

YEAR C ADVENT
DEVOTIONAL

DRAW NEAR

*Art & reflections to
draw near to God in
the season of Advent*



a Sanctified Art
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DRAW NEAR

YEAR C ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



A Sanctified Art LLC is a collective of artists in ministry who create resources for worshiping communities. The Sanctified Art team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God.

Learn more about their work at sanctifiedart.org.



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If you listen closely,
you just might hear
the sun whispering,
“Draw near, draw near,”
to flowers below
that straighten their spines
and stretch their faces
toward the light.

And like that light,
which falls to the earth
and covers us
in a blanket of warmth,
I see God
leaning toward me,
inviting my heart
and beckoning my feet,
leaning down
like a potter to clay,
a mother to a crib
or a child to pray—

Saying, “Child, my child,
draw near to me.
Draw near to truth
and wonder and peace.”

For in my bones,
I believe
that in the beginning
God came to me.
And just like the sun,
which day after day,
invites the flowers
to stand and change,
if you listen closely,
you just might hear
God say to you,
“Draw near, draw near.”



This Advent, let us draw near to the One who leans down
to earth to beckon us closer. May this devotional be your
guide as you respond to God’s invitation to “Draw near,
draw near.”

Artfully yours,

The Sanctified Art Creative Team

Lisle Gwynn Garrity
Sarah Are
Hannah Garrity
Lauren Wright Pittman



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DRAW NEAR TO WONDER

Carve out space for intentional Sabbath today. Contemplate the following prayer as part of your Sabbath practice.

I wonder if the earth is waiting for a Messiah like I am—
Trees bending toward love,
fireflies keeping a promise to be light,
the moon returning over and over again
with hope that the world will look differently
this time.

I wonder if I'll ever really know when it happens—
Those moments when God is in my midst.
Those all the time,
everywhere,
rare kind of moments that I'm terrible at
trusting but know like a rainstorm.

I wonder, because I am human.
I wonder, because *not* wondering leaves me stuck.
And I cannot be stuck in a world
that separates children from parents,
women from their bodies,
and men from their emotions.

So I wonder.
Will the stars ever fall?
Will I see you face to face, and you see me?
Will the moon come back tonight and sigh, saying,
“Ah yes. I can see that God is here. This is what
I've been waiting for.”

Prayer by Sarah Are





Raise Your Head | Lauren Wright Pittman

READ Luke 21:25-36

FROM THE ARTIST | Lauren Wright Pittman

In the past, I have met this text and spiraled out in my own grief and anxiety. Previously in my reading, these apocalyptic signs pointed to my own smallness, fragility, and mortality, stirring up fear and confusion. This year, however, for me these signs boldly point to the unfathomable, overwhelming greatness of God. This text feels massive, and it invites us into this Advent season in a thundering fashion.

Jesus says to respond to these apocalyptic signs with staggering hope and confidence. When it feels like the very foundations of the heavens are crumbling, we are to stand up. When the roaring sea and the waves confuse us, when the sun, moon and stars come tumbling out of the sky, we are to raise our heads. When the news cycle feels like an endless fire hose, people pour into the streets in protest, families are separated, and fires blaze through neighborhoods, we are to stand up and confidently usher in and claim the redemption that God promises.

Just as the trees signal the changing of the seasons, these signs will prepare us for the coming of Christ. Instead of getting lost in the worries of this life, stand up, raise your head, and get lost in the fact that this expansive, infinite God is drawing near to you. Choose to get lost in wonder.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Imagine placing yourself in this scene. What do you see? How do you feel? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Your Winding Ways | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

READ *Psalm 25:1-10*

FROM THE ARTIST | *Lisle Gwynn Garrity*

Recently, on a trip to Colorado, I got to visit the Garden of the Gods, a public park with rock formations that jut up like the sail of a spinosaurus against a backdrop of desert plains. Each sandstone tower appears frozen in time, as if the soft blanket of the earth simply peeled away to expose the red rock underneath. Walking through the park was like navigating a maze. The path led us through turn after turn, spitting us out into each unique corner of the park where we'd glimpse yet a new sandcastle formation. At each viewpoint we could only see part of the whole. There was no open vista to gaze upon the entirety of the rock formations at once. Most of the time, we were trapped in the belly of the park, lured onward by the curve of the path ahead.

Reflecting on that experience reminds me of the journey of discernment and what it feels like to step forward when you only have the perspective of what's right in front of you. When in a season of uncertainty, we are so desperate for the bigger picture, for clarity, for answers. And yet, it's only in retrospect that we can see how all of the pieces fit together.

The psalmist's words read like a prayer for discernment: "Make your ways known to me . . . Lead me in your truth . . . All the Lord's paths are loving and faithful." May these words become a mantra for each of us when we too are stuck in the labyrinth of life.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

In quiet contemplation, color in the page on the left, reflecting on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement. Conclude with a silent or spoken prayer to God.

[illegible]

[illegible]



Child in Safety | Hannah Garrity

READ *Jeremiah 33:14-16*

FROM THE ARTIST | *Hannah Garrity*

Why do we feel unsafe? The fear of being unsafe is such a huge emotion. It causes us to fight, fly, and freeze. Needing safety is an instinct. It is natural in each of us. It seems that our initial human attempt to create safety is to build gates, walls, and fences. These things give us a sense of security. However, biblical stories suggest that breaking down barriers, bringing down walls, and humanizing the other are actually the way to develop safety among humans.

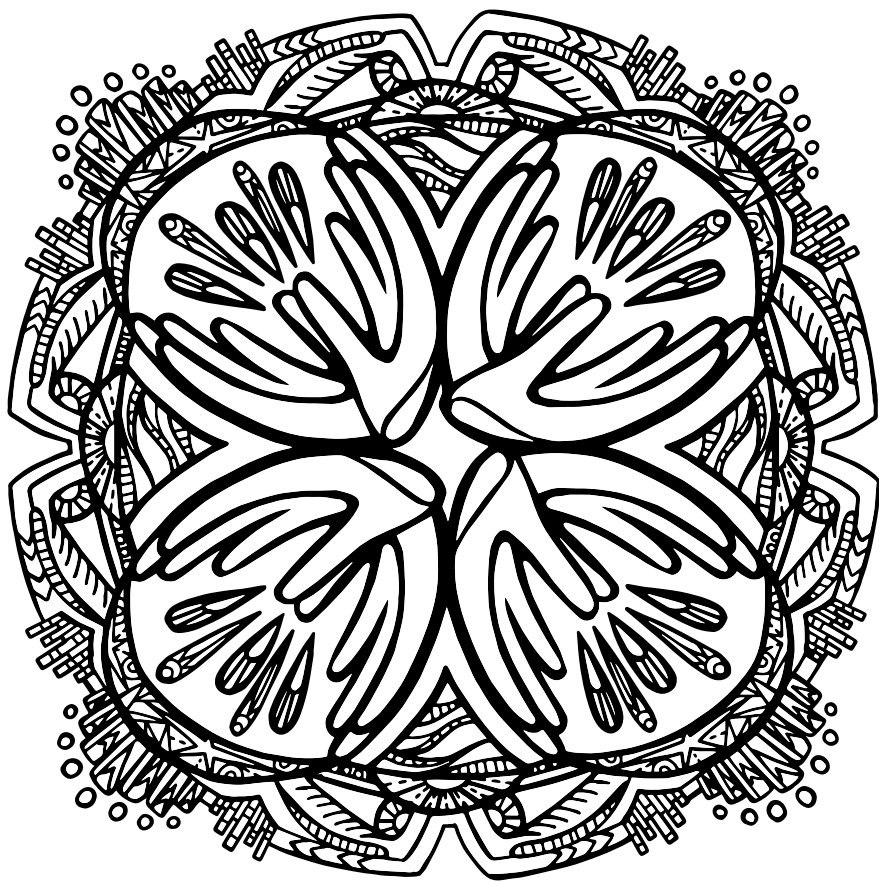
Safety is a mindset. If I expect to feel safe in the company of others, I am likely to build relationships. If I expect to feel unsafe, my fear may turn into judgment. If I dehumanize another, I increase the likelihood that a gulf will remain between us.

When I imagine safety visually, I think of the Madonna and Child pose. As children we receive comfort from the act of embrace. This comfort comes from a beloved adult. In this image, however, the simple movement surrounding the child symbolizes both the embrace of his mother and the embrace of community.

Painted in acrylic over pen on paper, the face of baby Jesus is wrapped in love and safety, concurrently emanating love and safety. In the love of God, we find the strength to overcome our fear of being unsafe. Through faith, we garner the strength to create spaces of safety through love.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Imagine placing yourself in this scene. What do you see? How do you feel? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Abound in Love | Lauren Wright Pittman

READ 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

FROM THE ARTIST | Lauren Wright Pittman

Paul's gratitude is wonderfully palpable in this letter. How can we thank God enough? I can almost see the smile on his face when I read these words. I find that when I return to gratitude, gratitude creates space in my heart, my mind, and my worldview for hope, and casts away the anxiety that often rules my life. It almost feels as though gratitude carves out physical space for me to breathe more easily when the world feels so heavy on my chest. Gratitude creates a home for hope to flourish. The hope of this letter is a restorative, active, forward-leaning hope. Paul writes with electric gratitude to the Thessalonians, hopeful that they will increase and abound in love for one another and for all. When I have enough space in my mind and heart, I hope for that too. The world is so daunting and overwhelming at times that it causes me to lose faith in humanity all together. But when I remember this amazing life and this astounding creation that God has gifted us, I have space for that radical hope, the hope that we would abound in love for ALL.

In this Advent season, let us return to gratitude and allow it to fill the nooks and crannies of our full selves and create space for a radical, restorative, active, forward-leaning hope.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

In quiet contemplation, color in the page on the left, reflecting on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement. Conclude with a silent or spoken prayer to God.

DAY 7



Action Prompt

DRAW NEAR TO WONDER

Go for a walk or spend some time outdoors, observing your surroundings with a sense of awe. Collect small items you find that hold beauty or wonder (such as a leaf, stick, stone, flower, etc.) and marvel over how they were made.



DRAW!

*In the space below, draw or doodle an image of wonder.
What does it look like to draw near to wonder?*



DRAW NEAR TO TRUTH

Carve out space for intentional Sabbath today. Contemplate the following prayer as part of your Sabbath practice.

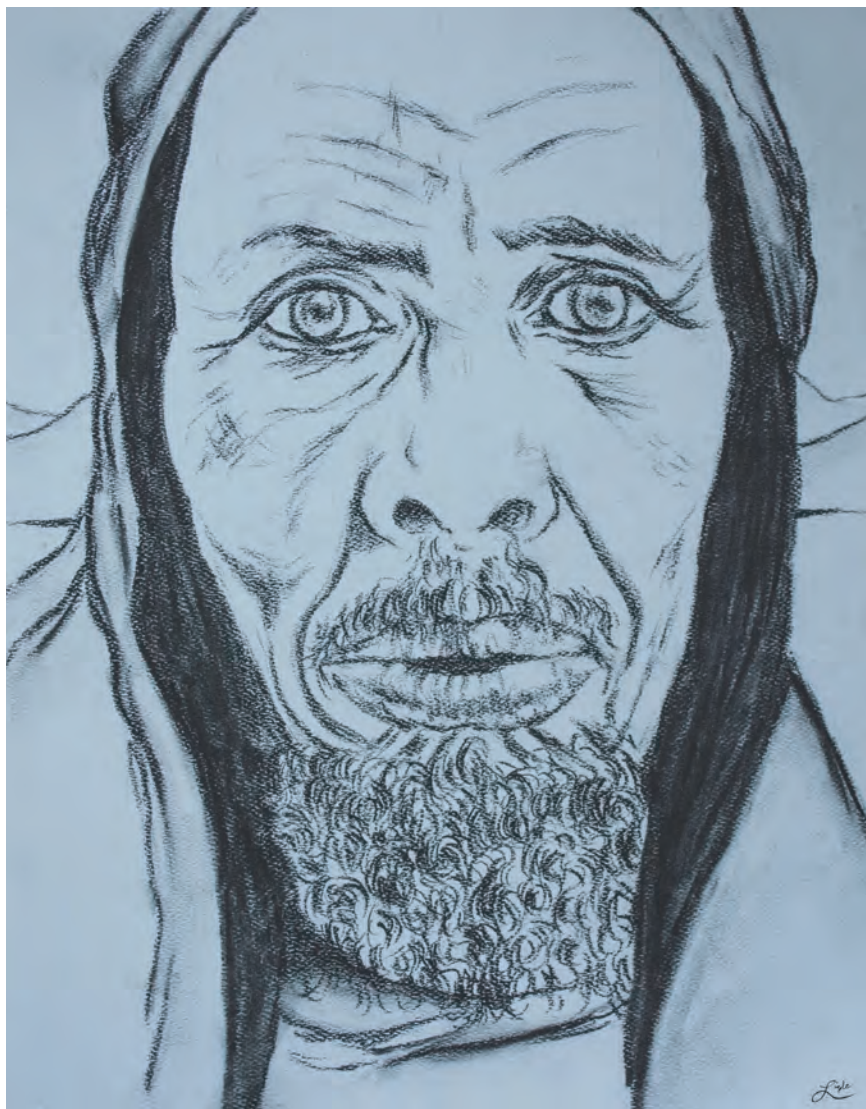
Truth is like sand—
Slipping through my fingers
every time I turn on the news.
So day after day, I gather the dust at my feet
and build sand castles of the world I want to see—
Sand castle cities with fair housing, no walls,
families united and a name like Love.

And when the waves threaten to tear them down,
I will rebuild.
For the truest thing I know is that
God is love,
and love is stronger than fear.

So at the end of the day, if you need me,
I'll be taking sand-soaked alternative truths
and turning them into sand castles of a better world—
A world rooted in love,
which I will keep building
until “love,” and “truth” and “God” all sound like
synonyms.

Prayer by Sarah Are





One Crying Out | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

READ Luke 3:1-6

FROM THE ARTIST | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

While the opening of this passage, saturated with rulers and regions that are foreign to us, may feel like detail overload to our ears, I like to imagine the writer is using a bit of comical irony. Luke catches us up on all the fancy rulers of the day, listing off their network of connections and territories. He paints a landscape of power and social control.

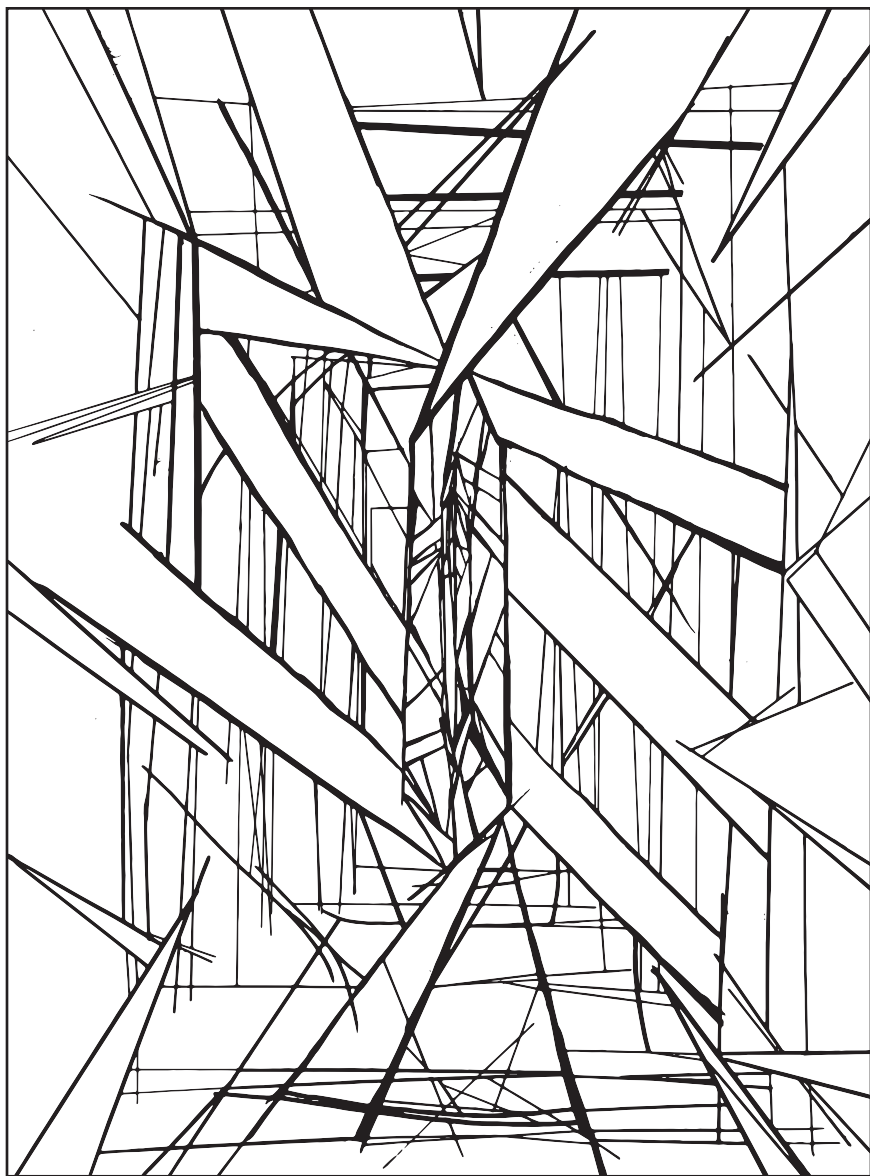
Yet, despite all of these mighty rulers—those who were most equipped to dictate messages to the masses—the word of God came to John son of Zechariah *in the wilderness*. Who? Where? Of all the people God could’ve chosen as a vessel for God’s message, God chooses an offbeat, repentance preacher in the middle of nowhere. The irony surely was not lost on the early listeners of this story.

But we know who John son of Zechariah is. We know he is a miracle child, born strong in spirit from a situation of barrenness. We know his story parallels that of Christ. We know that he foretells good news of a world where the crooked will be made straight and the hills made smooth.

Perhaps this is where God’s truth emerges: from the mouths of those we least expect, from the so-called “powerless,” from those who lurk on the margins of society or power or the edges of our own lives. In this season of truth-seeking, where will you draw near? What voices will fill your ears? What voices will shape your consciousness, your choices, your perception of the world? In your own life, where is the voice of one crying out?

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. What story do you imagine for the figure? What deeper meaning comes into view? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Refine | Hannah Garrity

READ *Malachi 3:1-4*

FROM THE ARTIST | *Hannah Garrity*

The Lord will sit and purify us. She will refine us like gold. As I read this text, I interpret purity as righteousness. I imagine the idea of rough spaces made smooth. In this coloring page the angles and glimmer of a diamond overlay the depth of repeating mirrors.

But, what is purity? Is it the same for each of us? Guided by a higher calling, can we not find our own way? Can we engage as a differentiated faith? It is not for me to know what God has in store for you. By building my relationship with you, I can inspire you to let your light shine, but I cannot tell you what your light is.

In God's image we are created, however, we need constant reflection, constant refining. The mirrors in the background remind us that self reflection brings us closer to God. Our perpetual effort to improve ourselves does not go unnoticed—in fact it is imperative. The Spirit's presence streamlines our gifts for the purpose of sharing them with the world. The Spirit, combined with self-reflective moments, provides the way forward.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

In quiet contemplation, color in the page on the left, reflecting on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement. Conclude with a silent or spoken prayer to God.



What helps you discern what is true?

In the space below, journal any thoughts, ideas, or memories that come to mind, or write your own poetry prayer to God.

[illegible]

[illegible]



For Those in Darkness | Lauren Wright Pittman

READ *Luke 1:68-79*

FROM THE ARTIST | *Lauren Wright Pittman*

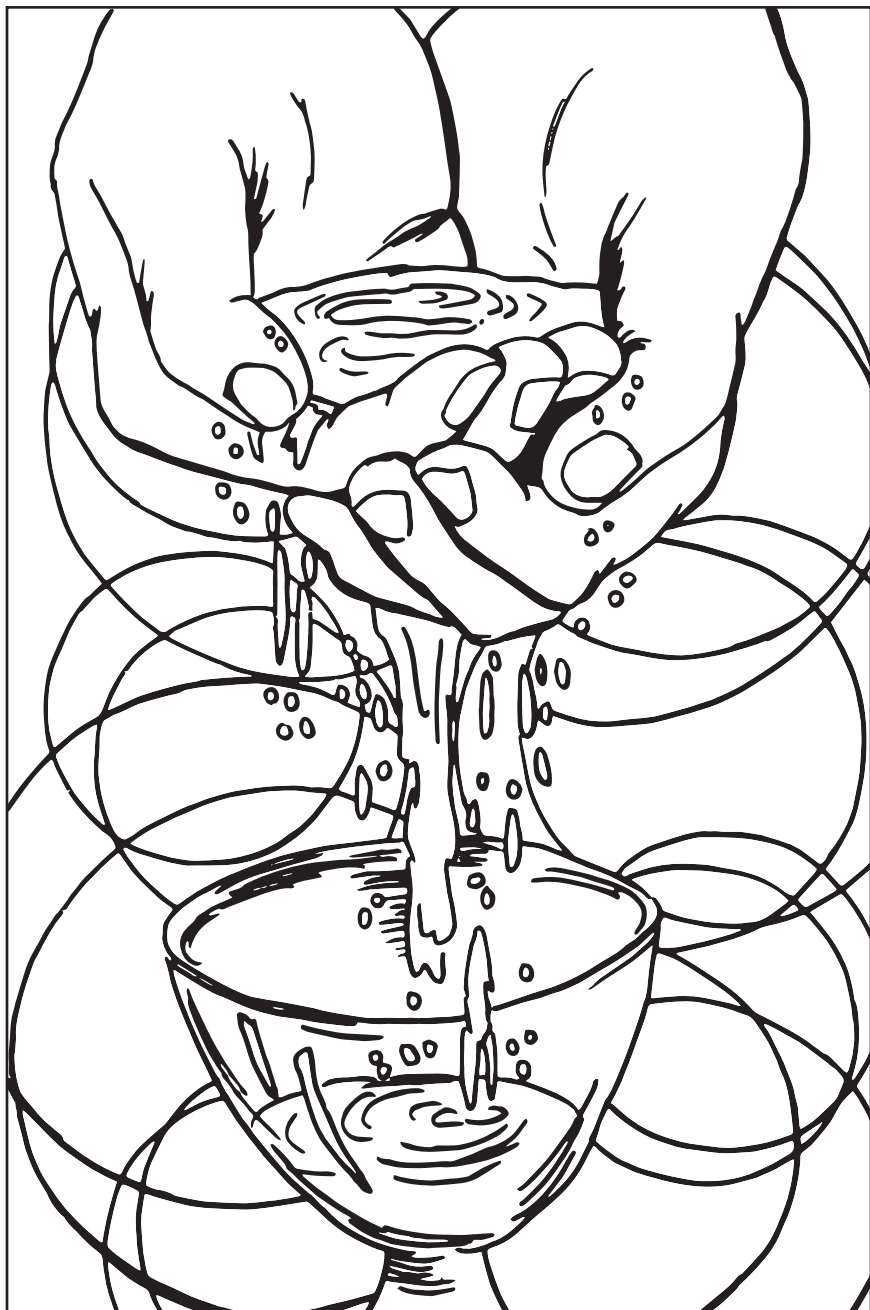
On the day before Christmas Eve almost ten years ago, my best friend died after a fiercely-fought battle with cancer. Later that day my friends came over for our annual gift exchange and we couldn't leave one another; we couldn't seem to go to sleep either. We stayed up all night telling stories about our friend and decided we would drive to an overlook to watch the sunrise. I remember sitting there in the cold, wrapped up in a blanket, huddled with my friends as the wind blew and spattered the tears that could not stop pouring out of my eyes. I desperately needed dawn to break because I was certainly sitting in what felt like the shadow of death.

In this text we find Zechariah having his own kind of mountaintop experience in response to the birth of his son, John the Baptist. Zechariah praises God for what he has done for Israel and prophesies about the person his son will be—“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High.” When we so directly see God's movement in the world it empowers us to boldly claim what God will do in the future.

As the sun hit my face that morning, I felt embraced by the light. Though everything was in shambles in that moment, I felt a sense of peace—not a fleeting peace, but one that carried me in my grief and continues to carry me now. At the end of the night, the sun will come up. The darkness will be shattered by the dawn breaking.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. What story do you imagine for the figure? What deeper meaning comes into view? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Overflowing | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

READ *Philippians 1:3-11*

FROM THE ARTIST | *Lisle Gwynn Garrity*

Paul's prayer to the growing church in Philippi is that their love may overflow more and more until it crystallizes into knowledge and full insight. Wisdom, knowledge, understanding—all of these things are not necessarily cerebral endeavors. For Paul, they are rooted in the heart, in love for God and neighbor.

Paul's words hold even more power when we recall the details of his first visit to Philippi (Acts 16). Even as Roman citizens visiting a Roman colony, Paul and his companions were treated as foreign threats; they were stoned and placed in jail for bringing their Jewish customs and rituals into a predominately pagan city. It was only through the love and hospitality of others, namely, Lydia, that Paul and the apostles were released and given refuge. They were able to foster a small community of Christ followers in that region only through receiving love from strangers. Paul could not share the truth of what he knew about God without love. His entire message was rooted in connection and relationship.

When I read Paul's prayer, I immediately saw the image of water overflowing into wine. Truth begins with love. It's an aging process, requiring years of effort and patience. If our actions are overflowing with grace, patience, and openness to embrace one another, then we will find our way.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

In quiet contemplation, color in the page on the left, reflecting on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement. Conclude with a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Action Prompt

DRAW NEAR TO TRUTH

Find a family member or friend and discuss the topic of truth. How do you discern what is true? Open yourself to another's perspective. You may wish to draw from your Wednesday journal entry to aid your conversation.



DRAW!

In the space below, draw or doodle an image of truth. What does it look like to draw near to truth?



DRAW NEAR TO JUSTICE

Carve out space for intentional Sabbath today. Contemplate the following prayer as part of your Sabbath practice.

It takes all of me to draw near to justice—
My whole, sinful, honest self.
There is no option for part of my heart to break,
for a fraction of my mind to recognize truth,
for just one of my legs to march.
It's all or nothing,
my life or our lives,
daylight or darkness.

Maybe that's why justice is so hard.
In order to be just, it takes all of who we are—
Sins, scars, guilt and all.

So I pray—
Break my whole heart, God.
Break my heart and in the cracks,
in the fractured places,
plant seeds of strength
so that justice will grow in me
and I in it,
like a wildflower that can't be tamed.
Bit by bit
I cling to your word.
Bit by bit,
I turn my heart into a garden
for your justice to take root.

It is not an option for part of my heart to break

Prayer by Sarah Are





Equilibrium | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

READ Luke 3:7-18

FROM THE ARTIST | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

John the Baptist cries out from the wilderness, willed by the vision of a world where the crooked will be made straight and the rough places made smooth. In this passage, we see how the poetry of this vision translates into the practical.

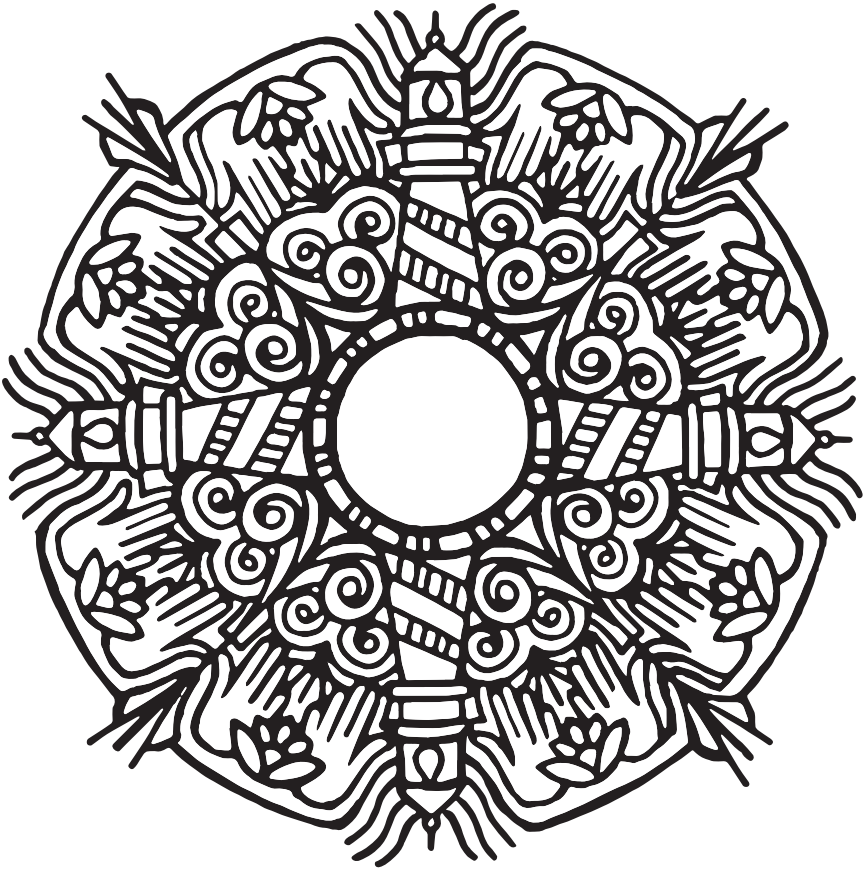
Crowds, compelled by John's message, gather around him. I imagine his passion spewing out of him in a frenzy of inflammatory statements and doomsday predictions, his words strategically designed to stir the heart and incite action. "What then must we do?" Different groups step forward, eager and yet afraid of what this new way of life might require.

John's responses are particular. There is no one-size-fits-all to justice-making. Each group must resist the ways they are tempted to perpetuate systems of inequity. Soldiers must resist ruling with intimidation and threats, preying upon the poor. Tax collectors must resist embezzling funds. Those with more than enough must resist hoarding their resources. Bearing good fruit requires pruning one's life of power, wealth, and resources acquired at the expense of others.

When I read this text, I visualized the act of both giving up and receiving, for when we let loose of that which binds us to systems of power and oppression, we allow space for others to thrive. We fear that letting go will lead to scarcity. Instead, God promises a restored earth, one where all are fed, all are made well. The mountains will fall and the valleys will rise up—then and only then shall all the ends of the earth truly know what the salvation of God feels like.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Which hand resonates with you the most? What story do you imagine taking place in this scene? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Joyful Noise | *Lauren Wright Pittman*

READ Isaiah 12:2-6

FROM THE ARTIST | Lauren Wright Pittman

When was the last time you sang so loudly you lost your voice? What does it feel like to use the full capacity of your vocal chords? Have you ever joined your voice so loudly with a crowd that you couldn't hear which voice belonged to you?

This prophetic song exudes joy. This song calls for more singing and shouting. It invites a resounding noise to build and reverberate to the ends of the earth.

What comes to mind most presently for me in response to this text is the sound of shouting in the streets, of voices crying out and chanting in unison for justice. The idea of organized, collective protests is that the protestors' voices will be heard and create awareness and a ripple effect of change. God has done great things and we must make God's movement known among the nations, but we must do this with our own hands, our own feet, and our own voices. This shouting and singing is the sound of an active response to God's greatness in the pursuit of justice. This is a joyful noise.

The image that immediately came to mind for me in creating this mandala was the image of a lighthouse in the midst of a turbulent sea. As I continued to draw, those turbulent waters shifted to become the wells of salvation. Hands are drawing from the well and pointing to the greatness of God as the light from the lighthouses radiates to the ends of the earth.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

In quiet contemplation, color in the page on the left, reflecting on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement. Conclude with a silent or spoken prayer to God.



In the space below, journal any thoughts, ideas, or memories that come to mind, or write your own poetry prayer to God.

[illegible]

[illegible]



Freedom Lullaby | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

READ *Luke 1:46b-55*

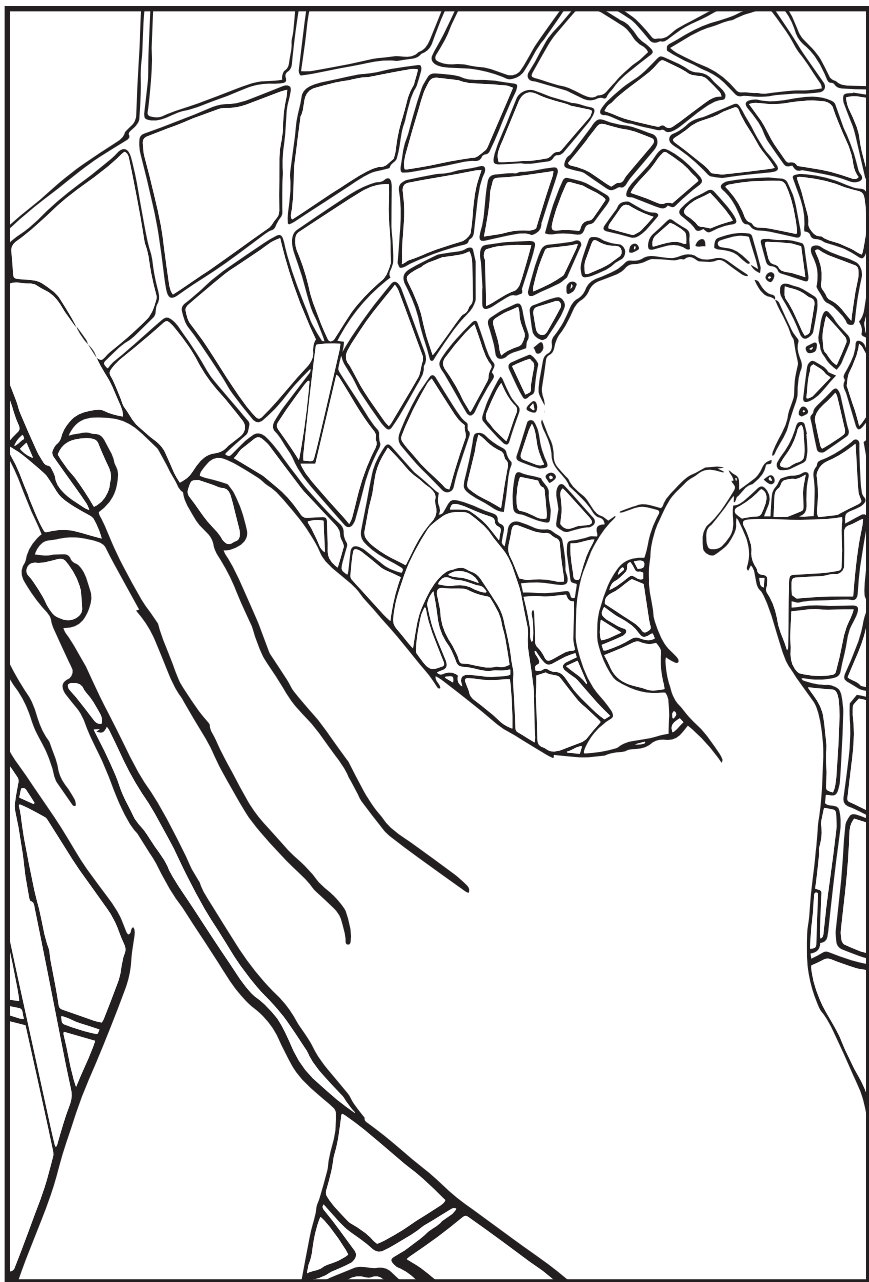
FROM THE ARTIST | *Lisle Gwynn Garrity*

Mary sings in the language of liberation. God choosing her, a low-status, unmarried, Nazarene girl, as the vessel for this revolution is a sign to her that the angel's news is about so much more than just her holy child. This birth indicates all that God has done, is doing, and will continue to do to liberate the oppressed, to bring down the powerful from their thrones, and to feed the hungry with good things. Mary is not only mother of Jesus; she is also a mother of this God movement. She joins the long tradition of women in the bible—Miriam (Ex. 15), Deborah (Judg. 5), Hannah (1 Sam. 2)—whose poetry points to God's power turning the world upside down.

When I read through the Magnificat once again, I imagined Mary cradling her growing belly and singing her song as a lullaby to her unborn son. With each gentle word and sway, she foretells the promise of freedom he will soon fulfill.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. What part of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you miss in your first glance? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Rejoice | Hannah Garrity

READ *Philippians 4:4-7*

FROM THE ARTIST | *Hannah Garrity*

Through prayer we are guarded by God. In this drawing, our collective hands reach up toward God in a prayerful pose. The ancient Greek word for “rejoice” is embedded, emerging from behind the prayerful hands. God’s peaceful protection is depicted by the pattern of a dreamcatcher in the background.

What does it mean to be guarded by God? In Lakota and Ojibwe traditions, a dreamcatcher allows only good dreams to get through to you as you are sleeping. In verse 8, just after this text, Paul advises the Philippians to focus on the positive: “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil 4:8). Paul suggests that we block out negative things, and only allow ourselves to have good thoughts.

Through prayer we gain the peace of God. Thankfulness and positivity stand guard. Let us rejoice!

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

In quiet contemplation, color in the page on the left, reflecting on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement. Conclude with a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Action Prompt

DRAW NEAR TO JUSTICE

Commit an act for justice. Donate money, time, or items to a local organization serving those on the margins of wealth and power, and/or call one of your elected officials to express your support for or opposition to an important issue.



DRAW!

*In the space below, draw or doodle an image of justice.
What does it look like to draw near to justice?*



DRAW NEAR TO ONE ANOTHER

Carve out space for intentional Sabbath today. Contemplate the following prayer as part of your Sabbath practice.

When Adam saw Eve,
the first thing he said was, “At Last.”
And when I fell in love,
God became real faster than I could imagine.

When my brother was born,
I learned the size of my heart.
And when my mom held my hand,
I knew the love that willed that heart to start.

And without them,
how would I know love?
Without others, how would I learn grace
or music, confidence or trust?

And without the sun,
how could the earth grow life?

And without you,
how could I know God with green eyes,
God with brown skin,
God with wrinkles,
God within.

So I have come to believe—
we belong to one another.
Families and friends, neighbors and strangers—
We belong to one another.

And I have come to see
the space between you and me
as nothing short of holy ground.
So take off your shoes and draw near.
Together is where God is found.

Prayer by Sarah Are



Mary & Elizabeth | Lauren Wright Pittman

READ *Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)*

FROM THE ARTIST | *Lauren Wright Pittman*

Mary and Elizabeth affirm, comfort, and support one another in the unexpected, strange circumstances of their pregnancies. Elizabeth instantly recognizes that Mary is pregnant and is filled to the brim with the Holy Spirit, so much so that she exclaims that Mary is blessed among women and the mother of the Lord. What an amazingly confident and prophetic statement she makes. It is unclear, exactly, of the reason for Mary's visiting Elizabeth. She may have been seeking comfort or community, or she may have been wanting to offer comfort to Elizabeth. Whatever her intentions, it is clear that Mary is emboldened and empowered by Elizabeth's affirmations as she breaks into the Magnificat. It is as though Elizabeth's words, "Blessed is she who believed," creates space in Mary's heart to proclaim the broad implications of what is taking place within her womb.

I wanted to depict the creative energy, communication, and power that was taking place in Mary and Elizabeth's wombs in this moment. Mary's womb swirls with the knitting together of the One through whom all things came into being, while Elizabeth's womb radiates joy with the leaping of the one who will spend his life directing attention, awe and reverence to the One in Mary's womb.

When we draw near to one another, we can recognize and proclaim God's movement in one another's lives and be encouraged in our own journey. When we draw near to one another, we live more fully into who we were created to be.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. What part of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you miss in your first glance? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Precarious Passage | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

READ Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

FROM THE ARTIST | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Returning to the Christmas story this year, I am reminded of how Christ's birth occurs in the midst of chaos, displacement, and lowly conditions. Born into the backdrop of Roman political power and social control, Jesus is an ironic Messiah. His birth is stripped of the status and wealth you might expect for a prince, and saturated with the characteristics of yet another common baby born on the streets and placed in a feeding trough.

The divine breaks through sweat, blood, straw and mud. Good news comes to low-wage sheep-herders during their night shift, on the edge of town. Where can't God go? Where *won't* God go? The Christmas story holds this answer: nowhere. As we'll soon remember, not even death can limit God's power.

In this image, I imagined Mary and Jesus as ancient world refugees, displaced and on the move. And yet, no matter where they go, God's light goes with them, encircling them with care.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

In quiet contemplation, color in the page on the left, reflecting on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement. Conclude with a silent or spoken prayer to God.



DRAW NEAR TO ONE ANOTHER.

How have your relationships shaped you? In what ways can you draw near to others in community?

In the space below, journal any thoughts, ideas, or memories that come to mind, or write your own poetry prayer to God.

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Yoke | Hannah Garrity

READ *Isaiah 9:2-7*

FROM THE ARTIST | *Hannah Garrity*

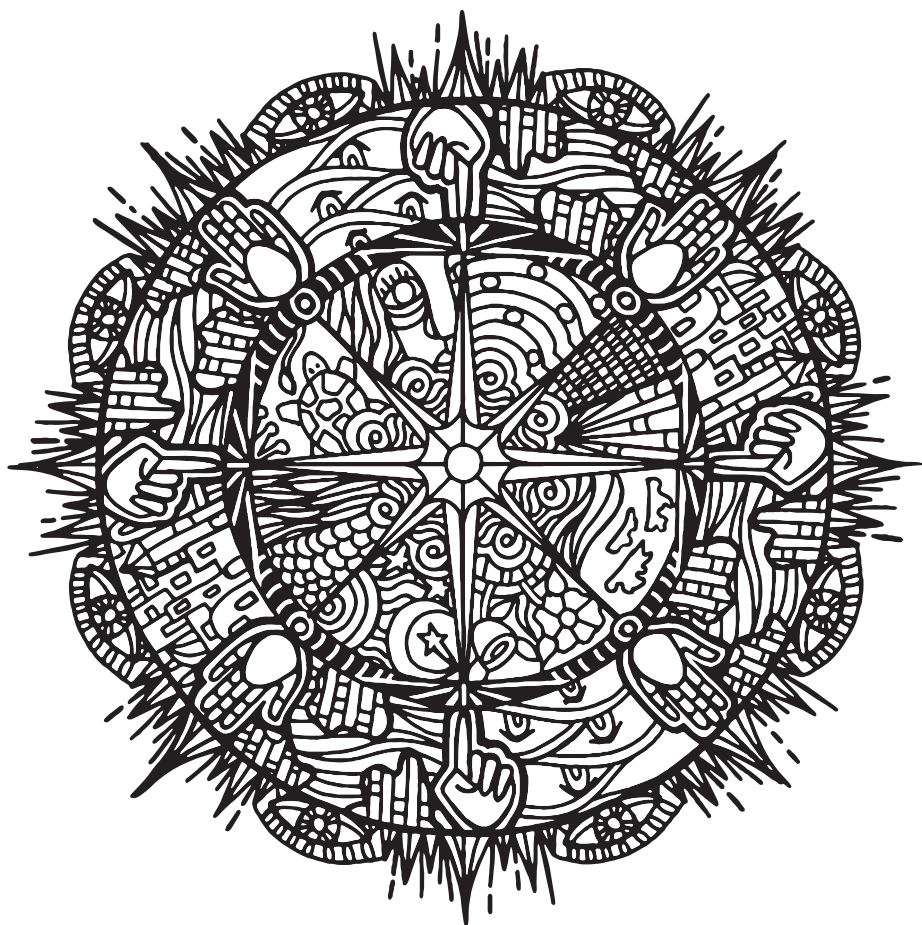
These fences surround. These fences divide. These fences protect. These fences tower ominously against the grandeur of God. As Isaiah predicted, Jesus came to free us. We no longer need to fear the people on the other side of these fences.

We need not fear that there will not be enough for everyone. There is enough to share. We need not fear that other people will hurt us or our loved ones. Jesus brought us the framework to build relationships.

God's children are on both sides of these fences. In this image, God's grandeur is imagined as the sunset sky. Here, God's presence is viewed through this fence. Jesus came to us to teach us how to break down these fences of fear that divide us, surround us, and protect us. We must break them down to get to God, for God is in the hearts of the people on the other side of the fence.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Imagine placing yourself in this scene. What do you see? How do you feel? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Thread of Creation | Lauren Wright Pittman

READ *John 1:1-14*

FROM THE ARTIST | *Lauren Wright Pittman*

The thread that binds all of creation came close, drew near to us. I have allowed this passage to tie my head in theological knots to the point where I've buried the utter simplicity of God's movement. God chose to draw near. The light of the world chose to dwell in the darkness.

We couldn't handle the blinding brilliance of the light because it revealed what we wanted to keep hidden. We tortured and killed the light. And now, every Advent we desperately wait, beg, cry out, and stretch our hands in longing to bring the light back. Please bring the light back.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I like my space. I circumvent people at times because they are complicated, relationships are hard, and people can be overwhelming. I promise I love people, but people are hard to like sometimes, right? Drawing near to people isn't easy.

What would it look like if instead of staying in my own little comfortable, insulated world, I engaged with the people around me? What if I took a moment to ask my neighbor how they are doing and really mean it, and make myself available to listen? What if I reached out to a new friend instead of burying myself in a blanket and Netflix? We need to draw near to the light in one another. We need to honor and truly see the light of God in one another and work to uphold, cherish, and protect that light, because we desperately need it.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

In quiet contemplation, color in the page on the left, reflecting on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement. Conclude with a silent or spoken prayer to God.

DAY 28



Action Prompt

DRAW NEAR TO ONE ANOTHER

Write a letter, email, or message to someone you know who could use some support right now. Tell them you are thinking of them and consider making arrangements for an in-person visit.



DRAW!

In the space below, draw or doodle an image of relationship. What does it look like to draw near to one another?



DRAW NEAR TO LOVE

Carve out space for intentional Sabbath today. Contemplate the following prayer as part of your Sabbath practice.

I know love's real,
for I have felt it in my bones
the way cold air finds my lungs
and music finds my memories—
certainly and entirely.

And I know winter is real,
for I have worn grief like
a blanket—
A blanket of what once was,
covering my bony elbows
and forgotten smile lines.

Somewhere in between
those certain realities,
I find myself wishing on
shooting stars
and wondering if they were
the same ones
that Jesus slept under.
I find myself whistling,
“O come, O come, Emmanuel,”
followed shortly by, “All is
calm, all is bright.”

It's the melodic rotation
I live in—
Joy and doubt.
Light and night.
Love and grief.
You alone and you with me.

So I'll never stop waiting for
Christmas.

Every day I'll rise with the sun
and pray that today it will be
Christmas again,
that today will be a day when
you are here,
when you are near me,
when the blanket is ripped
away to reveal the light
and my smile lines have
reason to bow again.

Then the stars fall,
the sun rises,
and in my heart of hearts,
I know it is.
For ever since that day
so many moons ago,
nothing has been able to
separate us from your love.

And so I say—
I know love's real,
for I have felt it in my bones.
All is calm. All is bright.

Prayer by Sarah Are



All the Ends | Lisle Gwynn Garrity

READ *Isaiah 52:7-10*

FROM THE ARTIST | *Lisle Gwynn Garrity*

“All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God” (Is. 52:10). After reading that line, an image of water meeting land emerged in my mind. While this passage opens with visuals of the mountains, I found myself sketching a composition that places the viewer in the current, peering over the waves to the shoreline in the distance.

In this section of the Book of Isaiah, the prophet composes a vision of promise and peace for the people of Israel, one that seems to be materializing before their very eyes. But these words were proclaimed from the ruins of exile. Restoration was not yet a reality. They were still stuck in the deep—in the pain, in the suffering, in the waiting for a better world. We read these words some 2,500 years later on the other side of this promise fulfilled. We receive this vision with assurance that the messenger of peace yet again brings comfort and restoration to our battered world.

In this painting, the focal point is the swoop of current along the bottom. No matter what your life feels like right now, whether you feel stuck in the deep or swept up in the current, may you be buoyed by the promise that all the ends of the earth, all the edges of your life, are wrapped in God’s care.

DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Imagine placing yourself in this scene. What do you see? How do you feel? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.

END OF YEAR REFLECTION



Reflect

DRAW NEAR NEXT YEAR

What do you wish to draw near to in this next year? In the space provided, write or draw the virtues, practices, and intentions you hope will define your new year.



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