

Sunday

FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

God dwells with us



EVERYWHERE AND ALWAYS

Right here.

That's where God is.

In the sun that turns our bedroom gold,
in the creaks of this old house, and in birthday candles on
the cake;

in clean sheets, sock feet, and porch-sitting;
in pancakes for breakfast and pancakes for dinner;
in the swell of a lit candle, in fireplace conversations;
in your grandmother's carrot cake, and the smell of evergreen.

God is in the seed-starters on the porch,
and the space between my bones;

in garlic butter, early mornings, and twinkle lights.

Certainly in dancing and laughing, in cups of coffee,
in the art hung on the fridge, snail mail, long phone calls,
and *oh how I love yous*. God is right here.

God pulled up a seat. God has traveled all the way to the heart.
Tell the next generation.

Poem by

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

READ John 1:1-14

COMMENTARY | Dr. Christine J. Hong

During Christmastime each year, I reflect on the faith of my ancestors, a faith forged in fire. I think especially about my grandparents who are no longer with me, who passed their faith down to their children and grandchildren. As internally-displaced people after the Korean war ceasefire, they built a life for their family out of nothing. Despite their faith, at times they despaired. I remember my grandmother telling me about those early days as they found their footing in a forever changed Korean peninsula. She spoke about the waves of grief that would wash over her. As they fled the northern part of the peninsula, their newborn died. She never got to say goodbye to her siblings or parents. Her younger brother was conscripted into the North Korean army, and after letters that would arrive here and there over those first years, the correspondence suddenly stopped coming and she could only assume the worst about his fate. She spoke about one episode of grief that hit her while sweeping the kitchen. Grief washed over her, and she crumpled to the floor, swallowed by it. She wanted to pray but no words would come. As she struggled, she had a vision of two giant hands open and beckoning her. She felt held by those divine hands as she moved through her grief. God did not try to remove her grief but held her through it.

When I consider my grandmother's story during Christmastime, the testimony of her life in post-war Korea, I cannot help but also reflect on Mary, who pondered all she bore witness to in her heart. The twin feelings of relief in welcoming the healthy birth of her child, and the anguish of what was coming for him. As she held Jesus, did she also feel held by the Divine presence—a presence that held her throughout her life as she moved through joy, anticipation, terror, and grief? Surely, she was also held by the hands of her ancestors, those who knew her by name, and would help her move through what life would soon bring.



Through Him, All Things | Lauren Wright Pittman
Block print with oil-based ink over gouache painting

READ John 1:1-14

FROM THE ARTIST | Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

In John's cosmic, mysterious creation narrative, the description of the "Word" that particularly sparked my imagination was in verses 3 and 4: "All things came into being through him.... in him was life, and the life was the light of all people." How does one image a concept so abstract and consequential to the Christian tradition? I find myself asking this question a lot. The words of the text themselves stretch to their limits while attempting to encapsulate the breadth of who Jesus is.

As I considered visual metaphors that might illuminate this text, I thought about a prism. I remember the first time I used this seemingly magical, transparent stone. I held it to the light, which I could not see, and to my surprise the light was broken down into the vibrant colors of a rainbow. It was natural for me to think the stone was creating something that wasn't there, but this medium revealed the complex truth that light is in fact made up of all the colors in existence.

In my image, Jesus is a prism.⁶ The light that is life that comes from the Creator shines through Jesus, and it is through him that we can see the fullness and beauty of who God is. It is through him that all of Creation came into being. I decided to paint the colors of the rainbow in the order I learned as a child: ROYGBIV.⁷ It was when picking paints that I realized there are seven colors in a simplified rainbow, and there are also seven days of Creation. In this block carving, each of the days of Creation is referenced through simplified patterning in each of the colors of the rainbow. It is through Christ that all things came into being, and it is through him that we experience the abounding saturation of God, who chose to dwell among us.

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.

⁶ I realized when creating this image that I was subconsciously inspired by an image by iconographer Kelly Latimore called "Christ the Light." In Latimore's image, Jesus is the light, and the Holy Spirit is the prism. I'm grateful for his influence and hope you will also check out his work: kelly-latimore.pixels.com.

⁷ An acronym for the order of hues in the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.



Wednesday | Journal Prompt

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION...

God dwells with us

The holiday season can be full of emotional highs and lows. In the space below, offer any gratitude or grief that is swelling for you. Close in prayer, knowing that God dwells with you no matter what you are feeling.



Ponder | Hannah Garrity
Paper lace with watercolor

READ Luke 2:15-21

FROM THE ARTIST | Hannah Garrity

The hope that Mary was pondering inspired the concept and flow in this watercolored paper lace work. Are you, as I am, most taken by the sense that Mary has given birth to the hopes and dreams of a people who are hurting?

During the pandemic, as I watched the news, I saw so much creativity bubbling up. I saw people imagining a world that could be, a world that should be. The hope that was emerging was palpable. Then, as a teacher, I went back to the classroom this year. Hope seemed absent among my students, among the faculty, among the parents. I began to research the science of hope. Perhaps it's teachable, I wondered. I watched a TED talk titled, "Hope is the Most Powerful Force in the World," by Somnieng Houern⁸ who runs a school for girls, putting concepts of the science of hope into action. He says that he focuses on one person. The ripple effect of hope was the power of which he spoke.

I was already putting this one-person-at-a-time focus into action before I saw this TED talk, however, understanding more about the science of hope has helped me realize that my work is making a difference. Relationships are improving, students are reconnecting with their studies, students are speaking up about their needs. The students need to know how to generate hope, how to create it, how to expand it in their daily lives—one person at a time.

In the midst of a difficult life, "Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). One of these treasures was the hope that her womb had brought forth for the world to return to again and again—and to pass on, like a ripple, one person at a time.

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.

⁸ Houern, Somnieng. "Hope is the Most Powerful Force in the World." *TEDxStMarksSchool*. November 11, 2015. youtu.be/i63givEPq7E.



Scan to hear
the tune!

God Became Flesh With Us to Dwell

The First Noel

Text: Anna Strickland (2022)

Music: Traditional English carol

From Ga - li - lee to Beth - le - hem Did
A - bid - ing in the fields that night The
The shep herds went as the an-gels had said To a

Ma - ry and Jo-seph their jour-ney be - gin Many
shep - herds saw a ra - diant light When
man-ger in town with haste they sped And

miles from home with - out a room Em -
an - gels came to fill the sky Break-ing
there as earth and heav-en con - verged They

man - u - el came forth from Ma - ry's womb
in - to earth from heav-en on high No -
shared with the par - ents all that had oc - curred

el, no - el, no - el, no - el God be-came flesh with

us to dwell

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION...

SABBATH IN THE KITCHEN

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

MIYEOK-GUK

A family recipe shared by Christine J. Hong

Miyeok-guk is a traditional postpartum meal for new mothers and a traditional Korean birthday meal. Korean people make and eat *Miyeok-guk* to celebrate growing a year older and to honor the labor of their mothers who brought them into the world.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ounce of dried *miyeok*/seaweed (*you can find this in the dried goods section at a Korean grocery store like H Mart*)
- 1 pound of beef brisket sliced into small pieces (*you can substitute any shellfish*)
- 1 packet of bone broth or anchovy and dried kelp broth (*you can find both kinds of broth ready-made and packaged at a Korean grocery store—bonus, they are shelf stable—or you can make your own*)
- 1-2 teaspoons of toasted sesame oil, to taste
- 1-2 tablespoons of soup soy sauce or light soy sauce, to taste (*you can substitute fish sauce*)
- 4 minced cloves of garlic

INSTRUCTIONS

Soak your *miyeok*/seaweed in cold water. It will rehydrate. Once rehydrated, drain, and cut it up into small bite-sized pieces. Prepare your brisket by cutting it up into small pieces. To a pot, add 6 cups of water and the *miyeok*. Cover and boil on high for about 10 minutes. Add in the brisket and boil at medium heat for 35-40 minutes. Stir occasionally. The beef will slowly become tender. Stir in your garlic, bone broth, and soup soy sauce and boil for 10 more minutes. Stir in the sesame oil. For a full meal, serve alongside or over hot rice with kimchi on the side. Serves 3-4 people.