



POETRY PRAYERS

Written by Rev. Sarah Are

There are a number of ways to utilize poetry in your ministry. You might print and distribute these prayers to members in your community, or read them aloud to open and close study sessions. In worship, you could offer a poem as an opening reflection, a meditation during the sermon, a moment of reflection after the sermon, or as a written prayer printed in the bulletin. However you utilize these poems, please include credit as follows: Prayer by Rev. Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

ASH WEDNESDAY

AGAIN & AGAIN, WE'RE INVITED IN

INVITED

I like to imagine that each year,
God invites me to a party.
God drops me a note that says,
"No gifts, casual dress. Come just as you are."

I like to imagine that I am brave enough to go.
I like to imagine that I decide that I am worth it.
This was no pity invite,
There is no obligatory postage.
God wants me there.

So I get myself together,
Smudged glasses, sensitive ego, wrinkled shirt, and all.
I ring the doorbell a few minutes late on account of
the fact that
I lost my keys twice trying to get out the door,
And I almost turn back to hide in my car,
Afraid that I might embarrass myself over
appetizers or small talk.
But then God answers the door,
And God says, "You're here!"
And I smile, because I am.

And with every step past that threshold,
I know that God is cheering me on.
It's the pride of a parent watching their child take
their first step.

If I freeze, God is not disappointed.
If I fall, God is not mad.
But if I trust the invitation,
If I move closer,
I know, God celebrates.

Friends, you've got mail.
It's an invitation to dust off your shoes,
To go deeper,
To trust that you're worth it,
To lose your keys and your faith,
And then to find them both, along with your worth.
You are invited.
We are invited.
Again and again and again.
This invitation is for you.



THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, GOD MEETS US

REMEMBER WHEN?

God never begins letters with the words,
“I hope this finds you well,”
For those words imply distance.

Instead, God begins God’s letters to you with the words,
“Remember when?”

Beloved child,
Remember when we dipped our toes into the water?
Remember when we dove right in?
Remember when the ice cream dripped down our hands
And the cicadas sang their song,
And the seasons changed,
And the days were long?
Remember when we fell in love and the world was new?
Remember when our heart was broken?
Remember the tears?
Remember the long nights?
Remember when we laughed again and the sound surprised us?
Remember when we marched in the street?
Remember when we cast our vote?
Remember when we believed in hope?
Remember when?
I do.

That’s what God’s letters say.
So on this day, and every day to come,
Remember: God is meeting you.
If you look back, you might remember when.



THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE CALLED TO LISTEN

TRUTH THAT RICOCHETS

I went to a lecture once—
An interfaith conversation with
interfaith leaders.
Whispers bounced off the church's
tile floors
As people shuffled into place,
Carrying hope alongside assumptions—
Mixed into pockets like loose change.

About halfway through the evening,
A young woman in a blue hijab
began speaking.
She was the youngest person on the panel,
Seated far to the left. You might almost
miss her
If you weren't paying attention;
But not here, not when she spoke.

In quiet determination she told us of fear
and persecution.
She told us of hatred and racial slurs,
Thrown at her people from car windows
like bombs.
It was a truth I did not know,
And that truth ricocheted like sunlight
through the cathedral windows,
Touching almost everyone that day.

Then a man in the back, who could
have been me—
Who has been me—
Approached the microphone and said,
“Your people are persecuted. You live in
fear. You are battered by hate.
If that is true, then why am I just now
hearing about it?
Why is your story not on the news?
Why have you not spoken up about it?”

And the air was still, partly because we held
our breath in anticipation,
And partly because the Spirit slows her
dance when we stand at the edge
of truth.

The woman in the blue hijab leaned into
the microphone
And whispered with a quiet strength that
can only come from years of practice:
“We are screaming.”

If there is one truth in my life
That unfolds again and again,
It is the need to listen.

For again and again, I will try,
with good intentions,
To act and walk with love.
But again and again, I will make mistakes.
Again and again, I will say the wrong thing.
Again and again, they will call me Peter,
And again and again, they will be right.

So again and again,
I will pray for a truth that ricochets,
For ears that will listen,
And for space to hold truth.

If people are screaming,
And to be clear—people *are* screaming—
I do not want to miss it.



THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE SHOWN THE WAY

FLIPPING TABLES

I woke up and realized I was sitting at a table that oppression built.
The patriarchy made the food.
Cheap labor sewed the table cloth.
The guest list was exclusive.
Fear was the host.

And the people seemed happy,
But the food tasted awful.
Because milk and honey
Are reserved for God's promised day.

So hold onto your silverware,
Because now that I see it,
I can't unsee.

This table is about to be flipped.



THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE SHOWN THE WAY

BREAD CRUMBS

I used to make decisions with a flip
of a coin,
Or, “Eeny, meeny, miny, moe,
My mother told me so.”

That was when the stakes were small,
When I was small,
When the world was small;
Back when we thought
We knew it all.

But you grow up quickly
When you start to see
That not all have the freedom
To love equally,
Or to breathe freely,
Or to protest peacefully.

And you grow up quickly
When you start to see
That the Church is shrinking
And the world is sick,
And people are lonely,
And the news won't quit.
And no amount of guessing games
Can right these wrongs.

So today I am going
To do my best
To tuck my ego
In the pocket of my chest.
Today I will listen
Louder than I speak,
And look for the tables
That Jesus is flipping.
For our God carved
Words into stone.
Our God led the people
In a pillar of smoke.

Our God was present
In the still, small voice,
In the middle of the storm,
And where people rejoice.
And if God was showing them the way,
Then I am confident,
God is here today—
Dropping bread crumbs
And leaving signs,
Flipping tables
Where oppression dines.

So yes, I admit,
This is harder than before.
I cannot use games
To decide or keep score.
I have to use faith; I have to believe
That even today, God is leading.

My mother told me so.



THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, GOD LOVES FIRST

HOLD

If you hold a newborn in your arms,
All at once you will understand
The crook of your elbow
And the cup of your palm
As never before—
Ordinary curves of the body
Transformed into a resting space.
You were designed for love.

And if you're lucky enough
To hold a newborn in your arms,
And that newborn curls
Its tiny fingers around yours,
Making your hands look
Like the hands of a giant—
Then time might stand still,
And those around you might point and say,
“Look! That little one is holding you back.”

And in that moment,
If you pay attention,
You will catch a glimpse
Of the circle that love was meant to be.
God is love,
Our resting place.
With small hands,
We hold back.



THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE REFORMED

KEEP DIGGING

I can feel change inside of me.
It's a slow burn.
Change usually starts out hot—
Defensive and angry,
A self-righteous blanket
Of, "I am right and here's why . . ."
I wrap it around my shoulders
Like a barricade.
I fight the temptation to lean forward,
To play the challenger,
To argue with confidence.

But in time,
Almost always,
The heat fades.
The air leaves the balloon.
The audacity of it all
Starts to wear off.
And eventually,
What I am left with
Is myself
And a big, open sky.
It's colder here.
It's quieter.
I can hear my thoughts.

And in this big, wide openness
I am able to say out loud,
"Maybe I wasn't right.
Maybe I need to learn.
Maybe it's time for change.
Maybe that's okay."

And if I'm quiet, and if I'm paying attention,
I can usually hear God whisper inside of me,
"Good work, my child. Now keep digging."



PALM / PASSION SUNDAY

AGAIN & AGAIN, WE DRAW ON COURAGE

PEACEFUL PROTEST

I wonder if Jesus could feel his heartbeat
In his throat, the way I do when I'm afraid.
I wonder if he had to take deep breaths,
In through his nose, out through his mouth,
Tricking his body into a state of calm.
I wonder if he was nauseous, like I am
When I'm headed into a hard conversation.
I wonder if he had to summon his courage,
Tucking fear away so that he could hold onto
What mattered most with both hands.

I wonder, because time has taught us
That it is not uncommon
For a peaceful protest
To start or end
With an unjust death.

So I wonder,
Did he know?
Was he afraid?
Did anyone see it?

I want to hold what matters most with both hands.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

AGAIN & AGAIN, WE ARE HELD TOGETHER

UNTIL THAT DAY *(Written in December, 2020)*

We cannot shake hands right now.
We cannot hug or kiss cheeks.
We cannot lean in to tell stories
Or draw close to pray.
We cannot pass the peace
Or even pass the time in each other's homes.
We cannot eat together,
Because the world is sick.

So instead of holding each other,
We hold distance.
We hold masks.
We hold statistics on the tips of our tongues.
We hold fear,
We hold space,
We hold tense conversations.

Maybe by the time you're reading this,
The day will have come
For all God's people to be gathered at Table.
Maybe by the time you're reading this,
We will be eating together.
Maybe we'll be hugging.
Hopefully there will be dancing
And laughing and kissing
And leaning in to tell stories,
And throwing our heads back to laugh.

But until that day,
I will wiggle my toes,
And think of footwashing.
I will eat sweet bread,
Ravenously,
And remember Communion.
I will close my eyes,
And picture your face.
I will clasp my hands
And know—
As sure as one palm knows the other—
That we are being held.
We are being held together.



GOOD FRIDAY

AGAIN & AGAIN, WE FIND OURSELVES HERE

HERE

There are places that our bodies know—
The curve of the couch, the creak of the porch swing,
The number of steps to our love's front door.

There are places that our bodies know,
And then there are places our souls know—
 Waiting rooms and sanctuaries,
 Nurseries and bedrooms,
 Open roads and dinner tables.
These are the travel routes,
The many destinations of a well-lived soul.

And while my soul would always prefer
To stay in the sun, living on the
Front porch swings where life is easy,
From time to time,
We all find ourselves at grief's front door,
In love's waiting room,
Or on the long and treacherous road to justice's house.
So when you do,
Remember:
Your body can be in a familiar space
While your soul can feel a long way from home.
Go easy on her.
She is traveling.
Being here has never been easy.



EASTER SUNDAY
AGAIN & AGAIN, THE SUN RISES

LIGHT

In Italian, the phrase, “to give birth”
Literally means, “to bring into the light.”
A mother will labor for hours and days,
Breaking herself for you,
Whispering between fractured breaths,
“This is my body, broken for you.”

A mother will do this as long as it takes
So that you, her beloved,
Have a chance at life.
So that you, her beloved,
Can feel the warmth of the light.

And after all that pain,
The sun will rise.
The doctor will put a baby on her chest.
The mother will hold her child as if
Letting go is indeed physically impossible.
She will breathe easy,
And then she will whisper softly,
“All this time,
All these deep breaths...
It was love, again and again and again.”

It is childbirth,
But it is also resurrection.
A body broken.
Breath fractured.
A long night.
A sunrise.
Breath returned.
New life,
And a love that won't let go.

Friends, maybe Easter is just God whispering,
“All this time,
All these deep breaths...
It's been love, again and again and again.”

I think we've been standing in the light all this time.
Now that I think of it, isn't it warm?





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Sarah (*she/her*) is the Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in Social Work, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Columbia Theological Seminary. Sarah loves to combine her love of all things creative with her passion for God. 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. 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.

