



READINGS FOR LENTEN COMMUNITY GROUPS

Week 1 (02.22): Litanies #2 and #9

Week 2 (03.01): Litanies #25 and #13

Week 3 (03.08): Litanies #17 and #6

Week 4 (03. 15): Litanies #15 and #11

Week 5 (03.22): Litanies #49 and #53

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RALLY

Communal Prayers
for Lovers of
Jesus and Justice

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FRESH AIR BOOKS®
Nashville

Sound the Alarm: A Call to Draw Near During Troubling Times



Britney Winn Lee

In the evenings, when my feet are sore from the day's work and the clothes from Sunday's unfinished chores are souring in the washing machine, I turn off the dreadful news so that I might stir the mac and cheese, chase my son's dump truck, and avoid the worries of the world. Folks are tired, of this I'm certain.

As my son and I gallop down our hall, I think about my Twitter feed and the weight that I've absorbed just from reading short commentaries on current events and the festering wounds of US history. *I've got to stop following so many melancholic activists*, I think to myself, just seconds before remembering that they're the ones who are teaching me how not to look away. It's so important not to look away right now.

But people are weary and nervous. Folks are tired of riding the yo-yos of policy scares and rumors of war, tired of explaining why they matter, tired of loose lips and hateful tones and violent threats, tired of divisions and extremes. They're tired of watching humans be treated as less than human, tired of wondering if the church is going to make it, if our country's going to make it. Tired of trying to figure out what power and purpose and time they actually have to do anything. Tired of bad news. Desperate for good.

In response to this exhaustion, I wrote a litany for the fighters of the good fight who feel constantly bombarded with the waves of a suffering world. It is for anyone who may need the jolt of a communal reminder that we're not yet done here—that God's not yet done here. I wrote it for the foolishly hopeful, the irrationally resolved, those who woke up today—despite it all—ready to look for the overlooked and love them with all they've got. Those who, as Dorothy Day described, embraced the merciful morning with a willingness to cast their pebble into the pond. So “let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as [we] see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:24-25).

ONE: Calling all those partaking in a resurrected life,
Who have known a death that did not kill them.

**ALL: Come those with very little left to lose
And those holding most things loosely but love.
We need you.**

ONE: Come all who are almost indifferent and undone,
Who are wielding disappointment as vigor.

**ALL: Come those who fell asleep in the soul's dark night
But have awakened with a heart full of hope.
We need you.**

ONE: Come with your words—old, eaten, and new.
Come, though uncertain about where it's all headed.

**ALL: Come with your aching need to be heard
And you who are new to the listening.
We need you.**

ONE: Come resolved to creatively find third ways.
Come committed to not rushing out of tension.

**ALL: Come with eyes unwilling to overlook injustice
And a heart unwilling to forgo celebration.
We need you.**

ONE: Come ragamuffin, radical, rebel, repressed.
Come you who were wrong and willing to say it.

**ALL: Come refusing to deny the stories of your people.
Come with the assurance of God's grace as your guide.
We need you.**

ONE: Come marchers, intercessors, artists, and prophets.
Come newcomers and those who have tried, tried again.

**ALL: Get close, get close, get closer now.
Draw near, ask questions, sing songs, take steps.
We need you together.**

ONE: And together, we'll be patient and mercifully kind—
Not envying, boasting, prideful, or rude.

**ALL: Not selfish, short-fused, score-keeping, or spiteful
But rejoicing in the goodness of what's to be shared.
We need you. We need you together.**

ONE: Because together the movement keeps going.
Sound the alarm because love cannot fail.

**ALL: Come resisters, revolutionaries, the meek who inherit the earth.
There will indeed be a story to tell.**

ONE: And it is this: When the Light was threatened
All God's people said, "Let's go."

ALL: Let's go.

One Small Step: A Litany for Not Knowing Where to Start Regarding Issues of Justice



Andrew Wilkes

God is able to do exceedingly and abundantly more than we can ask for, think about, or imagine. When we recognize injustice, what we can ask for, think about, or imagine may seem like an insufficient response to the injuries affecting us. Feeling unequal to the task, we may avoid doing anything. Our individual responses—or even our institutional ones—in fact may be insufficient. Those possibilities notwithstanding, there is another, deeper truth: God uses seemingly insufficient things to effect justice, to bring about freedom.

We remember the slingshot defeating the giant, widows wearing down unjust judges, exiled people rebuilding broken walls, as we ask, “Faithful God, transcend our imaginations, interweave our labor with other communities, and cause the work of our hands, be they few or many, to accelerate the end of patriarchy, racialized capitalism, and inhumane religion.”

In the name of Jesus our Liberator and life-renewing Savior, may we who yearn to interrupt injustice start where we are, use what we have, do what we can. If we begin the work, God will undergird it, ushering us and all of creation toward becoming the Beloved Community.

ONE: We affirm that liberation is the divine intent for all human beings, everywhere, in every age, especially for those who are oppressed, minoritized, and exploited.

ALL: Christ, set us free to experience freedom, justice, and peace.

ONE: We commit to upending injustice, working alongside those who are directly impacted.

ALL: Generous God, supply us with the courage to realize liberation by interrupting injustice.

ONE: We seek justice with discernment, rejecting the false ideal of having to know everything before starting anything.

ALL: All-wise God, help us distinguish between essential facts and non-essential perspectives so that we can take informed action for justice.

ONE: One small step to undo oppression is greater than an ambitious, undone deed.

ALL: Give us the strength to begin the work and the stamina to complete it.

ONE: Where do we begin to fight for liberation and justice?

ALL: Everywhere—in our homes and hearts, our schools and streets, our workplaces and public spaces, our churches and communities.

ONE: “For the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds.”*

ALL: As disciples of Christ, we undertake the Spirit-filled work of pulling down the strongholds of institutional sin: structural racism, gender-based violence, and economic injustice.

ONE: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”**

ALL: In church and society, we pledge to dismantle hierarchies based on gender, disparities determined by race, and oppression in all its forms.

ONE: With Spirit-led determination and righteous resolve to be living liturgies, we affirm these words together:

ALL: We will not rest until all are free, all are whole, and all are home.

*2 Corinthians 10:4

**Galatians 3:28

Falling in Love with Bodies: A Spiritual Practice



Stephanie Vos

No one believes me when I say I like my body. To deeply enjoy embodied experiences is a radical act—one modeled by a God who chose incarnation. That we have a God who lived inside a woman's body, washed the feet of his disciples, sat down to meals with strangers, and asked that the sick and suffering be brought to him only affirms bodies as a source of divine inspiration and wisdom. Yet so often our bodies are shamed and blamed, dismissed and ignored. While this litany isn't in response to an acute crisis—there may not be a Sunday morning when the dire news of the week demands these words—we cannot overlook the larger need for lament of disembodiment.

I write this as a Lutheran pastor, chiropractor, somatic therapist, dancer, anatomy teacher, and energy healer. All of my most divine experiences have happened in and through my own body. I have never been so connected to others as when we are sharing moments that began with bodies—maybe theirs was in a hospital bed and I was the chaplain, maybe we were dancing in the late afternoon sunlight, maybe I was being splashed by Lake Superior as I was meditating on her rocky shores. Most importantly, I write this as a woman who deeply loves her body—and as a woman for whom that wasn't always true. My appreciation and affection for my own body has been a revelation and a journey, one that I hope is nowhere near finished.

My invitation to you, as you bring this litany to life, is that you embody it fully. Don't rush the inhale and exhale; make it a real breath. Also, if possible, have the words on a screen and invite participants to be in contact with one another—holding hands or elbows touching. You can also include other preliminary instructions like inviting community members to stand as they are able and to rock slowly forward and backward on their feet, side to side, finding the edges of where their weight can land and then consciously finding that centered place where the weight falls evenly in every direction at once.

Alternatively, if it feels like too much to ask community members to be in contact with one another, invite individuals to rub their hands together, use their palms to squeeze their arms, move their legs back and forth—anything to

bring attention, awareness, and affection to the body. This could be led by multiple individuals scattered around the space or by one voice. The most important quality in the leader is their ability to set the tone and hold the space—the availability to truly be present in their own body in the moment. If the leader is going through the motions, the community will follow.

ONE: When we abandon our bodies to be absorbed in our screens,

ALL: We return by our breath. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When our bodies are overwhelmed with fear and anxiety,

ALL: We take care with our breath. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When our bodies fail and disappoint,

ALL: We stay close to our breath. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When our bodies cause harm and suffering to others,

ALL: We come back to our center with our soft breath. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When our bodies are harmed and violated,

ALL: We take refuge in the calm of the breath. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When we judge others and are judged by the appearance of our bodies,

When we use bodies to justify “othering” our fellow beings,

ALL: We remember that we share the same breath. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When we are consumed by thoughts of how we’d like to change our bodies,

ALL: We marvel at the steady perfection of the breath. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When we inhabit bodies of trauma and histories of abuse,

ALL: We breathe for those who have endured before us. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When bodies are dismissed and degraded as unspiritual,

ALL: We celebrate the incarnate God whose lungs were filled with breath. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When bodies are demonized for their hungers and longings,

ALL: We celebrate our capacity to delight and share breath. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When sex and intimacy are only ever painted with shame,

ALL: We rebel and enjoy the closeness of breath. (*inhale, exhale*)

ONE: When bodies feel like burdens,

ALL: We remember the incredible joys that come to us through bodies.

ONE: When bodies feel broken,

ALL: We remember that we always have something to bless the world with.

ONE: When bodies feel irrelevant,

ALL: We remember that our bodies are how we care for and relate to one another.

ONE: We value and celebrate bodies because God does—God who made bodies and said that they were good. Jesus inhabited a body; he knows what it's like to swim in the sea, to smell freshly baked bread, to hug someone he loves dearly. The Spirit is our breath moving in, through, and between us. It gives us life, moment to moment, freely and abundantly. Because of our faith, we proclaim the brilliance and beauty of bodies as spiritual teachers and ask God's help in remembering and reclaiming their wisdom and joy.

ALL: May our bodies be a blessing to us. May we use our bodies generously to bless the world.

ONE: Our breath brings us back to ourselves; our breath unites us with all beings. Through this embodied breath, this animating spirit, may we live and move and have our being.

ALL: (*inhale, exhale*) Amen.

Ears to Hear: A Litany for Listening One to the Other



Dee Dee Risher

I am a person of strong conviction and intense moral righteousness. I have a lot of ideas about how I think a “true Christian” should live in this world, and none of them is fainthearted. I don’t think Christians should make much money, so they can ally with the marginalized. I believe we must live very simply to care for the earth—leave fossil fuels behind, grow our food, try not to produce trash. I don’t think we should perpetuate war, and I feel racism and the love of money are major demons in this world. By now you get what I mean. Maybe you don’t want to meet me at a party.

God’s little joke is that many of the beautiful Christians I love deeply don’t share any of these convictions. They may never talk about economic disparity or race, but they do care about cultural attitudes toward sexuality and reproduction, whether people are giving the Bible enough authority, or about people who are not Christian. They have a rosier picture of the legacy of my country, the United States, than I do. Never have we united around a political platform.

Then there are the people I struggle to love because they have done harmful or brutal things. And there are the people with whom I go ‘round and ‘round, never sure *how* they can think the way they do! (They return the favor.)

This litany is a prayer for divided times. It begins in silence and listening. It reminds us of all we do not know and what we must learn from one another.

(Prepare the group to begin in silence.)

ONE: Listen.

Hear your own breathing, the rustle of a neighbor’s movement.

Listen to what is going on in this particular place at this moment.

Let every sound around you touch your ears.

(Pause)

Empty yourself.

The ancient teacher in the desert asked the disciple who was certain of herself,

“Do you want a drink?”

Then poured into a full glass of water more water,

Until it spilled everywhere and the disciple protested.

“Like the glass, you are full of your own opinions, ideas, truths.

You cannot learn to make peace until you empty your glass.”

Empty yourself.

(Pause)

Job had many comforters, but when Yahweh came,

They were shadowed by mystery.

ALL: “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?”*

ONE: O moving Spirit, displace us from our convictions

ALL: Into prayer.

ONE: Move us from our certainty

ALL: Into all we do not know.

ONE: Change us from warriors of righteousness

ALL: To people who know brokenness in ourselves and others.

ONE: Crack open our certain hearts,

ALL: Until we can whisper in the hollow spaces, “We may not be right.”

ONE: If we could read the secret history of our “enemies,” we should find
in each life

ALL: Sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

ONE: Love your neighbor as yourself.

ALL: This is the difficult Word of God.

ONE: Pray for your enemies and those who persecute you.

ALL: This is the demanding Word of God.

ONE: Do justice. Love mercy. Walk in humility.

ALL: This is the lifelong work of the Word of God.

ONE: May we see within our enemies and persecutors

ALL: Something precious that we ourselves need.

ONE: We commit today

ALL: To listen for what is under hate.

**To sense the pain under aggression.
To look for the wounds our certainty causes.
To find the truth our opponents holds for us.**

ONE: Like a treasure. Like vision.

**ALL: Like the gateway from the land of the dead to the land of the living.
Amen.**

*Job 38:4

Hope: A Litany Claiming That Another World Is Possible and On Its Way



Zhailon Levingston

I create new worlds every day. Specifically, I work in theatre, telling stories for the stage. My job is to look into the void of an empty stage and create stories of humanity that can be reflected back to the audiences for whom I created. It's my responsibility to turn the elusive into the material. I want people to walk out of the theatre saying they have had a real encounter with joy, love, despair, tragedy, triumph, and hope.

Hope, quite possibly the most elusive of these things, challenges me to turn its seemingly faraway song into an experience into which people from all walks of life can enter. How do I wrestle hope down from its hiding place, put meat on its bones, and offer it as a viable option to a room full of strangers? That's the magic of storytelling and world-building. In the four walls of my theatre, I tell stories of the least of us, centering their experiences and showing how people under the boot of oppression can overcome, all while maintaining a sense of integrity, humanity, and joy.

Hope filters into the equation when someone sitting in the audience sees themselves represented on stage for the first time or when someone in the crowd who doesn't think they will identify with my characters gets rocked by the multitude of ways they connect to the narrative being told. Hope reminds both the actors and audience that they are not alone. We all are connected by universal human need and struggle. But with great hope can come great doubt. Does the work I'm doing really mean anything? Because my Twitter feed and my news notifications keep reminding me that history doesn't tell a linear story, I often wonder why we still haven't learned the lessons of our past. Is this a vicious cycle through which we must keep going?

For every moment I feel myself slipping into the deep waters of fear and hopelessness, of depression and anxiety, my community reminds me that I am not alone. And if I just refocus my light in the direction of the people, places, and things that aren't given the same platform as my fears, I will see people choosing life in spite of death, creating things anew, and making the

hope I seek as real as the air I breathe. I concede to my friends' reminders and pray to reconnect with the folks who are finding hope by building new worlds right here, right now—preparing the way for a better tomorrow and calling down heaven today.

“You can create something from this,” says Truth. “You can create worlds with people where you offer grace to your demons and dance with your brokenness with hope at the center of it all.” And this is possible for everyone, as we are all creative beings. Therefore, if we have the will to organize ourselves around stories that bring people together in their complicated and beautiful splendor, through creativity and imagination, new worlds can exist not only in the theatre but also in our homes and workplaces.

What stories are you telling? Who are you inviting to experience them? Where is your theatre? We all can harness the power of the artist to world-build because that power is the very nature of what it means to be human and what it means to be made in the image of God. We are made in the likeness of an eternal creative force that breathes new life into forgotten spaces in order to make another world right here within this one.

ONE: We are made in the likeness of Eternal Creativity.

ALL: Another world is possible and on its way.

ONE: Its insistence moves us into being and imagines for us worlds beyond our hopelessness.

ALL: Another world is possible and on its way.

ONE: We are made to collaborate with those around us to build deeper connections and sustainability around new ways of doing life together.

ALL: Another world is possible and on its way.

ONE: We are making space in our world for doubt and uncertainty by calling out fear and isolationism.

ALL: Another world is possible and on its way.

ONE: This is the truth about us. It always has been and always will be.

ALL: A new world is both here and arriving. We wait for it, usher it, greet it as a hopeful people. Amen.

God Who Knocks: A Litany for Making a Home with and for Refugees and Migrants



Tony Huynh

Keeping people we don't know at a distance is easier than getting to know them. We can rationalize that getting to know a stranger may put us at risk and in the way of harm. Those who are strangers can hold untold secrets, hidden dangers, a multitude of evil. There are a whole host of reasons why we refuse to become familiar with a stranger. But could it be that by keeping those we don't know at a distance we actually are forgetting a common bond that we share? By keeping strangers away, we dehumanize them, thereby dehumanizing ourselves. Instead of getting to know people, we obsess over validating our assumptions about the stranger through data, numbers, and statistics. We move away from a culture of persons to a culture of things. Then we build more walls to protect our things, buy more guns to defend our walls, and vote for people who promise to protect our guns. We forfeit our humanity and become enslaved to our possessions when all we care about is keeping our stuff away from others.

Within the United States of America, the immigration system is inefficient. Not only is it inefficient, but it is broken and inhumane. We see people being reduced to statistics and numbers. People are seen as quotas: How many people are let in, and how many people are left out? What is more disheartening is that the church seems to be divided over how it should respond to refugees and immigrants. For those who profess that their faith is built upon the good news of Jesus, there seems to be much disagreement regarding what that good news is and who it is for. For a group of people who claim that their faith is built upon Jesus, we seem to forget that he himself was an immigrant and refugee.

Jesus is the God who knocks because he came into the world as a stranger, inviting us into a relationship so that we would be strangers no more. He knocks on the doors, walls, and structures that we have erected to keep others out. Jesus knocks as one who stands in solidarity with those we

have rejected. Jesus knocks as every visitor bearing the image of God who approaches our front doors and southern borders.

When we look for Jesus, do we look for him in those we consider strangers? God calls us to love our neighbor, meaning there are no strangers. As followers of Christ who have been called and sent, we have an obligation to love those whom we consider *the other*. Jesus stands with those whom we call strangers and invites us into relationship with them so that we can be in relationship with him. This is the beauty of the gospel: It is good news for all because all people who were once strangers have been called family.

As we consider refugees and migrants, do we look with eyes filled with compassion and mercy? Do we not allow fear or self-preservation to hinder our ability to extend hospitality and grace? Jesus repeatedly extends his hand toward those who keep others away and calls them to join him as he stands with and beside the other. Today, Jesus is with those we keep out. Whether it be in our homes, schools, places of work, or nation, Jesus is with the outsider. Therefore, Jesus is with the refugee and the migrant. May we join him and stand by his side as he stands by theirs.

ONE: God of the caravans,

ALL: We pray for our siblings' protection.

Provide for them as you once did for your children in the desert.

ONE: God of the sojourners,

ALL: We ask that you give them shelter.

Protect them as they are vulnerable.

ONE: God of the travelers,

ALL: We ask that you guide them on their journey.

Make clear their paths and direct their feet.

ONE: God of the exiled,

ALL: We ask that you cover them with your wings.

Let them know they are not alone.

ONE: God of the immigrants,

ALL: We ask that you bless them and give them your peace.

Grant them passage, opening doors and borders for their entry.

ONE: God of the asylum seekers,

**ALL: We ask for deliverance from danger and violence.
Grant them liberation from war and poverty.**

ONE: God of the refugees,

**ALL: We ask for your mercy.
Remind us that you were once a refugee.**

ONE: God of the weary travelers,

**ALL: We ask for forgiveness.
Remind us to open our homes and our hearts.**

ONE: God who is their God, God who is my God, God who is our God,

ALL: Teach us to welcome all your children.

ONE: God who has crossed the border between divinity and humanity,

ALL: Teach us to leave behind our comfort.

ONE: God who took on flesh,

ALL: Teach us to love as you have loved us.

ONE: God who became human,

ALL: Teach us to be willing and vulnerable like you.

ONE: God, have mercy on us all.

ALL: Amen.

Gospel Reconstruction: A Lament for Slaveholder Religion and the Ongoing Racism That Infects Us



Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove

In the name of “traditional family values,” many white Christians in America have supported policies that separate families, suppress votes, and prevent poor people from receiving healthcare. Since the 1980s, the “culture wars” have focused much of Christian witness in public life on narrow cultural issues that have distracted from the biblical prophets’ concern for immigrants, poor women and children, and creation.

Many millennials have been unwilling to accept the choice offered to them between progressive politics and orthodox faith. Many younger Christians see this false dichotomy not only as a challenge to their public witness but also as an impediment to their practice of faith itself. When slaveholders in the nineteenth century argued against abolition, they used the Bible to do it. But their lies not only hurt the people who were enslaved but also divided the church in America and distorted the spirituality of those who were taught that the Bible allowed some people to own other people.

I’ve worked with faith communities around the country to both name and unlearn the habits of slaveholder religion that still shape our souls, our faith communities, and our common life. This litany of repentance is an invitation to follow leaders of the faith-rooted freedom movement who have always known that we cannot separate love of God from love of neighbor.

ONE: Jesus, we confess that we have inherited a faith that was used to justify the theft of native lands and the enslavement of Black bodies. From this, our original sin, we ask for deliverance.

ALL: Forgive us for where we have failed to understand, Lord, and in your mercy, set us free.

ONE: Touch hearts that have been shriveled by generations of suppressed empathy and eyes that have lost the ability to see siblings who suffer from systemic injustice.

ALL: Forgive us for where we have failed to understand, Lord, and in your mercy, set us free.

ONE: Grant us courage to renounce the false teaching that we can somehow know you without being committed to justice for all people.

ALL: Forgive us for where we have failed to understand, Lord, and in your mercy, set us free.

ONE: In your mercy, help us mourn the divisions among the body of Christ and work for its healing in the places where we gather to worship you.

ALL: Forgive us for where we have failed to understand, Lord, and in your mercy, set us free.

ONE: Embolden us to resist the political forces that oppose the expansion of democracy by appealing to traditional values and idealizing a past when white men were in charge.

ALL: Forgive us for where we have failed to understand, Lord, and in your mercy, set us free.

ONE: As we name and unlearn the habits of slaveholder religion, give us grace to draw deeply from the witness of the movements that have always resisted injustice in the power of your Spirit.

ALL: Forgive us for where we have failed to understand, Lord, and in your mercy, set us free.

ONE: We give thanks that there is a river of witnesses that flows from Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass to Ida B. Wells and Howard Thurman; from Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. to the prophetic leaders who guide us today. Give us grace to follow them to freedom.

ALL: Forgive us for where we have failed to understand, Lord, and in your mercy, set us free. Amen.

Stewards of Our Home: A Litany for Our Interdependent Relationship with All of Creation



Kaitlin Curtice

I've never been a very good gardener. In all my efforts to have a beautiful, full garden, I often end up with half a crop at best. Some vegetables never see the surface. In other words, I'm still learning. But while gardening requires research and work, it's also a deeply spiritual practice. It requires a gentle spirit, conversations with dirt and seedlings, and a lot of prayer. When my two children sing to our seeds, the ones that are deep in the dirt waiting to be born, they are learning that the Earth listens. She listens and she speaks. She tells stories. She fosters life again and again for us, and we are stewards of that life, lives that belong to the goodness of God.

So when we garden or when we walk on the sidewalk outside our apartment building, we should wonder why there is so much concrete. We should wonder if it is hard for the birds to land when there are no more trees. We should wonder what life is like for all the creatures that we see and cannot see because we can't practice hospitality with one another if we can't practice it with the Earth. It is connected to working toward justice.

We don't own the land that we live on. Even if we've bought the perfect home with the perfect patch of grass, a few acres right outside the city limits, we don't own that land. It's impossible to own the land that sacredly lives and breathes beneath our feet or to own the sky that holds the clouds and sun and moon over us. We build our homes over land that was never meant to be owned, and we forget. We pull out our checkbooks and we pile up our debt because we are consumers. We are entitled. We miss out on the reality that the water and the ground—this Earth that is capable of such rich relationship—want to teach us.

To be a true steward of a truly hospitable home means we must remember that sacredness. It means we remember the indigenous peoples who originally lived on the land we currently inhabit. We must honor their lives because they honored the land. To be “environmentalists” means the church

must join indigenous peoples in caring for this Earth. Because without her, we do not breathe. Without her, we know nothing of God.

When we go out to the garden and plant those seeds, we do eternal work. We join the Earth in sacredness. When we watch leaves fall from trees in autumn, we watch the sacred circle of life do its work. We join in something holy. When we have our friends over for a meal, we practice hospitality, which is exactly what Mother Earth has practiced with us for centuries, no matter how we've treated her. And receiving her hospitality requires that we remind ourselves that we are dust to dust. This isn't a sentiment we should practice only during Lent but all year long, throughout our lives. We should remember that we belong to the Earth because she gives pieces of herself to create us, to shape us, to teach us, to care for us. She is a constant giver, and so we are constantly being given good gifts that nurture life and love.

So we say these words together to do the work of constant remembering that we are simply partners to this good Earth that holds us. She is our best and most humble teacher.

ONE: We long to know the Earth in the intimate ways she's known us. We long to be the kind of people who listen more than we speak. May we always be listening.

ALL: Because we are dust to dust.

ONE: We repent of the ways we have chosen to fill our pockets with money instead of our souls with the goodness of the Earth. May we change our ways. May we honor her.

ALL: Because we are dust to dust.

ONE: We acknowledge the indigenous peoples who have always cared for the land. We acknowledge that we must learn from them, honor their stories, and pay attention to a deeper kind of relationship. May we dig deeper.

ALL: Because we are dust to dust.

ONE: We hope for a future in which we are hospitable because the Earth is hospitable. We long for a future in which our relationship is born out of constant connectedness, so that when we care for one another, we are caring for her. May hospitality be our future.

ALL: Because we are dust to dust and the Earth has always taken care of us. Because we are dust to dust, we will recognize our place in this world. Because we are dust to dust, we will choose, every day, to remember. Amen.

Where Others Have Not Understood: A Litany of Resilience Among the Abuse of Power and Privilege



Iyabo Onipede

My participation in a theology program taught behind prison bars was the gift that helped me understand and reframe the concept of power as it relates to privilege. On the campus of Lee Arrendale State Prison for Women in North Georgia, I saw power in all its various manifestations.

A prison guard, unconsciously feeling resentful that inmates were receiving college-level classes in the theology program and unable to manage his frustration and fear at his dead-end job, decides to restrict an inmate from attending the daylong, once-a-week class in order to feel power in his life as he labored at a \$10.00-an-hour job. *Power over.*

An inmate dares to celebrate her self-expression, knowing the risk of punishment, by using colorful cutouts from glossy magazines and a layer of floor sealant as toenail polish. *Power within.*

The scholars in the theology program decide they want to share a holiday meal with their teachers, Master of Divinity students from area seminaries. The scholars make burritos out of ramen noodles, adding Cheetos as cheese, packaged tuna, hot sauce, and instant rice into the mix, creating something that resembles hamburger meat. A box of saltines appears. The teachers, who cannot share the food of the inmates, also place their food, brought from outside the prison, on the table. Everyone solemnly bows their head for a prayer. Inmate scholars, beside their teachers, break bread together and share the sacrament. The teachers, who thought they were here to share their wealth of knowledge, discover that there is more creativity, joy, and resilience behind prison bars than they had ever imagined. *Shared power.*

Economist Kenneth E. Boulding and other thinkers have identified an infinite form of power known as *power within*. *Power over* is the limited, finite expression of power, and it gets us into trouble because it is used to oppress and exploit others. Often, blinding systemic privilege couples with power.

This toxic mixture harms not only the “other” but also the power-holder. The holder of toxic privilege and power is unable to live in the fruitfulness of *shared power*. Power was designed to be shared. When we choose to share power, we can collaborate and create solutions that benefit everyone. To share power, we must experience the humanity of the other. It heals and creates new life.

ONE: When the invisible “other,” obscured by the blinding mixture of power and privilege, asks

To be seen as whole and human,

To be heard as valuable and precious,

To be received into the full fold of community,

ALL: Lord, hear their prayers.

ONE: As those who find ourselves maintaining daily lives that are distanced from our “other,”

As the ones who live unaware of our advantages and how that affects our movement, presence, and priorities,

As we who were born into the unseeing nature of privilege, set up without our knowledge or permission, for us to benefit from,

ALL: Creator, have mercy upon us.

ONE: Where we have not understood and misappropriated the power that you granted us,

Where we abuse such power when we exert it over others, with physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and systemic violence and force,

Where we wield such power to feed our egos and create our identities around the abuse of power,

We acknowledge the generational and bodily harm to each person involved in the dance of this abuse.

ALL: God, we ask for forgiveness.

ONE: As we enter into the awareness of what abuse of power does to the abuser,

As we acknowledge how we’ve abandoned those over whom we wielded our power,

As we become aware of the neglect and the stinging isolation that we have caused,

ALL: Eternal Repairer of the breach, make us all whole again.

ONE: As we turn inward and discover seeds of power where you planted them, Holy One,
 As we yield to the Holy Spirit watering those seeds, and
 As we discover the mysterious Omnipresent in others as within our own fragile frames,

ALL: Great Mystery, please open the way.

ONE: We recognize that though we may be afraid to trust one another and to move toward shared and mutual respect, we choose to dig deep and have faith.

We yield to the Mystery that is at work.

We each make the choice to share our newfound power within by reaching out to others,

By showing love,

By being empathic,

By listening,

By sharing wealth,

By disclosing opportunities,

By believing the best of one another.

ALL: Waymaker, teach us how to relate to one another the way you intended.

ONE: We embrace the creativity found in shared power.

We delight in the newness that diversity creates.

We receive as holy the truths of others.

We honor the ideas, products, and intellect of us all.

We humbly receive the lived experience of the other as a precious gift.

We enter into the grace of sharing power with one another.

ALL: Triune God, show us how to dance together seamlessly that we may be one.

ONE: We acknowledge that the opposite of love is not hate; it is neglect.

We acknowledge that we are incomplete without your healing.

We acknowledge that we have not understood, and we release false knowledge.

We accept the sacred gift of resilience that is present where there has been abuse and suffering.

ALL: Eternal Peacemaker, we bow in awe before you.

Stir in us compassion for one another.

Counsel us to see one another as wholly human.

Teach us to embrace the preciousness of all creation.

**Create in us empathy as we hear one another's lived experiences.
Plant in us a sustaining wisdom that brings healing and reconciliation.
Seal in us that eternal hope that is rooted in you.
In the Sacred Holiness that created us, redeems us, and sustains us,
We humbly ask that you, Our Great Lover, hear our prayer. Amen.**

As It Is in Heaven: A Protest Litany for When We March, Sing, Make Art, Prepare for Nonviolent Civil Disobedience, and Pray on Behalf of a Backward Kingdom



AnaYelsi Velasco-Sanchez

One of the most beautiful things about returning to scripture and learning to read it through a decolonized (one that has deconstructed the dominating Christianity of colonization) lens is the way in which it reinvigorates the Creator's word. For some of us, these are stories that we have read time and time again and, by virtue of their familiarity, they have lost some of their luster. In my journey to reconcile who I am as a woman of color with who I am as a Christian, I've been afforded the gift of seeing things in a new light. This offers comfort, healing, and liberation. It's through this decolonized lens that I returned to the story of the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 35. As Moses is directing the people of Israel in the building of the tabernacle, we are offered a guide for all movement toward justice.

Let whoever is of a generous heart bring the LORD's offering: gold, silver, and bronze . . . All who are skillful among you shall come and make all that the LORD has commanded . . . And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the LORD's offering to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the sacred vestments. So they came, both men and women; all who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and pendants, all sorts of gold objects, everyone bringing an offering of gold to the LORD. And everyone who possessed blue or purple or crimson yarn or fine linen or goats' hair or tanned rams' skins or fine leather, brought them. Everyone who could make an offering of silver or bronze brought it as the LORD's offering; and everyone who possessed acacia wood of any use in the work, brought it. All the skillful women spun with their hands, and

brought what they had spun in blue and purple and crimson yarns and fine linens. (Exod. 35:5-25)

We are so often inclined to create hierarchy. Even in justice work, we revert back to this need to rank the necessity and value of each person's role. We ask ourselves, *Am I doing enough? risking enough? Are my contributions relegated to the background or found on the front lines?*

Nothing lasting can be built with a few skilled workers. We require the benefactors, the craftspeople, the engravers, the designers, the embroiderers, and the weavers. Our strength is in our capacity to counsel, sharpen, and support one another.

ONE: Our God is an incomparable creator, storyteller, healer, and intercessor. God's artistry can be seen from thunderous skies to sun-kissed skin. Made in God's image, we bear the capacity to reflect all of who God is.

ALL: The Creator has made us to be a people that honor every embodiment of divinity. Let us welcome a spaciousness that allows for each of our gifts. Let us heed one another's guidance.

ONE: We turn to our mourners for a recognition of brokenness, an exposure to the depths of our pain. They remind us of our need for healing, mercy and justice, calling us to *feel* before we act.

ALL: The Creator has made us to be a people who bear one another's wounds. Let us heed the guidance of our mourners.

ONE: We turn to our prophets for a confrontation of reality, a calling back to what was intended. Their words render us convicted. They leave us tender and welcoming to a change of course.

ALL: The Creator has made us to be a people who are open to God's will. Let us heed the guidance of our prophets.

ONE: We turn to our storytellers for a memory of where we have come from and an understanding of where we desire to go. They offer us something in which to be grounded—a people, a history, an ethos, a vision for the not yet realized.

ALL: The Creator has made us to be a people who require relationship and connection. Let us heed the guidance of our storytellers.

ONE: We turn to our intercessors for fortification and revelation. They teach us how to pursue intimacy with the Holy Spirit and go before us when we cannot go ourselves.

ALL: The Creator has made us to be a people who desire empowerment and counsel. Let us heed the guidance of our intercessors.

ONE: We turn to our artists for inspiration and provocation. They employ shape, color, movement, and expression to stir us out of our complacency.

ALL: The Creator has made us to be a people who respond to imagination. Let us heed the guidance of our artists.

ONE: We turn to our front-liners for an example of what it is to dare—dare to step into the streets, dare to speak truth to power, and dare to place our bodies on the line. They lead us into conflict, reminding us that change does not come without risk and sacrifice.

ALL: The Creator has made us to be a people who stand in the gap, persistent in our demands for what is just. Let us heed the guidance of our front-liners.

ONE: We turn to our pillars in the movement for the support and care that sustains us in our mission. They provide a place to rest our heads, resources to fund the work, encouragement for our spirits, and sustenance for our bodies.

ALL: The Creator has made us to be a people who are rich in generosity and hospitality. Let us heed the guidance of our pillars in the movement.

ONE: We turn to our healers for restoration and balance. They allow the Spirit to work through them as a way to pull us back—back from illness and injury, back from grief and pain, back from fear and anger.

ALL: The Creator has made us to be a people who use our bodies, minds, and spirits to mend the bodies of others. Let us heed the guidance of our healers.

ONE: Let us not just pray. Let us not just speak. Let us not just act. Let us remember that we are many parts of a single body moving in a hurting world.

We have been gifted as mourners, prophets, storytellers, intercessors, artists, front-liners, pillars in the movement, and healers so that we may usher creation toward a kin-dom here on earth.

ALL: The Creator has made us to be a people who would rise up with courage and share our gifts for the fulfillment of God's promise. Let us now rise up. Amen.

All Shall Be Well: A Closing Prayer for Making It Through Together



Britney Winn Lee

In just a few short months, our world has experienced detrimental wildfires and devastating floods, political trauma and earthquakes after hurricanes after earthquakes. As I write this, I'm quarantined at home in what we can only assume are the beginning days of a global pandemic, the likes of which the world has not yet seen. Good people have died this year, more will follow. Systems have been turned on their heads, and countless communities have stood at the edges of fresh tragedy wondering where to start, how, and if.

But people have also rallied together for the sake of the most vulnerable around them. They have pooled their money, sewn supplies for first responders, come alongside the poor and elderly, and pressed seeds back into the ash of charred soil. They have written messages of love and hope in vibrant chalk on their sidewalks, figured out ways to sing though separated, and put themselves on the front lines for their neighbors. They have marched, voted, painted, baked, held, danced, planted, and started over and over and over again. Their community has become a version of itself that it didn't know it could be before. There is a lot that a moment of impossible suffering can do, but there is so much more that it cannot touch. This final litany reminds us that hope endures; goodness prevails; people surprise us; and love cannot, has not, will not fail. Keep going.

ONE: Everything can change in a moment.
Disaster can take our certainty,
Our plans for the coming months,
The health we thought would be ours,
And the people that made our lives full.

ALL: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

ONE: Tragedy can shake the firmest foundation
And consume our homes by flood.

Grief can rob our chests of deep breaths
And our minds of every clear thought.

ALL: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

ONE: The darkness can threaten the marginalized,
Who were vulnerable before its coming.

It can bring out the worst in our humanity
And expose the fears that we nurse.

ALL: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

ONE: War, disease, disaster, and violence
Can rewrite a story we loved.

Injustice can leave us beyond exhausted.
“How long, O God!” we cry out.

ALL: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

ONE: But here’s what it cannot do:

It cannot stop the sun from rising
Or grace from being free.

It cannot contain the abundant creativity
That explodes amid limitations.

ALL: Emmanuel, God is with us.

ONE: Loss cannot restrain the helpers
From meeting the needs of neighbors.

Pain will not keep the people from singing
Or the grass from growing again.

ALL: Emmanuel, God is with us.

ONE: Every ounce of chaos couldn’t kill the bravery
We learned was inside of us.

And no new normal can steal the memories
That taught us how to love.

ALL: Emmanuel, God is with us.

ONE: This moment, no matter how dark or how long,
Can’t make us belong to one another less.

And not one single thing in all of creation
Can separate us from God’s love.

ALL: Emmanuel, God is with us.

ONE: All shall be well, love has not failed,
ALL: We'll make it through together.

ONE: All shall be well, love will not fail,
ALL: We'll make it through together.

ONE: All shall be well, love cannot fail,
ALL: We'll make it through together. Amen.