

With a
Grateful
Heart

FALL 2023

A BENEDICTION

– Tyler Rogness –

I wanted to introduce Grateful Heart this year with a benediction, but was hampered in the endeavor by a friend's reminder that in most church traditions, benedictions usually follow something, acting as a kind of charge and a sending forth. Well. So my gears have been in a proper tizzy, spinning like mad and trying to figure how to properly kick this event off without "benedicting" it. I've fought hard.

"Well, technically," I said, "a benediction is just a blessing. And do we really have to wait until the end to bless the event?"

But technicalities aside, I've come up dry. Or at least I had.

I wondered, then: don't we do the same thing to love? And what about trust? There are many good reasons for it, but we tend to dole these out only after we've gotten something. Once we know we're safe. But sometimes the truer love and the stronger trust is given before all that, and as an act of hope and grace.

Could a benediction be the same, then? And (perhaps more pertinent for us) could gratitude? Should gratitude be something donned once we've experienced happiness, encouragement, contentment? Absolutely. But what if it was also a posture to take up alongside love and trust (*-cough-* and benedictions *-cough-*) as an act of hope and grace? Could it also be a staff on our journey and not just a chair to recline in post-trek?

Jokes and banter aside, I think you'll find the work of our creative community here at Woodland a beauty and an encouragement, and inspiring of a hopeful kind of gratitude you can take with you as you go on from here.

Consider yourself "benedicted." Charged. Sent forth.

With a
Grateful
Heart

**EVENT
PROGRAM**

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Dan Kent

Worship

Delon Smith, Kristie Holman,
Dave Moulton

Introduction

Tyler Rogness

Sineen

Holly Johnson

Kitty-Gone Scars

Kay Lee Penton

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Restless Child

Sage Boatman

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Approaching Horses

Dan Kent

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Infinite Gratitude

Carol Oyanagi

Song of Hours

Greta Cina

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Simple Things

Michelle Hanggi

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Closing

Dan Kent

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THE PARABLE OF THE CUP

– Megan E. Hardy –

You have a cup with a hole in it. You try to fill it with your skills, but they fall through the hole. You try to fill your cup with your looks, your accomplishments, your money, but they all fall through the hole. You even try power and the feeling of superiority, but they, too, fall through the cup's hole. Finally, you turn to God and, with nothing else to give, offer Him your cup. God takes it and fixes it. Then He fills it with His love and gives it back to you. He says to you, "So long as you keep My love in your cup, it will never go empty. But if you try to fill it with something else again, the hole will return. If you ever need Me to fix and fill your cup again, just ask."

THE GHANAIAIAN STARS

– Mary Ayetey –



Artist Reflection

I am grateful for Patricia O. Rosenker, my Adaptive Art instructor, who is helping me express myself through painting. "THE GHANAIAIAN STARS" is my very first painting, and it shows I love my Ghanaian heritage.

UNTITLED

– Pam Taylor –



Artist Reflection

The seasons of a person's life can be viewed like the four seasons of nature. Birth to age 25 would be the spring of a person's life. Next, 26 to 50 would be summer. Age 51 to 75 autumn and finally the age of 76 and beyond would be the winter. Since I will be turning 50 in a few months and autumn is my favorite season, I fully expect this approaching autumn of my life to be beautiful and extraordinary and I thank the Lord for that!.

MAMA'S WRITING...

– Melanie Van Wyhe –

That Sunday it was gloomy...

The clouds made no room for the sun. I didn't wake until almost ten-thirty. I moped around my apartment trying to decide to get dressed or go back to bed. The only energy I had was taken up feeding the cats. I stood there frozen and asked God what I should do. That was when I spotted a red book on my table. It had been in one of the boxes of junk that we had taken out of mom's house.

I noticed it was a devotional. I picked it up, sat down by the window, and opened it up. Inside of the front flap was my mom's handwriting.

It read:

*Hope is believing that a rainbow follows the rain.
That sunshine outshines the clouds.
That God understands your every need.
Believe---have hope in Him!*

As I read the last word, for an instant, the sun burst through the clouds and came shining into my living room! I sat there in shock, as I realized God was not only using something mom had written years ago to comfort me, but had given me a gift of seeing the sun on a completely overcast day.

Mom doesn't speak much anymore. Her illness has affected her ability to communicate. But there are certain words and phrases that

easily roll off her tongue—"I love you." "When are you coming back?" "I'm worried about you." Words that show how much she cares. Perhaps words that the Holy Spirit gives her.

But I'm ultimately comforted to know that because of Jesus' birth, one day she will not only speak but sing and dance again!



Artist Reflection

On April 9, 2022, mama went to be with the Lord. I am thankful she is now healed and whole...speaking, singing and dancing with Jesus...at last.

I am THANKFUL God gave me a mother who introduced me to Jesus!

BRIDGE TO THE CITY

– John Pilgrim –



Artist Reflection

I see this photo of the Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis as a visual metaphor for the story of Woodland Hills Church. As we often say, our current location feels specifically chosen by God so we could serve as a bridge between the suburbs and Saint Paul.

I do enjoy using digital tools like Photoshop and Adobe Camera Raw in my creative process. When I see an impressive scene but my camera settings don't do it justice, many times the right combination of color, highlight and shadow adjustments will bring back the scene I remember. Watching a photo really come to life as I dial in the settings reminds me of what happens to a life transformed by Jesus. In a way, the beauty was there all along; it just took the Master's touch to bring it to the surface.

A WHISPER OF SHALOM

– Grant Bullert –



Artist Reflection

It's easy to be overwhelmed by all the chaos, hatred, and violence in our world. When the harsh realities of life make themselves known, God can sometimes appear absent. In those moments, I try to remind myself of this truth: God often speaks softly.

MALAKAI

— Emily Morrison —

the first time i met you
i cried.

because
you were just right
&
exactly
what you ought to be.

i cried
because i
didn't know
i could love someone
so brand-new
like this:

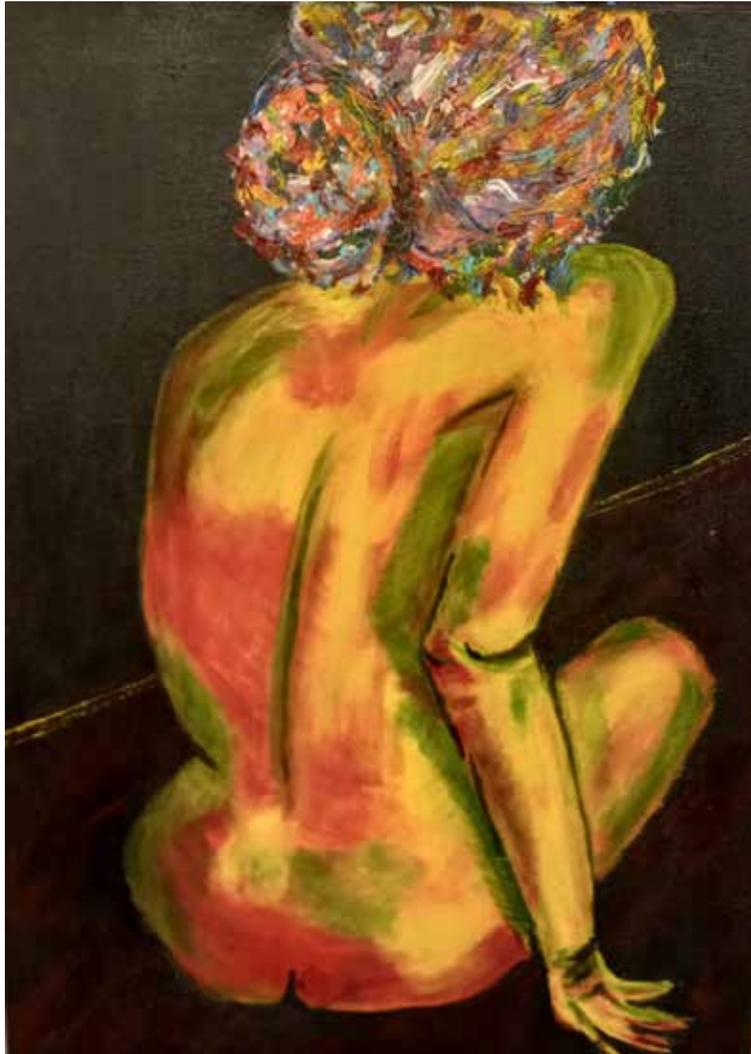
like i could
dance all night.



*"A baby is God's opinion that life should go on."
—Carl Sandberg*

UNTITLED

– Patricia Rosenker –



Artist Reflection

I love color. I use strong colors to convey a variety of anxieties while passionately expressing them from within. I use colors that are exuberant, unexpected and fierce. I embrace questions of morality, of goodness and of suffering. These are exemplified with the use of texture and various exaggerated brush strokes depicting the fragility and the power of the subject. These techniques are meant to reveal the emotional state of the artist, reacting to the angst in the world.

UNTITLED

— Patricia Rosenker —



SIMPLE THINGS

– Michelle Hanggi –

I have fallen in love with the simple things

The sparkles that dance on my eyelashes in the sunshine
The soft warmth soaking gently into my skin and clothing
Balanced by the tickle of a breeze flitting across my cheeks and
burrowing into my hair only to burst back out triumphantly

I have fallen in love with the simple things

My dog's contented sigh as she curls herself into a tiny furry
cinnamon roll on my lap
Her quiet breaths as she drifts into her millionth nap of the day
And a moment later her sleepy chirping barks as she reunites with
her beloved dream squirrel

I have fallen in love with the simple things

The stillness of the morning before the world begins to stir
The settled peace (which admittedly I very rarely manage)
Of having a few moments to just sit and enjoy the sharp bite of
hot coffee on my tongue before launching into the day

I have fallen in love with the simple things

Sitting back after eating my fill of taco potluck
Soaking in the laughter of a room full of people I love
People who love me
Remembering what it felt like—not so very long ago—to be alone
And sensing the warm bubbling of gratitude dancing in my chest
Feeling exactly the way those sparkles of sunlight looked on my
eyelashes

I have fallen in love with the simple things
And the simplest thing of all is love

THE LIST

– Megan E. Hardy –

You had heard about a great party and wanted to attend. You approached the entrance to the party and stopped when you saw a rather attractive man holding a note board. You walked to him and asked if you could enter.

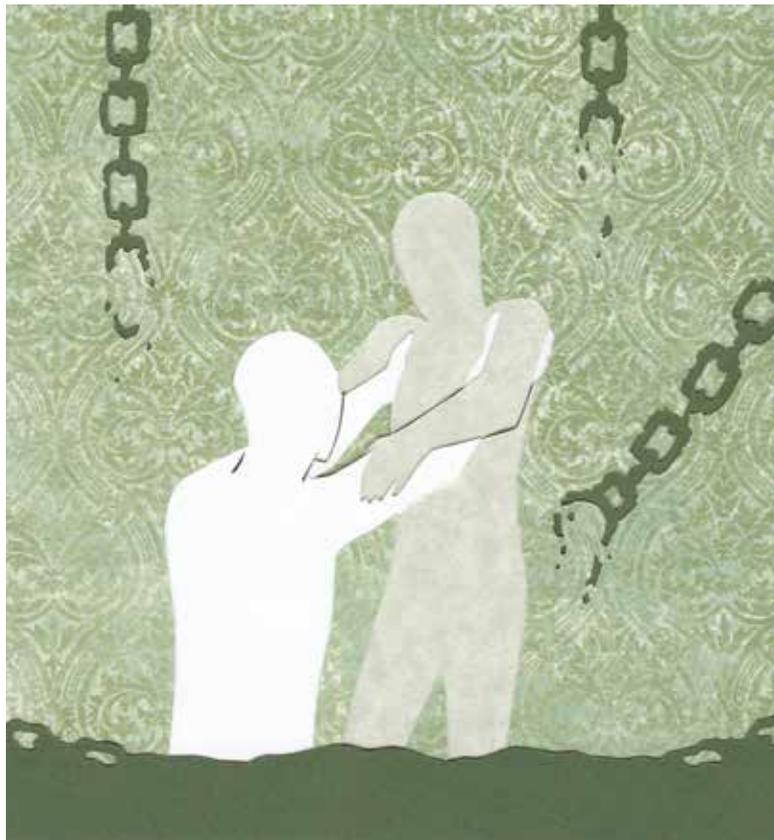
The handsome man looked at you, and then down at his notes. He flipped a few pages as he skimmed them. He looked back at you and shook his head as he said your name wasn't on the list. Deeply disappointed, you opened your mouth to try to convince him to let you in anyway, but before you could speak someone opened the door from the inside.

Jesus stood in the doorway, stepped to your side, and wrapped His right arm around your shoulders. He told the handsome man, "This one's with Me," and walked you into the party's entrance. You looked at Jesus and thanked Him for letting you in, but asked why your name wasn't on the list.

Jesus looked at you, and answered, "Because Lucifer out there has the wrong list." He pulled out a book titled The Book of Life. "I have the real one. I know every name on this list and recognize each one that comes knocking." He smiled. "Welcome to the party."

I AM FREE

— Melissa Hardy —



Artist Reflection

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”

- Galatians 5:1 NASB

BALLOON FESTIVAL

— Dave Peterman —



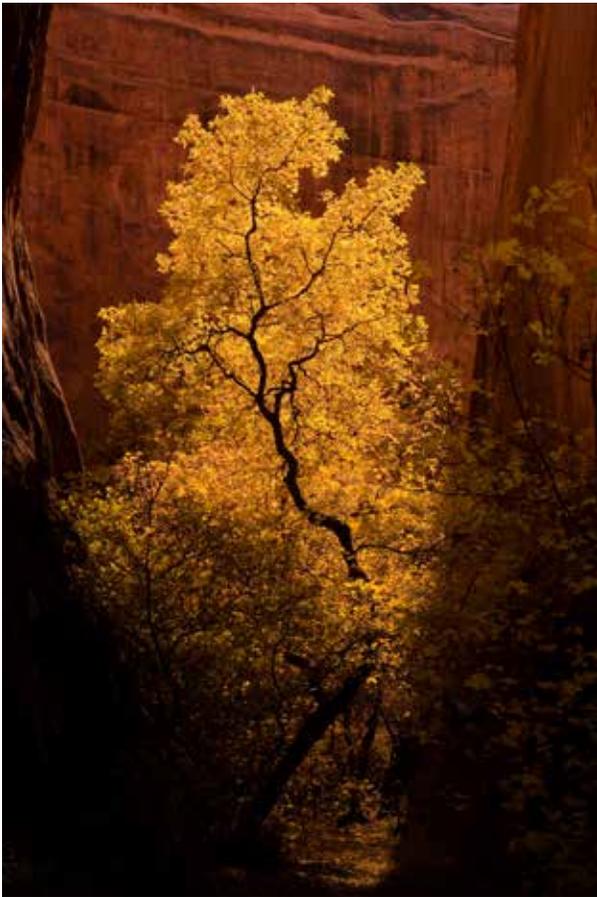
Artist Reflection

Photography has been my hobby for thirty plus years. During these years I have been fortunate to photograph many beautiful locations in the USA and other places.

Recently I found a new way to create art with my photos. Using filters in Photoshop I create unique, one-of-a-kind designs from the photos. These unique designs are then applied on metal bracelets as wearable art. I've included a few examples of photographs used and the end products.

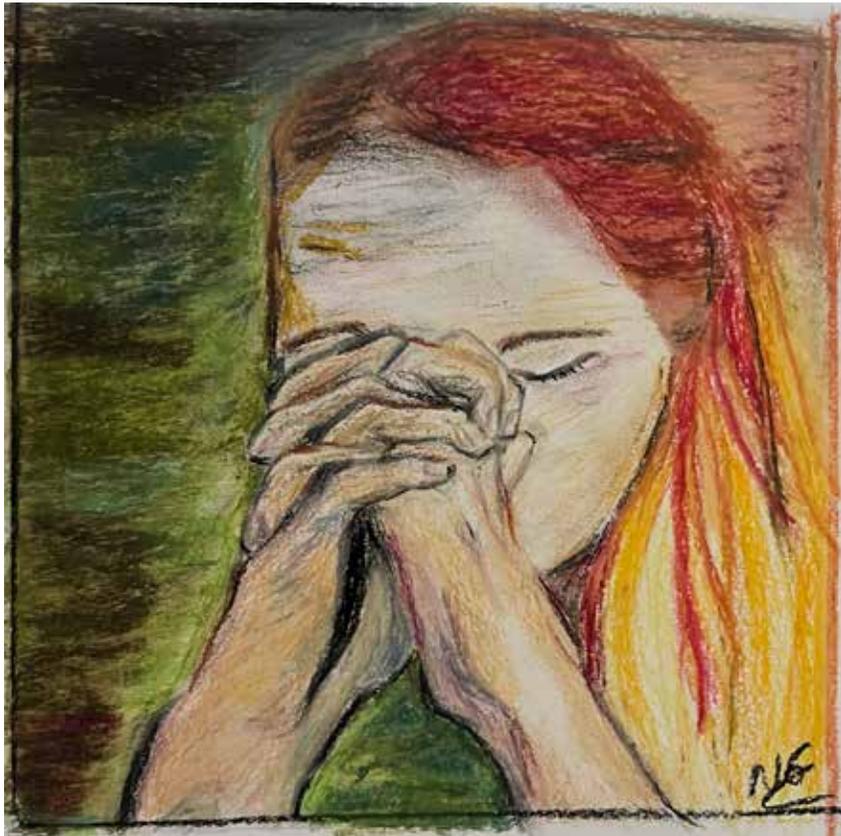
BURR CANYON

— Dave Peterman —



UNTITLED

– Nathalie Gaillot –



Artist Reflection

Gratitude is like prayer is like breathing. Gratitude happens not only when all is well, but when tragedy strikes. It is a spiritual prompting inviting us to dance or cry with our Creator. We cannot afford to live without gratitude, or prayer, or breathing. It is a gift of God.

SABBATH II

– Tyler Rogness –

The evergreens bear memories in bark –
each hard-remembered learning,
every creekbank-turning-aside
to toe the mossy slick –
 to step and slip,
 rocks and minutes skip hand
in hand
 in happy-ruining
 water-ways.

Water-veins hoist
small burdens swift along: molten
early-autumn-blessings,
blood-besprinkling the whispered tide –
 the trickle-tumult,
 gentle laughter of the wood – ablaze
in fiery shades.

Íf I had but one prayer to me
this I'd send from off my lips:
the berried eaves and rud-skin bark
would swell with memories
of us.

APPROACHING HORSES

– Dan Kent –

From his third collection, *Tender Lines of Code*

and there past the barn
I see the horses,

grazing out in a field,
together, but also alone.

I see the horses standing in the
sunlit fog.
I pause to acknowledge their
dignity.

they stand waiting to serve me,
neither domesticated nor wild.

they bow their heads to graze,
content with whatever grass they
find.

I approach with excitement.
I approach with fear.

their muscles flex when they move.
I pause to acknowledge their
power.

a horse can sense your danger.
they see inside your secret heart:

I know he sees my secret greed:
I know he sees I work too hard:

he knows my fear of failure:
he sees my cowardice.

I approach with excitement.
I approach with fear.

my horse huffs through his nostrils
as I slow my approach.

he remains calm and I know
he's made his fair judgement,

I remove my thick gloves
stuff them in my pockets.

the cold air engulfs my naked
fingers
as I reach out to my horse.

then my fingers touch his warm
neck,
and he presses himself against my
hand.

MURAL

– Kate Nichols –



Artist Reflection

Years ago I created a cross from tree branches across which I carved Proverbs 11:30, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.” This proverb stretched along the crossbar of an instrument of torture, symbolizing how a righteous man’s sacrifice on a tree designed only for death offers us life.

On this tree of life, the same proverb stretches across an implied crossbar, while a scripture from Revelation, “The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations...” drops from a perpendicular branch, suggesting the shape of a cross and conveying how Christ’s sacrifice brings life and healing. The root structure reveals life flowing from all parts of the tree as it forms a grapevine, framing the entire mural. This grapevine, full of life, is reminiscent of Jesus’s words in John 15 that as we remain in Him we bear fruit—the fruit of His righteousness bearing fruit in and through us.

I cannot think of anything I am more grateful for than Jesus’ sacrifice and the abundant life He offers.

RESTLESS CHILD

– Sage Boatman –

[Verse 1]

In this brightly colored prison
Their jeers ring out
Tearing the moisture
from my eyes

[Chorus]

And so, I ran on
Feet worn down to bone
And with my dry mouth
And with my aching soul
I hope I can make it home

[Instrumental]

[Verse 2]

Oh, and in this strange land
Their gazes lash
Ripping the warmth
from my mind

[Verse 3]

In this dimly lit city
The silence deafens
And the bitterness
takes my heart

[Chorus]

[Instrumental]

[Bridge] (Psalm 5:9)

Their throat is
Their throat is
Their throat is
an open grave
Their throat is
Their throat is
Their throat is
My open grave

[Bridge 2]

And the dust they exhale
is lies
Oh, the devil's own lies

[Instrumental]

[Verse 4]

And now in your home
Cool water from your well
Warm fire in your hearth
Sweet food on
your table

[Bridge 3]

And you've breathed life for me
When I had nothing left within
And from nothing I have come
And by your side I will be
Oh, I am more than these bones
And I am more than this
Hopeless body could ever
Conceive

[Chorus]

And so, I ran on
Feet worn down to bone
And with my dry mouth
And with my aching soul
I know I have made it home
I know I have made it home

Artist Reflection

This song is about my experience growing up and never feeling like I belonged — that is, until I found my youth group. There, I felt accepted and even celebrated for who I was, and it really changed the course of my life for the better.

AS A PARENT

– Melissa Hardy –



Artist Reflection

We may stumble and fall during our walk through the muck of life, but God has always been, still is, and will continue to be down in it with us. He comes down to our level to meet us where we are, He helps us back to our feet, and He takes our next step with us.

THE KING

– Tom Misukanis –



Artist Reflection

I chose to name this piece “The King” because the lamb half represents the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the lion half represents His resurrection. In the background of the piece, I’ve added a cross in the lamb half to again represent the sacrifice of Jesus; and in the lion I’ve put rays of light to give a glory kind of feeling to the resurrection. This piece is important to me, and I made it because the thought of these two events are what I base my life off of: to love sacrificially for others like Jesus does, and to live with confidence in His resurrection.

UNTITLED

— Gerald Snyder —



WHY I BELIEVE IN JESUS

– Nathalie Gaillot –

Sometimes I wonder
if you have searched through all my thoughts
bouncing from wall to wall
to ricochet in the maze of my heart
and give me another shot to spare,

amazed to see you
still hanging in this pinball game.

I noticed you flashing your red light
when I dropped the ball –
somehow you let me keep going.

I have
hit the same corners a thousand times
as I battled
the pride of life.

I fear I didn't wait my turn
in the rush of the game.

Did you feel my blood pump against my temples
as I searched my way up the ramp
to save another dream
from falling down the drain?

Or did I shed yours every time
I did not control my hands?

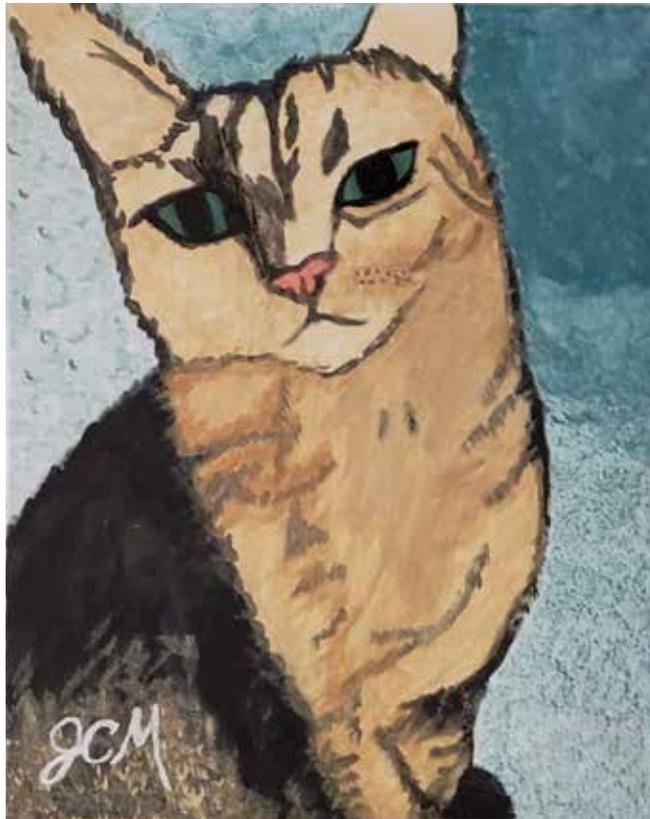
Surely life down here is like a pinball game
with the moon to shoot for and wars to shoot at,
trials to cross and losses to bear
until the game is over.

Why you love me is a mystery,
as is beyond life, eternity.

I need you so desperately.

SIMBA, MY SAVING GRACE

– Julie Martignacco –



Artist Reflection

My tabby cat Simba has been such a comfort during the pandemic, and I'm so grateful for the beauty that he adds to my home and life every day.

CHICKADEES IN WINTER

– Kara Chelgren –



Artist Reflection

Birds in the wintertime bring so much joy! They hop, fly, chatter and sing as the cold takes over. I love watching the birds hurrying before the next snowstorm; and I love the chorus that comes when the storm has passed. Their resilience in the cold causes me so much joy and gratitude as my heart lightens as their wings take flight!

KITTY-GONE SCARS

– Kay Lee Penton –

Freddy, my orange tabby, vicious kitty,
pandemic partner, little lover, psycho hater,
has been gone a year...

Your naps on my lap
with your hot, silky body
made me overlook
your manic cat attacks
on my arm, legs, or face;
your teeth, drawing blood
with those tiny sharp chisels
that appeared harmless
when you curled your mouth up and back
as you sleepily yawned.

I often see the neighbor's white cat
hanging around the shed
at the edge of the lawn
where you and she would casually
meet and meander around the weathered shack
until she left for her home
and you wandered into the woods;
the trees and hills always
were more tantalizing.

I thought of you today
when I saw the snagged thread
protruding from the thigh of my blue jeans;
how you would dig your claws

through the fabric
painfully pricking into my skin;
retracting them back through,
leaving me with that
little piece of you.

SIGNATURES

— Kay Lee Penton —

I wrote two checks today:
the last one with
both our names on it;
the first one with
just my name.
They were hard to sign
through a watery blur.

The last things he ever signed
were Christmas cards, 2016:
five “Dad”s and eight “Grandpa”s
in shaky print, written over two days with many breaks.
GRANDPA morphed into GRANDDA.
It was just as sweet.

Today, my hand written name
paid for electricity and fuel.
His final signatures
endorsed his life.

INTERTWINED

— Rebecca Wynia —



Artist Reflection

As in this painting, life is so often interspersed with dark and light. Soft moments contrasted by harsher ones. These contrasts, when put together and intertwined, end up weaving the fabric of our lives. If it were not for the darkness, we would not appreciate the light. Jesus himself in his life and ministry experienced every eternal despair, and yet encapsulated holy perfection. Through the darkest moment, His ultimate sacrifice, light broke through to offer us eternal hope. And while I never prefer the darker moments, I am so grateful for them. Those are the moments Christ has been nearest to my heart and soul. I praise God for his sustenance, the way he has intertwined and used every circumstance in my life to teach me more and more about his goodness and unconditional love. While sometimes it feels like the clouds are looming, there is always light on the horizon, and I couldn't be more grateful for the hope He brings.

ARCHES

— Stephanie Herington —



TULIPS

— Stephanie Herington —



Artist Reflection

For all my photography I'm so very grateful God has given me such a profound love and eye for his creation. I tend to pick up details in nature passed by most. I'm often on the trails, examining the smallest of creations, touching the mosses and trees, listening intently to the bird songs and swaying alongside the blowing grasses. This connection helps me fulfill a sense of purpose to life that I have trouble finding elsewhere.

SONG OF HOURS

— Greta Cina —

Vs 1

D G D
I thank you God as I open my eyes

A Bm G
Your faithfulness is echoed in the sunrise

D G D
Spirit, help me clearly see

A Bm G
The way things are in your reality

A Bm A/C# GM7/D--
My worth is defined by the love of my king
I'll co-labor with you through this day as I sing

Vs 2

D G D
I thank you God as I sit down to eat

A Bm G
I'll trust in you for everything I need

D G D
Spirit lead my every moment today

A Bm G
I'll attend to everything that you have to say

A Bm A/C# GM7/D--
I will treat your beloved creation with care
And when I am tempted I'll meet you in prayer

Vs 3

D G D
I thank you God, now at my day's end

A Bm G
You've been with me all along, a faithful friend

D G D
Forgive me all the wrong that I have done

A Bm G
Refine me Lord, in me your kingdom come
Help me Lord, in me your kingdom come
I'm ready Lord, in me your kingdom come

Chorus

D G D
Praise God from whom all blessings flow

D/F# G A
Praise God all creatures here below

Bm A G A Bm
Praise God above ye heavenly hosts

D G A D
Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost

Tag

D
Praise God, praise God

D G A D
Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Artist Reflection

This piece was inspired by an entry in *Then Sings My Soul* by Robert J. Morgan (2003). Morgan tells this story:

In 1647, the chaplain for Winchester College, Thomas Ken, wrote three devotional hymns for the boys of the school to sing privately in their rooms. Each of the three hymns was to be sung at a specific time of the day, and they each ended with the same stanza—now known as the Doxology.

I wrote this song as a prompt to give thanks continually and to remind myself of my intentions as I go about my day.

CREATIVE JUICES

– Carol Oyanagi –

The sweetest creative juices
begin unseen in Godly realms.
Fresh picked
fruit
from eternal trees
with love that overwhelms.
Simmered, reduced,
until the vessel overflows,
then poured out, abundantly
in tears, joys and sorrows.

Most is lost
in sewer drains
swept away by driving rains
carried to the ocean floor
at high cost.
Few falling drops remain,
no more.

They trickle into open hands
and those with courage and faith
share glimpses of eternity
boiled together in small cups

expanding, overflowing
to breathe, to taste,
to satiate.

IN BEGINNING

– Rachel McDonald –

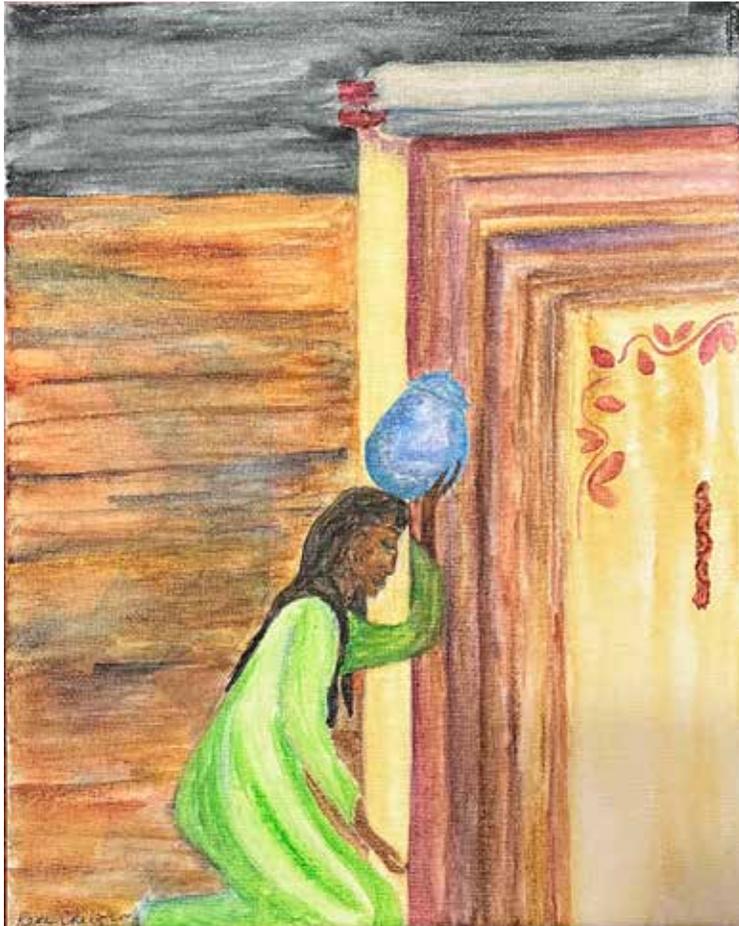


Artist Reflection

When I took my daughter, Mary Ayetey, to her Adaptive Art class with Patricia O. Rosenker, much to my surprise she had set up a canvas, paints, and brushes for me as well. My protestations of “I’m not an artist” were gently smiled away and I proceeded to put acrylic paint on the canvas. Several weeks later, with Patricia’s help, I have completed my painting, which I am giving the title “IN BEGINNING.”

THE JAR LETS HER IN

– Kara Chelgren –



Artist Reflection

In the story of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet in Luke, I find a woman with a heart unable to be consoled to do anything except be with Jesus. She gave of herself, her most precious gift, to anoint the feet of Jesus, in the presence of her enemies. She walked into that house, wondering why she would dare enter such a place and she left fully forgiven, in the sight of her enemies. No longer can they call her a sinner. She has been redeemed!

I call this picture story "The Jar Lets Her In," because I wonder if she wouldn't have been let in if she hadn't held such a priceless gift to present. Her heart was transfixed to be with her Savior and nothing could have prepared her for the gift she received in return. I believe gratefulness was paled by the love that shone out of her from then on.

THINK HOPE

– Lila Diller –

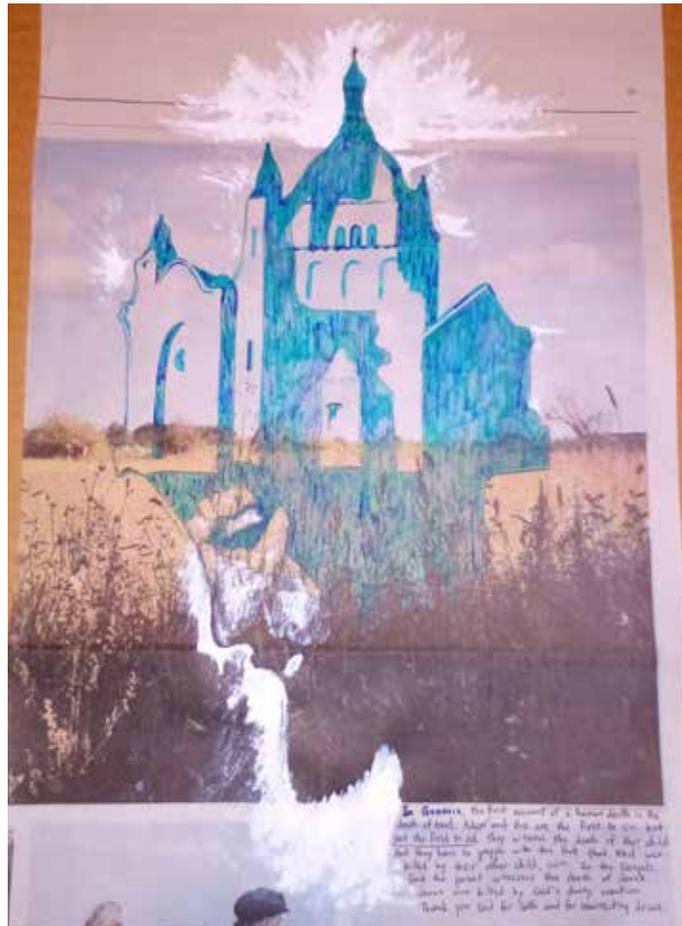


Artist Reflection

Especially in these dark times, the world needs us to show the hope we have in Jesus — and we need reminders from each other. The blessed hope we have for the future brings us peace and joy in the present. Let's continue to Think Hope!

UNTITLED

– Zach Cusick –



Artist Reflection

Thank you God for being a loving creator and leader.

LOOKING THROUGH OLD PHOTOS

— Dan Kent —

From his first collection, *Diamonds Mixed with Broken Glass*

Wow, this one is old.
I think that's a car,
or maybe a boat?

This pic's of me and my gramps.
Gosh, I remember that place.
Here's one of you at that camp.
Here's one before I gained
weight.
Ah, dad always made that face.

Look! Here's the dog as a pup.
These old photos are great!
I love how they fade,
how they let go of their spot
in commune and time
at about the same rate
that they fade from our mind.

But nowadays,
in the digital age,
photos don't fade.

It's a blessing, I'm sure,
but also a shame.
We have to move on.

The puppy is gone.
Grandpa's not here.
I'm not the same.
The past is the past—
and should look that way.

But digital pics
are embalming the past—
electrified formaldehyde
refreshes the dead,
turns the fruit bowl to wax,
turns the flower to glass.

Photos don't fade
in the digital age.

We lose all sense
of passing time—
the gentle mercy
of distance.
We lose our own narrative flow.
History, frozen in that pose—
inverted rigor mortis:
what's gone lives on and on,
and we're the ones who can't let
go.

UTAH GOLD IN AUTUMN

– Anne Craigmyle –



Artist Reflection

God's creation is still strong in some places. Let us pray Earth and its beauty will survive the current climate crisis.

SUNRISE POINT

– John Pilgrim –



Artist Reflection

Normally I would never consider waking up at 5 AM to watch a sunrise in the freezing cold, but Bryce Canyon National Park presented an opportunity I did not want to miss. Unique geologic features in God's creation are always awe-inspiring, but on this day the conditions were perfect for a spectacular display. The cloud cover created a perfect canvas for a multicolored light show while the sunlight painted dramatic colors between the spires of the canyon, its rays pushing aside the shadows from one moment to the next.

Watching in wonder that morning at God's handiwork was such an invigorating experience, one photo was not enough to capture it. This had to be a wide panorama merging multiple photos.

FOREST FOR THE TREES

– Lori Anne Baumgartner –



Artist Reflection

The statement “they can’t see the forest for the trees” is often used to describe someone who gets so focused on details they miss the larger picture. As a person with ADHD I have often experienced the opposite. I can see the grand vision of the big picture clearly, but I struggle to determine the details that make that grand thing possible.

This series of paintings explores both sides of that phrase. When viewed together the paintings convey a large dense forest, even though the individual trees are rendered with little detail. When viewed separately they lose context and it can be hard to picture the entire forest, or even recognize the brushstrokes as trees.

I hope that this series will encourage the viewer to consider whether they gravitate toward small details or larger visions, and see the beauty in both the trees and the forest.

WHERE IS HE IN THE HOMELESS CAMP?

— Caroline Wise —

The choice to leave the abuse was a dive off a cliff,
a dive into a vast yawning open pit of desperation.
And I thought of Hagar banished to a desert, thirsty
for water, for kindness, for humanity, such desolation, lying down to die.

Enslaved, exploited, and discarded, I know this mother of the desolate
as I become her.
It was not the life I dreamed of.

He knows. And He comes to the desert and gives water to the desolate
and promises of a future

—

a future not of my design but one in which he says, “Be brave, I’m with
you, I sing over you with joy.”

And again, yet again in my vagabond life fleeing the realities of poverty
and disability and misplaced trust fleeing broken families that disown
and persecute the autistic one, such pain, always pain. He is with the
autistic. He is with the pain. He surrounds it and lifts it off his shoulders
who can’t bear it.

He comes by way of an unexpected job offer when all hope of such a
thing is gone.

An apartment is rented. Coworkers tell me they don’t believe in God
because of homelessness in those we serve.

There are a thousand other desolations that shore up their disbelief and

yet in those very things

I've found the Emmanuel, God with me that hides my broken heart under the shadow of his wings. God is with me — He hides me in His wounded side as I kneel at the foot of the cross. The Cross where he bleeds for the shame of homelessness and disability and the stranger. No one is homeless when hidden in His wounds. There is always room there.

MOTHER DUCK

— Caroline Wise —



PRAYER SHAWL

— Rachel McDonald —



Artist Reflection

I started knitting simple squares and rectangles to relieve stress, and soon I found myself making large rectangular prayer shawls. People have given me yarn, and I occasionally take advantage of “sales,” but almost always I am halfway through a project before I know who needs it (usually via a call for prayer support on Facebook).

MY LIFE IS NOT A PERFORMANCE

— Sarah Monaghan —

My life
Is not a performance
Lived on a stage
Rapidly plot twisting to accommodate the pundits

My life
Is in the curtain closing

My life
Is found in the darkness backstage
Where I am both the actress and the audience

My life
Is when my pupils dilate
To see the performers that have been acting in these hallowed
shadows all along

And in finding them
We dance and clap and boogie and two-step
The best performance of our lives
With no one at all to watch

And when the curtain draws back again
We never even notice

That is my life

REMEMBER WHEN

– Amelia Boatman –

Remember when I didn't believe? Correction: when I didn't want to believe. It hurt my head, it wore me down, it made no sense. Remember when I shouted for you? I neither saw nor heard you. I shouted for you.

I was given a box to crawl into. They said you only visited those in boxes. All the box did was turn my heart cold and head hot. For years the box was my house, but never a home. To hell with the box! If this meant to hell with me, so be it. At least there the fires were warm. The fires in my heart were all ice.

The moment I left was the moment you called. In your hand were letters that had gone "undelivered." Despite your show of good faith, I had none to return. After all those years why should it be us? Are we a "we"? No, I choose me. Goodbye.

Skip ahead — years go by and it's just me, me and my frozen heart. No box, but still no home. No hell, but still no community. Where do I go? Life is easier this way, but far duller. I feel alive for the first time, but for what? What is the point, the goal, the purpose, thoughts, feelings, heart, head, soul. Where have I gone?

Why am I standing on your doorstep? Are you even here? I don't want to believe. Could we even be a "we"? Months go by; each week I step into another one of your houses. None feel like home, but none feel like hell.

You call again and you still have the letters. You offer a seat at your table; I simultaneously want to sit down and flip the table over. Like

father like daughter, right? At the top of my lungs I yell with all my frozen heart that younger me wants to be loved, teenage me wants revenge, but adult me just wants peace. You look me in my soul and breathe out, "We will find peace in the storm together." Collapsed in your embrace I cry out that I didn't know I could miss someone I never felt I knew.

Remember when I didn't believe?

We walk for miles as you hold my hand and I read the letters. Letters that describe my life and our world through your eyes. We share cries, fits of rage, and roaring laughter. All those years in my box, you were there. All those years alone, you were there. Whether it was my environment or my pride stumbling me into our great mis- or non-communication, you were there. You tell me about all the times you said my name, how ardently and faithfully you sought me out. Admittedly I express the times I sought you out as well. We agree on the times we were both there, but I wasn't ready to take your hand.

How do I thank you for all you've done? Forever grateful is the girl who doubted by age 9, walked away at 15, found you again at 18, and held your hand at 19. You are my peace and my home.

Remember when I didn't believe?

