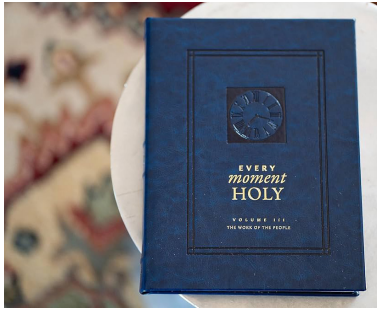




a publication of kirk irwin and sarah kennedy irwin in ministry with Cru and partnering with Friday Arts Project

AUGUST 2024

## Forum 2024



Through my tending of living, growing things, let me offer those who dwell nearby refreshing glimpses of beauty rather than of clutter and decay, of harmony rather than disorder, and of attentive care rather than long neglect.

—Douglas McKelvey, from A Liturgy for Yard Work, *Every Moment Holy, Volume 3*

In April we hosted a weekend forum at the crossroads of art and the environment. We called it *Birdsong Like a Canopy*. We had not done a forum since 2014 when we first moved here. We were not sure how it would go with all the changes that have happened in the past ten years related to our own lives, our community, and even the greater culture (think “post pandemic”). So, there was a measure of risk in pulling it off.

You might wonder, why host such a potentially divisive subject as the environment? People tend to fall mainly into two groups. Those that think there is no question humans are destroying the earth. While others have serious questions about that very conclusion.

Wherever one falls on the question of the environment, there is no question that we all live on the same planet. Additionally, as Bible-believers we know God placed our first parents in a garden to tend and keep it. God has much to say about gardening and cultivating ground. When I lived in NYC, I would hear Tim Keller make the statement, “God started in a Garden, but will end in a City.” Not long after this first quote, he adjusted it, “God started in a Garden, but will end in a Garden-City”. A proper adjustment.

Jesus died on a tree, so that we—by His sacrifice—may have access to the Tree of Life in the New Heaven and the New Earth. One of Sarah’s favorite images in the book of Revelation is chapter 22 where John saw...

...the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

By inviting attendees into the conversation to consider the place of Beauty and art it created a “disarming” context—allowing us to trust God’s Spirit to work. Three of the four main speakers were followers of Jesus. I had talked to each of them about the conference—about how our opportunity to represent Christ to both believers and non was unique. They did not disappoint.

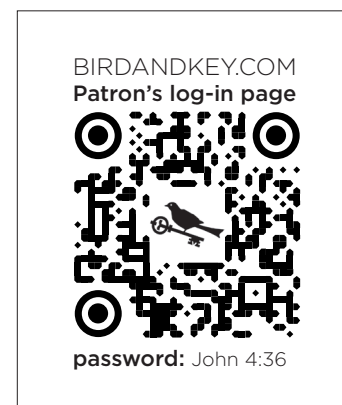
One of my favorite moments was at the end of Wesley Vander Lugt’s (<https://www.wesleyvanderlugt.com>) talk on the importance of Beauty/Art sourced in the transcendent in how we view and treat our world. During Q&A one of the most significant interaction was with a new “transplant” to Rock Hill. I don’t think he is a believer, but he was quite stirred by Wesley’s talk and had good questions—he was really thinking about the content. Pray that we continue to have favorable interactions with this new neighbor, as he is aware that we are Christians.

Though there were no dramatic conversions, there were stories of small ways God is working. The forum helped build even deeper relationships and connections with our fellow Rock Hillians for which we are grateful to God. ■

Blessings—

### Please Pray

- » Pray the prayer with us that we try to pray before every event, “Jesus, help us be a part of someone’s next step toward you.”
- » Sarah is painting more, which was a goal with her recent Cru staff status change. Pray she finishes soon a series she is in the middle of and is able to exhibit it or even find a gallery to represent her. To view some of her work, go to [www.artchickee.com](http://www.artchickee.com)
- » Please pray that God would continue to provide for our financial support in the recent loss of the monthly support of our church. We dearly love this worthwhile ministry. If you know someone who would appreciate what we do please share our info with them.



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