As I fell asleep one night, I had a dream.

In the late afternoon sunlight streaming into the high clerestory windows of the arched sanctuary, I saw more than two hundred of my friends and neighbours and some invited guests all around me in this light, airy church, all singing in parts as the Abendmusik choir led us in a congregational song, accompanied by an eight-piece ensemble.

After the concert, we moved out of the sanctuary and across the lobby of a sparkling new complex to a refectory where several of the sixty tables had been pushed aside to create mingling space for the crowd as coffee, tea and goodies were served from the gleaming stainless steel of a new cafeteria servery. Behind, the large commercial kitchen was dark, but the new dishroom was lit up, with one student volunteer turning on the dish sterilizer, ready to clean and put away the several hundred dishes in a matter of fifteen minutes.

I turned around in wonder at the smooth, linear architecture and huge windows of this refectory looking out on three sides at the grounds and buildings of this complex. I understood three hundred people lived here - students and seniors, young couples and families starting out, singles and mission workers, all in relationship with each other and in homage to Christ.

I saw some of the elders and students crowd around the resident Chaplain/Mentor who stood with a new visitor staying for a week in the residence while he attended a conference at UBC and Regent to present a paper and hear other theologians from around the world. He was a tall, young African from Cote d’Ivoire, and was struggling to make himself understood in English, as the Chaplain/Mentor tried her best to translate his French for him.
This certainly was a large complex! Yes, over there in that six-storey building with balconies and large windows sat someone I recognized - sitting in his wheelchair on his third-floor balcony. I made a mental note to ask him why he had not attended the concert, but I knew he probably missed his wife who had passed on recently, whose stellar voice had graced many church services at PGIMF. I suspected the resident Chaplain/Mentor had already visited him. There were fifty-four units in that building, all spacious and roomy two-bedroom-and-dens of about 1300 square feet with large bathrooms that could be converted over a weekend into a serviceable handicapped-access washroom, ceiling lifts, full kitchens and medicalert systems.

Turning slightly, I recognized another resident of that building near me - husband and wife with their granddaughter who was staying with them that weekend. They were speaking to one of the resident Licence Practical Nurses/Care Coordinators who visited all the intermediate care and extended care patients in the building one or more times a day. Their conversation was about the need to increase the level of care for one of them as their doctor had just placed one of them on a waiting list for surgery for severe angina that the Nurse had noted one day in conversation with one of them. I saw the nurse wave to someone who was just leaving the building - a cleaning and care attendant hired from an outside company to clean and care for residents who were unable to do it all for themselves.

Two young people ran up to me laughing and told me the latest joke. They were students at Regent and UBC staying in the 40-room student residence on the other side of the refectory. I turned round to speak to the students and saw the building out of the corner of my eye - a three-storey block with 40 rooms and common areas on the ground floor. I could see several lights on in there, and I asked the students who was still over there. They explained that some of the students were setting up for video night - many guests were expected from other colleges for a double screening and they were going to have a celebration potluck barbeque first out in the courtyard. I asked if the guest from Cote d’Ivoire was invited too, and they replied he was the main reason they were having such a big event. I wished them well and moved on.

Over in the corner were friends who had just had their new baby - their third. I went over to speak to them, and they invited me back to their place. The building was four storeys tall, with two-level townhomes up and down, six to a block, separated by pathways and greenspace. Kids toys sat in some yards, but the pathways were clear. They had just moved in a few months ago and had not decorated much yet, but their upper townhome was bright and pleasant. The family showed me the large bedrooms for each of the older kids, the den that they were going to convert to a room for the baby in a few years, the 2 ½ bathrooms and the balcony, from which I could see the
common areas with children’s climbing equipment, and a little further, the complex garden in which flowers and the first few vegetables were sprouting. I followed them into the kitchen and was surprised. Despite how compact it was, how much room it had for two to prepare food while others sat at the table. I asked if they could hear their neighbours on either side, or downstairs, and they replied they hadn’t heard a thing - the double walls and concrete construction was very quiet. They asked when they could get one of the 100 underground parking spots, and I replied they were still a ways down the list.

I walked back out of the townhome by way of the garden and play area to kick a ball with some of the teenagers who lived in the complex. One asked how old Mr. Epp was doing - he was in the hallway with the nurse that night when Mr. Epp’s medicAlert went off signalling something was wrong. I replied “Why don’t you go and see him for yourself - he knows you.” The teen replied that he would, and I moved on.

I paused and looked at the last building - the smaller six-storey tower and saw one of my friends coming out. He had a one-bedroom and den on the top floor with a grand view of the ocean. I asked where he was going and he replied he was walking up to the main street and along a few blocks to do his weekly shopping. We agreed to meet later in the week after the bible study we both attended, and he accompanied me back to the refectory, where the afternoon’s gathering was just breaking up. Outside the main lobby and church the street was full of cars departing, until a few minutes later, the street was quiet, except for a student sitting on the front steps of the dorm and a group of senior talking outside the front door of their building.

I sat, and pondered the meaning of my dream...