen, worked and studied, worshiped and played, celebrated and grieved, navigated conflict and reconciliation, breach and repair.

Because the truth is, learning to belong in a community such as this one teaches us the deeper truths: that we all belong to each other, that we belong to creation and Creator. This mutual belonging that blesses the space among us has the power to transform us, our communities and, indeed, our world.

Brene Brown writes, “As it turns out, those who have the deepest sense of true belonging are people who also have the courage to stand alone when called to do that. They are willing to maintain their integrity and risk disconnection in order to stand up for what they believe in.”

Belonging roots us in who we are, in where we come from, in the people and communities that have shaped and formed us, in connection to creation and Creator. And, belonging gives us wings - the courage to pursue righteousness, to practice right relationship, to sow justice, and to cultivate God’s beloved community. May it be so. Amen.”

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