



ARTIST STATEMENTS

Advent- Epiphany | RCL, Year C

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

The First Sunday of Advent

HOMESICK (HOPE)



Awake to Wonder

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Luke 21:25-36 | Digital painting with collage

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.

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

The First Sunday of Advent

Homesick (HOPE)



Yearning

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 | Paper lace with graphite & watercolor

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.

—Hannah Garrity

The Second Sunday of Advent

Laying THE FOUNDATION (Peace)



Berakah

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Luke 1:57-80 | Paper lace with graphite and watercolor

In this image, Zechariah holds his baby boy. He speaks a blessing, a *berakah*.¹ For his neighbors, he answers the question, “What then will this child become?” (v. 66). The intimate love of a father with his newborn son is captured in this pose. Patterns of water pour over John’s little shirt. Zechariah sees what his son will become and begins to speak his future into being from the start. As dawn breaks over Zechariah’s shoulder, his prophecy foretells God coming into the world—of light dawning in weary spaces.

Zechariah relents. God has made Her statement. He could not speak until he de-centered himself from the story. He gives the name that Elizabeth has been called to give. Zechariah’s willingness to hear the call is the action in this moment. Traditionally, he would give his first born son his own

name. His neighbors are shocked by the name he chooses to give, by the prophecy, by his being able to speak again. By removing his own personal and family legacy from the picture, he is truly able to give way to the greater narrative that God is calling him to participate in.

This is an incredible moment of humility. As I created this image, I asked God’s help in identifying where I can step out of the way to forward Her vision for this weary world. She knows. Her work is greater than my legacy.
—Hannah Garrity



Harvest of Righteousness

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Philippians 1:3-11 | Block print with oil-based ink

Paul’s letter is filled to the brim with affection, and models perfectly his prayer for the reader to live and move in the world from a foundation of overflowing love.

When I began creating this image, the reaching, mirrored hands of the *Close to Home* logo emerged for me as a way to reference Paul’s outstretched, compassionate posture toward the Philippians as well as Paul’s hope for the reader to mirror that Christ-like embodiment. How do we determine what is best? We constantly strive, extending our hands and stretching our fingertips to get a grasp of the person of Jesus, having our lives transformed in love along the way.

When I considered the metaphor of harvest that Paul provides, I knew I wanted to use botanical and fruit imagery. All of the flowers symbolize different kinds of love: Coltsfoot flowers representing maternal love and care, Forget-Me-Nots imaging faithful love and undying memory, and Heliotrope meaning eternal love and devoted attachment. At the center of the piece, the object of the hand’s reaching is a pomegranate, bursting open with seeds. Throughout history, pomegranates have been used as a symbol for royalty because of their richness of color and flavor, and for the crown-like shape on the end of the fruit. At times, this fruit was used as a symbol for Christ and resurrection as well. The split-open fruit with seeds spilling out represents Christ breaking out of the tomb.² The hands are ready to receive the knowledge and full insight of Christ and to be nourished by the harvest of righteousness. —Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

1 The Jewish prayer of blessing expressing gratitude and praise to God.

2 Appleton, LeRoy H., and Stephen Bridges. *Symbolism in Liturgical Art*. New York: Scribner, 1969.

The Third Sunday of Advent

A HOME FOR ALL (Joy)



A Closer Walk

by Rev. T. Denise Anderson

Inspired by Luke 3:1-18 | Oil on canvas

As I meditated on the theme, *Close to Home*, I decided that what makes a place “home” for me is people. That realization informed my decision to explore this theme through portraiture—the depiction of people. The references for each of the depictions I’ve painted are actual Palestinians and Israelis. It’s important to me to bring this ancient story truly close to home as we consider the current geopolitical realities in the land of the Advent story. I encourage you to read more about the stories of those who inspired these depictions.

My depiction of John the Baptist is inspired by Abuna (meaning “Father”) Elias Chacour, who was the Archbishop of Akko, Haifa, Nazareth and All Galilee of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church (2006-2014). A Palestinian Arab-Israeli, Abuna Chacour is a well-respected activist and educator who established the Mar Elias Educational Institutions in Ibillin, which educate students of multiple religious backgrounds—Arab and Israeli—from kindergarten through high school. His life’s work embodies the courageous and prophetic pointing to a better way that I also see in John the Baptist.

John’s words in the text are so full of imagery that it’s impossible to fit it all in one image. The shape of his tunic recalls the base of the tree referenced in verse 9. In the background is an obvious path, recalling John’s clear instruction to his listeners. *Share your belongings! Do not extort people!* His counsel is so simple, yet apparently so hard to follow. The path leads to the sunrise on a new day, the colors of which allude to the fire of Jesus’ baptism. In his hand is a key, which is a symbol that you’ll see in my other works. For Palestinians, the key represents a longing and determination to return home from displacement.

—Rev. T. Denise Anderson

The Third Sunday of Advent

A HOME FOR ALL (Joy)



Gather Us In

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Zephaniah 3:14-20 | Digital painting with collage

King Josiah, Zephaniah's cousin, has ascended to the throne of Judah. He steps into the aftermath of a half century of ruin incited by the former King, Mannaseh, who ruled with evil actions and led the people astray (see 2 Kings 22–23).

Much of Zephaniah's prophecy is an exacerbated lament. He believes the only way forward is for Yahweh to destroy everything. Too much has been corrupted, too much has fallen apart. But then, in chapter three, his message takes an unexpected turn—he turns toward restoration and unabated joy. This joy comes from God, who renews and calms us with

love, rejoicing over us with singing. It comes from those who are vulnerable and shamed being gathered back in, restoring the whole community.

In this image, the blueprint background reminds me of a deconstructed building; it's as if the roofline has fallen and the infrastructure crumbled. Yet, the collapsed roof provides an opening that becomes a doorway of invitation. God's hand reaches down from the heavens, gently nudging us inward. Fig trees adorn the opening as signs of promise. A music bar (showing the first line of the familiar hymn, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing") lures us toward the doorway, becoming a pathway for our journey home.

Perhaps the path toward creating a home for all requires some deconstruction. Some of our structures are rotting. Some of our institutions are compromised. Some of our rituals need repair. And yet, nothing is beyond redemption. Collective belonging gives way for collective joy—joy that is free and full. God's love will find a way to renew us and gather us in.

*Here I find my greatest treasure;
hither by thy help I've come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.³*

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

³ The second verse of "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," written by Robert Robinson (1758), altered by Martin Madan (1760). Public domain.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

seeking sanctuary (love)



Dances for Joy

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Luke 1:39-45 (*Mary goes to Elizabeth*) | Paper lace with watercolor

As I worked through the creative process for this image, I was talking to my mother and showing her my inspiration board: images of babies in the womb, spinning or cuddling. She said that John dancing for joy in his mother's womb is one of her favorite biblical images. I thought back to my study abroad in Glasgow, Scotland, at the Glasgow School of Art. I spent every day in a studio designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh.⁴ Through windows the height of almost two stories, light poured into the room.

I was interested in childbirth that year. I asked the local hospital if I could view one. They said, no, legitimately citing privacy concerns. Childbirth is rightfully a protected and private time—a time when women, the possessors of the womb, choose to use their bodies for the delivery of

the children of God. As a woman in my early twenties, I had no plans of having children anytime soon. Truly, I was intrigued by the way we hide the earthy, natural, bloody parts of the process. All semester I painted fetuses, newborns crowning, mothers birthing alone. They were dancing in the womb. They were emerging from the womb. They were patterns in a collage of orphaned children due to the AIDS epidemic. They were an American flag interwoven with articles of the strain of American military action on children overseas. They were newborns, still bloody, painted on patterned fabric with the stories of Peter Rabbit and the cow jumping over the moon. I even made a paint by number children's book explaining the stages of childbirth. The clash of a facade of perfection and the tangible reality was and is ever-present in my every day.

Here the globe is drawn as the background flow of the image. This long view of the world acknowledges the earthy, bloody, tangible, pouring-out reality that Mary and Elizabeth will soon embody to bear their sons. There is so much liquid everywhere. The central story of the text emerges as John dances with joy in his mother's womb of this world. Around him the patterns of his baptisms flow outward into the miracles of Jesus, woven into the flow of landforms and waters on the map.

Comparison is the thief of joy, my cousin tells me. God's children need us to dance for joy when we encounter one another. Where in my daily routines can I remove the facade of perfection, or break through it, and embrace the tangible reality of a beautiful and wonderful, earthy joy?

—Hannah Garrity

⁴ Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868–1928) was a Scottish architect, designer, and watercolor artist known for his influence on the Modernist and Art Nouveau movements.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

seeking sanctuary (love)



Redemption Song

by Rev. T. Denise Anderson

Inspired by Luke 1:46b-55 (*Mary's Song*) | Oil on canvas

I've read the Magnificat many times, but only recently have I started reading it for what it is: a protest song. Listen to the tone: "[God] has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly." It's a song of vindication against oppressive powers.

Some ancient manuscripts attribute this song to Elizabeth, not Mary. Of course, an older woman would be able to exegete the times from both communal history and lived experience. But it's also true that the gift of prophecy is no respecter of age. They each have different proximities to the Messiah: one's offspring will prepare the way, and another's will *be* the way. Both are able to sing the song because both are oppressed, which

brings me to the inspiration for this portrait: Ahd Tamimi.

An activist from childhood, Tamimi became a symbol of Palestinian resistance. Because of her recognizability, her family sent her to live with relatives in Ramallah, where she'd not have to face the threat of checkpoints. At the age of sixteen, she was arrested for slapping a police officer to protect her disabled cousin. The reference for this painting⁵ was a photo taken of her as she was being detained by Israeli forces for trying to intervene in her mother's arrest.

This visual expresses the mood of the Magnificat in a new way for me: a young girl under occupation, sent away for her own safety, responding to not only her own oppression, but to that of her community. She believes that righteousness is on her side, but she's still in anguish. The *Gaudete* (joy) colors of Advent surround her, but with that joy is remarkable pain. As for the key, it's there, but very tenuous. Can you even see it? Freedom is both here and not yet.

—Rev. T. Denise Anderson

⁵ Painting inspired by a photo by Abbas Momani/AFP/Getty.

Christmas Eve invited Home



Ordinary Glory

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Luke 2:1-20 | Digital painting

In this familiar narrative, what stuck out for me in this reading was the juxtaposition of human and divine, the mundane and extraordinary, the humbleness of a manger and the glory of a multitude of heavenly hosts. I wanted to image this dichotomy with the everyday, intimate, tender scene of new parents and their yawning baby, enveloped by the glittering, awe-striking magnificence of God.

The holy family is framed by an almond shape called a mandorla. Mandorlas have been used in Christian art to signify the glory of God, and can also represent the intersection and fullness of two things, like heaven and earth or spirit and body. Likely, the most familiar instance of this concept

is the shape made between the overlapping circles in a Venn diagram. I wanted to use this shape because this is the moment when human and divine intersect in the person of Jesus, and when the glory of God is birthed into the world. The golden field surrounding the mandorla is filled with my interpretation of the six-winged seraphim from early Christian art, representing the heavenly hosts filling the air with tidings of peace (imaged by olive branches). A seven pointed star hangs over the family, surrounded by seven other stars, a number that represents completeness.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

The First Sunday after Christmas

CHOSEN HOME



Chosen Home

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Luke 2:41-52 | Digital painting with collage

We don't know why Luke is the only gospel writer to tell us this story of Jesus as an adolescent. Luke offers us short vignettes of Jesus' life after his birth: he's circumcised and dedicated to God, he's blessed by both Simeon and Anna in the temple, and each year he and his parents return to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. His family follows the law according to Moses. This Messiah is not an outsider to the tradition; he's born from within it. But he will grow to question, challenge, reform, and revolutionize it.

We see Jesus' first challenge to that system in this story when, as a twelve-year-old boy, he stays behind without his parents' permission. He dives so deeply into the teachings that he shocks his elders, amazing them with his autonomy, knowledge, and earnestness. His actions threaten the status quo and also create a divide between him and his family of origin. To fulfill his ministry, he'll need to leave his home, his parents, and many of his faith traditions behind.

As I created this image, I felt the grief and tension shared by Jesus and his mother. The distance between them is poignant and heavy. Young Jesus looks over his shoulder at what he must leave behind as he moves forward in the other direction. His mother grieves what she can't fully understand, but she holds all of these things in her heart, keeping them forever. A dividing line made of gold separates them—but this boundary is also sacred and needed for Jesus to live into the fullness of his calling.

No matter the boundaries we choose or are forced to put into place, no matter the separations we endure, we must trust that we deserve true belonging. We must seek our chosen homes and families. When necessary, we must question and challenge the traditions we've inherited. Ultimately, we must trust that our true home belongs with God.

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

The First Sunday after Christmas

CHOSEN HOME



The Ties that Bind

by Rev. T. Denise Anderson

Inspired by Colossians 3:12-17 | Oil on canvas

Sindyanna of Galilee is an all-woman non-profit of Arab and Jewish Israeli women that supports educational opportunities for Arab women “by selling Arab producers’ olive oil and other premium products in the international marketplace according to Fair Trade principles.”⁶ A visit to their facility gives you an opportunity to shop from their award-winning olive oils and myriad products made in-house. They also offer classes in basket weaving and *za’atar* making. When I visited them, I was struck by the palpable love and unshakable commitment to peace and cooperation between the women who work, teach, and learn there. It’s a vision of Israel and Palestine that people rarely get to see.

If you can’t visit the co-op in person, you can browse the extensive photo gallery on their website. I was stopped in my tracks by one photo of a Palestinian Arab woman and a Jewish Israeli woman weaving something together.⁷ The reeds are unruly and going in every direction, but the women hold them masterfully in their hands—together. It’s almost difficult to decipher which hands belong to which woman. It’s as if they all belong to them both. I wanted to capture this literal act of love binding “everything together in perfect harmony” (v. 14).

As with my previous pieces, I’m opting for a depiction that’s not a replica of the reference photo, but still captures its spirit. Each woman is dressed in colors that call back to the flags of their respective people. Can you find the key? If you look closely, it can be found among the reeds they will fashion into something useful and beautiful. In this way, the women of Sindyanna of Galilee show us all how to find home with others and reclaim what was lost.

—Rev. T. Denise Anderson

⁶ Learn more about the organization here: sindyanna.com.

⁷ A photo by Oren Shalev inspired this painting: sindyanna.com/gallery

Epiphany

HOME BY ANOTHER way



The Wise Men's Dream

by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Matthew 2:1-12 | Digital painting

The Wise Men follow the direction of the shimmering, dotted lights of the night sky, and receive instruction in the subconscious world of sleep. They are ready and willing to discern God's will in the outward, tangible signs of Creation, as well as the inner contours of their own minds. God is in it all, and they are paying attention. Is this what it means to be wise?

In this image, the Wise Men are sleeping, and the viewer has a window into their vibrant dream. Surrounding the dream is the deep blue patterning of stars and hands pointing in every direction except for the direction of God's leading. These hands represent King Herod's desperate search and desire to take out this threatening, newborn King of the Jews. The Wise

Men have a choice. They could succumb to the pressure of the King, which is thick in the air and pressing in all around them, or they could choose to listen to the mysterious guiding of their sleeping vision. They decide to change up the narrative and resist the domineering, violent powers of this world, trusting their dream, and taking the long, likely dangerous, journey home by another way.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Epiphany

HOME BY ANOTHER way



Collapse

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Ephesians 3:1-12 | Paper lace with watercolor

As I worked on this paper lace, I saw the news of the Surfside building collapse in Florida.⁸ There was a building full of condominiums. Hundreds of residents were trapped or killed in the collapse. The number of missing people went from the 150s to the 120s; some were recovered alive, others found dead. This morning, the building was demolished. 121 missing people; time marches on. What a difficult decision to have to make.

This paper lace is drawn from images of the Surfside collapse. It had been deemed too expensive to fix. Inspections were skipped. People were lost to this tragedy; profit over people. Where else are we focusing on profit over people? The New Deal⁹ legacy has systematically been replaced over my lifetime by profit-at-all costs legislation. Tech monopolies now

rule the financial space. We know what to do. We are a team, God's team. Listen to the Gospel call here in Ephesians. The capitalist priority of profit over people must end. People are being hurt, killed, and exploited. We have tried to fix this before; God calls to us again and again. The children of God are everywhere—let us protect them, care for them, love them.

Embedded within the structures of the neighboring skyline are the lines of broken parts of the Surfside condominium. As I write this, 86 people have been found within the rubble so far. Many are still missing. As I drew these lines, I thought of the strength of design, the power of the weather, the need to reorder our societal structures so that people benefit financially from doing the right thing. It would have been right to renovate earlier. Trust would have allowed people to listen to one another. The background lines are figures sitting in vigil outside of the collapsed building. Leaning on one another, their limbs create an embrace in the energy of the image. Are we aware that God and love are the structures we can depend on?

As you look at this image, contemplate words that represent the places where you see our society valuing profit over people. Then, contemplate actions you can take in your daily life to combat this tendency.

⁸ On June 24, 2021, Champlain Towers South, a 12-story condominium in Surfside, Florida, partially collapsed.

⁹ Enacted by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the New Deal was a series of public works programs and financial reforms and regulations enacted throughout 1933-39.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Founder | Creative Director of SA

Lisle (*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.



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. 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.



GUEST ARTIST

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.