

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

Learn more about their work at sanctifiedart.org.



How does a weary world rejoice?

An Advent devotional

Art, Poetry, & Reflections for Advent in Luke's Gospel



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A Poem for the Theme

How does a weary world rejoice?

The Last Time I Saw God

The last time I saw God
face to face

I was looking at a bed of tulips.
God was every color of red.
I was merely a mortal,
in awe of it all.

The time before that,
we were tying back
the curtains,
looking for stars.
God was the deepest purple
and the brightest light.

The time before that,
the city was soft with snow.
God was the quiet
that tucked us all in.

And in between these
small gifts there were
newborn babies,
and sapling trees,
homemade bread,
the sound of a church
singing on Sunday.

...

Why, yes, we are lucky.
We are more than lucky
for the moments when
delight and awe
unzip the weight
we carry around.

*Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed*

Christ was born into a weary world. King Herod ruled the land with a legacy of ruthlessness. The Romans treated the people of Israel with contempt, imposing harsh taxes and land seizures that forced many into subsistence farming. Poverty and destitution were pervasive. And yet, Christ was born, bringing good news of great joy for all people.

This season, we invite you to look closely at the details in the opening chapters of the Gospel of Luke. Discover where joy is sprinkled throughout the narrative. Identify the moments when joy arrives—despite trepidation, fear, or grief. And consider how joy can be a companion to you this season, for our joy is rooted in the truth that we belong to God. Can you tether yourself to that deep truth? You deserve to feel joy—fully. The world needs your joy, even if you are weary.

This devotional is designed to help you practice joy in a weary world. Each week offers art, reflections, poetry, and hymns. Journey through these pages at your own pace. May each week offer you rhythms for rejoicing—through acknowledging your weariness, finding joy in connection, allowing yourself to be amazed, singing stories of hope, making room, rooting yourself in ritual, and remembering your belovedness.

And so, this Advent, let us hold space for our weariness *and* our joy. Let us seek a “thrill of hope” in our hurting world. Let us welcome joy—even and especially if, like the prophet Isaiah, we cry out for comfort (Isaiah 40:1). In this weary world, may we find many ways to rejoice.

Artfully yours,

The Sanctified Art Creative Team

Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Hannah Garrity

Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Rev. Anna Strickland



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ABOUT THE SA CREATIVE TEAM

Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Founder | Creative Director of SA

Lisle Gwynn Garrity (*she/her*) is a Pastorist (pastor + artist), retreat leader, and creative entrepreneur seeking to fill the church with more color, paint, mystery, and creativity. She founded A Sanctified Art with the conviction that, in order to thrive, the church needs more creative expression and art-filled freedom.

Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Director of Branding | Founding Creative Partner of SA

Lauren (*she/her*) is an artist, graphic designer, and theologian. She uses paint, metallic inks, and Apple pencil to image the layered complexity she experiences in scripture texts. She also helps faith communities share their vibrant stories through branding & design services.

Hannah Garrity Founding Creative Partner of SA

Hannah (*she/her*) is an artist and an athlete, a daughter and a mother, a facilitator and a producer, a leader and a teammate. She is the Director of Christian Faith, Life, and Arts at Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Va, an art in worship workshop leader wherever she is called, and a liturgical installation artist at the Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC.

Rev. Sarah A. Speed Founding Creative Partner of SA

Sarah (Are) Speed (*she/her*) is the Associate Pastor for Young Adults and Membership at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. Sarah feels called to welcome people into the church by using her energy and passion for beautifully scripted words, raw and relevant liturgy, and hands-on worship experiences to engage our longing for God and the need for justice in this messy world.

Rev. Anna Strickland

Operations Support | Content Creator

Anna Strickland (*she/her*) looks for the Divine in the everyday like treasure in clay jars and first encountered God in the integration of her spiritual self and artistic self. She is a former teacher and college minister, a proud Texas Longhorn and graduate of Iliff School of Theology, a Baptist to the core ministering in ecumenical spaces, and a lover of chaos anchored by the belief that the Spirit is most active in the spaces between us.

ABOUT OUR GUEST CONTRIBUTORS



Guest Writer

Rev. Cecelia D. Armstrong



The Rev. Cecelia D. Armstrong (*she/her*) is an energetic national leader within the Presbyterian Church (USA) who preaches often for conferences and groups. She is called “CeCe” by friends and family members. She has never met a stranger and continues to collect friends and family members throughout

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Guest Artist

Rev. Nicolette (Faison) Peñaranda



Rev. Nicolette “Nic” (*she/her*) is a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serving as the Program Director for African Descent Ministries. Nic is the creator of MONadvocacy, a racial justice resource grounded in play, as well as the “Talks at the Desk” series

which celebrates the voices of leaders in the ELCA African descent community: livinglutheran.org/2022/02/a-love-letter-to-african-descent-communities.

She is passionate about queer Black liberation, cultivating diverse leadership in faith spaces, and the art of creation. She is also the illustrator of *God's Holy Darkness*, written by Sharei Green and Beckah Selnick (Beaming Books, 2022). The book deconstructs anti-Blackness in Christian theology by celebrating instances in the story of God's people when darkness, blackness, and night are beautiful, good, and holy. She resides in the Chicagoland area with her spouse, two daughters, and two cats, Penne Pablo and Rigatoni Braxton.

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JOURNALING FOR JOY

Throughout the Advent and Christmas season, return to these pages whenever you want time to write and reflect. Choose from the prompts below.



On a piece of paper, write a list of everything—big and small—that brings you joy. Tape your list to your fridge or display it somewhere you will see it daily. Try to fill your days with the things on your joy list.

Write about a time joy surprised you. What was unexpected about that experience?



On a piece of paper, write down everything that makes you weary. Then, rip the paper into small pieces as a way to release it all and offer it to God.

Write a kind note for a stranger to find. Place the note in a public place: a park bench, on a car windshield, in a mailbox, etc. Fill the note with a message you would like to hear such as, “You are loved.”



Write a letter to a loved one who has passed on. Tell them what you love and miss about them.

Write about the last time you were truly amazed. How did you feel?



Reflect on 3 things you are deeply grateful for. Offer a prayer of gratitude to God.

Reflect on the past year. What are the moments and memories that are filled with joy?



The First Week of Advent

How does a weary world rejoice?

We acknowledge our weariness

Wade In

Over time
wind and water
will sand down the edges of a stone.
For humans,
our wind and water
is the grief of the world.

Stay here long enough
and pieces of you
will be pressed upon
by life's never-ending stream.
It's enough to make you weary.
It's enough to make you question.
It's enough to make you quiet.
And yet, the stream continues.

So do not be afraid to stand in that water.
Wade in. Soak the hem of your jeans.
Drip wet footprints through every room in your house.
Let the water stains tell your story.
And when your body grows weary of swimming,
name the stream.
Acknowledge your weariness.
For eventually,
you will pick flowers from
the opposite bank.
And over and over again, we'll tell this story.
And over and over again,
a weary world will rejoice.

Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

How does a weary world rejoice?
We acknowledge our weariness



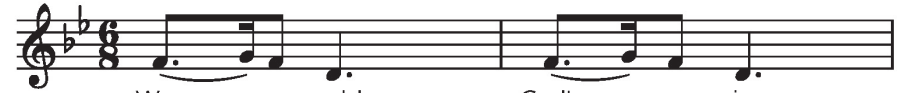
Scan to hear
the tune!

Weary World Rejoice

STILLE NACHT ("Silent Night")

Text: Anna Strickland (2023)

Music: Franz Xaver Gruber (1818)



Wea - ry world, God's own vine
Wea - ry world, bro - ken and bruised
Wea - ry world, out of hope
Wea - ry world, wait - ing still



Tears our on - ly bread and wine
Name of God is so mis-used
Dis - be - lief is how we cope
Hold - ing our breath un - til



Cry - ing out to be re-stored
Can we see the light of Christ
We've left faith to rot and rust
Christ re - turns in truth and grace



Des - perate for a break from war
Glow - ing in each per - son we spite?
Dreams are cov - ered in lay - ers of dust
Will we re - cog - nize his face?



Wea - ry world re - rejoice



Come and raise your voice

The First Week of Advent | How does a weary world rejoice?
We acknowledge our weariness

READ Luke 1:1-23 | Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

COMMENTARY | Rev. Cecelia D. Armstrong



We can be weary in various ways. We can be weary because of our age. We can be weary because of our waiting. We can be weary because we have faced the same routine for years and seemingly watched nothing change. We can be weary for various reasons, but must we stay weary? Can we exchange our weariness for hope? Is there a way to experience weariness and insist on the blessed hope that is to come?

Zechariah's question to Gabriel is directly aligned with this question of weariness and expectation of hope. In verse 18, Zechariah asks, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." When we are weary, we tend to seek clarity instead of insisting on God's grace to provide for us during the weariness. As a result, Zechariah is kept silent or muted. When Zechariah is before the people who were wondering about his delay in the temple, they realize that he had seen a vision. What we notice in the text is that the crowd, having witnessed his inability to speak, does not speak on the issue either. Although no words are exchanged, it seems that weariness has fueled the inability to believe or has offered us an opportunity to lose hope.

In the psalm text we hear the cry for restoration. This is a cry for restoration since our weariness has shaken our hope. The request in prayer form is to restore us, to let God's face shine, and the outcome will be that we may be saved. This request is made three times in our selected text. A great professor once taught that if something appears three times in the sacred text, then it must be important. Restoration is important because amid weariness, there must be a light at the end of the tunnel. There must be a way to combat the weariness of the current times. There must be a glimpse of hope that helps to sustain us during the weary times and grants us the opportunity to rejoice.

There is a famous poem by Langston Hughes titled, "Mother to Son."¹ It was written in 1922 and appeared again in print in 1926 in Hughes's first book, *The Weary Blues*. The poem depicts the heaviness of living life as a Black person who faces the many obstacles and dangers that accompany racism in American society. What offers hope during the weariness is the encouragement to not turn back, to not sit down on the steps, and to keep climbin'. This seems to be the encouragement we can find in Zechariah and Elizabeth's story. While silent, don't turn back, but look ahead since restoration is coming.

REFLECT

Can we exchange our weariness for hope?

Is there a way to experience weariness and insist on the blessed hope that is to come?

¹ Read the full poem here: [poetryfoundation.org/poems/47559/mother-to-son](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47559/mother-to-son)



Annunciation to Zechariah | Lauren Wright Pittman
Acrylic & Ink on wood panel

The First Week of Advent | How does a weary world rejoice?
We acknowledge our weariness

READ Luke 1:1-23

FROM THE ARTIST | Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Zechariah is dressed in a breastpiece, ephod, robe, checkered tunic, turban, and sash, just as the book of Exodus specifies. In my painting, gold, blue, purple, and crimson yarns are woven together and bejeweled with engraved stones which bear the names of the sons of Israel (Exodus 28:4).

Zechariah stands in the Holy Place wearing the most meticulous of garments. Does he expect to encounter the divine? Or is he just going through the motions, lighting the incense as an all-too-familiar scent fills the air?

After all these years of fulfilling priestly duties and “living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord” (Luke 1:6), Zechariah and his wife are still childless. Regardless of their desire for children, in their culture and context, childlessness bore the implication of God’s contempt.

I ruminated on this image... a weary priest wrapped in layered fabrics, colors, symbols, textures, and rare stones that proclaim God’s providence and power. The contrast is not lost on me.

I often try to neglect my weariness by putting on a veneer of unwavering trust in God—while feeling like I may suddenly unravel into a pile of beautifully-curated threads, stones, and gold accessories.

In this image, I decided to depict the angel as smoke from the altar of incense. Zechariah has one hand over his mouth in fear and disbelief, while his other hand cradles the notion—not yet hope—of his son’s existence.

Do you bind up your weariness in a neat and tidy bow, put your head down, and project okay-ness like me? What would it look like to acknowledge our weariness, quit powering through, and open ourselves up to what God might have in store for us? Perhaps we’ll meet an angel.

PRAY

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

The First Week of Advent | How does a weary world rejoice?
We acknowledge our weariness

READ Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

FROM THE ARTIST | Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

For this Advent series, I created a collection of paintings inspired by the Hubble telescope images of the cosmos. The telescope renderings invite you to peer into worlds unknown. The beauty of it all is a balm for the weary. When you gaze upon the colors of the cosmos, how can you keep from rejoicing? Inspired by the luminescent textures of nebula and star clusters, I painted washes of vibrant colors and metallic gold amidst a backdrop of beautiful blackness. These paintings have become the backgrounds for each of my digital drawings in this series.

The day I began working on this image, another mass shooting terrorized our country. This time it happened at a church preschool.¹ One of the children slain was the pastor's daughter. By the time you read this, there will have been more shootings, more unnecessary and completely preventable deaths. The weight of that prediction makes every bone in my body weary beyond repair.

As I read and reread Psalm 80 on that day of mourning, I remembered that politeness is not the language of the weary. The psalmist supplied me with the words I wanted to pray, the words I wanted to scream: *Wake up your power, God! Save us! How long?!*

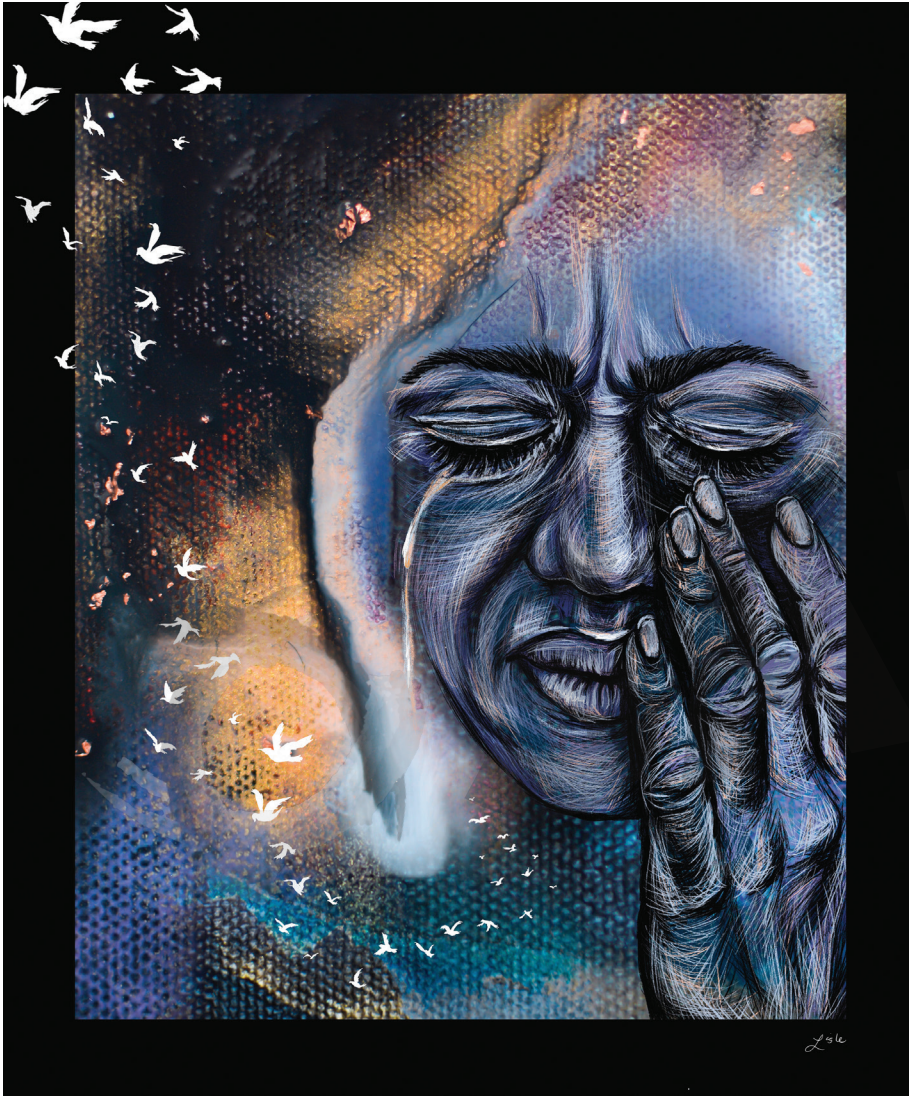
Then, I began to draw. What emerged was a face shining from the cosmos. I imagined God as Holy Mother or Holy Parent weeping for her creation. I imagined the parents weeping for their children who were so suddenly and brutally taken from them. The mere thought of their grief knocks the wind out of me.

As I completed the image, I added a flock of doves flying out from the void into which God's tears fall. The doves represent the Spirit let loose in our world, flapping their wings into every desperate corner. I added them not as a statement, but as a plea: *please, God, make your face shine so we might be saved.*

PRAY

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

² On March 27, 2023, a shooter took the lives of 3 children and 3 adults at The Covenant School in Nashville, TN.



Make Your Face Shine | Lisle Gwynn Garrity
Acrylic painting on canvas with digital drawing