

Connecting

By [Martha Spong](#)

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"I'm having a wardrobe crisis!"

"It's just a retreat," answered my sensible wife. "Saturday morning casual. How would you usually dress for a retreat?"

"Usually I would be the pastor," I replied.

This was different. Today I was both the new girl and the pastor's wife. What to wear? Who to be?

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. (1 Cor 12:14, NRSV)

It seems this body consists of many members, and keeping track of which one goes on retreat is only one of the complex calculations of my new life. The room is full of women, mostly from the church but some from the surrounding area, many of whom I've met but many not, even a few who have invited us to their homes for delicious dinners, or "friended" me on Facebook. One even helped unpack my great-grandmother's china.

But many have no idea who I am. And some might rather not know, and I can't be sure who they are. So I do what I do, what I learned to do when I was a little girl. I introduce myself to people and hope that's enough. I put out my little hand, and I look them in the eye and say, "I'm Martha Spong."

It's a new, weird thing. I suspect if I had married a male pastor, I would be telling people readily, "I'm Pastor KJ's wife." But there's no need to throw out Molotov Cocktails with people who may be uneasy. That's what I tell myself.

I felt this way until I met someone who was even more new than I am, maybe not by the dates on the calendar (she has lived her a few months longer) but by her association with the church. After all, I've helped lead worship (August, 2011) and attended a church picnic and taken two study leave weeks in the office! I know where the super-secret bathrooms are. At the other end of the table is a woman who

doesn't know anyone yet, and as we talk on the retreat about how friendship means taking risks and doing things that might feel uncomfortable for the sake of the other person, I get my bearings. I introduce myself. Her story spills out, and there are commonalities, so I respond with a fragment of mine, and then I take the risk. I say, "Do you know the Senior Pastor?" There is a slight nod. "I'm her partner, and I just moved here, too."

I have her cell phone number. I'm going to call her soon so we can have coffee and talk about being new in town.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. (1 Cor 12:27-31)

I may not be the pastor, and I may be the new girl, and I may not feel 100% comfortable saying I'm kathrynzj's wife in that space, but I am Martha, a follower of Jesus, and part of my calling as a faithful person is connecting.

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