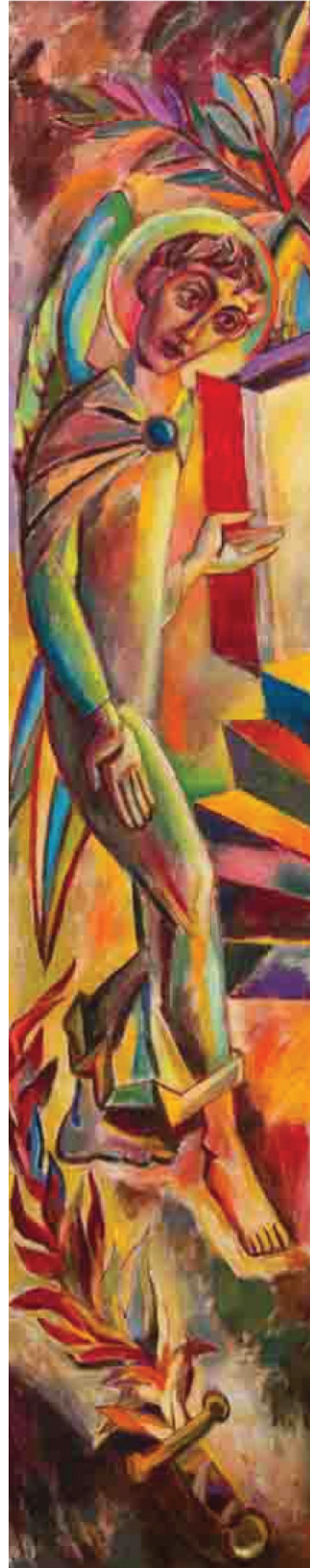


The Lord is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.
Psalm 118:27a

The Way Of Light

NSCBC Community Devotional
Eastertide 2024

 **NORTH SHORE**
COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH





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The Way of Light

The first moments of light.

The Way of Light is a compilation of lightbulb moments when Jesus' followers first became aware of a new reality. And those sparks began to reorient their entire world.

Let's not get too far ahead of the story. Upon meeting the risen Jesus, most of the disciples are initially bewildered, alarmed, trembling, and doubting. Yes, these same disciples will go on to witness to the resurrection in their communities. Some will travel to the far reaches of the Roman Empire, and beyond, announcing the good news of new life, freedom, peace, and joy. But before any of that, the light must dawn.

Over a fifty-day period the church remembers as Eastertide (ten more than Lent's forty), Jesus met with people, face-to-face. Little is known about what he said and did, yet this time profoundly changed them. Our meditations and artwork explore the mystery of these meetings. What sparked new life in them? What sparks life in us? How can these stories prod us beyond bewilderment or doubt and toward greater freedom, peace, and joy in Christ? How might we share that with others? Come along with us, spend time with the resurrected Jesus.

A Light for Our Path

The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine on us. Psalm 118:27a

Life is often described as a journey.

Jesus invokes the journey when he invites people to *Come*. To the weary, he says, *Come to me and find rest*. (Matthew 11:28-30) To his disciples, *Come after me, take up your cross and follow*. (Matthew 16:24-26) These invitations to *Come Along* are invitations to a new way of life — one that involves taking responsibility for the world's brokenness, but without being overcome by it, or left alone in it. In short, invitations to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God. (Micah 6:8)

But the way is not always clear.

There are times when life makes sense — the world appears to work as intended. There are times when the world falls apart. Often following a traumatic event, it is common to experience disorientation and even a crisis of faith. We honor this every year as we practice lament, repentance, and patience — we wait for reorientation. That is, the grace of growing into a new equilibrium, new understanding, new life. We wait for the Lord to *shine his light on us*.

So we exercise hope.

The Way of Light is the Eastertide complement to the Way of the Cross. Just as the Way of the Cross depicts the stations (moments or scenes) leading to the cross, the Way of Light depicts resurrection appearances. The Way of Light is the leg of the journey between disorientation and reorientation. As a church, we explore Jesus' life anew every year. As we do this, we invite Jesus to carve into our souls the truth that "through the Cross (one comes) to the light." We learn to wait expectantly, anticipating opportunities to experience now (and one day fully arrive at) humanity's true end: liberation, joy and peace. We become resurrection people, formed by joy, hope, feasting, and celebration.

Come along and learn to see.

This project commissioned authors and artists to create stations of the resurrection. They contributed devotional meditations and artwork, which you can preview in this book and experience more fully by visiting the gallery wall in the church building. As you do, join us in expressing gratitude to these 20 individuals for their skill and love for our church. It is our collective hope that these stations will inspire us to see the central event of our faith — the resurrection — with new eyes. By extension, to see the world with new hope. Like the disciples, we invite you to come along and let the Lord shine his light on us.

Adam Kurihara & Sarah Bartley

The Empty Tomb

Mark 16:1-8 • Steve Crowe

Our journey begins in utter darkness and despair. The disciples' hopes and dreams for their world came crashing down two days ago, when the one they thought was the Messiah died a gruesome death on the cross. Jesus was dead, that was for certain. In haste, before the Sabbath began at sundown, friends had placed his body in a tomb and rolled a stone in front. Now, in the dimmest of all light, in the early morning of the third day, some women who had followed Jesus make their way to the tomb to complete the burial process and lay their hopes to rest. What they find is shocking. The stone has been rolled away and the body is gone. To the human mind, there can be only one explanation: someone has taken the body. Then, two men "in clothes that gleamed like lightning"—angels—appear before them to announce that Jesus is risen from the dead, just as he had told them.

We pause for a moment, just long enough to see something so very significant here: the good news—the light for the nations—comes first to women. The resurrected Jesus, as in his ministry, continues to overturn the social constraints of his day by appointing the people considered to be the least credible of witnesses for taking his light into

the whole world. This good news is for everyone equally! Unfortunately, the disciples do not believe their words (and are later chastised by Jesus), but Peter and John race to the tomb to see for themselves. They go in for a closer look but have to step to the side to let light shine in on the details—the burial cloth and the strips of linen for the head lie undisturbed. Go ahead, pick them up and see for yourself. No one took the body of Jesus away; it vanished.

I love the way the Gospel of John records the disciples' reaction. They saw. They believed. They did not understand. That was my experience many years ago when I came to believe in Jesus, and it's been my experience many times since when life did not turn out the way I hoped. So, for me, it is good to stand inside the tomb beside these two men who will go on to be pillars of the church and take the light of Jesus into the whole world. But everything hangs on the thing they did not yet understand: "that Jesus had to rise from the dead." (John 20:9) Do we long to bear light to a world wrapped in darkness and despair? Then come to Jesus. He is the source: "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

Steve Crowe came to faith in Jesus Christ 50 years ago this spring while on a journey through Europe.

The Empty Tomb

Charcoal Pencil • Corinne Grant



Artist Statement

“Christ is risen, He is risen indeed. Hallelujah!”

About the Artist

Corinne is an artist who primarily works with pen, pencil, charcoal, and watercolor.

Letting Go

Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene • John 20:11-18 • Kate Hayashi

“Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” (John 20:17)

The morning Jesus rises, Mary encounters him in the garden outside the tomb and she clings to Jesus. Imagine the scene. Surprised, perhaps Mary stumbled as she ran to Jesus. Perhaps she climbed into his arms. Did Jesus hold and comfort her before speaking? When he speaks, he gently urges her not to cling to him, but to go and share the good news. Reflecting on this scene throughout Lent, the word cling stuck in my mind. Mary didn't hold or touch Jesus — she clung. I reflected on my own experiences with clinging.

1. I recently cared for another child who would have never chosen to leave my side. While she was with me, I remember trying to bring dinner to the table. My hands were full and she was pulling at my shirt, crying. I thought, “If you would only let me go, I would be able to get you dinner faster (and serve dinner on the table instead of the floor)...” **And yet, she continued to cling.**
2. A few weeks ago, I participated in the memorial of a late friend. During a planning meeting, my friend's spouse shared his desire for her life celebration to bring together people of varying religious beliefs, hoping that their friends would come to know God better as Holy Father, Christ the Savior, Spirit Comforter. He spoke about the way the Gospel would frame all parts of the memorial. I noticed myself pausing, as my loss caused me to tumble, ping-pong, and dwell in twisted emotional patterns,

seeking to control or to hide from what we faced. **His honest faithfulness helped me notice myself clinging to my insecurities and limited concepts of God.**

3. I am a fourth generation U.S. citizen from a family who experienced racial trauma when my grandparents and their families lost everything and were forced to move into Japanese-American internment camps. Returning to life after the camps, they worked hard to survive. Grandma cooked for everyone else on the farm while they labored to grow strawberries and sell them on the corner of the big dirt road. In scarcity, Grandma learned to make the most of what she had and practiced conservancy. She carried the practice into her new family's culture. **As I recount my family history, I confess inherited protective patterns of independence and isolation and trust that God knows me and desires to bless me with his holy catholic church.**

Be encouraged! Jesus reigns over death and has ascended to heaven. May we not cling so hard that we stifle the things or people we love. Rather, may we allow the Holy Spirit to flow freely through us, bringing comfort and mercy to ourselves, our families, our friends, our communities, and beyond.

Reflect: Whether in need or in plenty, to whom and in what do you cling? How can you turn your eyes to Jesus, hear his call, and follow his word? How are you invited to participate in offering the life of Jesus to your neighbors?

Kate racially identifies as Japanese-American and she works (on mission) as a public school elementary music educator in the North Shore. When not teaching, Kate leans into her strengths when she is able to “create” in everyday activities and holds space for others to be loved.

“He is Not Here”

Porcelain Pottery • Laura Gallant



Artist Statement

“But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.” (John 20:11-12)

This piece represents Mary’s view of the empty tomb. The angels tell her “He has risen! He is not here.” (Mark 16:6). The phrase “*he is not here*” really struck me, it emphasizes that Christ is not in the tomb and was not conquered by death. When I started playing with the imagery of the two angels at the head and foot of the place he was laid, I realized it reminded me of images I had seen of the ark of the covenant with the two angels’ wings covering the mercy seat. In my piece, the two angels’ wings figuratively cover the place where Jesus was laid, but the attitude of the wings is reversed from the angels in the ark of the covenant. Instead of facing inward covering the holiest of holies, the wings are facing outward, blown back and opened, representing how Jesus’ sacrifice has opened the holiest of holies to us, as when the veil of the temple was ripped in two from the top to the bottom. The wings are also tinged green bringing to mind the palm fronds which paved the way for Jesus to Jerusalem just the week before.

The shape of the piece, in a hollow circle like a bubble, represents the breadth of time in between Jesus’ death and resurrection, a collective held breath moment. I imagine the bubble bursting right as Mary turns around and finds the “gardener” and learns he is the risen Christ and the angels vanish. The cross inside the votive has three swirls at the top, representing the three parts of the Godhead. The red bead in the middle represents the blood that was shed. It’s primarily not meant to be seen inside the votive/tomb but to cast a shadow onto the world outside. The stone where he was laid, beneath the hollow circle of the votive, is meant to be rough and heavy to represent the contrast between earthly things and heavenly things, between death and life, between Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. The circular opening to the votive at the front represents the open tomb door where the stone was rolled away, while the circular opening at the top represents the now open way Jesus has made for us between heaven and earth.

About the Artist Laura’s vocation has always been in the sciences but she has recently come to call herself an artist too. Her main medium is hand built ceramics; she also works in jewelry making, painting, and writing.

He Breathes Again

Jesus appears to other women • Matthew 28:9-10 • Lyndsy Weeks

And behold, Jesus met them (the women) and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." (Matthew 28:9-10)

Shortly after midnight on February 17, 2019, I watched my mom breathe for the last time. I had spent long days beside her in the hospital, watching her quickly decline from being able to talk and pray, to sleeping and struggling to breathe. After she died, the nurses covered her with a sheet and told our family that her body would remain at the hospital until the funeral home arrived. Then, we collected her belongings, went home, and tried to sleep.

We woke the next morning groggy and confused, as if dreaming. It wasn't long before family and friends arrived. They cleaned our house. They brought food. In one sense, it felt like Christmas Day as the living room filled with uncles, aunts, cousins, friends. But instead of opening presents, we sat there, not knowing what to do. We were a collection of people who had just lost their sister, their aunt, their mom, their Oma. We were lost, moving in slow motion, without much to say.

Imagine if my mom walked into that scene and loudly proclaimed (as she always did when she got home), "I'm home!!" It overwhelms me to think about how that would feel. The last time we saw her, she had an IV in her arm, slowly dripping morphine into her dying body, because hope of her recovering had been lost. Can you imagine her cancer-ridden lungs filling with oxygen again? Her stiff hands beginning to warm? Her body becoming strong again, able to walk without assistance for the first time in two months? The tubes and IVs gone? Her smile returned? And her showing up at our house, having tasted death but come back to life?

It's unimaginable. It's inconceivable.

But that's what Jesus did.

Like my mom, he was fully human. His lungs stopped breathing, his heart stopped beating. Like my sisters and I, a small group of women watched it all happen. They watched his bloody body lowered off the cross. With tears streaming down their faces, they saw him placed in the tomb. Jesus was their friend, and as they visited the tomb that morning, they felt a lot like we felt on February 17th—devastated, confused, hopeless.

But then, Jesus appeared and said, "Greetings!" They took hold of his feet and worshiped him! The Bible doesn't explicitly say what this entailed, but I imagine it involved incredible emotion, hugging, singing, touching, smiling, and unexplainable joy.

It's hard to imagine my mom walking into the living room fully healed to greet us, but I can imagine Jesus doing it because He did.

I invite you to think of Jesus as a real close friend that you just saw dead. Now picture him fully alive, standing before you. As he says, "Greetings!" you hear love for you in his voice. Put yourself in the women's shoes, grab his feet, and worship him. He is your friend and very worthy of your worship.

Lyndsy is wife to Antuan and mom to Esther, Addy, and Hanna, whom she homeschools. She is trying to learn to live a slow, not-rushed life with Jesus, and enjoys spending time outdoors to marvel at God's creativity.

“Then came
the morning
that sealed
the promise

Your buried body
began
to breathe

Out of the silence
The roaring lion

Declared
the grave
Has no
claim on me.

Jesus,
Yours
is the
victory!”

Living Hope, Phil Wickham

read the full story at
NSCBC.ORG/STORY



“His Name Is Love”

Creative Non-Fiction • Jessi Rennekamp



This is the true story of a friend of mine from high school, Anthony, and his wife Charlotte, and their kids Lewis, Bridget, and baby Margaret. Their oldest child, Lewis, was born with a severe birth injury due to prolonged labor and lived with special needs for the nearly 9 years of his too-short life. But those special needs did not define him. He communicated through his talking device, facial expressions, hugs, and so much more. He treasured special activities like building Legos, dressing up in his adaptive Mandalorian costume, and going to sporting events. But most of all, he was characterized by love – the love of Jesus, his family, and so many others for him as well as his love for others and for his Savior.

With the family’s permission and blessing, and using as many of their own words as possible, I want to share Lewis’s story with the NSCBC community – to honor his memory, to encourage all of us through his faith journey and that of his parents, and to make tangible in a new way what we celebrate when we rejoice that death is not the end of the story. Knowing how Jesus walked with this family and provided abundant life even amidst struggle and pain, and knowing that now Lewis is walking and feasting with his Savior face-to-face, sheds new light and even deeper meaning on this Easter season.

An excerpt of this family’s incredible journey and testimony follows. Read the full story by scanning the QR code or picking up a print copy at church.

A Dark Easter

After 30 hours of hard labor, including 6 hours of pushing, Charlotte gave birth to a baby boy. Exhausted, weak, and in pain, she longed for a skin-to-skin embrace with her newborn infant – the moment she'd dreamed of since first finding out she was pregnant. But a flurry of confused and worried activity came instead. The baby was blue and limp. Whisked away immediately, the medical team worked to suction the meconium and amniotic fluid out of his little lungs. They put him on an oxygen mask with a tube down his throat to try to compensate for his final hours in utero when he wasn't getting the blood and oxygen he needed.

For Charlotte and her husband Anthony, the first days of their firstborn's life were a vortex of fear and prayer, despair and hope, weeping and holding one another. The doctors were focused on stabilizing the baby, not on the search for a diagnosis. There were no answers.

"I have not yet held my son. I'm home now and the house is quiet. The nursery is empty. And so am I," wrote Anthony. *"And other times I feel hopeful and full of joy. I don't know exactly how to describe it. I finally get some of the Psalms. 'The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you,*

O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.'"

There were no answers. Only love. His very name was Love. Lewis Love James.

Little Lewis Love seemed to be doing a bit better, and his parents celebrated when his breathing tube was removed. Then he had a seizure. Not uncommon for babies who had undergone a prolonged and difficult labor, they were told. But he had to go on anti-seizure medication, which relaxed him to the point that he once again stopped breathing on his own. The breathing tube, scraping up his raw throat once more, was reinserted.

His MRI the following day was perhaps the biggest blow yet, showing Lewis had significant brain damage. He didn't have the brain function to manage basic bodily activities. He couldn't swallow secretions of fluid, and he couldn't move his head and mouth to free his airways if they got blocked. His rigid limbs were locked at his sides.

There were no answers. Only questions. Including the worst question of all. Still exhausted from the traumatic birth and from watching their son struggle for breath, for food, for life itself, Charlotte and Anthony were awakened in the middle of the night. "We're removing the breathing tube again," the doctor said. "If he doesn't breathe on his

own, what do you want us to do?"

"After a very long Easter Sunday I wanted to update everyone," wrote Anthony. *"I will be blunt and straightforward; things are very dark right now. This morning, Charlotte and I literally had to make the decision whether Lewis lives or dies. Every second I spend typing could be his last...Sin and death came because of that wicked snake; someday, we will see an end to it, and if my boy goes today, I will be able to embrace him like I won't ever be able to do in this lifetime. For I know that nothing can separate me from the love of my heavenly father, and him do I trust. The Lord gives and takes away, blessed be his name."*

But the angel of death did not come through the door that night.

Exodus

The following day, Anthony and Charlotte got to hold their precious son for the first time – a gift that even twelve hours prior had seemed impossible.

Lewis began making strides that astounded the doctors and his parents. He was soon able to drink a bottle of breast milk by mouth, rather than through a feeding tube, without choking. Shortly after that, his feeding tube was removed altogether as was his IV.

And then the greatest miracle of all: The baby who was not expected to live was discharged from the hospital. Lewis went home with Charlotte and Anthony!

“Yesterday faith became sight,” wrote Anthony. “Yesterday the prayers of countless people were answered. The house that was full of sorrowful tears and prayers of agony only 13 days before is now filled with joyous smiles and psalms of thanksgiving. The nursery that was empty is filled with gifts from loving friends and family as well as the most beautiful little boy that my wildest imaginations could not dream up. My soul that was breaking had found a faith I did not know I had. The God that guided the Israelites with a Pillar of Fire has guided me with that same blinding glory through one of toughest tests I have seen. Though the fight is not over, though the race is still not won, today the victory is the Lord’s.”

Read the full story, continuing from this “Passover” and a celebratory exodus from the hospital, through the family’s difficult journey in the wilderness on which they are nevertheless sustained by manna from heaven and flowing streams in the desert, to Lewis’s eternal life in the Promised Land.



read the full story at
[NSCBC.ORG/STORY](https://nscbc.org/story)

“No matter when, no matter where, no matter how, Lewis will be on the journey with us for the rest of our lives. The reality is I have no idea why this is happening. What I do know, is this journey has made me better. God does not waste pain...No matter if Lewis is with me or not, I’ll just keep doing my best down here. Someday, by grace, I’ll praise alongside him. It’s taken me a lot longer to process this than Charlotte. At least three years of crying alone, by myself, about the inevitable. Thinking through the moment that is before us now. It’s giving me a healthy dose of reality, that the inevitability of an end will come for all of us. I won’t give up hope. I won’t go down without a fight. The snake ain’t taking me and he won’t take my son. Today, I choose joy. Tomorrow, it may be joy through tears, but it will be joy. It may manifest as a deep cry of sorrowful woe, groans that words cannot express, but it will not rob my ultimate joy. Where oh death is your victory, where oh death is your sting. This isn’t how it’s meant to be. Lewis taught me that, and that is why he will always be here. His story will continue to impact, no matter what happens.”

–Anthony, February 2023

(written about a year prior to Lewis’s death, upon the family’s heartrending decision to focus his treatment goals on maximizing the quality, rather than quantity, of Lewis’s life)

About the Artist

Jessi writes about health and hope in her work as a communications and social impact consultant for life sciences organizations. She believes in the value of distilling the beauty of a complex and messy world through narrative and in amplifying the experiences of those whose voices are not always heard.

What They Didn't See

Jesus appears to the disciples in Jerusalem • John 20:19-23 • Melissa Zaldivar

I can't imagine their vision was clear. Eyes tired from weeping, squinting to make out what appeared before them. Anyone who has lost a beloved friend understands that those early days are a blur at best. You stop eating and sleeping. There have barely been three days since they watched Jesus hanging lifeless on a cross. 72 hours. And they saw it with their own two eyes. The wind kicked up and the sky grew dark and it felt as it always does when the life of someone you deeply care for ends: it felt like light would never reenter the picture. Like the sky would never be bright again. As if the only way forward was impossible now that the Messiah is dead.

I can't imagine their focus was sharp. Groggy and off-balance, things must have seemed skewed. Didn't he say that he was, after all, one with God himself? Didn't he raise others from the dead that now fully wrapped him up behind the stone-sealed tomb? Everything feels like a question when someone is pronounced dead.

I can't imagine their hearts were at rest. Everything had been stirred up, nothing could possibly settle down to the bottom. After years of following Jesus through hills and countrysides and towns, witnessing anew what the Almighty could do, it seemed that perhaps this was someone they could truly trust. Someone they could rely on and lean into. And if he could multiply bread and fish, perhaps the new way forward was abundance? Perhaps their days of scraping the bottom of the barrel were behind them?

Surely now, things would be clear.
Surely now, things would be sharp.
Surely now, they could find rest.

But no. Instead, he was whipped and mocked and stripped and hung. Instead, their eyes were swollen and their bodies were exhausted and their amygdalas were firing off a panic response.

I can imagine their confusion and questioning and restlessness.

I can imagine they were expecting their new reality to be Jesus-less.

So imagine their surprise when a voice spoke of peace. Shalom.

Like the most unexpected visit from a faraway friend, he arrived.

Like the longed-for phone call of a recently departed companion, he rang.

Like some kind of strange dream in which all of your longings seem possible, he came into their hearts and minds and he walked into the room where they were hiding.

God in the flesh, right there in the middle of a dark hallway or a kitchen table, or a vacant crossroads.

Light in the dark, ordinary-ness of lament. The son shone through the window, catching a pattern on the wall that made the disciples look up and say,

“Oh. I didn't see that coming.”

Melissa is always looking for light, wondering where she left her keys, and regularly distracted by the kindness of God. She loves most of life, except the part where you have to meet a deadline or take out the trash.

The Way of Light

Photography • Ken Sawyer



Artist Statement

What an incredible concept. I have been captivated by it since the first mention of the project. To me it sounds like the next installment of Star Wars, or perhaps an ancient monastic order. To some this is a way of being, others a career path or a road less traveled. For me it is in my job title: photographer. There are countless theological applications of this word. I have often wrestled with the depth of connection here. I particularly enjoy the idea of the *imago dei*, image bearers, one who brings a small

piece of someone else everywhere they go. These images seek to illustrate the brightness of Christ's kingship, and His peaceful presence with us. Also on my mind throughout this project was another path, the *via dolorosa*. This road was far less bright for the Lord to endure. However our story does not dissolve at the end of that path. Our suffering servant earned for us a shimmering crown of light. One which far out shines the sun or any earthly way of light.

About the Artist

Ken is a photographer with a particular interest in architecture, graphic design, and history. He studied at Montserrat College in Beverly and has worked at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. Ken grew up in Philadelphia and enjoys watching movies and taking walks at the Crane Estate in Ipswich.

Thomas Wanted to See

Thomas believes because he sees Jesus • John 20:26-29 • Richelle Denman-Joseph

When Jesus rises from the dead, He visits many of His disciples. For some reason, Thomas isn't there. His friends tell him all about it: "Jesus is alive! We saw Him!"

I think it's worth acknowledging that most of us would say just what Thomas said. There is no precedent for a God to become a man, die, and resurrect. So can we blame Thomas when he says, *"I'd like to see Him for myself."*?

About a week later, Jesus actually shows up and says *"Go ahead, Thomas, see for yourself."*

It's what Jesus says next that sticks out to me the most: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Thomas is an early Christian who is able to physically see and be in the presence of Jesus. He did not expect to see Jesus, but he did, eventually, see Jesus. Today, what Jesus offers us is a profoundly hopeful way of life. The invitation to expect to see Him. Those who have not seen, yet believe, are people who believe, on one hand, that one day they will be fully in the presence of God. On the other hand, these are people who believe that Jesus will transform the present as well. These deeply expectant people squint into darkness, knowing that light will break through, soon.

This reminds me of something Tish Harrison Warren writes in, *Prayer in the Night: For Those Who Work or Watch or Weep*. She compares the Christian life to bird watching. She says the only difference between bird watching and staring abysmally into a swampy thicket is that the former involves expecting... Expecting to see a flit of color, or to hear a warbling song. The latter feels hopeless and despairing, maybe even endless.

Admittedly, I have felt like I'm staring into a mucky, thick darkness in this season of life. The heaviness of life has felt immense, and I relate to Thomas, thinking things like, "Hope?! In Jesus?! That sounds great, but I'll need to see it for myself." Feeling like the scales of life, which balance hope and despair, are tipped irrecoverably in the worse direction. Is there too much darkness in the world for light to overcome?

On my way home from church many Sundays this year, I've played Images by Schuyler Kitchin and sang along, wondering to God in the spirit of Thomas, "Will you make it true??" And I'm comforted knowing that Jesus honors Thomas' request after all. Comforted, too, in growing to understand that being one who expects to see is not about naive optimism, but rather, about watchfulness and discipline.

Join me in asking God to grow our hopefulness. To exercise this discipline, pray now for the skill of expectation, watchfulness. May God make us people who watch for His light to break into unexpected places. When we see light, may we nurture it, and where we do not, may we create it.

Ro is a lifelong New Englander in all the best and worst ways. She likes to plant seeds and watch them grow, professionally and recreationally, in the minds of young people and in her garden.

Artist Statment (opposite page)

1) **Ink drawing.** The ink drawing reflects the materiality but also the infinity of Jesus' resurrection. Paired with the sonnet, Jesus' death is in this envisioning engulfed "in shadows of the deepest blue." His hand is fixed onto the textured, material-rich paper with jagged lines both

“You were pierced with shadows of the deepest blue”

Ink drawing with watercolor & Poetry • Johnny Paul-Faina

thick and thin. A fine wash of water blurs these physical boundaries and signals the unbound, infinite atonement that his pierced body has accomplished for all mankind, for all of time. When Thomas reaches for Jesus’ pierced hands, he reaches for the physical body of the risen Messiah, but also for the eternal victor over death who is seated at the right hand of God (Lk. 22:69)

2) **Poem.** (*see p30*) This is a poem uttered as a prayer of confession from the perspective of the Apostle Thomas as he sees his risen Savior, suspended in disbelief. Written in the form of a Shakespearean sonnet, the poem reflects the cyclical nature of doubt and disbelief, reiterated in three consecutive stanzas. The couplet (paired lines) at the end of the sonnet signals the shift toward belief in Thomas’ heart as he reflects on words he probably heard during Jesus’ ministry: *“Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”* (Mark 9:24). I recently saw a performance of the musical *Godspell* at Gordon College and I was struck by the incredibly close-knit fellowship the disciples enjoyed with Jesus. When their rabbi died on the cross, they lost not only a mentor and teacher, but their dearest friend. Thomas, like the rest of the disciples, did not understand that Jesus was in fact the Savior of the world, and His death came as a shock even though Jesus had foretold it multiple times. In writing this poem I tried to sink into Thomas’ expectant disbelief: he wants so desperately to believe that the Messiah has risen that he cannot actually believe it. Relying on color descriptors, Thomas’ change of heart is exemplified in his blushing cheek, exhilaratingly welcoming his friend and the very Son of God back from the dead.



About the Artist

Johnny Paul-Faina is a Romanian-American artist and writer currently studying at Gordon College. His favorite medium is oil-painting due to its textural boldness and distinct personality, a preference also reflected in the Expressionist tendencies of his art and writing. A painter at heart, Johnny views the world as layers of meaning loaded with vivid truth, just waiting to be uncovered and traced. His writing reflects his ongoing pursuit of meaning through poetry and other short story forms. As a Christian artist, Johnny seeks to flavor his works with the beauty of the Creator God, inviting the Holy Spirit to imbue them with His colorful inspiration.

Body, Bread, and Belief

Jesus on the road to Emmaus • Luke 24:13–35 • Will Funderburk

Before beginning this reading, take a moment to prayerfully settle into an imaginative space where one of Christ's first disciples appears to you today, where you are this very moment, and invites you to consider the wonder and meaning of the resurrection.

“Oh, I’ve seen that look before – my brother Cleopas wore it on our long walk to Emmaus. Well, it wasn’t truly that long, but the devastation we felt made it seem so. You see, it was only three days after he died, and every possibility for our liberation from the Romans, every hope we had for life and freedom, had been absolutely crushed. He sparked our hope, and they crushed it. Sure, it had been three days since the cross, and he had certainly said something about the temple being torn down and rebuilt in three days, but how were we supposed to know he was talking about his body? Yes, Mary, Mary, and Salome said that they found the tomb empty, but to our shame we didn’t listen to them. At least Peter and John went to see for themselves; the rest of us were simply numb, confused, and lost.

You see, the resurrection is sometimes so hard to believe, to hold in your mind as real, when the world is crashing down. Don’t get me wrong! I’m not saying it isn’t important. On the contrary, it’s of *upmost* importance! It’s in all our creeds and proclaimed at every gathering. It’s the final victory over a long defeat, the opposite of a catastrophe, the moment something outside the normal working of the world breaks through and reverses a situation that was hopeless at the last!

But when all that is safe is upended, and all that remains is still shaking... when desolation is the

air you breathe – be it physical, familial, economic, vocational, or spiritual – it can feel impossible to grab onto the truth that God became a man who lived, died, and rose again. When the persistent intellectual doubt is matched by the existential circumstances of despair, belief feels like just another thing we must do to be good disciples. You seem to be in that place right now, wandering your own road to Emmaus, but don’t despair! You remember the story, don’t you?

As we were walking along, discussing these things, Jesus joined us. Only we didn’t recognize him! Even as we talked about him, we missed him. He listened to us share our heartbreak. Then he opened a new way of understanding our scriptures, showing us that the Messiah had to suffer before his glorification. Still, we didn’t get it. Our hearts burned, but we still didn’t recognize him. It was only after we convinced him to stay for dinner and he gave thanks and broke the bread – just like the supper before his crucifixion! – that we saw who it was!

Do you know why I think he chose to reveal himself that way? One of our dear brothers has said, “It is impossible for us to reach what is intelligible apart from what is bodily.”¹ After all, we have bodies too. When we are in crisis, pure reason often fails us. Sound logic may not move our souls. We need something we can hear, see, and touch with our hands to bypass the watchful dragons of the mind. Isn’t that the point of the incarnation? The Word became flesh, and when we see him, we also see the Father! The incarnation was necessary for us to know God. And he didn’t leave his body behind him at the tomb, but by raising with it showed us that his resurrection life will spread to all of creation. Sometimes, I think he wants us to taste and see

1 St. John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*

“Way of Light”

Watercolor • Shauna Kurihara

that he is good and present with us, and it’s by embracing those good gifts – such as a loaf of bread – that he makes himself present.

It’s a shame you never got to see him before he left. And I see that you are still feeling so broken. But come! Sit with me and share a meal. It will help – trust me. He is with us still and enjoys showing up when his disciples feast together.”

Will Funderburk is a special education teacher, has recently switched wood working aspirations for baking mishaps, and lives with his wife and cat in Pride’s Crossing.

Artist Statment

The story of the road to Emmaus has been a favorite of mine for a long time. I love what we can imagine about Jesus’ personality from this interaction: He asks questions, he wants to know how we feel, and wants us to tell him what we feel, even if he already knows the answer. He is gentle and wants to be invited to walk with us, be invited to dine with us. He sets our hearts on fire if we open ourselves to him. I love the image of walking along the road, sharing our hearts with Jesus and learning from him in return.



As I thought about this story I kept seeing Jesus as the light along this road with his two disciples. The title, “Way of Light” is based off our theme for this project as a whole, but is meant to remind us that ultimately Jesus is the light that guides us along the way. We just need to do the work of inviting him to join us.

About the Artist

Shauna Kurihara is a painter and spiritual director working primarily with watercolor and oil paints. She believes in “creating beauty that cares for the soul,” which influences her art, as well as her work in spiritual direction.

Peace Be With You

Jesus shares a meal with the two disciples on the road • Luke 24:36–49 • Sarah Bartley

Luke says the disciples were startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost. A ghost seemed more likely than the reality of seeing their friend and teacher again. They must have been heavy with grief and shame — their hopes disappointed, their fears realized, remembering that they had slept while he wept on the Mount of Olives and deserted him before his trial began. Perhaps they hadn't yet gathered the courage to ask, "Where do we go from here?" when Jesus interrupted, saying "Peace be with you."

Bewildered, they watched as Jesus stretched out his arms and legs so they could examine his hands and feet. "Touch me and see..." Rather than reproaching them for their unbelief, faithlessness, or failure, Jesus asked for something to eat. Stunned, someone rose to stoke the kitchen fire. Eyes wide, they watched him chew the broiled fish and wipe his mouth.

This is the moment when Jesus opens their minds so they can understand the Scriptures. This is when they finally see how Jesus' life fulfilled all of humanity's hopes and met the world's deepest needs for peace and renewal. The truth is, he had been saying these things to them in the days before his death, but they had not fully understood. It was not until this moment — this surprising moment of touching his wounded flesh and watching him eat fish — that they finally understood. This is the beautiful wisdom of Jesus. He gave them an encounter with his risen body to capture their imagination and heal their weary hearts. This is

how they become witnesses to new creation.

The scenes captured in these photographs are mundane; yet they sparked delightful surprise as new life visited my home.

My day-to-day work involves tending to the broken systems that choke out life and divide communities. I identify with the disciples, overwhelmed by the brutality of Jesus' death and their own powerlessness to face it. Like them, my heart is eager for signs of life — evidence of something tangible, real, physically present. When weary and burdened by the absence of justice and the barriers to peace, it revives my heart to sit with the sticks and the bent-over sunflowers and to see that the Source of their life, my life, and the life of the whole world is yet present, generating something new.

The truth is, I'm not a good gardener. I don't love the labor of it, as some people do. I garden for the life of it. How about you? What are the practices that help you to walk in the way of light? Is there a time you were surprised to see life emerge from a place that seemed life-less? Where does our Church witness new creation?

Sarah loves Jesus, who offers endless inspiration for a lifetime of peacemaking. Her vocation is community-building with a focus on ending and preventing homelessness.



Surprising Resilience & A Feast

Photography • Sarah Bartley

Artist Statement

(1) **Surprising Resilience.** Each spring I gently plant delicate tomato seedlings in the ground. I surround the small plants with large cages, anticipating the days when their spindly vines will stretch out and require scaffolding to prevent them from bending under the weight of their own fruit. Last year, I collected fallen branches and drove them into the soil around the cages for additional stability. In September, to my surprise, one of the sticks sprouted leaves. Though rootless, the stick conveyed fresh growth. What had previously been a stick — a tool for supporting another, more productive plant — was now, recognizably, the branch of a lilac tree. This is nature's surprising resilience.



(2) **A Feast.** A favorite ritual is growing sunflowers along the sidewalk in front of our house. I enjoy visiting them each day as they slowly rise to 8 or 10 feet tall. I like when my neighbors stop to talk about them. I love to sit at the base of their stalks and listen to the hum of the bees above. While the brilliant yellow petals are joyful, my very favorite days are the days after their colors fade and their heads bend forward. That is the season when new birds, like this American goldfinch, perch on the dead sunflowers and feast on the seeds.



A Step by Step Journey

Jesus appears on the mountain • Matthew 28:16-20 • Julie Funderburk

When I hiked my first mountain, I believed I was prepared. I knew what to do, but that didn't mean my body was ready. Walking with Jesus can be similar.

Jesus invited his disciples to meet him on a mountain near Galilee. By then, they had followed Jesus up many mountains. Their view from the top that day wasn't about the panorama, but about meeting with the risen Jesus. As they hiked up, they likely reflected on recent events, and wondered what was coming next. Hiking has a way of surfacing real thoughts.

At the top, Jesus commissioned them to baptize, teach, and disciple. We shouldn't assume the hike down the mountain was easy. Jesus had left them in a way that might have felt definitive, even as he clearly meant to strengthen them: I am with you always. They didn't immediately know all that Jesus' commission would mean for them. They needed another: the Holy Spirit. It was the Spirit who enabled the same disciples who had denied, ran, and hid from Jesus' death to now embrace the death of Christ as a way to live. They weren't embracing it in theory, but in their bodies (2 Cor. 4:10) — they went on to live the Great Commission.

The life of Christ is not simply for us to rejoice in, but to manifest to others. Christ made disciples by sharing life with them over years. He taught disciples to make disciples through embodied presence. Our youth exemplify this beautifully. They delight in experiences where they are fully, intentionally, authentically present. They pursue

experience over content. They want to be in it. This includes their discipleship. While conversations and words matter deeply, what often matters more is the life of the person speaking.

We live in a time when words have multiplied, and while their meaning is still powerful, the deeper need is for presence, a friend to walk with over all terrains. It is in the rough spots that we learn deeper intimacy with Christ and with each other. It's also when we need the hope of Christ manifested in the lives of others around us.

The invitation to participate in the Great Commission is an invitation to participate in the death and life of Christ with each other. It's a step-by-step, side-by-side journey. It's the willingness to get closer, to ask another question, and make time for the answers. It is sharing the rhythms God has disciplined us into with others. It's drawing close enough that when hard moments come, we can remind each other of the life of Christ that will always be present and will be our resting place.

This won't happen accidentally. The Great Commission is a commission because it requires us to move. If there is someone you are praying for, keep doing so. And ask God how you can draw closer to that person, not only to serve them, but to be with them on their journey and let them in on yours.

Julie spends a lot of time thinking about youth, being with youth, and answering inquiries about nerf wars. If she's not doing that, she tries to get out in nature and connect with God, noticing his detail, beauty, and love in all created things.

Christ Commissions the Church

Drawing (icon inspired) • Elizabeth Hammond



Artist Statement

This icon-inspired piece depicts Jesus delivering the Great Commission to the eleven apostles at the end of the Gospel of Matthew. Each disciple is depicted with an item commonly used as a symbol to identify them in traditional Christian artwork. These symbols of their lifelong testimony are often the implements they are recorded (or at least traditionally believed) to have been killed with in a final witness to Christ through martyrdom. These symbols call attention to the fact that these men were not passive observers to Christ's charge, but active listeners who followed His commission for the rest of their lives.

About the Artist

Elizabeth is in her second semester at Tufts University studying for a Masters in History. She is an avid artist who seeks out and converses with the art made by Brothers and Sisters from long in the past in order to deepen her interactions with God. Through the understanding of both ancient and traditional art of the church, Elizabeth seeks to continually broaden her view of the body of Christ and gain new perspectives on theology.

Revelation of Christ through Fish, Fire and Fellowship

The miraculous catch of fish • John 21:1-11 • Heidi Olson

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. (John 21:1)

After the most intense week of their lives, Peter and several of the disciples spent an uneventful night floating on the familiar waters of the Sea of Tiberias, also known as Galilee. After a three-year hiatus, they returned to fishing. But not a single fish was caught that night. Maybe they had lost their touch.

In the early morning light, they saw the silhouette of a man standing along the water, shouting out unsolicited fishing advice. Next to him was a charcoal fire roasting some “opsarion (ὀψάριον)” fish and bread.

For whatever reason, they followed the man’s advice to cast their net on the right-hand side of the boat, and what followed was a catch of fish so massive it could hardly be hauled in. The last time this happened, they had left the catch of fish behind on the shore and followed Him.

Then the revelation hit. “*It is the Lord!*” Peter threw himself into the sea and swam to shore, once again leaving the fish behind.

Dripping wet he warmed himself around the charcoal fire next to Jesus. The last time he stood warming himself around a charcoal fire was the bitter night he had denied his Lord. Now the resurrected Jesus was inviting Peter to breakfast around that fire.

When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish [opsarion (ὀψάριον)] laid out on it, and bread.

“Ichthys (ἰχθύς)” is the Greek word New Testament

authors normally use for fish. But here, on this mysterious morning, the word ὀψάριον – opsarion (ὀψάριον) was used. The only other time we read opsarion is when it is the offering of a young boy, which fed 5000 people.

Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and so with the [opsarion (ὀψάριον)] fish.

It is a familiar setting as the disciples reunited with the resurrected Christ around a charcoal fire along the shores of the lake that was home to them, and revealed Himself. It was as if Jesus was saying:

Do you remember when I first called you? Come and have breakfast with me.

Do you remember when you didn’t believe there would be enough, and I provided, and we ministered to thousands together? Come and have breakfast with me.

Do you remember when your spirit was willing, but your flesh was weak, and you swore you didn’t even know me? Come and have breakfast with me.

Through this early morning scene on a familiar lake, with a fire and fish that would trigger old memories, Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples as the risen Lord. He had suffered on the cross, providing forgiveness of sin. He had resurrected from the dead, achieving victory over sin and death. And now He was welcoming them to eat with Him again, extending His grace.

Dear friend, do you remember when you were called? When the Lord has provided? When you ministered with Him? The times that you failed?

As we remember again the death (*continues on p25*)

Abundance

Linoleum Block Print • Grace Romeo



Artist Statement

This print, carved out of a linoleum block and printed on paper, is an illustration of the disciples on the water as Jesus calls to them, telling them to throw their net over the right side of the boat to find fish. Through this piece I hope to convey the magnitude of the sheer number of fish caught. The disciples are small in relation to the size of the dark morning sky, the vast water surface, and the multitude of fish. Their net which was once empty is now full of abundance in response to Jesus.

About the Artist

Grace is a multimedia artist and designer currently studying at Gordon College. She enjoys combining her love of tactile fine art processes with design skills to create hybrid pieces that answer questions and solve problems.

(continued from p24) and resurrection of Christ, He is revealing to us His forgiveness, victory, and grace. Regardless of your past success or failure, He welcomes you into fellowship through the cross, and says to you again today: “Come and have breakfast with me.”

After living and serving in China for fifteen years, Heidi Olson moved to the North Shore to study at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She has recently become a member of NSCBC and breakfast is possibly her favorite meal of the day.

An Invitation for All My Questions

Jesus reinstates Peter • John 21:15–25 • Maddie Hutchison

The setup here is clear: Peter denies Jesus three times, Jesus questions Peter three times. *Do you love me, Peter? Do you love me, Peter? Do you love me, Peter?* The history of their relationship echoes in this interaction, and it's not all pretty. Peter is saddened, maybe even embarrassed, that Jesus asks three times.

There is more to explore. Just three years before this encounter, Jesus first invited the disciples, saying, "Follow me." He invites Peter again, saying, "Follow me." This time, he is explicit about the kind of following Peter will do. *Peter, I'm making you into a shepherd. I'm inviting you to walk with me and be like me.*

In a way, I think it means more this time, too. Peter now knows what it is to follow Jesus in a way he didn't at first. He has traveled with Jesus to minister to demoniacs and the sick. He followed in poverty and in setting a feast before the crowds. He followed through ridicule, shame, and the rejection of his own religious community. And still, "Follow me." Jesus goes to great lengths to communicate that following will not get easier — Peter will glorify the Father even unto death.

This story is like a mirror for me. I understand Peter's denial, fear, and shame. Maybe following is too much to bear. I understand Peter's hesitancy. What about the other disciples? Will your favorite be spared? Jesus doesn't budge. This invitation is for Peter. And when I'm tempted to deny, to remain entrenched in my doubt, and even to walk away, Jesus' invitation is for me, too.

Like Peter, I sometimes think it's all just been too much. I've done too much denying. I've had too many questions. My disbelief has been too much

to hold alongside any sort of real belief. While I have not physically seen Jesus on the cross, I've seen plenty of things that seemed 'God forsaken.' In those moments, I have chosen not to identify myself with Jesus — I doubted. I thought, *How can I call myself one who follows Jesus?* when I can't see God in this situation.

For myself, and I suspect for many of us, one reason this is painful is that *belief* is equated with a mental thumbs-up to a set of truths. And again and again, Jesus' words echo, "Follow me." He is not asking for my mental subscription first. He is asking for my life to be organized in the context of his reign. Jesus speaks to the deepest fears in Peter, and in me, saying, *You are mine. There is nowhere you can go where I will not invite you to follow me anew. I've still got a job for you, come walk with me a while.*

Consider letting this light in. Reflect: *How might we live if we really believed that the invitation to follow comes to people in the midst of loss, questions, and doubt? How might we live if we trusted that following even when the way is unclear will enrich rather than diminish our love for Jesus?* My response is to walk in the freedom that my doubt, pain, and questions do not turn Jesus away. I choose to live joyfully in response to this invitation to follow a King who is full of compassion and room for my questions.

Maddie loves being outside, listening to good music, laughing with good friends, and eating Captain Dusty's ice cream! She finds inspiration for writing from her family, her experiences, and in nature. Maddie works as the Office Manager at NSCBC and is married to Danner.

Reflected Light

Mixed Media Sculpture • Daniel Tuck



Artist Statement

Reflected light is a mixed media sculpture based on themes found in scripture. In this work, a mosaic of mirrored glass formed in scallops sits below a cloudy sky painted on clear acrylic. Images of Jesus extending an arm to the disciple Peter are pressed onto paper from linolium block cuttings. The images surround a campfire, the place of both Peter's initial denial and his ultimate restoration.

About the Artist

Daniel has recently discovered multimedia art, and likes to create works that place two dimensional elements into a three dimensional space, as well as exploring a variety of textures and materials. A videographer by training, and Audio-visual technologist by trade, he also enjoys incorporating unconventional, technical elements into his work, such as 3d-printed objects or small electronics.

Hope in the Ascension

Jesus ascends • Acts 1:1-11 • Arely Fagan

Imagine the scene: Jesus, having completed his earthly ministry, ascends into heaven. His departure leaves those who watched with a mix of emotions: sadness at his physical absence, yet anticipation of the promised Holy Spirit. In the midst of their uncertainty, they receive a message of hope affirming that Jesus will return. Through the Ascension, the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the call to live out the teachings of Jesus, we're invited to contemplate our spiritual journey, finding hope in our lives.

Can you imagine the mix of emotions the disciples experienced as they witnessed Jesus ascending into heaven? What thoughts would race through your mind, seeing Jesus depart yet knowing he reigns in glory? For me, the ascension evokes moments in my own life when I have felt God's apparent absence during times of challenge. In moments of loneliness and despair, I have deeply felt this absence. Yet, even in those darkest moments, I have clearly seen His light. I have learned to trust in God's control. Through these experiences, I have come to understand that God's love, grace, and sovereignty are guiding forces in my life. The ascension serves as a reminder that, despite apparent absence, God's presence and guidance remain constant, offering me hope and guiding me through life's challenges.

The Ascension marked Jesus' transition from earthly ministry to his exalted position at the right hand of God. This moment not only marks a pivotal event in Christian theology but also holds practical implications for our faith journey. The Ascension assures us of Jesus' sovereignty and eternal presence, guiding and sustaining us through trials. Just as the disciples witnessed this momentous event, we too can find assurance in knowing that Jesus

remains in our lives. His reign at the right hand of God empowers us to face life's challenges with courage and hope. And we don't do this alone. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit is with us even when he is not present physically.

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus entrusted his disciples with the task of bearing witness, beginning from Jerusalem and reaching to the ends of the earth. We too are called to celebrate this remarkable event by living as faithful followers of Christ. In our daily lives, we have the opportunity to authentically reflect God's love by demonstrating compassion and kindness through intentional conversations and acts of love. By actively engaging in missions initiatives and sharing the transformative power of the gospel, we participate in God's mission to bring salvation to all people.

As we navigate life's challenges, may we find comfort and strength in the assurance of Jesus' presence with us and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Let us embrace our role as witnesses, sharing the hope of the gospel with a world in need. As the disciples received a message of hope, affirming that Jesus will return, let us think about how we respond to God's call in our lives as we wait for him to come again.

Praise Him On High, Praise Him in Glory

Original Song • Arely Fagan

Chorus:

Praise Him on high, praise Him in glory,
With a joyful heart, we lift our voice.
And with songs of love, our hearts tell His story,
Praise God, our Savior, we rejoice.

Verse 1:

In Bethany, Jesus blesses us all,
With hearts full of joy, we answer His call.
With gladness and praise, we raise our voice,
In God's love, we all rejoice.

Chorus:

Praise Him on high, praise Him in glory,
With a joyful heart, we lift our voice.
And with songs of love, our hearts tell His story,
Praise God, our Savior, we rejoice.

Verse 2:

As Jesus ascends, we stand amazed.
His love and blessings, forevermore.
Back in Jerusalem, we worship and adore Him,
Praise God with joy, our Lord and King.

About the Artist

Arely loves to teach her native language, which is Spanish, and finds joy in imparting knowledge and nurturing others' growth, while also indulging in her passion for music, specifically through playing the saxophone. Alongside her musical pursuits, she is delving into the composition, exploring the creation of new songs, and branching out into writing devotionals, driven by her desire to inspire and uplift others.

Epilogue: Two Poems for Eastertide

Sonnet: "You were pierced with shadows of the deepest blue"
(Thomas believes because he sees Jesus)

You were pierced with shadows of the deepest blue
 I thought your lips were sealed for eternity
 I thought my ears would never hear your voice;
 My tears were pierced with shadows of deep-blue.
 The day of rest felt restless and long
 I thought I'd never feel your ardent embrace
 I thought we'd never share wine and bread again;
 The sighs of my heart were restless and long.
 Your trembling hands drew near to my cheek
 In the murmuring blur of that white morning's glow,
 When I thought it couldn't be true that you'd
 Returned to me and my cheek burned with crimson love.

I believe! Oh, help my unbelief, I prayed then
 In my chest, a prayer beaming silently from my pierced heart.

Johnny Paul-Faina, 2024
Artist statement on page 17

When I see the light -
 Holy, sacred dew of dawn -
 How I draw to thee.

Light's round guard: empty -
 Reflecting, abounding, free -
 Ascending heav'nward.

Eastertide Haikus
 Kate Hayahi, 2024
Artist statement on page 18

Blaze on, my warrior -
 Carry peace and all my love
 In undying life.

Easter Panels

Acrylic on Canvas, each 8' high • Tanja Butler (American, 1955-)



Artist Statement

PANEL ONE

“The Angel at the Tomb”

(Front cover left image)

An angel holding a staff of victory points to the empty grave holding only the shroud and headpiece that covered Christ’s body. The coffin-shaped sepulcher reminds us that we, too, share in Christ’s victory.

PANEL TWO

“Christ’s Victory Over the Gates of Hell and Death”

(Page 4 left image)

Christ stands triumphant over the gates of hell and death. The rainbow refers to God’s ancient covenant of grace after the destruction of the flood. It is also a symbol of God’s powerful presence, since the Revelation to John describes a rainbow surrounding the throne of God. Seven stars refer to the seven spirits of God, also surrounding the throne. The triangle symbolizes the Trinity of which Christ is the central figure. Green and red colors dominate John’s vision of God’s glory, with emerald light and flames emanating from God’s throne.

PANEL THREE

“Christ Appearing to Mary in the Garden”

(Page 4 right image)

Christ’s triumph over the universal forces of sin and destruction becomes more personal and intimate in this third panel. The scene depicts the meeting of Jesus and Mary after his resurrection. The glowing palm tree and stream of water refer to the Tree of Life, connected in Christian imagery with the cross. The rose and the walled garden also have a long tradition of references to the relationship of the divine Lover and his Beloved.

PANEL FOUR

“The Angel Guarding the Entrance to Paradise”

(Front cover right image)

The gates of Paradise, closed after the Fall and guarded by an angel with a flaming sword, are now opened. With Christ’s victory complete, we are invited to enter the door leading to eternal life.

About the Artist

Tanja Butler (b. 1955) was born in Germany and moved to the United States as a young girl. She received her B.A. and M.A. from the University of Albany. Her artistic practice has focused on liturgical art, illustration, and community service projects. She is inspired by Byzantine icons, American and European folk art, Persian manuscripts and textile patterns, African art, Early Christian art, Russian Suprematist paintings, Cubism and Fauvist color. Informed by studies in art history and time working in Italy, she was particularly influenced by the frescoes of Fra Angelico in the Monastery of San Marco in Florence. Her collection of 600 graphic images, Icon: Visual Images for Every Sunday, was published by Augsburg Fortress Publishers. Her work is included in the collections of the Vatican Museum of Contemporary Religious Art; the Billy Graham Center Museum at Wheaton; the Boston Public Library; the DeCordova Museum; and the Armand Hammer Museum of Art, UCLA. In 2014 she retired from her position as an associate professor of art at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, where she taught painting, drawing, liturgical art, and illustration and frequently integrated service opportunities in her courses.

A huge thank you to all our artists and writers!

Please encourage them with your words of gratitude.

*Visit the gallery wall at NSCBC at during the season
of Eastertide to see the art in person.*



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