

The Second Sunday of Advent | How does a weary world rejoice?  
*We find joy in connection*



## Comfort, O Comfort

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Isaiah 40:1-11

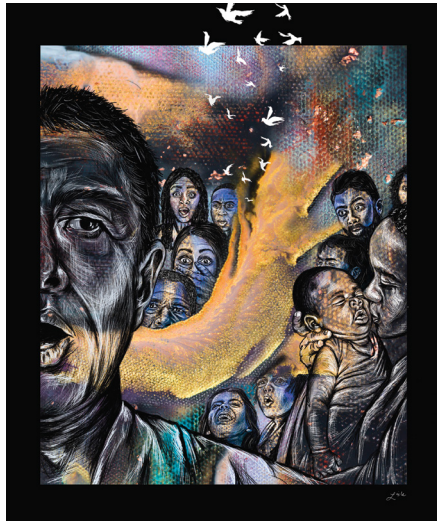
*Digital painting*

I wanted to create an image that spoke tenderly to the viewer as this text does to the reader. “Comfort, O comfort my people” (Isaiah 40:1). When I’ve read this text before, the shepherding metaphor has only yielded masculine imagery in my mind. It makes sense with the text’s pronouns that I would imagine a masculine figure. It was also ingrained in me— through translations, biblical art, movies, children’s pageants, etc.—that shepherds were always men. I learned recently, however, that women were shepherds too. Some young women were trained and worked as shepherds before they were married; this notion completely added new dimension and depth to the shepherding metaphor. I decided to use imagery of modern-day shepherds to inspire this image.

A shepherd is at once fierce and tender, willing to face the most dangerous of predators in the dead of night while warmly cradling the most vulnerable of the flock.

In this image, the shepherd nurtures a lamb while leading the flock through fields of tall grasses and flowers. The fuschia flowers in the foreground are marjoram flowers that represent comfort and the steadfastness of God’s word even in the midst of the leveling of the land. The shepherd’s clothes have repeated medallions with simplified imagery of a straight highway in the wilderness. Within the stylized landscape, a voice proclaims the coming glory of the Lord. —**Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman**

The Third Sunday of Advent | How does a weary world rejoice?  
*We allow ourselves to be amazed*



## What Wonder Turns Into

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Luke 1:57-66

*Acrylic painting on canvas with digital drawing*

When was the last time you were truly amazed? I don't mean surprised; there is much about this world that should shock us. I mean *amazed*—wrapped up in wonder, absorbed in an unexpected delight.

I love witnessing the moments when my one-year-old daughter allows amazement to wash over her like a gentle rain: her jaw drops open, her eyes widen and stay fixed, and for a rare moment, she gets very still. This recently happened when she discovered the kids across the street playing basketball for the first time. Her senses have not yet grown dull to the magic surrounding her.

In this image, I wanted to capture the moment Zechariah's voice returns to him. I decided to depict only half of Zechariah's face; this miracle is not really about him, but about what happens through him. When he confirms John's name, he sheds his distrust of the angel's impossible news. His skepticism and weariness subside as he awakens to the joy in his midst. He allows himself to be amazed.

Zechariah's voice pours out of him, parting the surrounding crowd like the Red Sea, stirring each person into confusion and bewilderment. The blessing of his song spills over to his son, who is held tenderly by his mother.

Elizabeth is the only person in this scene who is not presently swept up in wonder. I believe Elizabeth has spent months allowing herself to be amazed. She was in isolation for the first five months of her pregnancy (Luke 1:24). Perhaps she needed that time to go inward—to heal from the trauma of her infertility, to trust the promise of life in her womb, to attune herself to her child. She was capsized with awe the day Mary showed up at her doorstep.

And so, when Zechariah's voice returns, Elizabeth's senses have not grown dull. Instead, her amazement has metabolized into something new: attunement for her child. It has transformed into love and deep trust. It has turned into joy. When we allow ourselves to be amazed, we might be surprised what that wonder can turn into.

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn 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.