



# How does a weary world rejoice?

## Artist statements for Advent–Baptism of the Lord

While we hope viewers develop their own interpretations of the art we create, we offer these artist statements as theological reflections on our process creating these works. You are welcome to share these artist statements in worship bulletins, church newsletters, or online, and you may also incorporate them into sermons or worship liturgy (with credit).

The First Sunday of Advent | How does a weary world rejoice?  
*We acknowledge our weariness*



### Annunciation to Zechariah

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Luke 1:1-23

Acrylic and ink on wood panel

Zechariah is dressed in a breastpiece, ephod, robe, checkered tunic, turban, and sash, just as the book of Exodus specifies. In my painting, gold, blue, purple, and crimson yarns are woven together and bejeweled with engraved stones which bear the names of the sons of Israel (Exodus 28:4).

Zechariah stands in the Holy Place wearing the most meticulous of garments. Does he expect to encounter the divine? Or is he just going through the motions, lighting the incense as an all-too-familiar scent fills the air?

After all these years of fulfilling priestly duties and “living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord” (Luke

1:6), Zechariah and his wife are still childless. Regardless of their desire for children, in their culture and context, childlessness bore the implication of God’s contempt.

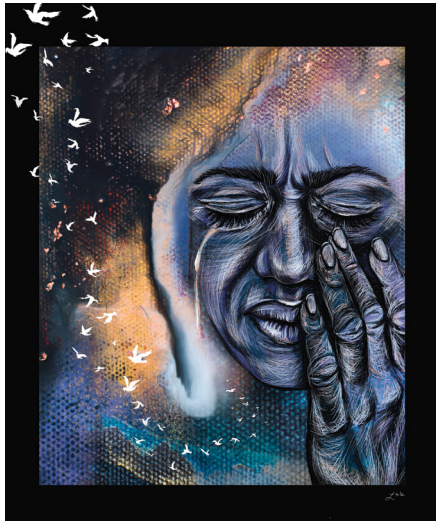
I ruminated on this image... a weary priest wrapped in layered fabrics, colors, symbols, textures, and rare stones that proclaim God’s providence and power. The contrast is not lost on me.

I often try to neglect my weariness by putting on a veneer of unwavering trust in God—while feeling like I may suddenly unravel into a pile of beautifully-curated threads, stones, and gold accessories.

In this image, I decided to depict the angel as smoke from the altar of incense. Zechariah has one hand over his mouth in fear and disbelief, while his other hand cradles the notion—not yet hope—of his son’s existence.

Do you bind up your weariness in a neat and tidy bow, put your head down, and project okay-ness like me? What would it look like to acknowledge our weariness, quit powering through, and open ourselves up to what God might have in store for us? Perhaps we’ll meet an angel. —Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

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## Make Your Face Shine

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Acrylic painting on canvas with digital drawing

For this Advent series, I created a collection of paintings inspired by the Hubble telescope images of the cosmos. The telescope renderings invite you to peer into worlds unknown. The beauty of it all is a balm for the weary. When you gaze upon the colors of the cosmos, how can you keep from rejoicing? Inspired by the luminescent textures of nebula and star clusters, I painted washes of vibrant colors and metallic gold amidst a backdrop of beautiful blackness. These paintings have become the backgrounds for each of my digital drawings in this series.

The day I began working on this image, another mass shooting terrorized our country. This time it happened at a church preschool.<sup>1</sup>

One of the children slain was the pastor's daughter. By the time you read this, there will have been more shootings, more unnecessary and completely preventable deaths. The weight of that prediction makes every bone in my body weary beyond repair.

As I read and reread Psalm 80 on that day of mourning, I remembered that politeness is not the language of the weary. The psalmist supplied me with the words I wanted to pray, the words I wanted to scream: *Wake up your power, God! Save us! How long?!*

Then, I began to draw. What emerged was a face shining from the cosmos. I imagined God as Holy Mother or Holy Parent weeping for her creation. I imagined the parents weeping for their children who were so suddenly and brutally taken from them. The mere thought of their grief knocks the wind out of me.

As I completed the image, I added a flock of doves flying out from the void into which God's tears fall. The doves represent the Spirit let loose in our world, flapping their wings into every desperate corner. I added them not as a statement, but as a plea: *please, God, make your face shine so we might be saved.* —**Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity**

<sup>1</sup> On March 27, 2023, a shooter took the lives of 3 children and 3 adults at The Covenant School in Nashville, TN.



## 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.