Breathe on Me,

Breath of God

Worship Resources for the Creative Church - Lent/Eastertide 2021

Sacred Seasons, *a series of worship packets with a peace and justice emphasis,*
from Seeds of Hope Publishers: 602 James Avenue; Waco, TX 76706 • 254/755-7745
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art by Sally Lynn Askins

Sacred Seasons

Worship Tools for the Creative Church

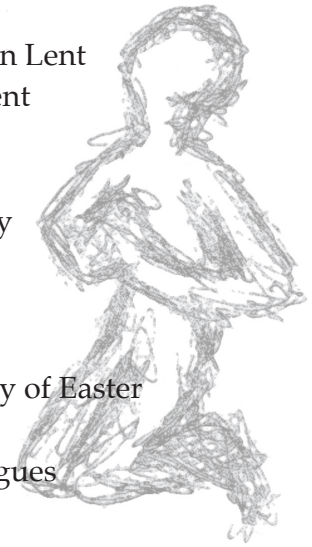
These unique resource packets are available for the liturgical year, three packets a year for $100 ($125 for non-US subscriptions), one packet for $50 ($65 outside of the US).

Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for poor and hungry people of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. Since 1991, the group has sought out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of hunger and poverty.

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

...in this worship packet:



art by Rebecca S. Ward

Editorial Address

The Seeds of Hope ministry is housed by the community of faith at Seventh & James Baptist Church. The mailing address is: 602 James; Waco, TX 76706; 254/755-7745; seedseditor1@gmail.com; www.seedspublishers.org.

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A Word about This Packet

As we send out our worship packet for the 2021 Lent and Eastertide season, we are once again indebted to a lot of people for their generous contributions. I am grateful to our liturgical team: Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Grant Dooley, Scott Turner and Alec Ylitalo for the direction and theme, and for most of the elements of the liturgies.

You will see in Alec Ylitalo's theme interpretation how we approached the idea of breath and breathing. When we came together to work on the 2020 Advent theme, we were extremely aware of our sisters and brothers who have to fight for breath—in every interpretation of that. We wanted our packets for this liturgical year to be relevant and helpful in this time of pandemic and ever-increasing chaos in our society.

Sally Lynn Askins, our resident artist, meditated on breath and breathing, and about the presence of masks in our world today. She created stunning four masked angels for the Sundays in Advent. Now, feeling very much led by the Spirit, she has created another masked angel for the cover of this packet, following the same theme. She asked that we mention that she is dedicating this angel to "Guilherme Almeida, Katie Cook and Charlie Mackesy,* whose art has reminded me about kindness and that it's okay to be a human being."

You will find fewer art pieces that are traditional for Lent and Easter, and more that exemplify the themes chosen by the team for each of the liturgies. Some of these are new pieces by Jesse Manning.

Besides the liturgies for Ash Wednesday, the Sundays in Lent, Holy Week, Easter Sunday and the first Sunday in Eastertide, you will find a sermon by Erin Conaway; a children's message by Scott Turner, and two monologues interpreting the resurrection appearance of Jesus to Thomas the Twin.

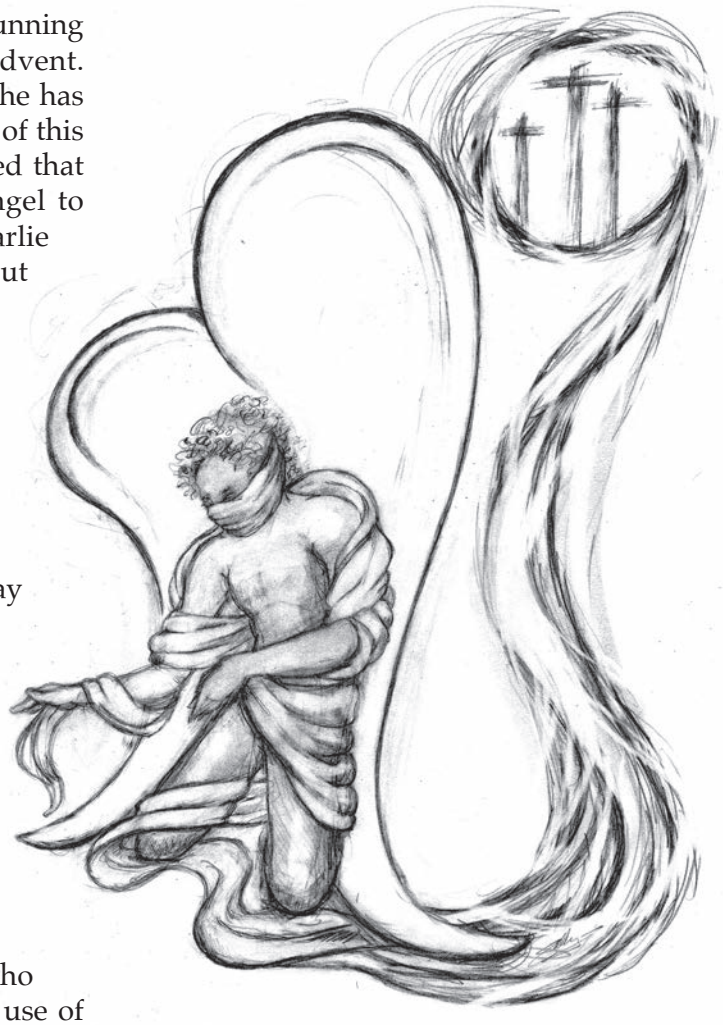
We also hope you are enriched by the many meditations and prayers that are sprinkled throughout the liturgy pages.

We are deeply grateful for all of you who subscribe to *Sacred Seasons*, and who make use of these gifts in your worship and work. As always, we are counting on you to adapt these contents to your own needs, resources and inclinations. We would love to hear about how you used them—especially the monologues.

The contents of this packet are your congregation's to use freely and we want you to share them with others. Our prayer is that they will give us the tools and inspiration we need to enter into a thoughtful Lenten season and a joyful Eastertide. May the breath of God blow across your lives and bless them with healing.

—Gratefully,
Katie Cook, on behalf of the Seeds staff
and Council of Stewards

* Charlie Mackesy is a British artist whose 2019 book *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* was a bestseller.



art by Sally Lynn Askins

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

A Theme Interpretation for Lent & Eastertide 2021

by Alec Ylitalo

Editor's note: This theme interpretation is similar to, and adapted from, the interpretation that Alec Ylitalo wrote for the 2020 Advent/Christmastide packet, "Breath of Heaven." Alec introduced, for that packet, our theme of breath and breathing for this liturgical year. This interpretation repeats the theme for the approach of Lent.

Breathing is second nature to us. It's one of the most intriguing aspects of the human body because it seems to be both voluntary and involuntary at the same time. You can control your breathing by stopping and starting it, but the moment your body requires a breath, it gasps for one without your own input.

> That first wail of Jesus in the manger was the very breath that established a life that would continue to breathe hope, peace, joy and love into a struggling world that has fallen far from the flourishing of creation.

In fact, I'd imagine that most people don't even really pay attention to their breathing patterns until that pattern is actually labored or interrupted. Breath is a life-giving and necessary part of being human.

On the other hand, since last March, humanity has become rather hyper-focused on breath because of the potential dangers that have come to the forefront in the COVID-19 era. Being (in the current understanding) the primary manner of transmission for the disease, breath has almost felt like it's become dangerous and life-threatening at times, while still being a necessity.

With us all being more aware than usual of how our breath affects, not only our own bodies, but the lives and health of others and the world around us, it seems appropriate to take a deeper look into the effects of God breathing into the world.

The breath of heaven, the breath of God, is a powerful force that is seen moving, creating, speaking and saving all throughout our scriptures, but there is especially an incredible focus on breath during the events that act as the pillars of our faith.

In the beginning, the breath of God forms into words of creation. From single aspirations, unbounded creativity arises day after day. Everything that we know of, heaven and earth, rock and sea, plant and animal, humanity itself, exists first because God breathed life into this world.

art by Sally Lynn Askins

From the start, we see that the breath of heaven can do magnificent things, but this is only the jumping-off point for us as God breathes the breath of life into the first human. What else can the breath of Heaven become in this new sanctuary?

All of this divine breathing of new life into existence is incredible, but is only indicative of a far-away God, transcending time and space. But what of the immanent aspect of God? What of the close-to-us God? During Advent and Christmastide, we witnessed our faith drawing near with the anticipation of the very first breath drawn by the Christ child. A new sort of creative breath arrived, a second part to the story of the breath of heaven.

Alas, whereas there is a first breath in a person, there is also a last breath. We have celebrated with overwhelming joy that first breath, and now, as we enter Lent, we realize the last gasp of "It is finished" lies in wait.

In this chapter, God is now breathing the same air as we do, joining in the now labored breath of humanity, but also God breathing new life into humanity itself through what that Christ child has now grown up to be.

That first wail of Jesus in the manger was the very breath that established a life that would continue to breathe hope, peace, joy and love into a struggling world that has fallen far from the flourishing of creation. Cries for justice, caring for the least of these and feeding the hungry form from that very same breath of Jesus, as he seeks to relieve those who are gasping for air while being drowned by the injustices of the world around them.

Breath continues to transform creatively and become action in the world as it now sustains the one who meets the people where they are and lays hands upon those who are in need. Jesus allows the world around him to breathe a little bit easier.

Alas, whereas there is a first breath in a person, there is also a last breath. We have celebrated with overwhelming joy that first breath, and now, as we enter Lent, we realize the last gasp of "It is finished" lies in wait. We will soon witness the danger and life-taking nature of breath, and yet we also will witness that that final gasp is still a creative breath that gives new life in different ways.

We see that the breath of heaven becomes grace and forgiveness for that fallen world, even as Jesus' final, labored breaths close out the time of Emmanuel, God with us.

From creation through the season of preparing for the first breath of Christ, we now enter the season of Lent and the focus on the last breath of Christ. We will go on from here to enter the Hunger Emphasis season, where it's easy to hear the labored breathing of humanity in the midst of the vast injustices of the world. This year we at Seeds focus on paying attention to the movement, the power, the life-giving nature of the breath of heaven throughout these seasons.

May the Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on you and be felt through all of these seasons in different ways as we realize the involuntary nature of creation's lungs being filled by the divine, as well as the voluntary actions of us following in the same steps of Christ breathing newness into the world around us. May we take to heart the life-giving and life-taking nature of that breath, and through it all feel the nature of God flowing over the earth.

From creation through the season of preparing for the first breath of Christ, we now enter the season of Lent and the focus on the last breath of Christ. We will go on from here to enter the Hunger Emphasis season, where it's easy to hear the labored breathing of humanity in the midst of the vast injustices of the world.

—Alec Ylitalo, one of the stalwarts of the Sacred Seasons liturgical team, is Senior Minister at Richfield Christian Church in Waco, TX, and is president of the Greater Waco Interfaith Council.

A Liturgy for Ash Wednesday

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Call to Worship

The smells of whispering pines, pre-rain on a summer evening, the scent of our grandmothers, ripe peaches stacked neatly in a crate, coffee slowly dripping into the pot, and so many more pleasant aromas we breathe in and feel content. Refreshed. Loved. But we are not here for pleasant inhalations; we are here for ashes and confession and repentance. Our sins against God, against one another, against our true selves, rise up as a stench from the smoldering destruction left in their wake. Let us brave the smell of our own brokenness that we might make good, honest, and full confessions as we remember we are dust….

Prelude

Hymn

"My Song Is Love Unknown"
Glory to God Hymnal No. 209
WORDS: Samuel Crossman
MUSIC: John Ireland
LOVE UNKNOWN 6.6.6.6.4.4.4.4.

Meditation of Preparation

Lent is a time of repentance, in the best sense of that word: reordering our lives to reflect who God would have us be.
~Lanny Peters

Reading from the Prophets

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 51:1-17

Hymn

"What Wondrous Love Is This"
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 171
WORDS: Stith Mead's
General Selection, 1811
MUSIC: William Walker's
Southern Harmony;
arr. William J. Reynolds, 1975

Epistle Reading

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Hymn

"Sign Us with Ashes"
Glory to God Hymnal No. 433
WORDS: Mary Louise Bringle
MUSIC: William P. Rowan
PHOENIZ Long Meter with Refrain

Gospel Reading

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Litany

ONE: If you have sinned, do not lose hope because of your error. Pray instead.

art by Peter Yuichi Clark

MANY: Lord, listen to your children praying.
(Silence)

ONE: On the other hand, if you have done something good, never presume too much on account of your goodness. Never congratulate yourself excessively.
MANY: Lord, listen to your children praying.
(Silence)

ONE: Never look down on someone else for sinning, and remember that when the wayward soul prays and repents of doing wrong, the Lord will raise a person up, as he did Lazarus.
MANY: Lord, listen to your children praying.
(Silence)

Meditation of Confession

The spiritual quest is not for interesting "spiritual experiences" but for the expansion of our capacity for mercy, the opening of our hearts wide enough to embrace the world, and not just the fragments of it, here and there, which at present we manage to feel with and care about.
–Martin L. Smith, A Season for the Spirit

Imposition of Ashes

LEADER: Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth; Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our dependence on you, that we may remember that by your gracious love we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, who became dust like us. Amen.

(The congregation forms one or two lines. The minister or ministers begin by making a sign of the cross in ashes on the forehead of the first person in line, who then turns and does the same for the person behind him or her. In this way, the participants are priests to each other. As each person imposes the ashes on a fellow worshipper, they say:
By the wearing of these ashes, we offer our suffering and brokenness to God.

Benediction

We've breathed in, in order to confess our part of the evil and injustice in the world, we've gasped at our role, and now it's time for that breath to exhale and transform from passive into active as we attempt to make things right. May the sign of the cross, the harshness of the sackcloth and ashes, the first steps into the desert and temptations be your first reminder that confession is just one part of repentance, and that there is a need in this world for tangible change. May we go and be that change, breathing new life into the world. ■

If we would be willing, during Lent,
To put ourselves in a new situation
in which we might not feel comfortable,
If we would be willing, during Lent,
To look through someone's eyes
who makes less money than we do,
If we would be willing, during Lent,
To spend time listening to someone
who has been excluded because of their race,
If we would be willing, during Lent,
To choose to seek out a different lens
through which to view our culture,
If we would be willing, during Lent,
To give up making assumptions
about someone based on their appearance…
Then, maybe, we would begin to be in touch
with the fast that God chooses:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke.
–Allison Stone,
"Thoughts for Early Lent"

A Liturgy for the First Sunday in Lent

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Call to Worship

Chains, shackles, bars, walls, locks. We impose them on one another often for safety, many times out of fear, sometimes just for hatred. We build prisons in many shapes and forms. Some hold those in need of reform, some are walls of addiction, some are systems of hatred and oppression and some are only locked from the inside. God who created the expanse of the Universe, deliver us from the temptations to make things small, to live and die by minutia, to make petty these lives which breathe the very breath of life you give them. Give us the courage to rise above.

Prelude

Hymn

"God of Grace and God of Glory"
Voices Together No. 716 (Mennonite Hymnal)
WORDS: Harry Emerson Fosdick
MUSIC: John Hughes
CWM RHONDDA 8.7.8.7.8.7. extended

Meditation of Preparation

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.
–Viktor Frankl

Reading from the Prophets

Genesis 9:8-17

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 25:1-10

Hymn

"There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"
Chalice Hymnal No. 73
WORDS: Frederick W. Faber
MUSIC: Lizzie S. Tourjee,
harm. Charles H. Webb
WELLESLEY 8.7.8.7.

Epistle Reading

I Peter 3:18-22

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:9-15

Continued on page 11

art by Sally Lynn Askins

The Devil Went Down to Georgia

A Sermon for the First Sunday of Lent

by Erin Conaway

Texts: Mark 1: 9-15, Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13

The devil went down to Georgia;
He was lookin' for a soul to steal.
He was in a bind 'cause he was way behind
And he was willing to make a deal,
When he came across this young man
Sawing on a fiddle and playing it hot.
And the devil jumped up on a hickory stump
And said, "Boy let me tell you what,
I guess you didn't know it
But I'm a fiddle player too
And if you'd care to take a dare
I'll make a bet with you.
Now you play pretty good fiddle, boy
But give the devil his due;
I bet a fiddle of gold against your soul
I think I'm better than you."
The boy said, "My name's Johnny
And it might be a sin but I'll take your bet
And you're gonna regret
'Cause I'm the best that's ever been."

I grew up singing this song and playing the seatbelt fiddle with Johnny and as far as I knew, this was normal behavior for the devil. He had some sort of quota to meet to keep the population of hell up to a certain level and he prowled around like a roaring lion just waiting to entrap people at their weak points. He should have tried to get Johnny with pride—and maybe he did—he just lost that particular battle and now there's a gold fiddle playing somewhere in Georgia.

How do you make a deal with the devil? One Ash Wednesday, I spent an hour or so reading parts of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragic Tale of Dr. Faustus* searching for a great quote to put in the worship guide, but I never found exactly what I thought I wanted. Faust made a deal with the devil and, at the end of his life, found he regretted it deeply, but it was too late.

There are many legends of people making deals with the devil in order to gain power or great intellect, or even just to get out of a fix. Pope Sylvester II is said to have gained his papacy either by winning at a game of dice with the devil, or by making a pact with the female demon Meridiana, who appeared to him after his one earthly love left him.

One of my favorite tales of making a deal with the devil comes from Icelandic lore. A priest made a deal with the devil to bring him back to Iceland from Europe on the back of a seal in exchange for his soul. Just before he got home, he smote the seal on the head with a Bible and killed it then jumped onto shore thus negating the deal, but getting a free ride back home. That's some Bible.

Most of the tales we have of people making a deal with the devil occur because the person wants to achieve some greater good. I'm sure Pope Sylvester thought of all of the great things he could accomplish as Pope. He was a learned man who encouraged Christians to study Arabic. Some then accused him of sorcery. Some people just can't win for losing.

Most of the tales we have of people making a deal with the devil occur because the person wants to achieve some greater good. I'm sure Pope Sylvester thought of all of the great things he could accomplish as Pope.

I don't know if Pope Sylvester II sold his soul to the devil, but I suspect if he did he thought it was to do some greater good in the world. And then perhaps he might win his soul back—who knows?

In the temptation narratives from the gospels, Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit for the specific purpose of being tempted. I don't

understand that. Why have a big showdown at the beginning of his ministry? Was this to make sure Jesus was on the same page with God about how this was all going to work? Aren't there better ways to get on the same page than letting the devil tempt you?

I don't understand the testing part of our faith, but it is undeniably present in the life of faith, including in the life of Christ. Perhaps this was to show us that Jesus can relate to us when we are tempted. Because he was fully human, he had to know and experience the lure of temptation, just as we do in our lives.

Ever since the emperor Constantine thought he could make all of Rome Christian by declaring it the national religion, it seems we have been in pursuit of power with the excuse that more power can create a more Christian civilization.

He fasts for 40 days and then the divider—which is a more literal translation of the word we have rendered tempter—the divider comes to him and tells him he should feed himself by turning stones into bread. That makes sense. Jesus is hungry, he has the power to do it, and just think of the people who would follow him if he would routinely feed them through this kind of miracle.

He faces this temptation again after feeding the five thousand. In John's gospel, Jesus and the disciples have to escape because the people want to make him king by force. Think of all of the people who could have heard his message if he only included free bread with every teaching? It's a real temptation, not just to satisfy himself in this moment, but to use his power to bring in the big crowds and keep them coming back.

The next temptation feels a little like the very first one in the Bible. The divider takes Jesus up to the pinnacle of the temple and tells him to jump because if God really can be trusted, God will catch you. "Did God say you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?" the serpent asked the woman.

Here it's as if the tempter is questioning what God said to Jesus after his baptism: "This is my son, the beloved one, in him I am well pleased." He's also questioning him by quoting the psalmist: "If you are the Son of God, prove it—just jump and then we will both know who you are."

That's how temptation works: just a hint of doubt about the fact that we are children of God, loved and cherished by God. The divider wants Jesus to prove his identity to the divider and to himself. That doesn't seem like a bad thing; it's good to know who we are, but God has already told us. This desire to verify basically calls God a liar—or at least doubts that God's word is true and can be trusted.

So many times in our lives, all we have to lean on is God's word—in the sense of Scripture and in the sense of the person of Jesus, whom John's Gospel calls the Word. It's important that we learn to trust and have faith so that when we are in those moments of despair and difficulty, we have a well-used muscle of faith and connection to God.

Finally, the divider promises Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world if Jesus will only bow down and worship him. All of the kingdoms of the world. That's the goal right? That's why Jesus came: To reveal God's love and fidelity to all humankind and to the Creation as well. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

If he can get it done this way, why not? Don't the ends justify the means? This seems like a sure thing whereas the other way—leaving people to their own freedom and choices, that's risky. Why not be king over all of the nations of the world rather than be crucified?

As king, Jesus could change all of the laws and regulations to fit within his teachings. He could fill his cabinet with the disciples or send them out to watch over faraway lands. There would be no more war if the entire world were ruled by one king. Right? If this is an easy decision, it's not a real temptation.

And we know this third one well, don't we? Ever since the emperor Constantine thought he could make all of Rome Christian by declaring it the national religion, it seems we have been in pursuit of power with the excuse that more power can create a more Christian civilization. We think that all we need are a few more seats here and a few more benches there and then we will be able to do a great bit of good—but at what cost?

If we just take the issue of abortion (because that's never divided anyone, right?), Christians see a practice that many believe violates the sanctity of life they find from Scripture. After the Roe v. Wade case, when the Supreme Court said accessibility to a safe abortion was a legal right of all women in the United States, various anti-abortion groups have done everything they can imagine doing in order to combat this law, and combat abortions anywhere in the United States.

I won't go into the extreme and graphic things that anti-abortion groups have done—all primarily under the Christian flag—saying they are motivated by their faith in Christ to do these things. Even going so far as to murder doctors who perform abortions. All in the name of Christ and, ironically, for the sanctity of life. The extremes are easy examples of people losing sight of what they claim to be their foundation in Christ and their motivation for action.

But what about the efforts to put people in Congress and in the White House in order to place judges who want to overturn Roe v. Wade? What about the efforts to get people elected to state office who promise to pass legislation that makes it impossible for some people to access any kind of health care in their towns or areas" And why? Because the clinics have been legislated out of business because, among the many services and screenings they provided, access to a safe abortion was one of them.

The grasp for power can lead to backing some candidates who might agree on this one issue, but who don't represent the values and morals of Christians in other areas. But if it is only about this one issue, then the ends justify the means. Right? This feels like a moment when we've exchanged our souls in order to amass power, to try to force our faith into laws and regulations.

Christians in the early Church were known to go and retrieve the babies who were left out to be "exposed." These are the unwanted children of their day who were literally left out by the garbage dumps to die. Christians would go get the babies and raise them as their own. Did they try to lobby Rome to make the practice of exposure illegal? I don't think they did. Should they have? Perhaps.

But, at some point along the way, we seem to have lost our way and gotten consumed with power and the good that we know we would do with it. We see all of the kingdoms of the world, and we think we should rule them, but rule them for Jesus.

But it doesn't turn out that way, because Jesus came proclaiming an upside-down kingdom, where the last are first and the first are last. How do we reconcile that with our efforts to amass more and more and more power?

But shouldn't we do everything we can to try to make God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven?

If it's an easy decision, it's not a real temptation.

Jesus was promised the kingdoms of the world. Just imagine all he could have done with that kind of power. All he had to do was worship the divider. What does that look like for us? I don't know if anyone in the anti-abortion movement has made a deal with the devil, or sold their soul in order to get to the most powerful position to try to end abortions, but isn't selling out to power the same thing?

Certainly no one in this room has made a blood pact with the devil to gain wealth or power or position in certain places, but haven't we all been tempted to put wealth and power and influence as our top priority over God—and over the demands of the gospel to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves?

Of course we have.

When we put it as starkly as the divider put it to Jesus, it seems easier than when it just kind of slips

Jesus was promised the kingdoms of the world. Just imagine all he could have done with that kind of power. All he had to do was worship the divider. What does that look like for us?

into our lives—when we make decisions about how we will spend our money that then dictate what we can and cannot afford to give away. Or when we have that opportunity at work to move up and all it requires is a few changes to this report or that report to make our team's numbers look better than the others. But imagine all of the good we could do if we had that position versus one or two little lies? If it is an easy decision, it's not a real temptation.

Jesus resists this very tempting offer. We don't even know if the divider or the tempter could actually follow through on his offer. He's not bound to tell us the truth. None of the things that tempt us are bound to tell us the truth. All the divider wants is

for Jesus to fail. Who cares if he can't follow through on what he's offering? All that matters is that we believe the lie.

If we believe we can make the world a better place by gaining power and whatever it takes to get there will be outweighed by the good that we do once we get there—then it's okay, isn't it? What happens if when we get there—or we get someone else there—and it turns out to be a lie? They really can't end abortion in our country—even by changing the laws. They can make it more difficult to obtain, but laws won't change people's hearts and suddenly make them behave a certain way.

> The divider wants Jesus to prove his identity to the divider and to himself. That doesn't seem like a bad thing; it's good to know who we are, but God has already told us.

And what did we have to give up to get here? What do people now think of Christians based on what they've seen of the anti-abortion movement? Do they think of love? Do they think of an overwhelming value of life—in all of its stages? Or do they see people behaving like everyone else who wants to be in power to have their way?

I really want people to believe what I believe. Well, what I believe now, because it changes a lot as I get older and have more experience and meet and listen to people who challenge my beliefs. But there are some things that I'm sure I'm right about, and wouldn't it be great if I could make everyone see that and believe it too?

I needed freedom to find my way, and I suspect others do too. And I'm still finding the way—as we all are. And as tempting as it is to want to sell people on the answers I currently have, I think God is calling us to find them together. God is calling us to challenge each other to ask good and even better questions and to learn to live with them even when they are still unanswered.

That is the worship of God who is mystery, who is still unknown in many ways by our small, but eager minds. This is the direction to which we are to bow our knees and turn our adoration and our energy. Towards God who came to us in the form of an infant, born to peasant parents, who lived a life on earth without a mansion or even a permanent home, who taught us in parables and with miracles that pointed to even higher healing and wonder, who submitted to death, even death on a cross and was then raised on the third day conquering death and its power over us.

We are called to worship God who chose the path of freedom, story, love and mystery—over power and coercion and forced obedience. Let us not lose sight of God while we try to rush to achieve our goals—however noble we may think they are. The ends might not justify the means. And we just might find ourselves playing fiddle with the devil. Amen.

– Erin Conaway, a native of Midland, TX, is a member of the Sacred Seasons *liturgical team and a frequent contributor to Seeds publications. He is the pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church, where the Seeds offices are housed.*

Liturgy for the First Sunday in Lent

continued from page 8

Sermon

(See "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" on page 9.)

Meditation of Commitment

Child, when do you think is the time to love somebody the most; when they done good and made things easy for everybody? Well then, you ain't through learning—because that ain't the time at all. It's when he's at his lowest and can't believe in hisself 'cause the world done whipped him so.

–Lorraine Hansberry, Raisin in the Sun

Hymn of Commitment

"Great God, Your Love Has Called Us Here"
Worship and Rejoice Hymnal No. 55
WORDS: Brian Wren
MUSIC: Erik Routley
ABINGDON 8.8.8.8.8.8.

Benediction

We've breathed in and confessed our role in the scourge of incarceration in our world, and now it's time for that breath to be exhaled into a voice for the imprisoned. May those who have no vocal advocates find a breath of relief in you as you follow Jesus' words and actions of setting the captives free. May we go and be that liberation, breathing new life into the world. ■

A Liturgy for the Second Sunday in Lent

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Call to Worship

Babbling creeks dancing over smooth stones, frozen mountains rising up from the ocean, motley-colored leaves whirling in the wind, eco-systems in balance as death feeds life and life drifts into death: All a part of the work of your voice, singing everything into being. And yet, in our selfishness and our greed, we have broken the melody of your song. We've decimated forests and murdered species into extinction. We've soiled the very air we breathe and neglected our call to steward the great gift of your creation. Every inhalation bears witness to our wanton madness. Give us tears for the things that break your heart, O God, and open our ears to the cries of Creation.

Prelude

Hymn

"We Sing Your Mighty Power, O God"
Chalice Hymnal No. 64

art by Jesse Manning

WORDS: Isaac Watts
MUSIC: Gesangbuch der H. W. k. Hofkapelle
ELLACOMBE Common Meter

Meditation of Preparation

Our task is enormous: to co-create with God. To look at all that has gone before us, and to recognize that each one of us, however small, has a unique task in co-creation—a unique contribution to make in the world and to humanity—to recognize that by our very existence, we are related to all things; to the caterpillar, the sod, the animals, the birds, to every man and woman. We are part of an interconnected, interrelated cosmos. We cannot amputate ourselves from the rest of God's unfolding universe. We must come to discover the part we have to play in it.
–Edwina Gateley

Reading from the Prophets

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 22:23-31

Hymn

"Creation Sings! Each Plant and Tree"
Sing! A New Creation Hymnal No. 36
WORDS: Martin E. Leckebusch
MUSIC: Dimitri S. Bortnianski
ST. PETERSBURG 8.8.8.8.8.8.

Epistle Reading

Romans 4:13-25

Gospel Reading

Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9

Sermon

Continued on page 16

Children's Message for Lent

by Scott Turner

Can anyone tell me what the season of Lent is? No, the season of Lent is not the fuzzy stuff you find in the laundry sometimes; it's a whole season that the church observes right before Easter. Lent is an important season in the church, because it reminds us of how great the love of Jesus Christ is for us. Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, a day when the church remembers that nothing lasts forever except for the love of God.

Sometimes, people even celebrate the day before Ash Wednesday by eating pancakes. We call it Shrove Tuesday. Lent lasts for 46 days until we celebrate Easter.

But there is still a whole week of special days before Easter, called Holy Week. In Holy Week we have Palm Sunday, the day when we lay out palm leaves for Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem, then we have Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. These are all important days for the church's celebration of Easter.

What have you and your family done to celebrate Easter in the past? Easter is such a joyous and fun day in the church; we wear colorful clothes, find Easter eggs and eat our favorite Easter candies, but Lent is supposed to feel a little bit different from Easter.

Lent is a season where the church purposefully chooses to be a little bit sad. Have you ever been sad about something? Maybe sad about something that was lost or went missing? Lent is about recognizing what life is like without Easter, a life without Jesus and His love for us, and that's a sad thing to think about.

So, because the church decides to live for a season without Easter, the people of the church sometimes decide to participate in Lent by giving up something that they like to have in their normal lives. Adults like to give up things like coffee, sodas, sugar, and candy.

Sometimes they even give up their bad habits, like biting their nails or spending too much time on their cell phones. By doing this, the people of the church are reminded every time they crave a soda or want to bite their nails, that Jesus loves us very much, and our lives are a lot better when we have the blessing of Easter to look forward to.

For Lent this year, we are going to remember a lot of things that people have to go without everyday. We're going to remember that there are people who are in jail who don't have a lot of things that we have, especially the choice to go outside and breathe fresh air whenever they want to.

We're going to remember that because we haven't done a very good job taking care of this earth and the air that God has given us, some people are having to go without food, water and sometimes even shelter.

We're especially going to remember that there are people all over the world that just don't have enough money to buy basic things like clothes or food. And finally, we're going to remember that there are people all around us who have to go without kindness, because people choose to treat them poorly because of the color of their skin.

Let's remember to be kind and loving this season, and care about those who have to live without important things.

Can you think of anything you could give up for Lent?

Let's pray: Lord, we thank you for the blessings of Easter that are still to come, but we ask that you would remind us daily of your love, and remind us to love and be kind to others, especially those without important things. Amen.

–Scott Turner was raised in Georgetown, TX, graduated with a degree in youth ministry from Howard Payne University, and is currently an MDIV student at Truett Theological Seminary. He's passionate about congregational ministry and art (specifically illustration and printmaking) and loves to explore how they intersect. He is a member of the Sacred Seasons *liturgical team.*

A Liturgy for the Third Sunday in Lent

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Call to Worship

Siblings are often identified by their resemblance to their parents: "They both have their mother's eyes, they both inherited their father's nose." We are all created in your image, bearing within our very bodies the vast wonder of your love and the variety of your beauty. And yet, we too often allow our differences to blind us to our kinship. We divide the family by education and class, like sisters refusing to recognize one another because they are wearing different colored clothes. We allow small things to overshadow mountains of similarities. We breathe in the lies of privilege and oppression. Bring us back to this moment of truth. Remind us of all we share, as your children, every one.

Prelude

Hymn

"In Christ there Is No East or West"
African Methodist Episcopal Church Hymnal No. 557
WORDS: John Oxenham
MUSIC: Traditional Spiritual Melody, arr. Harry T. Burleigh
MCKEE Common Meter

Meditation of Preparation

Liberation theology is about God's preferential option for the poor. We work for their liberation because God has chosen them, period—not because they are better than anybody else, or because they will do better if they are helped.
–*Marc Ellis,* A Year at the Catholic Worker

Reading from the Prophets

Exodus 20:1-17

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 19

Hymn

"Let Justice Flow like Streams"
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 689
WORDS: Jane Parker Huber
MUSIC: Aaron Williams
ST. THOMAS Single Meter

Epistle Reading

I Corinthians 1:18-25

Gospel Reading

John 2:13-22

Sermon

Continued on page 16

art by Robert Darden

Liturgy for the Second Sunday in Lent

continued from page 13

Meditation of Commitment

Each of us is called to prophetic agony—to speak the Word, to do justice and righteousness. We are most truly ourselves when we live within God's insecurity, acknowledging Yahweh's sovereignty over creation, taking full responsibility as contingent creatures who yet must decide and act. Future is created out of past by those who live the present. Wherever history is unfolding, faith demands response. In the face of God-encounter, indifference does not suffice.

–Martin Bell

Hymn of Commitment

"Creation Is a Song" / "Ho'è enemeohe"
Voices Together No. 181 (Mennonite Hymnal)
WORDS and MUSIC: Doug Krehbiel, Jude Krehbiel; transl. Lenora Hart Holliman and Wayne Leman
CREATION IS A SONG 8.6.6.6. with refrain

Benediction

We've breathed in and confessed our role in the harm and destruction of God's creation all around us, and now it's time for that breath to be exhaled into a voice for a creation that cries out. May those cries not be in vain, but be taken to heart as you follow God's call for humanity to care for and cultivate creation. May we go and be that healing, breathing new life into the world. ■

Liturgy for the Third Sunday in Lent

continued from page 15

Meditation of Commitment

They are our prophets when we neglect them, when we refuse to give to them because we do not think they are worthy. When they are forgotten in big, impersonal mental institutions or on the streets of our cities, they carry the pain and the alienation which we have inflicted, and in doing this they prophetically tell us what we have done with our own souls.

–Poul Gutteson, "Adam, God's Beloved"

Hymn of Commitment

"God of Freedom, God of Justice"
Chalice Hymnal No. 656
WORDS: Shirley Erena Murray
MUSIC: Guthrie Foote
TREDEGAR 8.7.8.7.8.7.

Benediction

We've breathed in and confessed our role in the harsh division and inequalities, the class warfare that has happened on our watch, and now it's time for that breath to be exhaled into a voice for those crushed beneath that weight. May those who are systemically pushed down, as they try to climb out, breathe easier as you reach out with the same hand Christ did to lift up the lowly. May we go and be that uniting force, breathing new life into the world. ■

In the face of death, live humanly.

In the middle of chaos, celebrate the Word.
Amidst babel, I repeat, speak the truth.
Confront the noise and verbiage and falsehood of death
with the truth and potency and efficacy of the Word of God.
Know the Word, teach the Word, nurture the Word, preach the Word,
defend the Word, incarnate the Word, do the Word, live the Word.
And more than that, in the Word of God, expose death
and all death's works and wiles,
rebuke lies, cast out demons, exorcise, cleanse the possessed,
raise those who are dead in mind and conscience.

—William Stringfellow,
An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

Do not bother looking for Lent in your Bible dictionary, because there was no such thing back then. There is some evidence that early Christians fasted forty hours between Good Friday and Easter, but the custom of spending forty days in prayer and self-denial did not arise until later, when the initial rush of Christian adrenaline was over and believers had gotten very ho-hum about their faith. When the world did not end as Jesus said it would, his followers stopped expecting so much from God or from themselves. They hung a wooden cross on the wall and settled back into their more or less comfortable routines.

...

Little by little, Christians became devoted to their comforts instead: the soft couch, the flannel sheets, the leg of lamb roasted with rosemary. These things made them feel safe and cared for—if not by God, then by themselves. They decided there was no contradiction between being comfortable and being Christian, and before long it was very hard to pick them out from the population at large. They no longer distinguished themselves by their bold love for one another. They did not get arrested for championing the poor. They blended in. They avoided extremes. They decided to be nice instead of holy and God moaned out loud.

...

So the church announced a season of Lent, from the old English word Lenten, meaning spring—not only a reference to the season before Easter, but also an invitation to a springtime for the soul. Forty days to cleanse the system and open the eyes to what remains when all comfort is gone. Forty days to remember what it is like to live by the grace of God alone and not by what we can supply for ourselves.
–*Barbara Brown Taylor*, Home by Another Way

Jesus does not romanticize his way of life. He is homeless, so his followers, too, can expect to wander the earth as pilgrims on a mission to proclaim God's nonviolent reign.... Jesus insists that his mission has a life-and-death urgency. The end of the old world is at hand—and so is God's reign. Get with it, stay with it, and don't give up.
–*John Dear,* Jesus the Rebel

One of my predecessors in the pulpit at The Riverside Church, founding pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick, once exclaimed, "It's a great time to be alive! The world is falling apart!"
–*Amy Butler*

Let us journey together
through this season of Lent.
Let us listen to stories of exile
and hear cries for hope.
Let us reach out for the hand of Jesus
and walk a path of dangerous love
into the possibility of new life.

If you dare, take the hand of Jesus
and go with him to Jerusalem.
Along the way, visit friends and challenge power,
Turn water to wine and be extravagant with praise,
For Jesus bids us live a dangerous love
and, in love, he leads us along the way.
–April Baker and Amy Mears

A Liturgy for the Fourth Sunday in Lent

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Call to Worship

Children fighting over sand while sitting on a beach, belligerent siblings trying to hoard sunlight, fish waging war over water. It sounds silly on the surface, but it is the simile of our greed. We let avarice and unfounded fears smear our hands with the blood of our neighbors. Teach us, O Lord: there is enough…

there is enough…

there is enough.

Prelude

Hymn

"Why Stand So Far Away, My God?"

art by Sally Lynn Askins

Lift Up Your Hearts Hymnal No. 648
WORDS: Ruth Duck
MUSIC: Jack Grotenhuis
MORNING SONG 8.6.8.6.

Meditation of Preparation

By the waters of luxury
we sat and tried to sing again;
Hung our harps on the traffic signs
Because the music would not come.
In our capital captivity
Heated and cooled by central air
In an alien land that we made for ourselves
We tried to remember home.
Did we really forget so soon
We were strangers in a foreign land
Sent as insurgents by the Prince of Peace
To work for Kingdom come?
Were we seduced by the enemy
And taught to play in the oppressor's band?
And did the wrangling and the jangling drown
The sound of the songs of home?
–Ken Medema, "Kingdom in the Streets"

Reading from the Prophets

Numbers 21:4-9

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Hymn

"In an Age of Twisted Values"
Glory to God Hymnal No. 345
WORDS: Martin E. Leckebusch
MUSIC: Alfred V. Fedak
CHURCH UNITED 8.7.8.7.D

Epistle Reading

Ephesians 2:1-10

Gospel Reading
John 3:14-21

Sermon

Meditation of Commitment
I met this preacher from Australia
He'd read the Bible searching
for its dominant themes
And he counted 87 times
when Jesus said,
"Follow Me!"
Well you know that
got me thinking…
Am I following Jesus
or just believing in Christ?
…If I'm a follower of Jesus,
Then why am I such a good life
insurance risk?
And why, when I do my giving
Do I still keep so much when so
much hunger exists?
And If I follow Jesus,
why do I have so many friends
Among the affluent
and so few among the poor?
And if I follow Jesus,
Why do missiles and guns
make me feel more secure?
–Bryan Sirchio, from "Follow Me"

Hymn of Commitment
"Children from Your Vast Creation"
Sing! A New Creation
Hymnal No. 58
WORDS: David A. Robb
MUSIC: William P. Rowlands
BLAENWERN 8.7.8.7.D

Benediction
We've breathed in and confessed our role in taking more than our fair share, greed that feeds into most of our society's failings, and now it's time for that breath to be exhaled into a voice for those who have been pushed away from the table of plenty. May those who have been left out when there's more than enough not have to gasp for their fair share as you breathe words of welcome back to the table. May we go and be that selflessness, breathing new life into the world. ■

art by Sally Lynn Askins

Lenten Prayer
by Susan Cowley

Oh, God,
You who multiplied the loaves and the fishes,
teach us a blending of sod, seed, sprout—and your Spirit,
that we might find no separation
between food for the hungry and faith for the righteous;
that we might so liberate ourselves this Lenten season
from lust for more and our self-seeking ambitions
that we will turn and see
those who, empty hands outstretched,
yet bear the nail scars
of your own hand—the scars of prejudice
and the torture of rejection.
Lord Christ, make us your own.
Surrender us wholly to you
so that, as we fill the bodies of others,
we restore our own souls to health.
In your blessed name we pray,
Amen.

—Susan Cowley is part of Crossties, an ecumenical faith community in an impoverished neighborhood in Waco, TX. She directs a Crossties ministry, a therapuetic childcare center called Talitha Koum.

A Liturgy for the Fifth Sunday in Lent

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Call to Worship

Lady Macbeth seemed astonished when the blood would not wash off her hands. Have we seen the hands of the Church? Co-mingling with partisan politics in pursuit of power, agonizingly slow to recognize the sins of slavery because we were blinded by profits and fear, offering lip service to neighbors who sleep on wet benches, who eat from trashcans, who suffer from our inaction. Lying to women for centuries about their place in God's heart and will, leaning on judgment in the face of abundant grace, casting out when we should be gathering in, and pretending our membership made us better. Lord, we know the sins of the Church rise filthy to your throne. Forgive us and drive us to be better.

art by Rebecca S. Ward

Prelude

Hymn

"Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life"
Glory to God Hymnal No. 343
WORDS: Frank Mason North
MUSIC: Gardiner's Sacred Melodies 1815
FULDA 8.8.8.8.

Meditation of Preparation

If your primary goal in life is to enjoy it to its fullest, then you're going to be spending a lot of time in denial of those who are in need around you. But if your goal is to love others as God has loved us, then we're going to be spending a lot of time crying over the inequities in our world.
–*Charley Garrison*

Reading from the Prophets

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16

Hymn

"Perdón, Señor" ("Forgive Us, Lord")
Lift Up Your Hearts Hymnal No. 642
WORDS and MUSIC: Jorge Lockward, t
ransl. Raquel M. Martinez
CONFESSION 4.7.4.7.4

Epistle Reading

Hebrews 5:5-10

Gospel Reading
John 12:20-33

Sermon

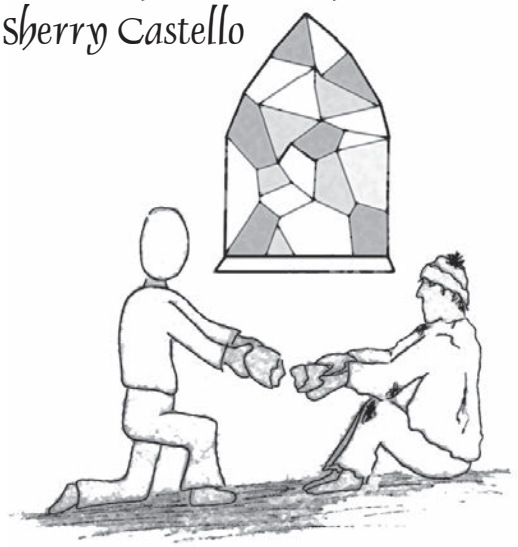
Meditation of Commitment
And what ought to be my place (the place of the privileged) in a world filled with the oppressed? This, I suppose, is the perennial question, the question, perhaps, which forms the very heart of the Sermon on the Mount. One can hardly escape the feeling that this is the central question of our century also. It is, above all, a question that I have preferred to ask in the abstract surrounded by family and friends. But for me now, the question has been raised by the bodies and souls of those who suffer. (Has the answer been posed by those who serve?)
–*Marc Ellis,* A Year at the Catholic Worker

Hymn of Commitment
"Wild and Lone the Prophet's Voice"
Glory to God Hymnal
No. 163
WORDS: Carl P. Daw, Jr.
MUSIC: Joseph Parry
ABERYSTWYTH
7.7.7.7.D

Benediction
We've breathed in and confessed our role, as the church universal, in oppressive words and actions, causing separation and division where there ought be none. Now it's time for that breath to be exhaled as the breath of God calls for that to change. May those who have been victims of such religious malpractice and violence hear and feel the sighs of the Spirit too deep for words, as you try to help guide the church towards repentance. May we go and be that transformation, breathing new life into the world. ■

A Responsive Confession for Lent

by Sherry Castello



art by Sharon R. Rollins & Katie Cook

ONE: God, we come to you in confession. More than we seek you and your will, we seek our own comfort and advantage. We have allowed ourselves to become blinded to the needs of our brothers and sisters so that we can enjoy our privilege.
MANY: Disturb our peace, O God. Give us clear eyes to see the suffering around us on all sides and the courage to ask what you require of us.

ONE: We confess that we protect our hearts from pain by judging those in need, although we have not walked life's paths in their shoes.
MANY: Give us the true humility to know that we do not know the hearts of those we judge. Give us a glimpse of your love that sees us all as your beloved children.

ONE: And we confess that we would rather talk about what your teachings mean than be taught by the struggles of trying to live them.
MANY: God, help us to trust you enough to follow you into a life of loving. Give us brave companions for the journey into hope.

—Sherry Castello is part of Crossties, an ecumenical faith community in an impoverished neighborhood in Waco, TX. She directs the Gospel Cafe, a ministry that serves lunch and provides an opportunity for wealthy people and impoverished people to share a meal together.

A Liturgy for Palm Sunday

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Call to Worship

Have you ever had someone open a door and explode in joy? Like soldiers returning from war and surprising their mothers; like lovers coming back after leaving in pain; like children running into the room on Christmas morning. A joyous welcome creates an indelible memory in our lives. Christ received this kind of welcome as people waved palms and laid down their coats. How many people are waiting for the church to open its doors this way? How many stand on the street, on the border, or even in the pews waiting, dying to see God's welcome in our open arms?

Prelude

Hymn

"Ride on, Ride on, the Time Is Right"
Church Hymnary (4th Edition) No. 370
WORDS and MUSIC: John L. Bell
and Graham Maule
RIDE ON 8.8.8.8.

Meditation of Preparation

Jesus refused to conform to the expectations of the people. He chose to travel around, hanging out with riffraff, healing and feeding people, and preaching about peace. The reign of which he spoke was crazy, topsy-turvy. His entry into the city of his royal forefathers was an absurd parade. His whole ministry was like a Feast of Fools. Whoever was in power should be out of power, he said. Whoever is up should be down. Whoever is first should be last.
Katie Cook, "The Absurd Parade"

Reading from the Prophets

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 or Psalm 31:9-16

Hymn

"The Kingdom of God"
Gather (3rd Edition) Catholic Hymnal No. 740
WORDS and MUSIC: Taizé Community

Meditation of Confession

In our world there is considerable hypocrisy and greed. There is economic injustice foisted on the poor by the wealthy and powerful. There are people who raise themselves above others, electing themselves to be the judges of who is socially acceptable and who is not. People are marginalized, even within our churches, because of an infinite number of things. They are different in some way. Maybe they were born different. Maybe they've made mistakes. Maybe they're just without resources. If we think about it, we will remember that Jesus would embrace those marginalized folks. And we have a sneaking suspicion that he might not be too thrilled with us.
Katie Cook, "The Absurd Parade"

Epistle Reading

Philippians 2:5-11

Gospel Reading

Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16

Sermon

Meditation of Commitment

But it takes a lot of courage to act in loving ways toward people who are different. It takes even more courage to stand up for them in the face of powerful authority. Perhaps our reaction today, after reading this story of Jesus' absurd parade, should be to seek out marginalized

art by Mary Daily

folks, to do something that doesn't make sense, to find a way to turn something upside-down.
–Katie Cook, "The Absurd Parade"

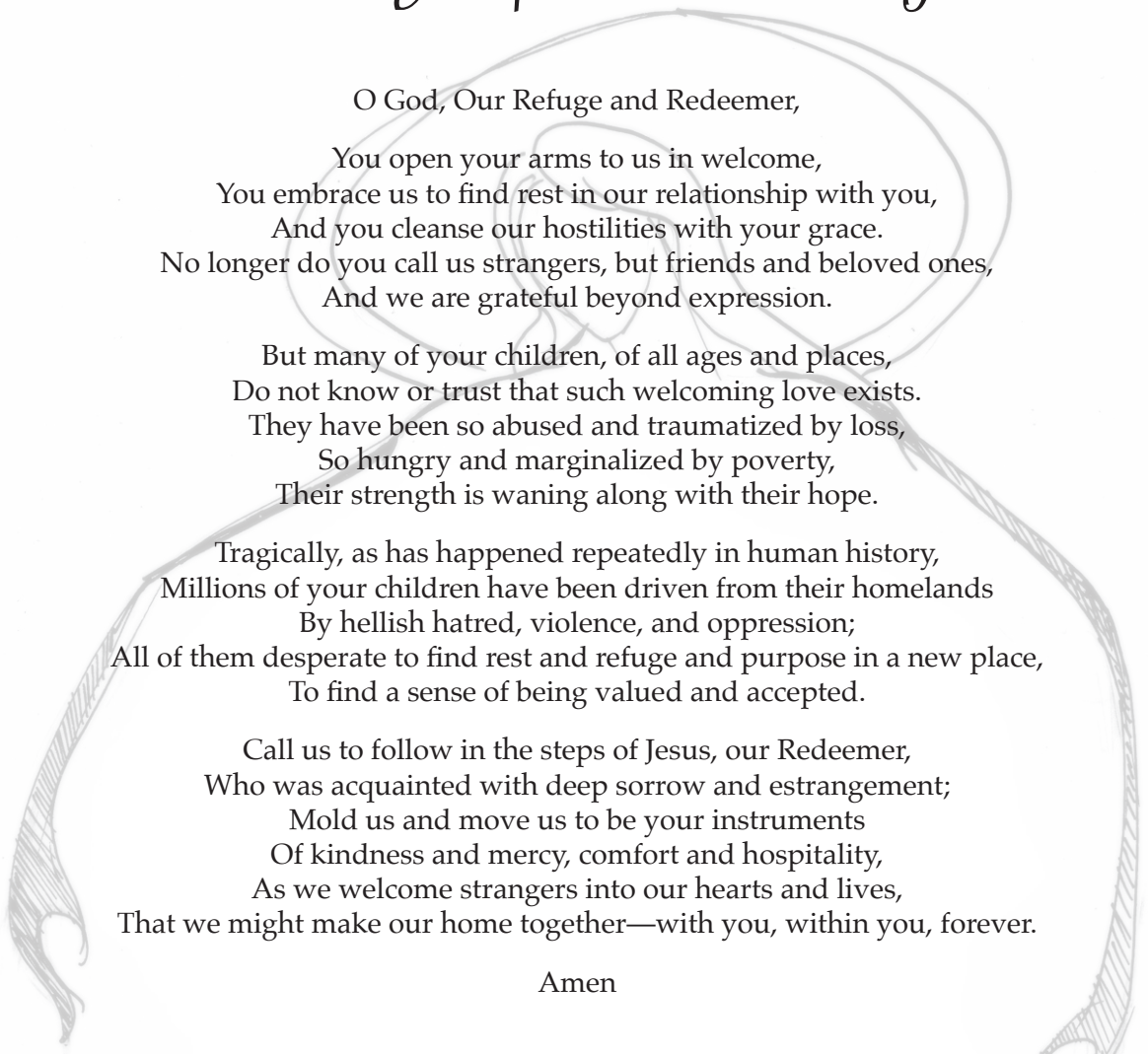
Hymn of Commitment

"Prepare the Way, O Zion"
Glory to God Hymnal No. 106
WORDS: Frans Mikael Franzen,
transl. Augustus Nelson, adapt. Charles P. Price
MUSIC: *Then Swenska Psalmboken,*
arr. American Lutheran Hymnal
BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN 7.6.7.6.7.7.
with refrain

Benediction

We've breathed in and confessed our role in the lack of hospitality to the stranger among us, causing friction in the midst of diversity, and now it's time for that breath to be exhaled as part of the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. May the alien who has heard painful words of discord hear shouts of Hosanna and become part of the hopeful crowd, part of the love-based movement of Christ. May we go and be that welcome, breathing new life into the world.

A Prayer for Welcoming



art by Sally Lynn Askins

O God, Our Refuge and Redeemer,

You open your arms to us in welcome,
You embrace us to find rest in our relationship with you,
And you cleanse our hostilities with your grace.
No longer do you call us strangers, but friends and beloved ones,
And we are grateful beyond expression.

But many of your children, of all ages and places,
Do not know or trust that such welcoming love exists.
They have been so abused and traumatized by loss,
So hungry and marginalized by poverty,
Their strength is waning along with their hope.

Tragically, as has happened repeatedly in human history,
Millions of your children have been driven from their homelands
By hellish hatred, violence, and oppression;
All of them desperate to find rest and refuge and purpose in a new place,
To find a sense of being valued and accepted.

Call us to follow in the steps of Jesus, our Redeemer,
Who was acquainted with deep sorrow and estrangement;
Mold us and move us to be your instruments
Of kindness and mercy, comfort and hospitality,
As we welcome strangers into our hearts and lives,
That we might make our home together—with you, within you, forever.

Amen

–This prayer was written by Deborah E. Harris, who was a vital member of the Seeds team before her death in 2016. She was corresponding secretary for the Council, a member of the liturgical team, our copy editor, our resident lyricist and our "Slogan Queen." The name Sacred Seasons, *among many other names in our publications and projects, came from her creative mind.*

A Liturgy for Maundy Thursday

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Call to Worship

Prelude

Hymn
"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"
*African Methodist Episcopal Church Hym*nal No. 375
WORDS and MUSIC: Traditional Spiritual,
arr. E. C. Deas
WALK WITH ME Irregular Meter with Refrain

Meditation of Preparation
We no longer have to ask ourselves if we are approaching a state of emergency. We are in the midst of it, right here and now, and we expect the future to mirror the past.... It is in the midst of this dark world that we are invited to live and radiate hope. Is it possible? Can we become light, salt, and leaven to our brothers and sisters in the human family? Can we offer hope, courage, and confidence to the people of this era? Do we dare break through our paralyzing fear? Will people be able to say of us, 'See how they love each other, how they serve their neighbor, and how they pray to their Lord?' Or do we have to confess that at this juncture of history we just do not have the needed strength or the generosity? How can we live in hope so as to give hope? And how do we find true joy?
–*Henri J. M. Nouwen*, Clowning in Rome

Reading from the Prophets
Exodus 12:1-4, 5-10, 11-14

Reading from the Psalms
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

Hymn
"What Shall I Render unto God for All His Mercies?"
African American Heritage Hymnal No. 389
WORDS and MUSIC: Margaret Douroux

Epistle Reading
I Corinthians 11:23-26

Gospel Reading
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Sermon

Meditation of Commitment
One must learn to make the transition from "let this cup pass from me" to "nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done." And God grant that as you face life with all of its decision—as you face the bitter cup which you will inevitably face from day to day—God grant that you will learn this one thing and that is to make the transition from "this cup" to "nevertheless." …This, you see, is the thing that determines whether you go through life devoted to an eternal cause or whether you go through life depending on your own finite answers, which really turn out to be no answers. This is the thing that determines whether you can rise out of your egocentric predicament to devotion to a higher cause. This is what Jesus was able to do and this is the lesson that he presents to us today.
–*Martin Luther King Jr., "Garden of Gethsemane" sermon, Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, AL, April 14, 1957*

Hymn of Commitment
"Fill My Cup, Lord"
African American Heritage Hymnal No. 447
WORDS and MUSIC: Richard Blanchard
FILL MY CUP 11.8.9.10 with Refrain

Benediction
We've breathed in and confessed our role in deciding who is welcome at the table of the Lord, creating a barrier where none was established, and now it's time for that voice to be exhaled as bread broken and cup poured for ALL. May those who have been turned away from the Lord's table by claims of gatekeepers hear the words of Jesus as he feeds the world at the table of grace. May we go and be food for the hungry, breathing new life into the world.■

art courtesy of the Franciscanos Cruzblanca

A Liturgy for Holy Friday

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Note: This liturgy includes nine scripture passages that can be used as Stations of the Cross. We encourage you to be creative in the use of these. You could set up stations in different areas, using art, sculpture and/or photography and ask the worshippers to stand at each one as the scripture is being read.

You could have nine readers of various ages and stages of life. You could print the scriptures on large posters or worship guides that can be carried, and include silent periods in which the congregants move from station to station, reading the passages to themselves. You could ask people to dress in first-century clothing and tell the events of each passage in their own words. You could have a candle at each station, to be snuffed out when that passage is read, leaving the worship area darker with each passage.

Prelude

Song of Penitence

"Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone"
Celebrating Grace Hymnal No. 505
WORDS: Thomas Shepherd
MUSIC: Folk Melody,
Henry Ward Beecher's *Plymouth Collection*, 1855
MAITLAND Common Meter

Meditation of Preparation

This season is given to the remembrance of a person who believed there was something of more value than his own life. Jesus died for the sake of truth. He held onto his vision of God as a loving parent—even at the cost of his own life. Lent ends with an execution. People gather at the feet of the victim to ask the hard questions raised by his death: Is anything worth dying for? Are there people for whom we would die? Would we die for a belief or a hope? If we were going to die tomorrow, then what would we do today? If we had only one truth for which to give our lives what would it be? How should the certainty of our death lead us to live?
–Brett Younger, "Is Anything Worth Dying For?"

Song of Adoration

"Con Devoción y Gratitud"
("Savior, with Glad and Grateful Hearts")
Santo, Santo, Santo Hymnal No. 684
WORDS: Martin E. Lechebusch,
transl. Eliezer Moreno L.
MUSIC: Henry Baker
QUEBEC Long Meter

Stations of Prayer

I. Jesus Weeps For His City
Matthew 23:34-37

II. The Last Supper
Matthew 26:20-30

III. Gethsemane
Matthew 26:36-44

IV. Betrayal
Matthew 26:45-56

V. Despised and Rejected
Isaiah 53:1-3

VI. Man of Sorrows
Isaiah 53:4-12

VII. Forsaken
Matthew 27:45-46

VIII. Forgiving
Luke 23:33-34

IX. Submission
Luke 23:44-46

Meditation of Recognition

Suddenly they saw him
the way he was,
the way he really was all the time,
although they had
never seen it before,
the glory which blinds
the everyday eye
and so becomes invisible.
This is how
he was radiant, brilliant,
carrying joy
like a flaming sun in his hands.

This is the way he was--is--
from the beginning,
and we cannot bear it.
So he manned himself,
came to manifest to us;
and there on the mountain
they saw him, really saw him,
saw his light.

We all know that if we really
see him we die.
But isn't that what is required of us?
Then, perhaps, we will see
each other, too.
–Madeleine L'Engle

Benediction

We've breathed in and confessed our role in humanity crucifying our Lord, and now it's time to hear the anguish caused by our own words and actions as the last breath of "It is finished" echoes through the world today. May we pause and feel the power behind that last breath as we also hold our collective breath, awaiting the realization and revelation that is to come on Easter morning. May we go and wait with bated breath for what God has in store in the face of death, breathing new life into the world. ■

Choral Benediction

"Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow"
The Celebration Hymnal No. 335
WORDS: William J. Sparrow-Simpson
MUSIC: John Stainer
CROSS OF JESUS 8.7.8.7.

art by Rebecca S. Ward

The spirit is breathing.
All those with eyes to see,
women and men
with ears for hearing
detect a coming dawn;
a reason to go on.
They seem small,
these signs of dawn,
perhaps ridiculous.
All those with eyes to see,
women and men
with ears for hearing
uncover in the night
a certain gleam of light;
they see the reason to go on.
–Dom Helder Camara,
late Archbishop of Recife and Olinda, Brazil,
from *It's Midnight, Lord*

A Liturgy for Easter Sunday

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Prelude

Meditation of Preparation

The sky changes from light blue to dark.
No sun, no clouds—nothing—just dark.
The wind, the sky took the breathtaking beauty
And turned it into dreadful destruction.

The sun shone after the wind
was no longer fierce,
But calm.
It shone on the sad scenery
which was lying beneath it.
A scene of all the disaster, destruction and
Skated pieces of debris,
But then the sunlight shone upon one root,
Shone upon hope.
–Heather Herschap

Call to Worship

Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Let the people breathe in God's triumph over death and shout out their glad Alleluias! O Death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The stone has rolled away, the grave clothes lay empty, and the light has driven out the darkness. People of God, take in the air of victory. Fill your lungs and your hearts with hope, for Christ has overcome the world!

Hymn

"Christ Is Alive!"
Glory to God Hymnal No. 246
WORDS: Brian Wren
MUSIC: *Musica Sacra, 1778*
TRURO Long Meter

Reading from the Prophets

Isaiah 25:6-9

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Hymn

"How Can We Be Silent"
Gather (3rd Edition) Catholic Hymnal No. 772
WORDS and MUSIC: Michael Mahler

Epistle Reading

I Corinthians 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43

Gospel Reading

John 20:1-18 or Mark 16:1-8

Reading from the Acts

Acts 10:34-43

Sermon

Meditation of Commitment

The Resurrection is not a single event, but a loosening of God's power and light into the earth and history that continues to alter all things, infusing them with the grace and power of God's own holiness. It is as though a door was opened, and what poured out will never be stopped, and the door cannot be closed.
–Megan McKenna

Hymn of Commitment

"In the Midst of New Dimensions"
Glory to God Hymnal No. 315
WORDS and MUSIC: Julian B. Rush
NEW DIMENSIONS 8.7.8.7. with refrain

Benediction

We've breathed in and confessed throughout Lent, and now it's time to breathe out a sigh of relief as the breath of God fills the lungs of the world anew with a resounding, "Christ is Risen!" May we join in the chorus, may we shout from the mountains, may we sing "Alleluia" as we celebrate life that conquers death. May we go, rejuvenated by glimpsing the light piercing an empty tomb, breathing new life into the world. ■

art by Sharon R. Rollins

A Liturgy for the Second Sunday of Easter

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Editor's note: We have incorporated into this liturgy, in place of a sermon, two of the seven monologues from "With Our Own Eyes," the series of resurrection monologues from Sacred Seasons. *You will need one actor; both of the scenes depict Thomas the Twin. In presenting the monologues to groups, we usually have people moving from room to room for each scene. We usually recommend enacting the first Thomas scene, then another scene (for example, the Emmaus scene) and then the second Thomas scene. In this case, we have placed it before and after the gospel reading. You may choose to separate it more or combine the two. (If you choose to do that, we have a script where that is already combined, so please feel free to ask for it.) The scripts include a suggested first-century setting, but we want you to feel free to be creative, and depict it in any way you find appropriate. We'd love to hear how you did it and how it went. –lkc*

Call to Worship

Did it happen? Are we dreaming? The disciples struggled as God's triumph unfolded around them. We know that kind of unknowing. And then Jesus appeared among them. And offered a new breath of life: The wind of the Holy Spirit from the mouth of God. Feel it on your cheeks in this moment, let it seep into your soul as we gather for worship—unsure, excited, afraid, confident, and in the presence of Christ.

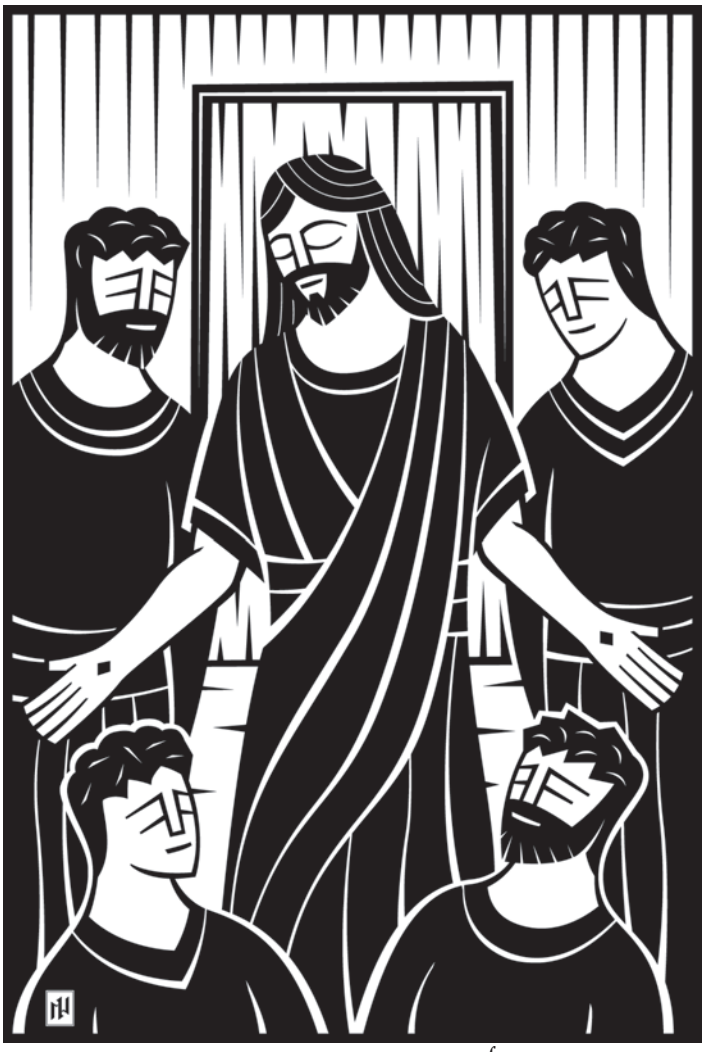
Prelude

Hymn

"O Sons and Daughters, Let Us Sing"
Glory to God Hymnal No. 235
WORDS: Jean Tisserand, transl. John Mason Neale
MUSIC: French Melody, arr. *Airs sur les hymnes sacrez, odes et noels*, 1623
O FILII ET FILIAE 8.8.8. with alleluias

Meditation of Preparation

Staggered by the brink of war
and the unyielding demonic,
Distracted by the daily daily
and committee commitment,
We come crawling to the God of the prophets.
We would beg for some scintillating answer.
But you answer, God of the prophets,
that we are to be the prophets.
We didn't come crawling for this,
didn't want to be prophets.



art from Paramentics

But there's this word in our mouths wanting out.
And we're weary with holding it in.
Okay.
–George Williamson, from "A Service of Commitment to the Prophetic Calling in a Demonic Time"

Reading from the Acts
Acts 4:32-35

Reading from the Psalms
Psalm 133

Hymn
"Christ is Risen" ("Cristo Vive")
The United Methodist Hymnal No. 313
WORDS: Nicolás Martínez; transl. Fred Kaan
MUSIC: Pablo Sosa
CENTRAL 8.7.8.7.D.

Epistle Reading
1 John 1:1-2:2

Hymn
"O Christ, the Healer"
Glory to God Hymnal No. 793
WORDS: Fred Pratt Green
MUSIC: Klug's *Geistliche Lieder*, 1543;
harm. Johann Sebastian Bach, 1725
ERHALT UNS, HERR Long Meter

First Monologue
Thomas the Twin, Part 1
(See the monologue on page 30.)

Gospel Reading
John 20:19-31

Second Monologue
Thomas the Twin, Part 2
(See the monologue on page 30.)

Meditation of Commitment
Easter happens every day when we show compassion for the poor, when we love and serve our neighbors far and near, when we welcome the stranger into our lives and when we choose the power of love over the love of power. Just as Holy Week and Easter are not reserved for one week and one Sunday out of the year in a church building, neither are these things. Holy Week is unfolding in our world every week. And the dead places in our lives are being resurrected all the time.
–Nancy Petty, Pastor of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church

Hymn of Commitment
"Restore in Us, O God"
Glory to God Hymnal No. 434
WORDS: Carl P. Daw, Jr.
MUSIC: Hal H. Hopson
BAYLOR Short Meter

Prayer to An Outrageous God
by Matthew Schobert

Dear God, you are outrageous. You do the inexplicable–
you forgive us our sins. You ask of us the unimaginable–
to be a confessing community in eager anticipation of the
coming of your kingdom.

As we embark on the adventure of worship, continue doing
the unexpected among us and through us. Jostle us, O Lord,
into being a people who dare to take seriously
the implications of life in the Realm of God.

May we be extreme in our love for you and for our neighbors,
wherever and whomever they may be;
may we be extreme in our efforts to pursue justice for victims
and those who suffer, both from the things we have done
and the things we have left undone;

and may the Holy Spirit sustain us with the most
revolutionary hope of all, a hope that is at once both terrifying
and joyous, the coming of Christ and the re-creation
of all things, whether on the earth or in the heavens.

In the Name of the One who came, who reigns,
and who is to come again,

Amen.

–Matthew Schobert wrote this while studying at George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, TX.

Thomas the Twin

Two Monologues for Eastertide

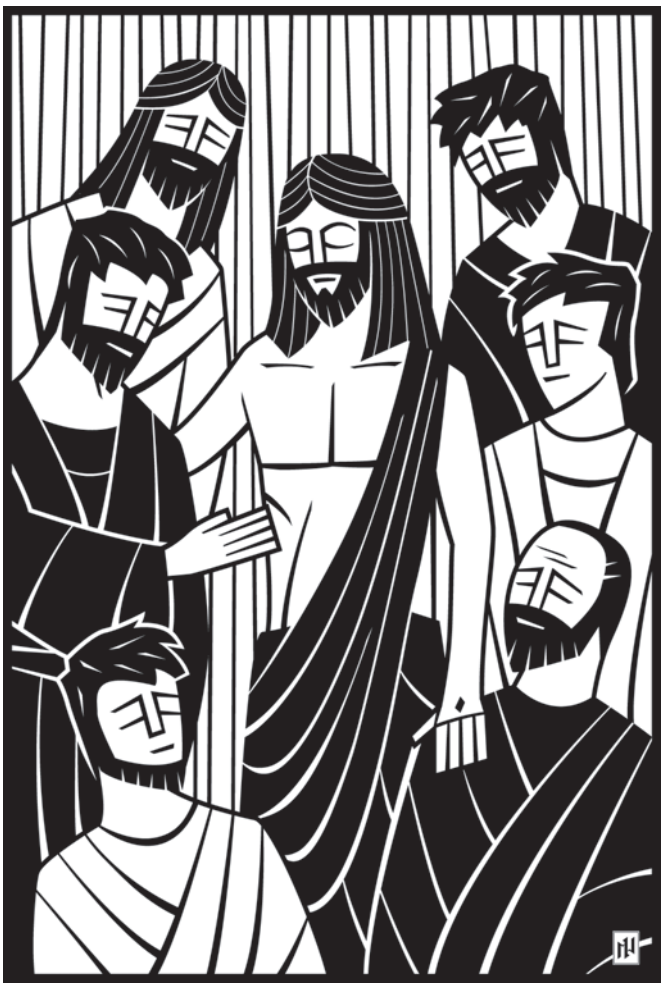
by Crystal Goolsby

Texts: John 20:19-25 and John 20:26-29

Part 1

Setting: Outside, in Jerusalem. Evening, first-century Palestine. You could use a painted backdrop that suggests a Jerusalem street or an olive grove. Thomas is dressed in modest clothing.

I can't believe all that has happened in the last few days. We thought Jesus was the Messiah we had all been waiting for, but he died without delivering us! Who will help us now?



art from Paramentics

Three days ago, Jesus of Nazareth was put on the cross and he died. He was put in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. My friends, who, along with me, make up a group of his followers, came running to me just now, saying that they saw him, alive. Impossible! They insist that it is true, but I don't believe it.

They told me that they were hiding in the upper room of a house, in a group, talking, when a man suddenly appeared in the room and said, "Peace be with you." The room was locked, because they were afraid they would be arrested, too, and this man just appeared inside the room!

As you can imagine, they were shocked and horrified! They thought it was a ghost. But then he showed them the wounds he got when he was crucified—holes in his hands and feet, as well as a wound in his side from a spear.

They said they were still not sure he was a real human being. But he asked for some food. They gave him a piece of fish from their supper, and he ate it while they watched. It was then that they knew he was really alive, and they came running to tell me.

But I don't believe it. Once a man is dead, he is dead. I won't believe it until I see him for myself, and can put my fingers into his wounds.

Part 2

Setting: A week after the first appearance. An interior room with a long rustic table, set as though a simple meal has just been concluded. It is evening. The room should be darkened, with lamplight or candlelight. Thomas is dressed in the clothing of a person of modest means in first-century Palestine.

I have a confession to make to all of you. I am the one who told you I didn't believe any of these stories about Jesus being risen from the dead. This

is the place that the others saw Jesus a week ago. They were here again tonight, but I was with them this time.

And what do you think happened? A man suddenly appeared in the room, like they described, and it looked just like the Master! But, I said to myself, it can't possibly be true.

The man said, "Peace be with you," to the whole group. Then he turned to me and said, "Thomas. Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." So I did what he told me. I actually put my fingers into his wounds and felt that it was real flesh! I was astounded. I exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus was happy that I now believed that he was alive, after I saw and touched him, but still he told me, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

If only I had believed it was really he when my friends told me they saw him. I am ashamed that faith was not enough for me, but I am happy that he showed himself to me. And I know he loves me. I will never doubt him again.

–These monologues were written by Crystal Goolsby, a writer who lives in Austin, Texas. They were published as part of "With Our Own Eyes" a series of monologues based on the resurrection appearances of Jesus in the four gospels, from Seeds of Hope Publishers, for Lent 2009.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the religious authorities, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Having said this, Jesus showed them [his] hands and side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As God has sent me, so I send you." Having said this, Jesus breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit…."

–John 20:19-22 (*The New Testament & Psalms: An Inclusive Version*)

art by Jesse Manning

Benediction

by Guilherme Almeida

Christ Jesus,
we come into your presence
from many different places.

We come with songs of joy
and shouts of gratitude.
We come carrying heavy burdens
and sighs of suffering.

As you welcome us into your house,
lift our burdens
and receive our praise.

Salt us with your grace
and flavor us with your mercy.

Bind us together,
that we may be at peace
with one another
and be strengthened to go forth
in service to the world.

In your holy name, we pray.

Amen.

–Guilherme Feitosa de Almeida, a native of Brazil, is a lecturer in Musical Theater at Baylor University, a Baptist minister specializing in music, a member of the Seeds Council of Stewards and a frequent liturgist for Sacred Seasons.