

The Fourth Sunday of Advent | How does a weary world rejoice?  
*We sing stories of hope*



## Embroidered Borders

by Nicolette Peñaranda

Inspired by Luke 1:46-55

Acrylic, ink, and mixed media collage on canvas

Two years before the birth of Jesus, during the Pax Romana, one of the worst public executions happened a half day's walk away from where Mary grew up.<sup>3</sup> She came of age during a time of occupation, more than likely unable to recall a time of true peace and liberation. Mary's song rings of a dream that not only she but her ancestors dreamed of, and she would be the one to give birth to the savior of her people.

Fast forward thousands of years and the same land where Mary grew up is still being occupied. One can imagine that the cries for liberation and the prayers for justice still ring down the streets of Bethlehem. To me, Mary's song of praise is still valid for the women of Palestine and for the people who still raise their children under the duress of war and occupation.

This image is a nod to Palestine. The background operates as a foundation, built with the colors of the Palestinian flag and with collaged scriptures that celebrate women. Elizabeth and Mary are both in Palestinian regalia but from different generations. Elizabeth, centered and holding her belly, is in an outfit inspired by a photograph of a woman from Ramallah, dated sometime between 1929-1946.<sup>4</sup> This was intended to emphasize the generational differences between the two. Mary, on the other hand, is in more contemporary Palestinian fashion. A stipple effect was used to highlight the intricacy of Palestinian embroidery in both garments.

What felt important to me is the placement of Mary and Elizabeth. Rarely does Elizabeth get to be the center of the story, as her pregnancy becomes an accompaniment piece to the birth of Jesus. But here, Elizabeth is in the foreground. She gets to be the star while Mary places her arms around her, comforting her, and proclaiming the good news of what is to come. Mary is the hope that we see in all youth. —Rev. Nicolette Peñaranda

<sup>3</sup> For more context, read: "Birth of a Revolutionary: The Shaping of Jesus' Politics," in *The Politics of Jesus*, by Obery M. Hendricks, Jr. (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> "Ramallah woman," photograph taken either by the American Colony Photo Department or the Matson Photo Service between 1929 and 1946. At the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ramallah\\_woman\\_15029v.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ramallah_woman_15029v.jpg)

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## Prophecy

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Luke 1:67-80

*Oil paint, charcoal, and copper leaf on canvas*

This painting engages the flow of Zechariah's prophecy. I painted in oil on canvas; the copper leaf represents God's healing love. Copper has qualities that interact with its surroundings. When coiled, it can harness electricity out of thin air. When used in body wrapping, it can support internal self-repair. When used in pots and pans, it disperses heat evenly. When used in the womb, it causes the blood to flow monthly. When used in piping, it allows clean water to flow.

Over the years, I have been drawn to taking away plastics in my artwork. It is not always possible because acrylic paint and PVC pipe are such accessible media. But the natural materials draw me in physically, emotionally. In my work, I return to copper to hold banners up, to build

sculpture, to create motion, and to capture light in an installation. It is a natural material that is prevalent in buildings. You can buy it at your local hardware store.

Here, the copper represents aspects of discipleship. It represents the presence of God in our lives and our actions—the presence of God in Zechariah's prophecy and in John's life and work.

The image is inspired by waters meeting one another. This intersecting flow portrays Zechariah's words meeting John the Baptist's life. It is a crashing toward, a central meeting place, a potential energy meeting a kinetic being.

Holy Mother, your love is mighty—more powerful than all of the forces that act to barricade justice, to block righteousness. Guide us like you guided Zechariah in your ways of peace, in your strength of courage, in your acts of love. Amen. —**Hannah Garrity**



## About the artists



### Rev. Nicolette (Faison) Peñaranda

Rev. Nicolette “Nic” (*she/her*) is a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serving as the Program Director for African Descent Ministries. Nic is the creator of MONadvocacy, a racial justice resource grounded in play, as well as the “Talks at the Desk” series which celebrates the voices of leaders in the ELCA African descent community: [livinglutheran.org/2022/02/a-love-letter-to-african-descent-communities](https://livinglutheran.org/2022/02/a-love-letter-to-african-descent-communities).

She is passionate about queer Black liberation, cultivating diverse leadership in faith spaces, and the art of creation. She is also the illustrator of *God’s Holy Darkness*, written by Sharei Green and Beckah Selnick (Beaming Books, 2022). The book deconstructs anti-Blackness in Christian theology by celebrating instances in the story of God’s people when darkness, blackness, and night are beautiful, good, and holy.



### Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Lisle Gwynn Garrity (*she/her*) is a Pastorist (pastor + artist), retreat leader, and creative entrepreneur seeking to fill the church with more color, paint, mystery, and creativity. She founded A Sanctified Art with the conviction that, in order to thrive, the church needs more creative expression and art-filled freedom.



### Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Lauren (*she/her*) is an artist, graphic designer, and theologian. She uses paint, metallic inks, and Apple pencil to image the layered complexity she experiences in scripture texts. She also helps faith communities share their vibrant stories through branding & design services.



### Hannah Garrity

Hannah (*she/her*) is an artist and an athlete, a daughter and a mother, a facilitator and a producer, a leader and a teammate. She is the Director of Christian Faith, Life, and Arts at Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Va, an art in worship workshop leader wherever she is called, and a liturgical installation artist at the Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC.