

A CreatureKind Lectionary for all Creation: For Animals, Peoples, and the Earth

**Edited by Karla Mendoza Arana
& Aline Silva**



**Featuring DefaultVeg
and plant-based recipes inside**



**For animals farmed for food,
and the workers
who must raise and break their bodies.
For the withering earth
bearing witness and holding our bones.
May the light of Jesus' victory over death shine
and the sun of liberation rise even there.**

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge all beloved impacted by the industry of the farming of animals. For centuries the industry has exploited native lands across the globe, actively working against local populations, prioritizing the accumulation of wealth over the flourishing of God's beloved animals, peoples, and the earth. Many times under the sanction of the Church, Indigenous peoples of many continents, wild and domestic animals, plants and other vegetation were taken from their homelands, owned as chattel, and forced to produce for the sole purpose of expanding the industry and the wealth of their oppressors. To this day Big Ag, Big Dairy, and Big Meats lobby against ethical farming, better environmental practices, labor regulation laws, anti-deforestation regulation, and food and land sovereignty. We write this CreatureKind Lectionary for all who have suffered and resisted under the weight of their power. We pray for a world liberated from the yoke and bondage that is industrial agriculture and factory farming. Our hope is to encourage Christians to recognize faith-based reasons for caring about the wellbeing of fellow animal creatures used for food, and to take practical action in response.

FOR ANIMALS, PEOPLES, AND THE EARTH

To be CreatureKind means to change the way we see ourselves and other creatures. We see that we are one among many of God's beloved creatures. Just as we are aware of our vulnerability as human creatures, and the vulnerability of the humans we love, so we become aware of the vulnerability of the creatures around us, many of whose lives are even more fragile than our own. We become aware of the power we exercise over these other creatures: how our lives impact theirs.

By adopting [DefaultVeg](#) for our meals, and especially by adopting DefaultVeg in community or group settings, we can significantly reduce our demand for animal products, and witness to the possibility of a more peaceful co-existence with God's other creatures.

When we gather for fellowship and food, we can love our neighbors well by reducing our consumption of animal products to provide benefits for:

ANIMALS

Worldwide, about 70 billion land animals are killed for food every year and 109 million metric tons of fish are extracted from the oceans. God sees every sparrow who falls, but the standard practices of industrial animal agriculture fail to treat animals as anything more than protein-production units. By adjusting our meals to focus on plants, we can begin to abstain from participation in an inhumane and unjust system.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The world's largest user of land resources is livestock raised for the production of meat and milk. Industrial farming produces enormous quantities of waste and pollution which threaten the health of workers and nearby residents and damage ecosystems. When we begin to rely on plant foods for our nutritional needs, we drastically reduce our ecological footprint.

FARMERS AND SLAUGHTERHOUSE WORKERS

Small family farmers are suffering from laws and policies that favor the unhealthy practices of mega-corporations. Many industrial farm and slaughterhouse workers are migrants and immigrants who are exploited to the extreme. These vulnerable people are routinely sickened and injured by working conditions. Reducing demand for products from this system will help drive desperately needed reform.

OTHER HUMANS AND OURSELVES

Decreasing our demand for animal products improves food and water security, contributes to healthier diets with lower disease risks, reduces the problem of growing antibiotic resistance, and reduces the risk of new zoonotic diseases such as swine and bird flu.

To find inspiration for your next meal we have added a sneak peak of the upcoming CreatureKind cookbook. You will find recipes and blog posts with recipes you can make for yourself, your families and communities.

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Foreword

When I joined CreatureKind I knew I would be in for a ride, but I didn't know this ride was going to be so incredibly healing, challenging, and perhaps most of all, an adventure.

In September of 2021, both Aline Silva, the Executive Director of CreatureKind and Sarah King Withrow, who at the time was the CreatureKind Co-Director, called me in for a meeting. I wasn't sure what to expect as I had joined the organization just a month prior. They presented me with this incredible opportunity to grow in my skills of teaching, preaching, and writing about the care and liberation for animals farmed for food.

The idea was to write a lectionary for the whole church that would center on the love, care, and lives of animals farmed for food. As far as we knew, this had never been done before, but CreatureKind is always up for a challenge. In partnership and support from the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals (ASWA) we were able to get to work.

We knew this project would require the perspective of folks from different backgrounds and perspectives, so we couldn't be more excited when Nekeisha, Candace, and Rose agreed to share their knowledge and their experience with us. With their commitment and the help of guest writers we jumped in and created what I believe to be one of the most crucial resources for the Church in the 21st century.

This Lectionary is meant to connect us to the heart of God for non-human and human Creations alike, however we have placed our attention on animals farmed for food because we know they are often forgotten in the narrative of how loved they are by Creator.

Whether you're reading this Lectionary for your personal devotional, or as you prepare for a sermon, or you're looking to learn more about the liberation of animals farmed for food, we hope the Scriptures, reflections, and prayers encourage you in your commitment to the liberation of Animals, Peoples, and the Earth.

Without further ado, here is the **A CreatureKind Lectionary for all Creation: For Animals, Peoples, and the Earth** May it bless your hearts, homes, classrooms, and churches.

Karla Mendoza Arana
CreatureKind
February 22nd, 2023

A Note on Language, Traditions, and How to Engage the Text

Aline Silva

A traditional lectionary contains a collection of Bible texts appointed for Christian practitioners on a given day or occasion divided by years A, B, and C. **A CreatureKind Lectionary for all Creation: For Animals, Peoples, and the Earth** is a de-colonial, pro-BIPOC, anti-ableist, liberationist approach and method to the traditional lectionary. It follows the Christian calendar and seasons including Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Feast Days, and Ordinary Time. It does not follow the yearly division. Our contributors come from varied Christian traditions and were given the freedom and agency to author for the seasons by selecting Bible texts they appointed for a given day or occasion. Sometimes these texts and entries coincide with the traditional lectionary. Other times they do not. Sometimes the author chose to include the biblical text at length. Other times, they are listed at the top of the page with a nameless invitation for the reader to open their own Bibles and engage the text for themselves.

The entries are meant to be read on or leading up to a given day or occasion. For instance, for the season of Advent, the reader will want to begin the devotional the week leading up to the first week of Advent or on the first Sunday of Advent. In the United States, Advent starts the week after the Day of Mourning, also known as the Thanksgiving holiday. This means the reader will want to begin the devotional this week or the Sunday after the Day of Mourning.

Many of our contributors are seasoned authors, activists, theologians, and farmed animal advocates. This means they are well versed with terms such as factory farms, CAFOs, regenerative farming, animal ethics, and more. The CreatureKind [website](#), the [Food Empowerment Project](#), [Veggies Mijxs](#), the [Afro Vegan Society](#), and [Defund Big Meat](#) are resources to aid the reader with these terms.

Industrial Agriculture is evil, valuing profit over God's beloved CreatureKind. It destroys all standing in its way, impacting animals farmed for food, workers employed by the industry, communities surrounding these operations, and the earth itself. This truth is often hidden from consumers. Here, some of our authors have chosen to explicitly name these evils and display the serious abuse endured by animals. Here we issue a **Content Warning**. Each time those images are upcoming in this project, a warning is given with an option to skip the content. We invite any and all to skip those sections if they are triggering. If they are not, here is an invitation to engage as one's mental and

spiritual health allows. Anyone who desires to see what this system looks like beyond this lectionary, see Mercy For Animals' [photos and video footage](#).

CreatureKind welcomes, affirms, and encourages all BIPOC folks, GNC folks, and LGBTQIA+ folks in all our programs. As such, this project contains gender-neutral, justice-centered, liberatory language. Words such as *God, Creator, Spirit, Creations, creation, human* and *nonhuman animal*, and *kin-dom* are used in place of exclusionary language. As we invite others to expand their definition of neighbor to nonhuman animals, we invite the reader to generous, curious, and critical theology.

ADVENT

ADVENT ONE

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: First Sunday of Advent Year A and B

Scripture Text: Psalm 80: 1-7; 17-19

80:1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth 80:2 before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! 80:3 Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. 80:4 O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? 80:5 You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure. 80:6 You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. 80:7 Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. 80:17 But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself. 80:18 Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name. 80:19 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Prayer:

O Sovereign and Almighty Lord, bless all Thy people and all Thy flock. Give peace, Thy help, Thy love unto us, Thy servants the sheep of Thy fold, that we may be united in the bond of peace and love, one body and one spirit, in one hope of our calling, in Thy Divine and boundless love; for the sake of Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep. Amen. — Liturgy of St. Mark.

Reflection: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23). “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd” (Isaiah 40:11). “I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep” (John 10:11).

Throughout the Bible, there are powerful references to God and to God in Jesus as a shepherd. In the First Sunday of Advent scripture, we see God as the mighty Shepherd of Israel who is able to listen and lead. Although the shepherd is depicted as angry, the

psalmist believes the shepherd can be compassionate. The shepherd can rescue and restore those who cry for help. Our God is a shepherd who saves.

This image of the shepherd, and especially of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, was so meaningful to the earliest churches that it became an important part of their identity. Because of that, three of the oldest known Christian paintings feature a brown-skinned Jesus standing with a live sheep wrapped around his shoulders. One or more brown sheep stand on his right side and on his left. All of the paintings give a feeling of peace and security. There is closeness between the shepherd and his sheep.

Today, the primary way of tending sheep is unlike this image of God the shepherd. *Whereas the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep, industrial farming happens at the sheep's expense.* To date, more than 3 million sheep have died on overcrowded live export ships traveling from Australia to the Middle East. On these deadly voyages to slaughter, sheep are packed so tightly many can't lie down; stand in their own waste for weeks; and slowly die from lack of water and overheating (Animals Australia)¹.

In 2020 in the U.S. alone, 2 million sheep and lambs were slaughtered, their body parts used to make everything from glue to gelatin to strings for musical instruments (The National Humane Education Society). Even on smaller scale dairy operations like those in Poland and Czechia, new sheep mothers are restrained in cramped milking stations while their lambs are taken away and killed to be eaten.

Where would we be if the Good Shepherd treated his sheep using our dominant standards? *Better yet, what would it look like if we treated sheep with the compassion the psalmist seeks?*

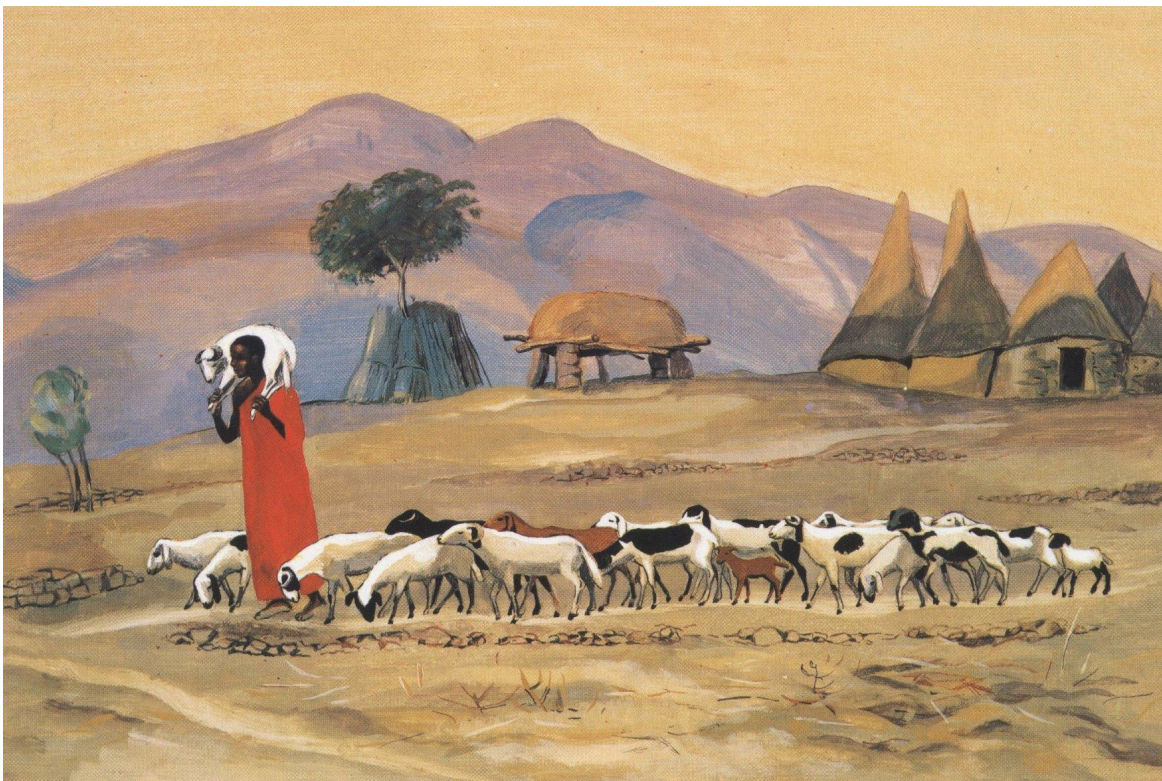
Thankfully, we have another example of relating to sheep: one that treats them, not as products, but like Jesus treats us – as friends. The word “sanctuary” in Hebrew comes from the root word for “holy” and refers to a space that is sacred. While it is usually used as a place for worship, it sometimes is used to mean “refuge” (Bible Study Tools). Today, there are sanctuaries for farmed animals where sheep receive healing, care and love: where they are restored and their lives are literally saved.

¹ For further reading on the lives of animals farmed for food in Australia, check our [Reflections on Farmed Animals](#), by CreatureKind Fellowship alumni, Lee Palumbo from Australia.

As we begin Advent, may our hearts grow in compassion, extending it to all God's beloved creatures. May we extend God's love that came into the world beyond our human selves.

Call to Action: Think about the image of God as a Shepherd who saves. How might this understanding of God change the way we think about our relationship to sheep and to other animals? Think about animal sanctuaries: places where humans take care of other animals without killing them for food. How might animal sanctuaries help us think differently about the way God cares for humans and rescues us? Learn more about Rancho Compasion, the animal sanctuary created by Miyoko Schinner, located in Nicasion, California, at www.ranchocompasion.org. In your next meal where cheese is called for as an ingredient, use a plant-based substitute instead.

Creative Work:



The Good Shepherd by JESUS MAFA²

² JESUS MAFA. The good shepherd, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://digilib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-image/act-image-link.pl?RC=48288> [retrieved February 18, 2023]. Original source: <http://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr> (contact page: <https://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr/contact>)

ADVENT TWO

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Year A

Scripture Text: Isaiah 11:1-10

11:1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 11:2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 11:3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; 11:4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 11:5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. 11:6 The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. 11:7 The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 11:8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. 11:9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 11:10 On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

Prayer:

Hear our humble prayer, O God, for our friends, the animals, especially for those who are suffering; for animals that are overworked, underfed, and cruelly treated; for all the wistful creatures in captivity, that beat their wings against bars; for any that are hunted or lost or deserted, or frightened or hungry; for all that must be put to death. We entreat for them all Thy mercy and pity, and for those who deal with them, we ask a heart of compassion and gentle hands and kindly words. Make us, ourselves, to be true friends to animals and so to share the blessings of the Merciful. (Catholic Prayer Book)

Reflection: In this reading, Isaiah describes the descendant of Jesse coming to bring justice into the earth. *One of the most remarkable parts of this peaceable kin-dom is that it is an interspecies one: other animals are part of the glorious transformation, too.*

First, the prophet foresees a time when untamed animals will lay together with animals who are farmed. These relationships bridge between wilderness and agricultural spaces, and cross the barrier between predator and prey as “the lion will eat straw like an ox.”

Second, peace is also made between humans and the other animals. Children will be able to be near the cobra and viper without danger. No one, neither human nor nonhuman animal, will enact or experience violence on the “holy mountain” because the entire earth will be saturated with “the knowledge of the LORD.”

In the season of Advent, Christians celebrate Jesus as the one who comes to establish this peaceable kin-dom. Indeed, we confess that Jesus reconciles all things to God (Colossians 1:20) and that through his incarnation the entire universe continues to be redeemed and restored. One might say this new order echoes the story of Eden where, “everything that has the breath of life, [God has] given every green plant for food” (Gen 1:29). In addition, in place of the enmity that started between humans and the serpent, these creatures will be in proximity to each other without any danger.

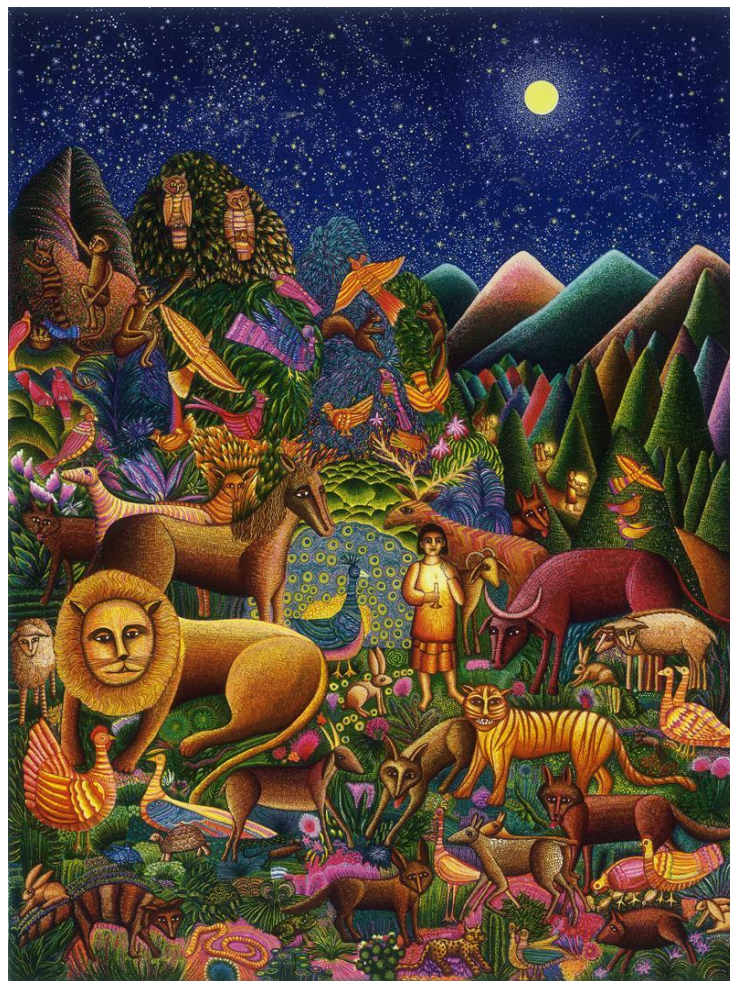
As people with new life in Jesus, this work of transforming violence into *shalom* – meaning safety, soundness, welfare, prosperity, friendship and tranquility (Bible Study Tools) – is ours to join. As Paul writes, “the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God” and there is hope “that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8). Jesus's followers have the power to be agents of God's peaceable king-om with each other *and* with other nonhuman animals right now. As new creation, we need not wait for Isaiah's vision to come to pass to be ambassadors for a peaceable way.

Each day, Christians make personal and collective choices that increase or reduce harm against others. Will I eat farmed animals who were terrorized from birth until their last breath? Will I eat plants that are ethically grown and harvested? Will I wear the skins and furs of other animals who are electrocuted and beaten to death? Will I wear sustainably-made clothing? Will I fund businesses that underpay, overwork and abuse workers? Will I protest in support of workers and patronize farmers who provide plant-based foods? Will I work with organizations who make sure my neighbors have access to fresh vegetables? The list goes on.

A shoot shall come from the stump of Jesse to decide with equity for the meek of the earth. As we continue the Advent journey, let us understand the interspecies hope of this word! Let us practice the complete peace made real in Jesus Christ.

Call to Action: The prophet Isaiah's vision of *shalom* includes humans and nonhuman animals. One way to practice living in health and wellness with untamed and farmed animals alike is to not eat their bodies. Make a commitment to eat only plant-based foods for the second week of Advent. Talk with a friend about how it feels to practice the hope of Isaiah by taking this step.

Creative Work:



Peaceable Kingdom by John August Swanson³

³ Swanson, John August. Peaceable Kingdom, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=56556> [retrieved February 18, 2023]. Original source: Estate of John August Swanson, <https://www.johnaugustswanson.com/>.

ADVENT THREE

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Third Sunday of Advent Year A and B

(Fourth Sunday of Advent Year B and C)

Scripture Text: Luke 1:46b-55

1:46b "My soul magnifies the Lord, 1:47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 1:48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; 1:49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 1:50 His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 1:51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. 1:52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; 1:53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. 1:54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 1:55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Prayer:

Look with pity, O heavenly One, upon all thy [creatures] who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant companions. Have mercy upon us and forgive us our sins of deed or neglect against these our neighbors. Give strength to those who work for justice and opportunity for all, and grant that all may enjoy the riches of this land; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (For the Oppressed, Anglican Service Book)

Reflection: Oh how powerful are Mary's words! Sung in response to Elizabeth's greeting, she sings of God looking upon her with favor and pulling the mighty from their thrones. Within Mary, is the seed of David, sent to save God's people "from the hand of all who hate us" and "to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins" (Luke 1:71, 77).

In the midst of this hopeful vision, it can be easy to forget the situation Mary and her people were facing. But Herod's reaction shows how threatening Jesus's arrival was. Installed by the Roman Empire as king of Judea, Herod tried to discover Jesus's birthplace to do him harm. When his plan failed, he ordered the massacre of all the

male children in and near Bethlehem, ages two years old and under in what some Christians call, "The Massacre of the Innocents."

The "Son of the Most High" who sits on "the throne of his ancestor David" to "reign over the house of Jacob forever" was clearly a threat to those who believed *their* kin-dom was without end. Mary's words conveyed the generations-long desire for liberation from other empires. It is a song of overturning and restoring. It is a song that some of us closely relate to—and others have never experienced.

For the millions of people who are economically poor, neglected in society and living under violent conditions, the message of a savior who turns the rich away empty and lifts up the lowly is *amazing*—news. But what if we are the ones who are merciless? What if we are the ones who are "proud in our imaginations"? What if we are the ones who abuse our power? Although very few people in the world are tyrants, many of us—even some of us with less political and social power—consciously and unconsciously support acts of great cruelty towards other beings.

Right now, there is a different "massacre of innocents" taking place in countries across the world. Each day, millions of land and water creatures are caged and tormented on the way to becoming food, clothing, and other products. Each year, billions of cows, chickens, pigs, goats and other animal neighbors are beheaded and dismembered on small farms and factory farms alike. These infants meet their ends despite their cries of terror; despite the trauma and abuse their handlers and workers also experience; and despite the lasting and irreversible damage these industries commit against all of God's creation. A lot of pride, stubbornness and ignorance is required to keep these systems going, even when these systems continue to destroy so much of what God loves.

A human child is not the same as a calf, kid or lamb. Yet, these animals need not be the same as children in order to appreciate the deep and distinct suffering they feel. Let us consider that, to other beings, humans are the arrogant and mighty ones. Let us wrestle with Mary's words from their perspective and think about how we might change.

Call to Action: Look up an organization or group near to you that rescues farmed animals from slaughter and other abusive situations. If no such organization or group exists in your area, look for one that is nationally- or internationally-based. Find out what kinds of contributions they need, including volunteer time, financial resources or material donations. Make a commitment to give to that organization or group in honor of the Advent and Christmas seasons.

Creative Work:



The Annunciation - Gabriel and Mary by JESUS MAFA⁴

⁴ JESUS MAFA. The Annunciation - Gabriel and Mary, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48278> [retrieved February 18, 2023]. Original source: <http://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr> (contact page: <https://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr/contact>).

ADVENT FOUR

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Fourth Sunday of Advent Year C (Second reading)

Scripture Text: Hebrews 10:5-10

10:5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; 10:6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. 10:7 Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God' (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)." 10:8 When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), 10:9 then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. 10:10 And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Prayer:

Almighty God, who hast placed in the skies the sign of thy covenant with all living things: Grant that we, who are saved through water and the Spirit, may worthily offer to thee our sacrifice of thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Anglican Service Book)

Reflection: Often when people think about animals in the Bible, we associate them with religious sacrifices. This response is understandable given how early and frequently animal sacrifice is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible especially. For example, Abel offers the "fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock" and receives God's favor while Cain's offering of fruit does not (Genesis 4). The ritual killing of cows, sheep, goats, bulls and doves, and non-animal offerings like grain were essential to people's relationship with and worship of God and the Israelites' relationships with each other.

Because of its importance, it might feel shocking to read the viewpoint on sacrifice in today's reading. Here, the writer says that God has not desired or felt pleased with sacrifices and that Jesus' death and resurrection abolishes it. He also challenges the effectiveness of sacrifice as "a reminder of sin year after year" (Hebrews 10: 3–4). How

might we explain this new understanding and what does it mean for our celebration of Jesus's coming?

Although most scriptures look favorably on sacrifice, other voices help us understand how complex the practice was. David routinely killed other animals for worship, but he also describes occasions when sacrifice was not necessary. In his prayer of cleansing and pardon for harming Bathsheba and Nathan, he writes, "For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Psalm 51:16–17).

Several prophets also criticized sacrifices when injustice, corruption, idolatry and exploitation were rampant in the community. Hosea states, "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hos. 6:6). Amos also declares, "Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them" (Amos 5:22). *The problem seems to be the hypocrisy of sacrificing to God when people were also neglecting and abusing the vulnerable, and living in wickedness.* While these passages do not condemn animal sacrifice, they make clear some of the required conditions for the ritual to be acceptable.

In short, just killing an animal was not enough for God: one's heart had to be clean and devoted; and righteousness, equity, compassion and wellbeing was needed among the people. This aligns with the scripture, "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than the sacrifice offered of fools; for they do now know how to keep from doing evil" (Ecclesiastes 5:1)

As we look toward Christmas, we celebrate the coming of the One who made it possible for us to approach God "with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience" (Hebrews 10: 22). We can keep the core of the original sacrifice without ongoing bloodshed. This is good news for humans and non-human creatures. Thanks be to God!

Call to Action: So often we only think about other animals as beings who are designated to die. How would it change our thoughts about cows, sheep, chickens, pigs, fish, and other creatures if we consider that they have their own self-awareness, communities, ways of communicating with each other, and even full emotional worlds? Watch the documentary, [The Emotional World of Animals](#), which is available on YouTube. How might what you've learned affect your behavior toward them?

Creative Work:



Expulsion of the merchants from the temple by Andrei Mironov

CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS DAY

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Nativity of the Lord - Proper I Year A, B and C

Scripture Text: Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

2:1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2:2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 2:3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 2:4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 2:5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 2:6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 2:7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. 2:8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 2:9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 2:10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 2:11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 2:12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 2:13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" 2:15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 2:16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 2:17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told to them about this child; 2:18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 2:19 But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 2:20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told to them.

Prayer:

Our Parent, who is in heaven. Holy is your name. Your kin-dom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kin-dom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Reflection: Glory to God in the Highest! The Messiah is here! Thanks be to God!

Today, we rejoice over the coming of Jesus, born in Bethlehem to Mary and Joseph! Throughout his narrative of his most holy event, Matthew provides amazing details on the long-awaited Savior entering the world. Yet, one of the most incredible and usually overlooked parts of the story is the interspecies nature of it all.

For starters, the first place Jesus lays his head outside of his mother's womb is in a manger. With the inn filled to capacity with people, the newborn king begins his days wrapped in bands of cloth, laying in "a long open box or trough for horses or cattle to eat from." Although Matthew does not say specifically, we might infer that Mary gave birth to Jesus in a place meant for — or at least close to — farmed animals. *The Lamb of God comes, not in a human residence, but in a place meant for cows, horses, and perhaps even other lambs.*

Then, when the angel announces the birth, they do not go to the kings. Instead, they go to the fields where shepherds tend their flocks. As a result, humans were not the only ones to receive the multitude of heavenly hosts: sheep were also witnesses to the appearance! Later. As Jesus begins his earthly ministry, we will see a similar coming together of the divine, human and nonhuman animal worlds again.

Finally, upon hearing "'the good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord,'" the shepherds make their way to Bethlehem and to the trough where Jesus lay. It is likely they did not leave their sheep behind to make this journey, but instead, took the creatures with them. As a result, when Christians around the world depict this nativity scene, we usually imagine that sheep were there, gathered around Jesus resting in the container in which they would receive their food.

When we pay attention to various ways that animals show up in the Bible, even at the beginning of Jesus's life on our planet, we notice that animals have more than a

sacrificial role to play in God's story. God's work on earth is not solely about saving humankind. Instead, for God so loved the world, meaning the cosmos, that God gave Godself in Jesus to bring peace to the whole earth. Like the peaceable kin-dom envisioned by Isaiah, salvation and reconciliation includes every body — all of creation.

Animals farmed for food were there from the very beginning, hearing about, traveling to, and resting before Emmanuel, God With Us. And they will be part of the end, as well. May we, the children of God and followers of Jesus, guided by God's Spirit, celebrate Christmas with deeper awareness of this fact. May God open our hearts to the other animals in the way we treat them here and now.

Call to Action: Have you thought about Christmas from the perspectives of the animals who were there before? Use your imagination by listening to "The Friendly Beasts" a 1920s Christmas carol, written by Robert Davis.

An English-language version of it, sung by Cedarhurst Kid music can be found [here](#).

Translated lyrics in Spanish can be found [here](#).

Translated lyrics in Hawaiian (hymn #92 IIESU HE POKII NOU A NO'U fin *Na Himeni Haipule Hawaii*) can be found [here](#).

Creative Work:



Creche by Avondale Pattillo UMC⁵

⁵ "Creche." One of over 250 Nativity scenes (creches) at the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, Decatur, Georgia. *Flicker*, 6 Dec. 2009, www.flickr.com/photos/apmethodist/4165909125/in/photostream/. Accessed 18 Feb. 2023.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: First Sunday After Christmas Year A, B and C

Scripture Text: Psalm 148

148:1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights! 148:2 Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host! 148:3 Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars! 148:4 Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! 148:5 Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created. 148:6 He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed. 148:7 Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, 148:8 fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command! 148:9 Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! 148:10 Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds! 148:11 Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! 148:12 Young men and women alike, old and young together! 148:13 Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven. 148:14 He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the LORD!

Prayer:

O heavenly One, who hast filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works; that, rejoicing in thy whole creation, we may learn to serve thee with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Prayer for Joy in God's Creation, [Anglican Service Book](#))

Reflection: Today, the interspecies celebration of Christ's birth continues! How fitting to reflect on this time with a psalm of all creation's praise! In this passage, the writer imagines beings of all kinds from all spheres exalting the Lord for the Lord's faithfulness. From the angels to the sea creatures to the young women and men, from the stars to the fruit trees to the snow and winds, the author animates everything that does and doesn't have breath in celebration of their Creator. Humans are a part of this chorus, of course, But they are not the center nor the whole.

In addition to the things of heaven and the human beings, the nonhuman animal world is also represented among the worshippers, including wild animals, flying birds and even creeping things. While we may be tempted to see the word "cattle" as representing only cows, bulls and calves, the Hebrew word transliterated as *b^hēmâ*, refers to "beast, animal, livestock, herds, cattle" and "domestic animals" more broadly (Believers Bible Commentary/Bible Gateway). Perhaps sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, horses and other animals that humans keep are part of this praise team as well!

It's a beautiful thing to imagine all these animals being conscious of God's presence and care to give honor and glory in whatever ways they choose. Yet, it's also sad to imagine this scene and contrast it with the sounds that billions of animals farmed for food currently make. More common than vocalizations of delight, contentment and joy are screams of pain, groans of illness, cries of fear, and whimpering unto death. The magnitude of tragedy, loneliness, neglect and dread these animals express is incomprehensible compared to the number of their siblings who express peace and bliss. Even the bodies of animals who live happier, freer lives will ultimately tremble at the moment of an untimely death. For even the cage-free and grass-fed animals in the world, flail and shudder during bloodshed.

When we see other animals as dead things and treat them as instruments for our own ends, we also miss how they fit into God's sphere of concern and God's ultimate plans for peace. But if we all share the breath of God, if we all share flesh, then perhaps we can see farmed animals as sharing the ability to offer praise in their own distinct creaturely ways. Maybe this is the kind of seed we need to think about them differently.

The Hebrew Bible's confession is that all animals, human and otherwise, were meant to live harmoniously until sin got in the way. Even if we can't attain that perfect peace today, there's no no reason more than 73 billion *b^hēmâ* should open their mouths in suffering and close their eyes in violence in a year (2020/Faunalytics).

As we move through the Christmas season with greater awareness of animals farmed for food, let us strive for a world where they, too, will lift their voices to God in thanksgiving. May we work for their freedom, as well.

Call to Action: Faunalytics is a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower "animal advocates with access to research, analysis, strategies, and messages that maximize their effectiveness to reduce animal suffering." They contribute to this work by conducting research, maintaining an online library and providing other resources. Visit

their website at faunalytics.org and review the latest statistical data for the global slaughter of cows, chickens, pigs and sheep.

Which countries do you notice slaughtering the most farmed animals? Where do you see the numbers of slaughtered animals increasing over time? Consider the place where you live: how many farmed animals might be dying in your region? Are there local organizations that can help you learn more and speak out?

Learn more: [Global Animal Slaughter Statistics & Charts: 2022 Update](#)

Creative Work:



Photo by [Doruk Yemenici](#)

FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME - THE NAMING AND CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS

Candace Laughinghouse

Lectionary Year: Year C

Scripture Text: Luke 2:15-21

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, 19 and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

21 When the eighth day came, it was time to circumcise the child, and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Prayer:

Lord, in your continuous mercy

Thank you for showing us the ways of inclusion

Farm animal life is diminished as a prop in the stories we tell our children

May we remember that all of Creation is a part of the birth, life, and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ.

The living word became flesh.

May you continue to redeem us in the consciousness

That those we typically omit in our recollection of your greatness add to your awesome

Power and liberation for all Creation.

Reflection: In this week's Feast of the Holy Name, the lectionary calls for Luke 2:15-21 as a fitting passage to set the scene for the naming and circumcision of the baby, Jesus. The angels depart, but not without naming the newborn, the name given while he was in the womb. We also read that men known for their vocation in connection with animals - the shepherds - arrived with the beautiful news that amazed Mary, Joseph, and everyone in attendance.

How might animals farmed for food be incorporated into the Feast of Holy Name? In the New Testament, two Gospel writers discuss the birth of Jesus. Matthew reports that Jesus was born in a house, while Luke omitted the flight to Egypt, a paranoid King Herod, and the murder of children to set the stage for the birth of Christ. Luke's Gospel also intentionally replaces the wise men with shepherds and Jesus's nursery as a stable among animals. Luke's gospel replaces centralizing the government with the experiences and voices of the oppressed. We read of a more relatable Christ heralded by shepherds, experiencing homelessness and cohabitating with animals farmed for food in a stable.

The naming of Christ is to be celebrated by all those who attended the birth, celebrated his arrival, and surrounded him with their special welcome. Recognizing the presence of animals at the naming of Jesus gives space to our critique of theologies and policies that only see animals as mere automata - non-sentient beings whose response is automatic. The birth within a stable is not only a connection to a socio-economic experience of menial resources but seats the narrative in the presence of animals. All the more reason that we can utilize such scriptures and feasts as a unique paradigm of collective agency for the rights of animals farmed for food.

Call to Action: Consider how many are omitted from historical narratives that perpetuate the dominant social stratification situating a hierarchy. Revisit ways your theology might participate in continuing this omission of any of God's Creation. How does today's devotion reframe your view of farmed animal life?

Creative Work:

Song: Jesus, Name Above All Names by Naida Hearn

*Jesus, name above all names
Beautiful Savior, glorious Lord.
Emmanuel, God is with us.
Blessed Redeemer, Living word.*



Photo by [Daniel Sandvik](#)

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Second Sunday After Christmas Year C

Scripture Text: John 1:(1-9), 10-18

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 1:2 He was in the beginning with God. 1:3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 1:4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 1:7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 1:8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 1:9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 1:10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 1:11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 1:12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 1:13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 1:14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. 1:15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") 1:16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 1:17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 1:18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures: Grant that, as we probe the mysteries of thy creation, we may come to know thee more truly, and more surely fulfill our role in thine eternal purpose; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Prayer for Knowledge of God's Creation, [Anglican Service Book](#))

Reflection: In this season, when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, it is very easy to focus on his arrival as a human infant. Yet, John gives us an invitation to consider his personhood in a bigger way.

As human beings, we identify with Jesus's humanity. He ate, slept, felt tired and breathed air like us. He loved, healed, prayed, and showed and experienced compassion like we can. He felt anger, grief, betrayal, abandonment, suffering and died just like we will. He felt the temptation of sin and overcame it, inspiring us to strive to do the same.

Jesus knows our joys and our struggles. And his shared humanity reassures us that God the Creator knows us intimately. And yet, even though it makes sense that humans prioritize Jesus' humanity, there are times when doing so is limiting. Just as theologies that focused on Jesus coming as a boy and growing into a man, often led to barriers that prevented women and persons of other genders to be fully embraced into church life, concentrating exclusively on his humanness often narrows our sense of God's good news.

Thankfully, today's passage from John allows us to broaden our perspectives. That broadening rests on the phrase, "And the Word became *sarx*," translated as "flesh."

In Greek, the word *sarx* means, in part, "flesh, body, the soft tissue of a creature, often in contrast to bone, ligament, or sinew"⁶. This definition parallels the Hebrew words for flesh, *basar* and *seer*, in that "Their basic reference is to the material substance of which earthly creatures are made. This is true of humans...and animals alike...including animal flesh used for food...and in sacrifice"⁷ In John's gospel, *sarx* also seems to distinguish "the sphere of the flesh" from "the divine sphere"⁸ When we understand that "flesh" describes every body, we begin to see God's work goes beyond the human sphere.

Jesus experienced our humanity intimately, yes. Yet, flesh is something he also shared with all other fleshy beings. How would we who are flesh treat other animals, including those we farm, if we really accepted the fact that Jesus shared *flesh with them*? How would our sphere of care change if we considered that God in Jesus knows what it's like to be a creature among creatures? In what ways were Jesus's experiences of joy,

⁶ NIV Exhaustive Concordance Dictionary

⁷ Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology via Bible Study Tools

⁸A. R. G. Deasley, Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology via Bible Study Tools
www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/flesh/

love, grief and suffering, like the experiences of other animals? How might asking ourselves these questions affect our faith?

This basic kinship across our distinct species is not something that was unique to Jesus. All of humanity, no matter our age, nationality, racial identity, gender identity, or other characteristics, inhabits flesh. The Word came and lived as flesh among all we land, water and air creatures, who are flesh. And Christ will reconcile all of us to God through himself (Colossians 1:15–20).

Call to Action: Throughout history, people have spent a lot of time thinking about how humans are different from other kinds of animals. In the West especially, great scholars have argued that humans are the only ones who can feel emotions, make ethical choices, use language and experience suffering. By taking this posture, we miss all the similarities between humans and other flesh. One organization that is highlighting our commonalities using a legal approach is the Nonhuman Animal Rights Project.

Learn more about their work: [What is the Nonhuman Rights Project?](#)

To go deeper, watch a longer THIRTEEN interview with the founder, Steven Wise: [Nonhuman Rights Project Aims to Grant Personhood to Animals](#)

Content Warning:

A graphic image of animal cruelty is upcoming.
Feel free to skip the following page or thoughtfully consider the image and the unnecessary cruelty animals farmed for food experience each day.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Jo-Anne McArthur](#)

EPIPHANY

EPIPHANY

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Epiphany Year A, B and C

Scripture Text: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

72:1 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.
72:2 May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.
72:3 May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in
righteousness. 72:4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give
deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. 72:5 May he live while the
sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations. 72:6 May he
be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth. 72:7 In
his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no
more. 72:10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the
kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts. 72:11 May all kings fall down before him, all
nations give him service. 72:12 For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor
and those who have no helper. 72:13 He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy. 72:14 From oppression and violence he
redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.

Prayer:

*O God, enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, for our
brothers and sisters, the inarticulate beasts, to whom Thou gave the earth as their
home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have
exercised the high dominion of humanity with ruthless cruelty so that the voice of
the earth, which should have gone up to thee in song has become a groan of
anguish and a cry of torment. May we realize that they live not for us alone, but
for themselves and for Thee, and that they too love the sweetness of life. Amen -
St. Basil the Great*

Reflection: The Lord comes with a purpose! His mission is not only to renew our hearts,
release us from sins and restore our relationships to God: it also involves delivering

persons who are overlooked and abused. As the psalmist declares, precious is the blood of those who are victimized by violence and injustice in his sight" (Psalm 72:14).

In Matthew's Epiphany account, we see two contrasting responses to this purpose. On one hand, the three magi journey to honor the newly born King of the Jews. On the other hand, King Herod becomes suspicious and fearful (Believers Bible Commentary), and tries to trick the magi into telling him Jesus's whereabouts. Warned in a dream, the magi chose to protect the vulnerable Jesus, instead.

Although he was a tiny baby, Herod saw in Jesus a power that threatened his own kin-dom. Why would a grown man be so terrified of a child?

The chief priests and scribes of Herod's court answer this question. Quoting from Micah 5:2, they note that Bethlehem would bring forth, "a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel." As the prophet of old had written, "he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord... And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, and he shall be the one of peace." The star meant that the One who was to "crush the oppressor" had arrived. While this was good news for God's people, it was deeply unsettling for Herod he helped run.

As a Black woman and immigrant living in a society where people like me are treated as inferior and victimized by violence, I rejoice in the coming of a savior who is concerned about ending oppression! Although it would be understandable to see God's work as good news for people in my communities and for others who face discrimination and inequity, recognizing that God's liberation is one for the entire creation allows me to think *big* about who else might benefit.

After learning about how billions of other animals are crushed under the weight of human systems through farming, experimentation, entertainment and other industries, I am sensitive to their cries as well. Other animals are desperately awaiting someone to save their lives, to be their helpers, and to be agents of peace. As an act of thanksgiving for the Good Shepherd who protects his sheep, I choose to extend my care to vulnerable cows, pigs, sheep, elephants and to other beings as well.

God's love and justice inspires me to be compassionate to *all flesh*. It might feel strange to have this mindset given the human-centered nature of most Christian traditions. And yet, the inclusion of the royal, Gentile magi; and the ordinary shepherds; and the angelic hosts; and the sheep and other animals at the newborn king's side reminds us

that God's circle is a cosmic one. We can also work for all God's creatures great and small to be loosed from their bonds.

Call to Action: Food is a major part of the celebration of Epiphany! Thankfully, many of the dishes are actually vegan-friendly or can be made entirely plant-based with a few adjustments. For example, fruits like oranges, blood oranges, clementines or tangerines are staples during this season and dried figs are often included among the desserts. Mexican soups often feature yucca, nopales (cacti) and plantains, and Latin American-influenced dishes like black beans and rice are easy to make without animal-based seasonings.

Make a vegan-friendly [Rosca de Reyes](#) (English) or [Rosca de Reyes Vegana](#) (Español)

As an alternative to the traditional *picadillo*, check out Dora's [Picadillo de Lentejas](#) recipe (English) or [Picadillo de Lentejas](#) (Español).

Try to make this year's Epiphany as much of a symbol of peace as you can.

Content Warning:

A graphic image of animal cruelty is upcoming.
Feel free to skip the following 2 pages or thoughtfully consider the image and the unnecessary cruelty animals farmed for food experience each day.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Jo-Anne McArthur](#)

TIME AFTER EPIPHANY/ORDINARY TIME

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Baptism of our Lord/First Sunday After Epiphany Year C

Scripture Text: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

3:15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 3:16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 3:17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, 3:22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Prayer:

Almighty God, who hast poured upon us the new light of thine incarnate Word: Grant that the same light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Preface of the Incarnation, Anglican Service Book)

Reflection: "There are two incarnations in the Bible, you know." I love to point this out to fellow Christians, often with a sly grin. The usual response is a look of being puzzled as people try to determine what I'm talking about. After a few seconds, often in silence, I continue: "There's God coming in Jesus, which is the one we like to talk about. And there's also God coming as a bird."

Yes, God comes as a bird. In bodily form. Why does this receive such little attention? Even when we actively talk about, write about, and visually depict the Holy Spirit as a heavenly dove, why do we fail to acknowledge the significance of this?

One reason we might not reflect on this appearance is because it's so brief. While God occupies human flesh for at least 33 years, God occupies flesh of a dove only at Jesus's baptism, long enough to declare, "You are my son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." The Holy Spirit coming in this creaturely form does not happen at any other time in Jesus's earthly story.

Although the short length of time that it happens might contribute to our overlooking this incarnation, I suspect that reason goes even deeper. Could it also be that the norm of anthropocentrism across all denominations of Christianity — meaning the tendency to regard "humankind as the central or most important element of existence, especially as opposed to God or animals" — also clouds our reading of this text and leads us to devalue this story.

Could it be that our general practice of discounting other animals as relevant to our lives and faith could be clouding our reading of this text? What if we read the Bible as a whole with greater awareness of other animals's intrinsic value? Would we notice their diverse roles in God's story more readily?

Despite the short time that God entered earth as a nonhuman animal, it was clearly significant enough to the gospel writers for all four of them to mention it in their narratives (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22 and John 1:32). While Matthew, Mark and Luke all speak of the Spirit coming, "like a dove," John makes the point more strongly on this first Sunday of Epiphany.

The Holy Spirit came at this crucial moment in Christ's ministry — revealing Jesus' true identity to all around him. And like other key moments in Jesus's life and ministry, this triune scene of God the Creator, God the Son and God the Spirit is also interspecies. If God having a body like ours is meaningful for us, it seems like God's Spirit having a body like a bird opens up all sorts of interesting possibilities!

God has also been on earth as a nonhuman animal! God has known being feathered and winged. How can we miss something so fascinating? How might our recognition of this change the way we treat other animal beings?

Call to Action: The celebration of Epiphany continues with more yummy food! This time, the festive and easy dish of Tofu Crumble Summer Lettuce Wraps, comes from contributor, Elizabeth Herrick The recipe readily serves two to three people and can serve as a side dish or can be packed with fillings to become a standalone meal. It

goes well with mushroom barbecue , fried tofu nuggets, or cold somen or soba noodles.
Drink with cold barley tea or cold black lemon tea.

Ingredients:

- Leafy lettuce head, butter lettuce is best. The better quality the lettuce, the better the wraps. Will not work with iceberg or romaine.
- ½ block tofu
- 2 tablespoons vegan butter
- Spices: Garlic powder, onion powder, msg or salt,
- Two cloves chopped garlic
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- (optional) cilantro or parsley

Recommended accompanying fillings:

- Julienned vegetables: half a carrot, ⅓ cucumber, etc
- Julienned pickled daikon
- Kimchi
- Chives

Stovetop instructions:

1. Melt butter on medium heat. Mix in onions and garlic.
2. Squeeze the moisture out of the tofu and discard. Crumble the tofu into ground beef size pieces and toss into the pan. Increase heat to medium high.
3. Add spices to taste, or about 1-2 teaspoon garlic and onion powder and ½ teaspoon msg or salt.
4. Fry in vegan butter until crispy and golden.
5. (optional) Finish with fresh cilantro or parsley.

Air Fry or Oven instructions:

1. Squeeze the moisture out of the tofu and discard. Crumble the tofu into ground beef size pieces and spread out onto a baking sheet or air frying sheet.
2. Coat with melted butter or oil.
3. Mix with garlic, onion, and spices.
4. Bake at 350 until crispy and golden. Approx: 20 min, mixing the tofu at the ten minute mark. If still not crispy and golden, bake for another 10 min.
5. Same for air frying.

Lettuce and mix ins:

1. Thoroughly wash lettuce, be sure to clean the base of the leaves.

2. Lettuce wraps can be served with just the tofu crumble, but can also be served with fillings such as kimchi, julienned pickled daikon, and julienned fresh vegetables such as carrots and cucumbers.
3. Spoon tofu crumble into a leaf of lettuce along with other desired ingredients and it up into a ball or a roll. Eat and enjoy.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Andrew Patrick](#)

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Second Sunday After Epiphany Year C

Scripture Text: Psalm 36:5-10

36:5 Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. 36:6 Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep; you save humans and animals alike, O LORD. 36:7 How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings. 36:8 They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. 36:9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. 36:10 O continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your salvation to the upright of heart!

Prayer:

You, Lord, through your works have revealed the everlasting structure of the world. You, Lord, created the earth. You are faithful throughout all generations, righteous in your judgments, marvelous in strength and majesty, wise in creating and prudent in establishing what exists, good in all that is observed and faithful to those who trust in you, merciful and compassionate; forgive us our sins and our injustices, our transgressions and our shortcomings... - Clement of Rome

Reflection: As we continue in the season of Epiphany, we celebrate God's faithfulness and steadfast love. One of the ways God demonstrates these traits is by saving "humans and animals alike."

In Hebrew, the word *yāšā'*, which is translated as *save* (NRSV) and *preserve* (NIV), means also "to be rescued, be delivered" with a "focus on rescue from earthly enemies" (Bible Gateway). It appears to be "a matter of temporal salvation — of the providence of God preserving His creatures" (Believer's Bible Commentary). This theme is repeated in other parts of Scripture as God is said to provide food for the cattle and the ravens (Psalm 147:9); to satisfy the appetites of lions and their cubs (Job 38:39); and to know when every sparrow falls to the ground (Matthew 10:20). Every nonhuman animal, like every human being, is in God's line of sight. Wherever they are, whatever their condition, God is concerned for them.

While it is true that God meets other animals' daily needs, we ought not limit God's relationship to other animals solely to the physical. Indeed, we see in other texts instances of spiritual connection. There are also stories like Balaam's donkey recognizing the angel of the Lord when Baalam couldn't; and the king of Nineveh calling humans and animals to fast and wear sackcloth (Jonah 36-9) — and animals are also said to praise God by themselves (Psalm 148).

Humans have a distinct spiritual relationship with God, yes. Yet, we need not assume this privilege belongs to us exclusively. In Ecclesiastes 3:18-21, the wisdom author writes, "I said to myself with regard to humans that God is testing them to show that they are but animals. For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place, all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?"

Truth be told, in this day when so many innocent animals languish and die in excruciating conditions, whether on farms, in laboratories or in shelters, it looks like humans have all the advantages while animals aren't worth much to God at all. Yet I believe that the God who is the fountain of life, who judges from the deep, and who intimately understands incredible pain in Jesus, is there when these creatures breathe their last. And I believe God desires a different set of relationships between humans and other animals in the end.

Call to Action: When we stop and think about the number of farmed and other animals whose lives are unnecessarily and/or senselessly taken every day of every year around the world, the grief can feel overwhelming. How do we confess that God sees, cares and preserves these lives when we live in the opposite reality? One reminder is that these death-dealing systems were not God's intent but, instead, result from human pride, greed and failure to act justly as part of God's creation. Another reminder is so many individuals and organizations are working tirelessly to rescue other creatures and be agents of God's peace. Although they are still the minority, these persons are nevertheless agents of God's peace in the world. To learn more about these stories of hope, you're invited to watch the documentary [Live and Let Live](#). The film tells the story of six people, including former butchers and factory farmers, who have reexamined and transformed their relationships to other animals.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Magda Ehlers](#)

Call to action and reflection: Watch [Dominion](#)

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Third Sunday After Epiphany Year A

Scripture Text: Matthew 4:12-23

4:12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. 4:13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 4:14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 4:15 "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles 4:16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." 4:17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kin-dom of heaven has come near." 4:18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea for they were fishermen. 4:19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." 4:20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 4:21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. 4:22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. 4:23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kin-dom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Prayer:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. – from the Prayer of St. Francis Assisi

Reflection: On this third Sunday of Epiphany, we honor Jesus forming a new cohort of followers and co-laborers. For unspecified reasons, he calls a pair of fishermen named Simon and Andrew to follow him and they do so immediately. The passage does not record his words to James and John but we know they have the same effect.

As Christians, we often see this story as one of faithfully accepting God's unexpected call. We have no idea if Jesus and these men knew each other previously. We don't know if the men are familiar with Jesus's message or his identity as the Son of God. We just know that Jesus chooses them and that they accept his invitation at a cost. They instantly give up work they know that puts them at odds with people in their community and do so with no financial reward.

The tremendous trust and sacrifice the disciples show here is compelling. But the story gets even more interesting from an animal-centered lens. By dropping their nets to follow Jesus. The disciples also walked away from catching, suffocating and butchering their fish neighbors. They exchanged death-dealing labor to witness in word and deed to God's kin-dom. Becoming fishers of men was good news for the people they touched—but it was also good news for the fish. Thanks be to God!

Admittedly, it's *highly unlikely* that Jesus called the disciples to spare the fishes' lives: after all, Jesus did eat a piece of a fish's body after the resurrection. It's also *highly unlikely* that the disciples eagerly agreed because they were low-key animal liberationists. And yet, amidst our contemporary situation of overfished oceans and waterways polluted by agricultural waste; desertification of land and widespread felling of rainforests for cattle ranches; rising global temperatures and loss of biodiversity tied to *both* industrial and traditional farming; a crisis is boiling between industries causing irreparable crisis on this planet and the overwhelming number of additional beings who will suffer if some serious hard choices and by breeders, farmers, slaughterhouse owners and workers, farmed and wild fishers — and all the people who support them — are not rapidly made. Can we learn from the example of leaving work that harms toward a less lucrative but life-abundant path?

In the scripture, Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John left their nets without hesitation. Today, the situation is incredibly more unwieldy and complex. Yet, the need for the same decisive change of mind that leads to a decisive change — the *metanoia* that we translate as repentance — is necessary in our age. The cost of violent industries that order so much of our world, fuel so much of our economies and generate the products we eat and use thwarts our creaturely calls to be fruitful and multiply. Will we continue to cast our nets toward destruction or say “Yes!” to the sacrificial transformation that saves others and ourselves?

Call to Action: Commercial fishing has changed tremendously since the age of Jesus. In fact, the industry is so unregulated and destructive, it is putting the very nature of our oceans at risk.

On top of billions of fish and other marine animals like sea turtles and dolphins being captured, crushed and suffocated in miles wide nets, and brutally beaten on ship decks, coral reefs and other watery habitats are being destroyed, upsetting the ecosystems all creatures need to exist well on this planet. In addition to the devastation experienced by our underwater kin, the reality of overfishing has also devastated human communities in countries who depend on fishes for food and their livelihood, particularly alongside the coasts of West Africa. This situation has also led to increasing numbers of families attempting the dangerous journeys to other nations for help. To find out more about this situation, you are encouraged to watch the documentary [The End of the Line](#), available for rent online.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Pixabay](#)

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Rose J. Percy

Lectionary Year: Year A⁹

Scripture Text: Isaiah 42:1-16, James 1:17-21, Matthew 8:14-22

Prayer:

God of gentleness and anger,
Let the truth of our emotions meet the call for justice in the world. May our unsettled frustrations birth movements of peace. Let us ally with you in the liberation to name injustice, as we find our hearts heavy. Lift our heaviness with your word and prepare our hands for the work, knowing you will meet us there. Amen.

Reflection: Honoring our gentleness challenges the ways we have been conditioned to understand leadership and power. The passage in Isaiah highlights a servant who cares for others not from raising their voice but in a conscientious and just demeanor that tends to the Earth and all its inhabitants with honor. It does not mean that there is no screaming or pain expressed but that pain is deeply tied to the experience of new birth. When the righteous, those who represent God's justice in the world, show up committed to restoring shalom the often unheard praises of creation can be recognized in worship. Another form of gentleness is expressed when there is clarity between what we say we believe and how we live it. Often, we are finding in ourselves the courage to reflect the full integrity of our beliefs. In this vein, righteous anger can often be a gift, pointing us to actions necessary for peace and justice. Allied with the discipline of gentleness, it can be life saving and life affirming. Righteous anger seeks out the "sound of the genuine" that must be protected and defended in all creaturely beings, and the earth we inhabit. In the words of Cole Arthur Riley, "Our liberation, depends on our ability to unlearn the lies told about our anger. Those who tell the lie are afraid of a world where the oppressed, are grounded in their anger, where they realize their subjugation and believe fully, in their bodies in private and in public, 'this is not okay.'"

⁹ From Wilda Gafney, A Women's Lectionary, Year A

Call to Action: What does the “sound of the genuine sound like in you? Perhaps you do not know, and need to “cultivate the discipline of listening to the sound of the genuine in yourself,” as Howard Thurman said.¹⁰ Read Howard Thurman's keynote address on the “The Sound of the Genuine,”¹¹ (aloud, if you can) and ask yourself these questions: what honors the sound of the genuine in you? What dishonors it? Can you recognize the dishonored sound in other beings, human and animal alike?

Creative Work:



Photo by [Mikhail Nilov](#)

¹⁰ “The Sound of the Genuine,” Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman

¹¹ This resource is easily searchable on the web.

FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Candace Laughinghouse

Lectionary Year: Year C

Scripture Text: Luke 2:22-40

22 When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), 24 and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. 27 Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 29 “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word, 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” 33 And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed 35 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.”

36 There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

39 When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

Prayer:

Creator God, you masterfully brought us all into being - human animals and nonhuman animals. To all of the animals, we omit from our mission to bring love and light into the world, we are sorry. Just as we are all loved by you, God, help us to execute the same love on all animals and not just on those we choose to make our companions and friends. May we express love and companionship to even those whose lives are brutally murdered for human benefit.

Reflection: Jewish custom called for Mary and Joseph to present their new baby to the Temple. While arriving at the temple, Mary and Joseph could only offer two turtle doves. Again, Luke is adamant about connecting the life of Christ - from birth - with those experiencing oppression in a myriad of ways. The family of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus arrive in the Temple. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon was promised he would not die until he placed his eyes on the Lord's Messiah. Along with the older man, there is an older woman - Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, the tribe of Asher - who, at 84 years of age, was committed to the Temple life and furthered her mission work by praising God and evangelizing about the arrival of Jesus.

Luke's discussion of the arrival of the redemption of Jerusalem through the birth of Jesus is an intentional connection of Jesus with those experiencing financial oppression, ageism, and the testing of society, which likely did not understand Simeon's testimony that he would not die until he saw the baby Jesus.

The telling of this story is not without connecting animals to the narrative of naming Christ. Though sacrificed, we must understand that the sacrifice of Mary and Joseph was based on their financial capabilities. Seen as a commodity, it was custom for animals to be used as a sacrifice. Today, animals farmed for food are still used as commodities, even in good faith, to feed their family.

In "On Animals," David Clough posits that we do not live in a flattened hierarchy. He discusses his continued question of the possible liberation of the family cat. How can we argue for the release of animals when we see the Sacred text connect the sacrifice of animals during feasts such as this? Perhaps we can move forward with acknowledging all life forms as present and participating in the birth and naming of Christ as the impetus to support advocating for the rights of farmed animals exploited and discarded for humanity. Can we seek to be advocates without absolute results that fit a holistic liberation of all Creation? Yes, we can. Let us run the advocacy race because it aligns with a message of inclusion of all and not be distracted by the outcome we desire.

Call to Action: Reflect this week on how we can reclaim the complete stories of Christ that include animals traditionally given value based on the needs of humanity. Reimagine our relationship with these animals and how they differ from the animals we chose to love “differently.”

Creative Work:



Photo by [Ruel Madelo](#)

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Rose J. Percy

Lectionary Year: Year B

Scripture Text: Isaiah 40:21-31, Psalm 147:1-11, 20c, 1 Corinthians 9:16-23, Mark 1:29-39

Prayer:

God of music,
Help us to find our way in the songs of the universe. We are so often longing for our own solos. Teach us the rhythm of your ways, so that we might sync up with the rest of creation. Let nature be our guide, and teach us to honor the wisdom of our animal ancestors. When tension arises, help us honor what the dissonance has to teach us. When harmonies lack, lead us to the whisper of a song that comforts and reveals our character of kindness.
Amen.

Reflection: The God of Isaiah 40 is like a conductor, skillfully weaving together the songs of creation across the cosmos. The rhythms of his work can be met in all the inhabitants of the earth, from the grasshopper (Isa. 40:22, NRSV) to the stars, each with their own given name ((Psalm 147:4, NRSV). This caregiving vision of God is unlike a tyrant or imperial leader, but each description of his care is wrapped in maternal goodness. The Psalter names this powerful God through qualities like understanding, encouraging, protecting, providing, and strengthening. God's steadfast love is made clear in an attentiveness to all creatures, human and animal alike, God hears and responds to our tears as well as the young ravens (Psalm 147:9, NRSV). So often as humans, we lose our place in the score, getting caught up with standing out or desiring a solo that outperforms the rest of creation. Not only are we to remember to trust in God, but our reflections on our interconnectedness should remind us to rest in our creatureliness. Even in the wind, there's a whisper of the song that comes to comfort the weary, to hopefully help us find a song we can sing back to our God.

Call to Action: Find your part in a song. It can be a song you love, or a song that is new to you. Take a moment to listen and lock in to the rhythm and tap it out with your hand or foot. Move from the rhythm to the melody. Be patient with yourself if you are learning a new melody. Allow this process to influence you as you greet the day and encounter new and old settings. Greet your frustrations with self compassion when you cannot find

your part right away. Observe and honor those who know and be willing to learn from the creatures around you how best to honor each and every environment.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Mehdi Sepehri](#)

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY

Ashley M. Lewis

Lectionary Year: Year A

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9, The Voice translation

3.1 My [siblings], I cannot address you as people who walk by the Spirit; I have to speak to you as people who tend to think in merely human terms, as spiritual infants in the Anointed One. ²I nursed you with milk, as a mother would feed her baby, because you were not, and still are not, developed enough to digest complex spiritual food. ³And here's why: you are still living in the flesh, not in the Spirit. How do I know? Are you fighting with one another? Are you comparing yourselves to others and becoming consumed with jealousy? Then it sounds like you are living in the flesh, no different from the rest who live by the standards of this rebellious and broken world. ⁴If one of you is saying, "I am with Paul," and the other says, "I am with Apollos," aren't you like everybody else? ⁵So who is Apollos really? Or Paul for that matter? We are only servants, agents who led you to faith, and the Lord commissioned each of us to do a particular job.

⁶My job was to plant the seed, and Apollos was called to water it. Any growth comes from God, ⁷so the ones who water and plant have nothing to brag about. God, who causes the growth, is the only One who matters. ⁸The one who plants is no greater than the one who waters; both will be rewarded based on their work. ⁹We are gardeners and field workers laboring with God. You are the vineyard, the garden, the house where God dwells.

Prayer

Gardener God,
Your field and your vineyard need tending. We want to bring about an abundant harvest. We want to reflect the beauty you've sown and grown throughout your Creation. But we get caught up in our own growth. We compete for resources – some of us sucking up too much living water, and some of us getting crowded out or overshadowed. We need your nourishment, your pruning, and your nurturing grace. Guide us to share abundantly – each according to their own means – until we truly celebrate as the Beloved

Community. Until we are a place fit for your presence. We pray this in the name of the vine from which we grow, Jesus Christ, amen.

Reflection: The church at Corinth was one of the most diverse of all the early Jesus communities. People from the farthest reaches of the Roman empire would find their way to this port city. They represented the full range of Roman social experience and identity – ethnicity, philosophy, religion, economic class, gender, and even legal status, like whether they were enslaved or freed. Conflicts like jealousy and quarreling are unsurprising since even the most homogenous communities struggle with such pitfalls.

A spiritual community is at any moment like a garden of plants at varying stages of growth – seeds, sprouts, seedlings, and transplants, all the way up to the most mature. Complex and varied, a body of believers will always need to tend to the various stages of its members' growth. Some see themselves as having surpassed the rest, standing tall in their virtue and wisdom. Others see themselves as stunted, delayed, or infantile.

The greatest challenge to this end isn't getting everyone to the same stage of growth. The challenge is to encourage appropriate growth at any and every stage. Community members should steer clear of thinking more highly of themselves because of their maturity or resenting and undermining those who seem to be farther ahead. We are all one realization away from being taken right back to the seedling stage of faith – to starting over in our pondering and contemplation of Christian life, love, justice, compassion, and mercy; to having to ask the basic questions and hope that God's answers don't fail us. (If we're avoiding realizations like that, we're probably missing the point.)

In those times when we are taken back down, so close to the earth we may actually be buried, we find ourselves needing the most basic spiritual nutrients just to keep our faith and ourselves alive. A struggling plant will fare far better in an ecologically rich garden than in one that is homogenous and lacking in its biological defenses. That plant can't afford to be concealed by a fully grown plant either, one whose shadow blocks out the sun.

Paul is telling us that the community's obligation – especially that of the more established plants – is to humbly commit to the needs of the seeds and seedlings, realizing that God does not reward based on height, or depth, or fruit-bearing potential. This is where life in the garden of the gospel distinguishes itself from the economy of the “broken world.” Crowding each other out leads to the failure of the whole crop.

Instead, all must share the sun, the root space, and the hydration. Pass the beneficial insects from leaf to leaf, bud to bud. Invite biodiversity and ensure each has what they need to thrive. The reality is, even the most mature plants will be nourished in the process. And whatever spiritual challenges are faced, the whole garden can delight in the assurance that God dwells in the garden with us.

Call to Action: Food growers are essential members of our community, and wherever you live, there are probably people offering the actual fruits of their labor, which will never make it to the supermarket chain or big box store. Black farmers, immigrant and refugee farmers, and farmers who have been shut out of life's most lucrative opportunities have so much to teach us about tending healthy gardens.

Not everyone has the option of shopping exclusively local or organic. Sometimes, we have to get food where we can get it. If you have the ability, seek out a farmer in your region from a historically marginalized community. Do your homework. Learn what you can about their operation from their website or social media. Make a purchase or donation, if you're able. Visit them where they're selling their items and thank them for their important work. Send them a note that communicates your appreciation with no expectation of a reply.

With this, let us also remember that many people who tend fields, vineyards, and gardens are hidden from sight because the systems that rely on them also require their exploitation. We may never get to thank those people face to face, but you can spend time thanking God for them. Lament for their suffering, and pray for their liberation. God's garden will not flourish until all are allowed to thrive.

Creative Work:

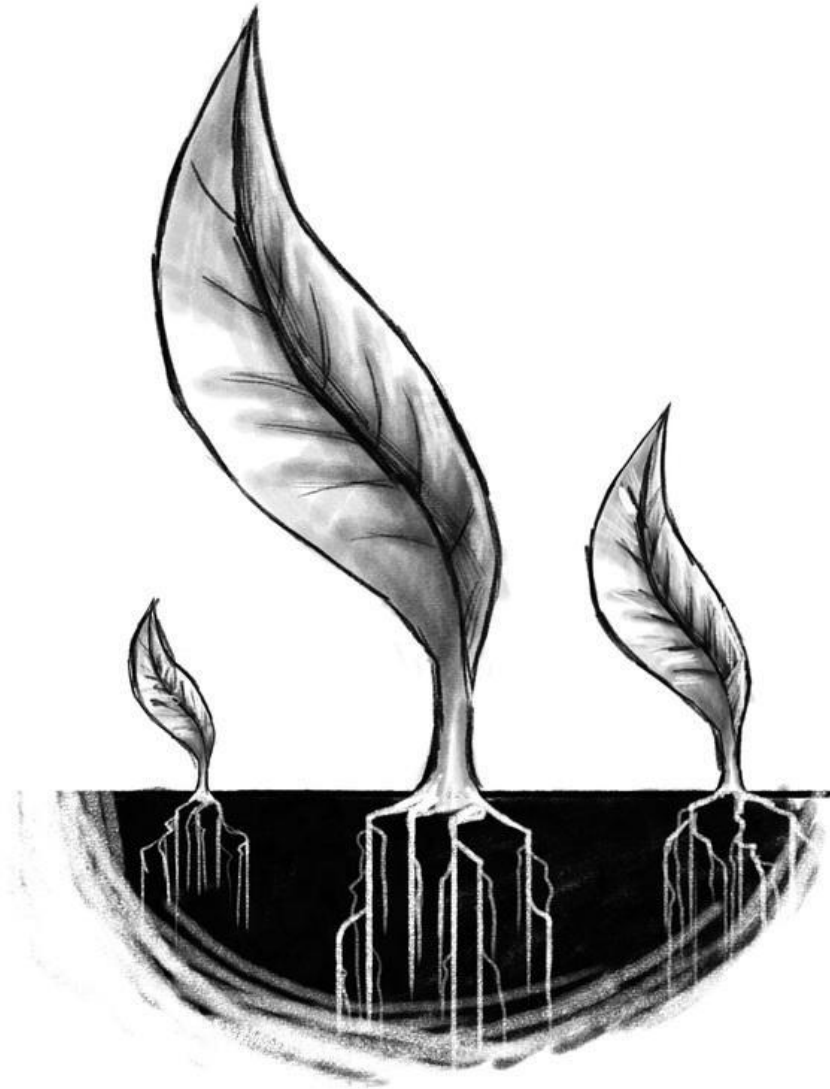


Illustration from [The Barefoot Guide Connection](#)

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Rose J. Percy

Lectionary Year: Year B

Scripture Text: Isaiah 43:18-25, Psalm 32, 2 Corinthians 1:18-22

Prayer:

God of freedom and wild,
Lend us the gaze we need to understand the freedom found in the wilderness.
Our human world forces us into boxes of time but release us into the tenderness
of the seasons. Our human ways have created captivity in ways that dishonor all
life. Reveal to us how best to honor your vision for the world through the
commitments of abolition and justice.
Amen.

Reflection: The task to forget the former things may seem nearly impossible and improbable, especially when those former things have so drastically shaped our identities and our lives. But the task might look a bit more like remembering forward, with our imaginations open to the new vision. Our faith can help us rest assured that in this new assignment, as we wander the paths made for us through the unknown wildernesses of the future, we are not without a guide. We are accompanied by a God who is familiar with the blessings and trials of all creation. A God who is a friend to the wildest known creatures of earth and finds comfort in their praises (Isaiah 43: 20 NRSV). Our fellow animal neighbors have a lot to teach us about unfettered time and the wisdom of changing seasons. It is through their freedom that they understand (Psalm 32:10, NRSV), unbound and still held precious as the eyes of God behold them. We must ask ourselves what restrains us, and who have we tried to domesticate in order to maintain some semblance of former ways? Ways that reveal we do not trust God's promises, that our transgressions are forgotten, or God's promises that we will be guided through the wilderness? As we pray for the wisdom to navigate the unknown and grow in our ability to envision new things, let us go forward, saying "yes" and "amen," to the God who is faithful (2 Corinthians 1:18-22). As we work towards the abolition of those who are held captive, human and nonhuman animals alike, we do so in the same freedom wild beings enjoy, instructed in the way of forgiveness, freedom and future-hope.

Call to Action: We do not always have the opportunity to live in unbridled time, but perhaps we can find a minute or two a day to cherish our hopes and dreams. In that minute or two you find, ask God to reveal something new to you through that wild dream. What is the underlying desire and how does it point to the hope of liberation for yourself and others? As you journey through the day, take that thought with you and let it challenge you as you remember forward.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Timothy Muza](#)

LENT

ASH WEDNESDAY

Rose J. Percy

Lectionary Year: Year A¹²

Scripture Text: Joel 2:1, 12-17, 21-22, Isaiah 58:1-12, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Prayer:

God of shared beginnings,

Your mark is one of place and belonging. Your words to us are life, hope, peace and promise. Let this be our way, as we honor our animal relatives. Let our fast be a fast of remembrance, that echoes back to the beginning, where our nations did not divide and soil was our home. May this Lenten season reveal to us our roots in relationship.

Amen.

Reflection: We can renew our ethical commitments every day, but there is something special about Ash Wednesday. On this day we remember of our origins, "from dust you came and to dust you will return," leaves room for ecological wonderings. Let's imagine in this space what it means to be connected to the earth and everything that grows and lives within it. As the prophet Joel proclaims, we must return to God through a sanctified fasting. A fast that the prophet Isaiah reminds us comes with the tasklist of shalom which is "to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke (Isaiah 58: 6, NRSV)" We have to remember that we are made of the stuff of the earth and the stuff of the heavens, or as Lucille Clifton, in her poem *won't you celebrate with me?*, calls "starshine and clay." We must remember that all of creation contains these same origins. Wil Gafney writes that "the land here refers to the soil, not just nationhood."¹³ "The day the Lord" comes not just to bless mankind but all of creation. There's something deeply beautiful about a journey through fasting that hopes for the reconnection with the divine. May it inspire our reconnection with all the divinely made creatures around us. May we use this day to serve as a reminder that "from dust we are made and to dust we will return" is a

¹² From Wilda Gaffney, A Women's Lectionary, Year A

¹³ Gafney, 74. Year A

remembrance of connection to a shared beginning. We play a role in concert with all creation, in the grandest story ever told. Perhaps the Lenten season is not about what we have given up, but how we might attune to a tenderness within us that honors our interrelation with all creatures of the Earth. When we allow ourselves to fast from dependencies that obscure those relationships, to “rend your heart, not your clothing (Joel 2:13, NRSV)” might look like internal reflection on how to reduce harm and enact peace.

Call to Action: We can all cultivate the practice of remembering our shared beginning by taking the time to watch something grow. Plant a seed, in doors or outdoors, in a place you can come back to daily. If you do not have soil nearby, consider propagating a cutting in water and watching the roots grow.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Karolina Grabowska](#)

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Rose J. Percy

Liturgical Year:Year A

Scripture Text: Genesis: 2: 7-9

Prayer:

God who sees,

As we draw breath, may it honor you. May our breath remind us of the sanctity of life in our animal neighbors as well as in the world we share. Remind us, as you call us “beloved,” that we are surrounded by belovedness. Let us walk alongside you, becoming acquainted yet again with our fellow worshippers of God. As we learn their names, teach us to name and declare belonging among them. May our belonging reflect back into our hearts desire to end their pain and suffering. Amen.

Reflection: “I’m trying to imagine what it would be like going through life not knowing the names of the plants and animals around you. Given who I am and what I do, I can’t know what it’s like, but I think it would be a little, a little scary and disorienting. Like being lost in a foreign country where you can’t read the street signs. As our human dominance has grown, we have become more isolated, more lonely, and we can no longer call out to our neighbors.”¹⁴

— Robin Wall Kimmermer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

The word for Adam means “from soil,” and in the Genesis 2 creation story, human beings received their breath from God. Held in intimate connection, God breathed life into the nostrils of “adam,” creating the distinction we have found within ourselves to explain who and how we are in the world. Many have read into this verse the understanding that humans were made to rule over the earth, as if in the order of creation humans come after animals and plants. Adam, formed from soil and animated by the breath of God, is not only human, but divinely human. We must dwell on the moments before Adam’s human partner in work and life is formed, before his loneliness overshadows our concerns. Though briefly described, it must have taken years, but with the breath given to him, he went on to name everything that has breath. To have a

¹⁴ Braiding Sweetgrass, Robin Wall Kimmermer, p.208

name means one's life is not insignificant. To have a name is to be seen and responded to just for existing. In some cultures, naming ceremonies happen after the birth of a child, when the community decides or when the character of the child is revealed. Often nicknames are given or declared to tell a story, name a quality, or express belovedness, among other reasons. In Western traditions, naming does not always come with honor, but can often come with a classification meant to hold other beings at a distance. These hierarchies make our loneliness a lot different from Adam's, as a "species loneliness,"¹⁵ punctuated by a confusion of who we can call a neighbor. In this great neighborhood called Earth, where there are boundless names to remember and call, we might not recall them all. It is far more important to remember we do not have to perceive ourselves as alone, when see and respond to other creatures who have breath as we do, creatures who respond to God in worship alongside us.

Call to Action: Learning the names of a particular species of animal is one way to cultivate relationship, but perhaps, one level deeper is to learn their habits and characteristics. Deepen your understanding through a spiritual study, perhaps starting with a characteristic you love about yourself and finding out about animals with similar characteristics. For example, if you love being at home and being surrounded by things that bring you comfort, you might be marveled by the ingenuity of birds who make nests and find seemingly disparate twigs and inorganic material to build a home.

¹⁵ Braiding Sweetgrass, Robin Wall Kimmermer, p.208

Creative Work:



Photo by [莊淳奎](#)

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Rose J. Percy

Liturgical Year: Year A

Scripture Text: Genesis 12: 1-4 John 3:1-17, Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

Prayer:

God of pain and triumph,

We hold up your Son and in his name remember those born under the pain of empire. We pray for transformation: of our mindsets when we lose sight of the mission of rebirth and of our world spectacularized as it exploits. We pray also for the pain of those we do not see, those who are not spectacles, but parts of a machine that tears away at flesh. Those whose bodies suffer to put food on our tables. Help us to be wise as serpents, as we hope reform and justice.

Amen.

Reflection: The image of Jesus as the Son of Man, raised up like a serpent might beckon us to pause as we remember the serpent whose crafty rewording is blamed for the downfall of Adam and Eve. But what does it mean for us that Jesus refers to the wisdom of the serpent, when referring to inevitable persecution for his disciples (Matt. 10:16, NRSV)? The understanding of the serpent as a figure of wisdom is known to the indigenous Teotihuacán people of Mexico, where the temple of Quetzalcóatl represents the hope of restoration to a precolonial Mexico. The stories endure in ways that challenge ideas of humanness as apart from other worshippers of God, found in our animal neighbors. The ongoing creolization of Indigenous and *mestizo* beliefs merged the Cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the Myth of Quetzalcóatl in ways that hold space for memories of both pain and triumph.¹⁶ Jesus compares himself to animals often, in when referring to humanity, he uses analogies to describe both our positive and negative attributes. In John chapter 3, Jesus is talking to Nicodemus about being reborn. We must wonder if the concern for the rebirth of a Jewish nation apart from empire is on Nicodemus' mind. Our wondering must also extend to our concern for Jesus as an animal sacrifice, shaped by his exploitation as a spectacle for empirical

¹⁶ Zachariah, George, and S. Lily Mendoza. "Wise as Serpents, Innocent as Doves," Decolonizing Ecotheology: Indigenous and Subaltern Challenges. Intersectionality and Theology Series.

power. In Lent, we often think about what to let go of, what to reform, and how to be transformed. What the indigenous and *mestizo* people of Mexico bring to the Lady of Gadalupe is the understanding that something hopeful can emerge from both the womb and the grave. How might Jesus be like Our Lady of Guadalupe, who sustains people who have been disenfranchised? How does Jesus remind us of a cosmology of belonging that invites us to be reborn into holy kinship with all creation?

Call to Action: Our desire for kinship with nonhuman animals exploited for human use, might lead us to consider ending the practice of animal testing. If you have not done so already, you can make the transition to cruelty-free products. If you have and are looking for an additional step in solidarity, consider advocating at the local and national levels of your government to defund animal testing. A simple donation to end animal testing for cosmetic products can be made here: [Ending Cosmetics Animal Testing](#).

Creative Work:



Photo by [Abimelec Castillo](#)

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Rose J. Percy

Liturgical Year: Year A

Scripture Text: Exodus 17:1-7, John 4:5-42, Psalm 95

Prayer:

God of living water,

Thank you for seeing our thirst, physical and spiritual and offering yourself to meet our needs. Let us find relief and belonging that replenishes and reunites. In this world where many find themselves alone in the heat of the day, seeking the peace you offer, instruct us to offer that same holy refreshment. Teach us how to preserve it as a home and a shelter for our animal neighbors. As we seek these ways, show us how we might strike the rocks that have kept water from flowing freely for those who have need.

Amen.

Reflection: The misery of wandering in the wilderness is punctuated by the thirst of the people and their livestock (Exodus 17:3, NRSV). Jesus recognizes a wandering and thirst in the Samaritan woman at the well. I and offers her the living water (John 4:14, NRSV), representing eternal life. Susan Miller explains that John emphasizes Jesus's connection to the natural world throughout the Gospel of John and in this passage emphasizes his connection to water.¹⁷ Miller goes on to say "John indicates that human beings may grasp the nature of the Spirit through their reflection on their experience within the natural world." In the same way that God provided manna for the people and animals to meet their hunger, he instructed Moses to strike the rock so that it may yield water for the people and the animals that traveled with them. It is interesting to consider that the people recognized their thirst and the thirst of the animals. However, despite the miracle, in their hardened hearts they still asked, "Is the LORD among us or not?" (Exodus 17:7, NRSV)" Psalm 95, while giving us the example of praise informed by the gratitude for God's provision, gives us the example of sheep as a picture of faithfulness (Psalm 95:7, NRSV). Some part of this holds the promise of Jesus to the Samaritan woman, who longs for belonging in community, as well as reconnection to the lands where her ancestral people worshiped. Like a faithful sheep, who found pasture and hope in her shepherd, the Samaritan woman gathers others to come receive the provisions Jesus offers: to see, believe, and belong.

¹⁷ Susan Miller, "John's Gospel," *The Oxford Handbook of The Bible and Ecology* 228.

Call to Action: Give the gift of clean water to communities in need by supporting the building of sustainable construction. You can make a difference in communities for generations by supporting initiatives like [Lifewater](#) through monthly donations.

Creative Work:



Illustration from [The Barefoot Guide Connection](#)

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Rose J. Percy

Liturgical Year: Year A

Scripture Text: 1 Samuel 16:1-13, John 9:1-41, Psalm 23

Prayer:

God of the unnoticed,
Reveal to us the hidden beautiful, as we find and honor it in ourselves. You have already honored it, making a place for us at the table. As you have affirmed our dignity, teach us to honor the voices of the unheard around us. Help us to exhort with our words and actions the black sheep that wander into our pastures. Show us how to release our assumptions so that we love all life and love it hard. Amen.

Reflection: As Samuel looks upon Jesses' sons, despite their strong appearances, one by one it becomes clear to him that they are not who God has chosen until Samuel asks, "Are *all* your sons here?"¹⁸ Jesse responds that their youngest was around, but was tending to the sheep—meaning he was not in any shape to receive company. But upon looking at him, Samuel received word that the scraggly young David, God says, "'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one (1 Samuel 16:12, NRSV)." David is hidden in the pasture, is a "black sheep" of his family, a second thought in the mind of his father. God sees and reveals what is beautiful in him to Samuel. When Jesus heals the blind man, he restores the sight of him in the eyes of the community. He was at once unrecognizable, since he no longer had to beg. The community, seeking answers go to his parents who respond, "he is of age and can speak for himself."¹⁹ Jesus makes it clear that the real sin is found in those who had sight, but did not acknowledge the imago Dei of the man, who served a place of value and belonging. Psalm 23 stands in contrast to both these stories, reminding us that God sees and prepares a place to honor for the black sheep and all who enter his pasture longing for rest and refuge. Much like Baby Suggs' exhortation in the clearing from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, these words fall like anointing oil on all creatures denied a voice and a place: "She did not tell them to clean up their lives or go and sin no more. She did not tell them they were the

¹⁸ 1 Samuel 16, paraphrased

¹⁹ 1 Samuel 16, paraphrased

blessed of the earth, its inheriting meek or its glorybound pure. She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it. Here,' she said, 'in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard..."

Call to Action: Black pets are less likely to be adopted from shelters. If you are considering pet adoption, consider a black pet. The phenomenon is so common it has been called the "Black Dog Syndrome." If you are not looking to adopt, there is still a world of good you can do to train your mind to see the beauty of Blackness in human and nonhuman animals alike. It can begin with the simple task of interrogating your associations of light/white/good and dark/black/bad. Make a conscious effort to love that which Howard Thurman called "the luminous darkness."

Creative Work:



FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Rose J. Percy

Lectionary Year: Year A

Scripture Text: Ezekiel 37:1-14, Psalm 130

Prayer:

Our Advocate God,

It is through your word that we know life, and in your example that we know death does not have the final say. Breath on the dry bones we find in this world, which include the bones of our animal neighbors and those who work to the bone to feed the world. Remind us that restoration is possible. Teach us to be advocates of redemption and justice, just as you are. Amen.

Reflection: Throughout the Hebrew Bible, animals are not exempt from suffering as a result of the mistakes of humankind. They also share in worship and lament. Uncovering a devastated valley, Ezekiel is given the task to breathe on dry bones and we must not miss the sacred connection we have mapped since the first Sunday of Lent from the task of naming that was given to Adam: we are not the only species to breathe. The restoration of the bones Ezekiel breathed upon, to reanimate the dead come as a response to Ezekial's advocative prayer: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. (Ezekiel 37:9, NRSV). In this world, we face variations of the valley of bones, worlds of suffering, human and animal alike. Our world is full of stories of degraded bodies, stripped of their flesh, awaiting for the word of a God that inspires the breath of advocates. Advocates are those who wait for God, "more than those who watch for the morning (Psalm 130:6, NRSV)," those who unbind and release the suffering, as Jesus does for the risen Lazarus (John 11:43, NRSV). Overwhelmed by the truth of death all around, we may feel defeated as Jesus appears to be enough to find himself weeping at the loss of his friend (John 11:35, NRSV), or as Ezekiel is, in his simple prayer, "O God, you know (Ezekiel 37:3, NRSV)." Jesus thanks his father for hearing him (John 11:41, NRSV), and like Jesus, we can rejoice in the one who hears in the words of the Psalter: "Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! (Psalm 130: 1-2)"

Call to Action: We may not be skilled in the art of resurrecting dry bones, but we contain in our bodies the breath of advocates. And with that breath, we can lean into

practices that honor degraded bodies, of human and nonhuman animal neighbors. Consider donating to organizations like "[towards justice](#)," which advocates for just working practices and protection for low-wage workers through policy change.

Creative work:



Photo by [Ta Z](#) on [Unsplash](#)

HOLY WEEK

PALM SUNDAY

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Palm Sunday Year A

Scripture Text: Matthew 21:1-11

21:1 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 21:2 saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. 21:3 If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." 21:4 This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, 21:5 "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." 21:6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; 21:7 they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. 21:8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 21:9 The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" 21:10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" 21:11 The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God, who didst ordain that our Lord Jesus Christ should ride upon a colt, the foal of an ass; and didst teach the throngs of people to spread their garments and the branches of trees in the way, and to sing Hosanna in his praise: grant, we beseech thee, that we may follow the example of their innocence, and like them, may render thee a worthy service. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Anglican Service Book)

Reflection: The season of Holy Week is bittersweet as it begins with the excitement of Palm Sunday and ends with the bleakest day of the Christian year. Here, Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem where a large crowd gathers around him. They cut branches and

wave them in his honor; drape the road before him with their clothes; and cry out "Hosanna!" meaning "Save us!" The scene is a sign of his distinct kin-dom and kingship: humble but disruptive.

Jesus would leave this triumphant entry to go to the temple and drive out the money changers, block the merchants and overthrow their tables. He would repurpose the space for healing the blind and lame, to the praise of the child slaves. He would release the doves, cattle, sheep and other animals designated for sacrifice, sparing their lives a bit longer. In response to his multi-day sit-in, the religious authorities' desire to arrest Jesus increases and he is eventually crucified.

When we look at Jesus's last days, it's intriguing to notice the parallels with the time of his birth. At the start and the end of his life, Jesus is a threat to the established powers. He is the subject of great praise. He is visited and honored as king of the Jews. And like his first days with the farmed animals in a trough, this scene is an interspecies one.

While Jesus was in the womb, it was a donkey that carried he, Mary and Joseph to safety. As he moves toward the tomb, it is a mother donkey and her young colt he chose for this appearance. As Alan R. Rudnick notes, many people tend to see donkeys as beasts of burden or "docile creatures." But, "In the ancient world...donkeys were used for ceremonial purposes. Whereas horses were symbols of war, donkeys were symbols of peace and often used to enact treaties."²⁰

It is no small thing that Jesus aligns himself with *this* message! In fact, it is in keeping with the word from Zechariah that the coming king would cut off the chariot, the war horse and the battle bow (Zec. 9:9). The sad and devastating irony, though, is that millions of donkeys are now suffering under unrelenting violence. Approximately 4.8 million of them are slaughtered for their skins every year in "unregulated, inhumane and unsanitary" conditions to make *ejiao*, a key ingredient in traditional Chinese remedies (The Donkey Sanctuary). This number doesn't include the numbers of donkeys who are abused as cheap labor, killed to become meat, worn down as transportation or forced to be entertainment for children and families.

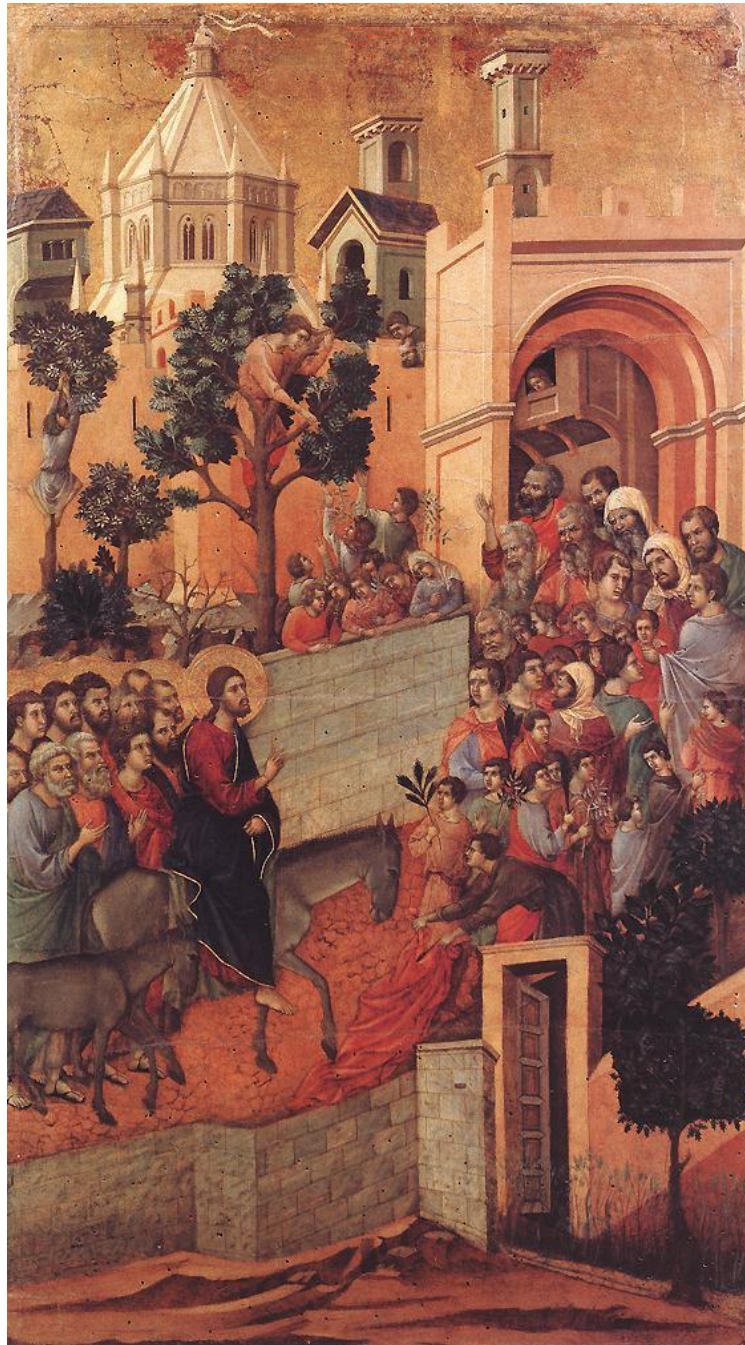
As we celebrate Palm Sunday, let us remember the animals who Jesus elected to make his character and let us do what we can to ease their pain. Peace on earth has been

²⁰ "Lessons from a Donkey," The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2013
<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/193175.pdf>

the mission of Christ since his arrival and we are called to follow his footsteps. That includes making peace with other creatures.

Call to Action: In 1969, Dr Elisabeth Svendsen MBE in St. Mary, Devon, located in the United Kingdom, saw an advertisement in the newspaper for a donkey mare on sale for £45 and decided to purchase her. When she took the mare home, Dr. Svendsen became “absolutely entranced by the way she moved, the intelligence used in examining her new surroundings and the way that every few moments she would come back to me at the fence to gently nuzzle me and as if to say: ‘Please don’t go, I’m only looking round a moment.’” That one donkey turned into two, and over the course of 50 years, it has become home for 20,000 animals! Learn more about The Donkey Sanctuary at www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk and commit to being an agent of peace to any donkeys that you come across.

Creative Work:



Entry into Jerusalem by Duccio, di Buoninsegna²¹

²¹ Duccio, di Buoninsegna, -1319?. Entry into Jerusalem, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=58772> [retrieved February 20, 2023]. Original source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EntryIntoJerusalem_Duccio_di_Buoninsegna.jpg.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Candace Laughinhouse

Lectionary Year: Year C

Scripture Text: John 13:1-17, 31b-35

13 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The devil had already decided that Judas son of Simon Iscariot would betray Jesus. And during supper 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 got up from supper, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." 12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had reclined again, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 Very truly, I tell you, slaves are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

31 When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32 If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33 Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' 34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also

should love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for lovingly creating us. May your love compel us to live a wide-ranging love for all animals and honor the lives slaughtered on farms worldwide. Too often, the plight of farmed animals is intentionally kept hidden. May we do the hard work that brings accountability in love to all involved.

Reflection: Growing up, we focused on Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. It was not until seminary that I learned the significance of Maundy Thursday. Maundy - the Latin word for “command” - reminds us of Jesus’s command to the disciples in John 13:34. Jesus offers this new commandment to his disciples at the Last Supper - *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have a love for one another.”* The disciples were facing a tough battle in showing love to people who showed hate towards them as followers of Christ. I cannot count the times my grandmother would remind me always to show love to others. What about those we do not know, let alone those who choose to be cruel towards us? The disciples faced the hard truth that Jesus would be taken away and no longer around to lead them in ministry. The disciples would only have the memory of the miracles of Jesus, soon to be replaced with the scandal of him being taken down by Rome. Now seen as the enemy of the state, Jesus was preparing his disciples to both know the truth that he would return and show love to all.

How can humans continue to show love to their pet dogs, cats, hamsters, etc. but choose to omit care for other animals like cows, pigs, and chickens? Jesus commands that we show love to all, not just those we feel deserve love, protection, and care. Humans feel love towards their dogs but respond with “Gotta have my meat” and consume burgers, steaks, and eggs. In her book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Critical Theory*, Carol J. Adams describes the replacement of animal lives with meat as the “absent referent.” The function of the absent referent is to protect and console the meat eater while consuming a meal that could only occur with the murder of innocent animals. Male dominance as the connection with oppressions of land, humanity, and animals is consistent with the writings of Adams and many other critical theorists - including me.

Call to Action: Moving forward, how can we honor the lives of animals in our meals and even in the production of clothing and bedding? Christ commands that love be shown to all. May this Maundy Thursday remind us to consider love as a dimension not limited to the number or qualification of “beings” that deserve our love.

How can you share a love that extends to the well-being of animals farmed for food? Consider [this](#) article's report on 21 charities for animals farmed for food.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Antony Trivet](#)

GOOD FRIDAY

Candace Laughinghouse

Lectionary Year: Year C

Scripture Text: Hebrews 10:16-25

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds," 17 and he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." 18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. 19 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for creating us in your image. It is in your image that we seek to find ways to explore love through grief and thankfulness for farmed lives slaughtered and ended by the authority of humanity. We seek ways in which we might honor their lives through authentic grief and presence in how the non-human animal lives lost are just as significant as the many human-animal lives we witness ending due to senseless murders, wars, and systemic oppression. We thank you for empowering us with the mind and will to carry out the love you continue to share with us and through us.

Reflection: I remember it as if it were yesterday. Almost 12 years ago, I gave birth to my first child - a baby girl. Her father and I recently changed church memberships and had yet to locate a church for our new family. While walking through the neighborhood, I ran into a neighbor who invited me to her church's Good Friday Service at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church. Growing up in the African-American Pentecostal church, I understood Good Friday Service to be an experience full of celebration with music and dance. This is not unique to the African American Pentecostal experience. African Americans always find a place to assimilate Africanism within their American

experience, consciously and unconsciously. We understand that a part of the story includes death and suffering, but we often centralize the celebration of Easter as it fits with our survival level in our own lives. I am not suggesting anything is wrong or right.

I remember visiting the service and learning to sit in the grief that precedes Easter weekend. The entire congregation of Holy Trinity concluded the service with a funeral procession around the church's parking lot, symbolizing the historical event that took place - the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Then I began to reflect on how authentic this particular praxis was to recognize the suffering and death of their Savior, Jesus Christ. I am not suggesting this is wrong or right, either.

Both contexts are necessary to an entire narrative of recognizing the "good" in "Good Friday." African-Americans choosing to focus on the celebration is connected to a history of coping and survival through enslavement and continued social injustice experienced in the United States of America. The above Greek Orthodox context is necessary to remind us of what started the entire weekend, eventually leading Jesus to become the Resurrected Savior and King of all Kings. What other King has conquered death?

In Hebrews 19:24-25, the writer calls for Christians to persevere through everything life gives us. As Christians, our role is to provoke love just as Christ presented on the Cross:

"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Call to Action: How can we provoke good deeds towards animals farmed for food in love? How can you encourage someone to consider love beyond humanity? Many are not around these animals regularly, but take a moment to bring a plant into your home as a reminder of the farmed animals experiencing suffering. Let the plant grow within your home and serve as a reminder that just a little daily good deed of love towards Creation yields growth, beauty, and long life.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Christian Widell](#)

HOLY SATURDAY

Candace Laughinghouse

Lectionary Year: Year C

Scripture Text: John 19:38-42

38 After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and removed his body. 39 Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. 40 They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. 41 Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. 42 And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Prayer:

Loving God and most precious Spirit grant us the strength to cherish lives lost while joyously expressing compassion as you give to us daily. Though we sit with the physical violence done to farmed life, let their lives remain invaluable as teachable moments that encourage us to engage further in advocating for the rights of farmed animal lives everywhere.

Reflection: It's Holy Saturday. This is the day the church recognizes the "in-between" time in which Jesus moves from death to resurrection. It is customary for church altars to remove all flowers as a noticeable absence is now present. Removal of all decoration except for maybe black fabric symbolizes death. This is not just the physical death, but death to pain, suffering, violence, and even a life of ministry. How will the disciples move on? How will the followers of Christ who were recipients of excellent sermons, parables, and miracles accept that the end has come? Sure, Jesus is no longer suffering. Jesus is no longer in pain. Jesus is no longer experiencing the beating and ridicule. In place of all this is the physical witness of a maimed body on display for all to witness what happens when you challenge such a powerful government and Empire like Rome.

What happens to people who decide to challenge society's normalization of murdering animals farmed for food? What happens to people who lead the cause of critiquing their death amid society's message that the human benefits far outweigh the harm to animals?

In this week's text, we see those who are followers of Jesus operate secretly to protect the body of Jesus. Within the footsteps of the place of the crucifixion are a garden and tomb. They rush to preserve the body concerning Jewish customs. Friends of Jesus are still being friends even after his death. We don't read that his family is there to help - just friends and those who met Jesus in the past.

Do we have to be friends or regular contacts to show signs of care for the innocent? How far does our care for the innocent extend?

This Holy Saturday, let us work in memory of innocent animals farmed for food. Their lives were stolen and used as commoditized goods to perpetuate a toxic governmental ploy to control all of humanity. Let us remember that all of our earthly companions are our focus in spreading the love of God throughout Creation.

Call to Action: May this Holy Saturday remind us to continue expanding our love for animals farmed for food through a connection of pain, pressure, and death experienced by others experiencing government-supported oppressions. Also, consider visiting the following Christian organization addressing animal issues.

As an interfaith organization, [Animal Chaplains](#), offers information about becoming an animal chaplain and a myriad of information about pet memorial services and pet blessings.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Florian van Duyn](#)

EASTER

EASTER

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Lectionary Year: Easter Sunday Year C

Scripture Text: Isaiah 65:17-25

65:17 For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. 65:18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. 65:19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. 65:20 No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. 65:21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 65:22 They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 65:23 They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD-- and their descendants as well. 65:24 Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent--its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

Prayer:

Our Creator, who is in heaven, holy is your name! Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen. – The Lord's Prayer

Reflection: In this passage, we get a word from the prophet Isaiah. A new earth is coming and the old order will fade! Here, there is no distress, pain, inequity or exploitation. Predators become herbivores alongside their former prey. Those who labor will reap what they planted. This vision is a comprehensive, multigenerational one

where long-life, justice and reimagined relationships are present. Even the serpent who eats dust is not totally destroyed.

The testimony of God's holy mountain is a powerful one — and yet when we look around it is so far from coming into being. In fact, it's reasonable to wonder what it has to do with Easter? How does this scene fit with Jesus passing from life to death to life again?

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul calls Jesus “the firstborn from the dead.” Through him “all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” and “God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:18–20). Because of this:

“you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body [in the body of his flesh] through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature [in all creation] under heaven” (Colossians 1:21–23)

Paul writes a similar message to the Corinthians, saying, “So if anyone is in Christ, there [that person] is a new creation: everything old has passed away, look, new things have come into being” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Although this reconciliation has not fully materialized, we who are in Christ are yet empowered to *live* into new creation now. Because peace is *already* possible, we are free to practice reconciliation with all others. Because his work is already done, we who live in Jesus *are capable of reshaping all our relationships* toward the holistic renewal Isaiah described.

As Jesus's followers, we are called to bear the fruits of love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These traits can change how we live with other animals, too. Whereas violence leads to the slaughter of billions of farmed animals a year, self-control can change who we consume. Whereas pride and idolatry cause us to perpetuate industries that harm our planet, gentleness can lead us to alternatives that are better for us all.

If all of God's good creation is damaged by evil and disobedience, then becoming new creation should lead God's people to help restore the earth. By aligning himself

with sacrificed animals on the cross, Jesus abolished ongoing sacrifice, saving other animals lives in tandem with our own. Easter is good news for humans, for other animals and for all creation. Let us live like this is so!

Call to Action: What would you give up to live more fully into God's dream for all of creation? In the documentary, *The Last Pig* a farmer comes to a place of crisis in his business. After years of raising pigs for slaughter, he can no longer bear the ultimate act of betrayal. The award-winning film chronicles his final year on the farm, capturing in intimate detail his personal upheaval as he questions his beliefs and the value of life. It is a powerful story of seemingly impossible transformation that shows what can happen when our perspectives dramatically change. To rent the video, click [here](#).

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER / SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Rose J. Percy

Lectionary Year: Year A

Scripture Text: Acts 2:14a, 22-32, Psalm 16, John 20:19-31

Prayer:

God of heaven and earth,

We have seen enough. Enough destruction, enough death. Enough apathy and enough hopelessness. Meet our doubts with your hope and our cynicism with your touch. As we take refuge in your strength, reveal to us the ways we can extend that same covering over unprotected and undefended lives. Help us to hold what you have given us well and to rejoice in the ways you have let us see visions of you defeating death and scarcity in our world. Amen.

Reflection: Many of us are like Thomas, needing to see and feel to believe. Our faith and experiences might have led us to a place of doubt. Disbelief can linger like a battle scar of faith, a scar much like the one that convinced Thomas. Perhaps Thomas is like Dr. Renita Weems, who, while being a biblical scholar and preacher, describes herself as a “cynic and a believer.”²² Weems also writes, “The issue in prayer is not to pray because we are certain, but because we are uncertain.” In Acts 2, Peter stands before a crowd and declares that they are all witnesses of the resurrected Jesus (Acts 2:32, NRSV). But how can we all be witnesses of what we have not seen with our own eyes and declare the same certainty we read from the writer of Psalm 16, that God is with us and we have a secure inheritance? How can we claim an inheritance in a world where the boundary lines point more towards scarcity than abundance (Psalm 16:6)? One of the sad truths of our world is the myth of scarcity which drives overproduction that leads to harm for the environment and to human and nonhuman animals. As we refuse the narratives of scarcity, we embrace the inheritance of God's goodness which cannot be privately owned. We might have to see and feel it to believe it, which might look like stepping out, as both cynic and believer, to create the equality we long to see. If we dream of a world where everyone has enough, we must first cling to a vision of enoughness that meets our discontent in an imbalanced world.

²² Weems, Renita J., “Listening for God: A Minister's Journey Through Silence and Doubt,” p.39

We are all witnesses to resurrection when we refuse narratives of death and proclaim, "enough is enough."

Call to Action: Spend some time in nature, and consider what it means to share in mutual inheritance of the environment you live in. Challenge the myth of scarcity by stopping the loss of natural land. You can begin by choosing the closest land preservation or land trust near you, recognizing that the call to share in this vision of resurrection can often look like preventing the loss of life in the first place.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Markus Spiske](#)

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Liesl Stewart

Lectionary Year: Year A

Scripture Text: Luke 24: 13-35 NSRVUE

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?"

They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

He asked them, "What things?"

They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him."

Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.



Illustration from [The Barefoot Guide Connection](#)

Prayer

Loving God, we are here with you, exactly as we are.
You see us, you see everything.
Nothing is hidden from you.
You meet us here in our bodies.

Deepen our sense of your presence here with each one of us
We welcome you!

Spirit of Revelation,
Come and reveal Jesus to us
More than ever, we need to see you, Jesus, as you truly are
We look for you in Creation—in humankind, creaturekind,
In the heavens and the whole earth.

Open our eyes to recognize you in nature's splendor, in beauty,
In our most ordinary moments, in the substance of our days;
In our grieving, our despair, our celebrations and delights,
In the bread in our hands, in sharing food together with others.

Soften our hearts and minds to You and Your ways.
Teach us that You love us.
May we know Your deep peace.
May we know your abounding love.

Amen.

Reflection: How was it possible for Jesus's distraught followers not to recognize Him? The two disciples didn't recognize Jesus in the hours they journeyed together but their hearts somehow 'burned within' as they listened to him tell his own story. Come nightfall, they still didn't recognize Jesus, but they knew they weren't quite ready to part ways with him. Their Aha! moment of recognition was at the table of a shared meal, with bread in Jesus's hands, broken so everyone could eat.

This was a familiar setting. They had gathered over meals with Jesus. On the eve of his death, he had even told the disciples when offering the bread to eat, "Do this in remembrance of me."

Most weeks, I reenact Jesus's invitation to 'take bread'. When I go to the communion rail, I keep respectful quiet so that others have space for their own private reflections. Together, we eat communion wafers and drink the wine to remember Jesus's death and the new life Jesus continues to breathe into Creation. We remind ourselves that we join Jesus in proclaiming good news to all Creation with our labors and our lives.

When taking the sacrament in a church space, it's easy to forget we're imitating the many times Jesus shared bread over hearty meals with his friends and followers—often even his 'enemies'. This was a familiar, even ordinary social occurrence, such that on the way to Emmaus, despairing, tired, and hungry travelers gathered at a table, and suddenly they recognized the One whom they grieved. They *knew Jesus* as he took, gave thanks, broke, and shared bread again.

It's also easy to forget the earthy substance of the bread in Jesus's hands. I have a strong respect for bread, specifically the flour that makes the bread. (No doubt there were other grains than wheat in the bread on the road of Emmaus.) In many modern factories, wheat kernels are milled under heavy weights and at high speeds, producing flour that is nutritionally lacking. This means bread, the most basic staple of many cultures, has lost much of its nutrition.

My family buys stone-ground flour from a farm that uses regenerative methods to grow heirloom wheat. Because they mill the wheat more slowly, healthy bits of the kernels are left intact. Every month the farm delivers bags of beautiful flour to our home, and we are filled with gratitude for this closer connection to the people, the earth, and the animals farmed for food (think: grazing and manure!) that produced this granular goodness.

When Jesus held bread in his hands, he held yield from the soil from which all life comes and to which all life returns in death and decay. Jesus gave thanks for this life-sustaining food. Our Creator, through whom all things are made, the fully human Jesus, was thankful for the food that would sustain those gathered for the meal. We give thanks in turn for the bread before us, its connection to all of Creation, and for our Creator revealed in its sharing.

Call to Action and Reflection:

What does *breaking bread* look like for you in your life: In your home? In your community? In your faith praxis? Reflect on this, and be present with what you notice and think about as you *break bread* this week.

In these times, so many of us feel alienated and disconnected from where our food comes from. This week, mindfully think about the food you eat and be curious:

- What do you know about the farming methods used and how the earth is treated?

- What do you know about how the employees are treated in their making?
- What do you know about how the animals were treated in their living and their dying?
- What kinds of businesses are producing this food?

Pick one or two foods that you eat regularly and seek answers to these questions. (If you struggle to find information, think about why you don't easily find answers.) Are there changes you might wish to make to support the kinder treatment of Creation?

Creative Work: I share this poem by Margaret Atwood. For a lovely introduction, Irish poet Pádraig Ó Tuama reads and reflects on this poem in his Poetry Unbound [podcast](#)²³.

"All Bread," by Margaret Atwood²⁴

"All bread is made of wood,
 cow dung, packed brown moss,
 the bodies of dead animals, the teeth
 and backbones, what is left
 after the ravens. This dirt
 flows through the stems into the grain,
 into the arm, nine strokes
 of the axe, skin from a tree,
 good water which is the first
 gift, four hours.
 Live burial under a moist cloth,
 a silver dish, the row
 of white famine bellies
 swollen and taut in the oven,
 lungfuls of warm breath stopped
 in the heat from an old sun.
 Good bread has the salt taste
 of your hands after nine
 strokes of the axe, the salt
 taste of your mouth, it smells
 of its own small death, of the deaths

²³ Poetry Unbound (an Onbeing podcast) <https://onbeing.org/programs/margaret-atwood-all-bread/>

²⁴ Margaret Atwood, "All Bread" from *Selected Poems II: Poems Selected and New 1976-1986*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 53.

before and after.
Lift these ashes
into your mouth, your blood;
to know what you devour
is to consecrate it,
almost. All bread must be broken
so it can be shared. Together
we eat this earth."

Prayers:

Jesus Christ, as we break bread in our homes and communities
Show us yourself, show us your love
Jesus Christ, for those who have no bread to eat,
Feed them through your love made real in our actions

Jesus Christ, Bread of Life, may we feed on you and never be hungry
Jesus Christ, we trust in you, may we never thirst
Jesus Christ, you call us to your table
feed us with the bread of life, that we may never be hungry
Jesus Christ, we commit ourselves to you anew

May we walk in the light of your Love
May we love You by serving Creation in our work, in our rest, in our whole lives.
Amen

Suggestion to end this devotional with the Lord's Prayer, said together in the language
of your choice.

May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be
with us all, forever. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Karla Mendoza Arana

Lectionary: Year W²⁵

Scriptures: Acts 1:6 (or Deuteronomy 5:11-22); Psalm 78: 1-7; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 22: 23-33

Prayer:

Creator God,

Many times we have forgotten to love our neighbor. We have asked , "Who is our neighbor?" and you have answered us with kindness and reminders that our neighbors come from all of Creation. You love and care for the birds, and the flowers, help us then to be like you. Help us to walk in the resurrection power that is concerned with abundant life because death doesn't have the last word. May we love with boldness, courage, and without fear. Amen.

Reflection: The days between Easter and Pentecost have remained a mystery for us through the centuries. The Resurrected Christ walked amongst his friends and disciples who still lived under the oppressive systems of the Roman empire. It was only fitting that during their time with Jesus they would ask, "Rabbi, is this time when you will restore sovereignty to Israel?". They had just experienced terrifying trauma as they watched how their friend and Rabbi was murdered by the state, yet within a few days they also experienced, perhaps what would be the most powerful moment in the history of the world. Resurrection power must've been a sight to behold, it is only fitting the disciples would then ask about when sovereignty would be restored to Israel.

As Dr. Willie James Jennings reminds us, "Such [nationalistic] fantasy dreams are completely understandable and quite compelling because they help us cope with the vulnerability that is creaturely life, and they reflect the power of accumulated wounds. The greater the number of wounds inflicted on a people, the greater the fantasy dreams of being self-determined and wielding power over others, and power to control our own destiny."²⁶ When you are under oppressive systems it only makes sense to wonder when will these oppressive systems fall, and when will you hold power.

²⁵ Third Sunday of Easter, Year W. A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church: Year W, Wilda C. Gafney.

²⁶ Jennings, Willie James Dr. Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible Book. Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

Many of the peoples of the global majority have experienced the evil of empires, oppressive systems, and the evils of white supremacy and colonization. It is only fitting for us to ask, “when will we have power to reign? When will we experience the resurrection power and no longer be oppressed by empire?” As I ponder this question, I am reminded of the ways human beings have distorted dominion and power over non-human Creations including animals who are now farmed for food.

When we see power, it's easy to wonder what we would do or could do, yet resurrection power is not concerned with death, but with life abundant. What does it mean to choose abundant life in the care of our non-human neighbors? As individuals we might not hold enough worldly powers to bring down corporations or industrialized farming, but we can work towards a more justice system within our own communities and our own stories.

Paul writes, “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:10) Not only does love causes us to consider what it means to love our non-human neighbors without causing harm, it places us in the perfect position to humbly learn from animals farmed for food, because their liberation isn't tied to deathly power, but instead their liberation would mean healing — for the earth, for the waters, to our communities, and our own bodies. May we learn to love with resurrection power.

Call to Action: Take time this week to listen to [The Spirit of Soul Food: Race, Faith, & Food Justice](#), a CreatureKind conversation between Dr. Christopher Carter and CreatureKind's Executive Director, Aline Silva. What is something you learned from this conversation? How can you take into consideration what racism has done to our food systems? What is one thing you can do this week to connect to other people's stories?

Creative Work:



The Trinity by [Kelly Latimore](https://kellylatimoreicons.com/pages/gallery)²⁷

²⁷ You can find Kelly Latimore's work here - <https://kellylatimoreicons.com/pages/gallery>

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER / FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Rose J. Percy

Lectionary Year: Year A

Scripture Text: Revelation 7:9-17, Psalm 23,

Prayer:

God of fresh visions,

As we long for the realization of eternal peace, help us meet and engage the hope of New Earth on this Earth. We may be so far from seeing an end to hunger and thirst. We live in a world where the scorn of heat continually rises. But we remember the Lamb that is Jesus, feeding the multitude. Remind us that we are not without our guide in Jesus, who has given us vision for future hope as well as a present one. Amen.

Reflection: The book of Revelation describes Jesus as the risen Lamb, who sits at the right hand of God. We are promised this precious Lamb will attend to hunger, and thirst, and eliminate the scorn of heat (Rev. 7:16-17, NRSV). In the midst of a world of food scarcity, drought, water pollution and climate change, this word comes to the welcomed relief of all creation. Calling himself the living water yet again, Jesus reminds us that water is life. It is deeply important that the water Jesus offers is both priceless because of its eternal value as well as as a symbol of economic relief (Rev. 7:16, NRSV). It is beautiful, then, that this vision for a New Heaven and New Earth has a foundational promise of ecological justice, with the presence of the River of Life running through the middle of the city. Being free from scarcity, we can live in the abundance envisioned for us in Psalm 23, a world where we all have enough. Where all who depend on water for life can come to drink and recognize our interconnectedness.

Call to Action: We may be far from the vision shared in this chapter of Revelation, but we are not far from enacting practices that help make us inch closer and closer to a world without lack. Find a mutual aid network near you or create one to help support people in your community fighting food scarcity. We can contribute to keeping the waters in our cities safe and clean for use by keeping harmful chemicals from draining into the sewage systems. Read up on more mindful tips here: [Pollution Prevention Tips for Water Conservation](#)

Creative Work:



Photo by [Jayant Kulkarni](#)

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Ashley M. Lewis

Lectionary Year: Year A

Scripture Text: 1 Peter 2: 4-10, The Voice translation

4 Come to Him – the living stone – who was rejected by people but accepted by God as chosen and precious. 5 Like living stones, let yourselves be assembled into a spiritual house, a holy order of priests who offer up spiritual sacrifices that will be acceptable to God through Jesus the Anointed. 6 For it says in the words of the prophet Isaiah,

See here—I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone, chosen and precious;
Whoever depends upon Him will never be disgraced.

7 To you who believe and depend on Him, He is precious; but to you who don't, remember the words of the psalmist:
The stone that the builders rejected
has been laid as the cornerstone—the very stone that holds together the entire foundation,

8 and of Isaiah:
A stone that blocks their way,
a rock that trips them.
They stumble because they don't follow the word of God, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen people, set aside to be a royal order of priests, a holy nation, God's own; so that you may proclaim the wondrous acts of the One who called you out of inky darkness into shimmering light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received it.

Prayer:

God of precious stones and rejected stones,
Your spiritual house is being formed in this world, as it is in heaven. It is a house that brings all under its shelter, providing for each as is needed. But we continue to stumble. We cast aside the very *living stones* that you would have to form your

altar. We insulate ourselves from the pain of creation and the despair of our fellow beings. Help us to trip so that we might look down and see the truth of Christ, the bedrock of your kin-dom, who forms the foundations of the universe and calls us to proclaim your truth. May we learn to be a people alive in Christ and alight with your love for all creation. In the name of Jesus Christ, the cornerstone, we pray, amen.

Reflection: When approaching this text from a modern Westernized framework, it's easy to struggle with the question, "What is a *living stone*?" In that worldview, stones are fundamentally lifeless. Relating to a stone as a living being is fanciful or even preposterous. With all the benefits of science and technology, there are also deprivations, like insisting on insulating ourselves from fellow creatures and ecologies. This insulation deprives us of seeing creation – all elements of creation – as *alive*.

While the modern framework asserts that humanity lives above and apart from "nature," which is considered inert, indigenous cultures throughout time and space have honored the life and wisdom of stones. Stepping outside humanity's insular reality means questioning the assertion that a stone is a so-called "inanimate object" and considering what it might mean for a stone to *really live*.

Living, after all, doesn't only refer to the existence of a beating heart, pumping lungs, and firing brain synapses as humans have. *Living* sometimes means that a being's essence is fulfilled – that it *lives* into its purpose in creation.

Perhaps it doesn't require ascribing consciousness to a rock to think about what kinds of experiences might be the equivalent of *living* for that rock. (Although several biblical authors famously did.) *Living* would presumably be different for each stone. I imagine a stone that is really *living* might be feeling the rushing of river waters over its surfaces and becoming smoother with time, or being slung by a child so that it skips across the glassy surface of a lake. Maybe a *living stone* would help form the rocky terrain of a path through the woods, witnessing many creatures pass by over many centuries.

A stone's existence is exceedingly long compared to that of humans. Some have been here since the very formation of this planet. In our species' short existence, how could we possibly presume to understand what it's like to be *alive* more than those that were here to witness Jesus live, die, and rise again? They formed the paths on which he walked. They were pelted at him against their will on his dying day. They quaked and

trembled at the time of his death. They enclosed his tomb, then freed him once more on the third day.

Like *living stones*, we are called to form the spiritual house of the Creator. God's wondrous acts are not meant for humans alone to witness and proclaim. Christ, the true *living stone*, forms the foundation of all creation. We join with the living creation to bear the truth of his shimmering light, like flecks of precious minerals gleaming in the sun. The spiritual house is not just a building that holds the Church's people. It's the very creation from which humans often seek to insulate themselves. But in (re)learning to witness and proclaim Christ's resurrection alongside the *living stones* – as well as with other fellow creatures that humanity tends to forget – we might begin to understand what it's like to be *alive* in Christ.

Call to Action: In the community of creation, fellow beings are worn and trodden against their will, especially because of the domineering attitudes of (some) humans and human systems. Those stones who have had the hardest time *living* are probably the most in need of a reminder that they are chosen and precious among all God's stones. Those who are finding living a bit easier are not discarded because of better fortune. But we are asked to move out of the way so that other stones can discover the joy in *living*, too. That is the mercy of the gospel and the mercy that each is asked to extend to another. There is room for every stone in God's house.

Look around your community for churches that don't fit the "norm." These communities may not meet in a building. Maybe their building doesn't look like a church in the traditional Westernized sense. Or maybe the building houses a group of people who would traditionally not be welcomed into a church. Perhaps you will find church outdoors – in the streets, on a farm, with the animals, or near the water. Consider whether it's appropriate and realistic for you to visit this church. If it is, ask to bear witness alongside them. If not, how might you honor them by giving what you have?

Creative Work:



Illustration from [The Barefoot Guide Connection](#)

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Aline Silva

Lectionary Year: Year W²⁸

Scripture Text: Acts 17:1-4,10-12, Psalm 145: 8-19, Romans 6:5-11; John 11-17-27

Prayer:

Psalm 145: 8-19, adapted from *The Green Bible: A Priceless Message that Doesn't Cost the Earth*, based on *A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church: A Multi-Gospel Single-Year Lectionary* by Rev. Dr. Wilda C. Gafney, p. 182., by Aline Silva.

Together or Aloud, begin by taking three deep breaths and uttering: *Blessed be the CREATOR GOD and blessed be their name forever and ever (as it appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls).*

- 8 Our Creator is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in
steadfast love.
- 9 The Creator is good to all,
their compassion is over *all* that
was created.
- 10 All your creatures shall give thanks to you,
o Creator,
and all your faithful shall bless you.
- 11 They shall speak of the glory of your
kin-dom,
and tell of your power,
- 12 To make known to all your
might deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your
kin-dom.
- 13 Yours is an everlasting
kin-dom,
and your dominion endures
throughout all generations.

²⁸Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year W. *A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church: Year W*, Wilda C. Gafney.

Together or Aloud: *Blessed be the CREATOR GOD and blessed be their name forever and ever*

The Creator is faithful in word,
and gracious in deeds.

Together or Aloud: *Blessed be the CREATOR GOD and blessed be their name forever and ever*

14 The Creator upholds all who are fallen,
and raises up all the creatures who are
downhearted.

15 The eyes of all creatures look to you,
and you give them food in due
season.

16 You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living
creature.

17 The Creator is just in all their ways,
and kind in all their doings.

18 The Creator is near all who call on them,
to all who call in truth.

19 The Creator fulfills the desire of all who revere
them;

The Creator hears the cry of the creatures, and saves
Them.

Together or Aloud: *Blessed be the CREATOR GOD and blessed be their name forever and ever. Amen and Hallelujah.*

Reflection: It is interesting to read of Paul organizing the community and sharing new ideas on holy days. It is even more interesting to read that only those with access to money—and therefore an education—were receptive to Paul's discourse.

Saint Luke, the believed author of the Acts of the Apostles, is depicted throughout Christian history as one with the bovine, another symbol of wealth. In contrast to Luke's Gospel and Acts, the Charging Bull or the Bull of Wall Street, as it is best known, is a symbol of prosperity and abundant confidence in a secured financial future. Such a strong symbol stands in New York City's financial district as a reminder: Black Monday will never come again. In our American dollars and the strength of Capitalism we trust. Nevermind that more than half of the population in the United States of America—in

the global community, the percentage is even less,—cannot afford to benefit from this system. And yet, when it crashes, it oppresses the poorest and the marginalized first.

Big Meat farmers, farmers of cows, bulls, dairy, and beef receive on an yearly basis, \$38 billion dollars in subsidies. These farmers are encouraged to prioritize profit over the flourishing of their workers, their animals, and the land where their practices take place.

Big Meat keeps their inhumane, unethical, and polluting practices hidden from the consumer. According to the [#DefundBigMeat](#) campaign, the industry of Big Meat is the lead cause of bankruptcy and poverty in the United States. In addition, it is the biggest contributor to environmental degradation on land, in rivers and seas, to wild animal populations, and public health. The campaign aims to “de-subsidize meat and dairy production and reallocate funds to subsidize the sustainable farming and equitable distribution of fruits and vegetables instead.”

Again, in the Acts text, those with access to wealth were educated and better able to accept the message of God. I imagine the author makes note of this as a critique and not something followers of the Way should aim for. For Luke it is clear: the ministry of Jesus must center the plight of the poor and the rich must consistently share their wealth in service of the poor.

Here I ask the same questions raised by my friends at #DefundBigMeat: “Why are we subsidizing a food system that causes us mass chronic disease instead of one that prevents and heals it; and, why a food system that disproportionately harms Black lives, poor people, Indigenous and People of Color?”

Is there another way? Is there another pedagogy?

We cannot continue to allow those in power to harm us in this way. We must rise with our Lord victoriously. We must rise and shine the sun of liberation into factory farms and slaughterhouses and declare life over death.

On behalf of those oppressed by this misuse of the Bovine and its image, together we can build a communion table that protects, preserves, and enables the flourishing of those at the table, those harvesting for the table, those serving the table, and those on the table themselves.

We must, as the author of Luke and Acts suggests, redistribute wealth and subsidize better practices and food systems. We can implement educational systems that help all of us understand where our food comes from no matter our acquisitive power. Systems that center the flourishing of all beloved of the Creator, a table where all can eat equitably and sustainably.

I understand it seems too late, but we can join the resurrected Lord to advocate on behalf of, reconcile with, and foster flourishing for all worshippers of the Creator: animals, peoples, and the earth itself.

May it be so,
Amen.

Call to Action: Below you will find some suggestions for organizations and communities doing the work of food sovereignty and farmed animal advocacy. I encourage you to find out more by checking their websites and more importantly, getting connected to what is happening in your own community with regards to Industrial Agriculture.

Organizations:

1. [The Black Church Food Security Network](#), connecting churches to Black farmers throughout the USA.
2. [The Food Empowerment Project](#), seeks to create a more just and sustainable world by recognizing the power of one's food choices.

Public Policy Campaigns:

1. [Defund Big Meat](#), a campaign is a grassroots effort to encourage strategic collaboration across diverse sectors of Global Justice, including social justice, democratic justice, environmental justice and animal justice.
2. [The Farm Bill](#), legislation by Congress, reviewed every five years that sets national agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and forestry policy.

A Bible Study on [Christianity and Animals](#)

Complementary materials to the Bible Study:

1. Resources for the CreatureKind Course, by Fellowship Alumni, Alyssa Moore [here](#)
2. CreatureKind Course during Lent, prepared by Fellowship Alumni, Dr. Shea Watts, [here](#)

Creative Work: I present to you four images for reflection. Who do you see? What is the Spirit saying to you? How will you aim to honor the divinity of each cow, bull, and calf as you follow the risen Lord?



Stained Glass Image of St. Luke





SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Karla Mendoza Arana

Lectionary: Year A²⁹

Scriptures: Act 3:18-26; Psalm 27: 1-2,4-5,7,10,13-14; 1 Peter 3:13-22; Luke 14: 7-14

Prayer:

Unhidden God,
Thank you for your kindness when we look for you everywhere, yet seem to miss you in the beauty of all your human and non-human Creations. Help us to remember that You're not hiding from us, but you are here among us in the mundane and in the big moments. Help us not to hide in the face of injustice, but let us be brave to find you in the pursuit of liberation for all animals, peoples, and the earth. Amen.

Reflection: Sometimes waiting on the Living God feels like a game of hide and seek. Sometimes we are ones hiding, but sometimes we are the ones counting to one hundred as fast as we can because the more time we give God to hide, the longer it will take us to Them. When one is committed to the liberation of Animals, Peoples and the Earth sometimes it feels like we're done counting and God is nowhere to be found. We have looked inside the cupboards, behind the curtains, and maybe even gone down to the scary basement.

For a long time I thought waiting was a passive verb. I thought waiting was boring because it left me with nothing to do, yet the more I thought about the ministry of Jesus the more I learned that waiting was perhaps more active than I wanted it to be. When asked about the Kin-dom of God Jesus said, "The kin_dom of God is not coming with things that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kin_dom of God is among you." (Luke 17:20-21).

The Kin-dom of God is among us, yet what does this mean for us to wait on the Living God when we see injustices every day, when we see the carelessness towards the lives of animals farmed for food, when we see the ways corporations extract from the earth without repentance and without reparations? To wait on the Living God is no longer a passive verb, but a call to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with the Faithful One. (Micah 6:8)

²⁹ Seventh Sunday of Easter, Year W. A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church: Year W, Wilda C. Gafney.

Even in the game of hide seek, when we can't seem to find God, when it feels like God is clearly hiding, it is perhaps because it's not that God can only be found in one specific spot, but in every nook and cranny, behind the curtains and in the cupboards, and every meal we share, in every animal, in every person we meet and in all Creation. Waiting requires an active action with the trust that we will join in with our non-human neighbors when we see the goodness of She who is Faithful in the land of the living.

Call to Action: Spend some time outside, at a nearby park, or even in your neighborhood, or wherever you feel comfortable. Pay attention to non-human Creations, from the dirt to the simple leaves of the grass dancing in the wind, or the itty bitty bugs going on about their day, etc. What does it mean to love them as our neighbors and not just as part of the human-centered society we live in? Sit with them, ask about their days, what they're thinking, and maybe listen for an answer. Sometimes silence can be uncomfortable, but perhaps it's in these moments we'll be able to hear something we don't know.

Creative Work:

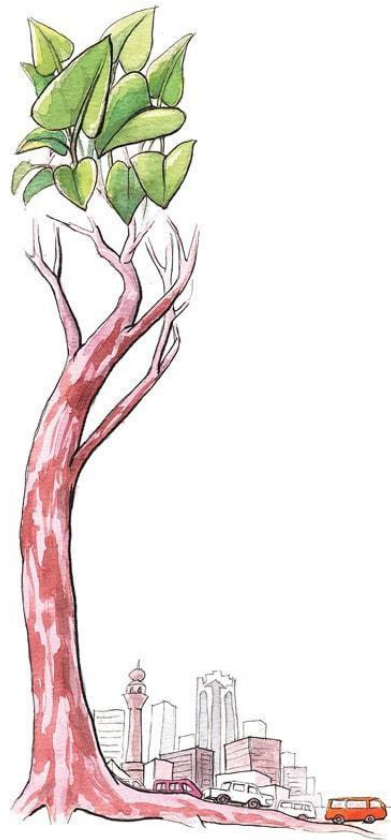


Illustration from [The Barefoot Guide Connection](#)

PENTECOST

DAY OF PENTECOST

Andrew Hudson

Lectionary Year: Easter and Day of Pentecost Year A

Scripture Text: John 7:37-39

37 On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, 38 and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." ' 39 Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Prayer:

Oh One, who holds a place for us in the transcendent, and at the same time dwells with us in our bodily creatureliness, thank you for giving us a place to come together, to drink and be satisfied. We open ourselves to compassion for the vulnerable: for our oppressed siblings, for animals, for the rest of creation, for ourselves. As you work in and among us, we give thanks for the grounding and peace that comes from both feeling in our body and being inspired by Jesus' words. Amen

Reflection: John's gospel is famously multi-level. If we simply try to boil down any part of it to a 'meaning', we are certain to miss a lot.

Jesus cries out during the festival of Booths, also known as *Sukkot*. In the words of Leviticus 23, "You shall live in booths (tents)...to remember I made you live in (tents) when I brought you out of Egypt." It is during this festival of *practicing* the memory of being enslaved that Jesus gives an invitation. During a festival of embodied practice, Jesus shares a visceral image, that people can come to him to get their thirst quenched. Jesus' faith, and his Jewish faith tradition, were alternatives to the body- and nature-denying worldview of the empire. Jesus' way was also the opposite of neoplatonism, the idea that spirit is higher than matter; that the soul is important and

the body isn't.. The gospel of Jesus was about being BOTH spiritually fed AND meeting our bodily needs.

When was the last time you slept outside? Have you ever done it with your faith community? How was it? Did you feel vulnerable, perhaps a bit fearful at every sound for the first hour or so? This experience is what the Bible recommends for a week every year, and is the context for what Jesus says in today's passage. For eight days every year, "you shall live in tents," says Leviticus 23. "All of Israel shall live in tents, to remember I made you live in tents when I brought you out of Egypt."

The thought of practicing *Sukkot* is a stretch for many people these days, but it is a hardwired part of the Hebrew Bible. Throughout the last 2500 years, faithful Jewish (and a few Christian) groups have slept outdoors during *Sukkot*. There are adaptations, of course, and it is often practiced in limited ways. But it continues to be practiced far and wide as one of the three primary festivals of the pentateuch (first five books of the Bible).

The practice of *Sukkot* is many things, but one of those is definitely an experience of vulnerability. Vulnerability is a visceral experience. It gives the biblical story much greater bandwidth. That vulnerability is something we have in common with the rest of our animal kin, we just insulate ourselves from it so much that most of us forget. To actually do it is to remember our creatureliness in a totally different way. Could this forgetting be part of why so many people participate in factory farming and forget our similarity, our creature-kind-ness?

It is into this context of visceral remembering that Jesus cries out an invitation. This isn't some magical utterance. Jesus is challenging people who are practicing embodied memory to go even further. Come to me, Christ calls, and experience a peace that passes all understanding, one that is both as visceral as sleeping outside as it is transcendently spiritual. This is the embodied invitation Jesus gives, when he uses the body-centered language of coming to drink.

How are you called to live that at-once-embodied-and-spiritual faith that he invites us to? Sleeping outdoors? Learning the local native animals and looking for them on nature walks? Adopting an animal? There are as many ways of being faithful as there are followers of Jesus. However we do it, it is important that we are faithful to it with the visceral nature of being embodied people; embodied beings.

For myself, when I am in touch with the vulnerability of living in my body, my compassion for my fellow creatures takes on a totally different tone. An urgency even. Sleeping under the stars is a millennia-old spiritual practice, and whether we do it, or even just imagine it as a thought experiment, it is an important part of a healthy spiritual participation in creation.

Call to Action:

In much of North America, Pentecost is a good time to begin looking for times to sleep outside. Consider one of the following:

Organize a sleep-out night with your spiritual community. Reflect on 'creatureliness', with readings from persons like anyone from Wendell Berry, such as Jayber Crow or *The Art of the Commonplace*; or, of course, the *Sukkot* readings in the Bible.

Do some reflecting and then sleep in your backyard or another outside area. Journal about it in the morning.

Spend a few minutes envisioning sleeping outside. How does it feel to try on? This can be fertile ground for reflection also.

ORDINARY TIME

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Candace Laughinghouse

Lectionary Year: Year C

Scripture Text: Romans 5:1-5

5 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Prayer:

Most loving and delivering God, thank you for sending your Holy Spirit as a reminder that you are forever with us. We may not physically feel connected but through the works of Jesus and empowerment through the Holy Spirit, we are grateful for the encouragement to lead in love. Let love rule our lives and direct us to continued activism on behalf of farmed animals everywhere.

Reflection: Following the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the church in the Upper Room - on the day of Pentecost - followers of Christ had to come to terms with celebrating and defining the Trinity. The First Sunday after Pentecost is one of the specialized church feasts necessary to determine the church's agreement that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are one. But why the need for the Holy Spirit among believers in God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

The disciples weren't the only ones reconsidering their boldness to proclaim the messages of Christ unto the world. They reflected on the hard truth that Jesus would no longer be present in their lives like before. Jesus would no longer give these sermons among nature and upon the seas to multitudes of people. It's nice to be physically connected with a great leader performing miracles for everyone. But now Jesus is no longer here. The disciples and followers of Christ are expected to carry on his witness of love for all, but they need a little encouragement.

In the book of Romans, Paul writes to encourage the church of Rome in a letter emphasizing justification for receiving the righteousness of God through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are encouraged by Paul to acknowledge that “*God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*” (Romans 5:5).

This Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and is significant in our acceptance of God’s love poured into our hearts. As we discover and learn how animals farmed for food are treated, we are motivated by Paul’s words that this love for farm life is a part of our accepting God’s love in our hearts. Once we acknowledge the authentic love of God - through the Holy Spirit — we are empowered to care for their lives and advocate for their complete freedom from humanity’s claim to oppress and subjugate them as being commoditized goods and food.

Call to Action: The [All-Creatures](#) organization is a top-tier organization offering a myriad of links to a wealth of information guiding you through caring for all nonhuman animal life. Utilizing animal stories, poetry, Bible studies, action alerts, and more, the organization is a guide to participating in the praxis of animal welfare.

Creative Work:



Illustration from [The Barefoot Guide Connection](#)

FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE

Candace Laughinghouse

Lectionary Year: Year C

Scripture Text: John 20:1-2; 11-18

Prayer:

Kyrie Confession

Lord, in your love, you invite us to be your friends:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy

Lord, in your joy. You choose us to go out and bear fruit:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have understanding.

Lord, in your power, you send us to be your faithful witnesses:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have understanding.

Reflection: In the above confession, the declaration is that we are chosen by God to not only enter into friendship and bear fruit from this relationship; we are called to be faithful witnesses. When is faith required? Faith is necessary when challenging moments arrive. I heard someone define the opposite of "faith" as "fear." But they continued by assuring that F.E.A.R. is just an acronym for "false evidence appearing real."

As we celebrate the feast of Mary Magdalene, we understand that Mary was a close disciple of Jesus. Also known as Mary of Mandala (her hometown village located on the shore of Galilee), her family business was tied into the sea-fairing business. Trade and connection with food was such a high income that she not only came to know Jesus through his sermons, but she was also a significant investor in the ministry of Jesus. As a devout follower of Jesus, she was also a leader among the disciples. Paul mentions her in his letter to the church in his letter *Romans* - delivered by a woman, Phoebe. Mary was more than a friend, skilled in the knowledge of what it takes to follow Christ's many sermons given on the shores of Galilee and abroad. Mary was such a faithful witness that she was with Jesus during the Crucifixion and followed up after he was laid in the tomb. Meanwhile, the disciples hid in fear. Mary Magdalene exercised her faithfulness as she rushed to the tomb to care for his body.

Her faithful witness brought her to the tomb to experience the first sighting of the risen Savior. With excitement, she rushed to share the good news with the disciples.
He is risen!

Instead, the disciples - mainly led by Peter - cast doubt on her story. Often our fear of what appears real can prevent us from accepting the liberating Gospel of truth.

As we venture through the lectionary advocating for the lives of animals farmed for food, in what ways have you ever felt unsafe about speaking against cruelty towards these animals? The chastisement may come from a family member who has made a living off animal cruelty. Perhaps, we choose not to say anything because we are socialized to consider animals farmed for food as unworthy of the same love, care, and concern we give cats, dogs, and other domesticated animals that become pets.

May the message of the faithful witness in Mary Magdalene remind us that witnessing truth can be met with demanding audiences who intentionally choose not to support the cause of protecting farmed beings. Yet, we press forward in knowing God empowers us to enact our faith as witnesses of God's love for all Creation.

Call to Action: [The Christian Vegetarian Association \(CVA\)](#) is a Christian organization that operates internationally in providing longtime support for Christians who choose to live a vegetarian life. One way to operate in the praxis of advocating for animals is through diet. CVA supports and offers tips for living a vegetarian lifestyle. If you are not already a vegetarian or vegan, consider weekly visits to the Christian Vegetarian Association for tips on animal activism and preparing a plant-based diet.

Creative Work:



Airlie Farm in Warrenton, VA - photograph by Karla Mendoza during [CreatureKind's Denominational summit](#). Spring 2022.

SEASON AFTER PENTECOST: PROPER 11

Daniela Rizzo

Lectionary Year: Year B

Scripture Text: Romans 8:22-27

8:22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 8:23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 8:24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. 8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. 8:27 And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Prayer

Thank you Lord Jesus that you move in the miraculous
That where there is oppression, you bring freedom
That where there is a closed door, you offer another path or solution
When I am distressed or anguished you bring me hope and you encourage me
I pray that I am transformed each day in your image
And that I stand not in my own strength, but with the power and anointing of
your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reflection: Paul writes that as all creation groans, including both human and non-human creatures, that the Spirit intercedes for the saints. As advocates for creation, we tend to focus our attention on the groaning of all creatures and our environment. We recognise the suffering, we see the bondage, and in most cases, we can identify the problem.

The groaning and the creaturely cries for help aren't difficult for us to detect, yet, what most advocates find challenging is the realization of change. We tend to commence with yearnings for change, we progress to declaring the need for change, we strive daily to become part of the change and many times, we are disillusioned with promises of change. However, as we stand as people united in faith, we look to our greatest advocate, the Holy Spirit, who fuels our desire for Shalom.

In this passage, Paul tells us that the Spirit calls us to hope and to persevere as we wait. Hope can otherwise be defined as 'confident expectation.' It's where the righteous, who have this trustful hope in God, have a general confidence in God's protection and help. This protection and help can be extended to the creatures in which we steward, where the Spirit intercedes our cries of justice, love, freedom and flourishing which flows over to our fellow creatures.

Let us be encouraged that as we groan together with our fellow creatures, that our confidence and trust is placed in God's good and righteous plan for all of creation. While we wait in confidence for the right doors to open, the right laws to be implemented, the right technology to make a difference, the right attitudes to sustain the change, the right protections to be put in place- we wait... and we stand in solidarity with the Spirit, the right and perfect advocate, to break chains and set the captives free.

Call to Action: Paul writes that as all creation groans, including human and non-human creatures, that the Spirit intercedes for the saints. As Christians who are concerned about animals and who are motivated to bring peace to a violent world, frustration and grief can impact us when we are presented with injustices and suffering that we cannot remedy. In these moments, let us trust that the Spirit (who intercedes for us, the animals and all of creation) will open doors, break chains, free the captives and bring hope and restoration through Christ, to the world.

Commit to reading a good news story about:

- policy or law that benefits non-human creatures
- animal rescue and recovery or
- how animals impact the lives of people living with disability or those who suffer with mental health issues.

Be encouraged that there are people in communities who are committed to animal flourishing and that the Spirit is interceding through all of us who are crying out for change.

Creative Work:



Illustration from [The Barefoot Guide Connection](#)

SEASON AFTER PENTECOST: PROPER 12

Jon Zirkle

Lectionary Year: Year A

Scripture Text: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

31 Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kin-dom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; 32 it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

42 and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kin-dom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen! Three Parables 44 "The kin-dom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and reburied; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 "Again, the kin-dom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; 46 on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. 47 "Again, the kin-dom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; 48 when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Treasures New and Old 51 "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." 52 And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kin-dom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Prayer

God of all wild things,
Expand our sight to fully see your kin-dom
Forgive us when we limit and control your creation, and teach us to repent.
Grow in us humility to honor and celebrate all of your creatures and creativity
Give us courage to pursue your justice and break cycles of domination.

Reflection: Of the many verses of Matthew 13 in today's lectionary, verses 31 and 32 draw attention to the creaturely world, a world that surely captivated Jesus' hearers then and intrigues modern readers alike.

Jesus invites us into a reflection on the kin-dom of God, illustrating his teaching by using phenomena we've witnessed before but can hardly fathom. Many of his ancient hearers worked in the fields. They grew crops and spent time hoeing the weeds or utilizing the labor of draft animals to cultivate. They had seen mustard seeds firsthand, either from collecting wild mustard seeds for making oil or for seasoning or from pulling out mustard weeds that grew quickly in grain fields. I suspect the image of God's kin-dom being like a grain of mustard seed didn't elicit positive associations, at least not initially.

I grow crops as part of my livelihood. I have spent hours in wheat fields in the northern U.S. where the grain was certified organic and using sprays to kill wild mustard plants was not an option. Mustard plants can grow quickly and tall, tolerate poor soil, and produce tons of seeds, ready to mature and shatter before the wheat is ready for harvest. To watch mustard plants grow within a wheat field and not be able to control them is immensely distressing.

A mustard seed allowed to grow to full size in a field essentially means the management isn't working. From my perspective, seeing mature mustard plants in a field means something unfortunate or unexpected happened: the laborers got injured or sick and couldn't tend the area; there was war and farmers had to abandon the field; or the weather conditions made it impossible to weed.

And yet.

And yet these creatures are part of Jesus' divine teaching. In the image Jesus presents, conditions in the field are not disturbed or cultivated by beasts of burden. Suddenly a tiny weed seed becomes large enough to hold the weight of a bird's nest. Jesus celebrates this image!

I've witnessed mustard plants ('weeds') in fields I manage but do not own. In hearing this parable, I feel tension and concern because I picture failure or neglect on the part of the farmer. But does Jesus? Can the kin-dom of heaven be like a weed growing without human control?

Can the kin-dom be home to birds nesting where food is grown or gathered—where they and their hungry young will easily be able to devour the harvest? Might there somehow be divine liberation in this kin-dom, a kin-dom where lowly weeds and unwanted birds are centered, where domination and human worries are not necessary?

Today, let us marvel at God's kin-dom of creation and imagine the life God is actively fostering beyond our care and control.

Call to Action: One method for growing the food we need that seeks to respect the lives of animals, God's creation more broadly and the health of human beings is a method called, veganic agriculture. According to the Veganic Agriculture Network of North America, veganics is “an approach... known as ‘stockfree,’ ‘vegan organic’ and ‘plant-based,’ this is a form of agriculture that goes further than organic standards, by eliminating the use of products that are derived from confined animals and by encouraging the presence of wild native animals on the farmland.” As a response to this reflection, visit www.goveganic.net to learn more. You may also consider taking an online course in veganic gardening. For details, go to <https://learnveganic.com/>

Creative Work: Jon Zirkle is the director, farm manager, and primary educator at Bushelcraft Farm, an educational farm that began in 2020 in Elkhart, Indiana. The farm's mission is to support community access to healthy food, meaningful experiences in nature, and to provide experience-based creative skills training for everyone to grow. The photo is one of a red-winged blackbird nest in a field of overgrown weeds that he and others were pulling.



THE TRANSFIGURATION

Candace Laughinghouse

Lectionary Year: Year C

Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

12 Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with complete frankness, 13 not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. 14 But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, the same veil is still there; it is not unveiled since in Christ it is set aside. 15 Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds, 16 but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

4 Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2 We have renounced the shameful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

Prayer:

Dear God of refuge and love. Help us to understand that we should never lose heart in knowing that as the Spirit gives us freedom, it may often come with some resistance from those around us. During the most challenging times in life, it can seem as if you are absent. Help us to remember you will always be our provider, and it is in your will and plan for our lives that we live in the Spirit's transformational existence of freedom. Help us to locate the freedom only you can provide even when we are unable to trace the necessities of life - housing, food, water, and the right to live. We choose not to live within the energy of fear but instead walk in the freedom you gave us through the sacred writings of this week. Amen

Reflection: Despite the disciples receiving instruction from Jesus that he would leave them and no longer be around, they found it difficult to accept this news. During this week of celebrating "the Transfiguration," we recognize the disciples found it hard to

wrap their minds around no longer seeing Jesus on their daily journey of spreading the Gospel. Paul writes an encouraging letter to the Church of Corinth about love and finding freedom in the Paraclete - the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God gives the liberty that encourages the church of Corinth to cease trying to live up to the standards of what is considered the "old law of Moses."

The church recognizes the Transfiguration of Jesus as the pivotal moment where humanity is now granted access to the eternal through Jesus as the catalyst and bridge between heaven and earth. But this can only be done by removing the veil of old ways of thinking theologically that included many of the laws of Moses. This became a struggle for the disciples and the continuing growth of followers of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, this led to different teachings - for example, between Peter and Paul. The schism within the church praxis juxtaposed to what is the right way to do things to please God became a distraction as exclusionary practices began to now define a group once known for its love and consideration for all.

In what way can you connect with the disciples' struggle to maintain traditional thinking? Is maintaining tradition possible when advocating for the lives of animals farmed for food? How do we address scenarios where farmed animals provide a way of life for certain families? How do we advocate for the lives of animals when family identities are closely attached?

Call to Action: While reflecting on the questions above, let us move forward with this reminder: The Holy Spirit is sent to comfort and encourage us as we use our voices to speak the hard truths in life. How can the discussion of the disciples experiencing grief due to an extreme change in environment connect with other ways of removal of safe spaces for God's creation? Consider [The Healing Species](#) organizational work that connects children and teenagers with homeless animals. Utilizing a variety of programs to pursue the mission of the organization, visit the following website for further advocacy work for animals.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Drew Farwell](#)

FEAST OF ST. MARY, THE VIRGIN

Candace Laughinghouse

Lectionary Year: Year A

Scripture Text: Luke 1:46-55

46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; 50 indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. 54 He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Prayer:

Thank you God for your wisdom and plan for my life. There are times when unwanted obstacles are before me, but you know the end from the beginning. You are Alpha and Omega. We worship and give thanks even in our moments of being able to understand the plight in our lives. Nevertheless, you continue to provide safety and guidance along the way.

Reflection: It is the feast of St. Mary, the Virgin. The church recognizes Mary as "the God-bearer" and honors her role as a pregnant virgin mother. The level of danger in bearing that which John noted as "the Word became flesh" is great for a betrothed young girl during her time. Yet, the text reads that she is not only bold but thankful for God raising the vulnerable and protecting them with grace. Luke suggests that God is with the vulnerable; thus, the church sides with and honors the lives of the weak.

Our advocacy for the protection and care of animals farmed for food is within the symbolic message of Mary's vulnerability to God. The innocent and vulnerable are the care and concern of God; thus, we can reflect on the salvation of humanity through the life of St. Mary juxtaposed to the act of advocating for the saving of lives for farmed animals.

Recent scholarship critiques the consensual experience of Mary as the virgin called upon by the Spirit to bring forth a child. This notion can seem a little heretical and

frightening to some, but also it can bring us closer to understanding how important it is for Mary to enact her faith at such a scary and dangerous time in a young woman's life. One cannot overlook that we live in a fallen world. As believers, we also rely on faith that as the designer of all of Creation and our lives, God will protect us even when life happens, not as we expect or prayed for.

Call to action: The dove is often pointed to Mary's virginity and Spirit-centeredness. Another way of honoring St. Mary the Virgin is considering God's humility and spirit (*ruah*) in all animals - including farmed animals.

This week, reconsider determining our relationship to farmed animals through projections of worthiness to some animals over others.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Matthias Zomer](#)

ALL SAINT'S DAY

Candace Laughinghouse

Lectionary Year: Year C

Scriptural Text: Luke 6:20-31

20 Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

'Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kin-dom of God.

21 'Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

'Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

22 'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. 23 Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

24 'But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

25 'Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

'Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

26 'Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

27 'But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Prayer:

Most gracious and all-knowing God. Thank you for continuing to extend your love beyond the day of Creation and through the lives of those who have gone before us. We dedicate this day to honoring those saints who have gone before us as they represent excellent examples of faith, dedication, courage, love for your Word, and dedication to displaying an extension of your amazing love.

Reflection: On May 13, 609 AD, Pope Boniface IV chose to dedicate the Pantheon in Rome as a church to honor all Christian martyrs, including the Virgin Mary. The dedication to honoring Christian martyrs who attained the highest levels of spiritual maturity. Celebrating All Saint's Day is the day the church venerates men and women deemed holy by the church. These men and women lived in such a way that their legacy is tied to a commitment to the Christian faith, often above the context and manner in which they died. The focus is on the human life lived and the refusal to compromise in exchange for eternal life in Christ. The canonization of these lives serves as an inspiration to those who have yet to transition. Luke's Gospel shares Jesus' message to not only show love for people who disagree, hate, and despise you for the uncompromised love for all of Creation. Not only is Luke continuing his message of God extending blessings to those lacking in food, resources, and other unfortunate life situations, but God's love is also extended to those who verbally and physically persecute them for loving their enemies.

All Saints Day is another opportunity for us to honor one of the many ways victory in Christ is attainable. Through worship and dedication these saints have fallen, but we maintain joy in the resurrection that is to come. As animals farmed for food add to the number of fallen beings due to the cruel treatment of humanity, we pray and advocate that these souls are no longer experiencing the trauma and pain lived while contained on farms around the world. During this season, may we continue to glean towards remembering the lives of farmed animals on All Saint's Day as they are never abandoned by You - the Foreseer of all of Creation.

Call to Action: As advocates for the lives of animals farmed for food , how can we honor the lives of those who died with an uncompromising faith in extending God's love for all of Creation? Take this week to discover two four farm animal advocates who connected their cause with Christian values.

Creative Work:



Photo by [Elina Okolit](#)

SEASON AFTER PENTECOST: PROPER 27

Sue Hall Pyke

Lectionary Year: Year A

Scripture Text: Amos 5:18-24

Alas for you who desire the day of [God/de]! Why do you want the day of [God/de]? It is darkness, not light; as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake. Is not the day of [God/de] darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

Prayer:

Gracious Sophia-God/de* of wisdom and justice

Free us to turn from our inheritance of controlling behaviours: the violation and child-theft we inflict on cows; the assembly-line enclosures that hold mutilated hens barely a handspan apart; just as we are turning from boxes piled high with snakes milked for their venom. Let us drink fully from your rolling stream of gentle kindness to ease the burning grief of our harms.

As we turn, help us let go of the lion we imagine ourselves to be and accept the fright of the bear within us, the knowledge that this world is stronger than us, that we are not in charge.

In our growth away from fear-driven patterns of oppression and death, may we rejoice with the abundant seeds of plant life in released spaces. May seeds sprout and multiply for all, repairing the land damaged from bodies humans have kept tightly in pain for generations.

We pray that when we embrace this change, entering the cleansing water of freedom for all, our warring darkness of violence against other animals, our limits,

will be washed through with your nurturing grace. We are ready to thrive in your stream of unbloodied justice.

May it be so. Amen

*Prayer note: According to Jeanette Acland of Sophia Springs faith community, God/de "upsets the gender binary of God vs Goddess and slots nicely into the middle" which is lovely simple version of my definition, which is 'the word is a stretch away from the masculinist connotations of Father God towards older ways of being with Mother Goddess, with the '/' serving as an interruption to the constraints of these two terms, creating a new place of fluid and productive uncertainty."

Reflection: Marion, a ninety-plus member of a church I attended years ago, was often asked for her secret to living her long life. Change, Marion would answer. I love it.

Amos 5:18-24 is an invitation to be flooded by change. In this passage, the god-figure demands just action, dismissing hypocritical words and empty gestures with a bristling anger that is an (old) testament to the appeasing Christ-spirit of cleansing justice. These castigating words hold a sweet promise: a hope and a faith that humans can change.

When I met Marion, I was a new mother, with two young children. I had recently become a vegetarian, after my oldest son, at two, had asked me about cattle trucks. But I was still drinking my after-church tea with milk stolen from injured mothers, even though, as a dairy-farmer's daughter, I had seen tears in more than one cow's eyes as her babies were driven off to slaughter. I lived a life of milk, cheese and cream and I loved a good egg sandwich too. I was part of the damage to those other mothers who, unlike me, were denied family and community.

I changed, perhaps as the people addressed by the god-figure in Amos might have changed, for my wrongs. I justified my entry into plant-based living as an action forced by a world heating into crisis. My church family got it. My discomfort with animal exploitation and death was harder for me to talk about and it was harder for my church community to hear. Less animal production, less global warming. Easy. Seeing nonhumans as equal under the divine logic of this world? Not so straightforward.

Facing the harms being done by humans to cows and hens turned me to a new task, that of loving snakes. Just as biblical ideas of stewardship have justified animal abuse, Christian hermeneutics have allowed snakes to stand for evil. Stamp on the vipers with their falsehoods and their trickery. Box them, Kill them. In this framework of disrespect,

the snake in Amos 5:19 is an enemy. In the old cultures of the lands I call home, snakes are god-beings.

I think, now, that leaning to 'rest' on that 'cupboard' might be part of the same ungodly damage I enacted in drinking a cup of tea with milk stolen from a mother's removed newborn, and eating a sandwich filled with the life a mother created for her own needs. I have leaned into the freedom of cows and hens, as readily as I have leaned against trees where snakes take their rest. I have imposed upon them.

When they can't escape humans, cows charge and hens peck and snakes bite. They fight for their freedom. They bellow and flutter and strike. A cow's hooves, a hen's beak and a snake's fangs demand justice. And in our fear of getting hurt, we enclose, we kill. But unlike us, farmed cows and hens and snakes are not on the offensive. Open the enclosures that hold them for our use and off they go.

There is a connection, for me, in this live and let live mode of being, with Amos 5:18-24 and its call for an inclusive church. A church's prayer for world peace and justice will always be undermined if its people are not working towards the freedom of all. It seems to me that when we unjustly use the flesh of creatures bred for death and penned for life, we abuse our own hopes for co-creating godly peace.

Call to Action:

- [Read](#) Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Kabul Oodgeroo Noonuccal's "The Rainbow Serpent"
- [Watch](#) Sacred Land Film Project's Song for the Rainbow Serpent
- [Support](#): Compassion in World Farming
- [Rally](#) with Ban all Slaughterhouses
- [Go](#) vegan

Creative Work: This is an eastern tiger snake, some can be seen not far from my family home, which is located in Eastern Maar Country, in the southeast of the continent mostly now known as Australia. Settlers like me call this place the Stony Rises. This beautiful creature, *Notechis scutatus*, is one of the world's most poisonous snakes. I now see that that snake has as much right to live fully in this habitat as me. This adds to my joy that cows and hens are no longer captives on this land.



Image by Robert W G Jenkins; Australian Museum³⁰

³⁰ <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/reptiles/tiger-snake/>

CHRIST THE KING

Candace Laughinghouse

Lectionary Text: Year C

Scriptural Text: Psalm 46

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea,
- 3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult. *Selah*
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
- 5 God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
- 6 The nations are in an uproar; the kin-doms totter;
he utters his voice; the earth melts.
- 7 The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*
- 8 Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
- 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
- 10 "Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations;
I am exalted in the earth."
- 11 The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*

Prayer:

We pray the songs of our ancestors, acknowledging the hope and presence in the only begotten of God - Jesus Christ. Christ's power is our example that though operating in meekness, Christ's love and power shall stand forever. Continue to be our foundation of confidence in you, God, whom we shall serve forever. Amen.

Reflection: The writer of Psalm declares that God will always be exalted among all nations. The writer would also write from a place of being an encourager to the audience reading the psalter. Should one find themselves doubtful during a time period of exile, this psalm fits the code to rivaling any enemy of God's people. As Christians, we read this text with the reminder that Christ's conception, arrival, ministry, death and resurrection are all examples of his sovereignty and power over all other kings - and dare we mention queens; who also reigned as rulers over nations.

As readers of this text, we come to learn that Christ's life is enough reason for us to advocate for righteousness - in all ways - because it gives us the power to no longer fear what is ahead. As we continue to advocate for farmed animals there are many barriers that come in place to distract us and discourage us from speaking against systems that protect humanity over animals.

In what ways can we move forward with Christ as our King? We move forward declaring that our message of love for farmed animals is supported by the sovereign one and we carry forth this message knowing we can find refuge in God when opposition arises to threaten our message and very existence.

Christ the king is not just a reference to the monarchy preferred by the children of Israel. May we see and come to know that Christ the King will always reign as no other king has overcome the grave. It is with pure joy in resurrection that we move forward to exalt Christ as king while we move forward to protect farmed animals with our voice and actions.

Call to action: How can we actually make a difference with advocating for farmed animal life with the understanding that nonhuman animal life is worth protecting in the name of Christ. Start with collaborating with your faith community as to ways you can build collective support for farmed animal life. Consider the organizations throughout this devotional and the resources offered as a model toward possibly creating your own organization. The more advocates there are for farmed life, the more awareness of the limitless capacity of God's love for all.

Creative work:



Photo by [sergio souza](#)

DEFAULTVEG RECIPES

THE CHURCH TABLE: A DEFAULTVEG COOKBOOK

(A Sneak Peak)

We set our CreatureKind church table with recipes from our friends around the world. Each recipe is a favorite that connects us to ourselves, our family, or our community.

Food is such a deep part of caring for God's beloved creation—for ourselves, for each other, for animals, and for the earth. We hope you find joy in reading about these dishes that do just that. May it inspire and stay with you all throughout the year. Enjoy!



Photo by [Maarten van den Heuvel](#)

Soups and Sides

Lemon Lentil Soup

Submitted by Beth Quick

I received this recipe from my friend Marianne Augenstein, and modified it. I am not sure where she got the recipe.

Prep time: 5 min

Cook time: 30 minutes

Total time: 35 minutes

I never liked soup growing up, but I have learned to really enjoy it as an adult. A non-vegan friend made this for me for a dinner at her apartment, going out of her way to find and prepare something I would eat. It was so good, I asked for the recipe. I make it all the time now, and have shared it with many friends. I've modified it a bit to my tastes. It is a hearty, creamy soup that I love.

Ingredients

- **Red lentils** | 2 cups
- **Vegetable broth, "Better Than Bouillon Seasoned Vegetable Base" works great** | 8 cups
- **Lemon juice** | ½ cup
- **Chopped Spinach (frozen is fine)** | 2 cups
- **Chopped Carrots** | 2 cups
- **Chopped Celery** | 2 cups
- **Coriander** | 1 Tbsp
- **Olive Oil or water for sauteing**

Directions

Sauté carrots and celery in olive oil or water until soft. Add vegetable broth & red lentils, bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover & simmer for about 15 minutes. Add lemon juice, spinach, and parsley. Salt & pepper to taste if desired. Simmer 2-3 more minutes. Then serve and enjoy!

Fiery Roasted Red Pepper and Tomato Soup

Submitted by Ruby Alemu

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 1 hour

Total time: 1 hour, 20 minutes

This became a favourite for Christmas Day starter in our family household - I come from a family of meat-eaters but we love to include this meal into our Christmas tradition. What I love most about this dish is the Ethiopian twist - it brings a lot of joy to my husband and I that we can share and mix our cultures when cooking. The beauty of this recipe is it is so adaptable to your own spice palette and it's a great way to share a meal with your closest family and friends.

Ingredients

- 10 large vine ripened tomatoes, cut in half
- 15-20 mixed small tomatoes (cherry, baby plum, yellow, go to town), whole
- 1 red onion, diced
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 1 bulb of garlic
- 4-5 chillies of your choice, cut into halves or quarters (optional)
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 1 vegetable stock cube
- Boiling water, around 500ml
- Seasoning of your choice on the veg (I use oregano, thyme, mixed herbs and a little paprika)
- Secret ingredient(!) - ethiopian berbere
- Optional - 50ml soya cream plus extra for serving
- Crusty bread

Directions

Heat your oven to 180 degrees (Celsius)

Get 1-2 roasting trays ready

Cut up all your veg

Place the tomatoes facing up in the roasting tray(s), place your garlic bulb in some tin foil and drizzle some olive oil on before wrapping. Place the other veg in the trays, add a hearty amount of olive oil, salt and pepper, and your seasoning of choice

Roast in the oven for about 35-40 minutes

Grab a large saucepan, a bamix or blender, and stick the kettle on!

Take your veg out of the oven and place into the large saucepan on low-medium heat (squeeze the garlic out of the bulb, you can do this using a butter knife or just get right in there with your hands)

Add in a couple of sprigs of basil and the berbere - I really recommend this spice as it adds so much depth to the flavour

Add in the vegetable stock cube and boiling water and stir it up, let this start bubbling away for a few minutes

Turn off the heat and use your bamix or pour into a blender until you get your preferred consistency - if necessary, add more water

Once blended to your desired consistency, add the soya cream if you are using it. Taste and add more salt and pepper if required

Serve with a drizzle of soya cream, fresh basil and bread to your heart's content!

Maple-Roasted Brussel Sprouts with Toasted Hazelnuts

Submitted by Nathan Brasfield

Recipe by Chloe Coscarelli

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 1 hour

Total time: 1 hour, 15 minutes

Ingredients

- **1½ pounds brussels sprouts**
- **¼ cup olive oil**
- **¾ teaspoon sea salt**
- **¼ teaspoon (or 10 grinds) black pepper**
- **2 tablespoons maple syrup**
- **½ cup toasted hazelnuts, coarsely chopped (optional)**

Directions

Step 1

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Step 2

To prepare the brussels sprouts, remove any yellow or brown outer leaves, cut off the stems and cut in half.

Step 3

In a large bowl, toss the brussels sprouts, olive oil, salt and pepper together. Once all of the brussels sprouts are coated in oil, spread them into a 9-by-13-inch (or larger) baking dish or sheet tray to roast. Note: You may want to line your sheet tray with foil for easy cleanup because the caramelizing process leaves a sticky residue.

Step 4

After 15 minutes, stir the brussels sprouts with a spatula or large spoon to even out the browning. After 30 minutes, stir in the maple syrup. (Steps 1 through 4 can be done a day in advance; store covered in the refrigerator. Continue with Steps 5 and 6 right before serving.)

Step 5

Continue to roast the brussels sprouts for about 15 more minutes, or until they are fork tender (about 45 minutes total roasting time).

Step 6

Toss the roasted brussels sprouts with the hazelnuts and devour!

Add in the vegetable stock cube and boiling water and stir it up, let this start bubbling away for a few minutes

Turn off the heat and use your bamix or pour into a blender until you get your preferred consistency - if necessary, add more water

Once blended to your desired consistency, add the soya cream if you are using it. Taste and add more salt and pepper if required

Serve with a drizzle of soya cream, fresh basil and bread to your heart's content!

Mains

Lentil Wellington

Submitted by: Janna Packham

Recipe by Sam Turnbull, Doesn't Taste Like Chicken: *Doesn't Taste Like Chicken (Sam Turnbull)*; <https://itdoesnttastelikechicken.com/puff-pastry-wrapped-lentil-loaf/#recipe>

Prep time: 45-60 mins (15-20 if using canned lentils)

Cook time: 40-45 minutes

Total time: 1 hour, 45 minutes

This dish is hearty and satisfying, and helps our family remember with gratitude that God has provided an abundance of plant foods to sustain us. The kids love it, too!

Ingredients

- 1 sheet puff pastry (or make your own)
- 1 Tb plant milk (unsweetened soy works well)
- 3/4c green or brown lentils, dried*
- 1 3/4c broth (less 1Tb)
- 1.5 Tb ground flax seed
- 3 Tb warm/hot water
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 1/2 tsp dried thyme
- Pinch cayenne
- Squirt of ketchup (~1 tsp)
- 1/2 Tb oil
- 1/2 small onion, diced
- 1 rib celery, diced
- 1 carrot, peeled and chopped
- 4oz (1 cup) mushrooms, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/3 c rolled oats
- 1/4c flour
- *If using canned lentils, sub 1 3/4c canned (rinsed/drained) for the broth and lentils

Directions

Preheat oven to 400. If cooking lentils from dry, combine in pot with broth. Cover, bring to simmer & cook 35-40 min.

Mash until ~2/3 of the lentils are mush.

Combine flax and water; set aside.

In large pot, saute onion, carrot and celery (in oil or water) ~5 min. Add mushrooms; cook 5 min more. Add in garlic, salt and pepper, thyme, cayenne, and squirt ketchup.

In large bowl, combine lentils, veggies, flax mix, oats and flour

On lightly floured surface, roll out pastry sheet to 10"x14". Transfer to parchment paper.

Form mix into loaf shape down the middle, leaving a margin. Cut sides into 1-inch strips.

Cut off corners; set aside. Fold top flap down, then overlap strips top to bottom, crisscrossing. You can use corner pieces to make leaf shapes and tuck into weave.

Brush with plant milk; move to baking sheet (including paper). Bake 40-45 min, until golden brown. Serve hot, maybe with vegan gravy.

Empadão de Palmito (Palm Heart Pot Pie)

Submitted by: Bianca Rati

This recipe is my Dad's. He's name is Claudio Rati.

Prep time: 2 hours

Cook time: 40 minutes

Total time: 2 hours, 40 minutes

Traditionally, this Brazilian recipe is made with chicken, called "Empadão de Frango" and I believe it is similar to Chicken Pot Pie. Brazilians also love the mini version of this food, served on birthdays or as street food, which we call "empadinhas". Usually in the chicken version some people add palm hearts, so when they want to make a vegetarian version they remove the chicken and leave only the palm hearts. Still, milk and eggs are used in the vegetarian version. So, because my dad (who is an amazing cook) knew I loved this food, he decided to develop this recipe completely plant-based. This is just one of the many recipes my dad learned or developed after I became a vegan, even though he himself is not one. Almost everything I know about cooking I learned from my father. Cooking together is something we've always done together, since my childhood. I learn every day from my father's compassionate and generous love for the food and God's justice.

Ingredients

Bottom Crust:

- 1 1/2 cup wheat
- 1 1/2 cup corn starch
- 1 cup of olive oil
- 2 spoons of chickpea flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/4 cup chilled water or chilled plant-based milk

Filling:

- 1 medium-sized chopped onion
- 2 cloves of minced garlic
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 cup of palm hearts
- 1 can of corn
- 2 large tomatoes
- Chopped olives to taste
- Chives and parsley to taste
- 2 tablespoons of cornstarch
- Salt
- Black pepper
- Nutmeg

Suggested seasonings:

- Turmeric
- Onion powder
- Garlic powder
- Nutritional yeast
- Optional: 1/2 cup of soaked cashew nuts and 1/2 cup of water

Top crust:

- 1 tablespoon of molasses or maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons of plant based milk
- A pinch of salt

DirectionsCrust

- Mix all the ingredients with your fingertips, forming until becomes with a texture similar to wet sand. Then, pour the milk or water should be mixed little by little until the dough is uniform.
- Open 1/3 of the dough between two plastic sheets about 5 mm wide, reserve in the fridge.
- Line the pan with the 2/3 of the dough remaining using your fingers. The dough lining should be 5 mm wide, so that it is not too thin and could burn. We recommend a spring form pan, but is not crucial. Pierce the dough in the pan

with a fork in multiple spots. Bake for 10 minutes at 180 degrees Celsius. Let it cool while you make the stuffing.

Filling

- Chop the onion and garlic. Put the oil on a pan and sauté both of them, starting from the onion. Add the palm hearts, the tomatoes, the corn, the olives and the herbs. To thicken the filling, which cannot remain liquid, dissolve 2 spoons of cornstarch with plant based milk and add that to the pan. Season with salt, black pepper, nutmeg, turmeric, onion and garlic, nutritional yeast and any other seasoning that you might like.
- Optional: you can do a plant based cream, using cashew nuts and water and add that to the pan, this will make a more creamy filling. For that, use 1/2 cup of cashew nuts soaked in hot water. Drain the water and add 1/2 cup clean water into a blender, and blend until smooth.
- Let it cool.

Assembling

- Remove the dough from the oven. Wait for the filling to cool completely before putting it over the dough. Fill the pan with the filling.
- Cover the pan with the 1/3 dough open between plastic. You can cut the dough in stripes and make a lattice crust to make it more beautiful.
- Dissolve molasses or maple syrup with the salt in the milk and brush over the top.
- Bake until golden, around 30 to 35 min, at 280 degrees Celsius.

Ashley's Stuffed Shells

Submitted by: Ashley Lewis

Prep time: 45 minutes

Cook time: 30-45 minutes

Total time: 1 hour, 30 minutes

When I gave up animal products, I missed eating stuffed pasta – a lot! As much as I enjoyed the satisfaction and peace of mind I found from opting out of harmful animal agriculture, I wished for the rich, comforting warmth and satisfaction of a creamy ravioli or manicotti. Nothing I tried in my early veganism could quite come close. (Although options are much better now!)

My husband, on the other hand, never liked anything cheesy or creamy to begin with, so he had no trouble giving up ricotta, mozzarella, or any other cheese. He'd rather have tofu anyway!

As I sought to appeal to both of our palettes, I suspected that stuffed shells might give us each what we wanted. Ryan would never turn down tofu, pasta, or mushrooms – which is what I always put in our stuffing. And, if I could just get the tofu mixture creamy and tasty enough, I probably wouldn't miss the dairy. So, my version of stuffed shells was born about six years ago. I'm certainly not the first or only person to make a dish like this, but I have been diligently tinkering with and testing my process ever since. Now it's also yours to make and make your own.

This dish is a hit with the non-vegans in my life, too. When my family members and I are searching for dishes to eat around the holidays – especially, before or after the big feasting days – this one checks all the boxes. It's festive, comforting, and filling. It's DefaultVeg. And, it's something you can prep early, then bake just before supper. Satisfaction abounds with this dish – for the cook and the diner alike.

Ingredients

Stuffing Mixture: (Adjust amounts as desired for your preferred taste/texture)

- 1 block firm tofu, pressed and mashed to a fine crumble
- 2 tsp nutritional yeast (optional)
- 2 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp of dried herbs of your choice (thyme, rosemary, basil, etc.); or an Italian Seasoning blend.
- 2 tsp lemon juice (or more to taste)
- 2 tsp of tahini, mixed with 1 tsp of warm water until a creamy slurry is formed.
- Plenty of salt
- Black pepper to taste
- Up to 1.5 total cups of your favorite sautéed or roasted vegetables, finely diced and lightly seasoned. (Suggestions: onion, spinach (well-drained), mushrooms, zucchini, etc. Sautéing the veggies first helps remove extra moisture, which is essential.)

Shells:

- 1 to 1.5 jars of your favorite tomato pasta sauce (or your own homemade sauce).
- 1 box of jumbo pasta shells

Optional Garnishes:

- Chopped fresh basil or parsley, vegan cheese (parmesan or mozzarella), red pepper flakes

Directions

Pre-work:

Pre-heat oven to 375 F

Pre-cook and season any veggies you want to include in your stuffing mixture. Set them aside.

Pre-cook pasta shells according to package instructions, but stop cooking just before they're fully done. Scoop out about a half cup of the pasta water and set it aside. Drain the shells, and rinse them gently in cold water. (If you cook them well in advance, you can toss some olive oil in to keep them from sticking together, but avoid this if possible so that they absorb sauce better when baking.)

Pour about a half cup of tomato sauce into the bottom of a 9x13 casserole dish and spread it around to lightly cover the bottom of the dish. Lay out your cooked shells in a single layer, with the open side up, so that they are packed tightly together. If they overlap a bit, it's okay.

Stuffing Mixture:

In a large mixing bowl, place crumbled tofu, nutritional yeast, cumin, dried herbs, lemon juice, tahini mixture, 2 teaspoons of salt, and up to a teaspoon of black pepper. Stir to incorporate. Using a whisk helps get the consistency to a fine crumble.

Fold in your pre-cooked vegetables.

When the mixture is well-incorporated, taste for seasoning and add more flavor as needed. (It's okay to taste a little of this raw tofu mixture. It won't taste as yummy at this stage, but don't worry about that. You just want to be sure it's not bland. If it is bland, add more salt and lemon juice gradually until all the other flavors come through. If it is dry, add more tahini/water mixture until it has the desired creaminess.)

Assemble:

Set your tofu mixture and casserole dish side by side. Using a dinner spoon and your hands, scoop a spoonful or two of the tofu mix into each shell until all shells are stuffed.

Pour the tomato sauce over the shells to fully cover. Jiggle the dish to ensure the sauce gets down between and around the shells. You can use a rubber spatula to gently smooth out the sauce on top and help work it down between the shells and the edge of the casserole dish. This helps prevent sticking to the dish.

Depending on how undercooked your shells are and how much water is in your tomato sauce, you can add some of the pasta water at this stage and throughout the baking process to help the shells reach doneness. Look for the right balance between too wet and too dry.

Cover with tin foil and place in the pre-heated oven.

Cook for 20-25 minutes until it's bubbling throughout.

Remove the tin foil and let cook for another 10-15 minutes. When done, it should be brown around the edges with no excess water. If you want to melt any vegan cheese on top, add it halfway through this cooking stage.

When you've removed the dish from the oven, let it sit for about 5 minutes. Garnish, and enjoy!

Sweets

Orange Rolls

Submitted by: Sarah Withrow King

Adapted from my mom's recipe.

Prep time: Like, so long.

Cook time: 15-20 minutes

Total time: Awhile! Note from author: The smell is amazing, they have to cool before frosting, and that takes a hundred years too long because you want to eat them immediately.

Look. I don't particularly like baking. Or holidays. But these orange rolls. These orange rolls. Each one is a little ray of sun during gloomy winter days and the existential crises (rampant consumerism! cultural pressure! forced cheer!) that show up in my life every December. Growing up, my mom would make them once a year, for Christmas morning. I don't make them every year. Enriched doughs take patience and focus, and these are not my strongest traits. So, when I'm carrying around a bit more anxiety than I can manage, I'll grab an orange from the grocery store and spend a few hours in the kitchen taking deep breathes and anticipating the sweet reward to come.

Ingredients

For the dough:

- 3 1/4 to 3 1/2 cups flour, divided
- 1 package active dry yeast
- 1 cup soy milk (or plant milk of choice)
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 3 TB plant-based butter
- 3 TB Just Egg

For the filling:

- 6 TB plant-based butter, softened

- 1/2 cup sugar
- zest of 1 orange (at least 2 tsp)

For the frosting:

- 1 1/2 cup powdered sugar, sifted
- 1-3 TB orange juice
- a little more plant-based butter

Directions

- In a large bowl, combine 2 cups of flour and 1 package of active dry yeast.
- In a saucepan over low heat, combine 1 cup of soy milk, 1/2 cup of sugar, and 3 TB of plant-based butter, until the butter melts (115-120 degrees F).
- Combine the soy milk and flour mixture, add 3 TB of Just Egg. Beat for two minutes on low, then three minutes on high.
- Gradually add remaining flour, until a moderately stiff dough forms.
- Knead slightly (it's sticky and hard to knead, but give it a couple of minutes until you feel the dough become elastic).
- Let rise in an oiled bowl for 1 to 1 1/2 hours (the dough should double in size).
- Punch the dough down, divide in two equal pieces, and let rest for ten minutes.
- Make the filling (combine all filling ingredients).
- Roll each half into a 12-inch x 18-inch rectangle and spread evenly with filling.
- Roll each half (along the long side) and cut into even pieces (8-12).
- Place cut side down in an oiled 9x13 baking dish or 2 oiled cake pans.
- Let rise approximately 1 1/2 hours.
- Bake on 375 degrees F for 15-20 minutes, until the tops are a light golden brown.
- Let cool completely before frosting.

Rabanada (Hah-bun-nah-dah)

Submitted by: Aline Silva

The vegan recipe is mine, but it's a family tradition which started with my vovó, Matilde Araujo de Morais.

Prep time: 30 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes

Total time: 45 minutes

Ingredients

- stale bread
- Aquafaba
- cinnamon powder
- brown sugar
- coconut oil.

Directions

Begin by cutting the stale bread into slices. When they are in the desired shape (round or sticks), dip them into the aquafaba. Once the liquid has absorbed into the bread, dip it into the cinnamon followed by the sugar. Fry the bread on all sides with the coconut oil. Once they are golden brown take them to the oven for 10 minutes until they are crispy around the edges and gooey in the center. Let them cool on a platter and sprinkle more cinnamon and sugar as desired.

For more DefaultVeg recipes visit www.becreaturekind.org

- [Recipes To Welcome In A New Season](#)
- [DefaultVeg Recipe Roundup For The Holidays](#)
- [Introducing Vegetarian/Vegan Meals Into The Week's Menu](#)
- [Tomato Bisque + Vegan Grilled Cheese = Delicious, Dairy-Free Lunch](#)

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Contributors

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis, (she/her/hers)



Nekeisha Alayna Alexis is a Trinidad-native and long-time New Yorker who calls Elkhart, Indiana, home. She received her Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in Africana Studies from New York University. She also received her Masters of Arts: Theological Studies from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, where she currently works as Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism (ICUR) coordinator. As an independent scholar and passionate vegan, Nekeisha writes and speaks on a wide range of topics related to human and other animal oppression, with specific attention to intersectionality, Black liberation, and/or Christian theology, ethics and peacemaking. She has been a contributor to several edited collections, including *Animaladies: Gender, Animals, and Madness* (Bloomsbury 2018) and in *The Routledge Handbook of Animal Ethics* (2020). Her favorite color is bright grass green.

Candace Laughinghouse, (she/her/hers)



Candace Laughinghouse is a native of Oakland, California, and resides in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is a graduate of the Candler School of Theology, Duke Divinity School, and currently completing a Ph.D. in Theology and Ethics at Chicago Theological Seminary focusing on an ecowomanist response to earth and animal care. She serves as double faculty at two Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Candace enjoys teaching undergraduate students in Religious Studies and as Director of Spiritual Life at St. Augustine's University - a member of the Raleigh Diocese of the Episcopal Church, USA. She also teaches theology, ethics and gender studies at Shaw University Divinity School. Professor Laughinghouse also serves as music director at the Historic Davie Street Presbyterian Church, member of Raleigh Rotary, and is mother to three young daughters - Arianna, Christianna, and Julianna.

Ashley Lewis, (she/her/hers)



Ashley lives in Decatur, GA, and recently graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary with her MDiv. Her ministry focus is helping Christians make food choices informed by faith – to help relieve animal suffering, reverse food-related injustice, and recover earth as a harmonious dwelling place for God and all creation. She left behind a decade-long career in Hospitality Management and Event Sales and holds degrees in Culinary Arts and Food Service Management. Ashley also enjoys coaching and educating in schools, churches, and workplaces. At home, she is a cat mom to Tesla and Westinghouse and the beloved wife of her childhood sweetheart, Ryan.

Karla Mendoza Arana, (she/her/ella)



Karla is a storyteller, writer, podcaster, a grassroots theologian, and mostly a bubble of laughter. Currently living in the land of the Iroquois in Toledo, Ohio though originally from Lima, Peru. She spends her time wearing many hats but is passionate about anti-racist discipleship, hosting people (when there isn't a pandemic), and creating beauty to engage the good news of justice. Karla has spent many years in different ministry roles as well as corporate roles but is excited to join in the CreatureKind community to keep learning and growing.

Rose J. Percy, (she/her/hers)



Rose J. Percy, M.Div., is a contemplative theopoet, spiritual care specialist, digital creator, and podcast producer. Rose loves helping people liberate their faith through vocational discernment informed by embodied rest and communal care. She enjoys creative expression through singing, playing guitar, calligraphy, and digital design. Rose was born in Haiti, raised in Pawtucket, RI, and resides in Boston, MA. You can read her grounding mediations, poems, and prayers through a newsletter called "[A Gentle Landing.](#)"

Her scholarly work engages theopoetics, mysticism, identity, vocational discernment, trauma, and theology. Rose is currently pursuing a Master of Sacred Theology in Spiritual

Formation at Boston University School of Theology, where she received her M.Div. As an educator, Rose has taught undergraduate classes on Christian faith and racial justice, creating curriculums shaped by Black stories, poetry, liturgy, and music.

Daniela Rizzo, (she/her/hers)



Daniela Rizzo is a third-year, full-time PhD candidate at Alphacrucis University College (Sydney, Australia). She lives in a picturesque, environmentally focused coastal city located on the Great Ocean Road. With ample bushland, beaches and wallabies to inspire her research, Daniela's dissertation focuses on God's concern for non-human creatures through the work of the Spirit. Her current and future research projects aim to develop a pneumatologically-centred perspective on animals with a desire to inspire and validate fellow Christians who are equally passionate about animal care. At home, she is a cat mum to Pacino (named after her favourite actor, Al Pacino)

and wife to her Sicilian husband, Davide.

Aline Silva, (she/her/ela)



Aline (Ah-lee-nee) Silva serves as the Executive Director of CreatureKind. Prior to coming to CreatureKind, Aline served for over a decade as a local parish pastor of rural and farming populations in Kansas, Missouri, and Colorado. Aline shares herself as a queer, Black & Indigenous immigrant of Brasil to the US. Aline chooses not to eat non-human animals, her fellow-worshippers of God. Aline is a pastor, an excellent preacher, and a life coach. You can most often find her laughing out loud, twerking, and sharing her life with her emotional support pup and main squeeze, Paçoca (pah-saw-kah). You can learn about Aline and her work by following CreatureKind on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. She writes today from the unceded lands of the Tequesta, Taino, and Seminole peoples, namedly South Florida, USA.

Liesl Stewart, (she/her/hers)



Liesl lives with citizenship in the US and South Africa. For the past 29 years, she's been rooted in Cape Town, where she and her husband live with their three mostly grown children. She currently works in the world of alternative food networks and plans to spend the rest of her days working toward food systems that are much more just.

Jon Zirkle, (he/him/his)



Jon Zirkle is the director and co-founder of Bushelcraft Farm, an educational farm in Elkhart, IN. He manages the farm, teaches classes and is an active participant in the Rooting Through Corn, Planting Families project. Before starting Bushelcraft Farm, Jon was the farm manager and an instructor at Goshen College's Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center. He also worked for Michigan State University Extension teaching crop and soil management.

Not Pictured:

Sue Hall Pyke

Andrew Hudson



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