

# 2017 Lenten Devotional

## Presbyterians for Earth Care

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life*

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Presbyterians for Earth Care

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*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. (Revelation 22:1-5, NRSV)*



Our Lenten devotions this year reflect on what it means to do the work of justice in our own watersheds. Revelation reminds us that rivers are the water of life, and the trees that grow in our watersheds heal. May these reflections inspire you in the journey to the cross during this Lenten season.

# Ash Wednesday Reflection

by Jess Rigel

*“The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.” (Leviticus 25:23-24, NRSV)*



Photo courtesy of Princeton Theological Seminary. Photographer: Andrea Kane

Though the role of the health of the land and our relationship with the places where we find ourselves is upheld throughout Scripture, too often Christians misunderstand why such a relationship is important. After all, Christianity was never rooted in one particular spot, a fact that is largely responsible for its rapid spread. Salvation through Christ was based on relationship with Christ—it was and is free from the bonds of geography.

Jesus himself spent most of his ministry as a homeless vagabond, constantly traveling and encouraging his disciples to do the same. Yet the reason this travel was so controversial is because

Jesus had the audacity to *transcend* the time and space of sanctity—worshipping wherever he went and healing whenever he felt like it. The contemporary Church tends to forget that Christ’s wanderlust didn’t function to *remove* the holiness of the temple; it instead functioned to remind us that to God, *every place* is holy.

In a world that has become increasingly mobile, the theology of place is no longer one we discuss in our churches, and too many church leaders have bought into the idea that people matter, but places don’t. We have allowed our places to become commodities, and it is high time that the Church re-rooted itself in physical space and acknowledged how place affects our spiritual identities.

Because love of place stirs awareness of community and awareness of community exposes inequality, a refined sense of place leads to a refined sense of justice. We cannot redeem a land that we don’t deign to know. So this Lent, get to know your place: befriend a farmer, go for a walk outside, spend time vista gazing. Know that the land you hold is the land God loves, and that you have been called to redeem it.

**Prayer:** *Creator God, help us to be present enough to our places that we might act as your agents, extending grace to all Creation. Help us to recognize that we cannot claim to love our communities until we recognize that the human community is only one element of the whole. We cannot claim to love our communities until soil, plants, animals, and the very air we breathe are recognized as worthy of our attention and your redemption. Liberate us to experience the sanctity of where we are. Amen.*

**Jess Rigel** is a third year M.Div/M.A. student at Princeton Theological Seminary, where she studies youth ministry and has been especially active with the Farminary project. Prior to studying at Princeton, she taught eighth grade Language Arts for several years, and served as a community gardener through the PCUSA Young Adult Volunteer program in both Cascabel, AZ and New Orleans, LA. She is passionate about food justice, adolescents, and literature, and she also enjoys hula hooping.



# First Sunday of Lent Reflection

## by Amy Cantrell

*<sup>18</sup> So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. (Exodus 13:18, NKJV)*  
*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.*  
*(Luke 4:1, NRSV)*

I have been talking a lot lately about our need for un-tamed spaces, un-domesticated geography and what I mean is that we need the wilds. Biblically speaking, this is wilderness.

Lent as a season is meant to take us back to the wilderness as we walk the road of preparation with Jesus--preparation for ministry that is deeply counter-cultural as it announces "good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and proclaims the Jubilee." (Luke 4:18,19) Capital One, Corrections Corporation of America, 1%-ers, empires everywhere, and you and me should

expect the order of the day to be turned upside down. Lent also calls us to walk the road to the cross where political, economic, and religious powers collude to keep death systems (that create more wealth and power for a few) in place and where the un-tamed are crucified only to find resurrection life.

In this day and hour, we desperately need wilderness. As the #NoDAPL water protectors have taught us, water is life, the Biblical record reminds us that wilderness is breath! We literally cannot breathe without the wilds. And we cannot know God's way (God's politics, economics and spirituality) outside of the inspiration (literally to "breathe in") of the wilderness.

Theologian Ched Myers writes: "Jesus seems to have spent most of his ministry and prayer life in the wild places that set our inner demons buzzing and call us into Holy Spirit-led transformation and wholeness."

Freed Hebrew slaves went to the wilderness to be instructed and to learn to practice a new way of life beyond empire or as we call it at BeLoved Asheville, Pharoah's pyramid schemes.

Many of the people we live and walk with are homeless and they camp in the woods. These folks daily remind us of the power to trust the Holy One and depend on the wilds for protection.

We live in a time where everywhere we turn, these wilderness places, these un-tamed spaces are threatened. What do we do when wilderness spaces are threatened?

When science is undermined, climate change and the news are deemed fake, and the lands are under attack, rangers of the National Park service speak up and other officials join them.





## First Sunday of Lent Reflection, continued

When tribal lands and waterways are threatened, tribes come together to speak in unison about the sacredness of the water and our very humanity as we are all made up mostly of water.

When communities in the wilderness who are perceived as “foreigners” in a land they have long called home are threatened by ICE raids, these beautiful people are defending their communities and standing up for peoples’ right to be here and to thrive.

When we have forgotten how to practice the wilderness way of Jesus, wilderness communities like BeLoved Asheville are emerging where we learn to trust Gods’ manna, cross boundary lines to work together for liberation, and live out the radical hospitality and sharing that are the great lessons of wilderness.

How will you enter into this wilderness season? How will you learn to trust and practice liberation? Will you trade the fleshpots of capitalism and privilege? Will you remember the wilderness way and resist? Will you declare your church an un-domesticated space, a sanctuary? Will you opt out of empire and live into the new wilderness community? Will you accept Jesus’ invitation to follow into wild-ness?

**Prayer:** *Un-tamed Jesus, help us to meet the temptations to be civilized when we need to be wild. Help us to follow you and the freed Hebrew slaves, and all who have walked the wilderness way in this season. Teach us to truly be liberated and liberating people! Amen.*



**Rev. Amy Cantrell** lives and moves and has her being in the intentional community, [BeLoved Asheville](#). BeLoved is a community of people from the streets and margins who conspire to do justice and end oppression including homelessness, poverty, and racism by doing the works of love and mercy. Amy lives with her partner; twin daughters; fuzzy rescue dog, Klondyke; and six community members in Asheville, NC. She is a pastor in the Presbyterian Church, USA, was school educated at Columbia Theological Seminary and was street educated on Ponce de Leon Ave. in Atlanta at the Open Door Community and on Grove Street at BeLoved Asheville. She plays guitar, loves the color purple and following the wildly loving and radical Jesus. She was most recently arrested calling for a NC that shows compassion to the vulnerable at Moral Monday 7 with NAACP NC Moral Monday Movement and spoke as a moral witness at Moral Monday 13.

## Second Sunday of Lent Reflection

by Alex Haney

<sup>7</sup> *Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

<sup>8</sup> *Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.*

<sup>9</sup> *Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquity.*

<sup>10</sup> *Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

<sup>11</sup> *Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

<sup>12</sup> *Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*  
(Psalm 51:7-12, NIV)



I walk through the city on the sunny morning after a snowstorm. Once purely white snow shows marks of what and who has passed by. Previous pedestrian's frozen footprints crunch under my own new prints. Brown, and black splatters from passing street traffic speckles the path ahead. The artistic sights of a snowman and snow fort warm my cold bones. Squirrel prints, dog prints, dog poop, and yellow snow occasionally catch my eye. A golden Twix wrapper, green cigar

package, and discarded ribbon also collect my attention on the path. Crusty street salt stains form patterns on the pavement.

Snow visually highlights our interactions with our watershed. Footprints, colors, and objects of our stay and our passing remain in sight until the snow melts, rain falls, and dissolves our markers into the water and carry it downstream.

## Second Sunday of Lent Reflection, continued

Our beautiful artwork and snow fort creations.

Our messy spills and widespread splatters.

Dissolved, absolved, resolved.

Much like baptism.

But

water is not God.

Christ said he would give *Living Water*,

Distinguishing himself as higher than the natural.

The watershed can't absolve and resolve all we put into it.

Our neighbors downstream must still swim, boat, and catch fish in that water.

Some of our water has the snow forts and ugly splatters of life in upstream communities.

Water cleans us, water connects us, water gives us life. Let us remember this with what we do to the ground and the watershed especially when there is no snow on which to see our neighbor's and our own footprints.

**Prayer:** *God help us to see what kind of mark we leave on our watershed and our neighbors, especially when it is not obvious like marks in the snow. With your help may we bring more good than harm to our surroundings like you have done for us in Christ, Amen.*



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**Alex Haney** is a proud member of the Young Adult Volunteers and Eco-Stewards communities from western Virginia. He is glad to be part of the planning team for the 2017 Eco-Stewards conference on Watershed issues along the James River.

## Third Sunday of Lent Reflection

by Gerard Miller

*"I've known rivers:*

*I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.*

*My soul has grown deep like the rivers."*

*~ Langston Hughes*



My grandfather is from a small coastal NC town that hugs an inlet of the Albemarle Sound. My grandmother's family is from another NC township named after the Sandy Creek that it was built next to. As a native of Maryland, I've been taught that the Chesapeake Bay is life and breath that must be cherished. When I went away to camp as a kid, it was to a small church-run place along the James River in VA. The chapel was a bower of rough-hewn tree limbs with rows of wooden benches, a driftwood pulpit, sandy floor in a clearing of pine trees looking out over the water. There, at Camp Lightfoot, we were told explicitly that we are able to see and connect with God's power through honoring nature. And it starts down by the riverside.





## Third Sunday of Lent Reflection, continued



Through the recognition of and care for nature, we contact Spirit and are able to participate in creation. Water is and was at the beginning, and is the primary symbol of God's mercy and grace. Coming into relationship with the living waters around us allows us to deepen our relationship with the Divine.



Throughout my life, I've understood the power of living water. We see it in Jonah's adventures at sea, in Moses' timely miracles during the Exodus, in Elisha being sustained by the Brook of Cherith, in the healing of Namon, in Christ's own baptism, and in the gospel story of the man at Bethesda. Water has the power to cool our burning bodies, soothe our thirst, feed us with aquatic plants and animals, support our crops, cleanse us, and provide comfort.

**Prayer:** *Let the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart, be accepted in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Guide my steps, and let the works of my hands honor your work of Creation and your sustaining Grace. Continue to work in and through me for my Ancestors' sake. Amen & Asé*



**Gerard Miller** is a native of Baltimore City with roots in rural Maryland and the Carolinas. Gerard was raised in the Pentecostal Holiness tradition, and was given a keen understanding and appreciation for tradition and scripture. After studying Modern Languages and Linguistics at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), Gerard joined the Eco-Stewards program in Montana during the summer of 2011. Working with farmer Dave Graber and alongside fellow Eco-Steward David Grace, Gerard deepened his understanding of the pastoral and agrarian symbology throughout the Bible, and built lasting connections in the local Apsaalooke community. He currently works as a housing counselor in Brooklyn, NY while studying and practicing herbalism, foraging, and urban gardening.



## Fourth Sunday of Lent Reflection

### by Nathan Sell

*Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. (Jeremiah 29:4-5, NRSV)*

I've lived in eight places in the last seventeen years. This is nothing unique—many millennials are constantly on the move. We go from this place to that, we leave home and go off to school and then we go onto another school. We take this job and leave it for that job. And on and on and on. To be honest, as much as I yearn for home, one gets used to this moving from place to place. Exile becomes the norm, rather than the exception. There's a line that the Avett Brothers sing that I've been thinking about related to this. "One foot in and one foot back, well it don't pay to live like that." It don't pay to live like that. The prophet



Jeremiah offers a different vision. Even if you are not home, you are to treat where you are as such. You are to build a life. You are to invest where you are. You are to plant gardens. Wendell Berry puts it this way: "no further, this is the place." What if we were called to stay put? Maybe God is calling us to churn up some soil and plant some seeds and stick around awhile. Who knows what beautiful thing might grow? We won't know unless we stay and see.

**Prayer** *Holy God, Help us to grow where we are planted. Help us to invest in the places and relationships where we are, rather than always looking towards what's next. Help us to be good stewards of those relationships. Amen*




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**Rev. Nathan Sell** is ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA). He is the chaplain of an all boys upper school in Maryland, where he lives with his wife, Caroline, and dog, Burley. Nate is most at home in the world when he is backpacking, canoeing, or failing at fly-fishing. He writes regularly for the [EcoTheo Review](#).

## Fifth Sunday of Lent Reflection

### by Allison Blay

*Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live, and there shall be abundant fish, for wherever this water comes the sea shall be made fresh.*

*(Ezekiel 47: 9, NAB)*

*“Attention is the beginning of devotion.” ~ Mary Oliver*

*“In the particular is contained the universal.” ~ James Joyce*

Recently, my family and I went camping at a nearby state park called Silver Springs, home of one of the world’s largest artesian springs. Surrounded by cedars and live oaks draped in Spanish moss, water birds, fish and other wildlife are abundant there. In a state known for tourism, Silver Springs is Florida’s oldest tourist attraction, dating back to before the Civil War. In ancient times, Native Americans viewed it as a sacred place, calling it “Sua-ille-aha”—which roughly translates to “sun-glittering waters.”

Today, this ancient, sacred place of radiant, crystalline waters is in jeopardy. All of Florida’s magnificent natural springs are, due to water overuse, agricultural contamination, and the like. But Silver Springs faces an additional challenge at this moment in its history: a cattle rancher wants to pump 1.2 million gallons of water a day from the aquifer that feeds the springs. Now having spent time there, I feel I must do more than shake my head from a distance; I must get truly involved in efforts to save the springs.

Watershed Discipleship teaches us that in order to care for creation, we must become more connected to and take responsibility for the water



and land under our feet. Attending to the exquisite beauty of Silver Springs has led to my devotion to it, and to all Florida springs. In the particular beauty of this place, I experience the universal beauty of all creation. And I know that, just as the spring feeds the river, which flows into the entire river system, which spills out into the ocean, so my care of this one spring will also bubble forth, leading me to care about other springs, other rivers, other watersheds.



**Prayer:** *Creator God, help us to experience your universal love for all creation by attending to the unique beauty of our particular surroundings. Let that attention lead us to become devoted stewards of creation in concrete ways.*

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**Allison Blay** holds a Masters in Theology from the University of Notre Dame, a Master of Education from the University of Florida, and a Certificate in Spiritual Formation from Columbia Theological Seminary. She facilitates online adult education theology classes for Notre Dame. For the past 18 years, she and her husband Steve have coordinated *Friends Across the Ages*, a nursing home volunteer outreach program they founded. They live in Gainesville, Florida with their two children.



## Palm Sunday Reflection

### by Shannon Spencer

*When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 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. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,*

*"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."*

*The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 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!"*

*When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee." (Matthew 21: 1-11, NRSV)*



It's Terry. It's Abby.

It's me. It's you.

We're on a journey. All of us. On our way from the Lenten wilderness to Jerusalem. And thank God we aren't called to do it alone.

We're called to accompany Terry. Tall

flamboyant Terry. Usually with something controversial to say and even more often something funny to share, Terry called me over to his table at 12 Baskets Café. I walked up behind him expecting his dry and at times inappropriate sense of humor. I placed my hand on his shoulder and said, "Yes, Mr. Terry..." His head turned slightly - just enough to look up - and I saw the tears. He was crying.



## Palm Sunday Reflection, continued

Immediately I assumed something was wrong, but before I could ask, Terry said, "This is so beautiful. It's just so beautiful." I was confused for a moment until I realized he was speaking about his plate - piled high with Chicken Tikki Masala, basmati rice, a slice of ham, and a spoonful of sweet potatoes. "Everyone should have this," he continued tearfully. "Every morning I think about not coming. But then I remember how grateful I am to be a part of this. So I come. And I brought these new friends I just met. Everyone should have a place like this." He wipes his nose and then offers to get the young woman still cold from sleeping outside the night before a hot cup of coffee.

It's Terry.

And it's Abby.

Abby is 8 years old and has been to the Café 3 times. She comes with her dad who is a firefighter. In January, Abby joined us with an envelope and several painted pictures. She gave us the envelope which had a little over \$30 in it. She said that over Christmas, she painted pictures while at home and then took them to her church. Following their worship service, Abby set up a stand and sold her art - letting folks know she was raising money for the homeless.

When I looked at her dad, he smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "She thought of this all on her own," He said. Did I say she was 8?

It's a Cafe. It's Communion. It's Church.

It's me. It's you. We're all on a journey. Friends, as we enter into Holy Week may we hear the Hosannas. Carve out time to answer the crowd's question, "Who is this? Who is this humble king...this prophet of peace...this simplistic savior?" Who is he and how is he informing your life?

When the rest of the world expects you "to do," gather with a community who teaches how "to be". When the demands and expectations weigh heavily - remember who you are and the narrative to which you belong. When the crowd's cheers have turned from celebration to accusation, hear the question, "Who is this?" and trust in the Table that promises to always have space for one more.

Wave your palms in expectation...for Jesus will surely show up...

"Who is this?" asks the crowd -

It's Terry and it's Abby. It's me and it's you.

Hosanna in the Highest!

**Prayer:** Gracious and Loving God, we give you thanks for the many and various ways you make your presence known to us. Give us the vision to recognize you, the courage to follow you, and the comfort of trusting your promise of life everlasting. Amen.

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**Rev. Shannon Spencer** is an ordained UCC pastor who currently serves as the founding director of Asheville Poverty Initiative - the non-profit that runs 12 Baskets Café, as a chaplain at Swannanoa Correctional Center for Women and as the Adjunct Pastor for Missional Engagement at First Presbyterian. But most importantly, she is the mom to two beautiful and amazing girls!



## Maundy Thursday Reflection

### by Pearl Quick

*Anyone who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and anyone who takes care of a master will be honored. (Proverbs 27:18, NRSV)*

God is never more present for me than when I step on a soft patch of land. I've been farming for as long as I can remember, but I haven't always been a believer. When I came to Christ three years ago, my first authentic experience of the presence of God was after I had weeded a large section of land, alone, in the heat, for hours. It was then, with sweat on my face, dirt under my fingernails, and a pile of weeds beside me that I began to weep. It was the first time I had a visceral reaction to participating in such a menial task. I could physically feel the presence of God. I am called to tend, to harvest, to weed, and to plant new life from the life that once was. I am no more humbled, in awe, and fully present than when I am on a farm, early morning and alone with God. This Proverb speaks to the humbling nature that is tending land with a life of its' own. We, as farmers, are at the whim of nature, and we celebrate death knowing that on a farm nothing ever actually dies but prepares the way for a new season and a new life.



**Prayer:** *Jesus, bringer, and giver of all life thank you for showing us true love in the dirt, in death and life fulfilled. I pray we always remember the ever approaching cycle that claims us all. I pray that we stay ever present, ever growing, and ever humbled in the presence of your love story to us.*

*Jesus, creator, all mighty, and perfect God  
Thank you for calling us all to tend not only land but  
Relationships according to your will.  
We lift all this praise in your name  
Amen.*

**Pearl Quick** is a first-year Dual Degree, Divinity/Youth Ministry student at Princeton Theological Seminary. She was born and raised on an Army Base and a farm in North Carolina. Currently, she is working with Princeton Seminary's working 17 acre Farm called 'Farminary.' She plans on becoming an ordained Pastor and starting a Farm Church for young, inner-city youth of color to teach healing, joy, and the beauty of Jesus.



## Good Friday Reflection

by Eva Foster

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (John 13:34, NIV)*

Throughout His ministry, Jesus preached and exhibited love. Yet, in this text he offers what He identifies as a new commandment: “love one another.” The newness of this commandment does not merely lie in the thought of love, but in the notion that we love as Jesus loves us.

The words found in John 13:34 will speak directly to us as we consider the inner city which is characterized by poor education opportunities, high unemployment rates, inadequate housing and lack of services to the elderly and disenfranchised.

If we are to live our lives as Christ commanded there must be a shift in focus from the local church to the greater community. There must be a shift from the focus of what's happening



to us as a congregation to what's happening to us as a community.

This notion of love calls local congregations into accountability by having them examine the immediate neighborhood and require that they speak out against injustice and inequality. It requires our active presence in the school systems. It requires that we demand programs for the elderly. It requires that, as a congregation we provide a presence that speaks out against systemic activities that have a negative impact on our communities.

It is incumbent upon Christians to speak out on issues that impact the communities where we provide ministry. We must hear Jesus' mandate ... to love one another ... with the knowledge that loving one another as he loved us calls for us to speak truth to power.



**Prayer:** *Gracious Lord, we thank you for the newness of your love for us. You loved us so much that you sacrificed your life. Our prayer, O God, is that we might be able to sacrifice our lives of comfort and security as a tribute of love for those who are in hopelessness and despair. Allow us to love others as you have loved us.*

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**Rev. Dr. Eva C. Foster** is a member of the clergy at First Baptist Church – Vauxhall, NJ. Dr. Foster is a graduate of the Drew University Theological School and received a Doctor of Ministry Degree from the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. She is active in American Baptist Churches of NJ and serves as Chair of the Essex Association Ordination Committee.

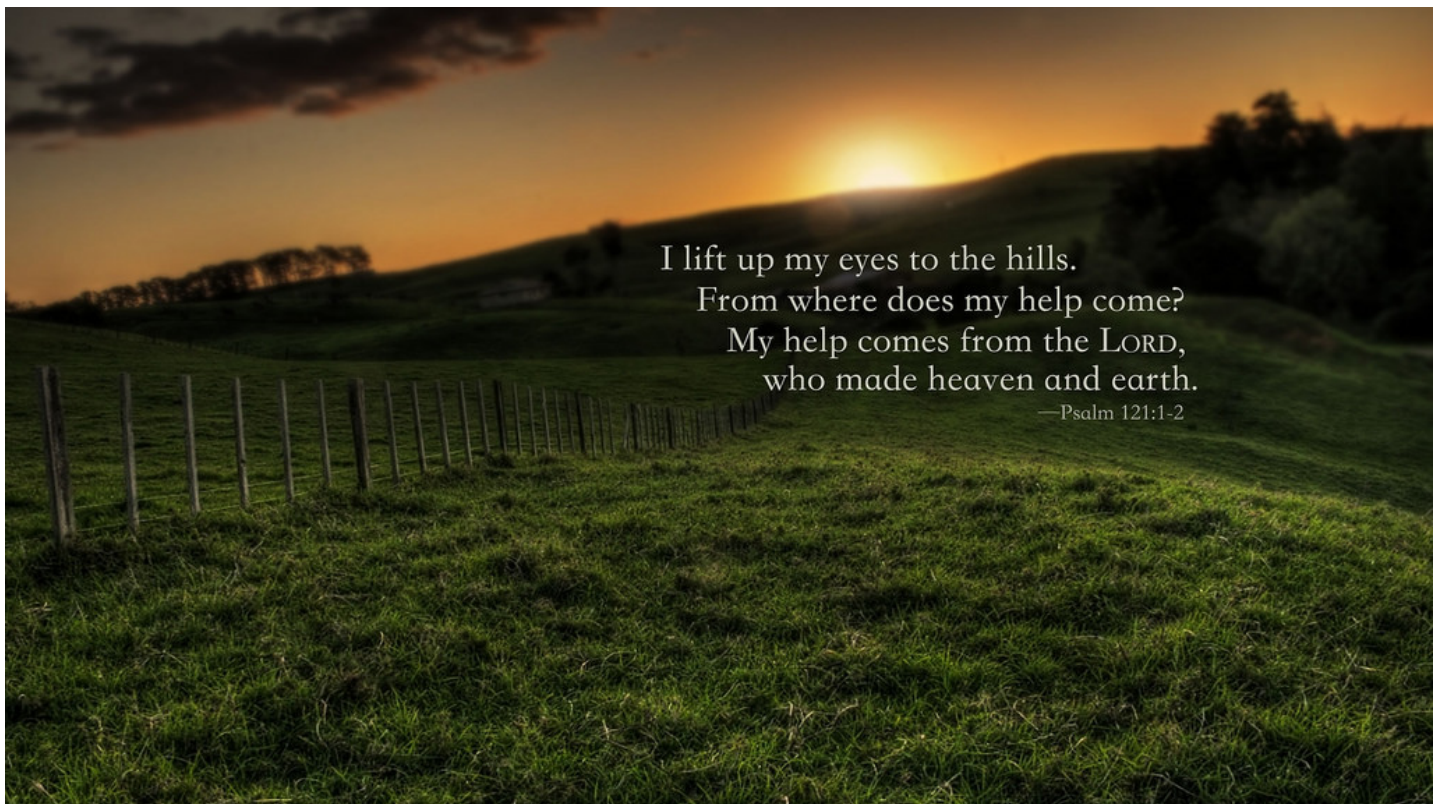




# Great Vigil of Easter Reflection

By Dave Grace

*I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?  
2 My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.  
3 He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.  
4 He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.  
5 The LORD is your keeper;  
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.  
6 The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.  
7 The LORD will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.  
8 The LORD will keep  
your going out and your coming in  
from this time on and forevermore.  
(Psalm 121, NRSV)*



*I lift up my eyes to the hills.  
From where does my help come?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.*

*—Psalm 121:1-2*

## Great Vigil of Easter Reflection, continued

The transcendent in the immanent is God's relation with/in Creation. Psalm 121 begins with a stark lifting of the gaze upward. It is not the same look up toward heaven in Acts 1:10, where disciples lose sight of God's presence, but it seems more akin to 'holding your head up' being confident of God's presence. First looking up, the Psalm quickly grounds the deeply human search for God in place, here the hillsides of ancient Israel. Despite origin in this particular place, the Psalm provides words which can speak to us too in our own particular place. This earthly expansiveness is witnessed in the very earthly care of God's provision of shade from the sun by day

and even shade from its lingering rays reflected from the moon at night (v.6). The quality of God's transcendent presence in Creation is why the Psalms poetic language is often at once metaphor and the thing itself. Beyond our imagination, God is acting in our places and God's transcendence can only be spoken of in terms related to our places. Transcendence and immanence can only be occupied at once by God so the question for us is how can we keep our heads up while keeping our feet steady on the ground. How can we occupy our place without pretending to occupy the place of God?

**Prayer:** *Lord, direct our gaze to the places where we are. Steady our feet. Let us follow your paths.*



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Dave Grace is an inquirer in the PC(USA) seeking to consult with Presbyteries and other denominational bodies on land-use planning to achieve conservation goals – M.Div & Master of Environmental Management '17 Duke University.

# Easter Sunday Reflection

By Alonzo Johnson

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.*

*But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her. (John 20:1-18, NRSV)*





## Easter Sunday Reflection, continued

In 1979 the Church Rock Uranium spill marks one of the most destructive environmental disasters in our country. Due to a dam failure, over 1,000 tons of radioactive mill waste and radioactive tailings were dumped into the Puerco River contaminating its groundwater. The contaminants traveled 80 miles downstream to Navajo County, Arizona and onto the Navajo Nation. Even decades later, the Uranium Tailings spill is still listed as one of the largest in the United States.

Among the organizations actively connected to the region is the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE.). MASE is a grassroots organization comprised of several groups working together to remove the uranium contamination and prohibit future mines in the area. Participants include Acoma and Laguna Pueblos, community people in the affected area, Navajo Nation, the Post 71 Uranium workers and ranchers who have been affected by the uranium mining industry. In recent years, with the help of the Presbyterian Committee of the Self

Development of People (SDOP), who establish partnerships with self-determining communities to promote justice, awarded a grant to MASE to help with raising public awareness activity and keeping old, abandoned mines from re-opening.

The John text shows us that the risen Christ turns a group of scared and confused disciples into a community of hope despite the risks. The work and advocacy of the Multicultural Alliance reminds us about the power of Easter, a power where empty tombs can influence the advocacy of empty mines. We are also reminded that we must take part in God's resurrection power and be willing to "roll away stones" with our witness so that people may find life in the power of the empty tomb. The empty tomb is much like a river empty of toxins and pollutants - it is alive and life-giving! Easter reminds us that the Earth as part of God's good creation is alive and life-giving. The activism and advocacy of alliance members are examples of what it means to be a community of hope despite the risks.

**Prayer:** *Holy Creator thank you for showing us that death and hopelessness does not have the last word in our world. As members of Christ's body and your good creation, show us again what it means to take care of the earth and all that is in it. Like clean and fresh waters, revive us again and show us that God's power is active and redemptive in all situations. Loving God, in this season of new life, remind us to empty our lives of the dross and the toxins that prevent us from fully experiencing your transforming power. Amen.*

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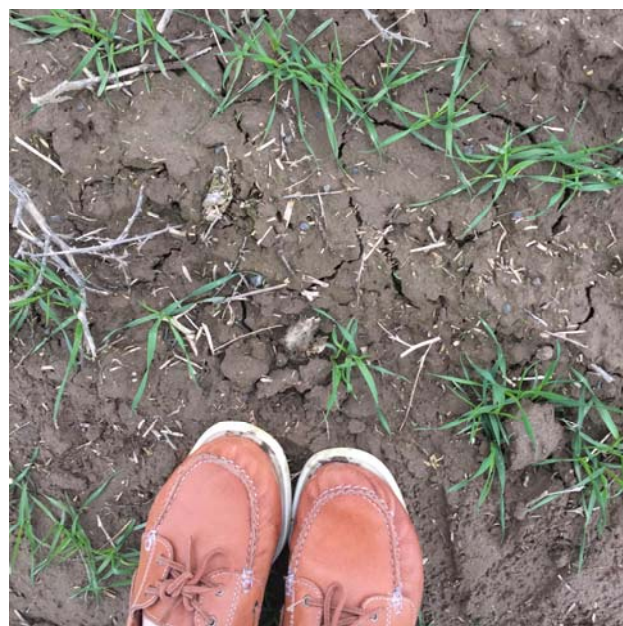
# Easter Monday Reflection

By Amber Slate

*Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." (Exodus 3:1-5, NRSV)*

All of creation is aflame with the glory of God. This is the claim that informs the Eastern Orthodox interpretation of the story of Moses and the burning bush. In the story I learned in Sunday school, the burning bush represented a miraculous event that Moses encountered on Mount Horeb. However, in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the burning bush represents the true state of all nature. Moses is simply given the holy perception to glimpse how all of life is aflame with the glory of God. The flames do not consume the bush because the fire is God's eternal presence encompassing the material world.

What would happen if we had the eyes to see all of creation in the same way that Moses did that day he was tending a flock of sheep in the wilderness? How would our relationship with the places where we are rooted change if we perceived them to be aflame with the glory and presence of God? Like Moses, you can encounter holy ground. Thanks to the wisdom of our Eastern Orthodox sisters and brothers, we are reminded that this holy ground is not just found



on the Mountain of God, but also in our very own places. Today, I invite you to consider a way that you could symbolically remove your sandals and honor the way God sets creation in your place aflame with holiness.

**Prayer:** *Creator God, may your holy presence in our lives and in the created world move us to honor you by acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with you in the places you set aflame with your glory.*



**Amber Slate** is a fourth year M. Div./M.A. student at Princeton Theological Seminary. Previously, she worked for five years at Sammamish Presbyterian Church where she was director of the middle school ministry. She grew up on a farm in Eastern Washington and wonders if one day she will get to be pastor of a church that would be excited about having goats.