



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.



   @sanctifiedart | sanctifiedart.org | contact@sanctifiedart.org

I've been
meaning
to ask...

a series for curiosity,
courage, & connection

**Study journal
with art, poetry,
& prompts for
fostering deeper
connection**



sanctifiedart.org

Here if You Need Me

I got the call and almost
rushed right over.

I wanted to hold your hand and
tell you it would be okay.

I wanted to start a meal train.

I wanted to bring casseroles and flowers
and hope of better days.

I wanted to take my heart
out of my chest
and put it in yours

so that the ache might fade.

I wanted to speak, and fight,
with the person in charge.

I wanted to get justice,

I wanted to make it fair.

I wanted to start a campaign.

I wanted to rewind time,
to easy, better days.

There is so much that I want to do,
but it's not about me.

It's about you.

So tell me—

what do *you* need?

I am here.

I am listening.

Poem by Rev. Sarah Are



In creating this series, we started by asking ourselves questions: *"How can we listen to one another? How do we find connection despite distance? How do we create space for compassionate dialogue and for seeking the holy in one another?"*

While the challenges of becoming beloved community to one another are endless, these questions are simple. We quickly recognized that all courageous conversations begin with simple questions and the curiosity to truly listen. We landed on our leading question, *"I've been meaning to ask..."* because it conveys intentionality, warmth, curiosity, and consideration. In essence, this question also implies the following statements: *"I've been thinking about you and I've been wanting to check in... You've been on my mind... I haven't known how to have this conversation, but I'm getting started with a question."* The ellipses symbolize the main objective of this series: to cultivate courageous conversations—and to keep having them, even if we need to pause. Our weekly sub-themes provide a trajectory for going deeper. As you will see, these questions aren't surface level; they invite us to share our pain and seek ways to care for one another.

As you journey through this series and study journal—both alone and alongside others—we pray that the scriptures, art, poetry, commentary, and prompts lead you deeper into the heart of things. May this series help us to behold each other as images of the divine. May it help us strengthen our capacity for empathy and compassion. May it remind us of the power of asking unassuming questions. May it show us that courage is rooted in the heart.

Through vulnerability and authenticity, may our courageous conversations lead us to glimpse hope, joy, and beauty—and to become the community God created us to be.

Artfully yours,

The Sanctified Art Creative Team

Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Hannah Garrity

Sarah Are

Lauren Wright Pittman

Anna Strickland

About the SA creative team

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. lislegwynngarrity.com

Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Director of Branding | Founding Creative Partner of SA

Lauren (*she/her*) is an artist, graphic designer, and visual exegete. 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. lewpstudio.com

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. hannahgarrity.com

Rev. Sarah Are Founding Creative Partner of SA

Sarah Are (*she/her*) is the Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas. She believes that the Church has a responsibility to open every door to God, so that those of us who are visual, kinesthetic, or relational learners all have equal opportunity to engage God to the fullest of our abilities. Writing is her most beloved spiritual practice. You can find her daily poems on Instagram and Facebook: [@writingthegood](https://www.instagram.com/writingthegood) | writingthegood.com

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



Dr. Raj Nadella

Dr. Raj Nadella (*he/him*) is the Samuel A. Cartledge Associate Professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. Dr. Nadella's research and teaching interests include postcolonial biblical interpretation, migration, and New Testament perspectives on economic justice and their ethical implications for the Church and society. In addition, his research has focused on Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Studies. His work has appeared in publications such as The Huffington Post, Christian Century, and Working Preacher. ctsnet.edu/faculty/nadella-raj



Rev. Brittany Fiscus-van Rossum

Rev. Brittany Fiscus-van Rossum (*she/her*) serves as pastor of Mercy Community Church, a grassroots ecumenical congregation that meets out-of-doors in borrowed space, parking lots, and on the streets of Atlanta, GA. As a community, Mercy strives to bring those in and out of housing together to worship, fellowship, work for justice, offer shelter, and build community. Brittany is passionate about the church's vocation to be present to the poor in ways that foster mutual relationships and healthy communities. mercyatl.org



Rev. Remington Johnson

Rev. Remington Johnson (*she/her*) is an ordained PC(USA) minister who has served at the bedside of the sick and dying as a healthcare chaplain for the last ten years. Remington is currently pursuing a masters in nursing at the University of Texas. Remington is active in the research community by working as a consultant on a growing number of peer-reviewed studies and also serving a medical school think tank at the University of Texas. remingtonjohnson.com



Rev. Aisha Brooks-Johnson (*Brooks-Lytle*)

The Reverend Aisha Brooks-Lytle (*she/her*) is the Executive Presbyterian for the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta serving 80+ congregations and encouraging 20+ new worshipping communities. She is honored and overjoyed to serve as an encourager to the congregations and leaders within a presbytery filled with a deep cultural diversity and a vast theological landscape. She believes that it is part of her call to support healthy and vital congregations and to equip healthy and innovative leaders to live into their passion and purpose as the people of God. atlpcusa.org

Table of contents...

A guide to conversation & listening _____ 1

Week 1

**I've been meaning to ask...
where are you from?**

Poetry prayer "We Are Not Strangers" by Sarah Are	3
Conversation prompts ...where are you from?	4
Commentary Genesis 2:4b-15 by Raj Nadella	5
Reflection prompts Genesis 2:4b-15	6
Art & reflection Genesis 2:4b-15 by Hannah Garrity	7
Commentary John 1:35-51 by Raj Nadella	9
Reflection prompts John 1:35-51	10
Art & reflection John 1:35-51 by Lauren Wright Pittman	11

Week 2

**I've been meaning to ask...
where does it hurt?**

Poetry prayer "When it Hurts" by Sarah Are	13
Conversation prompts ...where does it hurt?	14
Commentary 1 Samuel 1:1-18 by Brittany Fiscus van-Rossum	15
Reflection prompts 1 Samuel 1:1-18	16
Art & reflection 1 Samuel 1:1-18 by Lisle Gwynn Garrity	17
Commentary Mark 5:21-43 by Brittany Fiscus van-Rossum	19
Reflection prompts Mark 5:21-43	20
Art & reflection Mark 5:21-43 by Hannah Garrity	21

Week 3

**I've been meaning to ask...
what do you need?**

Poetry prayer "Unlearning Hands" by Sarah Are	23
Conversation prompts ...what do you need?	24
Commentary Job 2:11-13 by Remington Johnson	25
Reflection prompts Job 2:11-13	26
Art & reflection Job 2:11-13 by Lisle Gwynn Garrity	27
Commentary 2 Timothy 4:9-18 by Remington Johnson	29
Reflection prompts 2 Timothy 4:9-18	30
Art & reflection 2 Timothy 4:9-18 by Lauren Wright Pittman	31

Week 4

**I've been meaning to ask...
where do we go from here?**

Poetry prayer "Flashlight" by Sarah Are	33
Conversation prompts ...where do we go from here?	34
Commentary Ruth 1:1-22 by Aisha Brooks-Lytle	35
Reflection prompts Ruth 1:1-22	36
Art & reflection Ruth 1:1-22 by Hannah Garrity	37
Commentary Acts 10 by Aisha Brooks-Lytle	39
Reflection prompts Acts 10	40
Art & reflection Acts 10 by Lisle Gwynn Garrity	41
Poetry prayer "The Way Home" by Sarah Are	43



SAMPLE

I've been meaning to ask...

A guide to conversation & listening

...where are you from?

We believe everyone is beloved, shaped from the dust of the earth and the breath of God. Everyone has a story to tell. Our stories are messy and beautiful, painful and hopeful—being written and rewritten over time. We commit to disrupting our assumptions and staying curious.

...where does it hurt?

We believe everyone carries hurt and has the capacity to acknowledge the pain of others. We believe God draws close to us in every moment of suffering. We commit to vulnerability and compassion.

...what do you need?

We believe everyone has needs, but each of us needs different things at different times. We believe God calls us to care for one another—in seasons of joy, transition, and hardship. We commit to listening and being present.

...where do we go from here?

We believe courageous conversations have the power to change and transform us. We believe God bridges connections in unexpected ways. We commit to continuing the conversation.

Establish norms

We hope you'll use this journal to foster courageous conversations. Establish the following norms to maintain a safe and brave space.

- **Speak from the 'I'**—Commit to sharing what you know to be true from your lived experience. Do not make personal attacks, speak for other people, or state generalities or stereotypes. Speak only from your personal experience. Keep in mind that vulnerability begets vulnerability. If you share, it might give someone else the courage to share too.
- **Listen from the heart**—Commit to compassionate listening. Commit to receiving what your neighbors offer. Commit to a space where everyone can feel heard.
- **Step up & step back**—Remember that you are called to both speak up and step back and listen. Be mindful that you are doing both gracefully throughout the conversation. To do this, you might follow the practice of mutual invitation. When you finish sharing, invite another person to share. They can either share or say, "Pass for now," then invite someone else to speak.
- **Say more & circle back**—A helpful refrain for conversation is, "Say more." Sometimes it takes a while for each of us to articulate what we truly want to say or to find the courage to say it. If someone has shared something particularly vulnerable or raw, consider circling back with that person at another time. Check in to see if they wish to say more after having some time and space away.
- **Hold space**—Welcome moments of silence and stillness to let words and thoughts sink in. Silence can be sacred. If someone shares something that is particularly painful or emotional, resist the urge to respond in a way that could unintentionally dismiss their experience. Instead, you might say, "I hear you and I see you," or, "Thank you for sharing; you're not alone."
- **Respect boundaries**—Respect each other's boundaries and privacy by acknowledging that what you share in your conversation is to be confidential, unless permission is granted to share it otherwise. Be mindful of your own personal boundaries—you're encouraged to step into a vulnerable space, but not an unsafe one. Share only what you feel safe sharing.
- **Stay curious**—Curiosity is a spiritual practice. If you don't fully understand someone's experience, get curious to learn more. You might ask: "Can you tell me more about how that made you feel?" Or, more plainly, lean on the questions in our series: "Where are you hurting right now?" "What do you need?"

**I've been meaning to ask...
where are you from?**

We Are Not Strangers

If you ask me where I'm from,
I'll tell you about the South—
about sweet tea, church pews,

slow drawls, sultry summers.
And if you pause,
then I may go on to tell you

how I'm from a family of preachers,
how I stand on the shoulders of generations
who believed that love could be the answer.

And if you're still listening even then,
I'll tell you that I'm from strong women
with tall spines who have carried the weight

of inequality on their backs with children on their laps.

And then I'll tell you about
the kitchens that I'm from,

which have always cooked enough
food for unexpected guests—just in case.
Or I could tell you about the car

that carried us into the mountains, summer after summer
so that we could breathe again.
That's part of where I'm from.

And if you haven't given up yet,
then I may even mention the dirt—
the earth that catches me,

the earth that holds me.
The earth that reminds me of growth.
The earth that will eventually welcome me home.

You and I aren't really strangers after all.

Poem by Rev. Sarah Are

...where are you from? Conversation prompts

*Respond to any of the following prompts
with a conversation partner, or choose
one to reflect and journal.*

1. How many places have you lived or visited? What place(s) have you loved? What place feels most like home?
2. Is there a story behind your given name or your surname? If you have a nickname or a chosen name, how is this name meaningful to you?
3. Share about a family member or close friend who has shaped who you are. How has this person impacted your life?
4. Share a memory from your childhood.
5. If you feel comfortable, share anything you know about your ancestry or ethnicity. What stories have been passed down to you? What stories or information are missing? In what ways does your story of origin hold pain, and in what ways does it hold promise?
6. What's something you love or celebrate about yourself?

Week 1 I've been meaning to ask... where are you from?

Read Genesis 2:4b-15

Commentary | Dr. Raj Nadella

At some point in our lives, most of us have been asked that loaded question, "Where are you from?" I often wonder how Adam/humanity might have responded to it. Obviously, Adam was from the ground. But there are important details that merit attention, and God is in those details. God formed humanity from the dust of the ground and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life, making Adam a living being. How exactly did God breathe into Adam's nostrils? God utters things into existence in Genesis 1 but is more hands-on in this chapter. God forms humanity, makes all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, plants a garden, and lets water flow from the garden. Later, God takes Adam and puts them in the garden to till it. So, I can picture God carefully crafting different parts of the body, then kneeling over Adam and breathing the breath of life into nostrils.

Much of this story is about mutuality, symbiosis, and interdependence. Adam was formed from the ground and was, in turn, asked to till it. The Hebrew word *abad* has the connotation of doing labor for the land and serving it. Adam comes from the land and is sustained by it, but also serves the land. Similarly, there is a symbiotic relationship between other parts of creation. The earth gave rise to the river and the river, in turn, watered the garden. God is in the middle of this story breathing the breath of life but also promoting mutual, life-giving relationships between different parts of creation.

As I watched the image of Derek Chauvin kneeling over George Floyd for several minutes, extinguishing his breath and causing his death, I could not but help to juxtapose it with the image of God kneeling over Adam to breathe life into the nostrils of humanity, making them living beings. As people of faith, how do we foster relationships that are defined by mutuality? Are we engaging in life-affirming practices that breathe life into others—both human and non-human?

Genesis 2:4b-15 Reflection prompts

1. As a family of faith, our creation story grounds us in goodness. It tells us the truth about who we are and it helps us belong to something bigger than ourselves. How does this story of origin impact your sense of identity? How does it impact how you see others?
2. In Genesis 2:15, God settles the human in the garden of Eden to farm it and take care of it. The ancient Hebrew verbs used to describe these actions are *abad* (serve/work/till) and *shamar* (protect/guard/preserve). How does this verse inform your understanding of humanity's relationship to the earth?
3. Return to the last paragraph in Dr. Raj Nadella's commentary. Name examples of life-affirming practices that breathe life into others—both human and non-human.

Week 1 I've been meaning to ask... where are you from?

Read Genesis 2:4b-15

From the artist | Hannah Garrity

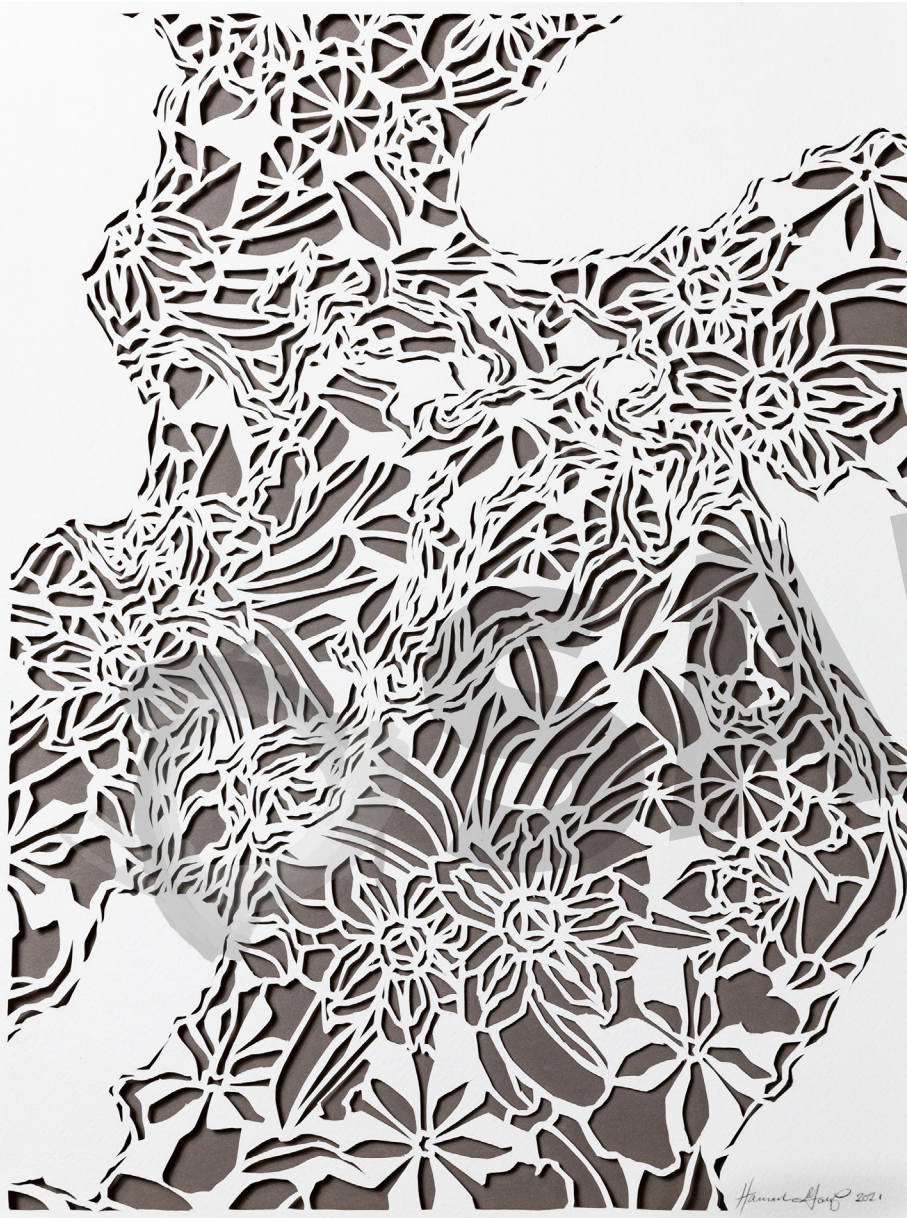
The natural beauty and wealth of the earth are poetically described in this passage. The valley of the Tigris and Euphrates weave inward, framed to the north and east by the Pishon and Gihon. The surrounding seas—Mediterranean, Persian, Caspian, Red, and Black—lean in on this land of Eden. Beauty and abundance burst forth from the earth. Where are we from? Here, we are from the earth and the water; we are from the Spirit. God reaches down and places the first humans here and molds them from the elements in this land of abundance.

This image is built on the patterning of flowers in Saudi Arabia, in Syria, in Iran. Indigenous to the area, the Blood Lily, Jasmine flower, Damask rose, Purple Crown, and Desert rose bloom among the rivers and the seas of Eden. Where are you from? How is it beautiful?

As I studied the satellite maps of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the water, topography, vegetation, and human efforts to control them create a powerful sense of flow. The land appears in motion like water. From afar, the lines begin to look like patterns; repeating with variation, they remind me of the incredible intricacy of life, the omnipresence of God. There are visual parallels in the macro and the micro. A wide view of the lands and the waters of Earth are reminiscent of close-up images from within the human body. The layout that I chose for this image reminds me of dancing, of flowing to music, to the beauty of life. Where are you from? What energy and emotions do you feel about that place?

Pray

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.



Four Rivers of Eden | Hannah Garrity
Paper lace