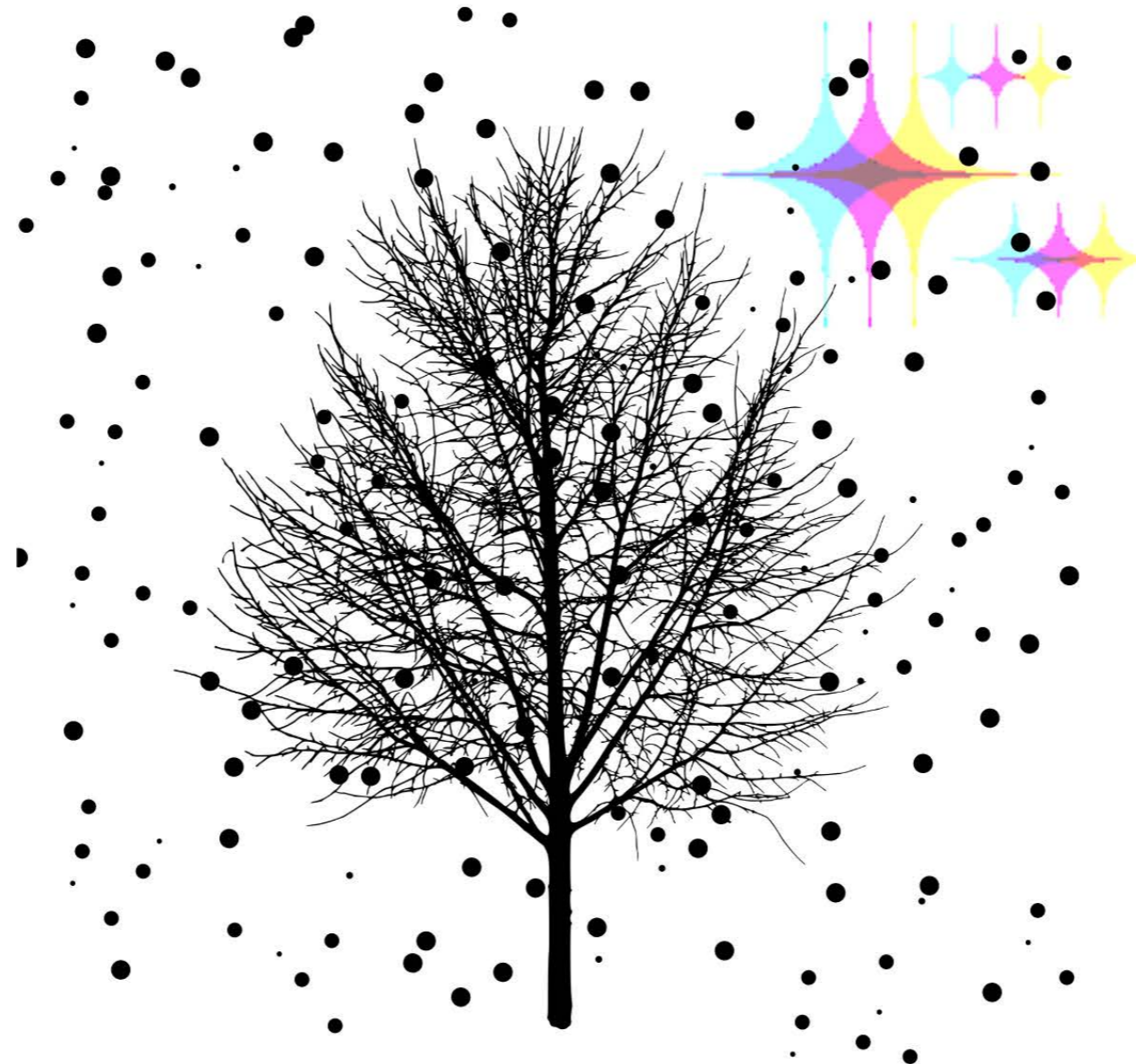


ASHES ALIVE: ADVENT

Advent devotionals written by
LGBTQI+ Christians and their friends.



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Ashes Alive: Advent

2022

**Advent Season Devotionals by
LGBTQI+ Christians
& their friends.**

Ashes Alive: Advent 2022 is based on the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A

With contributions by:

Liggera Edmonds-Allen	Denise Hamblen
Zaweria Hunyu	Faith Mbogo
Jemima Mugo	Rahab Wambui
Jeremy Emmert	Rev. Kim Purl
Nancy Wanja Mwangi	Monica Wambui
Daniel Kihara	Rufus Mugu
Giacomo Liggera	Diane Krantz
Anonymous	Rev. Rob Van Ess
Rev. Roberto Ochoa	Pastor Ali Lopez-Valcarcel
Rev. Marian Edmonds-Allen	Colleen C. Mitchell
Pastor Marie Nganga	Adrian Slonaker
Rev. Melissa Lynn Guthrie	Rev. Jason Carson Wilson
Boniface Waweru	Jacklin Wambui
David Mwaura	Elizabeth Moraa
Samuel Thirikwa	Wilfred Nyokabi
Steven Maina	Ash Mason
Ed Moran	Lucy Wanijuru
Dorcas Kiki	Angela Athey

Edited by Liggera Edmonds-Allen

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Introduction to Ashes Alive: Advent 2022 by Rev. Marian Edmonds-Allen

Welcome! We are so glad that you are here with us!

Ashes Alive: Advent 2022 is the fourth in an ongoing devotional series written by LGBTQI+ Christians and their friends from all over the world, from a variety of religious and spiritual traditions, expressions and points of view.

To preserve as best as possible the unique voices of our contributors their entries are very lightly edited and only for clarity when needed. Our goal is for the authentic voices to be heard. If you - are someone you know - would like to be a writer for future devotionals, please email me:

marian@parity.nyc

For many people, devotionals are something they have used before, perhaps for years. For others, this is entirely new concept. What our devotional series intends to do is to share the Scripture passages of the day - currently what is known as Year A in the Revised Common Lectionary. Many Christian faiths and denominations use the Revised Common Lectionary to guide their church services, and many individuals use the Revised Common Lectionary to guide their personal Scripture reading.

Personal Scripture reading can be accompanied by written commentary - a devotional volume, like this one. Devotional compilations are often written by one person or written with a particular theme or perspective.

You may choose to use your own Bible or access an online version. An online version we recommend is Bible Gateway where you can easily choose from different translations (NIV, NRSV, KJV, etc): <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

Our theme is love. We believe that all people are made in the image of God, and dearly loved by God. Each and every person has wisdom to share about God and about Scripture. This project seeks to share and amplify voices that often aren't heard together, and each represents the infinite diversity of God.

You may agree - or you may disagree - with what you read here. That, too, is part of the beautiful diversity of God.

May you be as blessed as we have been as we have worked together to create this for you!

How to use Ashes Alive: Advent 2022 by Rev. Kim Purl

Ashes Alive: Advent 2022 devotionals are written by LGBTQia+ Christians and their friends. Contributors write from a wide array of Christian conviction and belief at the intersection of faith and LGBTQia+.

Each has freedom to write from their own beliefs and doctrines without harm to another because we believe there is room for all at the feet of Jesus.

This is the heart of holy dialogue.

How you use the devotional guide is up to you.

You may choose to find a time and space to begin with prayer, receive the message of the day's devotional and prayerfully reflect.

If you would like to join a Converge group for LGBTQia+ Christians / those considering Christianity please let us know. We have in person and on line groups for those who identify as LGBTQia+ or are questioning, and groups for family/friends/and loved ones. Email marian@parity.nyc with your questions or interest, or visit: <https://www.holydialogues.org/converge-groups>

We look forward to meeting you!

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Thursday, November 24, 2022

Psalm 122; Daniel 9:15-19; James 4:1-10

Contributor: [Adrian Slonaker](#)

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.” (James 4:1-2 NIV)

In those four sentences, James the Just could have been describing today’s world, with those words accurately summarizing a range of events from the ongoing tragic wars in the world to brawls that erupt between bargain-crazed customers at Black Friday sales. This greed-based violence and destruction is as ancient as Cain’s murder of Abel.

This toxicity can assume less bloody, more mundane forms in day-to-day life – think of siblings squabbling over a wishbone or an inheritance. People frequently hurt, sideline and sabotage each other in order to achieve what they desire and to “get ahead.” Individuals and groups who have been marginalized and mistreated by mainstream society are not immune to this sort of behavior, revealing it instead of a sustained display of solidarity. The LGBTQ+ community is no exception.

After figuring out that I was queer just before I entered university, I turned to the LGBTQ+ community, first on campus and then off, in an effort to find “my people” and “my niche,” hoping to find warmth, shelter and open arms. Wow, was I naive! While I did encounter LGBTQ+ individuals who exemplified kindness, friendship and compassion, at least as often I discovered a cold, shallow world marred by backbiting, self-loathing and every kind of -ism from ageism to weightism.

This world was inhabited by people obsessed with superficial image in attempts to compete with each other not merely for sex, but also for elusive love, acceptance and companionship. These people were not afraid to cast aside and put down others in order to get what they wanted or feel better about themselves.

“You do not have because you do not ask God.” (James 4:2 NIV) Regardless of our sexual orientation and identity, we are all created in God’s image and loved and cherished by God. The particular problems that afflict the LGBTQ+ community are due to human flaws and foibles rather than any divine judgment or punishment, the same flaws and foibles that cause distress and violence to the world as a whole.

I have found that turning to God has made me a more balanced and mentally healthier queer individual. Believing that God values me unconditionally and is both my Creator and my Friend, I make an effort to pray daily, simply talking to God about my thoughts, worries, joys and fears, giving thanks and also asking for assistance and guidance. When I feel especially out of whack, bewildered or stressed, I might pop into church a few blocks away at St. George’s Anglican church here in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. For me, a focus on God has a re-centering effect, serving as a kind of reset or reboot when I am run down by the bugs and glitches of day-to-day life.

“Don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” (James 4:4 NIV)

My ancestors were Mennonites from Switzerland and the Alsace region of France. Almost as much as their plain lifestyles and their pacifism, Mennonites are known for their belief that they should be “in the world but not of the world.” This approach motivates my personal philosophy to turn to God and ensure that God remains a priority no matter what my earthly concerns as a human being, and more specifically as a queer human being, may be.

As today is Thanksgiving across the border in the United States, I am inspired to give thanks to God for always being there even if, admittedly, I sometimes do not immediately recognize it.

Friday, November 25, 2022

Psalm 122; Genesis 6:1-10; Hebrews 11:1-7

Contributor: [Ash Mason](#)

Psalm 122 The Message 122:1-2

When they said, “Let’s go to the house of God,” my heart leaped for joy. And now we’re here, O Jerusalem, inside Jerusalem’s walls! Jerusalem, well-built city, built as a place for worship! The city to which the tribes ascend, all God’s tribes go up to worship—to give thanks to the name of God—this is what it means to be Israel. Thrones for righteous judgment are set there, famous David-thrones. Pray for Jerusalem’s peace! Prosperity to all you Jerusalem-lovers! Friendly insiders, get along! Hostile outsiders, keep your distance! For the sake of my family and friends, I say it again: live in peace! For the sake of the house of our God, God, I’ll do my very best for you.

This theme of protection is absolutely fascinating to me in this Psalm. There's a sense of urgency in finding the separation between who will be the insiders that belong and the outsiders who do not.

As a person who is a drug recovery counselor, I find myself working with the themes of families much more than the individual sitting in front of me. I find that the individual sitting in front of me, usually facing prison time, finds themselves in a state of seeming helplessness as they know they need to create their safe circles for Sobriety, but recognizing that the call for safety would mean immense sacrifice.

Protecting yourself, your sobriety, your mental wellness, your family, whatever it is, means that you have to do the difficult and tedious process of setting boundaries and enforcing the boundaries.

I've found in my time as a counselor, the overwhelming desire for those with the illness of addiction is to find peace. They want to know what it's like for the storm inside of them to cease.

This desire is across the board! We all desire to know peace and to be loved. We all want for the storm inside of us to subside long enough that we have a glimpse of a life of peace and stillness. Unfortunately, many of us are also surrounded by toxicity, by unrealistic standards and expectations of others.

As an Lgbtqia individual, I feel the constant storm around me. I remember my girlfriend and I were in public at a Christmas tree lighting last year. I was asking people to take our picture, and after the 4th person called us a disgusting name, I decided that we would just take a selfie.

The pressure of being a person of peace in the midst of toxicity means that despite wanting to wave my finger at their faces, I chose to go into protection mode, get us out of there, and to protect our peace. The thing about peace, is that others won't protect it for you. You can no longer count on others to maintain boundaries. Boundaries are things we have to set and maintain on our own accord.

Protection means acknowledging that the thing, people, or situation you once found comfort in could very well be entrapping you now. What will you do to protect your peace? What boundaries do you need to set for the sake of protection?

Saturday, November 26, 2022

Psalm 122; Genesis 6:11-22; Matthew 24:1-22

Contributor: [Daniel Kihara](#)

Psalms 122:1

“I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the Lord.”

My great grandfather was among the first Africans to embrace Christianity. He gave missionaries a very big land to build a church, the missionaries gifted him by choosing my grandfather to be a clergy in the church, so we practically grew up in the church compound. I loved church because it was part of us, we took care of everything in the church compound and as expected we were the first in the church service. My grandfather used to wake us early Sunday morning singing “let us go in to the house of the Lord”. I grew to love being in church.

I remember the time I started withdrawing from going to church, I was fighting with my feelings towards men. Every time they preached about Sodom and Gomorrah; I had this feeling that God was exposing me through the preachers. After the sermon they would request people with special needs to step forward to be prayed for and I would voluntarily go for prayers and it became my habit to go to the altar after every service for prayers.

Nothing changed my feelings and this affected my spiritual life. I started spending time alone and I avoided the church completely. All my life I was used to going to church every Sunday and now I had nowhere to go. I could rock myself in my room and pray but still I missed the atmosphere of being in the midst of believers. But the preaching in our church made me believe I was a sinner and God was about to destroy me.

There is specific preaching's that is still fresh in my mind that made me avoid going to church completely. “Sodom and Gomorrah were burnt down! Hallelujah! And all homosexuals were burnt! Hallelujah, can the church say Amen!” the whole church was clapping and shouting. This was my last day in that church, I went home heart broken and I have never gone there again.

I lived a very desperate live as I was waiting for my time to die and go to hell. I was so broken to imagine that I will burn in hell and yet I was still a virgin. I did all despicable things because I wanted God to be angry with me and kill me. I remember one day a friend we used to fellowship with found me drunk and he was surprised, he asked me if I wanted to die because alcohol is taken by people who are dying. I told him death is delaying me because I need it urgently. I was walking dead, with no hope.

God is full of love for us, just as I was about to give up completely. I was introduced into a Christian fellowship for lgbtq persons, this is a group of Christians who have been wounded by the churches they devotedly served. The fellowship has helped me reconcile my sexuality and my faith. I have found a place that I always look forward to be every Sunday. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. (Genesis 6:8) As humans we get angry at anything that injures what we love just like in the story of Noah God was angry with humanity but there is always the shining grace. Noah found grace in Gods sight and his family was saved. I am alive today because of God's grace, He found me and saved my soul. As we reflect on today's devotion, let us know that God is still wooing us, He is still reaching out to us. Not because of anything we have done but because of the manifestation of God's grace.

Sunday, November 27 2022

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

Contributor: [Rev. Roberto Ochoa](#)

The House of God

Isaiah 2:1-5 (adapted from the Message translation)

“The Message Isaiah got regarding Judah and Jerusalem:

“There’s a day coming when the mountain of God’s House will be The Mountain—solid, towering over all mountains.

“All nations will river toward it, people from all over set out for it. They’ll say, “Come, let’s climb God’s Mountain, go to the House of the God of Jacob. They’ll show us the way it works so we can live the way we’re made.”

“Zion’s the source of the revelation. God’s Message comes from Jerusalem. They’ll settle things fairly between nations. They’ll make things right between many peoples. They’ll turn their swords into shovels, their spears into hoes. No more will nation fight nation; they won’t play war anymore.

Come, family of Jacob, let’s live in the light of God.”

For several years, I was called to an interfaith ministry geared for the economic vulnerable in Worcester, Massachusetts. On Thursdays, we provided an open respite space for anyone needing food, clothing, or just a place to rest. It was a beloved community, where all were welcomed as they were. Everyone was treated with the dignity we all deserved as created images of God.

I loved the blessed comradery of volunteers and guests alike during these days. We came from all corners of society and faiths. The Muslim working aside with the Jew, the Hindu and Christian sharing sacred smiles while serving someone a hot dish and beverage.

The mechanic and the CEO working in the kitchen making sandwiches for the guests. The homeless bringing another seeking free clothing and hygiene products. The care so many had for the other, inviting them to sit at the table.

The space had welcoming literature with rainbow and trans colors to indicate this was a safe place to be fully Queer and authentic. Many amazed at a gay minister wearing a collar of the Christian faith and affirming God’s love for them and their worth as a beloved child of the Divine.

I imagined Isaiah’s vision of the New Jerusalem was (and still is) glimpse every Thursday in this sacred space in Worcester and other places around the world, where we “live in the light of God.”

The Christian Advent is that continuing seeking of the Promise of God that we’ll turn our “swords into shovels, spears into hoes” and we are encouraged not to give up the quest. We are called to the Mountain of God for the sake of love for one another.

This keeps me going in my ministry in the Christian faith. Those moments I had in Worcester, filled me with an indescribable sense of joy, even in a troubled world. To see the humanity who walk in those Thursdays, feeling safe and secure....surely this is what the House of God must be like.

May it be so for you, me, and the world. Amen.

Monday, November 28, 2022

Psalm 124; Genesis 8:1-19; Romans 6:1-11

Contributor: [Wilfred Nyokabi](#)

It is important to note that, God is always with us even when we are going through difficult times. Sometimes God makes go through some situations so that His name will be glorified through us. That we may become witnesses of His deliverance and encourage many to hope in God.

I remember the day I was expelled from school like it was yesterday. Fire had blazed down our dormitory while we were doing our evening preps. The following morning, we were summoned to a parade and the principal called out the names of seven girls who were suspected to torch the dormitory. I was surprised to hear my name; I was not aware of any plans to torch the dormitory.

The principal said we shall serve as a lesson to the rest of the students. Deep down I knew I was innocent but how was I going to prove my innocence?

I was sure the head girl knew I was innocent and she just wanted to frame me because sometimes back I turned her down when she tried to kiss me in the bathroom. She always teased me that I am a tomboy and she was obsessed with me. I knew I was a lesbian but I had to suppress it. I never wanted anyone to find out and I avoided any encounter that could make someone be suggestive.

But this girl kept sending me love notes and I told her I was born again just to push her away. This particular day she found me in the bathroom and tried to kiss me, I pushed her and she fell down. She told me I will pay dearly and I will live to regret. I knew this was the reason my name was there but I had no way to prove my innocence.

I went home and my mother was so mad at me, the expelled students were supposed to build another dormitory before being allowed back in school. It was so expensive for us and that is why I never sat for my final exam in high school.

Just as I was thinking my life was over, I was introduced to a lgbtq Christian fellowship by a friend. Here I found acceptance, I have reconciled my faith with my sexuality and

I have fully accepted my self as a lesbian woman who is a child of God. I have seen the deliverance of God in my life, this has made me trust in God for a better future.

I know by the grace of God I will pursue further education because God is not finished blessing me.

Contributor: [Monicah Wambui](#)

Scripture – what is it and what is its purpose? This has been hotly contested for millennia. There is no way to neatly provide an answer to this question although Scripture clearly appears to stand as a witness, declaring who God is.

When I read today's passages, I'm reminded of the constant need for us to be convinced of who God is, to be convinced that He's real, to be convinced of who we are in relationship to Him.

When I step back to consider this, it's exhausting. Will I be on this journey forever?

The book of Samuel was written to document the intimate relationship of God with Israel. It seems to wrestle with the very same questions I struggle with but in a vastly different context, documenting the highs and lows of the most important king in Israel's history, King David.

In David's fight with Goliath, the author writes that David will defeat Goliath, "so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand." (1 Samuel 17:46b – 47, NRSV).

This is just one story that stands as a witness to who God is in the life of Israel, and who Christians believe He is to us today.

Psalms continues in this principle, acting as a temple for the people of God, especially after the physical temple was destroyed. Psalms shows the human cry grappling with where God is, who He is, sometimes briefly catching a beautiful glimpse and wildly praising God for what is briefly seen.

And then we encounter Jesus in Scripture, my personal favorite.

In this Luke passage, Jesus rises from the dead (spoiler alert) and then visits His disciples who were "startled and terrified" (Luke 24:37, NRSV).

I think it's funny that after all our efforts to encounter God, trust Him, see Him, hear Him, the minute He comes right up to us, it can terrify us.

Even though we know He's God and, in this case, we're told He would raise from the dead, doubts arise in our hearts. (I'm purposely intertwining the disciples' experience with our own).

It reminds me of that exhaustion I talked about earlier – in all our efforts to seek God, the moment He is revealed to us face to face, even there we doubt and fear. It makes me think that the doubts and fears come from something within us rather than the myriad of ways God has revealed Himself to us.

What remains encouraging to me is that even through all this, there is Jesus, still present, still coming to see the disciples, still trying to convince them of who He is. He has the patience and willingness; He said, "Touch me and see" (Luke 24:39, NRSV).

How amazing that Jesus came down from heaven to our world, in human form, for us to see and touch Him knowing we would still struggle with fears and doubts. He continues to reach out to us regardless.

Where is God reaching out to you today, asking you to touch and see?

Wednesday, November 30 2022

Psalms 124; Isaiah 54:1-10; Matthew 24:23-35

Contributor: [Zaweria Hunyu](#)

Psalms 124; Isaiah 54:1-10; Matthew 24:23-35

I reflect on my life and just like the psalmist say, “if it had not been the Lord who was on my side, my enemies would have destroyed me long time ago”.

My life its self is a living testimony of the faithfulness of our God. when I was young, I really wanted to be a biblical scholar one day. I had the desire to preach the word of God but, as fate had it, I had no one to support my dreams. Then there came conflicts within me if I can be a Christian and yet I am a lesbian.

I lost my faith in God and everything I tried to do could fail terribly. My family failed me and I lost all the friends when I was outed as a lesbian.

Even though I was all alone, God never left my side. I always felt His presence in my life. I made up my mind to trust fully in God and obey His command, the Holy words in the bible.

Just as I was about to give up, I was connected to a lgbtq Christian fellowship. This was the turn about in my life and everything that I had lost was restored, I got a new family and a support system. I feel fully loved and accepted.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away”. Matthew 24:35

Just as God has kept His promise to Noah to never again destroy the earth by water, so too he has kept His promise to never forsake us who trust and obey Him. God has turned my tears of pain to tears of joy. He turned my failures in to a beautiful success story. I now mentor lgbtq Christians in our local fellowship in business matters.

I encourage everyone who feel like the world has turned against them, we have a God who keeps His promises.

No matter what your current situation is, God will mold you in to something beautiful and worthy of Gods praise. We serve a wonderful God who keeps promises. In this life, I have come to realize that, there is no greater success than to be exactly who we were designed to be.

I can proudly say I have succeeded because I know God loves the queer me just as I am. I will not let the world limit me and my faith in God. I will continue trusting and obeying His commands because trusting Him is not in vain. God’s purpose for us was to enjoy the life he has given us, but to us in the lgbtq community, our happiness is limited.

Our fellow humans have dictated that we are lesser humans in the eyes of God.

I will encourage you today that we serve a wonderful God. people in my family were looking at me as a failure, someone with no hope. They rejected me and I was condemned to hell fire because I am a lesbian, but my God has restored my Faith.

I am set free and I know God loves me just as I am. I have hope for a better future and above all eternal life.

Thursday, December 1, 2022

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Isaiah 4:2-6; Acts 1:12-17, 21-26

Contributor: [Denise Hamblen](#)

Growing up in Utah, as a member of the predominant religion, and recognizing that I didn't quite fit into the expected mold made life challenging. Even in preschool, when the class was separated into groups of boys and girls, I went with my buddies Rodney and John, only to be shuffled over to the other side.

I was forced to wear clothes that were uncomfortable and to participate in activities that held little if any interest. All I wanted was to play basketball with the guys.

I grew up hearing church leaders say that, if I were faithful, God had to bless me. I would do my best to be good, to listen to my parents, be kind, make good choices and I would go to bed each night praying that, somehow, God would make everything right and I would wake up the next morning in a body that fit my identify.

It didn't work, and thus began a decades' long battle with myself. I tried to meet the expectations of my church leaders (and I thought, by doing so, I would meet the expectations of God), but nothing changed, not my body and not my heart.

My dearest friend saw what was happening and created the safe space I needed. With her by my side I made the decision to leave the church of my childhood. For awhile I wanted nothing to do with religion. There was a lot of anger and almost all of it was directed at church leadership – the men who stood at pulpits and condemned me. After a few years, the desire to connect with God returned and I began attending other churches. It wasn't long before I joined in worship at the United Church of Christ. At the beginning of each Sunday service, everyone joins together in saying the words "Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

My heart felt the love of God in those words that first Sunday. The pastor made mention of a scheduled baptism that wasn't taking place as planned. She mentioned that she had considered not mentioning that a baptism had been planned. But she chose not to erase what had been planned. She talked of the young lady who had asked to be baptized. The Pastor shared that she was a transgender woman who had started attending church a few months prior. After her first service she asked what she needed to do to become a member. They started working together and soon her baptism date was chosen. The Pastor reached out to the young lady earlier in the week, with no reply. She continued trying to reach her, without response. Even Sunday morning, the Pastor held on to the hope that she would arrive at church, ready to make that sacred promise with God.

But she didn't.

At this point, my past religious experience took over I expected to hear a sermon about the lack of faith shown by this young lady. Instead, the Pastor repeated the words spoken each Sunday, "Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

This inspired church leader then spent the next 30 minutes challenging us to search our hearts and see if those words were written there. Did we do everything we could to make this young woman feel loved and accepted? I sat in stunned silence, tears flowing, as I felt the glorious love of God coming through Pastor Gilmour.

As I read Psalm 72, the juxtaposition of the church leaders of my youth and Pastor Gilmour came to mind. How grateful I am for the healing balm she provided me that day. Pastor Gilmour left Utah several years ago, but her influence in my life continues today.

Friday, December 2, 2022

Psalms 72: 1-7, 18-19; Isaiah 30:19-26, Acts 13:16-25

Contributor: [Boniface Waweru](#)

After every five years, Kenyans go to the polls to choose their leaders.

During the campaign period, we see politicians interacting with the voters and they turn out to perform all sorts of dramas, they try to do anything and everything to make them gain political mileage.

There was one gentleman who even volunteered to serve customers in road side food kiosk. They want to be associated with the lowly in the society, they distribute food and cloths to the needy. If you need any assistance from a political leader, just approach them when they are doing their campaigns.

Unfortunately, immediately they are sworn in office, they forget all the promises they made to the voters. They pass bills that only favors them, they increase their salaries and sitting allowances. Most of them go back to their constituencies after the five years to ask for votes. The cycle continues and that is why the poor will remain to be poor in our country.

Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness. Psalms 72:1 (NIV)

Kenyans are used to disputed elections and as usual this year was no different. There were light moments in the supreme court where lawyers requested the panel of seven judges to use the “Solomonic” wisdom.

I thank God because all the parties obeyed the court ruling and there is peace in our country. The supreme court in Kenya is the final arbiter in settling election disputes and so the judges need to have a high level of discernment. It is my prayer that, God will give our worldly leaders wisdom so that they may lead with justice and righteousness.

O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Isaiah 30:19 (NIV)

When the citizens are needy, they cry out to their government to intervene and help them.

Here in Kenya, drought has been declared a national disaster. People are dying of hunger and our government is overwhelmed. It is at this time that we should cry out to God, let us put our trust in Him. The Lord waits for us to cry out to Him so that He can be gracious to us. God wants us to align ourselves with His will.

There is hope for us who wait upon the Lord, in this life we go through many tough moments and challenges.

The lgbtq community in Kenya lives in a hostile homophobic society, we are made to feel sorry about ourselves because of our sexuality, they expect us to sit and cry about it.

But even in our darkest hour, let us remember that God is always on our side. Let us not cry because of our sexuality, let us always cry out to our God, He will hear us and be gracious to us and we will see the work of the Lord in our live. God bless us all.

Contributor: [Pastor Ali Lopez-Valcarcel](#)

Rebirth!

Today's story from Isaiah portrays God's voice for Her people declaring God's unceasing desire to bring comfort to those in wilderness. This chapter is an interesting one, as it is believed it was the commissioning of a second Isaiah.

Perhaps, it is Isiah's second chance, rebirth, or redo.

At least is how I imagine it. Maybe because, as I celebrate my birthday with you today, I feel as I am in my own rebirth and redo experiencing life in a way, I thought impossible. The story and the special date got me to reflect on my childhood in Puerto Rico growing between Catholicism and Pentecostal religions. In both spaces I felt the love of God and even a calling to serve.

As a female, I knew my possibilities were minimal at best. My only chance was perhaps to marry a male pastor, but as a queer gender non-conforming person, that was not an option. In fact, coming to the realization of being an LGBTQ person, threaten the worthiness to be loved and welcome by God.

Deprived of a space to nurture that call, and deeply questioning God's love for me, life moved on all the way to Texas, but the call to service move with me; along with a sense that God was more than the limits religion had outlined for me.

As described by the prophet in our text today, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all people shall see it together,". We cannot limit God to our narrow mind and expectations. Our God is as expansive as our view from the highest mountain top.

Today as I look back to my journey, I can see God comforting me and speaking tenderly to my heart all the way through my doubt and questioning.

Even as others continue to question my worthiness and qualifications to proclaim God's love in my life, God finds a way to show us Her love.

Equipped with the grace I have found in this new breath and rebirth in my life, I feel compelled to proclaim of the eternal love God has for all people. A call that has grown deeper and stronger as the glory of God reaches out creating a new way for me to trace.

As we trace new roads of welcome, let us remember that Her love does not end as She carry us in her bosom. Her love moves in us and through us, creating a path for others to be reached by Her mercy.

Prayer: Comforter of our souls, as we wander through the wilderness of self-doubt and the pain of rejection. Guide us to the path of comfort you and those you sent ahead of us have prepared.

Let us learn from your love to extend love to those around us and become beacons of your grace.

Contributor: [Rev. Melissa Lynn Guthrie](#)

A Way From

A friend of mine named her son Branch.

“A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...”
(Isaiah 11:1-4a).

I don't delight in the Hebrew Testament. While I find meaning for my story through the stories of those who have gone before, I just don't delight in the “old” testament. I resonate more with the Christian Testament, the “new” testament. Still and still and still yet, I am finding new life in all the scriptures and new meaning in my story. I invite you to breathe in and out and in and out and repeat, “Still and still and still yet...”

Branch's mother, Amber, told me about one of the first days following his birth. Her neighbor stopped by the home to welcome the baby and congratulate the family. Learning of Branch's name, the neighbor spouted, “Why did you name him Branch? People will make fun of his name.”

Amber said she asked the neighbor to leave and she cried. Amber and I have cried together just a few times. The spirit of the Lord rests on Amber and while we've grown away from one another, I sense that the spirit of the Lord rests on Branch. Amber founded a nonprofit called SPARK to Share Peace and Rekindle Kindness. The organization designs and manages community service experiences.

Amber—and her family—they are striving for “equity for the meek of the earth.” We've grown away from one another.

I have grieved the distance and time—the lack of time—between us. But whenever we see one another or hear from the other, there is still holy dialogue. And there is new meaning for growing away from one another. I am reinterpreting language and my experience. While not near one another—sigh, there's less than 30 miles between our North Carolina cities!—each of us has grown. And each of us has made a way from our stories.

Many of us—you and me—we have made a way from judgment and exclusion to embrace and inclusion. I was asked to leave a position of leadership in the church when I came out. It was a subtle, indirect admission, this particular “coming out.” Years later the pieces are coming together as I still come into the fullness of my self. Outed and forced to get out, I spent time reinterpreting scripture, community and the institutional church. I have grown. And I am growing. Every Advent, my ornament collection grows. My wife and I gift one another an ornament that we think represents the previous year. It's a delightful tradition. We're going to need more Christmas trees, more branches.

Isaiah 11:1-10 is described as a reflection on the future peaceful kin-dom. Verses 6-9 paint a picture of tensions eased and fears overcome: “The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them...They will not hurt or destroy on my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

Throughout Advent and beyond, may each of us grow a way from the pains and injustices of our world. May we spark delight in one another and in the fear of the Lord. May we always celebrate in all ways the many branches of our stories.

Contributor: [Lucy Wanjiru](#)**Psalms 21:**

King David knew where his salvation came from. Even if he had power as a king, he always turned to God. he rejoiced being in the presence of God. king David was not perfect, he had many faults but his love and trust towards God never failed. David fought many battles and he always prayed to God for victory. God was the center of king David's life.

Having a personal relationship with God is very important in a Christian life. As a lesbian Christian woman, I understand very well that it is only God who grants salvation, life, and strength. There are times that I become very discouraged by circumstances, trials and suffering.

In all this, I know my redeemer lives. I look up to God for comfort. This gives me joy and peace knowing I am safe at the feet of my Savior, the keeper of my soul.

My son was 2 months old when the doctors told me he had a problem in his head and an urgent surgery was to be performed to save his life. I looked at my little bundle of joy and I was so confused. I had so many questions to God. at this particular time, I had no money and the doctors said it was an emergency that required a deposit of 500\$. I just went home with my son with no hope of where I could get that kind of money. The only thing I had was my faith in God,

I knew God makes a way even in the wilderness. In my state of hopelessness, I still trusted God, there was nothing much I could have done but to wait upon the Lord. Three days later, I received a call from the hospital, I was told there was a doctor who volunteered to operate on my son but I had to buy a pipe that was to be inserted in his head.

This was the first miracle and I said yes to the offer. The pipe was costing 200\$, I reached out to friends and only a few were in a position to help. I sold the furniture's I had in my house and I was able to raise the money.

Today my son is alive, he turned out to be epileptic and I love him so much. Through him I see God at work. My son brought me much closer to God. I have seen God providing for us in a mighty way.

From that day, I don't take things for granted. I have learnt to be grateful and appreciate even the small things in my life. in the midst of life's pain and misery, I know the grace of God is sufficient. I will forever give God all the glory.

1st Thessalonians 4:1

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how-to live-in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. (NIV)

It is my prayer that we may put God first in our lives. it is through His word (bible) that we will discover what pleases God. pleasing God is more than what we do outwardly. It is having our heart right with God. our attitude towards God and His word has to be right first. God looks at our hearts, remember David's life was not perfect but God describes him as a "man after His own heart".

I urge all lgbtq Christians, let's make pleasing God our priority. We are judged harshly in this world full of homophobia, we are not a mistake in this world. God created us to please Him.

Contributor: [Elizabeth Moraa](#)

Isaiah 41:14 *“the Lord says, “small and weak as you are, Israel, don’t be afraid; I will help you.”*

This is a very power scripture; God is telling us not to be afraid.

This wonderful God knows us better than even we know ourselves. We are weak and small in our families and even in the society but God is assuring us that He will help us. He knows we are weak; he knows people look down on us because of our status in the society. But he is promising to help us. In our situations, God is omnipresent. He is always with us even when we are going through hard times.

The current situation in our country is wanting, many people are desperate. The cost of living has gone up, many are sleeping hungry. They have lost hope and they need someone to encourage them.

As a Christian I know I am called to the ministry. We have different gifts and we should allow God to work through us so that we can reach to the needy in our midst.

The promises of God are true and we can always trust His word.

I was brought up in a very religious setting and I had this desire to serve God from a young age. I loved children ministry and I always volunteered.

People in the church were not happy with me because I was born of a single mother who died because of HIV. I was a bad omen and they feared I will infect their kids.

I was denied a chance to serve at any capacity in the church. it is only the word of God that would encourage me to wait upon the Lord. I had the zeal to know God more and that is why after I finished high school in enrolled to a Bible college.

I am now in my second year, even if I still face challenges because I am queer, I am more informed. With humility I know God has chosen me and I will humbly serve at whatever capacity I get a chance to. It doesn’t matter that I am queer, I believe in the salvation of Jesus Christ and my sins are forgiven.

I am a child of God.

Prayer:

Dear father, I pray that I may be full of your goodness. Filled with your knowledge so that I may be able to instruct others who want to know about your salvation.

May I as a lgbtq Christian, make and be an acceptable offering filled with your Holy Spirit. Help me to make it my duty to speak of Jesus Christ everywhere to all lgbtq Christians in the world. Let me love your word so much that I will help others proclaim your love. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, December 7, 2022

Psalm 21; Genesis 15:1-18; Matthew 12:33-37

Contributor: [Jeremy Emmert](#)

Truth and Grace

Matthew 12:33-37

Recently a spiritual mentor asked me to rate my emotional well being on a scale of 1 or 10. Since the parameters of the measure were not clearly defined, I chose “7” with an explanation.

I chose 7 not because it is closer to some mythical perfection of 10, but I chose 7 for its archetypal representation of completeness.

My emotional health is tied directly to my ability to strike the right balance of truth and grace and grace in my daily life. In God’s economy truth and grace are twins. However, in the human economy, the twin partners can operate more like strange bedfellows. The truth sometimes sounds harsh, even if it is sorely needed. Grace sometimes sounds like it ignores the hard facts, even though sometimes all the facts in the world won’t move a person one inch. In surface paradox is where great truth can be found.

In Matthew 12:33-37, Jesus himself addresses the importance of our words. Verse 35 stands as my personal guide for how I balance truth with grace as a mere mortal. In verse 35 Jesus said,

“A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.” Matthew 12:35.

I think Jesus is saying motive matters.

As I move in daily life, I can speak and act with deliberate action or I can be reactionary. My motive is act, however imperfectly, with the right motive of truth and grace. While it can sometimes feel above my spiritual pay grade, I know if I operate with a pure motive and set an intention to operate in both truth and grace I will produce great fruit in my life and the lives of others. Jesus said in verse 33, “Make a tree good and its fruit will be a good, make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad.”

The other day, a gay political activist asked me if my church was affirming. “I am pretty sure it is not,” I answered.

The person expressed bewilderment that I wasn’t fully sure and even a touch of hostility that it didn’t seem to matter to me. Presto, just like that I was confronted with the earthy difficulty of communicating grace and truth to a particular moment. I smiled at the person and said, my church is where I feel called. The conversation moved on to other matters and ended well.

I always try and remember grace and truth are not something to be balanced. By balanced, I mean any moment doesn’t require more of one and less of the other, but rather each moment requires just the right response that doesn’t compromise either.

Prayer: Jesus you never tempt us beyond what we can withstand. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, may we learn to walk in both grace and truth and reap the good harvest it will produce in our lives.

Thursday, December 8, 2022

Psalms 146: 5-10, Ruth 1:6-18, 2nd Peter 3:1-10

Contributor: [Zaweria Hunyu](#)

Psalms 146:5

Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.

There is a joke that goes around “every man for himself and God for us all”. Kenya is amongst the most corrupt countries in the world. Here you are required to have a god father for you to be successful. We live in a country where academic papers are not important in the job market, you just need to have cash to bribe your way out if you don’t have a god father. It is important to know that these are just earthly gods and if you put your trust in them you will be disappointed.

I learnt this with my friend Carol. We had finished high school together but our parents were not in a position to afford our college fees. I started doing casual jobs so that I could raise money to support myself. I was going around people’s homes doing laundry for a small fee.

One day I met with Carol and she was doing good with life, she had enrolled into a college and she was living in a very good apartment. I admired her life and requested her to help me secure a job where I can comfortably pay for my education. To my surprise, my friend told me she was not working but she had herself an older married man who finances her. She was so comfortable and proud to have this man take care of her finances and actually she felt so sorry for me that she requested me to be going to her house every Saturday to do her laundry. One day I noticed Carol was stressed up and she was drinking excessively, I tried to reach out to her but she kept her distance.

One morning I received a call and I was told Carol had committed suicide but she had left a note to me. “Zaweria, I admire you. Continue working hard and never depend on any man. This man has left me and now I cannot afford to pay this house. I cannot face the shame I have been exposed to. Take care.” I was shocked by this note and this psalm reminds me of my friend.

Human beings will fail you but God will never fail us. And yes, blessed is you whose hope is in the Lord.

Situations may force us to compromise our faith in God, we are tempted to see that God is delaying to bless us. Naomi had run away from Bethlehem in Judah because of famine, there in Moab her husband died as well as her two sons. She was still in Moab when she heard that God had remembered his people and there was plenty of food in their home town. It is good to wait upon the Lord. It doesn’t matter how long you’ve waited for the Lord to remember you, just be sure that one day the Lord will remember you and people will know that God has remembered you.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends; With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 2nd Peter 3:8 (NIV)

Let us be patient as we wait upon the Lord, He’s about to remember His people. The girl who was walking around doing people’s laundry is now the owner of a beauty shop.

A lesbian woman was remembered by God. I am a child of God. Amen.

Friday, December 9, 2022

Psalms 146:5-10, 1st Samuel 2:1-8, Luke 3:1-18

Contributor: Angela Athey

Psalm 146 Not up to “Holiday Happy”

I was greeted this morning with a bleak reminder that summer has bid farewell to the Midwest. The November cold brings excitement and anticipation of holiday celebrations and time spent with family and friends. However, for many, the cold and darker days seem to mirror a bleakness of the soul. Anticipation, rather, of loneliness, loss, isolation or painful memories. A reminder that “all” is not always well. I fall somewhere in between.

Hallmark movie channels flood our screens with warm fuzzy, happily ever after holiday storylines. Someone finds love, all are reconciled, throw in a Christmas carol and everyone holds hands around the beautifully light tree singing, “Silent Night.” And.. no one talks about the credit card bills coming next month. Since I will never get those two hours back... I find some satisfaction that it really wasn't a “silent night,” that the shepherds of a certain Christmas carol may have been “trippin”, and wouldn't a warm blanket have made a “wiser” gift. (Just kidding, we all know the wisemen didn't show up at the manger).

While I want to take time to hold sacred the Advent celebration, I want to acknowledge, that these last few years have not felt sacred or celebratory. Many of us will greet the holidays with tears for loved ones lost to a pandemic, for school shootings, lost employment, an oppressive economy, social injustice or rejection for simply taking off the mask of a hidden identity. 2 Peter 3 encourages us to be at peace, to be patient and grow in grace while we wait for a better day. The Psalmist pushes us a little farther, to even be happy.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,
who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever; Psalm 146: 5-6 (NRSVUE)

So how then do we hold celebration and grieving in the same space?

I have often referenced laying my suffering at the foot of the cross. But today, I wonder if we can lay our pain, our loss, our disappointment at the foot of the manger? What if we frame this Advent in the light of a kept promise, the birth of a baby. What if we remember that Emmanuel is with us when a friend lends a hand, when a prayer is prayed over us, when a need was met, a door opened, in the beauty of a sunset or the hug of a child.

who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets the prisoners free;
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.
The Lord watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow
Psalm 146: 7-9 (NRSVUE)

Be reminded, child of God, that you have much to celebrate! You are seen. You are loved. Your cries have been heard.

Be reminded that your answer is now, in the love that surrounds you. In this I can find hope! And maybe even happiness.

Saturday, December 10, 2022

Psalms 146:5-10, 1st Samuel 2:1-8, Luke 3:1-18

Contributor: [Daniel Kihara](#)

Psalms 146:1-2

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (NIV)

There is power in praising God. singing takes us closer to God and as Christians it is our duty to sing praises to our God. we are blessed because we trust in our God and our Hope is in the Lord. When you trust God with your life, your faith in Him is deeply rooted and you will be praising Him in and out of season.

Hannah had put her trust in God. she knew the secret of taking her burdens to Gods altar. She didn't listen to Peninnah's mockery and she didn't focus on her barrenness, instead she continued trusting God even in her situation. God answered Hannah and blessed her with a baby boy and Hannah's heart was full of praise to this wonderful and marvelous God.

1 st Samuel 2:8

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. "For the foundations of the earth are the Lords; upon them he has set the world.

When we are facing challenges, we always run to God. this period we are very prayerful and even make vows to God. as soon as God answers our prayers, we become reluctant and too busy for God. Many of us don't even remember it is God who has answered our prayers. In this scripture we see a very grateful Hannah, she was full of praise to God, she's making a confession of the faithfulness of God.

If someone had asked me where I would be five years ago, I would have said I would be dead and forgotten. I had listened to the worldly Peninnah's and I had judged myself to death. I used to cry out to God and it was like He was not listening to me. All I needed was someone to assure me that God still loves me, someone to tell me that I am still a child of God even if I am gay. I needed God to send me an ally who could connect me to my destiny.

God hears our prayers, sometimes we feel like God is not understanding our emergencies. But as we can read in the story of Hannah, God knew she badly needed a child, God knew the tribulations she was going through and in His own time, He blessed Hannah with a child. God in His own time answers our prayers in a very special way. The first time I was invited to attend a gay meeting, I thought it was just like any other where people go have fun then go home.

To my surprise I walked in to a Spirit filled fellowship, the main mission is to share the word of God and uplift each other. God had answered my prayers, I was welcomed into this beautiful family. My life has changed for the better because my dream of being a farmer was restored. Through this fellowship I got a grant from parity that helped me start my life again. I have more reasons to live and most importantly I will live to praise God.

Luke 3:11 John answered, "the man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." As our pastor insists to us, we serve God better through humanity. We have learnt to share what we have amongst us. We live in a very hostile society but the grace of God we survive. I thank God for the servants of God who have devotedly supported us financially and emotionally.

Sunday, December 11, 2022

Isaiah 35:1-10, Psalms 146:5-10, Luke 1:46b-55

Contributor: [Pastor Marie Nganga](#)

Have you ever found yourself in a moment and wondered if your hope would ever return?

Mum is the strongest woman of faith I have known for years; she was diagnosed with dementia and it progressed really fast. She is just a shadow of her former self, she is in a wilderness of confusion but one thing that encourages me is that she still knows how to read her bible, she misplaces it more than a thousand times a day and I will never get tired of looking for it and read with her the same verse over and over again.

I am not her only child but I took the responsibility because the others cared less. I am her primary care giver. Just when I was settling in with taking care of my mother, I was diagnosed with fibroids that became so painful, I needed to undergo an urgent operation to remove them. The doctors told me they had no option and I had to let my uterus go because it was deeply affected. I went home with a very broken heart, loneliness surrounded me, I had no one to discuss with. I was in this desert confused and alone, I had no money, I had no friends and to say the truth I felt like I had no hope.

As our daily routine with mum, we read a verse before we go to bed. This day we read Isaiah 35; I received these words as a prophecy to my life. I needed this God who provides in the desert. I knelt on my bed side and prayed, I had no choice but to hope and wait upon the Lord. The hospital called me a week later and told me my surgery will be facilitated by volunteers who were raising awareness of cervical cancer.

I knew God had started making a way for me. I approached my neighbor who offered to look after my mum the time I would be in the hospital. My surgery was successful and I had found favor with the head nurse who took care of me for the one week I stayed there. The nurses were surprised that no body came to visit me and they organized for my transport back home. As I was preparing to leave, I noticed a young man with a rainbow arm band, I showed him my arm band and we exchanged contacts. We became friends. Through this friendship we started to fellowship together as he became a constant visitor in my house. He introduced me to another friend.

From a chance meeting in a hospital parking, we have grown to a fellowship of 30 LGBTQ Christians. We meet every Sunday and we are a very close family, they help me take care of my mum. I shed tears when I say I have seen God with my eyes. I am a witness of what God is capable of doing.

Isaiah 35 is a message of hope to us all, we are living in a difficult time. Chronic diseases, financial crisis, rumors of war but we have hope in our God. He is making a way in the wilderness, your weak hands will be strengthened, if your heart isn't strong, it will be made strong, if you are blind, you will be able to see. The people who have harassed you will be banished from your life because God is taking you to a safe place. God is promising us a life full of His goodness. How will we receive these promises?

Psalms 146:5

When we are helpless, let us learn to put our trust in God. let us not compromise our faith in God by looking for shortcuts. Let our dependency be on God alone. Our God will forever remain faithful.

As LGBTQ Christians, God knows how we are struggling to be accepted in the society. In this struggle we are not alone, God is present, He is looking out for us and making way for us in this homophobic desert.

Contributor: [Dorcas Kiki](#)

Psalms 42:3

My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, where is thy God? (King James Bible).

As a transgender person, I did not have to come out to anyone. The changes in my body as I approached teenage made people give me funny nick names. I look back to my life and I wonder why I had to go through all that yet it was something I had no control about.

I had not met other people like me and I wondered why. Even the close people to me were as confused as me. Every time I was called names my heart could bleed in the inside, dry tears and sorrowful prayers to God. as a staunch catholic, I would cry holding my rosary and believing there is a God somewhere who listens to my prayers.

I remember one day my big sister asked me “why did you chose this life? I was surprised because if I was given a choice I would never even in my dreams choose to be born a transgender. This is what Lgbtq persons go through here in Kenya. The society thinks its something we have chosen and thus we have to live with the consequences.

Some says we choose this life so that we can get donor funds and others say we are paid just to say we are queer. There is something I always ask “who can choose this life where you are always at risk of being killed by mob justice and no one can raise a finger, a life of ridicule where they don’t call you by your name.

Mostly they call us Sodom and Gomorrah. We live in a society that thinks God’s wrath is upon our country because of people like us. Every lgbtq Christian in Kenya can relate to psalms 42. We are ridiculed when we say we are Christians and we are outrightly told we are blaspheming God.

Being lgbtq Christians put us in a position where constantly we question God. yes, our soul’s thirst for God, we yearn to be included in places of worship but our sexuality limits us. For the times I have fellowshiped with the lgbtq Christians I have witnessed more tears than in any other congregation.

The first time I went into a closed-door night vigil hosted by lgbtq and my life was changed. During prayers everyone knelt down and no one was able to utter a word. They just cried to their God. at the end they would just say the benediction and conclude. From that day I became part of this group. I am at peace with my God now. My soul has found rest in God.

The apostles were ministering the Gospel, they could heal the sick and cast out demons but no one wanted to be associated with them. They were filled by the power of the Holy Spirit and God was working through them.

I just want to encourage all my Lgbtq Christians, it has not been easy and it will not get easier anytime soon. We have to be vigilant, work together for the common goal. Let us spread the love of Christ.

God bless us all.

Contributor: [Boniface Waweru](#)

Psalms 42: *“As a deer long for a stream of cool water, so I long for you, O God.”*

Water is life, we have been told that 80% of our bodies consist of water and 75% of the earth is water. This shows how important water is to living things, we cannot survive without water. We have experienced a very dry season in our country like never before, drought has ravaged many parts of our country. We have seen human beings, domestic and wild animals dying because of hunger and thirst. This shows us the importance of having rivers around us.

Social climate for LGBTQ persons in our country is not good, we are worried about our future security. We long for a world free of homophobia, transphobia, hatred, fear and death. We thirst for forgiveness, healing and salvation.

Ezekiel 47:12 On each bank of the stream all kinds of tree will grow to provide food. Their leaves will never wither, and they will never stop bearing fruit. They will have fresh fruit every month, because they are watered by the stream that flows from the temple. The trees will provide food, and their leaves will be used for healing people. (GNB)

This passage fills me with comfort and hope, a marvelous river is flowing to bring life and healing to the land. There is a river that will flow in us and it will heal our broken hearts. God created us so that we can enjoy this life and our God is the source of our lives. Just like the rivers give life and joy to the land, God is giving us life and joy.

A while back I was looking for my kind of family, we don't have a safe space here so the only place you can meet LGBTQ persons is in bars and on social media. One day I tried my luck in an app called grinder. The person I met had impersonated to be a single gay guy. It was my first time and so I fell for the trap. We met in a hotel room and it is from there that he blackmailed me, I had no idea he had a hidden camera recording us and after I went home, he sent me a video of our conversation and threatened to send it to my work place if I didn't give him 500\$, that amount was too much for me and because I didn't want the shame of being fired, I never reported back to work.

I later learnt that the guy I met was a known criminal who uses this app to extort money from innocent gay people. He knows very well that you cannot report him to the police because homosexuality is illegal in our country and you cannot risk a 14-year jail term.

Here we live in fear especially in social places. I thank God because last year I found a group of LGBTQ Christians and now I have a family that I feel safe with. There is hope in Jesus, we should all learn to trust in God, the mercies of our God flow like a river to us, His presence is healing, sanctifying and fulfilling. We struggle with our brokenness; we face rejection even from our immediate families but we know that our only hope is in Jesus.

Jude 1:24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to bring you faultless and joyful before his glorious presence. (GNB)

God in His faithfulness will keep us, he will guide us to eternity. Let us build ourselves in faith and be prayerful always.

Contributor: [Denise Hamblen](#)

With a degree in English Literature, I am drawn to the Psalms. How beautiful it is when words inspire and guide. And, when the lyric of language is combined with the magic of music, heaven comes just a little closer.

As I studied today's reading, I came across the song Psalm 42 by Tori Kelly. I have included a link to it at the end of my devotional. When I return to the presence of God, I hope I am given a voice that doesn't detract from the spirit of a song (unless the purpose of the song is to convey a train wreck). I often lament that I do not have a singer's voice. One of my greatest loves is Broadway musicals. In my shower, I can belt out those show tunes with the best of singers. But my talent ends as soon as the water turns off.

As a child of God who, in this world, is identified a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I have often felt a stranger here. There have been times when I have felt as if I were wandering in the desert. In this Psalm I am reminded that this place is not my final home. I will be home when I return to the presence of my Heavenly parents.

Relief, understanding, courage and strength...these things come to me as answers to my prayers.

I was raised in a faith that taught me my Heavenly Father knew me and I could seek His peace and His guidance through prayer. I was taught to use the formal Thee, Thou, and Thine when praying.

At the age of 21, I served a religious mission to southern Germany. In the German language, there are two forms of the pronoun you – one familiar and one formal. The familiar Du is used among family, close friends, and children. It is also used when praying. I remember how I felt when I first learned this. It felt so comfortable and so right. It brought closeness and trust to my prayers. It was in a tiny apartment in the Black Forest where I first experienced the peace that only comes from God.

My most powerful testimony came to me when I was at my lowest and I felt that the windows of heaven had been closed to me. I expected that the only answer to my prayers would be a change – that I would suddenly become a heterosexual female. That had been my unanswered prayer for 30+ years.

One night, I stood in the shower and my soul cried “I need You Lord.” In that moment, as clear as anything, I heard the words, “You are asking me the wrong question.”

And, with tears flowing, I asked my Heavenly Father if He knew me. Was I who He created? And then, in that basement shower in Murray, Utah, I felt the love of my Heavenly Father wash over me. I knew that I was just as He created. He knew every part of me and it was good. I was good. He became my living water that night.

It is my testimony that I need the Lord. I need His guidance and His love in my life. And I am profoundly grateful to know that He needs me.

Psalm 42 by Tori Kelly:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGgsmCEgf4w>

Contributor: [Lucy Wanjiru](#)

Psalms 80: 3 Bring us back, O God! show us your mercy, and we will be saved!

I had a very hard time reconciling my faith and my sexuality. I questioned God and at times I could feel very bitter with God.

I thought I had sinned against God and that is why I was given these earthly desires of being attracted to women. I felt that God was punishing me and I deserved all that I was going through. Even when I was told my son had developed problems at birth, I still thought it is the wrath of God upon me because I am a lesbian.

I was desperate for the mercies of God; I was in need of restoration. I used to plead with God to come and save me. I desired to get back closer to God again. This is a psalm that all lgbtq Christians can identify with.

We go through tribulations in our day-to-day life and we long for the day the light of God will shine on us.

2 Samuel 7: 14-15

I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him as a father punishes his son. But I will not withdraw my support from him as I did from Saul, whom I removed so that you could be king.

David had a very intimate relationship with God, he failed many times but God was always with him. Just as God had promised David, He walked together with David and full filled all that He promised. It is through the lineage of king David that we have salvation in Jesus Christ. Even today God is having an intimate relationship with us, He is walking among us, being our God and we being His people. We have hope that it is never too late, even when we fail, God will take us back to be His children and continue a relationship with Him.

Galatians 3:26

It is through faith that all of you are Gods children in union with Christ Jesus.

I now know I am a child of God. Being a daughter of God means that I have a direct relationship with God. I have been brought into Gods family through faith in Jesus Christ and I am a heir in the kingdom of God. I no longer need a mediator to stand between me and God. I no longer question my faith because of my sexuality. I just need to take time to build my relationship with Him in prayer.

Our lgbtq brothers and sisters are also sons and daughters of God, then I must express my love for our God by loving them.

Prayer:

Thank you, God for calling me your child, please take hold of me and make me more like you in my character. In Jesus name I pray. Amen

Contributor: [Rufus Mugo](#)

Psalms 80:3 *Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.*

As Christians we are aware when we drift from God. our conscience tells us when we need to turn back to our God. we ask God to restore us into His kingdom. Once you realize that, your heart is truly repentant. Sin blinds us from seeing Gods desire to see us grow daily, we must pursue holiness and live a righteous life. in this passage, we read about the children of Israel.

They got to a point when they became aware of their sins, they realized God had departed from them. Sins had brought them emptiness, bitterness and pain. Our sins as Christians tarnish our testimony, the world is watching us and will mock us when our ways do not represent Christ.

Repentance is the only way to enter into a restorative relationship with God. when we come to Him with a heart of repentance, He offers forgiveness and shows us that His grace trumps all sin.

Humility: 2nd Samuel 7:18 *Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, who am I, o Lord God? And what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?*

King David humbled before God; he recognized the far that God had taken him from. David had not come from a royal family; he was just a young boy taking care of his father's sheep but God chose him and made him a king over Israel.

Have you ever looked back at your life and you are amazed by the Lord is doing? If it were not for God, I could be dead by now, people laugh at me when I say "God has taken me from far like pit soil."

Sometimes I do not believe that I am the same person who can afford at least two meals in day, have a roof over my head and wake up sober every day.

God took me out of a deep pit, He washed, cleansed, pardoned and justified me. through His mercies I am now a son and heir in His Kingdom through Jesus Christ. Today let us focus on the greatness of our God. He who knows how to save and sustain. Let us always be humbled by the grace of our Lord God.

2nd Samuel 7:22 *"How great you are, o sovereign Lord! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears."*

King David was the youngest in his father's house, but God chose him. Many of us do not qualify to be called children of God according to the status in our society.

Why are people shocked to hear that a gay person is born again? When we confess that we are Christians, they mock us, they throw us out of their churches. But the good thing is that God does not look at us the way human beings do. When we follow Jesus, we are adopted as 'sons' of God.

Galatians 4:7 *So then, you are no longer a slave but a child. And since you are his child, God will give you all that he has for his children.*

When we were living in sins, we were slaves but now that we are born again by the blood of Jesus, we are heirs in His kingdom.

Yes, I am a child of God. I will close my ears to all the negative voices in my life that tells me I can not be gay and born again. I will press on to my goal, which is to live with Christ in His kingdom. I am no longer a slave to sin but I am a child of God.

Contributor: [Faith Mbogo](#)

There is power in the blood!

When God was bringing judgment upon Egypt, the children of Israel were ordered to apply blood to their doors that when the angel of death sees the blood, he will pass over the houses with blood. Each family was to slaughter a lamb but God in his new covenant with us gave Jesus as a sacrificial lamb to humanity.

If we are sanctified by the blood of Jesus, we will be spared from the coming judgement that leads to eternal damnation and separation from God. The blood of Jesus on the cross was to set us free, it is a direct ticket for us to have a relationship with God that endures forever.

I struggled with my sexuality for a long time, i had accepted Jesus as my personal savior at a young age but the preaching in our church made me believe otherwise. My dad is a pastor with an evangelical church, I was raised in the church and still I turned out to be a lesbian.

It is my mum who outed me, when she found lgbt content in my room. I had downloaded sermons by lesbian Christians and I had a file of them hidden under my pillow. I had started skipping going to church and my parents became suspicious of me, my mother came to my room to search for drugs because she thought I was into drugs.

To her disappointment, she found my lgbtq sermons, she also read my diary and knew I was a lesbian. She gave dad all the evidence.

I never expected my father to throw me out of his house but that day he did, I knew he was homophobic but I never expected that from him. My father wished me dead for bringing shame to the pastor's family.

This is common to many lgbtq youths. Here in Kenya, it is like a death sentence when you are outed while still under your parent's care. Instead of parents protecting their lgbtq children, they throw them out. They care so much about what society will think of them.

My father asked me how can he be a pastor and he has failed to pastor me, he concluded that since I have chosen that path, I should carry my own cross.

Most lgbtq youths end up in streets, they are used as drug peddlers and sex workers by cartels. It is so unfortunate we are losing so many innocent souls. I do pray that one day, we shall have a safe space for lgbtq youths.

I thank God because, if I had stayed in my father's house, I could not have gotten the little freedom I have found. God led me to a Christian fellowship for lgbtq persons where I found acceptance and peace.

Through this fellowship, I have achieved a lot and I will also share this faith with other lgbtq persons who are facing the same tribulations I faced. God is our helper and deliverer, let us continue trusting Him.

Contributor: [Colleen C. Mitchell](#)

I sat in the cafe waiting for a dear friend to approach. She hugged me quickly, took her seat, and then breathlessly stammered out, “I need to know how to do it. I need to know how to get where you are.”

I took a minute to process what she had said and realized just what she was talking about. See, we have children who were raised together from when they were small who both now identify as non-binary. We also both identify with a faith tradition that does not affirm those identities.

I thought for a moment and then responded. “For me it’s an easy answer. I let go of any notion of a God who would have me choose between loving him and loving my child.”

That initial response has resonated in my bones since I spoke it aloud to her. My child’s proclamation of their identity has taught me more about God’s identity than I ever thought possible. My child ushered in an awakening in me.

In the psalm today, we find the lovely repetition of the psalmist, “Restore us...make your face shine upon us so that we may be saved.” God’s face shines. It is radiant with light. When God looks upon their children, they, like me, light up inside. And we who are loved so radiantly by this God are saved from any doubt, any despair, any lingering thoughts of being unlovable. This is the God who knit me together in my mother’s womb, perfectly fulfilling their desire for me, and the God who knit my precious child together in my womb, also perfectly suited to the Divine gaze.

The eyes of God are upon my child and they are alight in love. And from that truth comes my own marching orders. Get out there and love like crazy. Light up with joy when you gaze upon another creature who sets God’s heart ablaze. Affirm the Divine spark in every one of your fellow humans, and especially in the ones closest to your own heart.

In the Gospel, we get a very real example of this kind of love. Joseph, hearing of Mary’s pregnancy, plans to do what would be deemed “right” historically by his faith community. But God sends Joseph an angel with a message that flips what “right” means on its head. The coming of the Kingdom to earth shakes up the ways we once thought things would be. What were once “righteous” ways of judging and seeing others are changed when God puts on human skin and becomes one of us. Our flesh is redeemed and we are at once all that is good and holy in the world. Joseph wakes up from his dream and does what he now knows is right, he cares for the Divine one alive and present in his precious betrothed.

I too have been invited into an upside down Kingdom. My notions of an orderly God who keeps tables and figures and grades our holiness based on pious acts of payment have been unilaterally dismissed in favor of a messy God who comes to dwell with us and in us, who regards righteousness as our instinctual state of being and who welcomes us into a new world where what matters most is that our God is all lit up with saving grace that they want nothing more than to pour out on each of us. So, this, this is how I get there. I strive to love like God is all lit up with love for me, for my child, for you, for us all.

Sunday, December 18, 2022 Fourth Sunday of Advent

Contributor: [Edward Moran](#)

The relatively sad tidings of the Fourth Sunday in Advent are often overlooked in the run-up to the Christmas festivities: Let's get on with it. Open the presents. Bring on the shepherds and angels. Spread the myrrh.

Even the lectionary reading for the day is more muted. It comes not from the familiar second chapter of Luke but from the first chapter of Matthew, where we read of Joseph's existential crisis at the prospect of foster parenthood. As a queer Christian reading this passage, I can certainly understand his hesitation. After all, we have long been conditioned to feel that our gifts are not quite sufficient in the eyes of the church. In this context, the Fourth Sunday of Advent can offer grace and peace to those who are accustomed to feeling left out or not enough.

By entering into the hearts of Mary and Joseph as they journey to an unknown future, we acknowledge the self-doubt many queer folk have felt in our own spiritual pilgrimage. We wonder whether this whole narrative might have been fake news: will the child be stillborn? will the child have special needs? should Mary be reviled as an unwed mother? should Joseph the carpenter be making a cross instead of a manger?

These ramblings inspired the following hymn text, which invites us to celebrate the Fourth Sunday in Advent as a triumph over marginalization in their lives and in our own.

HYMN FOR THE LAST SUNDAY IN ADVENT ARMSTRONG (Richards) 8.7.8.7.D

Text: Edward Moran, 2006

Tune: Brinley Richards, 1819-1885

In the dwindle-days of advent,
Dark at dawn and end of rope,
Stirs again a motley pageant,
Kindling light in hope of hope.
Meek and mute the critters gather,
Shepherds settle into flock;
Stables shut against the weather,
Rafters hide a crowless cock.

Magi scan the skies for portents,
Stableboys have straw to spin;
Bumbling Herods claim importance,
Someone shutters Bedlam's inn.
Hardly noticed in the flurry,
Foster-father, wife-to-be:
Lost in thoughts of want and worry
Far from stead or shivaree.

Was she led astray by angels?
Fickle voices from the spring?
Fantasies that grabbed her ankles—
Some mirage about a king?
Should he make it final, fatal?
Put away his bride—what loss?
Will he craft a manger cradle?
Should he carpenter a cross?

Will she swaddle son or daughter?
Stillborn, or with special needs?
Will she die for want of water?
How to find the bread he needs?
Will this child from springly promise
Live a leper, shunned by all?
Will it make no mark upon us?
Some blind beggar by the wall?

Who will clothe her but the lilies?
Who will break for him his bread?
Will she ride the edge of always?
Not a place to lay her head?
No one knows but kine and cattle,
Shepherds braced against the chill,
Stableboys adrowse and subtle:
These will know—they surely will.

Copyright 2006 by Edward Moran.

Contributor: [Ash Mason](#)

As a teenager nearing the end of high school, I knew then that I was supposed to help others come to love themselves and love Jesus.

I thought it was through being a pastor. As I went to college and became a pastor, I loved what I did! It was the greatest honor to love others on their journey. Under it all, however, I had a secret.

I was Lgbtqia, and hadn't told anyone. This secret was slowly eating me alive as parishioners would try to set me up with their sons, nephews, grandsons, etc. With each blind date, it felt like a slap across the face that I knew them so well and was walking with them during the most intimate parts of their journey, but that they were unable to reciprocate the same with me.

Eventually, the pain became greater than my capability to hold it, and I began in therapy where I finally shared this secret that felt like it was going to kill me.

I remember sobbing in therapy, asking why I had to be gay. I remember my therapist looking at me with grace and empathy, and everything changed. As my therapist and I worked together to learn to love and cherish this piece of myself, this piece quickly became the greatest source of beauty and understanding in my life.

Unfortunately, the denomination I was in didn't see it the same way. In fact, this denomination that once trusted me with huge events, that had published my writing and research, that promised me funding when I was ready to start a church, had decided that I was no longer worthy of trust, grace, understanding, or love.

Due to the thing that I considered to be the most beautiful piece of myself, my sexuality, my voice was no longer valid or trusted by them. This was a Shockwave, as they rapidly went from asking me to step into more leadership roles and even training others to no longer providing me a seat at the table.

I relate to this scripture as it talks about the pains of childbirth and growth. I know what it's like to quickly be forced into silence because others are unable to hold the experience of growth. It's as if being enslaved to the resistance to the growth of others has such a strong hold on this denomination that it no longer seeks the mind and knowledge of Christ.

How I wish we could still be growing together. Perhaps we could have shared some truth together that would have brought us both so much closer to the heart of Christ.

What is the thing that once served a great purpose for you, but that you have outgrown?

Contributor: [Jacklin Wambui](#)

In our African tradition, the importance of a woman in marriage is determined by how many children she bears and especially male child. If a woman is unable to conceive, the man seeks a second wife. The barren woman lives in pain and she can do or give anything to anyone who tells her she can treat her condition.

Many are exploited by witch doctors and have used many resources after being promised to conceive. Here in Kenya, there was a pastor who was known for “praying” to women who were unable to conceive and they had miracle babies. Many women were flocking to his church so that they could receive the miracle baby. They were told to give the best offering just like Hannah did, when they didn’t conceive the pastor told them they had little faith. They ended up broke and desperate.

Hannah found herself in this kind of situation, her co wife had many sons and daughters and she had none. Peninnah kept on provoking Hannah and this irritated her. She was living with the pain of being called barren. Peninnah was a thorn in Hannahs life and this pushed Hannah more.

Sometimes we must have some issues in our lives that must be there to push us to God. Year after year, Hannah went to the house of the Lord to offer a sacrifice. One day in bitterness of soul Hannah wept in the presence of the Lord. She prayed to God for a son. In her brokenness she made a vow to the Lord that if she remembers her and give her a son, she will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life.

1st Samuel 2:1 *“My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.”* (NIV)

God heard the prayer of Hannah and answered her. She was blessed with a son. We see a delighted woman rejoicing in the Lord. She took her problems at the altar of the highest God.

We have pressing issues in our lives that it is only God who can help us. I live in a very religious rural society and as a queer Christian woman it has been so painful for many people like me. We call on our God in secret because of hatred and rejection we face. I thank God today because I have a testimony that there is a God who hears and answers our prayers.

I would like to encourage someone today that, a day is coming when you will rejoice in the Lord, a day is coming when you will sing a song of praise to answered prayers. Just keep moving on and trusting God.

Genesis 21:6 Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me,”

Sarah was blessed in her old age. She was blessed with a son, Isaac was not an ordinary child, he was a child of the promise. Sarah was surprised by God and she rejoiced in the Lord.

When we wait upon God, He does not give us ordinary blessings. It does not matter for how long you will wait, but our God will fulfill his promise that He promised His chosen ones.

As Galatians 5:1 says, Christ has set us free. We are no longer slaves to sin.

Wednesday, December 21, 2022

1 Samuel 2:1-10, Genesis 37:2-11, Mathew 1: 1-17

Contributor: [Steve Maina](#)

I had passed my primary school exams very well. But there was no hope of progressing to high school.

My mother was not in a position to afford my school fees. There were many children from financially stable families that had not performed well. They wanted my mother to give them my position because there was no way she could have managed to pay school fees in the school I was admitted. It was a good national school that only admits bright students. The rich parents wanted that position for their kids. I had no hopes of joining high school and so was mum that she gave out the chance.

One morning as we were preparing to go to the shamba. We saw visitors entering our compound.

They had come with good news. It was the principal of the school that had my admission. They told us that I had qualified for a sponsorship and my school fees was paid in full for the four years that I will be in that school. My mum knelt down with tears and started thanking God. I prepared to go with them to school and this is a miracle that will not fade in my memory. God intervened in my situation and changed everything that was working against me.

Just like in the story of Hannah, her situation of barrenness was overturned by God. she was blessed with a son and she became a mother.

As a football fan, I do not predict a football game until the final whistle. In 2018 world cup Belgium made a great come back and won their game against Japan. They were 2-0 down in the 54th minute but by the 94th minute, they won the game 3-2. That's why in football they say, it is not over till it is over.

Hannah was looked down by Peninnah because she had no Child, but look at how our God works. She blesses Hannah with Samuel and many more. With human wisdom, lgbtq persons are looked at as failures.

Don't be surprised to hear a pastor in Kenya saying the country is lacking rain because of the lgbtq community. Everything bad that happens in our country is connected to the lgbtq existence. They say God is angry because of us and that is why we are facing the wrath of God. Let us all be encouraged, that our God will surprise us soon and just like Hannah, we shall rejoice in Him.

Genesis 37:2-11

This is a sad story about Joseph. He did not know that his brothers were envious of him. He did not expect his brothers to betray him. Lgbtq community know this kind of betrayal very well.

Here in Kenya the first response you get from family members when they know anything about your sexuality is rejection. We have learnt to survive without the support of our immediate families. We have learnt to find satisfaction in Jesus because Gods love never fails.

Mathew 1: 1-17

This chapter represent to us the family tree of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. It traces the roots back to Abraham who the bible calls the father of faith. We are all blessed in Gods family.

We are favored.

Contributor: [Pastor Ali Lopez-Valcarcel](#)

¡Si Dios y la Virgen lo permiten!

It took weeks of preparation, finally the morning of the procession was here. As my dad put on his shoes, he reminded me it would be okay if I didn't walk the entire Procession. After all it was, he who promised to our Lady of Providence to walk from our home to the Cathedral some 15 miles away. This procession was his way to honor her and thank her for my uncle's safe return from the Gulf war.

Growing up in a Catholic home, I would often sneak around the kitchen table to listen to grown-up's conversations. They discussed all the regular stuff, from the weather to the seemingly more complex issues that required divine intervention. Those difficult conversations often ended by my grandmother exclaiming: "Si Dios y la Virgen lo permiten!"

Abuela's use of this phrase in my memory implied that life happens as God and the Virgin Mary, Jesus's mother, allows it. Mary is a central image in my imagination and the imagination of many Latinx individuals that grew up seeing la Virgen as a silent divine interventionist in our behalf. However, in the Bible, woman are not as visible and as engaged as I envisioned it growing up in a Catholic faith.

Mary's song as presented by the writer of Luke, gives me a rare opportunity to listen to a female perspective in a Holy book where women are seemingly invisible or inconsequential.

The Magnificat rejoices in the favor God shows her as an insignificant "lowly" woman to bring forth into the world God's good news. The question that came to my mind as I read her song, who told her she was "lowly?"

As a human born in a female body, I can safely assume that the world around her told her so. I can't tell you how many times the world told me that my brown, female, queer body was "lowly."

Mary's pronouncement attests to God's ability and desire to operate through those disregarded by society. It served as an opportunity to remind myself the importance of allowing space in my heart and imagination to see God in the unexpected and especially through those that society often ostracizes.

Prayer: God of all creation, lift our minds and eyes to see you in the simple things and in the majestic wonders. Open our minds to see each other in your intended glory. Allow us to find the strength to proclaim your love in our own bodies and on those unable to see in you in us.

Let it be SO!

Contributor: [Pastor Marie Nganga](#)

As I was reflecting on this message, I tried to imagine a Mary living in today's life of face book and twitter. She could have posted "feeling blessed" on her social media pages and she could have gotten many likes.

In today's culture, being blessed is when everything is going right for us, when we are in our comfort zones. Mary was not officially married, she could have worried about being pregnant outside marriage because the society could have judged her harshly, she was from a poor family and all odds were against her being the chosen woman to be the mother of our savior. She could have questioned why her but we see a very jovial Mary, she feels honored and special that her heart was rejoicing. She was humbled that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah. she knew she was blessed and everybody would call her blessed.

2nd Samuel 7:18

Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

King David is amazed by the grace of God; he is breathless as he wonders why God has chosen him. He was the least in his father's house yet God chose him to be a king. God led king David in many battles, he saved his soul and even at this time God was still concerned about him and his household.

King David was awed by the blessings of God

This is good news for the poor and lowly. People are surprised by the fact that I am a born-again lesbian woman, they wonder how I can be. My big sister rebuked me for saying it in a family gathering and warned me that I am blaspheming God.

According to our society, all lgbtq persons should die and be removed from the face of the earth. Let them be surprised because God is raising us and will continue using us in His kingdom.

God is bringing us up from the shame we have been subjected to as the lgbtq community, this shame that distorts our worldview and convinces us that He hate us. We are going to be set free, we shall call ourselves blessed because we have the gift of salvation.

Galatians 3:9

Abraham believed and was blessed; so, all who believe are blessed as he was. (GNB)

Abraham was made righteous in Gods eye by simply believing what God said, we too are saved by believing in Jesus Christ the son of God. we are living in a very tempting world but the grace of God is maintaining our testimony.

Dear God, thank you for your word today. Thank you for forgiveness of my sins, thank you that through faith I am saved, help me to live by grace. In Jesus's name, Amen

Contributor: Angela Athey

If I am being honest, when I saw my assigned devotional date was December 24th, I was like, “Great!”

Not “great” because it is the culmination of our Advent celebration, not “great” because I get to reflect on the miracle of the Virgin Birth, not “great” because I get to share nostalgic scenes of Christmas morning. But “great” because I had allowed life to make me cynical. I have become the Christmas Grinch.

We buy into a façade of the nostalgic scene which society (i.e. retailers) has created, that on Christmas, families are filled with love, everyone has gifts under the tree, the hungry are fed and there is peace on earth. And let’s not forget those favorite Christmas hymns, “All I Want for Christmas is You”, “Santa Babe,” and “I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus.”

A touching scene. But in reality, many end the day disappointed, empty and wondering how they are going to pay the credit card bills. Hang in there, I promise the devotional doesn’t leave you here!

The last few years, many of us have realized that the things which define our personal security and well-being are entangled in national and global instabilities.

My own life has been abruptly disrupted with, loss, change and new beginnings. I struggle with fear, anger and hopelessness. But, wasn’t it much the same that first Christmas?

Foreign occupancy, political agendas, oppression, poverty, unrest. I wonder if, even Mary, felt the anxiety of bringing a child into a messy world. A world of violence, injustice and uncertainty.

Even the Christ child knew disruption as his family fled to Egypt, becoming refugees in a foreign land. It was this tumultuous scene where entered the Prince of Peace.

It doesn’t feel like peace. It didn’t feel like peace to the shepherds.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. (NIV Luke 2)

Maybe all our holiday hoopla is a means of distraction. A mini vacation from the real issues that cause us fear, uncertainty, pain. Or to shut out those things that we feel powerless to change. Maybe it is an attempt to create the version of a life we wish for, where all is well. Maybe somewhere deep within, it is really a longing for love, belonging and peace.

I am seeing God and coming to understand his grace in new ways this year. In an earlier devotion, I wrote about reframing Advent as a promise kept and recognizing Emmanuel (God with us) in the kindness of others, a need met or the hug of a child. I am challenged today as the shepherds, to look past the fear, to seek the promise of peace.

“14 Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” (NIV: Luke 2)

Contributor: [Rev. Jason Carson Wilson](#)

John 1:1-14

Calls to ministry manifest themselves in many ways. This Black gay faith leader usually recalls clearly hearing God's still speaking voice calling a then-6-year-old cisgender little boy from Champaign County, Ill. to ministry. However, that little boy received the call in conservative evangelical church where the pastor declared all those identifying as men should become pastors and those identifying as women should become pastors' wives.

God, however, made it clear that my call came straight from the Creator's lips--even while realizing there was something different about me.

Burying myself in the Bible and preaching for more than one Youth Sunday and at nursing home services were pre-teen experiences. Hiding from my fabulousness was no longer an option as homophobic sermons (not so coincidentally) began drowning out God's affirming still speaking voice and led me to believe a lie. I was unworthy of God's love.

The lie drove me from church to a career in journalism that I tried fashioning into a ministry. Covering a serial killer is when God decided to use me. In the days before #BlackLivesMatter, a white serial killer targeted Black women supporting their addictions through sex work and dumped their bodies near Peoria. News stories only focused on what led to their murders. God called me to humanize them.

A lesbian United Church of Christ clergy couple, the Revs. Carole Hoke and Lauren Padgett provided the women's families pastoral care and allowed me to gather with them. That encounter not only allowed the women to be seen differently but helped me discover social justice ministry.

Those moments also revealed LGBTQIA+ people could, indeed, do ministry. Through action, Rev. Carole and Lauren embodied John by sharing the good news through prophetic presence. Upon reflection, this faith leader has done social justice ministry since birth. My presence transformed racist family members. My presence transformed homophobic family members. God called me to become the John of the family, but, ironically, my name, Jason, means healer. However, I'm in good company. God has called all LGBTQIA+ people to become healers and prophetic voices even if they're not religious.

Ministry can come in so many forms. Art, in every form, is a ministry. It provides representation to people feeling alone and abandoned, thanks to theological terrorism. That terrorism has led many LGBTQIA+ people to believe they're neither worthy of God's love. So, they had to hide their light under a bushel. Some of them believe they weren't worthy of life. So, some of them snuffed out the light.

Theological terrorists encouraged and enabled homophobes to blow out their bright burning candles. And they cheered when an epidemic began ravaging the LGBTQIA+ community.

Bayard Rustin, Harvey Milk, Marsha P. Johnson, and Sylvia Rivera were among the LGBTQIA+ people called to embody John, bringing a prophetic good word about God's fabulous creations. A warped idea of family values wrapped in theological terrorism has emerged once more, specifically targeting transgender people (especially Black transgender people) but confronting the entire LGBTQIA+ community.

We need more voices of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions who embody a similar devotion to sharing the good news that all God's fabulous creations to deserve to live in peace and with dignity. May it be so. Amen.

Contributor: [Rufus Mugu](#)

Why am I here? Why was I born?

I used to ask myself these questions. There was a time in my life when I was questioning my existence. In our human understanding we live in this world to reproduce and fill the world.

The society expects each of us to have a generation named after us and if we do not achieve this, we are counted as failures. My dad disowned me and threw me out of his compound just because I am gay, he was so disappointed that I will never get married to a woman and have children that will continue his generation. Actually, I forgave my dad because that is his view towards life. but once you come in to a relationship with God, your world view changes. My life revolves around pleasing God and doing His will. I know I was created to praise God and glorify Him while in this world.

Psalms 148:3 "Praise him, sun and moon, praise him all shining stars."

This psalm reflects a sanctified heart longing for the creation to praise the Lord. These heavenly bodies praise God by their existence, they have no audible voice to praise the Lord. Humans are special beings in the eyes of the Lord, we should join creation in praising the Lord. If mighty Angels are not ashamed to bow down and praise the Lord, why should we be ashamed of praising Him.

In the Lord's prayer, Jesus taught us to hallow the name of God. This means to place the name of the Lord above all names, to adore His Holy name, we should not joke around with this name. it is a sacred name.

Many of us praise God only when He provides for us but even when we are in need, we should praise Him more.

In Kenya, lives of lgbtq persons are always hanging on a thread. We are never assured of our security and we are always on the lookout, we don't trust even our family members because they can betray us any time.

I was operating a food kiosk in our home town, there was this young man who reported in my kiosk every day for lunch, we got really close. He was the one who gave me advances of being more than friends.

One week later, a group of angry men came to my kiosk and started destroying everything. I was beaten up so badly that they wanted to lynch me because I would destroy their boys with homosexuality. I was saved by the police who were on patrol and they took me to the hospital, I got a chance and ran away from that town. I later came to learn that the so-called friend had betrayed me.

Every time I read the story of Stephen; I remember that day that I had faced death. This story is similar to many lgbtq persons in our country, we do not feel safe at all, we stay in one town and if we realize people are noticing us, we run away. We cannot invest in a certain place

because we do not know what can happen tomorrow but our hope and trust is in God alone and even in our situation, we still find more than enough reasons to praise Him.

Let us become instruments of praise to our God.

Contributor: [Dorcas Kikii](#)

Praise the Lord. This is common greetings among Christians.

My grandmother was used to this kind of greetings when she met with other Christians from her Church. she was among the first persons to embrace Christianity when the missionaries came to Kenya.

Theirs was different because they only testified of the greatness of God to people who they went to church with. The greetings were limited to brothers and sisters in Christ who they were in fellowship with. They believed they were the only people who were supposed to praise God because they were saved.

According to them, non-believers were not supposed to praise God. that is what they were made to believe, you cannot blame them because they did not know how to read/ write. The bible was read to them and they believed what they heard.

Psalms 48 is giving everyone an opportunity to praise God. all of the creation from heavens above to the earth beneath are called to praise Him.

Psalms48:5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. (NIV)

Even today, many Christians feel that, lgbtq persons are not supposed to praise their God. sometimes you wonder if they know the God they represent well. If at all they believe God created everything that is in heaven and on earth, why do they think God never created queer people? All of us are created in the image of God and we should also praise Him without limits.

It is my daily prayer that my heart and soul be filled with praise to God, for He alone is worthy to be praised. in the book of Proverbs (8:22-31), we see the wisdom that God used to craft the world.

He created everything with mankind in His beautiful plans. He had a purpose for mankind and that is the reason through Jesus Christ, He brings mankind to Him.

1st John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

The bible clearly states that “everyone” who believes. I grew up in a church that lgbtq persons were not supposed to be saved. I praise God for the revelation that it doesn't matter your race, color or sexual orientation. You were created by this wonderful God and if you believe that Jesus is the son of God you will overcome the world. We have eternal life because we have the Son of God in our lives.

1 st John 5:11 And this is the testimony; God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. (NIV)

Dear Father, assist us by your Holy Spirit to see Jesus and to acknowledge Him as both Lord and savior. Give us enough grace to live lives worthy of Christ. In Jesus name we pray trust and believe. Amen

Wednesday, December 28, 2022

Psalms 148: Isaiah 49:13-23, Mathew 18:1-14

Contributor: [Steve Maina](#)

Psalms 148:13 Let them praise the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. (NIV)

There was a big tree in my grandfather's compound that was home to weaver birds, early in the morning they woke us up with their melodious noise. At times it was irritating when you wanted to extend sleep in the morning or when you just needed a quiet time.

My grandmother wanted to cut down the tree and my grandfather was against it. He loved birds and he was happy that they had found a home in his compound, he woke up every morning and pour millet on the ground for the birds to eat. He made sure there was a bowl of fresh water each day for the birds. One day I asked him why he cared so much for the birds and he told me that the birds remind him to praise God all the time. He challenged me to watch the weaver bird early in the morning, the bird wakes up and the first thing it does is to praise God for a new day, in the evening they praise God before they go back to their nests. My grandfather told me we should be like birds; we should learn to praise God and make praising God our priority.

Looking around us, we see the beauty of Gods creative art. God in His artistic nature created everything here on earth and in heaven above. Look at our diversity, we are all crafted differently and still all in the image of God. I am a gay man and I am born again and I love praising God.

When I meet you don't be surprised if my greetings are "praise the name of the Lord". Let's make it our habit to praise God all the time, in season and out of season. Our God still remains to be God and we should praise Him all the time.

Isaiah 49:13 Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord comforts His people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. (NIV)

God knows His people and He cares for us more than a mother cares for her children. Most parents with the lgbtq kids reject them. My own mother told me she cannot be a partner to sin and thus she disowned me. Many parents have chosen religion over their lgbtq kids, I know the pain of being rejected by my own mother and I have a testimony of a faithful God who has walked with me up to this day. God is our comforter.

Mathew 18:14 In the same way your father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

In the beginning of these chapter, we see the disciples asking Jesus who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Many people are obsessed with power. They want to be called the greatest, but Jesus explaining to the disciples, He draw to them a good picture about the kingdom of God.

He gives them example of a little child and told them that, unless they change and become like little children, they will never enter the kingdom of heaven. In the parable of the lost sheep, we see God as the good shepherd. God stretches His hand and look for that one sheep that is lost.

Lgbtq persons feel lost in the kingdom of God, but in His mercies, God is reaching out to us. Just

the way we are, in our queerness Christ is calling us back to the fold. Let us be humble, trust the Lord and follow after Him.

Praise be to God forever and ever. Amen.

Contributor: [Elizabeth Moraa](#)

In our African tradition, only the sons that are eligible to have an inheritance from their parents because girls are treated like assets to be married and dowry paid for them. The male parent decides on how to share amongst his sons and mostly first born are favored because they believe the first-born son is just like the father.

Mostly this brings a lot of conflict among the other siblings because they feel left out. Many land conflicts we have here are as a result of some sons getting a bigger share than the other and mostly causes death. Brothers killing each other because of a piece of land.

We live in a society where the successful children belong to the father and the less fortunate belongs to the mother. Our families are divided by the patriarchal notion that men do not fail and it is women who fails.

The story of Esau and his brother Jacob is no different. They were blood brothers but one was his father's favorite and the other one was loved more by the mother. Rebecca knew that Jacob was destined for greatness, she did everything possible to make sure Jacob received the inheritance that was meant for his brother Esau. As we know the story of Jacob, he had to wrestle with God, he knew he had failed and realized he was a sinner but God blessed him and changed his name to Israel.

Our God is a master planner, before we are born, He knows what will become of us. All that God has crafted must be accomplished because he doesn't fail. Through the lineage of Jacob, we have our messiah Jesus Christ. He was born and lived amongst mankind. He performed many miracles and preached about the kingdom of God. Jesus came to show us the way to the Father.

He died and on the third day He resurrected. He revealed himself to the disciples and assured them that He is going back to the Father to prepare a place for them. Jesus did not leave his disciples empty handed. He told them of a gift that His Father promised.

Acts 1: 4 “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (NIV)

Acts 1:8 “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The disciples were very obedient, they waited patiently for the promise in Jerusalem. They trusted Jesus and they knew what He promised to them will be given. they were staying together in an upper room, praying together and it is in that room that they received their promise.

There is power in togetherness. Jesus left His disciples together, they were fellowshiping together and I believe, He wants to meet the church to stay as one body.

As Christians, our main duty is to witness Jesus starting from our homes because that is our Jerusalem. As we are led by the Holy Spirit, it is not a must we be there physically to spread the gospel, we can join each other in prayers and even use the resources God has given us to reach to the people who needs to be shown the love of Christ.

It is my prayer that, God may guide us who are already in Christ to live according to His will. To accomplish the great mission, He commissioned the early church.

In our society we have souls that are thirsty for the love of God. our lgbtq persons needs affirmation that they too are invited in the Lords table. may we be led by the Holy Spirit to reach out to them and spread the love of Christ.

Contributor: [Jacklin Wambui](#)

Growing up in the 1980s, there was a dictatorial regime that ruled for 24 years in Kenya. People were oppressed by this regime that there were songs composed that demeaned the then president.

Others prayed for him to die. The president lived for many years and those who wished him death wondered why God spared his life. God commands us to pray for all those in authority (1 Timothy 2:2)

As I am writing this, we have a new government in Kenya. The LGBTQ community is scared for their lives. In the past the current president was quoted saying that the LGBTQ persons have no place in Kenya and that they should look for an island to settle. That is why the LGBTQ persons are afraid of what next, he can say. It is our responsibility to pray for our president that he may rule in the wisdom of God and that his rule will be good and servant like for us to live in peace.

We are facing untold troubles, we are living a life of uncertainty, many lack something to eat and they are homeless in the streets. As Christians we know where to put our trust. We trust in the name of the Lord our God.

Isaiah 26:4 *Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord is the rock eternal.* (NIV)

Trusting God boosts our faith in Him. There was a time I was so sick and, in the house I was alone. With my phone in hand, I scrolled at all the contacts and wondered who to call and ask for help. I tried to reach out to a few people but they were not in a position to call.

I looked around and said to myself, it is only God who can help me. In that moment I remembered my grandmother used to give us salty water when we had stomach upsets. I prayed to God and said “God I am not testing you, but I will mix salt in a cup of water and drink, by faith I will sleep and tomorrow I will wake up healed.” I knelt down and worshiped God then I drank the water and went to bed, I slept peacefully and the next day I had some strength that I was able to get myself to hospital. When we trust God, He keeps us in perfect peace.

2 Corinthians 4:16 *There for we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*

When we trust God, we have hope for the future. We have never seen God, but we look to Him in faith. We know He is real and He cares for us. There is hope for us who are in Christ Jesus.

We are heirs in the kingdom of God.

Contributor: [David Mwaura](#)

Psalms 20:7 *“Some trust in Chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.”*

After I finished high school, I started looking for a job. I wrote many job applications. Sometimes I was called for interviews and others I got no reply. The little money I could get from doing casual work I used it to look for a job. I remember one time I was invited for a job interview in Nairobi. I had high hopes because it was a government institution and I had all the required documents. When I entered the interview hall, I was asked who was with me. I didn't know that I had to be directed by a senior person in the ministry or else I give a bribe so as to be interviewed. I knew nobody and I had no money to give. Those who had money were directed to another room and the ones who were brought by senior officials just presented their papers and left. From the point I was sitting I knew even if my papers were right, I had no chance to qualify for that job. I left the place so discouraged. I cursed why I was born from a poor background. I had no one to look up to who could help me secure a job but I knew there is a God who I can trust.

We are living in times that many are trusting in earthly powers, money has become a powerful tool and we are competing who is richer than who. King David had this testimony that, even with the power and wealth he had as a king, his strength came from the lord. As Christians, we understand that our strength to overcome is only found in the Lord our God. if we are weak, discouraged, depressed, or overcome by circumstances of life, we just call out to the Lord for help. Our God is always available to help and guide us in the way we should go.

We have an amazing God; He surrounds us with His presence and every time we cry out to Him for help, He hears us.

1st Kings 3:5-14 *“Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for-both riches and honor-so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.”* (NIV)

King Solomon asked God for wisdom so that he will be able to lead His people. God was pleased with His prayer request because it was to do according to His will. “This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us.”

Sometimes we pray selfish prayers full of complaints. From king Solomon we learn that, when we pray according to the will of God, more will be given to us. The Lord was pleased that Solomon asked for that which would bring glory to God and more was given to him.

John 8:12-19 “When Jesus spoke again to the people he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (NIV)

In the present time, we are struggling to understand what is happening in the world. There is darkness all over especially with the lgbtq community here in Kenya, they fear for their lives because of the new regime. people are dying of hunger; depression and they have lost hope.

Let us encourage ourselves in the Lord. Let us look to Christ in whom all things are illuminated. In Christ all the hard questions are answered. Let us live for Christ.

Contributor: [Rev. Rob Van Ess](#)

A Parable for the Holy Name of Jesus

I once knew a dog named Sam. Sam was a kind dog with a playful personality.

One day their human companions decided to rename them “Truck.” As a puppy they didn’t resemble a truck. They didn’t sound like a truck. But they did love to pull things – like a truck. At first the name didn’t make any sense until you got to know them. They shared a house with a couple of cats named Luna and Bella who would get on a towel spread out on the living room floor. Truck would grab the other end of the towel and pull the cats all over the house.

Tug-of-war was one of Truck’s favorite games. They would grab onto one end of a chew toy and pull with all their might. They would never give up until they “ran out of gas” – like a truck. Finally, they loved to go for a ride in their human companion’s Ford F-150 with the windows rolled down hanging their head out to feel the wind pushing against their face. The name “Truck” just seemed to fit better than “Sam.”

A quick google search reveals at least 50 times someone’s name has been changed in scripture. Abram and Sarai become Abraham and Sarah. Jacob becomes Israel. Naomi becomes Mara. Saul becomes Paul. Simon becomes Peter. Every time their names are changed to more accurately reflect their more authentic selves revealed in a relationship with God.

I believe that every person is responsible for their own name. Even Jesus wrested with the disciples over what to call him: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets, the Messiah, the Son of the living God (Matt 16:14-16). So many names, some are even titles, and yet Jesus had to live his life to find his more authentic self.

Our gospel reading today reminds us “... he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb (Luke 2:21b).” The name Jesus is a derivative of Joshua. Joshua, from the Hebrew name “Ye-ho-shua,” means “God is deliverance.” That’s a lot to live up to when you are just Mary and Joseph’s kid who got lost in Jerusalem during Passover, or later that troublemaker of Nazareth.

And yet, it was Jesus who named himself by how he chose to live his life in a relationship with God that revealed his more authentic self. No one can discover a child’s authentic self by staring into their eyes. Not even an angel of the Lord. The child must discover their more authentic selves on their own.

In queer communities changing your name is nothing new. The continued revelation that gender and sexual orientation are non-binary and fluid leads many to choose new names to better reflect their more authentic selves.

Leading by example as the Trans community has done time and again throughout history their bravery affords us the gift of knowing that we carry the power to define ourselves. That no one can tell us who we are or for what we will stand.

Whether we grow into the name we are given or chose a new name entirely, that choice is ours and ours alone and change, including one’s name, is simply another step in a far greater journey. A new name revealed in the many sacred relationships we share, like the Israelites, Jesus and the disciples, and a dog named Truck.

Contributor: [Diane Krantz](#)

The common theme of the readings for this reflection is faith – what it looks like, what it expects, and what it accomplishes. The first part of Psalm 20 is petition, the psalmist asking for God’s blessings on the ruler. But the second part is wholehearted belief that God will respond to those prayerful petitions. To make such petitions is an act of faith, for as the author of Hebrews says, “whoever would draw near to God must believe that [God] exists and that [God] rewards those who seek.”

If we consider that to ask is itself a sign of our faith in God, then we know that all our prayers are welcome to our almighty, loving Parent. That Parent is prominent in our Old Testament reading. Genesis tells the familiar story of the call of Abram to become Abraham—the father of a mighty nation. Abraham’s faith is so strong that at God’s command and in his own mature adulthood (Hebrews says he is “as good as dead), he uproots himself and his extended family, his slaves, and his herds to move into an unknown land. There he continues to attend to the voice of God. The story bids us to ask ourselves: how far are we willing to go for God? What does faith look like in our lives?

When I was a young college student in Connecticut, I studied Thomas Aquinas, a famous Christian theologian, who wrote about the five proofs of God, (proofs he got from the pagan philosopher Aristotle, by the way). These proofs rang so true to me in my twenties that they banished all the doubts my public high school education had aroused in me about God’s existence.

But over the years of studying other philosophers and scientists, I found the proofs less compelling.

So when someone asked me recently why, at 79 and gay, part of a group demeaned by many authorities in my church, I still believed in God, I thought deeply. Finally, I responded that I believe in God because I have experienced God.

My experiences have come from moments of wonder in walking at sunset or gazing at the magnificence of the night sky; they include times of quiet and listening in prayer when I have heard a voice speak to my heart. Eventually, and as often happens in meditative prayer, a palpable sense of God’s presence left me. But the memory of God’s voice and the belief that God continues to speak, to listen, and to guide me has remained.

Consider how you experience God: perhaps, like me, it is in a moment of felt joy as you listen to a choir sing, or as you gaze on religious imagery, or as, while reading scripture, you think about a particular incident in Jesus’ life. Or perhaps when you hold a newborn baby. Or in nature when you hike mountain trails, savoring the cool green shade of summer or multicolored leaves of fall, or feeling the exhilaration of speed and wind on your face while skiing in winter. Maybe you experience God in a fun gathering of close friends for a meal or at a holiday celebration with family. You might experience God in a moment of sexual passion or quiet cuddling. As part of the LGBTQIA family and friends, you can have experienced God in the legalization of gay marriage or in our acceptance in community or as ministers by many religious denominations. Whatever enables us, along with God’s grace, do we, like Abram and the psalmist, believe?

Tuesday, January 3, 2023

Psalms 72, Genesis 28:10-22, Hebrews 11:13-22

Contributor: [David Mwaura](#)

I was brought up as a Christian in the Anglican church. since my childhood, we were taught to wait for the second coming of our Lord Jesus and till today I am still waiting.

Sometimes we face many challenges in life and ask ourselves, why can't Jesus just come and take us home? My grandfather was a staunch Christian and even in his death bed was telling me Jesus is taking him home. My grandfather was physically in this world but his spirit belonged to another kingdom. He talked so passionately about Jesus and this influenced every one who was close to him. Through my grandfather's faith, I desired to know Christ. I believe I will live with Jesus in His kingdom days without end. I am an ambassador of Christ in this world and that is why my reflection on this psalm is from a Jesus kingdom perspective.

Psalms 72:12-14 "For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight." (NIV)

I pray for the victory of Jesus amongst the lgbtq community, we live a life full of uncertainty. Many are rejected by their families and are out there in the streets. They have become drug addicts, the only thing you can see in them is brokenness. Many are hopeless, poor even in their souls and they are thirsty for Christ. They need someone who can reach out to them with the love of Jesus. The victory of Jesus will deliver them and in Him they will find a helper who will judge them with righteousness. Let us always be prepared for the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Genesis 28:15 "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

In his dream, Jacob saw a stair case to heaven and at that point he was communicating with God. As Christians, we know Christ connects us to heaven, He is the mediator between us and God. Blessings flow down to us through Him and we receive by Faith. When Jacob rose from his sleep, he realized that he was in the presence of the Lord. God is always near to us. No matter what you are going through, this loving God is always watching us. Let's worship Him in His very presence, let us praise and serve Him. He first loved us. All the glory and honor to the highest God.

Hebrews 11:13 "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth."

As I had noted above, I lived to see my grandfather die at the age of 94 and still waiting for the second coming of Christ, he had lost his memory and had no account of many things but one thing stood out to everyone he interacted with. He had a testimony that he was waiting for Jesus to take him home. This really inspired my faith in God. my grandfather is my hero in faith. Because of him and many heroes of faith we read about in the bible, our faith in God is strengthened. We know we are sojourners in this world and there is a better place for us as Christians. We are living by faith trusting and waiting upon the Lord.

Wednesday, January 4, 2023

Psalms 72, Exodus 3:1-5, Hebrews 11:23-31

Contributor: [Monicah Wambui](#)

During the inauguration of Kenyan 5th president, prayers were made on this day. Different faiths and denominations were presented to pray for the incoming president. It is a Kenyan tradition to pray for our leaders before they assume office. We are reminded of our role as Christians in this world, we pray for the kingdom we are living in even as we remember that we belong to the kingdom of God. Jesus taught us to be prayerful all the time.

The Lord's prayer Mathew 6:9-13 (KJV)
*Our father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
 Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in
 heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
 forever. Amen.*

As Christians we know we represent the kingdom of our savior Jesus Christ and we are praying for the victory of Jesus in the world. The kingdom of Jesus is peaceful, just and righteous. We look around in this world and you cannot fail to notice the filthy smell of sin, people are turning against each other. In news making headlines you hear spouses killing each other, children killing their parents and many more scary things are happening around us. We just need to pray for Jesus' victory where we will have peace and all nations will be blessed in Jesus.

Exodus 3:4 *"When the Lord saw that Moses was coming closer, He called to him from the middle of the bush and said, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Yes, here I am."*

It is by faith that Moses obeyed the voice in the burning bush, he obeyed the voice and believed when the voice said it was God speaking. By faith he led the children of Israel of Egypt. In all his journey in the wilderness, we see a Moses who was walking by faith. He did all the Lord commanded him to do because he had faith in God.

Hebrews 11:1 *"Now Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."* (NIV).

I love proclaiming the love of God and His amazing grace. I love posting on my WhatsApp page that I am born again, recently my elder sister told me that I should repent and go to church for deliverance.

I told her by faith I know I belong to the kingdom of God. many people make us believe that lgbtq persons do not belong to the kingdom of God, they make us hate ourselves and feel lesser human beings. I love my God because I know all that He promised to all who believes in Him shall come to pass.

We are heirs with Christ in the kingdom of God. Our faith in God makes us look forward to the coming of the kingdom of God. when we look up to God, our problems in this world seems less, we can endure any kind of pain because it shall all come to pass. We know our kingdom is coming and our citizenship is in heaven. We all look forward to that day where all our burdens shall be lifted and we shall live together with Christ, as we pray for that day, let us find ways to participate in the coming of the kingdom. Let's us spread love especially in our Lgbtq Christians. Let us preach peace and grace to all.

Contributor: [Adrian Slonaker](#)

“After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide: ‘Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites.’” Joshua 1:1-2 (NIV)

At this point, Joshua might understandably have felt incredibly overwhelmed. Not only were he and the other Israelites fleeing as refugees from persecution in Egypt on a treacherous journey to a new, foreign and unseen home, but they also had to contend with the death of their leader, none other than Moses. And now Joshua had to take his place! There is no way Joshua could have been trained, prepared or otherwise ready for such a sequence of events.

Routine rites of passage for young people, such as going off to university or mandatory military service, can also be disorienting. When, at age 17, I left my community to start my undergraduate career at the University of Chicago, I felt as if I were falling off a cliff. Would I succeed? Would it be too hard? Would I be homesick? Would I make new friends? Would I get lost? Would I be safe? Would my roommate and I get along? Moreover, I had just realized I was queer. How would I negotiate that?

“No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (NIV)

Aware that Joshua could very well have been freaking out at his new duties, God reassured him that he would be fine, that he need not worry, that God would always be there for him. Moreover, God encouraged Joshua to follow God’s Law and again offered this guarantee, commanding him to “be strong and courageous” for the third time: *“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”* (NIV)

As a teenager, I had been cultivating a stronger relationship with God.

At age 15, I had decided to start reading the Bible, cover to cover, a little each day, and I was in the midst of this task as I prepared to leave for university. I resolved to become involved with Brent House, the campus Episcopalian ministry. I also planned to sign up for an introductory Biblical Hebrew class. I also knew that I would continue to pray, just I had before, asking for guidance and confessing my thoughts. Just as Joshua would be fine, I knew I would be fine.

And now, over thirty years later, a distance in time amplified by the distance from Chicago to my current home in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, I recall that I was fine. I graduated on time with my bachelor’s degree in linguistics, just as I had intended. At age 21, I was in some ways wiser, some ways more jaded, and in many ways more experienced and informed. I emerged with my faith in God still intact and possibly stronger.

Today is Twelfth Night, the eve of Epiphany and the traditional transition from the end of the holiday season to the resumption of the “normal routine.” Christmas trees and colorful ornaments now yield to tax returns and more typical workweeks in long, cold, gray stretches of winter. Furthermore, we have all veered off the familiar, well-worn path of last year and into the unknown of a new calendar.

Fortunately, God is still with us, a constant resource to be turned to whenever we feel doubt or need Someone to talk to about the possibilities of the next twelve months and beyond.

Contributor: [Rev. Roberto Ochoa](#)

The Magic of the Magi

Isaiah 60:1-2, 6 - The Message

“Get out of bed, Jerusalem! Wake up. Put your face in the sunlight. God’s bright glory has risen for you. The whole earth is wrapped in darkness, all people sunk in deep darkness, But God rises on you, his sunrise glory breaks over you. Welcome gifts for worship at my altar as I bathe my glorious Temple in splendor.”

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-12 - NRSV

“after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born... they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary the child’s mother, and they knelt down and paid the child homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.”

My Dad grew up in Mexico, and he would tell me stories of Epiphany he experienced in his youth. He remembered that on Jan 6 th , el dia de los reyes/magos (Day of the Kings/ Magi) as a child, he would swiftly get up and looked under his bed. There my dad would find a shoe with straw and a gift left by the by the three Magi in celebration of the Christ Child. He delighted in the magic of the Magi throughout his youth.

What is interesting in the Gospel of Matthew’s account of the visiting of the three Wise Ones, is that they were considered practitioners of the study of the mysteries found in the stars, constellations, and numerology. They looked up for signs in the Divine heavens which, story has it, led them to the Christ Child in Bethlehem.

The story tells us, how a star led them to the Divine Child, and they provided them with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh...prophetic symbols for royalty, divine incarnation, and renewal. The narrative goes on to say, that a dream led them to act in a way to protect the Child.

I like to think the Magi are special as Queer folks are special.

Authentic truth seekers, we live our lives to bring awareness of the fullness of the Divine in each one. As Queer Ones, touched by the Divine, we all bring unique gifts to the “glorious Temple” of God’s creation.

So, this Epiphany day, my dear siblings of the Divine...”Get out of bed...Wake up. Put your face in the sunlight. God’s bright glory has risen for you.” And feel the Magic of the Magi that reminds us to celebrate the gift of this day that God has given us.

Know that we are all worth the gifts that is provided to us by the Divine. Let the “Sunlight” fill you today. May it be so for you, me, and the world. Amen.

Contributor: [Nancy Mwangi](#)

Psalms 72 encourages us to pray for our leaders.

Here in Kenya, we have just concluded a general election whereby we have a new president and new members of the national assembly. Kenyans have huge expectations from the new government and they have hope for things to change for better.

As a queer person in Kenya, I am afraid of what tomorrow will be like. Our president remarks towards the lgbtq community makes our hearts tremble. He said in an interview that he wants the people of Kenya, who majority are very homophobic people to decide what to do about lgbtq persons. We are the minority and our voices cannot be heard.

The only thing we can do now as the lgbtq Christians in Kenya is to pray for our president. It is God who anoints leaders to lead His people. I pray that God will give our president love for Gods justice, I pray that god will give Him divine wisdom to discern what justice means to the lgbtq community. I pray that our president will follow God's guidance. We know we have a long way to recognition but its is my prayer that we will not be exposed to more homophobia under the new regime.

Ephesians 3:14 *"for this reason I fall on my knees before the father"* (GNB)

I kneel before God because I feel humbled, I look at my life and I just see God in everything.

He is the king of kings and Lord of Lord. I have a very Spirit led pastor who tells us in our fellowship "Never fear to kneel before God, because he will make you stand boldly before men".

Ephesians 3:20-21 *"To Him who by means of His power is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of. To God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time, forever and ever! Amen.* (GNB)

Paul is giving us a reason to focus on God alone, the greatness of our God is incomparable, our God is able to do above and beyond anything that we ask for or think about.

I was made to believe that I cannot be a lesbian and a Christian, God has done it for me and I am at peace with myself. I am a praise and worship leader and also a youth leader in our local lgbtq fellowship. God deserves all the glory and honor. There are invaluable blessings that come from God to those who are in Christ. Let's all seek from the richness of Gods grace. How I pray that as followers of Jesus, we will know the love of Jesus more and more. That each one of us will know God at a much more personal level.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I thank you for the leadership in our country Kenya, I pray that through them your justice and righteousness prevail in this country and throughout the world. Give them wisdom to lead your people. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Sunday, January 8, 2023

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17

Contributor: [Liggera Edmonds-Allen](#)

Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (NIV)

I am of two minds of this passage - I could easily speak about the request of baptism from Jesus, who did not need repentance. I could speak of Jesus' response, and his use of the word 'us.'

After the events at Club Q, my mind is somewhere else.

I doubt I need to elucidate a reader on the pain and heartbreak the entire community is feeling, or the rage and frustration that has followed. As a transgender person, the political attacks on my community have made me sick to my stomach, especially when thinking about the transgender kids across the United States whose lives are at stake.

The physical attacks have made me terrified.

I usually identify with Jesus' followers, when reading Biblical passages, or the onlookers who encounter him. I identify with the wonder, and awe, and relief they feel when hearing Jesus' words.

Maybe it is shameful to say that this passage makes me feel like Jesus.

Was he scared, when he was baptized? Did the waters of the River Jordan rush around his ears, and make him afraid? Were the arms of John and the knowledge of this 'all righteousness' comforting?

I have no authority to say. But in my mind, he rises, blinking water from his eyes. In my mind, there really is a physical dove, who lands on the banks of the river and cocks her head at the funny men in the water. In my mind, the heavens open and there is light, and the water isn't cold.

God says, there you are. How happy I am to see you!

And I feel a little bit better...

Monday, January 9, 2023

Psalm 89:5-37; Genesis 35:1-15; Acts 10:44-48

Contributor: [Giacomo Liggera](#)

How easily are the words of Christ and the Bible twisted? Pretty darn easily, we have seen throughout history, contemporary and, well, not. I admit to being a bit of a Millennial stereotype. I am always on my phone and social media. I say I have sworn off Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, but I am constantly addicted to Reddit, where I conveniently see screenshots of particularly notorious posts from, you guessed it, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Now more than ever, with the presence of social media and the internet, we are bombarded daily with messages of hate, for us, for our children, and for our families. I used to excuse such hate as people taking advantage of anonymity. However, lately, hate has become a sort of platform— you see this in the social media of politicians and activists, and just the everyman— all based on Godly, Christian values.

As if this is what it means to be a true Christian, not to love your neighbor but to be better than your neighbor, and the one to bear judgment down on them all in the supposed name of Christ.

When I heard about the tragedy at Club Q, I hoped and prayed that there would be a sign of regret and humanity in the voices who were complicit in creating such hatred. And there ‘was’ a reaction. Not really, but the token effort you always get after a horrific tragedy in America. “My thoughts and prayers.” I can not express how sick I have gotten in the last week, looking at the posts of politicians sending their “thoughts and prayers” after years and years of doing nothing but encouraging rhetoric that led to such a hateful crime.

As if the idea that they, being such good Christians, were bestowing such a blessing on our community that even they— the ones who call us groomers and pedophiles— were willing to send us their “thoughts and prayers.”

I will say straight up that I am not a Christian. Maybe that will erase my words of their meaning but maybe not. However, even as a non-Christian, I know the bare minimum: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” And I know that Jesus was an activist and advocate for all, not just a select group. I know that from the people he surrounded himself with and the way that he died. Through his actions.

If Jesus had simply sent his “thoughts and prayers,” we would have no Bible and no Christianity. We would simply have a man who did nothing... except send his thoughts and prayers. No advocating for the poor, the diseased, and the socially outcasted. Just a meaningless token and phrase. Something that is now parroted blankly by Christians seeking a respite from action and responsibility.

We must judge those around us by what they actually do— not on meaningless “thoughts and prayers—” as if that will save them from the damnation of creating an atmosphere here in the 21st century that LGBTQ people are still the victims of such hate.

Contributor: [Anonymous](#)

Chosen and Kept - Psalm 89:5-37

Thanks for joining me to look at these encouraging verses. Psalm 89 is a poetic passage of imagery that alludes to deeper principles. Among these are God's choosing and God's faithfulness.

I grew up in a rural area of the Mid-South U.S. that was super conservative. I remember when women couldn't wear pants to church, much less lead in any capacity. Interracial marriage or remarriage after divorce would bring God's wrath (or so we were taught). Don't even mention that someone might have questions about orientation or gender. And on top of this, I was taught that salvation must be perfectly maintained. The slightest infraction of God's will would lead to hell unless you hurriedly went to the altar for repentance. Fear replaced joy and service supplanted grace.

As a boy struggling with so many thoughts, I lived in fear. It wasn't until I was pastoring, and broken people began coming to me for counsel, that I realized I was overlooking grace for myself. Weakness, doubt, sexuality, orientation were topics people would come to discuss with me - they couldn't work them out with their own pastor. They felt high then low. Secure then unsure. Pure then dirty. For them, like me in my childhood, salvation hung by a thread. I am here to say that female or male, balanced or bouncy, spotless or spotted, or just unsure - God's choosing and faithfulness remain unwavering.

Let's look at the two "characters" mentioned in Psalm 89 - Rahab (figuratively as inhabitants of the city of Jericho) and David.

Rahab

Psalm 89:10 says Rahab was crushed. We can replace this "Rahab" with Jericho. To be sure, Rahab's people were destroyed, but Rahab, the person (and her family), was not. In fact, Rahab has the exalted position of being mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus.

So the crushing of Rahab referred to in Psalm 89 is not the person, but the rebellious people associated with her heritage. Remarkable - this woman is so well known in God's eternal plan that an entire city is identified through her name.

Rahab was a prostitute. But she was the one who was chosen to provide sanctuary to the Israelite spies. She was chosen to deliver her family.. Without this female prostitute the scouts of God's army would have been caught; the only family to have been delivered from the destruction of Jericho would have been annihilated. God chose her and was faithful to exalt her - just as she was.

David

David was the youngest in a long-line of sons. Not a kingly type at all - a dreamer, emotive type. Quick to cry, quick to mourn, quick to dance. Psychologists suggest that he might have been bi-polar.

He was never half-way. David was always on the highest mountain, or in the lowest valley. He was at complete peace or wrapped up in intense emotions of passion, fear, anger or praise. No one would have chosen him to lead anything, much less to be the pre-eminent King in the centuries long history of a nation. God chose him and was faithful to exalt him - just as he was. You: In these characters, we learn that God's choosing and faithfulness are permeated with divine grace.

You

You are chosen by God, not because you fit in with everyone around you or have a spotless life - but because God has a plan for you - just as you are.

You are kept by God, not because your life is balanced and smooth - but because God has faithfulness towards you - just as you are.

Contributor: [Rahab Wambui](#)

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was King. Soon afterwards, some men who studied the stars came from the east to Jerusalem and asked, “where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him.”

Strangers from a far are drawn to the light of Jesus, they were just common men who God chose to be among the first to celebrate Jesus. King Herod was caught by surprise when he heard that a king was born, Jesus was manifested to magi because our God does not play favorites, He receives all whose hearts long for Him.

Good news is for all the people. Jesus was born in a small city, to common parents and was revealed to ordinary people who came to worship him their gifts. The light of Jesus was not for Bethlehem or alone, it was not for specific people. The light of Jesus was for the whole world.

The birth of Jesus was met with hostility, king Herod thought Jesus had come for the earthly kingdom. He ordered all the male children under two years to be killed, little did he know that Jesus was the king of kings. Savior to humanity. The hostility and violence continue in our world today.

Many lgbtq people know first hand cruelty, they live in fear and hide in their closets. Being outed is a death sentence and you can be killed any time. The good news is that, despite the dangers we are facing, many lgbtq persons have taken the journey to the light of faith.

God led me into a community of lgbtq Christians, this community has become my refuge. I could be dead by now because of drug abuse, I had lost hope. Here my faith was restored from many years of destructive theology.

In this community we are free worship God with our gifts. The first day I joined this fellowship I fell in love with it. You feel the presence of God, there is peace, joy something that I was looking for a long time. This beautiful soul knows how to worship their God, the Holy Spirit fire is upon them. They shine with their gifts in the presence of God.

I have a zeal to introduce the light of God to the many lgbtq persons, many do not believe that God can use the lgbtq persons. I like telling them “Just come and see” and as soon as someone steps into our fellowship, they never leave.

In Kenya right now the lgbtq community is scared, the current regime has put our future in a thin line. Many are heart broken, I pray that the light of Jesus may shine on us. Let us seek God to show us the way in this world, that we may have peace and justice. May our leaders rule in the wisdom of God.

Dear God,
You spoke your word and revealed your good news to us through Jesus Christ. Fill all creation with your word again. So that they may proclaim your word to all nations again. Help us to sing of your glorious hope to all people and that we may become one living body in Christ. In the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

Contributor: [Samuel Thirikwa](#)

The psalmist is recognizing the greatness of the Lord Our God, he is aware that God does not require him to offer sacrifices, he is required to hear Him. Follow instructions, do the will of God by keeping the teachings.

As Christians we have the bible to guide us, we are witness to the faithfulness of God in our lives. We have experienced His mercy and grace upon us and we know very well that God will never forget us. He is our savior and our God.

There is a proverb that says “wage of sin is death”. We live in a society that enjoys being the judge over every situation, they do not like following the law. They take the law in their own hands and justify their actions by using this proverb.

There was a time lgbtq refugees in Kakuma camp were being burnt alive if not brutally killed. In Kenya you will not be surprised to find a multitude surrounding someone and stoning them because they are suspected to be gay. Our society has already judged us as sinners who deserve to die.

I thank God for this word today, yes, I was born a sinner and I deserved to die but because God loved me so much, he took away my sin through the blood of Jesus on the cross.

People who know I am gay do not believe when I say I am born again. Homophobic preachers make us hate ourselves for trying to live true to ourselves as lgbtq Christians, they read verses that shows us how God despises us.

I thank God I met a pastor who made me change my perspective. This pastor reassured me that I am valid in the kingdom of God.

Jesus paid a ransom for me through His life, on calvary my sins were taken away. By faith I am justified, by the grace of God I am free. I belong to the Lords table.

Isaiah is giving us hope today, Christ’s life did not end in death. He is risen to life because after all the suffering, God exalted Him and now the name of Jesus is above all. That is why we pray through the name of Jesus because He is interceding for us, it is through the name of Jesus that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.

We are called to live a life of humbleness, obedience and faithfulness, until my life on earth is complete. I should endure through suffering so that I can inherit the promises of God. Christ sacrificed once for all of us so that we may have eternal life, all we need to do is to believe and confess Jesus.

I love the song by Jonathan David and Melissa Helser “I am no longer a slave to fear, I am a child of God.”

Contributor: [Jemima Mugo](#)

Psalms 40:1 *I waited patiently for the LORD'S help; then he listened to me and heard my cry.* (GNB)

David's heart is full of thanks, he recounts the Lord's deliverance from his enemies. He is so grateful that God gave him a new lease of life. He commits himself to doing the will of God and confesses of the Lord's deliverance.

Just like David, each of us can look at our lives and see the salvation of our God. I have been in a very difficult situation in my life that I could not see any way out. Looking back at those events I just see God and I will be forever thankful. As David said, happy are those who trust in the Lord.

God had directed Elijah to anoint Elisha as his successor, he found him plowing in the field. Elisha had no other choice but to follow Elijah. But Elisha requested that he may bid his parents goodbye. Elisha went to his team of oxen and killed them all, he even broke the yoke and used it as fire. He destroyed everything that could have reminded him of his past, he freed himself and after doing that, he followed Elijah as his helper.

What is preventing us from fully serving our God, we should break every yoke that is hindering us. As LGBTQ persons, our churches have made us believe that we are not part of God's kingdom. We should make effort to get rid of any malice, any deceit. We should be ready to commit to God fully.

The fishermen had spent the whole night in the lake and they had caught nothing by morning, they were tired, they were disappointed and when Jesus came by, they had left the boats and they

were washing the nets. Jesus requested Simon to push his boat a little from the shore so that he could sit and teach the crowd. After the sermon Jesus told Simon and his friend to cast their nets down, they caught a large number of fish that the nets were about to break.

Simon and his partners had worked so hard through the night looking for fish, it is through fishing that they got their daily bread. But when Jesus came, he changed the whole situation. They caught a lot of fish and they could have made a lot of money from the sale, but they chose to follow Jesus. They abandoned their big catch. Material things do not dictate our success, let us put aside all that can hinder us from following Christ, let us get out of our comfort zones, take a step of faith and follow Jesus.

There is this song that we used to sing in Sunday school and until today it still blesses my heart:

“I have decided to follow Jesus *3”

No turning back*2

The world behind me,

The cross before me*3

I will follow you, Jesus*2

I will follow you, Jesus

I will follow you!

Though none go with me still I will follow *2

No turning back, *2

Though I may wander, I still will follow*2

“No turning back*2”



Rev. Kim Purl is an online minister at missouripastor.org who lives in rural Missouri and is ordained in the Church of the Nazarene.

Kim is one of the hosts at holydialogues.org, enjoying rich dialogue at the intersection of LGBTQI+ and faith.

As a mother of two teenagers and two young adults, she finds herself in natural conversation on social topics and faith over yummy Thai food.

Kim is married to her minister-husband, Joe, who helps her keep one foot on the ground.



My name is Marie Nganga, and I am a Kenyan of African origin. I am 38 years old. I am a Christian lesbian woman. I love God with all my heart and I love serving God through humanity.

I have a passion for writing and studying the Bible.

I am a woman of faith and I look forward to the day when all of the LGBTQ+ community will feel safe at the Lord's table.

Author:
Liggera Edmonds-Allen



Liggera Edmonds-Allen (they/them) is a Dramaturgy student at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Their work revolves around transgender activism and queer joy. They love poetry, theatre, and going to the aviary!

Author: Wilfred Nyokabi

Wilfred Nyokabi

29 years

Kenyan/ African

Lesbian

Christian



Zaweria Hunyu

Kenyan. African, Kenyan/kikuyu

Non-binary

Lesbian

Born again Christian

Business woman

Teacher



My names are Daniel Kihara. 45 years old. Non- binary.

Born again Christian who is saved only by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am a small-scale farmer, and I live alone with my fur babies.

I believe in serving God through humanity.



“I grew up on a farm in rural Indiana. I went to Purdue University and then on to Regent University in Virginia Beach for law school. I started practicing law first for a small firm in Indianapolis and then eventually served 10 years in the Air Force.

The Air Force gave me the chance to live in several parts of the country, however, it was during that time that the conflict between my sexual orientation and faith became too much, so I thought I had to choose one or the other.

I walked away from a relationship with Jesus.

I made that decision in isolation without the benefit of the counsel of others.

In a way that only God could, that false dichotomy came to a resolution in October, 2013 when I firmly reconnected with God.

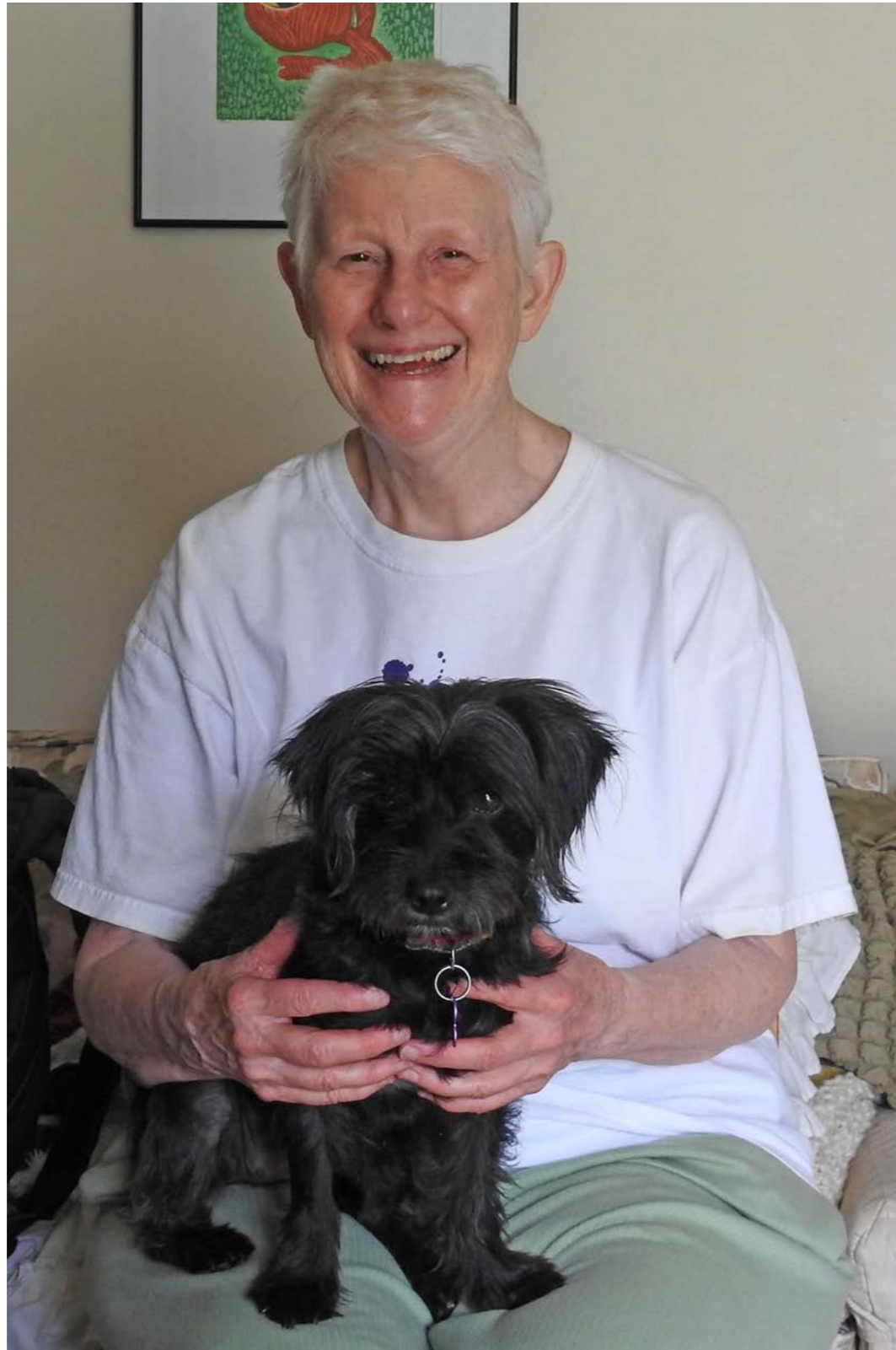


My names are Nancy Wanja Mwangi.

I am from Kenya, and I love nature.

A single mother of two boys and a born-again Christian lesbian woman.

I am a human rights activist and I advocate for LGBTQ+



I grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania and went to my local parish school. After we moved to Connecticut, I attended a large public high school.

Immediately after graduating, I entered a convent where I eventually taught math and science for elementary and then high school students in Connecticut and St. Louis, Missouri.

At forty-three, feeling called to a different vocation, I left the convent, got a Ph.D. in literature at the University of California, and moved to Utah to teach for seventeen years at Weber State University from which I am now retired.

I am a member of Holy Family Catholic Church and its choir and am an associate member of our local ELCA Church, Elim Lutheran. I share a large condo with a beautiful but headstrong little mutt called Bella.



Adrian Slonaker resides in downtown Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada in an apartment shared with a multicolored plush unicorn called Blaze.

Having completed university studies in linguistics and literature, Adrian works as a language consultant. In precious moments of free time, Adrian enjoys swimming, rock 'n roll records, naps during thunderstorms, horror films and extremely spicy vegetarian dishes.

Adrian's theological background and beliefs are somewhat eclectic and syncretic, with elements of Anabaptism (Mennonite), Anglicanism, Reform Judaism and Unitarian-Universalism in the mix.

Adrian also writes poetry, stories and essays and has been published extensively in journals and anthologies. In addition, Adrian is a fan of iced non-alcoholic beverages, especially if they are bright blue.

Author: Jemima Mugo



My names are Jemima Mugo.

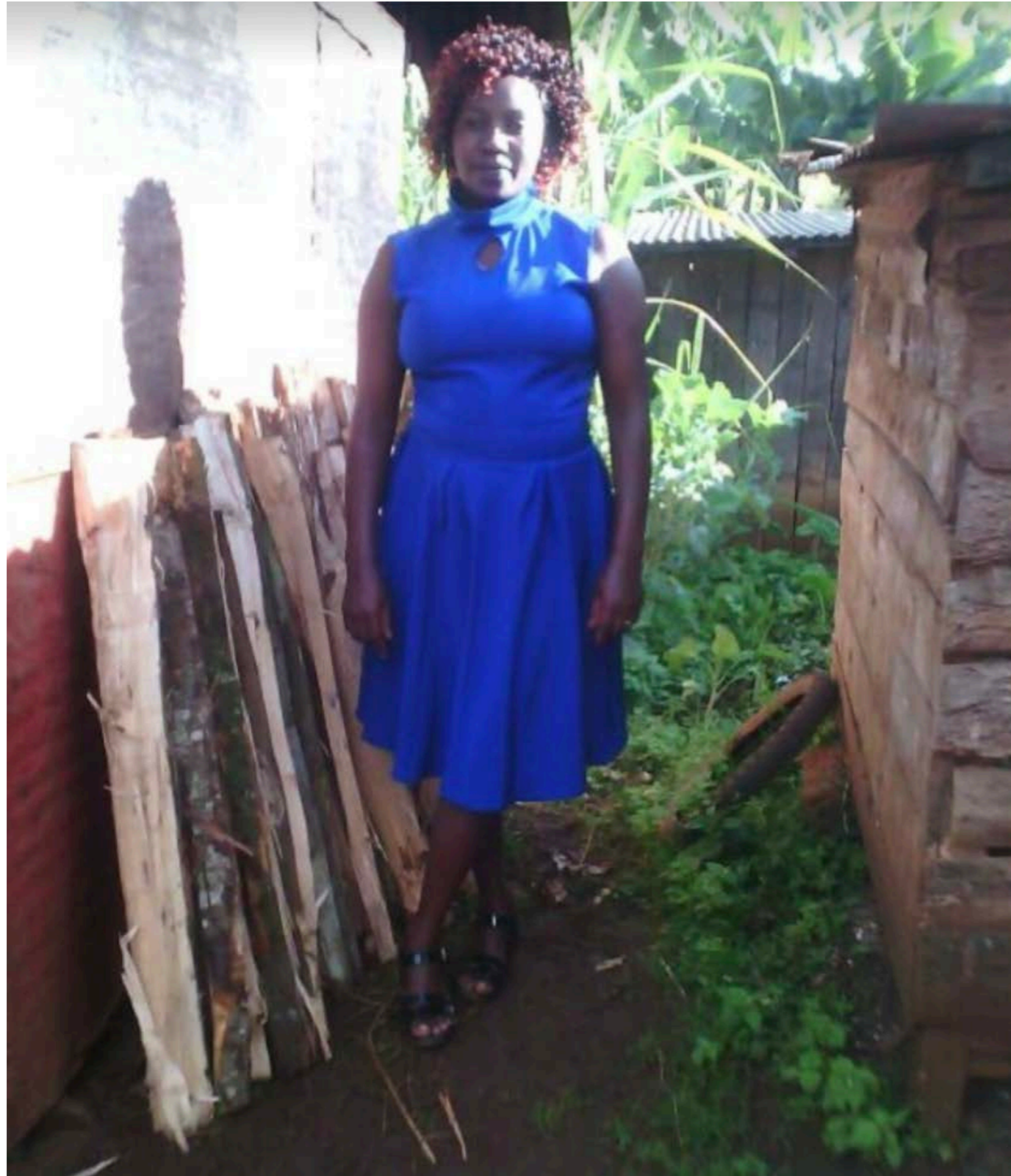
I am a 25 years old a born again Christian lesbian and Kenyan.



Colleen C. Mitchell is the author of *Who Does He Say You Are?* and *When We Were Eve* and upcoming third title.

She is the mom of five humans who challenge her daily to be deserving of such goodness. She is a champion of women and a fan of dark chocolate, fine wine, and tropical climates.

She resides in Fort Wayne, Indiana where she is learning to embrace the sun and the snow alike.



My names are Faith Mbogogo.

I am a 24 year old born again Christian and lesbian from Kenya.

Author: Stephen Maina



My Names are Stephen Maina.

I am Kenyan aged 26 years.

I am a born again gay Christian.

Author: Boniface Waweru



I am a gay christian and I love God.

I have 30 yrs and I fellowship with pastor Megan in Kenya.



My journey began in Ogden, Utah and I love hailing from the "rough" part of Utah.

I grew up a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of latter-day Saints (often referred to as the Mormons). At the age of 21, I left home to serve a proselyting mission for the church to southern Germany.

My faith foundation was shattered when, at age 40, I could no longer deny my orientation and gender identity. When I walked out of the closet, I also thought I was walking away from God.

I struggled reconciling my relationship with God and I am grateful He never gave up on me. I will always be grateful for the wonderful people at the United Church of Christ congregation I found during this time.

It was in that chapel I was reintroduced to God, who loved and accepted me, just as I was. My faith journey continues and I am so grateful for experiences, such as this, that allow me to rejoice in the word of God and worship Him.

Author: Samuel Thirikwa



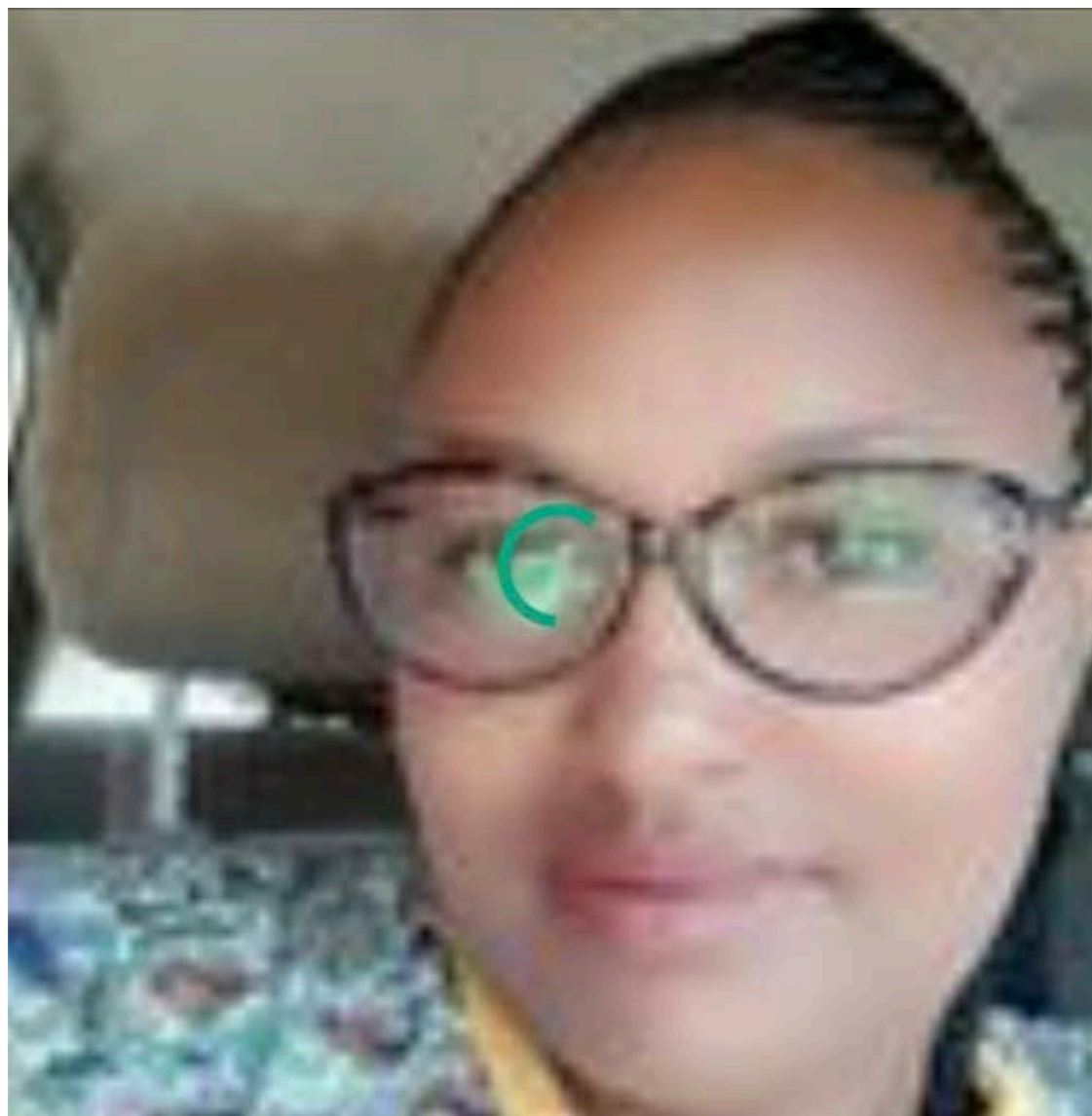
Samuel Thirikwa

Kenyan

Gay

30 years

Author: Jacklin Wambui



My names are Jacklin Wambui from Mukurweini and I fellowship with Pastor Megan whom I was introduced to by Nancy our youth group patron.

I was so lonely and am happy with my new family now.

Author: Giacomo Liggera



I am a solitary Wiccan practitioner who believes in nature and humanity's interconnectedness.

I grew up in New York but currently live in Utah with my miniature Aussie, Bubba.

I am a graduate student at the University of Utah and a proud genderqueer person.

Author: Rahab Wambui



Rahab Wambui

Kenyan

22 years

lesbian

Author: Rev. Melissa Lynn Guthrie



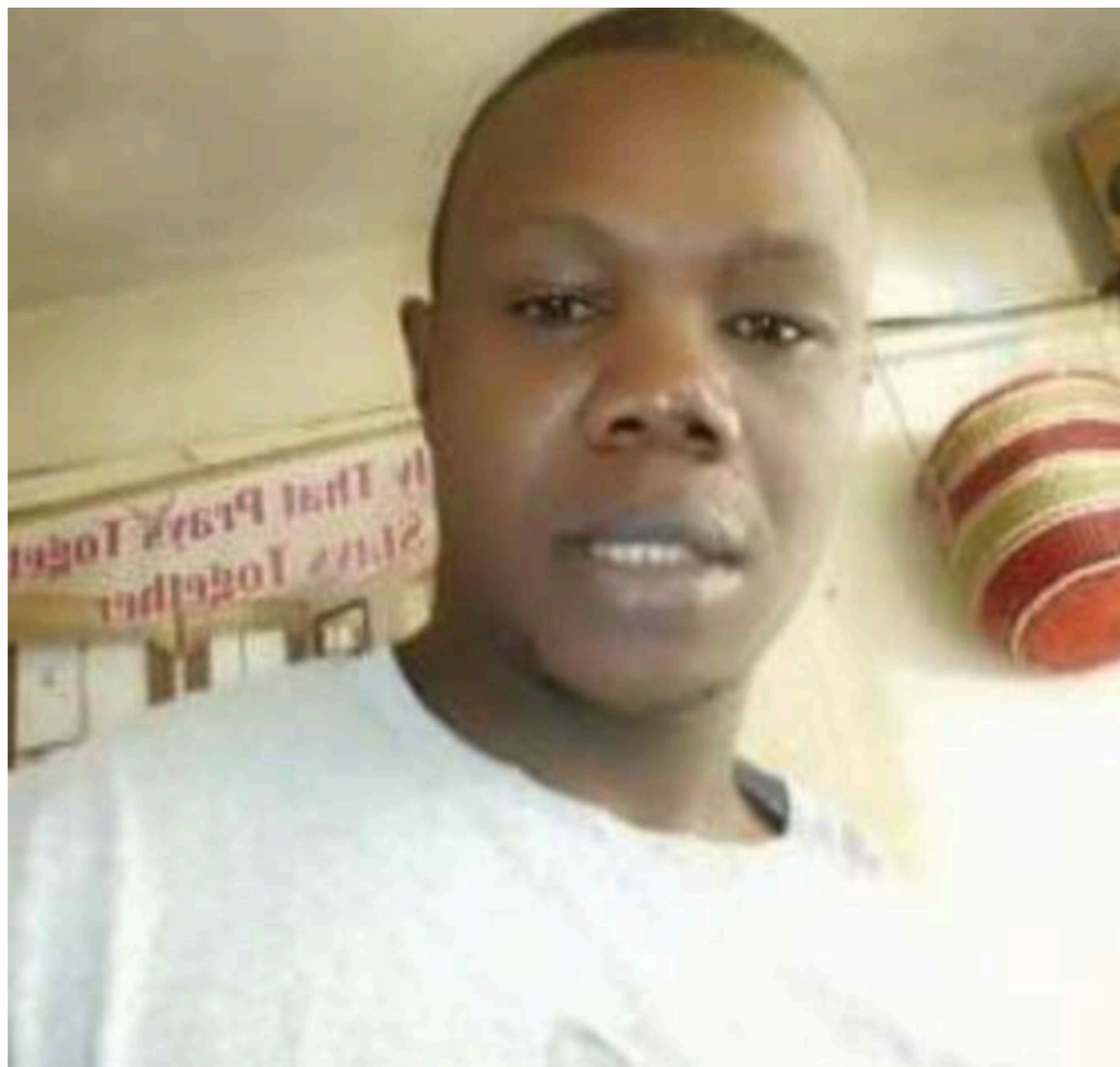
Rev. Melissa Lynn Guthrie (she/her) is a mother and a minister.

She is the Executive Director + Minister with AllianceQ—the Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance and the founding director of Salvage Garden.

She created “The Banquet: A Sensory Worship Experience,” centering disabled individuals.

Melissa is trained in faith-based nonprofit leadership through Wake Forest University Divinity and Law Schools. She enjoys cheesecake and cycling, in that order. Melissa likes being outdoors and reading and writing poetry (outdoors). Pink and yellow are her favorite colors. She is the editor of *Colors of Hope: A Devotional Journal from LGBTQ+ Christians*.

Melissa (left) and her wife, Leah, live in Greensboro, North Carolina, with their children and a small zoo.

Author: David Mwaura

My names are David Mwaura. I am 30 years old.

A Kenyan of African origin. I am a born again gay Christian man. I love God and I love serving Him.

Author: Ali Lopez-Valcarcel LMSW, M.Div.



Pastor Ali Lopez-Valcarcel

Pastor Ali is a graduate of the UTRGV School of Social Work, where she earned a Master of Social Work. Also, a recent recipient of an MDiv. at Brite Divinity School, and candidate for ordination at the United Church of Christ North Texas.

Ali served as a Chaplain Assistant in the US Army and as a lead pastor in the RGV. Ali also served as an Associate Pastor at FUMC in Grapevine TX. Currently, Ali serves as Minister of Community Outreach and Sabbatical Pastor at Embrace UCC.

Ali's biggest passion it to share the expansive love and grace of God to all of God's creation.

Author: Elizabeth Moraa



My names are Elizabeth Moraa. An African of Kenyan origin, I am 20 years.

Pursuing studies in theological studies because I want to know God More.

I am a Christian. And I love God with all heart.

I have struggled with my sexuality for so long but Now at I am at peace because I have reconciled with myself as a transgender woman.

Author: Rev. Roberto Ochoa

Rev. Roberto Ochoa (el, he, him, his) is originally from East Los Angeles, CA and currently is an ordained clergy person and Minister for Ethnic Inclusion & Congregational Support for Rural and Small Churches for the National Setting of the United Church of Christ and is a member of Mt Zion Congregational UCC in Cleveland, OH.

Roberto serves congregations and provides UCC and ecumenical resources for congregational assessment, support, and advancement, especially for rural, ethnic identified and congregations of Color. Prior to his call in 2018, Roberto pastored Lake View Congregational Church, UCC for seven years in Worcester, MA

Roberto earned his Master of Divinity from Andover Newton Theological School (2017) with Certificates in Ethics and Social Justice; and in Spiritual and Pastoral Care. Roberto did his undergraduate work in Macalester College, St. Paul, MN and Becker College, Worcester, MA.

Roberto lives with his husband Jim of 25 years (nine years married) in Cleveland, OH.

Author: Ash Mason

Hey hey! I'm ash, my pronouns are she/her, and I find the greatest joy in getting to know the most intricate nature of humanity.

I have a couple too many theology degrees and am pursuing education to become a therapist. I work in an acute psychiatric hospital with individuals in active psychosis, schizophrenia, and so much more.

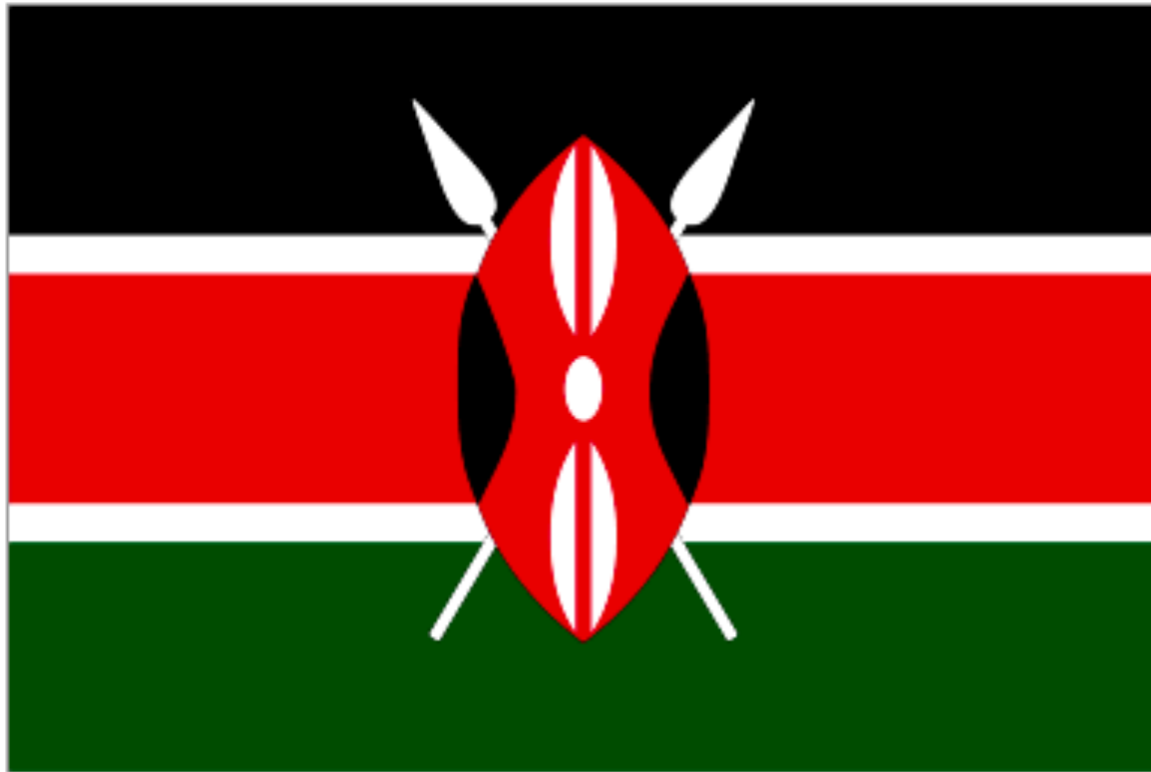
I have found that God dwells in the ashes of humanity, in the people that have been burnt by life... in mental wellness, I have found particularly that God is with the individuals in acute mental illness that try to kill me just as much as a packed church on a Sunday. This, my friends, is where I find great delight..the God of the ordinary, unusual, and all around beautiful.

Author: Dorcas Kiki



I am Dorcas Kiki, a Kenyan transgender woman who loves God with all my heart.

Author: Josphine Wambui



I am Josphine Wambui aged 38 years from Kenya.

I am part of the fellowship which is led by our Pastor Megan.

I must confess the hope and love we get in that fellowship is just wonderful and may God keep us together as each others keeper.

I am a lesbian Christ is my personal saviour and I believe in God's protection and powers.

Author: Monica Wambui



I am Monica Wambui, Kenyan citizen, aged 26years, a Christian lesbian.

I love worshipping God, and I am born again.

Author: Rev. Rob Van Ess

Rev. Rob Van Ess

Pastor Rob is the Pastor & Teacher at Pilgrim Church United Church of Christ (UCC) in Fond du Lac, WI.

They graduated from Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO and is a trained clinical chaplain having served a residency at The University for Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock with The College for Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy.

Pastor Rob is an ordained minister in the UCC. (UCC).

Having grown up in Green Bay, they have served churches and hospitals in Missouri, Indiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, and now “back home” in Wisconsin. They carry a passion for all things discovered at the intersection of queerness and faith.

Rob (he/they) and their husband Nicky (he/him/his) just celebrated 19 years together and enjoy spending time with their two cats DeeDee and Dexter.

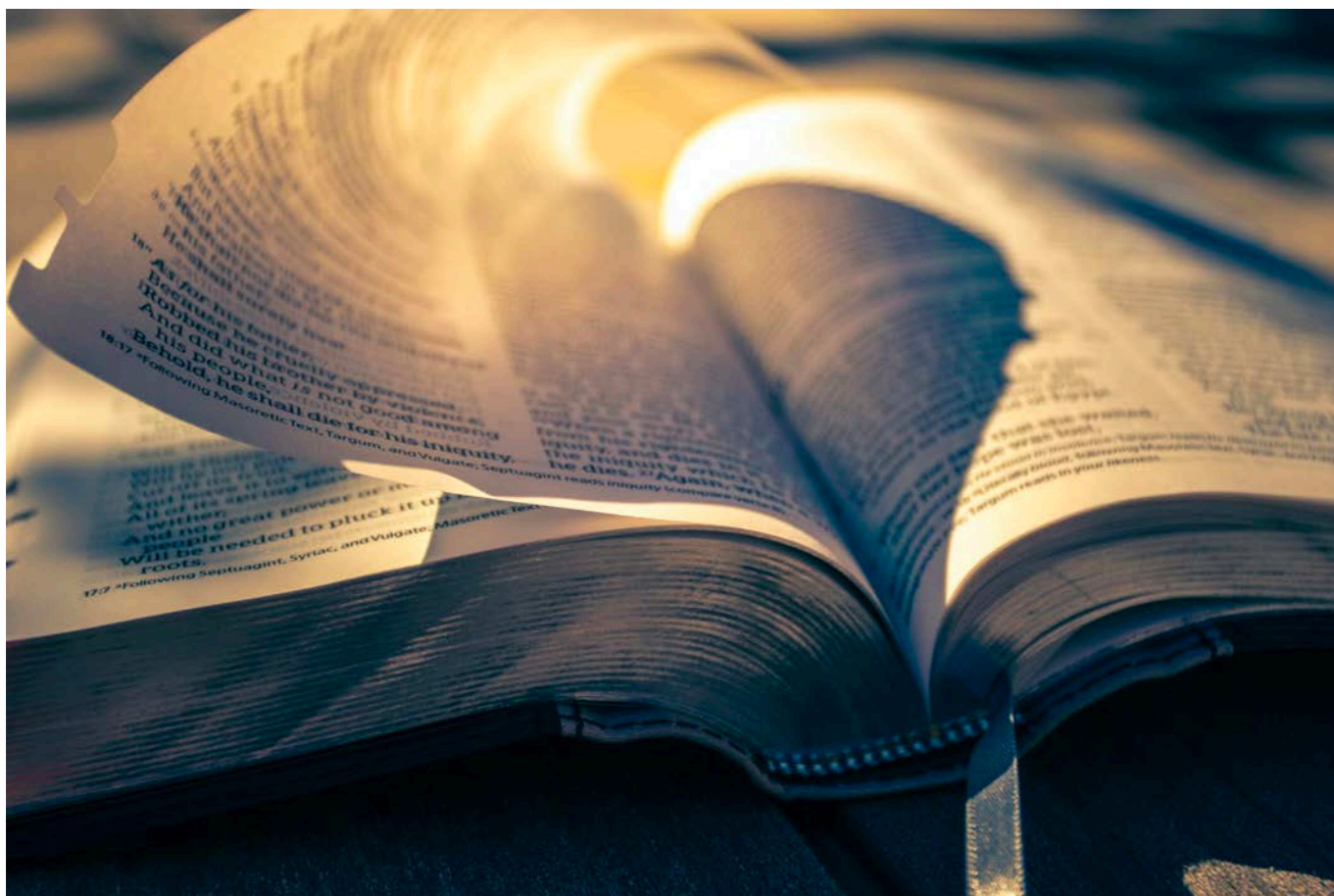
Author: Lucy Wanjiru



I am Lucy Wanjiru, A Kenyan of African origin.
born again Christian lesbian woman.

I love God and I trust Him with my life.

Author: Anonymous



Three decades of Pastoring background as well as Senior Management experience in a variety of secular firms. His business management skills, combined with his education, have been a blessing in equipping him to encourage others to great growth.

He was raised in a very conservative upbringing, but throughout his calling to ministry he has constantly worked with an ecumenical approach to magnifying the work of the Kingdom across denominational and cultural boundaries.

He holds:

- DMin in Christian Counseling
- MA in Pastoral Counseling
- BA in Religious Education

Currently he works with a mission group and travels overseas extensively. In addition to this, he is in the groundwork to develop an online Pastoral Counseling, Support ministry.

He has been asked to create a series based on lessons learned in 30+ years of ministry.

Author: Rev. Jason Carson Wilson



Rev. Jason Carson Wilson, M. Div. is the founding executive director of Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit focused on Black & LGBTQIA+ liberation.

Wilson is an ordained United Church of Christ minister, theologian, and writer. He serves on the board of DignityUSA, an organization focused on LGBTQIA+ Catholics.

Wilson is earning a Doctor of Ministry at Howard University School of Divinity. He earned his Master of Divinity at Chicago Theological Seminary. Wilson is a native of Champaign-Urbana, Ill., but considers Chicago his adopted hometown.

He lives in Washington, D.C. with his partner, Jim.

Author: Rufus Mugo



I am a 40 year old farmer from Kenya.

I am a born again Christian and I am transgender and I believe God loves me the way I am since He is my creator.

Author: Edward Moran

Three of Edward Moran's hymn texts were included in *Songs for the Holy Other: Hymns Affirming the LGBTQIA2S+ Community*, published in 2019 by the Hymn Society of North America. He has long been a member of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, New York. He is pictured here sitting in the pew of poet Marianne Moore, who was also a member of that congregation. *Photo by Alison Cornyn.*



Rev. Marian Edmonds-Allen is the executive director of Parity, an NYC-based national nonprofit that works at the intersection of faith and LGBT concerns, director of Blessed by Difference, and author at Family Christian.

Marian attended Western Theological Seminary and Eden Theological Seminary and has served in many pastoral capacities, including church planting, parish ministry, and chaplaincy. She is a Doctor of Ministry candidate at Eden Theological Seminary (2023) with the topic Covenantal Pluralism and Mission: Evidence for Healing the LGBT and Faith Divide. Marian is married, has four children, and is a passionate skier and outdoor enthusiast.

Thank you for joining us during this Advent Season!

If you have questions, comments need help - or would like to write - please be in touch. We always want to hear from you That is the spirit of Holy Dialogues. Be in touch by emailing marian@parity.nyc

And please visit us at HolyDialogues.org for videos, devotionals in this series, and resources for individuals, families, faith leaders and churches. Plus, we have wonderful Converge Groups for you to be part of.

Check it out - and remember, God loves you!