

# Passing the Sacrament in My In-Laws' Garage

by Lance Larsen (professor, English)

I wear a paper mask, Jacqui a festive Aloha mask, and ten feet away, a card table between us, sit her parents, both in their nineties, maskless. Too hard to explain to them the what and why of the wearing, and we're listening to "All Creatures of Our God and King" on Jacqui's phone. To keep Covid at bay we use the garage to bow our heads and lift Jesus to our mouths. I close the garage door for privacy and open the back door to coax a breeze playing hard to get. This is the eucharist, with me preparing bread and water, me kneeling on concrete, and me passing to a congregation of three, then taking a scrap myself. The garbage can, big as a witch's cauldron, squats behind my left shoulder, shovels and rakes line the wall like saints, and three boxes of slug bait on the shelf haven't killed anything, with or without bones, since before 9-11. Dementia and pandemic are the twin enemies. Whole countries have evaporated from my in-laws' memories, goodbye Thailand,

so long Peru, also farewell to continental drift and Bay of Pigs and the faces of three adult grandchildren who visited at New Year's. No more Harriet Tubman or Ruth Bader Ginsberg, though Fred Astaire still kindles something—wait, wasn't he a general? Jesus, though, is still here, not homemade or Wonder but a torn English muffin, and soon he'll be four trickles of water in Dixie cups. And He is summer solstice, our longest day and shortest night, and He is robin and finch and sometimes a Steller's jay ricocheting tree to tree. And He is the hoe that can chop weeds till sunset, and this sweet tangle of silver-white lights we'll drape over the flocked tree come Christmas. Monkey wrench and vice grips, Selah, tape measure and twine, Selah. And He is the dusty blue cruiser bike, tires still good, hanging from the rafters, ready at any instant to ferry us to the next life. Till then, we bow our heads to this glorious broken now and we ask and we ask and we ask.



Photo: David John Arnett (Advertising '25)