

Tapestry Art Exhibit  
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## *Waves: A Story of Everyday Life*

In August of 2022 I began to weave small tapestries to depict the difficult waves of circumstance and emotions surrounding having placed my mom in a Memory Care Community. There were many unsettling things about her new living situation that my family and I had to work through and continue to do so. Even before these adjustments, just the fact that I was losing who I had previously known my mom to be, created wave after wave of hardship and difficulty. I began to realize that the wave of Alzheimer's was not likely to go away any time soon. In fact, there would likely be many more years of difficult circumstances to navigate. I had to find a way to be with this wave, to live within the impact of it in my life, to somehow accept this new reality.

I asked myself a series of questions in moments of quiet and contemplation. What does the wave feel like at the moment? What color is it? How big is it? What color is the ocean in which it lives? Where am I in relation to the wave? Am I about to drown within its vortex? Am I a ways off, seeing it rushing toward me? Am I riding on the crest of the wave? I started to sketch these out in very simple shapes with an idea to weave very small tapestries depicting each iteration of the wave's presence in my day to day world. Through this practice I had several realizations and discoveries about the nature of the waves in my life.

One realization was that the wave was made of the same stuff as the ocean in which it exists. I have for many years felt that the love of God is indeed a vast ocean whose width and breadth, height and depth I cannot fathom. If these waves are somehow mysteriously made up of His ocean, then I could view what I was experiencing as somehow part of that Love. At the very least, my mom's journey into Alzheimer's was not purely a random fluke or sinister evil. Though I am not calling this wave "good", I do recognize it as part of a vaster, broader expanse of love, mercy and goodness in which God is at work to redeem all things.

Another realization came after having woven several of the little tapestries. I began to see the shape of a wave as a hand. There was a quality of this wave shape that echoed a cradle, and this comforted me to think that even in the worst place of feeling I might drown within this wave, God was actually holding me, carrying me through my days.

And finally, I realized that the shape of these waves was reminiscent of the bow or stern of a boat. This idea that the waves form a boat, spoke to me of the truth that we are all in this Wave-boat together. Not everyone is walking the path of Alzheimer's with a loved one. But we all experience waves of one kind or another. We can offer kindness to one another even as we offer kindness to ourselves as we navigate the challenges that our respective waves present.

The practice of creativity in my life, allows me to engage the difficult waves of life with a bit more openness and curiosity than I would otherwise. I offer you the same ability to do this with the waves you are encountering in your daily life. Here's a simple way to be with the wave and its ever-changing nature.



On a piece of paper, draw a square (or print off a sheet of them) and within that square, draw a wave shape. This doesn't have to be precise at all. As you draw the wave, consider how large or small it is within the space of the square.

Then draw the rest of the ocean and place the horizon line where you think it should be. Now draw a circle to denote yourself, placing the circle wherever you are in relation to the wave at this moment. You are only sketching this particular wave image according to how you are experiencing it in THIS moment. You can always draw other wave sketches later in the day, or at another time when things have changed and shifted.

Using some colored pencils or crayons, add color according to how each part of your drawing feels in this moment. What color is the wave? Is it dark and broody? Or is it a bit lighter color, or made up of a variety of colors? What color is the ocean? Is it the same as the wave? And what color are you? Is all the color drained out of you? Is there a bit of life still there? Or are you sunburnt from too much exposure to the elements? Continue with the sky color until the whole square is filled in.

You might even keep these in a sketchbook or journal, writing about each one of them. You too may have realizations that help you in your day to day living and working through the waves. May God have mercy on us all as we navigate the troubled waters of life together.

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I am honored that a beautiful piece of piano music was written and performed by Michael Kuehn. He wrote it in response to my sharing with our Almond Tree Artist Collective group, how I imagined my mom's memories folding and unfolding throughout the day, and from day to day. Please listen here to:

*The Folded Ribbons of Time*  
By Michael Kuehn

