

## Think Small

Since the beginning, I have longed to see small-group Bible studies flourish in our chapter at DePaul. Small groups foster community, spiritual growth, and student leadership in unique ways, especially giving new students more opportunities to connect with student leaders. This fall, we have modified our weekly worship meeting format to include small-group Bible studies (as opposed to a whole-group teaching) and we are enjoying fruit from this change! The student leaders are being stretched by leading discussions each week, and a sense of community is developing in a deeper way than we have seen in the past.

## WinterFest & Alums

Our annual training conference, Winterfest, is coming up in February. I am directing a course (or "track," as we call them) that was launched two years ago, "Transforming Power." In this track, we teach Bible study skills while focusing on the topic of social power and justice. I am very thankful to be working with a top-notch staff team to redesign some aspects of the track. We have some terrific ideas brewing, and I'm excited to see how they'll take shape.

On another note, any InterVarsity alums who would like to reconnect with each other should consider attending our Chicagoland InterVarsity Alumni Reunion on the Saturday of Winterfest, February 19, beginning at 1:30, at the Hyatt in Oakbrook. The cost is \$15, and dinner is provided. You can sign up at [www.ivchicago.org](http://www.ivchicago.org), or feel free to contact me with any questions.



We had lots of fun hosting a backyard barbecue for Jon's birthday. Here I am with dear friends Kriss Marion and Linc Abbey.

## Shelf Life

### Book Notes from Ann

*Let Your Life Speak*, by Parker Palmer

The more I read by Parker Palmer, the more I enjoy him. This book is focused on the topic of vocation and the question, What kind of life work have I been created to do?

Palmer himself struggled for years to discover his vocation. He describes the conflict between his convictions about what he thought he should do (in his case, community organization) and what he was really gifted to do (in his case, teaching). He shares his struggle with depression that arose out of his vocational crisis and the way he found ways out of that struggle. He offers wise thoughts about leadership and the inner strength and self-understanding that is needed to lead well.

It was a gift to read his refreshingly authentic story and to absorb the excellent questions he poses to help the reader consider his or her own vocation.

## Boyd's Eye View

This autumn has been full of both joy and sorrow in the Boyd household. Jon and I were looking forward to announcing, in this very issue of the Ann-a-Gram, our expectation of a new baby. But unfortunately we had a miscarriage in late October — eleven weeks along in the pregnancy. We knew this was a possibility, as 25% of all pregnancies end in miscarriage, but it was still a shock and a disappointment. During this sad time, we have been blessed to receive an abundance of love and support

from our many family and friends. The outpouring of calls and cards and flowers and prayers has been an obvious sign of God's care for us. We feel so thankful for his provision in our lives of a loving, caring community. And we feel thankful for the hope there is for the future.

## Prayer Requests

Please pray:

- for spiritual and physical rest and replenishment for DePaul students this winter break
- for continued growth and development of DePaul small groups
- for the track revision process for "Transforming Power"
- for God's comfort, hope, and joy through this season of waiting

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Extra! Extra!

## Waiting in Joyful Hope

This autumn has been full of waiting for me: waiting to find out if we were pregnant, waiting to tell our families the news, waiting to see if we'd make it past the first trimester (when the risk of miscarriage drops sharply) — and now waiting to start the process over again.

I am finding waiting to be extremely difficult. This probably means that I'm learning something. I wish I could hurry up and learn it so I could stop waiting so much!

Waiting feels like a passive process, which is very difficult for someone who likes to have some control in life. It is often a confrontation with my own powerlessness. I cannot make time pass any faster. So what would God have me do during a time of waiting? Here are a few things that God has been teaching me about this.

1. Enjoy yourself. Time moves interminably slowly while you are waiting. God has things around us to learn and to receive while we are waiting. Just as in Advent, we wait for Jesus and prepare our hearts for his coming, we can use the waiting time to grow and develop. I've been trying to get back to my swimming and healthy eating plan in order to keep my body healthy. I've also found that working on a few more challenging knitting projects is giving me engaging ways to develop this skill. All the while I'm looking for God's activity in my life and watching for gifts he has for me along the way, notably in my InterVarsity ministry.

2. Practice thankfulness. Early on in the pregnancy, I was wrestling with anxiety. Would this baby develop normally? Would I have a miscarriage? One day in church, I had an

inspired thought: I need to just be thankful every day that I am pregnant, to give thanks to God who is doing amazing things in my body.

Right now, I can be thankful each day that there is no reason not to expect that we can get pregnant again and have a healthy baby. But beyond babies, I can be thankful for so many things in my life: good health, a wonderful husband, loving family and friends, a cozy house, challenging work, and many other things. All these are gifts from a very, very good God.

3. Risk hoping. Having hope is often scary because there is the risk of disappointment. But cutting oneself off from hope is just a defense mechanism — it doesn't really help the situation, and it is not any more real. So if I want to be authentic and live in reality, it is good for me to hope. Even in the most bleak situations, there is hope. This is a core truth of our faith: that God gives new life out of death, which we can see especially in the resurrection of Jesus. Praise be to our God who has life-giving power in the midst of life-draining circumstances.

This Advent, may you wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

For Christ & the University —

*Ann*

P.S. I hope you'll fill out the enclosed, once-a-year reply card to give me some useful info.

And as always, there's more online at [www.annagram.org](http://www.annagram.org). This issue's Web Extras: Lectio Divina and a recipe for Cranberry Pumpkin Bread.