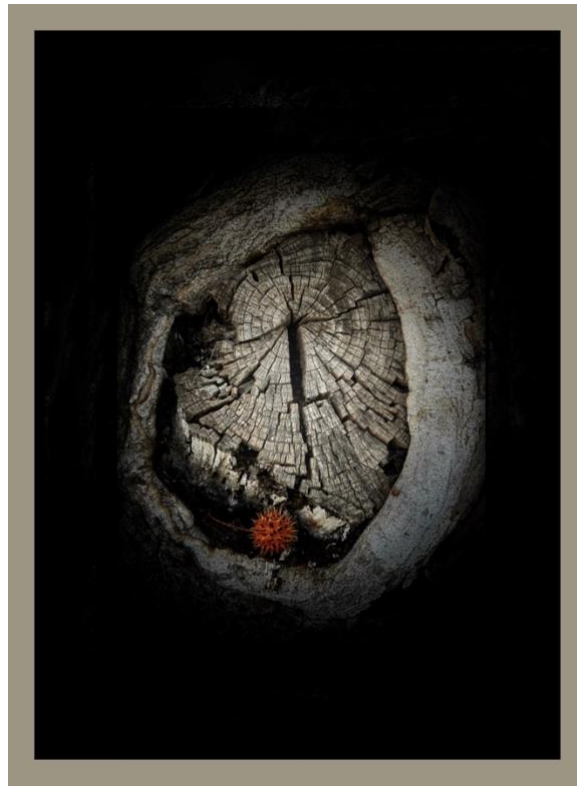


The Old Branch and The Seedpod



1.

On my morning walk I came across a prickly sweetgum seedpod that had landed in the cradle of a sawn-off branch, its rings of years circling and cracked.

The moment spawned a haiku.

As is my practice, I started finger tapping. Words.
Syllables. Feelings. Ideas.

Today they went to a question that has been working me for a few years: *How to elder better?*

2.

Around me this morning the fires of Los Angeles were burning. Not in their direct line, I caught whiffs of smoke that would come and go.

Around us this morning our world is burning. Not in their direct line, whiffs of suffering never stop swirling.

3.

Small confessions.

I often feel inadequate, like I should have some clarity or advice or somehow should be one step ahead of where all this burning rages.

I suffer Barking Dog Syndrome: The feeling of always arriving just after the car has passed.

Noisy and useless.

4.

When walking and trying to grasp an emerging poem – not quite here, not quite right, not quite whole – I do not have the luxury of sitting quietly with pencil and blank watercolor paper, my preferred haiku approach.

At some point on my walks the finger tapping coheres.

Today, the seedpod, sawed off branches, and old trees led me back to my question.

*eldering better?
maybe start with the braiding
of seeds and shelter*

5.

At a red-light crosswalk, I pulled out my phone.

Last year I found a haiku phone-app, my emergency kit for not losing a newly arriving poem.

Even my luddite self likes this app because at each opening it offers a new haiku from another poet.

Every so often, the ancestor poet, my present moment, and my finger-tapping have an unexpected meeting.

Today was such a day.

On the app a Japanese master arrived, translator and source unknown.

*see: surviving sons
visit the ancestral grave
bearded, with bent canes*

Matsuo Basho

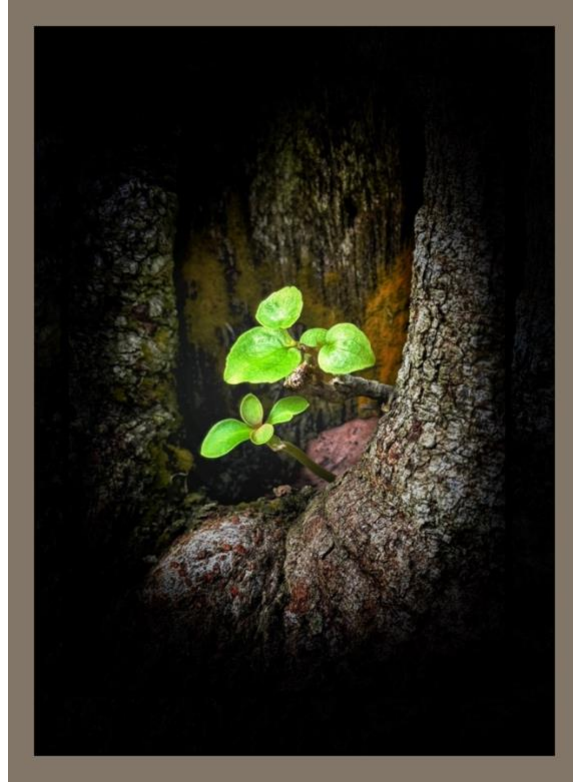
6.

We need prickly seedpods and old branches to hang together.

Advice for 2025 and our burning grounds.

If you can, find your way to cross-generational seeding and sheltering – the infinite pathway stitching past and future.

With time it's rarely clear which is seed and which shelter.



john paul lederach
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Old Towne Orange, CA

Inspired in part by the courage of youth and
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