

2026
More Light
Presbyterians
Lent Devotional






This season invites us into holy honesty: to tell the truth about grief and injustice, about exhaustion and hope, about the cross we carry and the resurrection we long for. We enter these forty days grounded in the fierce love of a God who delights in queer bodies, diverse families, and the radiant image of God reflected in every person.

Lent is not about shrinking ourselves. It is about returning to prayer, to courage, to community, to the Spirit who sustains movements for justice and breathes life into dry bones.

May these reflections from the MLP community guide you deeper into God's liberating love, steady your spirit for the work ahead, and remind you that even in the wilderness, you are not alone.





“We have proven ourselves...in every way: in great endurance through conflicts, disasters, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights... through verbal abuse and good repute alike. We are treated as impostors and yet are true,... as dying, but look — we are alive!” - 6:4-5, 8-9



Paul and the other apostles lived queerly — that is, they transgressed every societal norm, from the focus on marriage and offspring to the insistence on sticking to your own ethnic group and class. Worldly logic says to avoid suffering and stigma, but they defiantly embraced those things as an inevitable consequence of living into **Christ’s anti-imperialist Way.**





In Lent, we too are called to live queerly.

The ashes we receive on our foreheads today signify our acceptance that to follow Jesus is to risk suffering, fraught relationships, even death.


In this era of increasingly brazen violence against immigrants, trans people, and other vulnerable groups, the possibility of facing “imprisonments, riots,” and “sleepless nights” feels realer than ever (and maybe you’re already living it).

Use this season of self-reflection and self-giving to contemplate:

What am I willing to risk in Jesus’s name? What avenues of action am I most suited to?

And then: **act.**





“Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.”
- v. 5



So many **queer Christians** are taught growing up that we are intrinsically sinful for our desires. The desire for romantic or bodily love of someone of the same gender. The desire to align one’s own body with the soul God gave us. Even for those who finally break free of those heresies, just the mention of sin triggers a **trauma response**.


But we must talk about it. Because each of us participates — whether we mean to or not — in thriving systems of sin.





Each non-Indigenous, naturally born American citizen is born guilty; conceived on stolen land. Each Christian inherits the legacy of our religion's genocides past, and very immediate present. And until each of us individually claims **responsibility** in these ongoing corporate transgressions, and participates in the meaningful **repentance** required to **repair** the world, nothing will change. Christ have mercy.





"I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you. ...I'm always asking that somehow, by God's will, I might succeed in visiting you at last." - vv. 8a, 10b



Have you ever thought about how much of the New Testament is just reading people's mail?

In today's letter from Paul to the Romans, he spends the majority of the letter saying that he's **grateful** for the Roman Christians and that he hopes to visit them soon.

One of the things that **makes queerness so divine** is the inclination toward found family, community, and collective care. How are you checking on your people these days? Are you writing to them to tell them how grateful you are and how you hope to visit soon?

Spend a few moments writing **your own epistle** (letter) to your queer kin. Share the good news of queer community.





“[Jesus] called a little child over to sit among the disciples, and said, ‘...Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.’” - vv. 2a, 5



When you are disabled, neurodivergent and/or chronically ill, you constantly feel that your **needs** are an imposition. You learn not to ask for “special” accommodations. That is what the world teaches you.


What Jesus teaches us is the exact opposite: The most vulnerable ones are the standard. **The ways of the Kingdom are built to serve them.** Because the simple logical truth is: when their needs are met, everyone’s needs are met.

“When Black lives matter, all lives will matter.”
When a place is accessible, everyone profits.
We won’t be free until we are all free.



Growing up, especially when you are a part of a marginalized group, you internalize bit by bit that your most essential needs will never be the standard. Jesus is very clear that **this is a sin committed against you**. It is hard work “turning your life around” and unlearning those things. It can help to remind yourself that **by demanding your own rights, you are actually helping everyone**.





“When I kept quiet, my bones wore out;
I was groaning all day long. ...All you whose
hearts are right, sing out in joy!” - vv. 3a, 11b




Psalm 32 invites us into the holy work of truth-telling.

Liberation begins not with perfection, but with confession — naming what we have carried, hidden, or denied. Lent reminds us that silence can weigh heavy on the soul, while honesty opens space for healing. When the psalmist stops concealing and begins to speak, freedom follows.

God is not waiting for us to become someone else; God meets us as we are, right here. *We are the ones we've been waiting for* when we choose courage over concealment, accountability over avoidance, and trust over fear. In this choosing, joy is restored and community made possible.





“He longed for his own death...Then suddenly a messenger tapped him and said to him, “Get up! Eat something!...” - vv. 4b, 5b



What do we do with Elijah? He killed. However we try to justify it because he killed “the bad ones,” Elijah is a killer. Does he deserve to die as well? Jezebel certainly thinks so by her immediate promise of additional violence. Elijah seems to think so too. As he flees, he begs God to bring an end to his own life.

The only one who is against Elijah dying is God. But God knows big sweeping affirmations are not going to help. God offers smaller interventions. A nap, a snack, a drink, a walk. **God gives space** for Elijah’s nervous system to catch up with what just happened.

What small support can you offer someone today?





“While I kept silent, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up, as by the heat of summer.

You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.”

- vv. 3-4, 7



When I kept who I really was inside of me, hidden away, I carried a heaviness that felt relentless. The nudging of God saying “It’s not only okay but beautiful to be yourself,” sometimes felt **both impossible to name and impossible to keep silent**. I ran out of strength and felt dried up.






I had been hidden from the world so long that when I finally decided to come out and be open to the world, sometimes I felt tremendously exposed. In my un-hiddenness I was able **to hide in the Almighty** — to be sheltered in the shadow of safe wings — to find respite from hateful speech.

God sent me hiding places in many ways — my **chosen family** mostly — who loved me unconditionally and helped keep me safe. Now I try to keep myself attuned to the moving of the Spirit so that I might be, often unknowingly, **a hiding place for those who need it.**





“What do you think? If someone had one hundred sheep and one of them wandered off, wouldn’t he leave the ninety-nine on the hillsides and go in search for the one that wandered off?” - v. 12




Do you feel lost? Is the world’s chaos so overwhelming that you can’t see straight?

Despite my best efforts, sometimes I find that I can’t help but go astray. As I try to follow the path, I look around and don’t know my surroundings. And in my uncertainty, I rest in the comfort of Jesus’s words to his friends that our Shepherd will not leave us alone in the mountains. And that there is rejoicing when we reunite with our purpose.

Friends, our God searches so that none may be lost. I pray that you will know God’s presence as you journey.





“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control.” - v. 6-7



This passage reminds us that faith isn't meant to smolder quietly. Paul says: fan into flames the gift of God within you. Not fear. Not shame, but: "Power. Love. Self-discipline."

This Lent, we remember that God's Spirit does not erase who we are — it breathes through it. Your queerness, your questions, your tenderness, your courage: none of these disqualify you. **They are places where the flame already lives.**






If the world has tried to dampen your light, hear this again: God has not given us a spirit of fear. Fear that you are “too much.” Fear that you don’t belong. Fear that love must be hidden.

That fear is not from God.
So fan it into flame. Gently. Bravely. Together.
This Lent, may we tend the holy fire within us — and in one another — **until love burns brighter than fear.**





“Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity? ...
You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.
You will show faithfulness to Jacob
and steadfast love to Abraham,
as you have sworn to our ancestors from the days of old.”




This passage from Micah ends not with denial, but with trust forged in long, ancestral memory. Who is a God like this: one who does not cling to anger, who delights in mercy?

The prophet speaks to a people who know failure and fracture, and still dares to believe in faithfulness that outlasts it all. This is a commitment to restoration. **What has weighed us down is not ignored, but carried, then released** into depths where it no longer defines us.

In Lent, we practice remembering this kind of mercy. We journey honestly, without despair, trusting that God’s steadfast love is patient enough to meet us again, and again, and again.






“A centurion had a servant who was very important to him, but the servant was ill and about to die...” v. 2



This passage tells a quiet, tender story. A Roman centurion — powerful, respected — is deeply worried about his beloved boy. He advocates for him, trusts Jesus with him, and believes healing is possible even from a distance. Love motivates everything he does.

Jesus doesn't question the depth of that care. He honors it. He calls the centurion's faith extraordinary.





This Lent, we sit with a truth that still matters: devotion, vulnerability, and love are not limited by rigid categories. The care we show — especially when it crosses boundaries of culture, status, or expectation — can be a reflection of deep faith.


For LGBTQIA+ people, this story whispers reassurance: **the love you hold, protect, and risk yourself for is not invisible to God.**

Jesus sees faith expressed through compassion, not conformity.

May we trust that love — and let it draw us closer to healing, wholeness, and grace.



PAMELA ANDERSON




“I raise my eyes toward the mountains.
Where does my help come from?
My help comes from Living God,
the maker of heaven and earth.” - vv. 1-2



Psalm 121 begins with a question born of weariness: Where does my help come from? In this sacred season, we lift our eyes not in escape, but in clarity. The psalm reminds us that help comes from God, yet God’s care is often mediated through human courage, communal responsibility, and faithful presence. God does not sleep, but neither are we meant to disengage. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for when we choose to be shelter for one another, watchful in the night, and steady on the journey.






“In your house, your wife will be like a vine full of fruit.
All around your table, your children will be
like olive trees, freshly planted.
That’s how it goes for anyone who honors the Lord:
they will be blessed!” - vv. 3-4



This Psalm is titled in my Bible “The Happy Home of the Faithful” yet the contents of the Psalm aren’t things I have or even strive for. Being people of faith with an ancient holy book, we run into moments where the definition of success or even happiness has shifted since the words were written. Yet the promises remain that God blesses us with happiness and we return praise for whatever that is.

What would your Psalm of “The Happy Home of the Faithful” include?





“Look! I’m creating a new heaven and a new earth... They will build houses and live in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ...They won’t hurt or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain, says LIVING GOD.” - vv. 17a, 21, 25b



I have read this passage dozens of times and only today I noticed that this vision of new heavens and new earth is not the product of just God’s intervention in the world, but also of the work of humans. If this shalom is to come to exist, humans need to change and do. They shall not hurt or destroy, they shall build and plant. The new thing God is doing requires that we stop hurting each other, that we make sure people enjoy the work of their hands. **We are co-creators of the new heaven and the new earth.**





“Let the one who is without sin
cast the first stone.” - 8:7




Most of the time we don't know the whole story. Our stories are ours. I think Jesus might have been saying something like, “You don't know this woman's story. We also don't know your stories, scribes and Pharisees. Do you want us to judge you **without listening to and hearing your story first?** No? Then maybe keep your mouth shut.”

I love “The Story” by Brandi Carlile, particularly these lyrics:

You see the smile that's on my mouth
It's hiding the words that don't come out
And all of our friends who think that I'm blessed
They don't know my head is a mess.

Listen to “The Story” and reflect on your story.





“The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and ate our fill of bread, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.’

Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day...’” - vv. 3-4



The people have been freed, but they are not yet at ease. The wilderness stretches before them, unfamiliar and demanding. Questions rise quickly: **Will this freedom sustain us?** Will there be enough for the days ahead? Hunger sharpens their fear, and memory begins to blur. What once wounded them starts to look safer than the **uncertainty** of the present.






God meets them there, right there, not with judgment, but with daily bread. Manna appears in the morning light, fragile and fleeting. The miracle does not lead to stockpiling resources, but it is a gift that provides for the day. Again and again God provides enough. **Enough to keep taking it one day at a time.**

In this season of Lent and life, we are reminded that God's care often comes through ordinary means: shared resources, daily rhythms, and mutual care. **Our thriving is communal.** How will you participate in the thriving of community, one day at a time?





“For [Jesus] himself...has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. ... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but **fellow citizens**... And in [Jesus] you are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by Their Spirit.” - vv. 14-22



Blessed are you, binary-breaking God,
Jesus Christ! —
you who are both fully human and fully divine;
you who demolish divisions
to make the many one —
**both fully united and fully ourselves,
in you!**





Ignite in us a brand new way of looking
at the world — a Kin-dom lens —
so that we might break down the walls
between “us” and “them,” upend the boxes
that confine and constrict.

When we join the struggle to ensure
that no human is treated as unworthy,
untouchable, or illegal,
then we become co-builders
of this divine dwelling that is us —
not us individually, but all of us together,
founded on your Spirit of justice and love.

Amen






“Jesus was tired from his journey,
so he sat down at the well...” - v. 6b



There is a meditation garden outside of my office with different nooks to sit, contemplate, and pray. One of my favorite spots is by the bubbling fountain under the trees. It's not the same as the well Jesus sits next to in today's passage, but I find the water to be restorative.

We all need a break. Even Jesus.
Take a minute. Sit. Breathe. Be.





“...We even take pride in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. This hope doesn’t put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” - vv. 3-5



Let’s be careful. It’s easy to use Romans 5 to **justify suffering** or to dismiss people’s pain instead of joining in their liberation. If a Bible verse feels too easy or too comforting at first glance, we are called to dig deeper.

Paul writes to a divided church living under empire, where “peace” is promised by soldiers patrolling the streets.






Suffering is not good, and Paul does not ask us to celebrate it. What he names instead is formation. **Trouble exposes what we cling to and what we trust.** Endurance is learned not through heroics, but through **sustained commitments** to community, integrity, and God. Over time, this endurance shapes people who can tell the truth about the world without surrendering their love for it.

Paul insists that God's love is already at work among us, binding us to one another and refusing to let fear, suffering, or empire have the final word.





“When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his uncle, and the flock of Laban, Jacob came up, rolled the stone from the well’s opening, and watered the flock of his uncle Laban. Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud.” - vv. 10-11



Genesis 29 tells a love-at-first-sight story. Jacob sees Rachel, and suddenly strength he didn't know he had rises up — he rolls away the stone, makes space for connection, and joy spills over. Love does that. It moves what once felt immovable.

This Lent, we remember that holy love is not scarce or suspicious. It is generous. It recognizes itself. God is present in the moment when two or more people truly see one another and say, *Here you are.*






For LGBTQIA+ folks, this story can be a gentle reminder: **your capacity for love is not outside God's story.** Desire, tenderness, courage — these are not obstacles to holiness. They are often the very place where God shows up.

As we journey through Lent, may we trust the love that draws us forward, and may we have the courage to roll away stones that keep us from living — and loving — fully.



PAMELA ANDERSON



“I lifted the burden off your shoulders;
your hands are free of the brick basket!
In distress you cried out, so I rescued you.” - vv. 6-7a




Psalm 81 calls the community to remember **who they are and whose they are.**

God reminds the people of liberation already given — chains broken, burdens lifted — yet grief enters when they refuse to listen. **Freedom**, the psalm suggests, is not only God’s work but our response to it. *We are the ones we’ve been waiting for* when we choose attentiveness over amnesia, obedience over comfort, trust over fear.

In this sacred season, the invitation is not to long for a distant deliverance, but to live into the freedom already offered, letting God reshape our desires toward justice, abundance, and joy.






“Don’t make the Holy Spirit of God unhappy—
you were sealed by him for the day of
redemption.” - v. 30



We cannot hold space for others if we cannot hold space for ourselves. Queer people are called to the hard work of accepting all of who we are: our joys, our fragilities, our scars, our pride. The world has told us we are less, and too often, we have believed it. But God calls us to recognize our worth as children of God and to carry that truth into every relationship and community we enter.

Self-acceptance is not optional; it is the foundation of Beloved Community. Only when we honor ourselves can we engage with others honestly, even when their identities, experiences, or beliefs challenge us. Loving ourselves equips us to respond with patience, courage, and accountability.






“Therefore, imitate God like dearly loved children. Live your life with love, following the example of Christ... Sexual immorality, and any kind of impurity or greed, shouldn’t even be mentioned among you...” - vv. 5:1-3



Since seeing the video of the little girl reciting Psalm 23, it is always her voice that speaks in my head when I read the Psalm, which is probably why I hesitated when I got to Ephesians 5:3. It is hard to hear the Ephesians passage in the voice of a child. Yet approaching faith should be childlike, especially the hard parts. To stay curious, to embrace naivety, to not take ourselves too seriously is exactly how God wants us to sort through the difficult parts of scripture.

Give a hard scripture a childlike reading today? What do you discover that you haven’t seen before?






“En el principio era el Verbo,
y el Verbo era con Dios,
y el Verbo era Dios.” - v. 1



One of my favorite translations of this passage is in Spanish. Actually, most Spanish translations translate the word *logos* the same way: *logos*, in these translations, is not Word, but *Verb*. “In the beginning was the Verb, and the Verb was with God, and the Verb was God.”

Every time I think of this way of interpreting *logos*, I think that **God is not static. God is action**, ever-moving, ever-becoming. We follow the Living God, and all living beings have one thing in common: they move. In their very name, God is calling us to action. May we hear the call.





“As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. Jesus’ disciples asked, ‘Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither he nor his parents sinned.’” - vv. 1-3a



John 9 tells the story of “the man born blind,” whose social role is to serve as an object lesson about the supposed consequences of sin. But Jesus breaks him free of this role by declaring, “Nobody sinned!”

And I imagine that that Truth spoken aloud — someone finally recognizing that he’s a human being, not sin embodied — brings more healing to this man than the subsequent receiving of sight.





After all, his sudden sighted state subjects him not to newfound welcome, but further suspicion from his society. “Surely” this transformation, conducted on the Sabbath, is the result of sin just like his blindness supposedly was.

But as religious leaders continue to debate his existence while mostly ignoring his testimony about his own lived experience, this man continues to assert his humanity. They can suspect him, judge him, even exile him, **but the Truth has set him free: His existence is not and never was a sin.**





“Meanwhile, Saul was still spewing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. ...


[S]uddenly a light from heaven encircled him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice asking him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me?’”

- vv. 1, 3-4



If the Holy Spirit would choose someone like Saul to transform and restore, may it be so with each of us. Saul’s transformation from persecutor to servant of the Lord shows us the power of the Spirit. Many of our most significant transformations happen similarly to Saul’s. They come with challenge and difficulty. They require us to rely on our community. And in the end, I hope that we might emerge like Saul. I hope that each of us will burst forth, scales falling from our eyes, surrounded in supportive community, and ready to take on the world.






“May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from [God’s] glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully.” - v. 11



I was a master pretender when I was a kid, and if I’m honest I pretend as an adult too. Sometimes I put on my favorite outfit and pretend to be more confident than I naturally am. Sometimes I pretend to have unlimited patience and stay present when I’d rather leave and do something more fun.

This verse says we can pray for ALL THE strength of God to help our endurance and patience. Imagine having the endurance of a mountain or the patience of a seed in winter. Pretending has always allowed me to find new depths in myself so maybe that’s where I need to start. What can creation inspire you to pretend to be today? Maybe you’ll find you already possess that quality too.





“And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, ‘See that no one knows about this.’ But they went away and spread the news about him through all of that district.”

- vv. 30-31



A month into Lent, has anything changed? If you committed to any fasts or adopted any new practices for this season, how has that been going? Take a moment to reflect on the past four weeks.

In many years, at this point in Lent I am feeling all too ready for Easter. I want to get to the good part, I want the trumpets, I want to hear the best news — Christ is risen! In an impatient frame of mind, I imagine that the two men introduced in Matthew 9:27 had been trailing Jesus — and shouting at him — for miles.





If they were so desperate for healing, perhaps we can understand why they ignored Jesus's command that they keep it a secret.

Ready or not, the good news was coming out! They could not keep their own transformation in the closet.

May our living reveal the good news of God's love in just such a way, even as we simultaneously continue our season of expectation for a while longer.





Psalm 130, Rrewritten:



Out of despair I cry to you, Good Parent.

Hugging Parent, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for safety.

If you, Gentle Guardian, kept a record of sins,
who could stand a chance?

But with you there is no record keeping,
so that we can, with reverence, be kin to you.

I wait for Your Warm Hug, my whole being waits,
and in Your Story I put my hope.






I wait for the Good Parent
more than the nightwatch of a scrolling phone,
yes, more than the nightwatch of a
doomscrolling phone.
I wait for the Good Parent.

Family, put your hope in the Good Parent,
for with the Good Parent is unfailing love
and full inclusion.

The Good Parent will redeem Family
from all that has caused them harm.





“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying,
‘The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ,
and he will rule forever and always.’” - v. 15



We are deep in the sci-fi narrative by Revelation 11. This passage reminds me of two works of art that have been formative in my life: Messiah by George Frideric Handel and Tony Kushner’s Angels in America. I knew the Hallelujah Chorus long before I read Angels and subsequently watched the HBO series.

Read [this passage](#), watch the [Handel video](#) and the [Kushner video](#), and then read the passage again.

The book of Revelation has inspired some real bangers. What other media comes to mind when you read this passage? How has the book of Revelation been weaponized? Inspirational? Confusing?






"If you kept track of sins, Lord — my Lord, who would stand a chance?" - v. 3

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“When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’” - v. 21



We often spend so much time focused on Christ's weeping and the resurrection of Lazarus, that we forget the pleas of Mary and Martha.

If you had been here, God, then my brother would not have died.

It is said twice, by both siblings. *If you had been here. If you hadn't waited. He's my brother.* And if you had been here, he would not have died. They are grieving. They are weeping in pain. And they are ignored. Because Lazarus' death is going to be used for something bigger, something for the Glory of the Lord.






I get that, but I hate that. I hate spiritual bypassing.

Yes, God will make sense of all things, eventually,
but for right now it all just sucks.

Cancer sucks. Death sucks. Transphobia and queerphobia suck. Racism sucks. Xenophobia sucks. A lack of health care and increased medical debt suck. Lack of affordable housing and an increase in the population of unhoused siblings, suck.

It sucks. And we can say that. **And we don't have to rush to the resurrection to pretend to be okay with everything.** Sit with Mary and Martha for a little while, and let yourself feel all your feelings.






“I remember the days of old; ...
I meditate on the works of your hands.
I stretch out my hands to you, LIVING GOD;
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.” - vv. 5-6



Psalm 143 gives voice to a weary faith that **refuses to pretend**. The psalmist pleads for mercy, not because of righteousness, but because survival depends on God’s steadfast love. **Memory becomes resistance** — remembering what God has done becomes fuel for endurance when the spirit feels crushed.

We are the ones we’ve been waiting for when we choose honest prayer over polished performance, persistence over despair, hope over numbness. In this sacred season, **the work before us is not self-salvation, but daily trust** — stretching out our hands toward God and one another, believing that guidance still comes, even in the dry places.






“At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did...But God is rich in mercy. They brought us to life with Christ... You are liberated by God’s grace! - vv. 1, 4-5



Lent calls us to face the ways we are trapped by guilt, shame, or fear. God’s covenant is not a contract we earn; it is an unshakable promise, renewed again and again. We are invited to step into this freedom, to release the chains we have bound ourselves with, and to live fully into the life God offers.

Freedom is not passive. It calls us to face our failures and to act with integrity in community. As Dr. Emerson Powery reminds us, “**a person can become too heavenly minded to be any earthly good.**” God’s grace does not remove responsibility. Trusting in God’s love, we are freed to forgive, enact justice, love fully, and help create a world that reflects God’s mercy and boundless possibility.





“And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.

For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

Then the angel departed from her.”



Mary’s response to Gabriel’s announcement is NOT the famed magnificat where she praises God for what is about to happen through Jesus. Instead, she says the ancient equivalent of, “I hope you turn out to be right.” Next she seeks a second, human opinion on this claim — corroboration from someone she trusts that this impossibility is maybe actually happening.






Gabriel says Elizabeth is also expecting? If so, she should be showing by now, and Mary should be able to see for herself whether any of the angel's message is true. She feels entitled to that verification.

So if you, in your mundane nobody existence have trouble believing in the power of the Divine, have trouble trusting in the character of the Divine, you are not alone! So did the literal mother of God. Doubt is your birthright, and the hope you hold onto until that transforms into belief is Mary's gift.



NAME



“And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what really matters.” - vv 9-10



I recently had the opportunity to travel with colleagues to a nearby county to visit women incarcerated in immigrant detention. I was blessed to speak with two women who shared their struggles with the complex legal system, their worries for their families, and their grief and anxiety over the uncertainty of their situations.

When I asked how those of us on the outside could help, they both asked first for prayer.





As I read Paul's words in Philippians 1, which he wrote while he was imprisoned, I considered my own prayers — for the women I met, for the world, for myself. Let us take up Paul's challenge and pray this prayer together:

God, make your love overflow in me more and more. Bless me with knowledge, wisdom, and imagination to understand what really matters and live a new life in response. Amen.

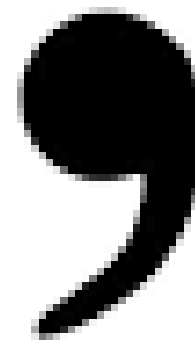
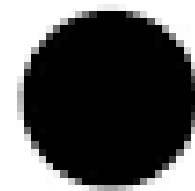


"I'm sure of this: I will stay alive..."

- v. 25a




the option to
stop but the
decision to
keep going



If you haven't heard of the Semicolon Project, take some time to look up and learn about their story.





“They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. ...[He said,] ‘Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Humanity will be handed over...and after three days he will rise again.’” vv. - 32-34



Jesus walks ahead of the disciples. He knows what is coming at the end of this road, and yet he does not turn away. And even though part of this journey will be undertaken alone, for now his friends, his community, his disciples accompany him.

As they join him in the journey, Jesus speaks honestly with them about what is about to happen. He names betrayal and death. He also names his rising.






Jesus holds together what the disciples cannot yet imagine: the depth of the suffering to come and the life that will rise beyond it.

As we continue in this journey of Lent, may we speak honestly about what is wounding and harming the world. May we accompany those who are most at risk. And may we, not in a toxic positivity way, hold fast to resurrection that lives deep in our bones.






“And when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. ‘Who is this?’”
they asked. - v. 10



Jesus enters Jerusalem not with force, but with intention, riding on a borrowed colt and greeted by ordinary people offering what they have. Palms are waved, cloaks laid down, and hope shouted into the streets. This is not a parade of certainty. **It is a procession of risk.** The crowd names Jesus as liberator without fully grasping the cost.

We are the ones we have been waiting for when we choose participation over passivity, when we prepare the road for justice with our own hands. In this sacred season, faith looks like showing up publicly and vulnerably, ready to follow where love leads.





“Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, home of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Lazarus and his sisters hosted a dinner for him...” - vv. 1-2a



Read John 12:1-11. *Then*, read John 11.

In today's gospel, Mary anoints Jesus after he raises her brother Lazarus from death. Martha and Mary sought Jesus' help, and he came — from Jerusalem to Bethany — to raise Lazarus from the dead. It's a salvific story of both miracles and devotion.

In 2013 I took my first trip to Palestine. With the guidance of a local activist group, I walked paths Jesus walked during Lent. When we reached this passage — “Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, home of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.” — our guide stopped us at **the Israeli apartheid wall separating these historic Palestinian towns. We could not get to Bethany.**






These days, I feel stuck between Jerusalem and Bethany.
I don't yet see resurrection; my road feels blocked by empire.

And still, God is with me.

If you're not feeling up for a story of anointing today, how about the story just before this one? In John 11, we see Jesus responding to Martha and Mary's worry with shared tears. Despite the fact that Jesus knows he will raise Lazarus from the dead, he takes the time to cry with his friends. By reading John 11 in tandem with John 12, we get a fuller picture of liberation — it involves partying and resurrection, yes — but also stages where we feel blocked and full of tears. In all stages, Jesus accompanies us. We go nowhere alone.





“By ordinary human standards not many [who have joined the church] are wise, not many are powerful, not many are from the upper class.

But God chose what the world considers foolish to shame the wise. God chose what the world considers weak to shame the strong. **And God chose what the world considers low-class and low-life** — what is considered to be nothing — to reduce what is considered to be something to nothing.” - vv. 26-28



I am again struck by the queerness woven into the Church's very foundations.

To *queer* as a verb is to constantly question and subvert The Way Things Are — in other words, to declare the world's wisdom, its status quo, foolishness, uplifting instead what the world considers foolish, weak, “low-life”!





Queer God, Jesus Christ,
attune our hearts and minds
to the foolishness of your cross.


We will celebrate the holiness,
find the sacred wisdom in
the parts of ourselves
we've been taught are shameful.

We will scoff at so-called "powers"
of wealth and domination
in favor of the power in softness,
solidarity, and compassion.

We will seek out the outcasts,
the outlaws, the overlooked
and in so doing, find you.

Amen.





“So then, with endurance, let’s also run the race that is laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us...” - v. 1



I adore the notion of a “great cloud of witnesses.” Do you know how many queer folks and queer ancestors are in your great cloud of witnesses?! So many!


Queerness demands connection. It teaches us to be a collective. Part of that collective includes the ancestors who have come before us, and another part includes those who cheer us on from the sidelines.





Make a list of your cloud of witnesses. How have they encouraged your queerness to be ever sweeter? How have they cheered you on in the race toward self acceptance and love of others? Who is at the finish line waiting with a bottle of water and a hug to collapse your tired body into? Hold the list in your hand. Give thanks for it. Now make a list of who you might be a witness to.





“No!” Peter said. “You will never wash my feet!” Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you won’t have a place with me.” Simon Peter said, “Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head!” - vv. 8-9



I sat in a swivel chair in the center of a ring of chairs where my classmates were sitting and smiling back at me. I was in a full panic. I could feel the sweat beading on the back of my neck. I knew my face was red and breathing was getting harder and harder.

The thing causing terror to grip me — compliments. The people around me were about to give me compliments and all I was allowed to say was “Thank you.”






Receiving compliments — or in the case of Peter, receiving service — from another is difficult. Jesus's new commandment though is to love one another, which means we will have to receive love from others too. Without someone to receive love, the giving doesn't really work.

Who is trying to give you love that you are rejecting? (ProTip: that "who" might be you trying to love yourself)






“And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don’t stop meeting together with other believers... Instead, encourage each other.” - vv. 24-25a



Most of my friends and family like saying something along the lines of: “I have my faith and I don’t need to go to a church to be a good person.” But I always tell people that I go to church because I am a recovering asshole who needs an accountability group.

This passage says something similar in nicer words: “Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together.” In the act of gathering in worship, we encourage each other to love, to do good deeds. Church is not perfect, but we need each other to be better.





“So Joseph took Jesus’ body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.” - vv. 59-60



There was a tomb ready to go to receive Jesus’ body — one Joseph of Arimathea had hewn for himself, intending it for Joseph’s own eventual burial. But Joseph still lives, and Jesus (at this point) does not.

Deconstructing Christians who leave the death cult they were raised in can and do meet the living God they hope exists when they do as Joseph did: lovingly placing the lifeless body of the Christ they met in church into the tomb intended for their own demise.






Because Joseph lives, there is room for Jesus to be dead, and because He dies Joseph lives.

So it is with you. The Body of Christ you had known has to not just die to you, but be buried by you, in the tomb you yourself laboriously carved out, expecting to make your home there. Seal that place and walk away from it. Look elsewhere for Him.





“Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my siblings to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” - vv. 9-10



Christ is risen!
Christ is risen indeed!
Alleluia, alleluia!
Thanks be to God!

I am not going to lie to you, friends: I grade (**judge**) people by their “alleluias” and their “Christ is risen” call and response. If that initial “Christ is risen!” from the preacher or Pastor doesn’t awaken my soul and draw me towards that enthusiastic response of “CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED!”, well, then it just doesn’t feel like Easter to me.





I don't need the flower cross or the egg hunts. I need to the enthusiasm of "the Marys" — who upon receiving the news from the Angel of the Lord, didn't fall down in fright (...and they say women are too emotional/weak...), but who got up with awe, and joy, and ran ahead to share the news that the tomb was empty and Christ had been raised.

I want the same enthusiasm for the miracle of resurrection that I do about the miracle of birth. I don't want half-hearted alleluias. I am hopeful, that at such a time as this, the hope of the resurrection and the Promise fulfilled will stir each of our souls. Thanks be to God. Alleluia, amen!

