



ARTIST STATEMENTS LENT-EASTER YEAR B

While we hope viewers develop their own interpretations of the art we create, we offer these artist statements as theological reflections on our process creating these works. You are welcome to share these artist statements in worship bulletins, church newsletters, or online, and you may also incorporate them into sermons or worship liturgy (with credit).

ASH WEDNESDAY AGAIN & AGAIN, WE'RE INVITED IN



Invited In

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Matthew 6:1-21

Hand-carved block printed with oil-based ink on paper

Again and again, we are invited inward. The common thread here is the focus on expressing love for God in secret, not for the recognition of others, but as an outpouring of devotion for God alone. I think the references to spiritual disciplines are less about the particular acts themselves and more about the intention fueling the action. The intention affects the quality of the action itself. Does your outward action align with what's going on inside of you?

There are times when I've been with friends and I've felt this tug to document the event and share it on social media. This impulse yanks me out of the present moment, away from my friends, and I find myself focused on how the event might be perceived by others. Ultimately, it's as though the moment isn't actually happening. I'm not present in mind, body, or spirit; I am elsewhere, fixated on my phone. Have you heard this before: "If you didn't post it, did it even happen?" I think that is a great

question to consider. Are we so caught up in the amplification of our actions and how they are widely perceived, that the actions themselves are void? If we are more concerned with how our public prayers and acts of allyship are received, are we actually praying? Are we actually being an ally?

God invites us into thorough self-examination and authentic relationship. In this image, a person kneels with arms extended, basking in the glow of God's all-encompassing love. It is in the true pursuit of God, this intimate, inward turning, that God sees you. It is in our full, embodied intentionality that we find deep connection with God and ourselves. This is the reward.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

ASH WEDNESDAY
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE'RE INVITED IN



Dawn

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Isaiah 58:1-12 | *Paper lace over watercolor*

In this image, I am mesmerized by the lines, the way that even in the two-dimensional, this dancer is in perpetual motion. Even in a whirlpool, threatening to suck away her life, this dancer is rising—effortlessly. It is magical.

But fighting oppression in real life is a constant exercise in finding the magic in a moment. Fighting oppression in real life is the antithesis of effortlessness. As I look around our world, I see people doubling down to forward oppression. As I look around our world, I see so many amazing embodiments of our Holy Spirit, pushing back, spinning out, rising up. It is magical. I am amazed.

In this image, I have represented a woman spinning up out of a whirlpool, her face shining up at the sun. She rises above the ruins of ancient cities. Background motion spins up with the energy of the woman who represents the Holy Spirit, who represents the oppressed breaking free from the yoke, breaking “forth like the dawn” (Isaiah 58:8)

—Hannah Garrity

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, GOD MEETS US



I Delight in You

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Mark 1:9-15 | *Digital Painting with collage*

During Advent, we learn that the good news begins with John the Baptist shouting in the wilderness and “everyone in Judea and *all* the people of Jerusalem” following him out of the city to the Jordan river to be baptized, to repent, to change their hearts and, consequently, their lives (Mark 1:5). This is a moment of mainstream conversion, of widespread openness to truly hear the cries of one shouting out, to leave what they had known behind to follow a new path. This, Mark tells us, is when Jesus’ ministry begins—with a community earnest and eager for change.

Mark tells us nothing about Jesus’ life prior to this moment, omitting any details of his miraculous birth or the years of his youth. Instead, Mark notes that Jesus comes from Nazareth of Galilee (over 100 km north of Jerusalem) to join John the Baptist’s movement. We might expect the long-awaited Messiah to greet his new followers like the kings before him have—with a pompous coronation, with hunger to exert power and control over his populus. Instead, Jesus steps in line along the river’s edge, blending in with the crowds, joining in solidarity with those around him. Jesus doesn’t demand any attention, but as soon as the water washes over him, creation is summoned to celebrate. I imagine him wading into the waters and leaning back to receive the blessing that falls upon him like rain: *You are my beloved. I delight in you.*

In this moment, God-in-flesh joins alongside those he will heal, beckon, teach, challenge, and comfort. Simultaneously, God-in-Spirit meets Christ at the water’s edge, at the threshold of his ministry. Before Jesus faces the pain, betrayal, and challenges of what will come, before he does anything to prove himself, God grants him unconditional belovedness as his essence. From this, all his subsequent teachings and actions flow.

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, GOD MEETS US



In Our Hands

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Genesis 9:8-17

Hand-carved block printed with oil-based ink on paper

In the beginning God filled the formless void with color, texture, light, flavor, time, and life. God scooped the clay and carefully molded it, breathing life into the nostrils of humanity. These are the images of a tender, imaginative God who loves Creation limitlessly.

Following the Creation narrative, humanity quickly spirals into violence, corruption, and power-hunger toward the total destruction of Creation. God becomes deeply aggrieved and even regrets

creating humanity (Gen 6:6). God decides it best to return all of Creation to the chaotic void, though God finds hope in Noah's family. I've struggled with this narrative, but I find myself feeling a tremendous amount of compassion. I can only imagine how painful it is to watch the work of your hands devolve into brutality.

God offers Noah, his descendants, and every living creature an all-encompassing promise, vowing never to flood the earth again. Despite humanity's destructive role, God limits God's self and alone is held accountable in this covenant. God requires nothing of humanity or the entirety of Creation in return. God gives humanity a chance to start fresh, and the opportunity to choose a different path. If we model our actions after God's, then we would humble and limit ourselves in order to better love God and care for Creation. Sacrifice and selflessness pave the new way.

In this image, God's hands hold various animals and plant life, and are surrounded by the bands of the rainbow, shielding Creation from the swirling waters of chaotic destruction. I chose not to image humanity because the hands are at once God's and ours. We must respond to God's covenant by protecting and keeping the earth. It is our responsibility; it is our calling. God meets us where we are—utterly dependent and bound toward self-destruction—with a promise sealed with a bow bursting with the endless spectrum of colors light holds.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE CALLED TO LISTEN



Transfiguration

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Mark 8:31-9:8

Hand-carved block printed with oil-based ink on paper

I'm not a good listener. In the midst of our national reckoning around structural racism and white supremacy in the U.S., I've found that I've done a terrible job listening to my Black and Brown siblings. I constantly have to resist the urge to explain myself, to be seen as good and antiracist. I try saying all the right things, I do performative acts of allyship, and quite honestly, I need to be quiet and listen. I need to be ready to accept criticism, and instead of trying to prove anything, I need to gain awareness of my internalized biases and learned racist tendencies and do the difficult work of unlearning them in every moment. "Get behind me, Satan" (Mark 8:33).

Here we find Peter stepping in and saying all the right things, rejecting the notion that Christ must suffer and die; but in the end, he's not listening to Jesus. It seems Peter's rejection of this

narrative reflects his fear of the suffering he also might face in following Christ. "Let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

Six days later, the disciples are called to listen once again. In this image, I zoomed out to focus on the moment of Transfiguration. Jesus shines like a beacon atop the high mountain while former prophets appear. The disciples are terrified, but also want to live this moment forever, making the glory-filled rock face their home. At once a cloud descends, obscuring things further, and God's voice echoes down, "This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to him!" (Mark 9:7). It's almost as though Jesus had exhausted all efforts to get the disciples to listen, and God had to spectacularly reiterate the importance of listening. I think it's important to note that following God's words, all the disciples could see was Jesus.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE CALLED TO LISTEN



Sleep Unborn

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Psalm 22:23-31 | *Paper lace*

*“To God, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.”*
(Psalm 22:29)

As I contemplate the idea of people beneath the earth and people in the womb, I feel a sense of beautiful protection. In particular, I feel a deep connection to our minuteness in contrast to the greatness of God. Each time I meet this text, I find myself taken by the repetitious time spent in joyous and abundant praise of God. God, we love you. God, we are amazed by you. God, you are everywhere, you are everything. God, we praise you!

In this piece, I depict a sense of covering—covering in the womb, “people yet unborn” (v. 28); covering in the soil, “sleep in the earth” (v. 31). A spiral radiates outward representing praise. The pattern depicts people in various poses of prayer and praise.

As I cut tiny stencils of prayer poses, I abstracted them to depict the shrouded minuteness of our being in God’s presence. As we became a beautiful and intricate pattern of prayer and praise, I began to see other images in the patterns—masks, faces, flowers—as though all states of being are present in that constancy of appreciation for God.

—Hannah Garrity

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE SHOWN THE WAY



Overturn

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 2:13-22 | *Digital Painting with collage*

In 1965, my grandfather moved his family of six to Birmingham, AL, to become the new senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church. Situated downtown, First Pres sits only a few blocks away from 16th Street Baptist Church, the site of the 1963 bombing attack by white supremacists who killed four young girls. Earlier that same year, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed eight prominent white clergy in his now famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” My grandfather’s predecessor was one of those clergy. They prompted King’s famous letter by requesting he appeal to law and order. In essence they said to him: “*We agree with your movement, but your methods are too harsh. The demonstrations are destructive and causing too much*

backlash. You’re bringing agitators into our city. Wait for a better time and negotiate gently.”

This is the context in which my grandfather began his ministry with First Pres. While he helped the church change their policy to become open to worshipers of all races (a process that undoubtedly required much moral fortitude), I wonder how often he, too, felt the urge of his predecessor and the other white clergy who had written to Dr. King. I wonder how often he preferred for justice to happen slowly, gently, and in an orderly manner. I think often about how that urge lives in me too.

In this image, I wanted to freeze-frame the destruction Jesus ignites, forcing us as viewers to focus on the process of dismantling and destroying an oppressive system. For those who willingly or unwillingly benefit from systems of oppression, it may feel threatening and terrifying to see them all come tumbling down. But for those held within the unrelenting grip of injustice, it must be completely and utterly liberating.

Again and again, Jesus shows us that his movement is about overturning systems of oppression to bring forth God’s beloved community on earth. Again and again, liberation movements throughout history pursue this same goal. Will we join Jesus in the overturning, or like the disciples, question his methods?

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE SHOWN THE WAY



The Cross Remains

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 | *Digital drawing*

Confession: I have a problem with the image of the cross. Early Christians expressed their identity subversively with a fish or an anchor, but once Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the cross emerged as the predominant Christian symbol. My struggle with the cross is connected to my rejection of state-sanctioned violence. It is after all an empirical torture device. In my desire to reject the empire's visual identification of the movement of Jesus, a symbol that has also been co-opted for questionable purposes in American culture, I have denied the cross

as a marker of my identity with Christ.

As I have spent more time in reflection, however, I think this rejection could be an indication of my privilege. It is convenient for me to identify with more comfortable, rosy images of Christianity while turning away from the anguish Christ suffered at the hands of earthly power. It's easier for me to protest the cross than it is to try and more fully understand the ugliness of the oppression he endured. For those who know injustice intimately, the cross can be an image of profound identification with Jesus, the one who endured unspeakable agony and rose again.

On the wall next to my front door hangs a resurrection cross created by a Mexican artisan. I love it so much because you almost can't see the cross for the flowers. It serves as a reminder to me that death does not have the final word. I drew this image as I attempted to obscure the cross with blooming irises, a flower that represents wisdom and strength. Ultimately, in the negative space, the cross remains.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, GOD LOVES FIRST



Light Wave

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 3:14-21 | *Acrylic painting with gold leaf on canvas*

My first memory of this passage is from writing “John 3:16” on my basketball shoes when I was in seventh grade, joining many of my teammates in blending our sport with our faith. I don’t remember knowing what the verse really meant, but my display of it was to make a statement about who I was—or at least who I desperately wanted to be. Like the branded clothes I wore, or the way I styled my hair, this was just another way to curate my middle school self-image. I wanted to show that I was good, that I fit in, that I believed in God. Later that basketball season, I added another Sharpie pen tattoo to my basketball shoes: my mother’s initials and the dates of her birth and death, marking the 44 years she lived. After her funeral, my teammates added her initials and the dates of her life to their sneakers in solidarity.

Now I know that Jesus originally spoke these famous words to Nicodemus, perhaps whispering them amidst the hushed noises of the night. I wonder why Nicodemus came to Jesus in the first place? Had Jesus’ teachings uprooted his religious self-image, one carefully curated to project propriety and adherence to the law? Or had death recently left a sharp sting, unraveling his tidy beliefs, creating in him a well of desperate questions about eternal life?

Jesus speaks to him with poetry of promise: God didn’t send his son to judge the world, but so the world might be restored through him. For God so loved. For God so loves, that like light, God keeps traveling to reach us with that redeeming love. In this abstract painting, the gold leaf marks become like a wave gliding through the cosmos, moving endlessly until it reaches everything.

As I think back to those Sharpie pen inscriptions on my basketball shoes, perhaps “For God so loved... so that everyone... will have eternal life” was the perfect companion to my mom’s initials.

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, GOD LOVES FIRST



Prevenient

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Ephesians 2:1-10 | Paper lace

In our group study of the lectionary scriptures for Lent, Lisle was quick to tell me that this text matters a lot to Reformed theologians. I needed that theological and historical context. My first reading had brought nothing deep or important. I had completely missed what our Reformed thinkers had contemplated for centuries. Here are my notes from our conversation:

“This Ephesians text is really important to Reformed theologians. The idea in Paul’s words is all about God’s grace, not works. Prevenient grace—we are given grace and we live our lives in response to that grace. This makes me think of the Paul Simon lines,

*‘And as I watch the drops of rain
Weave their weary paths and die
I know that I am like the rain
There but for the grace of you go I.’*

I imagine a flow of water; it speaks of baptism. The ripple represents the expansive effect of God’s prevenient grace.”¹

Repetition in art is important. When I first created this piece, it appeared to me to be three different images. The sky, the distant water, and the ripple in the foreground. As I stared at the three patterns, I desired unification. Perhaps I’d repeat the ripple in the sky, or maybe add thin lines in the foreground to tie it in. But maybe, metaphorically, this separation can represent the idea of prevenient grace. The sky and the distance appear separated from the present. God’s grace—represented in the water ripple in the foreground—will eventually connect us to it all.

—Hannah Garrity

¹ This is the last stanza of “Kathy’s Song” by Simon and Garfunkel. © 1965 words and music by Paul Simon.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE REFORMED



Drawn to Love

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by John 12:20-33 | *Paper lace*

I love borders. I place them in my artwork so that I can break them. They set up a reiteration of balance; they allow for a secondary or tertiary focal point. They introduce a conversation. In this image, the border allows for variation in the foreground and separation in the sky. The wheat breaks through the border. The horizon continues past the border. What are the metaphors within this imagery?

People are drawn to Jesus, drawn to love. I portray God's voice with cumulonimbus clouds, the clouds of thunderstorms. As they move upward toward the heavens, they become wheat and doves. The image incorporates a border representing the loving constraints that Jesus' ministry places on our lives and choices. What would

Jesus do? Jesus would love.

The wheat grows beyond the border of life; the wheat brings forth a standard of daring love. "Those who love their life lose it" (John 12:25). The wheat breaks the border, it dances with the voice of God, it is not cautious, it is not scarce. It is love.

—Hannah Garrity

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE REFORMED



Written on Our Hearts

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Jeremiah 31:31-34 | *Digital drawing*

The events of 2020 have made me keenly aware of the brokenness of humanity. We can't seem to see past ourselves, neglecting our neighbor and undoing creation. We repeat past patterns, and the low moments of history keep echoing again and again. We point fingers, shrug responsibility, and we turn our back on God, widening the chasm between this world and the coming Kingdom. God's frustration and disappointment are palpable in this text: "a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband" (v.32). I think it's important to sit with that for a bit. God has gifted us everything—our lives, this wonderful world—and we can be so forgetful and ungrateful.

Despite humanity's constant breaking of covenants, God continues to seek reconciliation and pours out grace upon grace. Why not let this grace transform us? It is in receiving God's grace, responding in gratitude, and offering grace to others that God forms us into who we were made to be. God saves us from ourselves, writing the way on our hearts, and gives us unlimited chances to get it right. It's clear we can't keep the covenant on our own, so God steps in, offering and fulfilling the covenant at once. What a gift!

In this image, I drew an anatomical heart with the words, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The heart is surrounded by covenantal imagery—including the stars imaging the vastness of Abraham's descendants, the parted seas on the journey to the land flowing with milk and honey, and the rainbow signaling God's promise to all of creation. It creates a beautiful kaleidoscope of stories that define our pilgrimage with God. The common thread throughout these narratives is that when we mess up, God is ready with a promise, again and again.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

PALM / PASSION SUNDAY

AGAIN & AGAIN, WE DRAW ON COURAGE



Through the Palms

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by John 12:1-19 | *Hand-carved block printed with oil-based ink on paper*

Jesus lies down on the donkey's back, steeling himself before his journey through the palms. He has a target on his back—he's a disruption to the status quo upheld by the Pharisees and Chief Priests, and a threat to the power of the empire. His friend Lazarus is caught up in it all too. I imagine as he closes his eyes and strokes the donkey's hair, he hears the anguish in Mary and Martha's voices as they cried out to him, wondering why he took so long. I imagine he smells the pungent fragrance of the burial perfume poured on his feet, bringing into clarity the reality of his impending death. I imagine he sees the judgment on Judas' face as he was scrutinized for wasting perfume and neglecting those in desperate need.

Jesus plans to enter the city in a way that symbolically subverts power, taking a route opposite of the military leaders who oversee the festival celebrations. His entry would make a definitive statement, imaging an alternative kind of power, a servant leader riding an humble donkey. He knew this act would inch him closer to state-sanctioned torture and death.

We are in a time when we need to draw on courage to call into question the structures that uphold systems of oppression. We are in a time when we need to subvert the powerful and protect the vulnerable. The crowds close in on Jesus. Some lift their hands in praise, others point accusingly. I hope this image serves as a reminder to call upon God for the courage you need, to rest and recharge for the work ahead. But I hope it also heartens you to move forward in courage, even in the midst of great resistance, toward the work God is calling you into.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

MAUNDY THURSDAY
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE HELD TOGETHER



You, Too, Must

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 13:1-17, 31b-35 | Digital painting with collage

“You will never wash my feet.’

‘If I don’t wash your feet, what share will you have with me?’”

(John 13:8)

The first time my dad took me to visit her in the hospital, I walked in to find a slouched figure sunken below a bundle of blankets. Short brown hairs collected in clumps along her shoulders and pillowcase. A cotton beanie grasped the edges of her yellowing, swollen face. I averted my eyes at the sight, tricked by cancer’s devouring disguise. Pale walls drained the room of energy; even the blue curtains in the window drooped lethargically against the wall. As we came close, my

mother’s shrunken torso grew, her familiar, honey-rich voice filled like liquid in my ears.

“Take off your shoes. Let me rub your feet.”

I paused. Death pressed in on us like an unrelenting fog. I was scared, unsure of how to play daughter to a mother whose life was slowly slipping away.

“Let me rub your feet.”

Reluctantly, I climbed up onto the hospital bed. Reaching through the blanketed layers, she removed my shoes, the sweat from my middle school basketball practice still lingering on my skin. Without hesitation, she peeled off my socks and gently massaged away the anxieties building within the room.

In the face of the cancer that would soon take her, my mother was determined to hold us close. In the fading and fullness of life, she savored moments of service to others. Her gentleness continues to startle and soothe me.

“You, too, must wash each other’s feet.”

(John 13:14)

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

GOOD FRIDAY

AGAIN & AGAIN, WE FIND OURSELVES HERE



Status Quo

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by John 19:1-30 | *Paper lace*

Pitiful, sad, scary. The continuous repetition of history is so poignant with our yearly reading of this text. As I drew and cut the layers of this work, I contemplated the ways in which I play the role of Pontius Pilate or the crowd in my daily life. Where do I perpetuate hate? Where do I forward injustice? Where do I join the voice of the wayward crowd?

Pontius Pilate depicts the weakness of the status quo. Structures—what holds them up? What makes them fall? Windows are the lenses through which we see the world. In this image, we look through the window of my favorite architectural style, Arts and Crafts, to the cathedral window style. I portrayed layers

of architecture and symbol. The cross is a contentious symbol. I repeat it again and again. The cross is the instrument that murders God incarnate. The crown of thorns shames Jesus. I have placed the Alpha and Omega within the crown of thorns on the cross, reminding us that the crowd put God to death and shamed God. The cross I drew was modeled after Celtic crosses made of nails.

Again and again, we meet Pontius Pilate, knowing Jesus to be innocent, refusing to protect him from the hate of the masses, refusing to do the right thing. As I look around me now, I see the same things happening in our daily lives, in the life of our nation, in the life of the world. How can I pivot those places in my life where I resemble the crowd and crucify the righteous, or where I resemble Pontius Pilate and perpetuate the injustice of the status quo?

—Hannah Garrity

EASTER SUNDAY
AGAIN & AGAIN, THE SUN RISES



The Promise

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Mark 16:1-8 | Acrylic & gold leaf on canvas

Just after sunrise, they come to the tomb. They come to do what far too many cannot do in the wake of COVID's rage—to touch and anoint the body of their loved one, to provide a proper burial, to honor the life lost with a memorial. However, the women at the empty tomb are left with what many who are grieving today are experiencing—dread and terror. Mark's gospel originally ends this way (we believe verses 9-19 were added later). Not with Mary running to tell the disciples, not with exuberance and joy, but with fear and silence. The women are numb.

How could it be this way? Who stole the body? Did we come to the wrong tomb? Jesus is going where? Galilee? How?

The young robed man's words probably feel like a mirage induced by their grief or lack of sleep—or both.

In this painting, I imagine what the women see in the moment before they turn to flee from the tomb. Instead of the dry, cracked desert, I imagine instead that they see the story of creation happening again before them. As the horizon breaks open, I imagine light and wind sweeping over a deep sea, giving shape to what was once a formless void. I imagine the heavens blooming like an iris, giving birth to glimmers of radiance. I imagine darkness that still lingers—for in these shadows, there is sacredness too. I imagine the winding path they followed to get to the tomb, previously lit only by starlight, now illuminated with promise.

They may be overridden with fear and trembling, but their story does not end here. There is a way forward. In this liminal space, once again, God proclaims that their fear—this new, uncertain way—is still held within the promise of resurrection. For this, I believe, is the promise of this life: that the story of creation happens again and again.

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity