

Sunday

FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

There's room for every story



ROOM

I asked God—
what about my
fingernail-biting habit
or the way I leave all
the cabinets
open in the kitchen?

What about the way I can
be dramatic,
drumming up a fight, only to
hand out apologies like
souvenirs?

What about the way I
second-guess myself,
let shame drive,
or stay quiet when I
have something to say?

What about the way I
chase accomplishments
like a dog with a bone?

What about the doubt,
or the fact
that I'm terrible at prayer and
cannot help but yawn
during church?

What about
What about
What about?

My baggage might be too
big for the van.

But then
God called me by my first
and middle name,
which always means
business,
and said:

Who told you that you
were too much?

Sugar, there is so much
room for you here.

So that's when I grabbed
a seat
and we hit the road
and I knew right then
that the rumors were true.

There is room.
There is room.
There is room.

*Poem by
Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed*

There's room for every story

READ Matthew 1:1-17

COMMENTARY | Dr. Christine J. Hong

Just as Christ's genealogy reveals the relationships across time and space in his life, many of our names also tie us to the generations who come before us and those who will come after us. Matthew lists the names of Jesus' forebearers as a marker of hope finally realized. Even today, names are the seeded hope of one generation planted in another. They are the thread that connects our histories, stories, and futures. We are the hopes of those who've come before, and we live in hope for those who will come after us.

In the Korean tradition, male babies are named by the oldest patriarch on the father's side of a family. My paternal grandfather died before I was born, so it was my maternal grandfather who built my name. Even before I was born, he declared he would build a meaningful name for me (even though I was not a boy). I would receive a name with intention from the oldest living generation to the newest. He gave me the name *Jin*, which when paired with my surname, becomes *Hong Jin*, meaning "something precious in the wide expanse." When I was born, he was not sure when he would get to meet his granddaughter with the vast ocean separating South Korea from California. In those days, it was not so easy or affordable to fly internationally. The name represented the connection he felt to me and my parents, despite what felt like an insurmountable distance between us. What is the Spirit of God if not the hope against hope in our lives?

My grandfather knew about hope against hope; he died at 101 years old, a survivor of war and displacement, excruciating trauma and loss. Yet, I knew him as a loving human with a joyful disposition, a spiritual and humble man, my biggest fan, the person who left me the gift of my name—connecting me through that name to the hope he bore through so much tragedy. Three years ago, I passed the gift of the name *Jin* to my daughter, *Tae-Jin*, giving her the part of the name my grandfather built for me. Her name means "precious light." Through her name, she is connected to her great-grandfather, to his stories, his hopes, his spiritual presence. As she grows, she will become part of a larger story by weaving in her own stories as seeds of hope against hope for someone new.



Genealogy of Christ | Lauren Wright Pittman
Digital Painting

There's room for every story

READ Matthew 1:1-17

FROM THE ARTIST | Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

As I began this piece, I was inspired by the composition and movement of the *From Generation to Generation...* logo. In this image, I chose to represent Christ using a rose at the center of the composition. The women mentioned in the genealogy are imaged as foundational leaves building and upholding Christ. All of the women are looking at the viewer and holding objects to represent the fact that they took their life and survival into their own hands. They were catalysts who propelled the lineage forward. In the bottom left, Tamar holds her father-in-law's insignia, which represents how she assumes his role as the leader of the tribe of Judah and continues its lineage.¹ Moving counterclockwise, Rahab holds the red cord which she lowered to ensure the safety of her family after supplying Israelite spies enough information to achieve victory in Jericho. Next, Ruth holds the wheat that she gleaned from the field. She knows that she must marry again in order to be protected, and so she takes initiative with Boaz. Bathesheba's name isn't even mentioned in Christ's genealogy; she is referred to as the "wife of Uriah." She withstands abuse from King David, survives the murder of her husband, and ensures that her son Solomon takes the throne. She takes matters into her own hands, becoming, as scholar Dr. Wil Gafney writes, "the queen mother of the united monarchy of Israel."² Finally, there is Mary who looks adoringly at the rose which represents her son. Here she holds the love and pride of a beautiful lineage that leads to the birth of her son, the Messiah.

These women only wanted to ensure safety for themselves and for their children; in the process they ensured the continuation of the lineage of Christ. Without their brilliance, passion, ingenuity, resourcefulness, creativity, and sacrifice, the lineage would have ended.

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.

¹ Attridge, Harold W. From the footnote for Genesis 38:15-19. *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (San Francisco, CA: Zondervan, 2006). 62-3.

² Gafney, Wilda C. *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017). 220.



Wednesday | Journal Prompt

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION...

There's room for every story

In Matthew's genealogy (Matt. 1:1-17), each name contains a story, threading together a lineage that leads to Christ. In the space below, record the story of someone who came before you—a relative or friend—who changed your life.



War No More | Lisle Gwynn Garrity
Silk painting with digital drawing and collage

Thursday | FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION...

There's room for every story

READ Isaiah 2:1-5

FROM THE ARTIST | Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

When I started this art series, I returned to a familiar medium: silk painting with gold resist and ink dyes. I photographed my creative process, capturing the wrinkled fabric, the wet lines of gold, the inks bleeding into one another. I've collaged photographs of my silk painting into the backdrops of these digital drawings. The silk background represents a tapestry of time, like an interconnected web of beauty and story traced through the generations.

As I reread this familiar passage in Isaiah, I paused at my favorite line about swords that become plowshares and spears that transform into pruning shears. In the past, I've marveled at the poetry of tools for destruction becoming instruments for cultivation. This year, I contemplated the ways these tools are used and realized that this vision holds gritty promise. Iron plows, mattocks tools, adzes—these are used to break apart rock-hard (often long-neglected) soil so it might receive water, nutrients, and roots. Plowing the earth is a physically intensive process of deconstruction that gives way for seeds to be planted, to be nurtured, and—with all the right elements and some luck—to grow into something worth harvesting.

Pruning is a seasonal act of trust; it feels so risky, especially when it takes months for that new life to begin to appear. But pruning away what is dead or in excess allows the plant to direct its energy into growing new shoots and branches once spring comes.

In other words, I realized that both of these tools are used in the process of regeneration, but they are not in themselves symbols of a bountiful harvest. Like gardening, “learning war no more” is a daily practice requiring dedication and lots of trust that we are truly cultivating an environment for God’s peace to one day bloom. And so, in this Advent season, what needs to be plowed or pruned? What daily acts of regeneration will provide for you and the generations who come after you?

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.



Scan to hear
the tune!

Through the Ages

Away in a Manger

Text: Anna Strickland (2022)

Music: James R. Murray (1887)



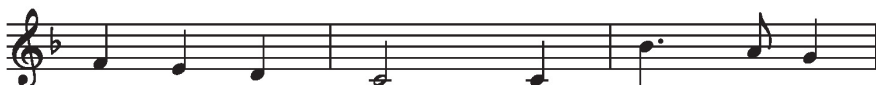
Oh down through the a - ges and gen - er - a -
From A - bra - ham, ls - aac, and ls - ra - el's
And still through the a - ges our sto - ries will



- tions From God in the gar - den to
line How Ra - hab and Ruth and Bath -
find Be - long - ing in God's sto - ry



Je - sus the son Each sto - ry was wo - ven, each
- she - ba sur - vived From ex - ile in E - gypt to
of hu - man - kind From God in the gar - den to



one has a place With - in the great
Bab - y - lon far Christ's lin - e - age
e - ter - ni - ty We're wo - ven to -



tap - es - try tell - ing God's grace
shows how com - plex sto - ries are
- geth - er as one tap - es - try

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION...

SABBATH IN THE KITCHEN

As a Sabbath activity, follow this family recipe or prepare another favorite dish.

NANA'S VINAIGRETTE

A family recipe shared by Hannah Garrity

There are many versions of this dressing, including the simple olive oil and salt version with which Nana (my grandmother) dressed up our salads when she and I visited France in the autumn of 1999. Her first time there, in the 1950's when my mother was young, became the inspiration for many of the recipes that we then inherited. Perhaps this dressing is such one. My memories of our salad dressing span decades and are drenched in joy. I was finally old enough to sit with the older cousins and adults. With thirty people surrounding the table, the salad was always already dressed. It was my favorite part of the meal. The dressing would slide under the rice on my plate, creating a unique delicacy that I would recreate in my college dining hall as comfort food years later. Sounds of laughter and repeated stories, feelings of love and warmth would flood back at the first taste. No one in my family makes the dressing just like anyone else. Every time it is a little bit different for everyone. So, as a snapshot of a moment in a long and fluid span of time, here's the recipe Nana made, as I remember it, on that distant day when I thought to take note.

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup olive oil
- ⅓ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon basil
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- A pinch of pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

Shake or stir the dressing. Dip a piece of lettuce in it. Taste it. Add salt if needed. Dress and toss the whole salad. Serve with any meal. Enjoy.