

A Sanctified Art LLC is a collective of artists in ministry who create resources for worshiping communities. The Sanctified Art team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God.

Learn more about their work at
sanctifiedart.org.

CLOSE to HOME

Advent Devotional

Art, Poetry, Songs, &
Reflections for the
Season of Advent



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When something hits close to home, it affects us deeply. The stories and scriptures of Advent are tender, heavy with emotion, and vulnerable. We hold the memories and truths of this season close to our hearts. *Close to Home* acknowledges that Emmanuel is with us, and yet, God's promised day—our everlasting home—is not fully realized. We long for God to come close.

The Advent and Christmas scriptures are rich with home metaphors and imagery. John the Baptist prophesies about the One who is to come, but reminds us that we are still wandering far from God's promised day; his message hits close to home, especially for those experiencing inequity and oppression. After receiving the angel's news, Mary retreats to Elizabeth's home, seeking refuge and safety. Christ is born in the midst of a journey home, in a crowded dwelling space amidst livestock and shepherds alike. The Magi travel far from home to pay homage to Christ, and, having been warned in a dream, they avoid Herod by traveling home another way. In these scriptures, home is both physical and metaphorical, something we seek and something we are called to build. Ultimately, God is our home and resting place. God draws near and makes a home on earth—sacred ground is all around us.

This Advent, may we be comforted by the One who dwells intimately with us. May we expand safety and sanctuary for everyone wandering far from home. May we come home—wherever home is found—to live fully with joy, hope, and courage.

Artfully yours,

The Sanctified Art Creative Team

Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Hannah Garrity

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

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About the creators



Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Founder | Creative Director of SA

Lisle Gwynn Garrity (*she/her*) is a Pastorist (pastor + artist), retreat leader, and creative entrepreneur seeking to fill the church with more color, paint, mystery, and creativity. She founded A Sanctified Art with the conviction that, in order to thrive, the church needs more creative expression and art-filled freedom.

Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Director of Branding | Founding Creative Partner of SA

Lauren (*she/her*) is an artist, graphic designer, and theologian. She uses paint, metallic inks, and Apple pencil to image the layered complexity she experiences in scripture texts. She also helps faith communities share their vibrant stories through branding & design services.

Hannah Garrity Founding Creative Partner of SA

Hannah (*she/her*) is an artist and an athlete, a daughter and a mother, a facilitator and a producer, a leader and a teammate. She is an art teacher at a middle school in Richmond, VA, a Sunday school visual choir facilitator at Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, VA, an art in worship workshop leader wherever she is called, and a liturgical installation artist at the Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC.

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed Founding Creative Partner of SA

Sarah (Are) Speed (*she/her*) is the new Associate Pastor for Young Adults and Membership at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. Sarah feels called to live her life welcoming people into the church by using her energy and passion for beautifully scripted words, raw and relevant liturgy, and hands-on worship experiences to engage our longing for God and the need for justice in this messy world.

Rev. Anna Strickland

Operations Support | Content Creator

Anna Strickland (*she/her*) looks for the Divine in the everyday like treasure in clay jars and first encountered God in the integration of her spiritual self and artistic self. She is a native Austinite and graduated from the University of Texas where she now works as a college minister, especially serving LGBTQ students.

About our guest contributors

Elder

Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri

Vilmarie (*she/her*) is an educator and a ruling elder. Ordained for 26 years, she has served in the Presbyterian Church (USA) at the Session, Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly levels. Vilmarie holds a B.A. in Education (ESL) and an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Teaching. She has taught English and English as a Second Language to teenage and adult students from all over the world. Vilmarie and her husband, Rev. José Manuel Capella-Pratts, live in Miami, FL. Along with the Rev. Cindy Kohlmann, she served as Co-Moderator of the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the first Hispanic Latina and first Puerto Rican person to be elected to this office. Among her loves is the love of art in its many forms. These days she feels closer to God through color, shapes, and movement, exploring watercolor painting as a form of prayer and engaging in one of her preferred spiritual practices, "Praying in Color."

Rev. T. Denise Anderson

Denise (*she/her*) is a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the acting Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency's Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries. A graduate of Howard University School of Divinity, she is the former Co-Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (USA). A nationally-recognized writer and blogger, Denise's work has appeared in *The Christian Century*, *The Huffington Post*, *These Days*, and on her own blog, *SOULa Scriptura: To Be Young, Gifted, and Reformed: soulascriptura.com*. Denise writes, preaches, and engages on issues of social justice, diversity, and reconciliation. As a gifted visual artist, she creates art that explores themes of spirituality, history, religion, and race: tdandersonart.com.

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homesick | Luke 21:25-36

How do you describe homesickness to a child?
You don't.
They know.
Children know the feeling of being away from home.
It's fear, dipped in loneliness,
that "What if I've been forgotten?" sonnet,
or the "What if I can't go back?" refrain.
Even a healthy, scrubbed-clean,
showered-with-love child
knows the longing of home.

But if I *had* to.
If I had to describe
that aching feeling, I would say:
"Homesickness is when longing and grief
wrap themselves around you like a blanket.
It's the door to comfort thrown open.
It's an eye on the horizon for what could be
and the only way out is to keep walking,
to keep dreaming,
to keep looking
for signs that will point you back home."
And if you tell that to a child,
you just may realize
that a part of your spirit
has shoes on
and has always been walking,
always been dreaming,
always been looking
for the home that could be.

The door to comfort has been blown open.
Tell God I'm homesick.
I'm on my way.

Poem by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed



Monday | homesick (HOPE)

Read Luke 21:25-36

Commentary Elder Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri

"...Mi corazón se quedó frente al mar en mi Viejo San Juan..."

The famous Puerto Rican song, "*En mi Viejo San Juan*"¹ has described the sentiments of many in the Puerto Rican diaspora. The song, written in 1943 by Noel Estrada for his brother stationed in Panamá, recounts memories of life in San Juan and the long-awaited return: "My heart remained at the seafront in Old San Juan." Listening to this song sometimes makes me a little **homesick**, but, most of the time, it evokes warm, nostalgic feelings and brings forth memories of the cobblestone streets and blue seas of my hometown.

When hurricane María hit Puerto Rico in 2017, the news footage of the massive category 4 storm contrasted with the lovely memories of the island. The words of the song resonated; my heart was, indeed, at the seafront in Old San Juan. The storm passed, and we anxiously awaited news from our families on the island. Homesickness crept in as we were far away from loved ones and wished to be close to them in the moment of need. Days later, *el silencio de la espera*² was finally broken by the buzz of a text message: "*Estamos bien*" ("We're OK"). Those two words were hope in the midst of chaos. Those words were **home**.

Images of distress, confusion, and fear emerge in Luke 21. In many ways, the feelings that these words evoke mirror the past almost two years of pandemic crisis—a world in turmoil suffering from disasters, both natural and human-made—speaking to the realities and injustices of a chaotic world. Thankfully, Jesus enters this world offering words, not of foreboding, but of **hope** to a homesick people that felt far away from God and longed to be close to kin in the middle of the crisis. "Stand up and raise your heads," Jesus said, "because your redemption is near . . . So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near" (v. 28-31). Even in *el silencio de la espera*, we are reassured that God's kin-dom is near. Kin-dom, in Ada María Isasi-Díaz's definition, is "interconnected community, seeing God's movement emerge from *la familia*, the family God makes."³ God is close. These are words of hope for a homesick world. These words are **home**.

1 Listen to "*En mi Viejo San Juan*" sung by composer Noel Estrada here: youtube.com/watch?v=VF7Oz80Xx4.

2 "The silence of the wait."

3 Ada María Isasi-Díaz quoted in "The Kin-dom of Christ" by Melissa Florer-Bixler. *Sojourners*. Nov. 20, 2018. sojo.net/articles/kin-dom-christ.

Read Luke 21:25-36

From the Artist Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

It is peculiar that we begin Advent with adult Jesus offering us a prophecy and parable filled with fear and mystery. This particular scripture is within a longer section of Jesus describing the coming destruction of the temple, a public statement that no doubt added to the conspiracies and plots stirring against him. The fate he speaks of is filled with terrifying details: the temple demolished, false prophets, wars and uprisings, food shortages, natural disasters, persecution, and epidemics (Luke 21:5-24). As we read these words now, this litany of fear and foreboding feels far too familiar—a bit too close to home.

When I began this series of visuals, I printed an architectural blueprint on a large piece of cardstock. Using acrylic paint, I added fluid strokes of blue, obscuring the white lines in the blueprint so that the plans for building a home would appear present but also blurred and concealed. I added hints of gold leaf, trying to emulate the texture of paint peeling from the exterior of a building. I then shifted to digital media, photographing the painting from a number of angles and then drawing figures and details into my compositions with my stylus and iPad.

As I began this particular image, I imagined a scene of chaos and apocalypse. However, as I drew a woman lifting her head and reaching for the fig tree, I began to see a vision of beauty and hope, a glimpse of one's whole being awake to wonder.

I think we all share a collective homesickness. It feels like nostalgia. It looks like the trauma hiding in our past. It can turn into foreboding fear that robs us of real joy. But in this image and in Jesus' words, I see a call to resilience despite the difficult realities that confront us. I see a longing so deep that it keeps us reaching—for a home restored, for comfort renewed, for the fruit that is sure to come.

Prayer

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Imagine placing yourself in this scene. What do you see? How do you feel? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Awake to Wonder | Lisle Gwynn Garrity



Yearning | Hannah Garrity

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

From the Artist Hannah Garrity

Silhouette profiles of faces with diamond repetition. . . Inside the diamonds weave paper lace representations of love, restoration, and Christ's forgiveness—God's grace that alone provides the state of holiness among people. Hands, architecture, doves, food, clothing, and education—these portray some of the gifts we give to one another in faith when we meet face to face.

In this 3rd chapter of Thessalonians, Paul spends time on the ideals of faith, of restoring each other's faith over time. We circle back to one another to connect, share, and build faith in God. From all over the world, four faces smile into the middle of the frame. Our longing to meet face to face creates a ripple effect for community building. Inside the ripples are hands, architecture, doves, food, clothing, and education symbols to represent faith in action. The faces yearn for and inspire one another from afar, like Paul in this letter of love and faith to the people of Thessalonica.

As Paul yearns for the people and the faith of the Thessalonians, he faces persecution in his own city. The news from Timothy gives Paul hope in the face of oppression and persecution. In our current global climate, whom do we yearn for? Whose good news do we rejoice in? Whose faith inspires the continued work of our own faith? For me, it is you.

Prayer

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Imagine placing yourself in this scene. What do you see? How do you feel? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



*Draw or journal a memory of feeling homesick. How did you feel?
What did you yearn for? Close with a prayer for those who are displaced
or far from home.*



SAMPLE

Scan to hear
the tune!



See Fig Leaves Now Sprouting

Lo, How a Rose

Text: Anna Strickland (2021)

Music: Geisliche Kirchengasäng (1599)

See fig tree leaves now sprout - ing Soon
Sun, moon, and stars a - bove us Speak

sum-mer comes a - gain Cre - a - tion
of God's pro - mised day To make space

groans in la - bor For God's reign to
for our new home This world must pass

be-gin We wait with ba - ted breath
a-way When we are filled with dread

Home-sick for God's true kin - dom Age
The words of Christ up-hold us: "A -

with-out hate or death
- rise and raise your head"

Take Sabbath

Nourish and sustain yourself with rest. Commit to a Sabbath activity today, perhaps one of those listed below:

- Go for a walk outside.
- Sit quietly and meditate.
- Plant something indoors or outside.
- Spend time with a friend or loved one.
- Explore a new area of your town or city.
- Cook or bake something using a favorite or new recipe.
- Do yoga or exercise in a way that feels good for your body.
- Write and mail a letter to someone you haven't talked to in a while.
- Organize or redesign an area in your home.
- Draw or create something.
- Dance or play music.
- Write a poem or a song.
- Watch a movie.
- Take a nap.
- Read a book.