

SURPRISED BY JOY

2023 Advent devotionals written by
LGBT Christians and their friends.



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Introduction to Surprised by Joy: Advent 2023 by Rev. Dr. Marian Edmonds-Allen

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

Surprised by Joy is the fifth in an ongoing devotional series written by LGBTQI+ Christians and their friends from all over the world, from a variety of religious and spiritual traditions, expressions and points of view. Read and download our other devotionals at HolyDialogues.org If you would like to listen to these devotionals, they are available on various social media platforms.

Visit HolyDialogues.org for the ever growing list of platforms.

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

For many people, devotionals are something they have used before, perhaps for years. For others, this is entirely new concept. What our devotional series intends to do is to share the Scripture passages of the day - currently what is known as Year B in the Revised Common Lectionary. Many Christian faiths and denominations use the Revised Common Lectionary to guide their church services, and many individuals use the Revised Common Lectionary to guide their personal Scripture reading. Personal Scripture reading can be accompanied by written commentary - a devotional volume, like this one. Devotional compilations are often written by one person or written with a particular theme or perspective. You may choose to use your own Bible or access an online version. An online version we recommend is Bible Gateway where you can easily choose from different translations (NIV, NRSV, KJV, etc): <https://www.biblegateway.com/> Our theme is love. We believe that all people are made in the image of God, and dearly loved by God. Each and every person has wisdom to share about God and about Scripture. This project seeks to share and amplify voices that often aren't heard together, and each represents the infinite diversity of God.

You may agree - or you may disagree - with what you read here. That, too, is part of the beautiful diversity of God. May you be as blessed as we have been as we have worked together to create this for you!

Scriptures are from the Revised Common Lectionary Year B

Surprised by Joy Editor, Liggera Edmonds-Allen

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How to use Surprised by Joy: Advent 2023 by Rev. Dr. Kim Purl

Surprised by Joy 2023 devotionals are written by
LGBTQia+ Christians and their friends.

Contributors write from a wide array of Christian conviction and belief at the intersection of faith and LGBTQia+. Each has freedom to write from their own beliefs and doctrines without harm to another because we believe there is room for all at the feet of Jesus.

This is the heart of holy dialogue.

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

We have a special invitation for you!

Please consider joining a Converge Group. They are for Christians and for those who aren't Christian but want to talk about Christianity. We have groups for LGBTQia+ folks and for those who love them, in person, and online. Always free.

Email marian@parity.nyc with your questions or interest, or visit:

<https://www.holydialogues.org/converge-groups>

We look forward to meeting you!

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[Monica Wambui, author](#)

[Psalm 27; Malachi 2:10-3:1; Luke 1:5-17](#)

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[Psalm 126; Habakkuk 2:1-5; Philippians 3:7-11](#)

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[Steven Maina, author](#)

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[Rev. Dr. Darlene Brewer, author](#)

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[Elizabeth Moraa, author](#)

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[Lisa Whitesell, author](#)

[Psalm 125; 2 Kings 2:9-22; Acts 3:17-4:4](#)

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[Samuel Thirikwa, author](#)

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[Lucy Wanjiru, author](#)

[Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; 2 Samuel 6:1-11; Hebrews 1:1-4](#)

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[Paul Nderitu, author](#)

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[Rev. Roberto Ochoa, author](#)

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[David Maura, author](#)

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[Monday, December 25, 2023 Christmas Day](#)

[Rev. Karen Pitt, author](#)

[Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14, \(15-20\)](#)

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[Jacklin Wambui, author](#)

[Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Samuel 1:19-28; Hebrews 8:1-13](#)

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[Nico Bonner, author](#)

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[Dr. Stephen Sprinkle](#)

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[Faith Mbogo, author](#)

[Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 8; Galatians 4:4-7 or *Philippians 2:5-11*](#)

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[Monday, January 1, 2024: New Year's Day](#)

[Cynthia Vacca Davis, author](#)

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[Wilfred Nyokabi, author](#)

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[Wednesday, January 3, 2024](#)

[Josphine Wambui, author](#)

[Psalm 110; Proverbs 1:20-33; James 4:1-10](#)

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[Jane Wangigi, author](#)

[Psalm 110; Proverbs 3:1-12; James 4:11-17](#)

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[Liggera Edmonds-Allen, author](#)

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[Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12;](#)

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[Sunday, January 7, 2024: Baptism of the Lord](#)

[Idah Gitau, author](#)

[Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1-7 ; Mark 1:4-11](#)

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[Zipporah Nyaga, author](#)

[Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18; Judges 2:6-15; 2 Corinthians 10:1-11](#)

Sunday, December 3, 2023

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Contributor: Moses Njoroge

This is the time of the year that unites many families. There is always a mass exodus of people traveling to their villages to celebrate Christmas.

At this time of the year, there are no movements in our big towns and if you happen to be left behind there is a possibility of sleeping hungry because all businesses are closed. For this important event, people start saving Christmas money as early as from January. They go back to the village with pomp and vigor. It is always like a competition of who has made it more than the other and siblings try to out do each other on this particular day. Its all about eat, drink and make merry and then go back to the city broke, start hustling to save for the next Christmas.

That was also me before I accepted myself as a gay man. The pressure to get married was too much and I was becoming the laughing stock anytime I went home for Christmas because my younger brothers had wife's and kids. The last time I was with them 5 years ago my mother had organized a woman for me to marry, I excused my self from the scene and since then I have never gone back home. But this changed my perspective of how to celebrate Christmas, having no family to go to during Christmas means there's is a very high possibility you will stay alone.

For the first two years I just stayed indoors with my phone switched off, my only companion was the bible and this became my turning point. I realized most people don't know the real meaning of Christmas. We have idolized earthly possession and celebrate them during Christmas to a point we forget that Jesus Christ is the reason we celebrate on this special day.

This Advent season we gather with the shepherds around the manger where a young mother has laid her first-born child. We have heard the good news that will bring joy to all people, a savior has been born, messiah the Lord, the prince of peace. God with us our intercessor, the only true hope. Let all rejoice, praise and worship him.

This Christmas I will spend my time in a children's home, with other Lgbtq+ friends who have no home to go to, we have been collecting clothes and food stuffs to gift them. Our message is simply that there is hope, faith and joy in Christ. May we preach peace and pray for peace in our world.

Praise the name of the Lord. Amen



Moses Njoroge

35 years Kenyan
Gay Christian

A wounded healer who loves
serving God through humanity.

Moses Njoroge

Monday, December 4, 2023

Psalm 79; Micah 4:1-5; Revelation 15:1-8

Contributor: Zaweria Hunyu

Psalm 79:9 Help us God, and save us; rescue us and forgive our sins for the sake of your own honor. (GNB)

Each and every one of us has, in our lives, found ourselves in lamentation like the psalmist in Psalm 79. As long as we are alive, we cannot escape situations like this. We should hope and pray in the midst of pain. In our own lives, may we learn to embrace lament and not despair, because lament is the song of hope. Let us be humble and repent our sins as we wait upon the Lord.

Psalm 79:10 Why should the nations asks us, "Where is your God?"

There was a time when everything was falling apart in my life, a lesbian single mother with no stable income. Friends deserted me as I was becoming a burden. They mocked me when I told them my God will surely come. Sometimes I could get weak in prayers and all I could do was to thank God for His promises. There is joy in knowing the God you have trusted with your life. Even when I had no money for food, I could boil water and thank God for it. We live by faith because of who God is and the surety of His promises because true to the word of God, I was remembered. Things changed so fast in my life; I was surprised by God one day. Through Parity grant funds I have a business that pays my bills and I mentor Lgbtq+ youths in our fellowship to start their own businesses.

Psalm 79:13 Then we, your people, the sheep of your flock, will thank you forever and praise you for all time to come.

The visible circumstances we find ourselves in will not limit our trust in God. even if the psalmist is lamenting, he is instilling hope in the promises of God. we believe that God will deliver us and we shall praise him forever.

Micah 4:1-5

We long for a beautiful world like the one described by prophet Micah, a world where there is peace, unity, freedom of worship, freedom of expression but just like the Israelites we are hoping for that perfect world. We just wait by focusing intensely on the promises of God.

Prayer: Dear God,

Your name is great, you are a faithful God.

With a humble heart we repent and confess our sins, you are not overwhelmed by what we have done in the past. You are a righteous judge. Help us to trust and wait upon you to fulfill all that you have promised to us.



Zaweria Hunyu

Kenyan.
African, Kenyan/kikuyu
Non-binary Lesbian
Born again Christian
Business woman
Teacher

Zaweria Hunyu

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

Psalm 79; Micah 4:6-13; Revelation 18:1-10

Contributor: Sontaia Briggs

When I hear the sentence: a rose that bloomed in a concrete garden, I think of New York City. I moved to New York in 2015 and before then I lived in New Jersey. When I mention I'm from NJ, people let out a little sigh — as if I couldn't know and understand the NYC way, the intricacies of it all; as if I came desensitized to the millions of stimuli that pass your eyes each day. This is simply not true. While NJ is right there 15 minutes away depending on where you live in NJ, culturally they couldn't be farther apart. Think of NJ as a conservative southern state without excellent food and good manners. Think of repressed people with even more repressive ideas with manicured lawns, parks, and trees.

So, the fast and gritty streets of NYC have always been a vast emotional adjustment when commuting. Becoming a resident, something happened, I lost my NJ veneer and settled into the perpetually unsettling buzz that is NYC. Exhilarating, frightening, and unexpected each day.

Which is why unexpected joy is so delicious when it happens. Which is more often than one would think, if TV was your only reference.

In New York, you must learn how to commute, walk, and stand. These three things could get you in an altercation or guarantee you're going to have a smooth day. There is also another thing they say, which I didn't believe until I had seen it with my own eyes: New Yorkers are helpful, especially to the stranger or the lost.

I've seen so many people giving directions, their coffee, or buying food for a person in need. But the most beautiful and surprising to me is still, the unexpected smile or shared laugh on the train or platform. The train platform is the perfect hodgepodge of emotions and regret. You just missed your train or it is unexpectedly taking a different route: regret. Or you transfer and the train you want isn't running: anger.

But now and then, you look across the platform or train car and a simultaneous smile occurs with the stranger. Shared struggle. Shared regret. Shared confusion. 'Shared' is the common denominator. On a packed metal tube with smells and languages that span the globe two eyes connecting; the universal hello, a smile can make that cold train feel warm safe, and familiar.

These moments remind me of the stories of Jesus with the many strangers he encountered. They didn't know what to expect but were often met with actions that indicated love, hope, or possibility. Engagement and acknowledgment in a world where it is truly easy to dismiss everyone around you. Your earphones are placed in your ear and visible; the universal don't bother me symbol.

I get so much joy from the unexpected smile of commissary, hello, or shared happiness or frustration against whatever the moment has thrown our way. There is something magical about not being alone.



Sontaia P. Briggs

Sontaia P. Briggs is a Queer Faith Activist working at the intersection of LGBTQ+ and Faith.

A consultant with nonprofits and churches, Sontaia authors youth and young adult programs and workshops.

She is a sought-after LGBTQIA inclusion trainer and motivational speaker who has worked with PARITY NYC, Blanton-Peale Institute and Counseling Center, Park United Methodist Church, and NMAC Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Psalm 79; Micah 5:1-5a; Luke 21:34-38

Contributor: Nancy Wanja Mwangi

Micah 5:2 The Lord says, “Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel, whose family line goes back to ancient times.” (GNB)

The book of Micah clearly shows us how God works. It is not the same way we see things. It doesn't matter how lowly or broke you are, so long as you are his chosen one. Our God does not listen to the crowd or how we see or feel about others, but he does his things his way and surprises many in his deeds.

There is no doubt in the interpretation of this verse that it refers to Jesus Christ. He was born in Bethlehem and he would rule over Israel. His origins were from ancient times the son of God.

In verse 3 of Micah 5 it teaches us that God has good plans for us, even while in our mother's womb —“until the woman who is to give birth has her son”. God knew of our existence even before we were conceived. This teaches us as Christians to praise Him in all situations because he is God for us in all times.

Let me tell you a true story of my friend Mike. Back in our Sunday school days, he used to tell me how he would want to be a priest in the Catholic church. But all the odds were against him: he was born out of wedlock, his family had no priesthood background, and they were poor. God works in mysterious ways and we are always surprised by his ways of sorting out our issues. There is a woman who believed in the calling Mike had of being a priest and she represented his case to the bishop. Mike was allowed to go to the seminary fully sponsored by the church, and today he is celebrated for his contribution towards the society.

As a lesbian Christian I can spend a whole day telling stories of the many surprises that have brought immense joy in my life, but I will just say that my life has become a walking miracle since I gave my life to Christ. I have this inner peace to know that I am a child of God, I have supportive Christians who loves and accept me for who I am. I have this joy in Christ and I know my life is full of joyful surprises.

Prayer:

Our heavenly father, I pray in the light of requirement for your people. Help us to humble ourselves under your Holy teachings, open our inner eyes and ears that we may continue to see your greatness in all situations we might be going through in our lives. And that your joy may be full in us. I pray for Rev. Marian and the Parity family, bless them for choosing to love and reach out to all Lgbtq+ persons of faith. Through them we are always surprised by your love. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.



Nancy Wanja Mwangi

My names are Nancy Wanja Mwangi. I am from Kenya, and I love nature.

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

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

Thursday, December 7, 2023

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; Hosea 6:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

Contributor: Rev. Rob Van Ess

“Not My God”

When I first came out as a gay man my family rejected me for moral and religious reasons. They told me men who were attracted to men and wanted to be with a man the way other men desire to be with a woman were wrong. I was told this was not biblical, it was forbidden and unnatural. People who loved me my entire life looked me dead in the eye and told me I was disgusting, a pervert, and going to burn in hell. They told me I was broken, dangerous, and worthless; and I believed them.

For years I carried an unbearable amount of guilt and shame for being gay. Not only did I lose my family, I lost the God of my childhood. What I needed to learn at that point in my life is that I needed to walk away from the dysfunctional relationships that would deny me what I needed most in this life –unconditional love and acceptance without the fear of judgment or prejudice.

At 18 years of age I became a member of the queer diaspora united by the unique and beautiful ways we identify ourselves that set us apart from the rigid binary status quo that runs across every culture and continent. Like the Hebrew people in scripture, we are always the outsider, the stranger, the other, looking for safe places to coexist for a time until they are safe no longer and we need to move on. As queer people we are intimidated, manipulated, and scapegoated every day of our lives.

I believed I deserved the hardships and persecutions, the betrayal and bigotry. I suffered in this life simply because of who I am and whom I loved. We get used to it. Like when one finds themselves caught in an abusive relationship, like the one between God and the people of Israel I see here in the Book of Hosea, or the relationship between me and my birth family when I came out. I thought that everything bad that ever happened to me was my fault and all I had to do was change and everything would be OK. But I couldn't change who I was. I tried. It never worked. I'm gay. I am who I am. Now what?

Over time I found others in my tribe, each sojourners on their own journey out of exile and into a promised land of their own making. Many had more experience traveling the queer highways and they showed me a God who was so different than any god I had ever known.

Their understanding of God doesn't demand that I accept the injustices that are thrown upon me. I do not have to deny my humanity, but embrace it. I reclaimed my right to be welcomed, blessed, and loved by God, my neighbor, and myself.

Looking back I am surprised by the joy I now hold in my heart and I give thanks for all the queer elders I met along the way who showed me THE WAY of Jesus. A way that allowed me to let go of the passive aggressive, codependent God of my childhood, who I see here in the Book of Hosea, who was stalking me, organizing my enemies against me trying to manipulate and control me to the point of conversion or death. But there was another way. Let go of the dysfunctional relationships with God and others that deny you what you need most in this life and let the joy surprise you!



Rev. Rob Van Ess

Pastor Rob is the Pastor & Teacher at Pilgrim Church United Church of Christ (UCC) in Fond du Lac, WI. They graduated from Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO and is a trained clinical chaplain having served a residency at The University for Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock with The College for Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy.

Having grown up in Green Bay, they have served churches and hospitals in Missouri, Indiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, and now “back home” in Wisconsin. They

carry a passion for all things discovered at the intersection of queerness and faith. Rob (he/they) and their husband Nicky (he/him/his) just celebrated 19 years together and enjoy spending time with their two cats DeeDee and Dexter.

Friday, December 8, 2023:

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Acts 11:19-26

Contributor: Pastor Megan Nganga

Surprised with Joy

Jeremiah 1:5 “before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations”.

I have always known that I have been called to the ministry, just like Jeremiah I had a major excuse. “Lord, I am a lesbian”, what can I tell your people? For a long time, I kept running away from the calling. My main challenge was that I could not serve in a church where I will be forced to hide my sexuality because you cannot lie forever, and when the truth comes out most of the times the outcome is not so pleasing. In my sleep I could dream of a big accepting church, but according to me, that was impossible.

What God has planned with your life will be accomplished no matter how long it takes. I was challenged by my destiny connector to start a fellowship for LGBTQ+ Christians. Even then I still had an excuse that I reside in a very rural village and it will be hard to get any LGBTQ+ friends.

After deep thinking, I accepted the challenge in my heart and I started praying about it. I met my first member in the hospital where I had gone for checkup, he just noticed my rainbow arm band and asked me for assistance. Fortunately, I was able to help, and we became great friends. He visited me one Sunday with a friend to say thank you and from there our fellowship was born.

It does not matter the situation you are in, when God decides to surprise you, he will surprise you with joy. I am always humbled by the grace of God; from that hospital encounter, a church was planted and our fellowship keeps growing every day. Lives are changed as we preach compassionate gospel. I accepted the calling and I believe the one who called me is faithful to finish the good works he started in me.

Acts 11:21 The Lords hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

When we teach others the gospel, the hand of the Lord is together with us. It firmly holds us and encourage us to remain true to the Lord. This advent, I pray that we be encouraged because God is about to restore our fortunes, his salvation is near those who fear him. His glory will dwell in our land and there will be peace.

Loving God, thank you for loving us so much. Today we yearn for your restoration and healing.

Remember all the LGBTQ+ Christians, strengthen us that we be givers of your grace. Give us hearts of courage to proclaim your righteousness and that when people see us, they see your salvation. Let faith, hope and love be our song every day. In Jesus Mighty name we pray. Amen and Amen.



Pastor Megan

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

I have a passion for writing and studying the Bible.

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

Saturday, December 9, 2023

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; Ezekiel 36:24-28; Mark 11:27-33

Contributor: Adrian Slonaker

For much of my life, I've felt like a misfit or a "black sheep" (although I prefer to call myself a "tie-dye sheep"). While I love my family and they love me, when I was growing up in an Illinois suburb, I felt somehow vaguely "different," and this difference created a sense of tension since I was aware that my parents couldn't fix this sensation of being the odd person out, and yet I didn't want to conform. In elementary and junior high school, I frequently felt alone and was taunted for being somehow different.

While high school was much better, I still wince when I recall a supposed friend telling me that some of my fellow members of the student newspaper staff considered me to be some sort of "freak." One reason I didn't fit in was because of my "naturally eccentric" self; another likely reason was that I am queer and, at times, gender non-conforming. Even when I didn't realize it and others might not have been able to pinpoint it, we all knew that I wasn't and couldn't be like the majority.

One way I dealt with being a "square peg" was by romanticizing faraway lands. I'd dream of going to a different city or country, and finding my "tribe" where I'd capture that elusive sense of belonging.

That's why I excelled at foreign languages; somehow I imagined I might be learning the speech of someone else who might possibly be more like me. Another way I coped was by believing in God. I knew that, even if I felt alienated by many of my peers and even if I had a rocky relationship with my earthly parents, I have a Heavenly Father who is perfect, who created me the way I am, who loves, understand and accepts me. God is my Family.

As an adult, I have lived in different cities and countries (currently in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada). After graduation from university, where I figured out my queerness, I spent a few years living in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood, which is known as Boys Town for its high concentration of gay and bisexual male residents. In a way, I did feel more comfortable, as I didn't necessarily have to hide my preferences or my creative self-expression; however, the same inadequacies haunted me, as certain segments of the LGBT community (and others) can be judgmental if you don't have the right look, the right weight, the right hair, the right behavior, the right lifestyle.

Again, I had God and faith in God, which, in itself, has occasionally caused friction with other queer (and straight) individuals who have been dismissive of religion.

Just as a dusty, freezing attic or a spooky, dark basement isn't necessarily representative of an entire house, these situations where I haven't belonged, as well as these critics and haters, don't represent the "Big Picture." Despite them, I can assert myself and thrive! I can be happy! I remember God's commitment to renew me, to take care of me, to provide me with a spiritual home, to center me, as He promises "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you." I rejoice in this and remember it at Advent and throughout the year. Have a blessed holiday season!

Adrian Slonaker resides in downtown Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada in an apartment shared with a multicolored plush unicorn called Blaze. Having completed university studies in linguistics and



Adrian Slonaker

literature, Adrian works as a language consultant. In precious moments of free time, Adrian enjoys swimming, rock 'n roll records, naps during thunderstorms, horror films and extremely spicy vegetarian dishes. Adrian's theological background and beliefs are somewhat eclectic and syncretic, with elements of Anabaptism (Mennonite), Anglicanism, Reform Judaism and Unitarian-Universalism in the mix. Adrian also writes poetry, stories and essays and has been published extensively in journals and anthologies. In addition, Adrian is a fan of iced non-alcoholic beverages, especially if they are bright blue.

Sunday, December 10, 2023

Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, 2 Peter 3:8-15a, Mark 1:1-8

Contributor: Daniel Kihara

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. have you ever felt like your situation is hopeless?

I think about all the Lgbtq+ Christians around the world who are being hurt over and over again, and they can see no way out of it. this was me not so long ago, I lived in a hopeless situation as a gay man, I had prayed the gay out of me for so long. I even tried having a heterosexual relationship with hope that I could be straight.

The situation was hopeless and it was complicated by guilt, I believed it was my fault to be gay because I was not Christian enough. I should have been delivered from all sinful desires when I gave my life to Christ. I despised my self for so long that at some point all I wanted was to sleep and never wake up again.

While I was in this state of hopelessness and despair, God in his faithfulness sent an angel to me and introduced me to Pastor Megan. I never imagined in my life I can meet any Lgbtq+ Christians in the village, I live in a very rural setup that is so homophobic. But out of the wilderness I was surprised by God. our God will surprise you when you least expect it.

Isaiah 40:11 he tends his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Despite my shortcomings, my unfaithfulness, my impatient, God still cared and loved me enough that he restored and gave me hope. I have this joy in my heart to know that, nothing can separate me from the love of God. we should lean closer to God as we are being invited in his presence, let us prepare our hearts as we wait upon the Lord. We must be holy as he is Holy.

Psalm 85: I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants- but let them not turn to folly.

We have faith in God and our trust is founded in him the prince of peace. Let us serve him in faithfulness and humility.

2nd Peter 3:9 the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.

Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. God brings hope out of hopeless situations, Hannah was hopeless in barrenness but God blessed her with Samuel. No matter how long you wait, in Gods good time, deliverance will come. Let us trust in his promises and rely on his presence with us.

May God surprise you with joy today. Amen.



Daniel Kihara

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

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

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

I believe in serving God through humanity.

Contributor: Denise Hamblen

It is impossible to count the times I have heard the first verse of Psalm 27 mentioned, quoted, and preached about. It is a lighthouse when life is difficult, a reminder that with the Lord we have nothing to fear. But today I would like us to walk a little further into the Psalm. “My heart has heard you say, “Come and talk with me.” (NLT: Psalm 27:8)

Growing up a queer Mormon kid in Utah was more than a little uncomfortable. My coming out, embracing all my Heavenly Father included in my identity, didn't happen until age 40. And, even then, it was confined to the borders of Salt Lake County.

I grew up in a small town about 45 minutes north of Salt Lake City. And within this small town my dad served in several leadership positions within the Mormon Church. It was a place full of people who loved my family, loved me, and were very “involved” in making sure I stayed on the straight and narrow. My parents received more than a few calls regarding the activities of their middle child. Even though three generations of my family have called Riverdale home, it was not a safe place to come out.

About 12 years ago, after walking away from religion and finding my way back to faith, the words of verse 10, “Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.” became my guide. For the first time in my life, I spoke my truth to my parents. Walking through their door, I wondered if it would be the last time I would be invited into their home. That conversation was difficult, but the Spirit of the Lord was there. When I left, my mom embraced me and asked me to keep talking with them. What a surprise! The joy I felt overwhelmed me.

Over the next few years, we continued talking. Conversations with my mom came a little easier than with my dad. But even those were very painful at times. I heard my mom express her concerns of what others would think; would it affect my family's reputation, would it affect the opinion others had of my dad, would their parenting be questioned? But mom and me, we kept talking and occasionally my dad would join us.

And then my mom passed away. Before she passed, she made me promise to call my dad every night and visit every other Saturday. Things were awkward for several years, but I had made a promise to my mom. A few years ago, because of my dad's advancing age, I moved back home to help him. And, almost four years later, it is one of the greatest blessings of my life. I have felt the Lord leading us along the right path. We talk about the scriptures, we share our faith, and we have finally come together in Christ. What an overwhelming blessing, the ultimate surprise!

I am so grateful for my Savior and grateful for this Advent season that invites each of us to slow down and rejoice in the birth so many years ago of that beautiful child in Bethlehem.

Bio: My journey began in Ogden, Utah and I love hailing from the "rough" part of Utah. I grew up a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At the age of 21, I left home to serve a proselyting mission for the church to southern Germany.

My faith foundation was shattered when, at age 40, I could no longer deny my orientation and gender identity. When I walked out of the closet, I also thought I was walking away from God. I struggled reconciling my relationship with God and I am grateful He never gave up on me. I will always be grateful for the wonderful people at the United Church of Christ congregation I found during this time. It was in that chapel I was reintroduced to God, who loved and accepted me, just as I was. My faith journey continues and I am so grateful for experiences, such as this, that allow me to rejoice in the word of God and worship Him.



Denise Hamblen

Tuesday, December 12, 2023

Psalm 27; Isaiah 4:2-6; Acts 11:1-18

Contributor: Dorcas Kiki

The Lord is my light and my salvation- whom shall, I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life-of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1 NIV)

This is a very strong declaration of someone who has a very personal relationship with God, the boldness shows someone who has fully committed their lives to Christ. Having faith in God and trusting him to be the light in this dark world. We have this assurance that we can rely on God as our light, salvation and stronghold, we have no reason to fear any earthly threat. There is joy in knowing that the love of our God is steadfast and we can depend on it throughout our lives.

As we face time of trouble and temptation our hearts should be focused on God and not on those around us. Too often we are more concerned about what others think rather than what God sees in our actions and in our hearts.

Before I had my self-acceptance, I was working hard to fit in social spaces, I wanted people to accept me and I always went beyond so that they can see the good in me. I ended up wasted, discouraged, because many people will always judge you by your outside appearance.

I spent so much energy trying to convince the society that I am a good Christian, a transman loved by God, instead they became my enemies. No woman wanted to be my friend anymore and men saw me as a threat to their manhood, transphobia placed me in a very dark place but the light of God shone on me and all my fears were erased.

God surprised me with a new family, I have a very supportive fellowship of Lgbtq+ Christians and this is where I got my freedom. They love me for who I am and I love them. We are one big family.

I remain confident of this; I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. (Psalm 27:13-14 NIV)

Today I work to please God because I realized it does not matter what everyone else thinks about me, the most important thing is my relationship with God.

In that day the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and the glory of the survivors in Israel (Isaiah 4:2 NIV)

Wait upon the Lord patiently, because you shall rejoice on that day when your pride will be restored. I choose to live in the presence of the Lord because from there I will see the goodness of the Lord.

Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for shining your light upon us. Thank you for all your promises towards your people. Help us to be strong as we wait upon you. We have faith and we trust that we shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.



I am Dorcas Kiki, a Kenyan Christian transman who loves God with all my heart.

Dorcas Kiki

Wednesday, December 13, 2023

Psalm 27; Malachi 2:10-3:1; Luke 1:5-17

Contributor: Monica Wambui

One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. (Psalm 27:4 NIV)

When the light of God shone upon me, my life changed. All my fears were gone, all my insecurities disappeared when I made God my stronghold. I was living a reckless life with no hope, I was a drug addict living in the street. Being outed as a lesbian and being rejected by my family led me in to bad company, at first, I felt comfortable in their circle because like me they were just hopeless. We lived a day at a time. I saw my friends die one by one; I would cry to God for deliverance because I felt trapped. I knew I had a gift of being a worshipper and I always promised God that if he gets me out of the bondage of drugs, I will forever live to worship him.

The Lord was merciful to me and he answered me. I met an old friend who sympathized with my situation, she introduced me to their local fellowship. I was showered with love and acceptance and my life changed from that day. There is beauty in living in the presence of the Lord, I am now the praise and worship leader in our fellowship. I feel free to worship God as a lesbian because I have proved that God cares and loves me beyond measure

they practiced their faith and they were in constant prayer. The angel met Zechariah at the altar offering a sacrifice, good news surprised him at old age. They were blessed with a son and not just an ordinary child but one who will be joy and delight to many. I believe our God has good plans for us, we have blessings that awaits us when we stay focused on righteousness. I pray that when the angel will be sent with good news to me, I will be in the right place.

It is my prayer that I will live to strive to live a holy life as I patiently wait for the Lord.

“I will send the messenger who, will prepare the way before me. then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty. (Malachi 3:1 NIV)

Let us continue seeking the face of God, let us wait patiently for the promises that he has promised us and we shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Good things will not happen to us when we die, but when we are still living in this world we shall be witnesses of the goodness of the Lord.

Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lords commands and decrees blamelessly (Luke 1:6 NIV)

Zecharia and Elizabeth lived a holy life, despite having no child,



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

I love worshipping God, and I am born again.

Monica Wambui

Thursday, December 14, 2023

Psalm 126; Habakkuk 2:1-5; Philippians 3:7-11

Contributor: Rufus Mugo

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "the Lord has done great things for them." (Psalm 126:1-2 NIV)

Each one of us has dreams and aspirations, growing up I wanted to become a priest.

I knew I was different from other men and I convinced my self that being a catholic priest no one will judge me by my appearance or even question my sexuality. My ambitions were cut short when I was told I was too feminine to be a priest, I was so discouraged, I was angry at God for giving me a feminine body.

Life in the village is very hard for a transgender, here people are very ignorant and they just sprout hate at you for no reason. They actually hate what they don't know. I was trusting God that one day he will take me out of our village and take me far where nobody knows me.

One day God really surprised me because I was introduced to a local LGBTQ+ fellowship and there I met Daniel; we became good friends and today we are partners staying in his farm. I didn't know I have a passion in farming before I met him but now I am enjoying life here.

We host LGBTQ+ youths who are homeless and mentor them into farming, I feel that I am serving as a priest but in a different capacity. When God chose to surprise you, sometimes it feels like you are dreaming. I no longer feel lost because I was rejected in the seminary, I am happy because I am comfortable with my sexuality and I am able to serve people who loves and embrace the real me.

Put it in writing, because it is not yet time for it to come true. But the time is coming quickly, and what I show you will come true. It may seem slow in coming, but wait for it; it will certainly take place, and it will not be delayed. (Habakkuk 2:3 GNB)

Lgbtq+ community and allies have a dream of a better world; the progress may seem to be very slow. Let us write this dream in the walls of our hearts because at the right time, it will come to pass. We just need to be patient and wait for God who fulfills promises.

Prayer:

O Lord restore our fortunes, like streams in the desert, let the living water of your holy spirit refresh our parched souls. Our lives are filled with challenges, discouragements and frustrations. We plant in tears and we long for the day when our planting in tears will return an abundant harvest. We look forward to shouting with joy in your presence and then the whole world will say that "the Lord has done great things to them." Amen



I am a 40 year old farmer from Kenya.

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

The farm of Rufus Mugo

Friday, December 15, 2023

Psalm 126; Habakkuk 3:2-6; Philippians 3:12-16

Contributor: Jimmy Abyad

You don't know what's out there until you do. It's a simple truth with huge implications. There are moments in life where you experience something, often unexpected, and now you've seen and know the truth of that experience, how good it is (or bad but our focus today is on joy).

I remember the first time I had phở, the Vietnamese soup, at a friend's house when I was 11. My friend's moms said we were having soup for dinner, which I was not too thrilled about assuming a boring American version, but then afterward, I was like what is this goodness?! Life changed...

There was also the time I wandered into my first spin class thanks to a free gym membership, not knowing I'd absolutely fall in love with this activity that would wildly transform my physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health (always happy to provide more details on that). What I often consider is what if I hadn't taken that job offer that gave me access to this gym that then allowed me to discover this passion that would change my life. I might have never known.

Most of my spiritual journey has felt like the 'pressing on' in Philippians 3, which I now feel has been an unhealthy interpretation on my part, a sort of striving for perfection, for acceptance, for validation, for God to approve of and love me. Yet more recently in life, something of Psalm 126 resonates a little more - God restoring the captives; what was sowed in tears I now reap with joyful singing, filled with laughter. The thing about restoration and liberation is that you don't know what it is until you find it. Another thing I've observed, frustratingly, is that you don't always know WHEN you'll find it.

This is now what I claim as my spiritual inheritance.

I may never have known the wholeness I know now had God not brought healing into my life in so many unexpected ways. Learning to accept myself, sexuality and all, in a context of faith has been and still is a wild ride.

I've had to step out of familiar environments and places I thought I'd never be able to. But as I did, I found myself surprised by joy, discovering healing, goodness, and beauty I may have never known until I did. I still hold hope for the future, for those beautiful things, moments, or people I don't yet know that will further heal me and change me for the good.



Jimmy Abyad

Jimmy has lived and loved in the Washington, DC, area for 17 years but his hometown is Tucson, Arizona.

His day job is a pretty basic federal employee that aspires to be like Leslie Knope. Otherwise, his days are spent enjoying people, food, tv/movies, music, languages, and teaching spin classes (come visit me at VIDA Fitness)

Saturday, December 16, 2023

Psalm 126; Habakkuk 3:13-19; Matthew 21:28-32

Contributor: Steven Maina

Let those who wept as they planted their crops, gather the harvest with joy! Those who wept as they went out carrying the seed will come back singing for joy, as they bring in the harvest. (Psalms 126:5-6 GNB)

There is hope that God will renew us like streams in the desert and I look forward to the day I will reap the harvest with celebration.

Have you ever felt like you are planting in tears? As an African gay man, I know well what it feels like to plant in tears.

When I was in my 20s, I had the whole life in my hands. I was invited to a birthday party by a friend and that is where I met my first boyfriend. Our relationship was so secretive and we made sure we left behind no traces that can suggest we were a couple.

The man was so abusive both physically and mentally, he was financially stable and that is why he took advantage of my delicate situation. My family had cut ties with me when I was outed and that really affected me. I just wanted to feel loved and this man was the only one who proved to love me for being gay.

I started developing complications one year into the relationship and I was diagnosed HIV+, I was not expecting this in my life as I was faithful to this one partner and he had assured me I was the only man in his life. Unfortunately, my boyfriend left me and I was so devastated.

I didn't know where to start but I had to make ends meet and that is how I started sex work, I felt so used and useless. I slept on the streets drugged with no hope, I look back at my life and for sure I have no idea how I made it because for one year in the streets offering sex for food and beer and on the best day you get a client to take you to his place to have a decent sleep.

I was in that desert and desert life is not easy but as I write this today, I can say that Jehovah God took over in my life.

What sustains me today is to know that, I was a sinner but my God in his faithfulness restored my life through Parity ministry. This page cannot fit my story but I can tell you for sure that my life changed when I met pastor Megan, she introduced me to Rev. Marian and through Parity I was given a grant that gave me a second chance to live. I have a business that sustains me and my health has improved greatly and that is why I will say like Habakkuk:

“Even though the fig trees have no fruit and no grapes grow on the vines, even though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no grain, even though the sheep all die and the cattle stalls are empty, I will still be joyful and glad, because the LORD God is my savior”. (Habakkuk 3:17-18 GNB)

Today I think about the future harvest, where there will be shouts of joy as Christ take the church home. Let us always stay in the presence of God and may you be surprised with joy this advent.



My Names are Stephen Maina.

I am Kenyan aged 26 years.

I am a born again gay Christian.

Steven Maina

Sunday, December 17, 2023

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Contributor: Rev. Dr. Darlene Brewer

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

'61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; 61:11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and, as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.'

I have chosen two verses from Isaiah 61 for my focus. Joy is to me a river of abundance that flows through even the driest land. It is a sign of something more than what we are living, something more than chaos and dread, especially for those living under the occupation of others. A friend of mine who is gay reminded me, at a crucial time in my life, that joy and sorrow come from the same source within us. She said it helps her in the times when she feels rejected and judged for who she is, calls her back to herself, and invites her to celebrate God who has made us all as gifts to this world.

When I think of my 2SLGBTQQIA+ siblings, I think of the good news they have shared with me, despite their broken-heartedness, despite their despair sometimes at the way in which people from this community are often treated like they ought to be discarded. Isaiah brings us the good word that there is 'good news to the oppressed.' What is the good news we can find as Christians to share with our 2SLGBTQQIA+ friends, neighbours, colleagues, ourselves? Good news is not false hope.

I have learned with friends in the gay and trans communities the deepest expression of a joy for living that springs out of facing the chaos and knowing it will not have the last word. In this season of Advent we believe Jesus is the light. Jesus also invited us to go and share our light so that others may find their way home to themselves. 'The spirit of the Lord has anointed me.' How are we called to live out our anointing to the world, to be a river of joy that flows for our friends and neighbours when all around is chaos?

So many communities of faith celebrate the light in the darkest time of the year. That need to celebrate and share the light dwells in every heart. God invites us to witness, as Isaiah expresses in Isaiah 11, how God is with us, how redemption is at work in the world. 'For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before the nations.'

Wow. Just wow! Let's really believe in the good news. Let's celebrate it! Some of the best times I have had is with gay, trans, and straight friends on the dance floor, just enjoying ourselves and being lost and found in a celebration of life, a joy that sometimes surprises us, even in the midst of so many challenges we face, even in the driest of deserts. God invites us each day to save this world by deepening our joy and loving the world into that righteousness that God is breathing into this world. How can you surprise someone with the joy of the 'good news' God is bringing through you this Advent season?

Rev. Dr. Darlene Brewer is a feminist theologian and ordained minister with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada and the U.S., and



is the former pastor of Wyndholme Christian Church, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. She is awaiting God's call for her next adventure. Darlene has worked in urban chaplaincy drop-ins and centres, churches, and universities, as a teacher, mentor, program coordinator, and minister. She is delighted to offer courses and workshops through her own work with Forest Streams Retreats & Workshops. As a Newfoundlander, she is increasingly aware of the importance of 'place' and 'space' in our identities and understanding of theological and social justice issues. She is happy to be writing for this series.

Rev. Dr. Darlene Brewer

Monday, December 18, 2023

Psalm 125; 1 Kings 18:1-18; Ephesians 6:10-17

Contributor: Elizabeth Moraa

Those who trust in the Lord are like mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. (Psalm 125:1)

We live in uncertain times, we are afraid of what might happen in the world the next minute, right now we are afraid that the war in Gaza might turn out to be a third world war. There is inflation and the cost of living has gone high, climate change has affected our day-to-day activities. With our human efforts we cannot make the world a better place, we can only trust the power of God to do what we cannot do for ourselves. God is trustworthy and he has promised to overcome evil in the world. Those who trust in the Lord are safe.

Prophet Elijah was directed by God to go and meet King Ahab; Elijah knew his life was in danger in the hands of King Ahab but he trusted God who directed him to go. Elijah obeyed God and while on his way he met with Obadiah who was a staunch follower of God, when Elijah told him he wanted to meet with King Ahab he was afraid. Jezebel had killed the Lord's prophets and was eager to kill Elijah, Obadiah knew the risk he was taking by following the prophets' instructions but he chose to obey. Everything worked out well for both Elijah and Obadiah because God does not make mistakes.

God has you in the right place at the right time because he wants to use you to glorify his name. When I joined bible school at first, I was feeling out of place. Everybody else is sponsored by their churches but I just got here on my own, I was not after ordination into the ministry but I just wanted to know this God more, I wanted to understand why God allows LGBTQ+ persons to be born that way yet He is supreme.

But I have come to realize that, we are never out of place when we are living our faith because God is God. Being in a bible school has helped me to reconcile my faith and my queerness,

I am still learning but I thank God for where I am today. I have met other queer people in this college and I thought to myself, there were other Gods prophets hidden in the caves by Obadiah and Elijah thought he was the only one remaining. That is how God surprises us with joy. Let us always trust and obey God like Elijah because he has greater purposes for us.

Prayer:

Dear God, help me take up the full armor of God and resist all the work of the enemy, we are living in evil days, I pray that I may walk in spirit and speak the truth in your love. Clothe me in Christ's own righteousness that I may be able to stand till the end of time. In Jesus mighty name I pray, trust and believe. Amen.



My names are Elizabeth Moraa. An African of Kenyan origin, I am 20 years. Pursuing studies in theological studies because I want to know God More. I am a Christian. And I love God with all heart. I have struggled with my sexuality for so long but Now at I am at peace because I have reconciled with myself as a transgender woman.

Elizabeth Moraa

Tuesday, December 19, 2023

Psalm 125; 2 Kings 2:9-22; Acts 3:17-4:4

Contributor: Lisa Whitesell

2 Kings 2:9-22. Elijah and Elisha

Not long ago a TV drama became a weekly staple in my home. The NBC medical drama “New Amsterdam” explored the challenges of daily health care in New York City. The leading character of this fictional fragment of 21st century American hospital leadership is the Hero-Everyman Dr. Max Goodwin, Medical Director. Max is the visionary, Good Samaritan, bleeding heart consistently thwarted by stagnant, trusty-but-rusty pervasive norms. Max brings youthful vigor but struggles with most of his goals due to lack of preparation and/or lack of resources for his many significant administrative responsibilities. In most every episode of this intense drama we see a glimpse behind the professional facade of each member of the medical staff Max must lead. We soon learn that each brilliant medical specialist in the ensemble has their own private series of complex crises that are on-going and span the realms of physical, mental, social, and emotional human conditions.

I am currently re-watching this poignant TV series and reflecting on this vulnerable storytelling hero Dr. Max Goodwin. From the very beginning pilot episode we are introduced to Max from his yearning desire and thematic byline. His greeting to one and all—day in and day out—from blissful moments to tragedies beyond our grasp Max will always say “So...How can I help?” Four words that slice tenderly to the root of his wellspring of hope. Max has fortified his impish, immature hopefulness by buying into each catastrophe with these earnest words. These words form a universal contract with his very own body-mind-spirit. Right before our eyes we can observe a shift in cosmic energies. Scattered pieces of random intention become a galvanized solution or at least a pleasant respite from the current chaos. Much like our own individual lives we, like Max Goodwin, plod along until we are faced with a dilemma or confronted with a seemingly unsolvable crisis. Packed inside every crisis is an opportunity to say “so...how can I help?” Might this be the intent behind Elisha’s big ask of Elijah when he asks for the double portion of blessing?

I am finding myself lately repeating this mantra when mulling over large and small crossroads of conscious convictions. So...How can I help? That is to say...What is mine to do? What is my offering to be? Where do I place my effort in this place? In what way can I be of service to this presenting situation? How can I help (and not hurt) in this matter?

In the moment of devastation, in the fragile heat of an argument, across the layers of consuming physical or psychological trauma—the sharp intake of a single breath and an inner reckoning smile beaming up from the soul-seat of the Almighty within...and then...these humbling words...in a spoken vow with a pow...So...S stands for SELF-self first then O stands for others second. So... HOW CAN I HELP?

It is surprising just how much relief and pure joy this little mantra of introspection can bring to any given situation. Perhaps I can dare to bring it to the largest existential crisis of our time. What exactly IS the largest super-crisis? Is it the war in Israel? Is it the devastation of climate change? Is it the decline of American literacy and crumbling knowledge base? Is it the abundance of apathy and absence of empathy? Is it the downward spiral of ethics in the workplace? Surely we LGBTQia+ folk may feel a sparkling kinship to Elisha walking with Elijah as we are learning, growing, and prophesying. We are living in a bold, fresh age. This is an era of new and energetic truths full of robust hope. Indeed the full measure of our LGBTQia+ wholeness cannot yet be understood in our own lifetimes! Perhaps we can allow ourselves to be mentored by the scriptural story of Elijah and Elisha. Maybe there is a holy boldness in asking with Elisha for a double portion of the qualities we most admire in the hearts of our visionary leaders and elders.



Lisa Whitesell

Let us prayerfully ask with the enthusiasm of Elisha and the relentless hopefulness of Dr. Max Goodwin, So, how can I help? May it be so. AMEN

Lisa was born and raised in Oklahoma. Retired professional musician and teacher. Cresting at the time of her retirement, she taught public school music for 28 years along with adjunct teaching at an urban community college for 18 years and more than 30 years of service as a part-time minister of music in suburban mainline denominational churches. Lisa describes her experience of the Holy as being grounded in biblical roots and polished by writings of mystics from many faith traditions. Inspiration from experiencing great art, literature and music send her spirit soaring. A fierce lover of dogs, mountains, trees, and all bodies of water, Lisa is blissfully married to the kindest woman in the universe.

Wednesday, December 20, 2023

Psalm 125; Malachi 3:16-4:6; Mark 9:9-13

Contributor: Samuel Thirikwa

Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which can never be shaken, never be moved. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, now and forever. (Psalm 125:1-2 GNB)

This is a great assurance to all who trust in the Lord, we are surrounded by the grace of God and the strong arm of our God will always hold us tight. This gives me hope as a gay Christian that, no matter what am going through, and what people say or plan about me, my life is surrounded by Gods love and peace. He watches over me all times and I will only trust him alone. Then the people who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard what they said. In his presence, there was written down in a book record of those who feared the Lord and respected him. (Malachi 3: 16 GNB)

In this world full of wickedness, there are still remnants who fear the Lord, who love their God and believe and worship His greatness. There is a book of remembrance and God keeps a record of your good deeds. These are the Lords own people and they are precious to Him. I count myself lucky as I was able to complete my high school education unharmed. Those days schools were like prisons, teachers did not care about bullies. We feared reporting because the teacher you report to will punish you for not being a man enough to defend yourself. Many people dropped school and others started taking drugs so that they fit. I thank God because the Christian union leader was my friend, during weekends he could gather a group of 10 boys where we did bible study for just one hour.

One Saturday evening when we were in our group for prayers, we heard screams from the dormitories. There was fire and some students were asleep in the dormitories. The aftermath was that, two students were burnt beyond recognition and 10 had serious burns. We were called for an emergency assembly and the 10 boys of our group were called forward, I thought we were the suspects because everyone mocked us even the teachers. To our surprise everyone was sent home and we were told to remain in school. This was a big lesson to me and even today I chose to be in the presence of God.

Prayer: Dear God, I truly thank you for inviting me to join at your table. through the crowds you noticed a gay man and had mercy on me just as I was. help me to live in your presence, I pray that you make me a remnant while I am in this present world. I have hope for a better world, where Christ will regain forever and our joy as your remnants will be full. In Jesus name I pray. Amen



Samuel Thirikwa
Kenyan
Gay
30 years

Samuel Thirikwa

Thursday, December 21, 2023

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; 2 Samuel 6:1-11; Hebrews 1:1-4

Contributor: Lucy Wanjiru

Psalm 89:1 I will sing of the Lords great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.

Are there times when you have felt as if God has forgotten his promises?

Yes I am a victim and many times I have been in situations where I even remind God who I am, my hopes and fears. Over the years, I have come to realize that God has remained to be God in all circumstances. Today I want us to celebrate Gods unfailing love, though life has not turned out as we hoped let us continue to put our trust in God.

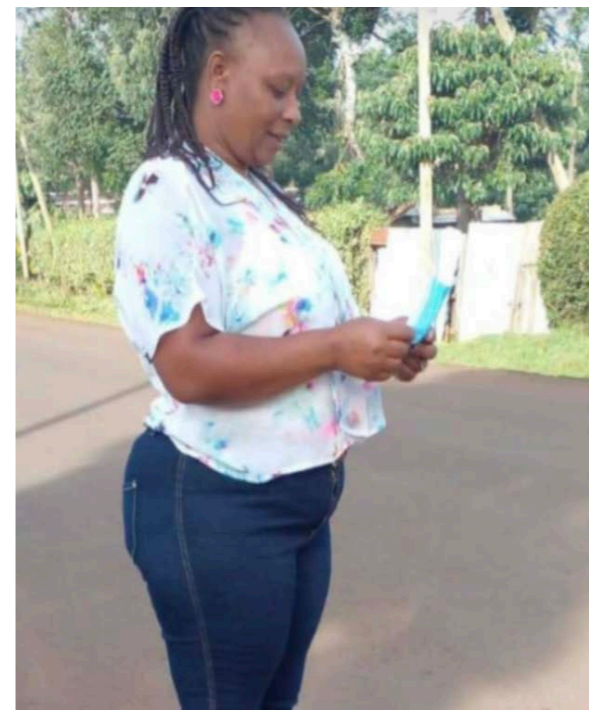
I have been in the margins for the better part of my life, growing up as an orphan, my adult life as a lesbian and now a mother to a mentally challenged kid. I have questioned God a thousand times, I got to a point in my life where it feels like God has already forgotten my existence but just when I am about to give up, I hear that small voice says “my child! I am still coming”. I have been in to situations of being ashamed but God always lift away the shame from me.

My life is just a miracle and I always encourage people who are depressed that, me being alive is a proof that there is a God who hears and cares for us. The only secret to survival is to make Jehovah God your refuge, his right hand is strong and will calm all the storms and our hearts will rejoice. Today I want to pray with all Lgbtq+ friends reading this advent, that the enemy who attacks you with homophobic and transphobic attacks will not get the better part of you because God is your father, the rock of your salvation.

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of Gods glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

Gracious God, I praise your Holy name. just like the psalmist, I wonder why you let things in this world be so wrong. I wonder why you tolerate so much suffering, so much injustice. I cry out to you to send your kingdom here on earth, because your kingdom is peaceful and full of justice. God help us to know and trust your love for us, help us to share your love with all the people we meet today.

Praise the name of the Lord forever. Amen and Amen.



Lucy Wanjiru

I am Lucy Wanjiru,

A Kenyan of African origin,
born again Christian lesbian
woman.

I love God and I trust Him
with my life.

Friday, December 22, 2023

²⁵
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; 2 Samuel 6:12-19; Hebrews 1:5-14

Contributor: Paul Nderitu

I will sing of the lord's great love forever with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known.

This psalms (89;1-2) emphasizes to us to take time to praise God for His faithfulness, even when things don't turn out as we hoped. In verses 3-4 boundless mercy and faith to our God brings comfort in the deepest trials. Verses 19-26 it reminds us that when we trust in the Lord nothing will shake our faith at all, most of the time we go through a lot of difficulties in our Christian life but we are reminded that those who trust in the lord will never be shaken it does not matter how hard the situation is, we continue to Hope in Him, looking forward to the fulfillment of his promises.

2 Samuel 6;12-19

"The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-edom all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God".

This scripture teaches us that there is a great blessing in genuine worship. the lord blessed Obed-edom simply because he had the ark of God. This shows us as Christians that when we are in the presence of God, we will experience the goodness of God.

Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might. (2nd Samuel 6:14 NIV)

For a moment, King David forgot his kingly status and danced before the Lord. David also offered sacrifices. This challenges me as a Christian on how I approach the presence of God, with a humble heart we should repent our sins, ask God for his favor and then give ourselves fully to God.

Every day I start my daily devotion, I feel more connected to the presence of God while singing this song:

All to Jesus, I surrender; All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him; In His presence daily live.

Hebrews 1: 8 -9 "your throne, O God will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy".

There is no greater joy than pleasing our creator. We can only please God when we are humble and faithful because Christ is above all. Dear Lord, we pray for forgiveness, we surrender all to you, fill our hearts with your love.

Thank you for your peace that we find through your son Jesus Christ. I have joy in my heart because I trust in you alone.

Amen



My name is Paul Nderitu

Gay man from Kenya.

I love Jesus.

I enjoy traveling and outdoor activities.

Paul Nderitu

Saturday, December 23, 2023

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Judges 13:2-24; John 7:40-52

Contributor: Rev. Roberto Ochoa

Angels come to us in many different forms and ways. Angels surround us to help us navigate uncertain futures of our lives, sometimes when we least expect it.

In the Book of Judges, the mother of Samson, an important judge for the ancient Israeli people, had a visitation from a stranger who foretold her pregnancy and the giving of birth of Samson. The thing is that Samson's parents thought that his mom was not able to conceive. Their joy was at first, cautious, however when the angelic figure came back and assured both parents that indeed the woman was going to give birth, they celebrated by providing a ritual offering to God. As promised Samson was born a few months later; and who would grow up to be a judge of Israel for 20 years.

Over five years ago, when I sensed a call to the national setting of the United Church of Christ as a national minister, my angel came in the form of my husband Jim, who encouraged me to apply for the position, "knowing" that I would be called, even though it meant me having to move away for a couple of years. Jim felt strongly this was what God wanted of me, and he supported me in my ministry. It was Jim, who eased my doubts in myself to feel worthy of such a call and he never wavered in his conviction that I was called to a national ministry. We both celebrated when I was indeed called to my position, and we felt the Joy of God's blessings upon us.

My dear angel Jim passed away recently and in this season of Advent and Christmas, I find the joy of my 26 years of memories of Jim, helps my broken heart every day. In God, we can find the joy that Jesus taught us when we lean into Christ and the comfort of the Holy Spirit amid so many tragedies in the world.

This Advent season, embrace the angels that come our way, especially when it comes in unexpected ways. A young maiden, by the name of Mary, also had an angelic encounter which foretold the birth of a special Child that would show us the way to a loving God, in new and surprising joyous ways. May you feel the everlasting love and joy of our loving God this Holy Season. Amen.

Rev. Roberto Ochoa is the Minister for Ethnic Inclusion, Rural and Small Churches, United Church of Christ, Cleveland, OH



Roberto and Jim

Sunday, December 24, 2023

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Contributor: David Maura

December 24th has a very big significant in the life of many Christians, it is the eve of Christ's birth day. It was more fun when we were young, we used to follow church elders as they moved door to door singing Christmas carols.

Those days every thing was simple back in our village, people lived in peace, they loved and cared for one another. Everybody knew everybody because we had similar problems and challenges. All the kids belonged to the whole community; we did community work because no one had money to pay for labor. Kids were very disciplined because if a grown up finds you misbehaving, he/she had the permission to punish you before reporting you to your parents. Life was just fun and enjoyable because people cared and loved each other.

Christmas eve celebrations were so much fun, we looked forward to this night. The meeting would start from the church elders home compound and they would divide in to groups to go different directions, they would knock to each house hold with Christmas hymns.

The whole household joins them and sing more celebration songs towards the birth of Jesus. This song was a must sing "are you happy as we are celebrating Christmas tomorrow? yes we are very happy to celebrate Christmas tomorrow...we all should be happy to celebrate Christmas.". After singing and prayers the members of that house hold would join the church elders and go to the next home and the trend would continue until all of them meet at a central place after covering the whole village.

People used to leave behind their homes and there was no incident of theft reported. There was that cloud of peace that covered our village and everyone was a keeper to her/his neighbor.

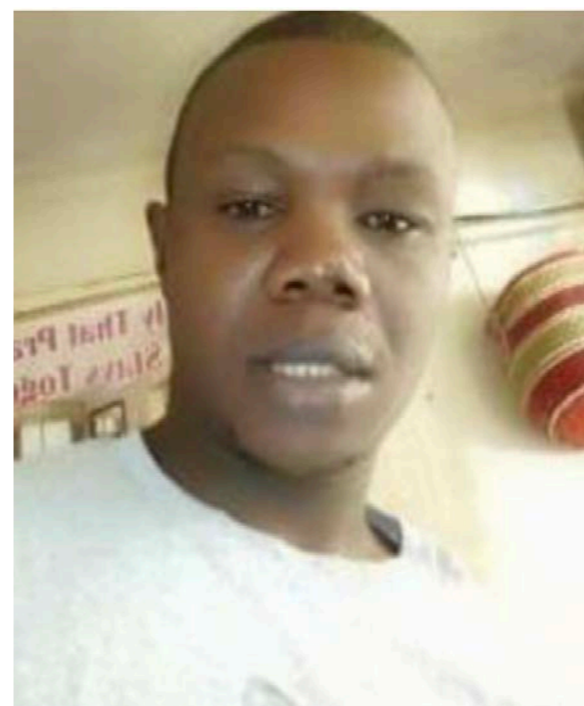
2nd Thessalonians 3:16 "now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The lord be with you all of you."

As a gay man in Kenya, I live in constant fear of homophobic attacks. I lost self-confidence as I am always on the look out of my surroundings. Previous attacks have made me to hibernate and exclude myself from many social spaces. All I need is God's peace and God has given us the gift of peace so we can live joy filled lives.

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, Everlasting Father, prince of peace.

Lord, as we celebrate Christmas this year, we invite your peace to rule our hearts, let the prince of peace be born again in our hearts. Let your presence bring joy in all who seek you this advent season. Amen

This true story encourages me to trust only God almighty, in His own time He will remember you and give you all that your heart desires.



My names are David Mwaura.

I am 30 years old.

A Kenyan of African origin.

I am a born again gay Christian man. I love God and I love serving Him.

David Maura

Monday, December 25, 2023

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

Contributor: Rev. Karen Pitt

Heaven and Earth Touching

As a young person, living in a broken family and experiencing high levels of violation and fear, I had little refuge in the adult world. I chose to be a 'neutral' person being a 'tomboy'. When I look back at my school photo, I looked like a disheveled little girl shutting down in a developing body. This struggle found an outward expression in a Christmas memory. I remember, as a 12-year-old young person in Grade 8, I was asked to be part of a school play. I did not believe that my part was all that important, but it did embody my feelings at the time. This part has remained with me every Christmas since then. The words of the hymn 'In the Bleak Mid-Winter' parallels my role and I share three verses that best express the experience of the first Christmas:

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
a stable place sufficed the Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air,
But only His mother in her maiden bliss,
worshipped the Beloved With a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise man, I would do my part.
Yet what I can I give Him, give my heart.

This story has been retold in words, music and the lives of people for over 2000 years expressing God's divine touch extended to the earth and seen in the love of Mary and the community of shepherds. Heaven and earth entwined in this baby Jesus. She held the mystery of this birth in her heart for many years. The shepherds, a community of outcast workers, were chosen to hear the heavenly chorus announcing the identity of this vulnerable and helpless child. They shared what they had seen and heard, glorifying, and praising God, repeating the 'good news of a great joy that will be for all the people.'

The news of this heavenly incarnation travelled through the years - to me. My first declaration was in a primary school Christmas play. The role I was given was named Corbin the Beggar. In my role as the beggar I was unworthy and unable to step into the crowd of shepherds, wise men, and others. I resisted approaching the Christ-child. Filled with fear. The only gift I could offer was my heart. The ripple effect of this incarnation reached me with words of hope. God came and comes to earth, announcing to ALL people the amazing love and care for all creation, including me. My heart has been drawn to this connection with God and my need of a constant and reliable Saviour.

Wherever and however you are, know that you are welcome, with me, as part of this earthly and eternal relationship. "Let us go and see this thing that has been made known to us."



Reverend Karen Pitt

I am a biracial, disabled and LGBT woman growing up in the midst of violence, abuse and addictions. I spent years overcoming the pain, isolation, fear, and the shame of being Karen. As someone who personally experienced faith-based conversation therapy (in the 1990s) I have lived and work to overcome the burden of religious judgements to embrace my own value and a relationship with a loving God.

I became an ordained clergy woman, theologian, and registered psychotherapist, journeying with people from all walks of life. After living in England for 26 years, and returning to the country of my birth, Canada, I have enjoyed working with people from different ages, genders, and sexual identities, including people from all marginalized populations and cultures. In England I worked with people from all social groups and faith communities, with special focus on past and present trauma. In Canada I have developed many services and outreach to people online and in person. We stand together, in care and community.

Tuesday, December 26, 2023

Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Samuel 1:19-28; Hebrews 8:1-13

Contributor: Jacklin Wambui

“My soul glorifies the Lord” (Luke 1:46b NIV)

Mary praised the Lord, not for what he had done, but what he was about to do, Our God is a God of magnification, who bless the poor, hungry and the oppressed. some times in our churches we tend to recognize those who give more to the developments of the church projects and sideline those who give whole heartedly the little they have, but our God loves to glorify himself through humbleness.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble (Luke 1: 52 NIV)

Mary in her humbleness was favored by God to be the mother of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

Mary is my role model in faith, she believed what the Angel said to her and she started praising and worshipping God. she trusted God enough to know that whatever God promises will come to pass.

We all know the story of Hannah in the book of 1st Samuel chapter 1, she spent many years praying to God to remember her with a son. One day God answered her prayers, it matters not how long you have prayed on an issue, our God will come and answer it in the right time, all we are called to do is pray believing in the highest God that we will receive our request from him.

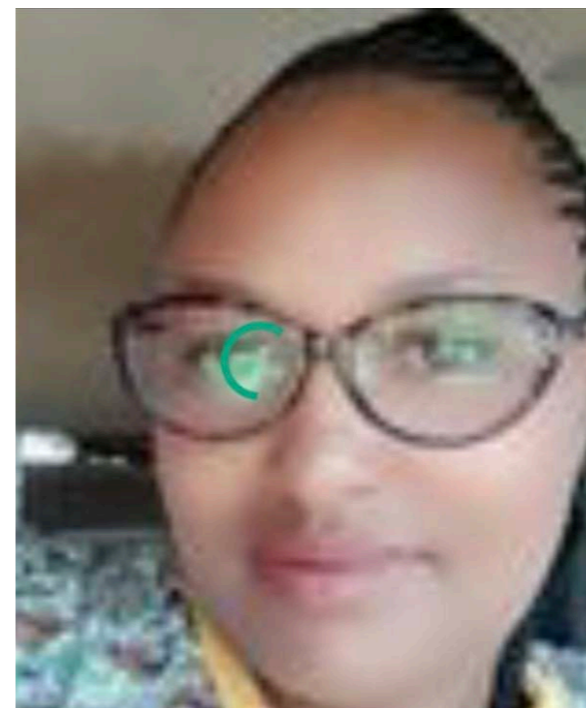
After receiving what we pray for, we are reminded to honor the promise we made to our God. Hannah returned to Shiloh with a sacrifice of thanksgiving after which she was blessed with many more children. Hannah did not confront Peninnah when she was despising her, Hannah turned to her God because she believed in God alone.

Let us not forget to give thanks for what God has done with our lives. I have seen God transforming my life since the day I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and savior. I was a sinner who deserved to die but God in His mercy has restored my life. I walk with hope knowing that the one I trust is holy and He can surprise me anytime the same way He surprised Mary and Hannah.

Prayer:

Thank you, everlasting father, for your faithfulness, The story of Hannah teaches us that you listen and answers our prayers. Mary teaches us to believe your promises even before we receive.

Help us to be patient while waiting upon your salvation, give us more grace to remain faithful till the end. Thank you for giving us your only begotten son Jesus Christ to be our savior. Guide our ways heavenly father that we may remain true to your word. Amen



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

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

Jacklin Wambui

Wednesday, December 27, 2023

Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Mark 11:1-11

Contributor: Boniface Waweru

Luke 1:46b “My soul glorifies the Lord”

In this book we see Mary praising God for what he has done and what she anticipates God will do. Mary paints a picture of a very humble woman who God chooses as the mother of our Lord Jesus. According to human understanding, maybe this role should have been assigned to the then “Miss Nazareth” or maybe someone with some royal blood. When the Angel approached Mary with the good news, she just believed what she was told by the angel.

Writing this I am trying to figure out if Mary was in our generation, maybe she could have gone to social media and start flaunting with the #blessed. But the humbleness in Mary made her to worship the Lord, she praised the Lord for his mercy and grace. She knew that she had not done anything special to please God to accord her this favor and for that she praised God.

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

Hannah is the most preached woman when talking about difficult and complicated situations in life. Hannah was living under the reproach of her co-wife Peninnah, Hannah presents a good example of pray without ceasing she also teach us how to appreciate answered prayers. By praising and worshiping God.

Mark 11:2 “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.”

A colt was tied and no one has ever ridden it, maybe it did not fit to their needs but Jesus saw the need to use it. We do not know for how long it was tied there but a time came and Jesus used it to make his entrance to Jerusalem.

The Lgbtq+ community has been sidelined for so long in the Christian spaces, our families have rejected us, people ask “what good can come out of us”? We have been put aside as non-noble.

We have already been condemned to hell; society has already ruled us out as people who are corrupting Christian morals. People do not believe when I give my testimony, I am born again but today I am encouraged because God is choosing to use people like us, lowly people who are despised and mostly counted as others.

When God has lifted us from the margins, let us learn from Mary and Hannah. Praise the Lord at all times, never think it is about you but let it always be about Jesus glorifying himself through you. Let us be patient in the presence of God because at His right time we shall be surprised with joy.



I am Boniface Waweru

I am a gay Christian and I love God.

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

Boniface Waweru

Thursday, December 28, 2023

Psalm 148; Jeremiah 31:15-17; Matthew 2:13-18

Contributor: Rahab Wambui

Psalms 148; we see the psalmist's desire to praise God, in verse 2; Praise the lord, Praise the Lord from heaven, you that live in the heights above. this means that even in the highest parts of the universe he is praised and his name is exalted. He is God above everything else, the creator of the universe and all that it contained. his name is great.

This makes it clear to us Christians that God is not only praised here on earth, but he is praised by all his creation. The most important reason for our existence is to glorify God he who has done a lot in our life's. In times of trouble, he affirms his faithfulness to us by saving us and protecting us from the devil. We are encouraged by the psalmist to continually worship God, follow Christ teaching with all our hearts and deeds.

Jeremiah 31;15-17. God is assuring us that he will repay us for the pain we have undergone on many occasions and he is promising us hope for the future, meaning despite all the difficulties we have undergone, our future will be bright and promising as if nothing happened before. it is only in him we will get real comfort; our friends will get tired of comforting us and most of them won't do it genuinely but our God will be with us till the end.

Mathew 2;13-18, a prophecy is fulfilled, Herod gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years and below. "When they had gone an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, get up he said, "Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt."

The word of God is teaching us the importance of trusting in God's guidance.

Joseph obeyed the angel and trusted God so much that that he did not question when he was told to go. This reminds me of Abraham, he walked with God and they became good friends such that he never questioned Gods direction.

How I wish we can have this kind of faith in God because even today God is still speaking to us through his servants and more through his Holy word. We need to make God a close friend to us and we will obey when he will be guiding our steps.

Prayer: Heavenly father, hallowed be your holy name. we pray today that you may guide our steps. Help us to know and recognize your voice, help us to trust you more. In this journey we cannot make it without, we fully depend on you for guidance and counsel. Thank you for all the promises you have promised us, with faith we believe we shall receive because you are holy.

Help us to live in your presence praising and worshiping you.

In Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.



Rahab Wambui

Kenyan

22 years

lesbian

Rahab Wambui

Friday, December 29, 2023

Psalm 148; Isaiah 49:5-15; Matthew 12:46-50

Contributor: Nico Bonner

“You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.” - Isaiah 49:6 NLT

March 2nd, 2022 - the day before my soon-to-be wife and I were involved in a near-fatal accident and two days before my 33rd birthday... Back then, how would I have interpreted this scripture? I hadn't opened a bible in years; that God would anoint me as a leader, urging me to “go make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19 NLT), seemed far-fetched.

Over the past decade I envisioned being my own boss, owning multiple businesses - a bar, liquor store, restaurant, and tattoo shop. I know now that my vision lacked true purpose.

God was about to intervene.

That day in March, a sedan collided and totaled our vehicle. According to first responders on the scene, miraculously we only suffered minor cuts and bruises. The next day was Friday. Working that lucrative shift with the incentive of earning birthday money was too enticing for me to take time off to heal and rest. Yet, a part of me died that Friday night; the part that placed money above all, operating outside of purpose, focusing on earthly pursuits instead of spiritual ones.

As I reflected on what I thought made me happy, I realized I was neither happy nor secure. Over the next few months I sat with my miraculous survival, reflecting on the source of my protection. That's when I realized the life-long truth I'd been grappling with: God loves me, He cares for me, and He has a plan for me. He's been pursuing me even when I wasn't pursuing Him. He never stopped loving me and has never forgotten me (Isaiah 49:8, 15 NLT). He's been aligning my life and path with the plan and purpose He uniquely created for me.

During the Summer and following Fall, I embarked on a journey of prayer and active pursuit of God and His will, praying for Him to guide me in using the skills He blessed me with to further the Kingdom. I promised if He said to “Follow me” (Matthew 9:9 NLT) that I would respond like Matthew and rise up and pursue His will. True to my promise, I retired from bartending to pursue music and ministry for God's glory.

As a Christian Hip-Hop artist, I joyously use my creative and musical skills to showcase how God can use a lesbian in a male-dominated industry. As the founder of Flaming for Jesus, I am blessed with the joy of assisting the LGBTQIA+ community in the healing of religious trauma.

I found my joy in the purpose for which God uniquely created me. How joyous the love and care He has for us? From the beginning He designed His plan for us, revealed in His time, created on purpose, with purpose.

Let us join hands and pray for them and we shall rejoice together as they come to Christ.

Nico Bonner (she/her) is an African American lesbian who advocates for an inclusive connection between faith and the LGBTQIA+ community.



Nico Bonner

A native of Houston, residing in San Antonio, Tx with her wife, Jess, Nico founded Flaming for Jesus to bridge the gap between faith and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Nico is also a Christian Hip Hop artist and her debut EP album, “Not Nicodemus” was featured on WOKB 1680 am.

She is passionate about serving the Lord, cooking, writing, volunteering, and music. Nico's personal journey is one of hope, faith, and love, and she aims to ensure that no one in the LGBTQIA+ community feels unloved or unworthy.

Contributor: Jemima Mugo

“Praise the Lord church”, this is a common phrase in all Christian meetings. Praise and worship are our Lord's food. This is the only sacrifice God expects from us. The reason for our existence as Christians is to praise God and worship his holy name. the book of psalm begins and ends with hallelujah which is an exclamation of praise and encouragement to Christians to always praise him.

When are we supposed to praise God? we should praise God at all times, when things are smooth in our lives we should praise God, when we are facing problems, we should praise him even more because his strong arm holds us not to fall. By praising God, we are not doing him a favor but God has given me favor to be among them that are praising Him.

When I came out to myself as a queer woman, I was going through a lot of conflicts in my mind and my biggest worry was how God viewed me. I had developed this don't care attitude because of peer pressure, most of my friends were drug addicts and I also started smoking to fit in their circle.

While we were partying almost every weekend, we had a habit of praying gospel music from midnight till morning. The most amazing thing was that the praises were so emotional, being an outsider, you could have thought this people were pretending to love God. they get so broken before God and you can feel their openness to their creator.

Even if we question God so much as the Lgbtq+ community, we complain so much for being who we are but we praise God for keeping us alive. We have survived brutality from the society, we have survived correctional rape, we have survived conversion therapy and deliverance prayers. God has saved us from being killed by drug addiction, we have survived homelessness and now that we are able to meet here and do this advent together is reason enough to praise and worship God.

God is very patient with us; he does not rush to judge us. He has given us wisdom that we are able to make sober decisions, it is only through wisdom we are able to acknowledge God as the Creator of all.

2nd Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to love you with all my heart, mind and strength. Help me to worship and praise you at all times. Transform me to be like my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you because your grace is enough in my life.
Amen



My names are Jemima Mugo.

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

Jemima Mugo

Contributor: Dr. Stephen Sprinkle

Focus on Luke 2:22-40: The Presentation of Jesus the Christ

When Jesus' parents took him up to the Temple to present him to God according to the law of Moses, two amazing elderly people awaited him there.

Anna, the prophet, a holy widow in her eightieth decade, and Simeon, a member of the tribe of priests who matched her in age, could have said, "Someone rumored to be the Messiah? Sure, sure. We've seen it all before." But they didn't conclude that at all!

The first great post-nativity miracle is that these two elderly Jews realized their waiting and watching had not been in vain. Old Anna erupted into prophecy at the sight of the Christ Child, declaring that here was the "redemption of Israel!"

Ancient Simeon took the baby in his arms and burst into song: "My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel!"

Eastern Orthodox Christians honor Simeon the God-Receiver and Anna the Prophet as the final prophets of the First Testament, and rightly so. There was nothing passive about how they awaited the Good News. I like to think of them as activists of faith, of "hopeful waiting."

Anna virtually lived in the Temple "night and day." Luke tells us that Simeon was on-call, in and out of the Temple precincts whenever the Holy Spirit beckoned. When they saw the infant Jesus brought through the portico of the Second Temple, their activism was joyfully rewarded. God had broken into human time once more, "Alleluia!" and their lives, as well as the generations that were to follow, were changed forever.

Waiting is not inactivity. Every activist for human liberation who takes the long view knows. Waiting is hard work, and it takes communities of hope to sustain it over the long haul. Not everyone gets to see the fruit that it bears. In fact, most do not.

We got a living example of that very hope-come-true for millions of Anglican Christians in mid-November. The General Synod of the Church of England voted to allow a trial of special rites blessing same-sex couples.

Continued next page

Sunday, December 31, 2023 Continued

Contributor: Dr. Stephen Sprinkle

The decision came after decades of argument. The headlines of The Guardian on November 18, 2023 blared, In Blessing Same-Sex Couples, the Church's Compassion Triumphed Over Blind Faith.

We are latter-day Annas and Simeons, blessed to welcome what generations of our forebears longed to see. God has broken through again, and Jesus is a bit more present than in Advents before. We, and those who follow us, have much work to do to secure this long-awaited hope-come-true for human rights and LGBTQIA+ equality. The tides of current authoritarianism are not running in our favor. But that makes the joy of these recent glad tidings all the sweeter.

As Catherine Pepinster, former editor of The Tablet, writes, "Christianity is at its best when its followers shape God not in their own likeness but in someone else's, when they see God in the stranger, the outsider." Amen! This Presentation of the Lord, we have brand new Good News to tell!

Bio: Stephen V. Sprinkle is Emeritus Professor of Practical Theology, after holding the office of Director of Field Education and Supervised Ministry since 1994 at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas. A native of North Carolina, and educated with a B.A. from Barton College, an M.Div. from Yale University Divinity School, and a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Duke University Graduate School, he is an ordained minister of the Alliance of Baptists and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Dr. Sprinkle is the first openly LGBTQ+ scholar on the faculty of Brite. Dr. Sprinkle was named 2010-2011 Hero of Hope by the Cathedral of Hope United Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas for his advocacy on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community. He currently serves as Theologian-in-Residence for the Episcopal Church of St. Thomas the Apostle, Dallas, Texas. Dr. Sprinkle is a human rights advocate, a widely sought speaker, and is an internationally recognized authority on anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes. Dr. Sprinkle is the author of three academic books, *Disciples and Theology* (1999) and *Ordination* (2004), both published by Chalice Press, and the award-winning *Unfinished Lives: Reviving the Memories of LGBTQ Hate Crimes Victims* (2011) by



Dr. Stephen Sprinkle

Resource Publications. Throughout his career, Dr. Sprinkle has been involved in the life and witness of the church. He has served five congregations including three in North Carolina, one in Connecticut, and one in Texas. He also serves on the National Board of Parity NYC, a faith-based organization that works to reconcile the secular and sacred world with the LGBTQ+ community.

Monday, January 1, 2004 Part 1

Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 8; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:15-21

Contributor: Faith Mbgogo

Holy name of Jesus

Long ago in our village, there was a home that was demon possessed. It was the only incidence I have ever witnessed in my life but I do not wish to encounter that thing for the rest of my life. It all started like a joke when we heard screams from this home stead and when neighbors got there found nothing. They narrated how they were being roughed up and beaten by unseen people, sand was added to their food, water was mixed with paraffin etc. out of curiosity many people flocked there just to watch these mysteries. This family was really suffering, they were tormented by demons and they were helpless.

Mark 16:17-18 And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.

One Sunday afternoon, the churches around organized joint fellowship at this home. The preacher preached Mark 16:17-18, they prayed calling the name of Jesus and the house hold was set free. This family had suffered for almost a whole week physically and mentally but by the mention of the name Jesus they were set free. Many people gave their lives to Christ upon witnessing the Lord's deliverance. This scenario had a very big impact in my life because even when I am in distress I just find my self calling on the name of Jesus. When I have bad dreams, even in those dreams I still call out the name of Jesus.

John 16:23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

In the Holy name of Jesus, we obtain every blessing and grace for this time and even eternity. This name protects us against Satan and his wiles, the devil fears the name of Jesus because he conquered him when he was tempting him in the desert and even on the cross.

Philippians 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

It doesn't matter your status in the society, all should bow at the mention of this wonderful name, diseases bow and Gods people are set free by the mention of the name Jesus.

Acts 3:6 then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

I pray that today each one of us may be surprised with joy at the mention of the name above every other name. Jesus name above all.

Song by Naida Hearn:

Lord, I praise your name; Jesus' name above all names

Beautiful savior, Glorious Lord; Emmanuel, God with us

Blessed Redeemer living word.

God loves us in mysterious ways; Beyond all sin or shame;

Rich blessings for our weary days; As Love dares speak its Name.



My names are Faith Mbgogo.

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

Faith Mbgogo

Contributor: Cynthia Vacca Davis

I like to think of advent the same way I think of the days leading up to a trip, when life feels awash in potential. What will we see, what will we do and experience? As adults we too often lose that sense of wonder; as Christians, we too often lose sight of life's potential. Advent is an invitation to revel in the excitement of anticipation and imagine the possibilities of life in the here and now.

There's a tendency, sometimes, to boil the narrative of Christ's coming down to theological—although slightly intangible—ideas: Jesus came, long ago, and one day, we'll meet him in heaven. As joyous as those ideas are, I don't believe they represent the fullness of what Christ came to offer.

Many times, Christians cling to hopes of heaven and completely miss the gifts Jesus wants for us here on earth. Today's scriptures remind us that we can anticipate heaven AND experience a full and complete life on earth.

Ecclesiastes 3:12 tells us there is "nothing better" in the human experience "than to be happy and enjoy [ourselves] as long as [we] live." And Matthew reminds us that the kingdom of God is only for those who make things better for others here on earth.

In their book *The Last Week* scholars Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan offer an argument for a politically-minded Jesus who came to confront an unjust political system where oppression reigned under the guise of godliness. The authors argue that Jesus' work wasn't primarily about the afterlife in a heavenly sense, but, rather, to pave the way for life after oppression in the now.

The idea of Jesus as a politically-minded liberator has profound meaning for LGBTQIA Christians who have been told to suppress their desires and identities for the sake of their eternal souls. This idea is one of bondage and oppression. As a friend of mine once said to one of our gay siblings "there is no abundant life in a closet."

What if we turned our thoughts this advent season to messages we've received—often under the guise of godliness—that keep us in bondage? What if our focus was on life beyond that bondage rather than just life in the great beyond?

Let's embrace advent as a time to imagine the potential of life beyond whatever bondage has held us and experience, perhaps for the first time, the life Christ truly came to give.



Cynthia Vacca Davis

Cynthia Vacca Davis is an adjunct professor with a trunk full of ungraded papers and snack wrappers.

If you come to her house, expect dogs at the door, wine on the table, and medium roast in her Industrial Bunn coffee maker. She is serious about beverages. She loves cameras, New Orleans, and stories. She overuses the word "community" because she thinks you can never have too much of that.

Cynthia is the author of *Intersexion*, a story of faith, identity and authenticity published by Lake Drive Books.

You can reach her at <https://www.cynthiavaccadavis.com>

Tuesday, January 2, 2024

Psalm 148; Proverbs 1:1-7; James 3:13-18

Contributor: Wilfred Nyokabi

I had reached to a point in my life where nothing seemed right. My life was very blank, there was nothing worth living for. I was just living because I woke up but many times, I prayed that I would not wake up. Why did God choose me of all people to be born a lesbian, I was so much aware that I was born this way despite what people say its influence. My other sisters and close cousins were very rebellious, some had kids out of wedlock but I envied their lives. This life was just unfair to me, I could have given anything to be heterosexual. Today I am a happy soul, my mourning days are over and I long to the beginning of a new day. I learnt to love and accept my sexuality as a gift from God and not a curse as I was made to believe. I always wake up with joy because I know I have a mission to accomplish in this world.

Psalms 148 answers my question and other questioning Lgbtq+ Christians “why am I here today”? The reason for our existence is to glorify God. our hearts should always yearn to praise God. of all Gods creations, human beings are the only ones who are able to praise God with our voices. The rest of God’s creation reflect the praise of God by just existing, look at the mountains, valleys, ocean and see the greatness of our God. at the rising of the sun, sunset, we see the stars and praise the name of God. we believe in this powerful God when we say in the apostle’s creed “I believe in God, Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.”

Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

This is a common memory verse in Sunday school classes, and we grow up being taught that for us to succeed in anything we must put God first in our lives. There can be a lot of peace, justice and love around the world.

We can only put God first by acknowledging his supremacy above all things, through our praises and worship. When we fear the Lord, we love one another. How I wish the world can learn to live in the fear of the Lord because we can hate what our God hates and love all that he loves.

James 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Prayer: Dear God, like Solomon I pray that you may gift me with your wisdom. Help me to be humble, help me to be truthful, and a righteous peacemaker and above all help me to always praise and worship you in Spirit. In Jesus mighty name I pray. Amen.



Wilfred Nyokabi

29 years

Kenyan/ African

Lesbian

Christian

Wilfred Nyokabi

Wednesday, January 3, 2024

Psalm 110; Proverbs 1:20-33; James 4:1-10

Contributor: Josphine Wambui

A don't care attitude leads to a valley of "I wish I knew" - our Sunday school teacher used to repeat these words to us. And when I went to high school, our principal used to remind us to be wise in making decisions and following multitude.

There was a group of girls in our school that formed a group called "untouchables", to fit in this group you had to have been born and bred in the city because they had a different slang from the rest of us who were brought up in the village.

They had a lot of influence in school and because of peer pressure many students wanted to be associated with them. One day they complained that the tea we were served did not have enough sugar and they planned a strike, they destroyed school properties and they left the school compound. The majority girls from the rural areas never left the school compound, those who left were expelled from school. Many lives in regret as to why they joined the group but it is already too late.

This is the wisdom Proverbs 1:20-33 is talking about. One cannot live foolishly forever without reaping the benefits and when the results come in, it is too late to undo the path that produced them "I told you so." Failure to listen to wisdom brings regrets, this is equivalent to rejecting the fear of the Lord. *Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* There is destruction of fools because wisdom is life.

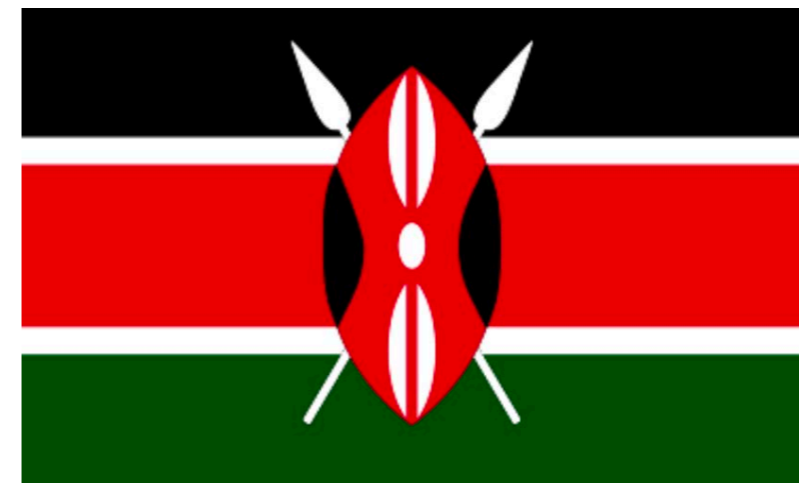
Let us never fear the future, our Lord is sitting at the right hand of God with expectations. We too can sit in this peaceful assurance, with confidence as we wait the second coming of our Lord Jesus.

James 4:1-10 is teaching us how we should wait for our Lord Jesus Christ, why do we devote our hearts to other things. James 4:4b "therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

Jesus replied "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." God's grace is greater than our sins, we should resist the devil and he will free from us. If we draw near to God, he will draw near to us.

I thank God today because of this assurance, with Jesus sitting at the right hand in glory. One day he will reign in righteousness and there will be justice in our world. we shall live without being discriminated because of our sexuality.

Dear Lord, prepare me to be the person you would like me to be when I shall meet Jesus' face to face. Amen.



Josphine Wambui

I am Josphine Wambui aged 38 years from Kenya.

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

I must confess the hope and love we get in that fellowship is just

wonderful and may God keep us together as each others keeper.

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

Thursday, January 4, 2024

Psalm 110; Proverbs 3:1-12; James 4:11-17

Contributor: Jane Wanjigi

Psalm 110:1 “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

This helps us understand how strong God is, he is telling us to stay believing in him and he will make us winners of all the battles. Satan and his agents may want to bring to our lives. He assures us that he will defeat them all and make us emerge victorious.

This makes us to rejoice and always remain in him who promises us victory. He is true to his promises just like he did to David. Let us listen to his teaching and do according to his will. Let us remain faithful to him because he has good plans for us as Christians.

The book of Proverbs 3:1-12 focuses on love of our God. The book guides us on how we should honor our God. When we do according to his commands that we are reminded by his book that they were set for us as Christians to follow we make him happy. Trusting and doing his will is the key message in this book. And when we do all, he has commanded us to do he has promised us that he will bless us in an extraordinary way.

When we live in a life of trusting God, we find treasures in his accompanying promise so as Christians, let us listen to his words and obey his commands because after we do all that there is a reward from him.

James 4:11-12 is reminding us not to take the position of God in judging others. James reminds us that we are the doers of the law. He urges us to walk in humility in our relationship with God and with each other. James 4:13: Now listen to me you that say, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to a certain city, where we will stay a year and go in to business and make a lot of money,” this shows how easy and ignorant we

Christians are, by thinking we can see our future. We are being reminded that its only God who can make our plans succeed if he allows them to. Verse 14 reminds us that we are not guaranteed of tomorrow, or the next minute, this is because our life is like a mist. We are on earth now the next minute we are no more, may God guide us to put him first and understand his word.

Prayer: Heavenly and eternal father, I come before you with a request of being forgiven my sins.

Thank you for reminding me that am like a vapor which can be missed any time you want, and help me live according to your will as a true Christian. Everlasting God continue showering your blessing upon my life and protecting me from all my enemies. Make me victorious as your servant and make me shine by your grace. Amen



My names are Jane Wanjigi, 45 yrs Kenyan.

A lesbian woman who loves God with all my heart.

I love traveling and meeting new people.

Jane Wanjigi

Contributor: Liggera Edmonds-Allen

Luke 6:29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also.

I was very hesitant to interact with this passage. It's a very famous one, and it has always made me feel bad about myself. I always thought it was about forgiving someone who is oppressing you, and allowing them to harm you.

It was only after reading the work of Corey Farr that I found unexpected queer joy in these words, and took their meaning as the activism they have always represented.

Imagine being slapped in the face by somebody's palm. If you turned your other cheek, they would have to hit you with the back of their hand. In the context in which this passage was written, the fine for a backhand was twice that of a slap - the equivalent cost of spitting on you.

When you turn the other cheek, you are daring someone to make a statement of degradation and inhumanity. Or, if they had backhanded you and marked you as lesser, they would have to strike you with their palm on the other cheek, making the choice to either dirty themselves or reinstate your humanity.

Turning the other cheek does not mean tolerating abusive behavior. It is a means to reclaim your own humanity, and expose your oppressor. It is a challenge to the very fabric of society, and the shared empathy between humans. It is a naming of the power structures all around us. It asks, will you recognize me as a person? Will you treat me like an animal?

I always thought this passage was a way to make people small, but I now realize it makes us larger than life. It makes me think of the drag queens and leather gays who are always told to be less embarrassing, less flamboyant, to stop giving the queer community a bad name. But their largeness is a political, celebratory, mythological act – they are unapologetically themselves, daring the world to call them lesser; or even more terrifying, to recognize them as human.

My way of turning the other cheek is continuing to create. It is continuing to laugh and sing and dance as a transgender person. It is continuing to fiercely love and defend my queer community. In a world that wants us to disappear, this is the most radical act of all.



Liggera Edmonds-Allen (they/them) is a Dramaturgy graduate from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Their work revolves around transgender activism and queer joy. They love poetry, theatre, and going to the aviary!

Liggera Edmonds-Allen

Saturday, January 6, 2024

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

Contributor: Kennedy

Epiphany of the Lord

“When Jesus will be revealed to me, I will rejoice, There will be no more tears when I will see the Lord with my eyes, It will be a moment of praise as I embrace the Lord my savior, I look forward to that day, Christ will be revealed to me.”

This is a direct translation of an African language (kikuyu) song, most African mothers sing it while in difficulties. It gives them hope of a better life in eternity. But as a born-again Christian, do I still wait for another manifestation of Jesus?

I am very humbled today as I write for this year’s advent in an Lgbtq+ context. I am proud to be associated with my gay brother, I regret the many years my family drove him away with our homophobia.

God was manifesting himself in our family through my brother but all of us were so blind to even recognize it. since we were young, my brother was this person who would challenge us to sing a worship song before every night prayers as it was a tradition to pray together as a family. He would jokily tell us “Don’t you think God will be happy if we just sing him a song before telling him we fear the night”?

My brother was the most spiritual in our family and his sense of humor always lighted our home. When he came out to me as gay, I went through a phase of denial, I failed to recognize the beautiful soul he is, created in the image of God. but in the midst of if all, I chose to see my brother beyond his sexuality and that was a game changer. I thank God for my gay brother and because of him, today I am a proud ally.

They went in to the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshiped him, they brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him. (Mathew 2:11 GNB)

God used the stars to manifest to the wise men the birth of Jesus Christ, they had studied the stars and they saw the unique star over Bethlehem they realized something special was happening.

God will always use what we are familiar with to manifest himself to us, When God manifest himself to you in some way, nothing could be more important than to be attentive to his voice and follows his manifestation with the same haste.

As we honor this moment in time when the Christ child was manifested to the world, we need to look deep in to our hearts. Christ has been born again in our hearts and he will continue to manifest within us. What can we give our God for manifesting himself to us, we can only give him our allegiance and completely submit to him. As we celebrate the soberness of the Epiphany, God wants to manifest himself to you today, let us respond with faith and worship by giving our lives to him.

Prayer: Most glorious Christ, please manifest yourself within my soul where you wish to be born, may I follow the example of the magi, by laying down my life for you Lord. I surrender all to you my Christ and savior. Amen.



A Kenyan heterosexual man who is an ally. Human rights activist and a Christian.

Kennedy

Sunday, January 7, 2024

Psalm 143; 2 Kings 4:18-37; Ephesians 2:1-10

Contributor: Idah Gitau

Baptism of the Lord

My grandmother was among the first Anglican converts in our village, even today her name is respected as a staunch believer of the Anglican faith. She made sure all of her grandchildren were baptized and confirmed as Christians. My mother was very reluctant with matters of faith and so my grandmother took it upon her to make sure we were baptized.

We were young and we never understood the importance of baptism, we just did it because our grandmother loved it and it was fun being clothed in a white garment. When I grew older, I wanted to experience the change that comes with the baptism as the bible says and I wanted to be baptized by the river just like Jesus.

I joined an evangelical church and just I had desired, I was baptized at the biggest river in our village. Just like I had expected, I felt a wave of relief over my body, I was refreshed and the fact I was baptized in a river made me feel more connected to Jesus. But hey! The baptism did not wash away my gayness as I had hoped, even when I was stepping into the water I had only one prayer request. “Lord Jesus, heal the gay in me.”

God did not kill the gay in me, instead he gave me the assurance that I am his child and he loves me just as he created me. I am confident today to say that I am born again Christian who constantly pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And a voice came from heaven; “You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:11 NIV)

The holy trinity reveals Jesus as Gods beloved son, we acknowledge Jesus as our savior. By baptism Jesus became one of us, as a human person, Jesus identified with us, at times he was hungry, thirsty, angry and even wept. After his baptism Jesus began his ministry, he preached the gospel of healing and deliverance.

Jesus changed lives then and even today he’s changing lives, “it is no longer I who lives; it is Christ who lives in me”, this transformation compels us to work to bring justice to the marginalized, as a queer woman I look forward to the day the church will affirm us and respect our dignity. I look forward to the church of Christ preaching love and acceptance just as Jesus did. We share the divine life through Jesus and we too look forward to the day we shall be told “this is my beloved child in whom I am well pleased.”



Idah Gitau

25 years

Lesbian Christian

All I know it that my redeemer lives.

Idah Gitau

Monday, January 8, 2024

Psalm 69:1-5, 30-36; Genesis 17:1-13; Romans 4:1-12

Contributor: Tony Lemmy

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

This verse reminds us that even in the face of adversity, we can find hope and strength in the knowledge that God is always with us, ready to guide and support us through any challenge.

Nothing can be conceived more overwhelming than the strange and inexplicable suffering resulting from loyalty to God and zeal for His honor. Undeserved reproach is the most stupendous grief possible to the sensitive soul. The burdened heart finds some ease in describing how heavy its burden is, and the devout heart receives some foretaste of longed-for help in the act of telling God how sorely His help is needed. Sometimes we feel like things rush in on us, like drowning in a flood. Other times we feel as if the water level slowly rises until we are overwhelmed. Each has its own type of fear and misery.

Too often we think that we need to get our lives right first before coming to God. “I can’t come to God because my life is a mess.” This is why you need to come to God! You cannot get your life right without God. We are all ungodly. We are all in sin.

We are all deserving of God’s wrath. You can’t fix your life first. You cannot earn your way into God’s favor. Now here is the twist to the story: God is already showing you favor and you don’t even know it! God should be executing wrath upon us for our sins because that is what is just. Rather, God is showing us favor and grace, hoping that we will see his love and come to Jesus.

Come to Jesus first and he will change your life. Don’t try to change your life first. That is not going to work and you are not impressing God. God knows you need him. He wants you to recognize you need him and need his sacrifice for sins. Come to Jesus with your sins and he will make you white as snow. You cannot clean yourself up. You need the blood of Jesus to make you clean, set you on the right path, and guide you in the paths of right living.

Sometimes we feel like things rush in on us, like drowning in a flood. Other times we feel as if the water level slowly rises until we are overwhelmed. Each has its own type of fear and misery.



Tony Lemmy

A Kenyan gay Christian 28 years.

I believe we are all valid in the eyes of God.

Tony Lemmy

Contributor: Esther Njeri

1st Samuel 15:22 shows us how important obedience is in our life's. When we obey God and heed to his commands, he feels exalted and worshipped a lot more than giving him sacrifices. In verse 24, Saul said "I have sinned for I have transgressed the commandments of the Lord and your words." He farther explains that he did that for he feared the people. When we sin against God, we tend to give a lot of excuses why we have sinned to prove our innocence. We are called to own up our wrong doings and repent so that God can forgive us. Genuine repentance is what God want from us so that he can pardon our sins. It is also important for us to keep in mind that anytime we do wrong or contrary to Gods doings, we have a price to pay for that and that's why Saul was trying to give excuses because he knew he was to lose his position as a king.

Acts 5;1-11 is talking about our faithfulness towards giving our tithes and offerings to God. We cry when praying for breakthrough in our day today activities like businesses and generally the work we do to sustain us financially. we even promise God that when we receive what we are praying for we will give back a certain percentage to him, when he answers our prayers, we get so busy that we don't remember our promise to God and sometimes we say he will understand.

The story of Ananias and his wife Sapphira teaches us to be truthful to God and know that he sees us always. We cannot hind from God and that he can do anything to us because he is the super power.

Psalms 86; is a prayer that we pray to God while in a difficult situation. We should remain confident that God will hear and save us.

The book is encouraging us to remain prayerful and strong in the Lord, it does not matter how big the situation is, God our master is bigger than everything. Gods grace will always be sufficient to us.

Psalm 86:11 Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

We are called to choose Christ to be our guide as we walk in the spiritual path. When we choose Christ, it does not matter where and when the trials of Satan want to attack us, we are assured of protection. Honoring God and living a life with light of God is good in our lives because our hearts will be settled in him. Our God is slow to anger and he loves us and he is faithful to us. He gives us strength to overtake our enemies and overcome just like in verses 14 is telling us. Let us then make God as our closest friend.



Esther Njeri

22 years

Bisexual Christian

Student.

Esther Njeri

Wednesday, January 10, 2024

Psalm 69:1-5, 30-36; Isaiah 41:14-20; John 1:29-34

Contributor: Julius Mwangi

Psalm 69: Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

For the past few weeks, we have experienced extreme rainfall in our country Kenya. This has resulted to death, displacement and destruction of properties. This is a natural disaster that a man can do very little to prevent it. The government is trying to save life's but still they are overwhelmed and people are still washed by the waters. In Psalm 69, the psalmist has found himself overwhelmed by heavy floods, he realizes it is only God who can save him and that is why he is crying to God for help.

In our day to day lives we have found ourselves in the midst of flooding waters, raging storms that almost kill us. But these tragedies have not been the final word in our lives. God has always been there to uplift us and our final words have been those of victory where we come out praising God.

Psalms 69:33 The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his captive people.

As a gay Christian man in the rural area, my greatest was being outed. I never had the confidence to come out by myself because of the dangers that are involved. There is no bigger tragedy in Kenya than being an out gay. Even if you are abused nobody cares, you cannot report to the police because they will abuse you more there while being locked up.

We live here by the grace of God and I can testify that the grace of God has been sufficient to me.

Isaiah 41:14 "Do not be afraid, you worm Jacob, little Israel, do not fear, for I myself will help you" declares the Lord, your redeemer, the Holy one of Israel.

God is assuring us that despite our delicate condition, he is there to help us. A worm is an insect that can easily be crushed but God is transforming it into a threshing sledge that will crush mountains.

Gods' assurance is for us too today, we have mountains in our lives as Lgbtq+ community. We are marginalized to the extent a former president called us a non-issue; destruction waves are so loud in our lives. But this advent God is assuring us that we will not be crushed, no obstacle is too big for God. He is with us all the time to protect us.

Isaiah 41:17 "the poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

When I joined our local Lgbtq+ fellowship, I found souls that were thirsty for God. For us to find this community of worshippers is prove enough that God provides even in the desert. For many years I had lived to imagine I was the only gay man in our area, I had longed to meet people who would understand and relate with me. But see how God surprises His loved ones, I am here writing this advent. My prayer is that may we be blessed and know that God wants to hold our hand.



My name is Julius Mwangi

34 years gay man from central Kenya.

I value happiness and peace in the whole world.

Julius Mwangi

Thursday, January 11, 2024

Psalm 31:9-16; Lamentations 3:55-66; Mark 10:32-34

Contributor: Zipporah Nyaga

“I have heard a voice calling my name;
I will go down the valleys, climb mountains, go to the plateaus, I will go and do what the word commands me to do. I will put on faith as my cloth, prayers will be my food, the word of God will be my light.”

This is a song we used to sing in Sunday school and even as I read today's devotion it is still fresh in my mind. We all know

Samuel was born as a result of answered prayers and his mother presented him to the altar as she had promised God. from the scriptures we learn that God was calling Samuel by his name. *Psalm 139:1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.*

Have you ever run away from yourself? I spent many years running from the fact that I am transgender. I had been ignoring the fact that I am different and any thought of that kind I could put it under the carpet. The truth about my sexuality dawned on me after I cleared high school, the masculinity in me was so much, no matter how I tried to be feminine, the inner me was male.

I felt trapped in this body and I had this internalized transphobia, I could not look at my self in the mirror and I never cared what I wore. This affected my spiritual life and I stopped praying, I was just surviving without a care. There were many instances that I contemplated suicide but I never succeeded no matter how well I planned it. I thought to myself, “I should try on Facebook and see if there can be other people like me around”.

That is how I was introduced to a local LGBTQ+ Christian fellowship, I was surprised with joy. I am a witness of the Love of God that never ends, I know I am not in this world by mistake.

Psalm 139 shows us the picture we should have of our God. the one who knew us even before we were born, who designed our destiny even when we were in our mothers' womb. A God who is calling us by our names, where can we hide not to be seen by Him and he knows even the number of days each one of us will stay in this world. what a mighty God!

When you hear the voice of the Lord today, do not harden your heart. If you listen carefully, you will hear that still voice calling you to be united with Christ. *1st Corinthians 6:17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in Spirit.*



How I pray that as we finish this advent, we shall obey the voice of the Lord. Christ is already manifested to us, let us go out there and represent Christ. Let us preach peace and love.

Zipporah Nyaga 28 years
Transgender Christian
Human rights activist.

Zipporah Nyaga



Pastor Kim serves as minister at Immanuel United Church of Christ, Wright City, Missouri. Previously she has served in the Church of the Nazarene as associate pastor and co-pastor in Kansas, Florida, and Missouri. Pastor Kim has a B.S. from Trevecca Nazarene University; M.Div./Religious Education from Nazarene Theological Seminary; and D.Min. from Eden Theological Seminary.

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

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

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



Rev. Dr. Marian Edmonds-Allen is the executive director of Parity, an NYC-based international nonprofit that works to heal LGBT and faith concerns. She is also the director of Blessed by Difference, Holy Dialogues, and an author and speaker.

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

Thank you for joining us during this Advent Season!

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

We also have wonderful Converge Groups for you to be part of.

Everyone is welcome. EVERY one.

Remember, God loves you!

