

Artist Statement: What Wonder Turns Into

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

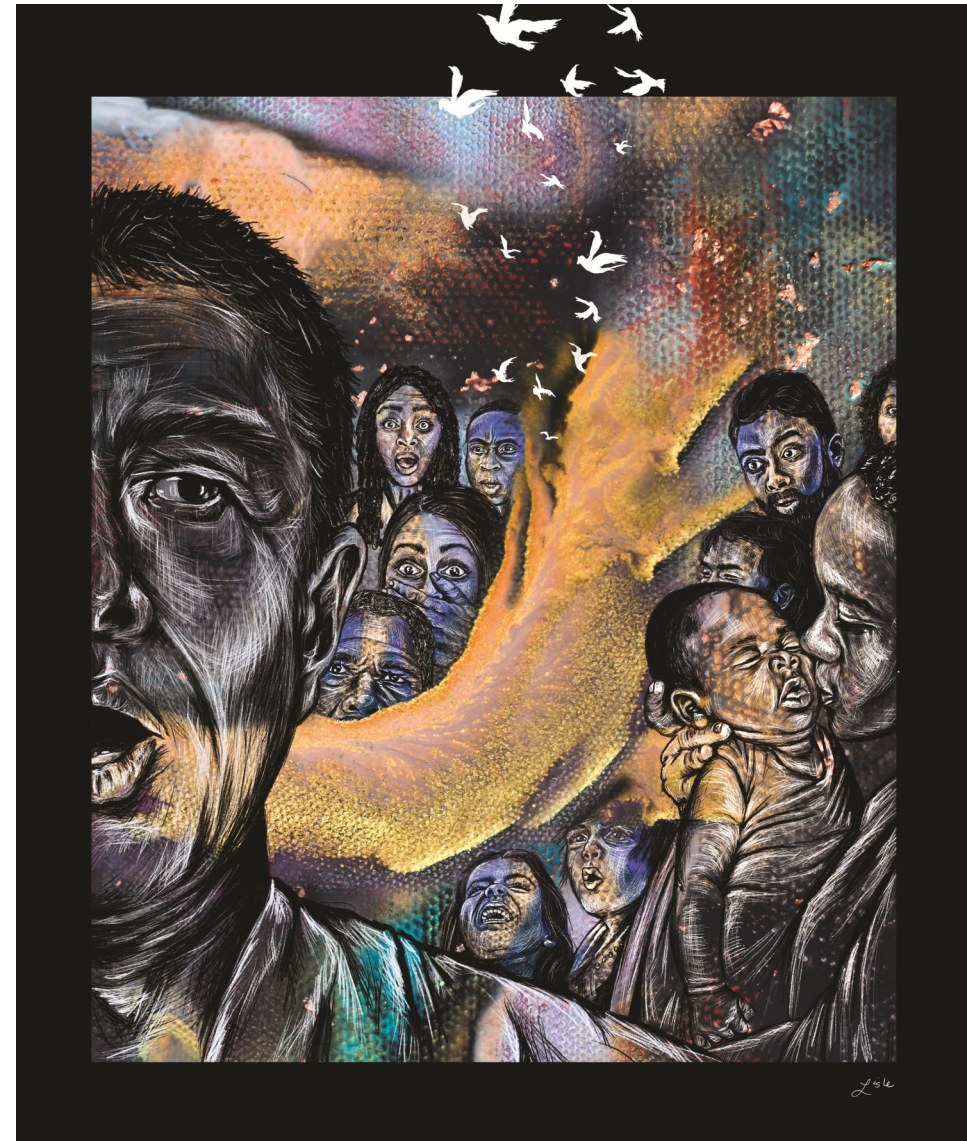


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What does the logo mean?

The image of a comforting embrace, and perhaps in the space between the people, continents and bodies of water come into view. These two people could represent characters we follow this Advent season: Elizabeth & Zechariah, Mary & Elizabeth, Mary & Joseph. Or maybe the figures are more broadly representative of God & humanity or of the personification of joy & weariness. Two people—one radiating joy and the other wading into weariness—hold the world together.

How does this all work?

You have several meditation options. You can read the prayer on the next page, you can focus on the images on the front of this bulletin and use Visio Divina (instructions below), you can listen to the music, or you can practice all three. You are welcome to the coffee and cookies available in the Narthex. If you want to spend some time chatting, join us in the office.

Visio Divina

Visio Divina, latin for “divine seeing,” is a method of meditation, reflection, and prayer through a process of intentional seeing. Visio Divina extends the 6th century Benedictine practice of Lectio Divina by the use of visual imagery. Traditionally, Visio Divina was accompanied by Benedictine iconography and illuminations, however, different faith traditions have adapted the process over time, utilizing both secular and nonsecular images.

Suggestions to consider throughout the visual meditation:

- 1) Focus on your breath. If your mind begins to wander, inhale and exhale slowly. Stay mindful of your breathing as a way to bring you back into the present moment.
- 2) If you find yourself not knowing what to think, or trying to figure out what the art means, remember that you are invited to simply be an observer. As you look, jot down simple observations about what you see, or ask yourself questions such as, “Why did the artist choose that color?” or “Why did the artist portray the story in this way?” or “How does this art make me feel?” Perhaps your questions will lead to more questions and more observations and then you’ll be getting somewhere.

Holy God, Christ with us,
Once again we bow our heads. Once again we close our eyes. Once again we draw ourselves closer to you in prayer.

Meet us here. Surround us with your loving presence. From sunrise to sunset, you fill us with awe. For that, we pause to give you gratitude. Thank you for the way the sun shines through our windows, for the mist rising off the river, for the warmth of a cup of coffee, for the joy of returning home, for the beauty of a crowded table, and for the glory of a sky full of stars.

God, we are in constant awe of you. The story of Zechariah and Elizabeth reminds us that there is nothing you cannot do, and there is no grief that you do not know. For that we give thanks. However, even with this good news at hand, we know that there are many in this world who cannot find the energy to practice awe or wonder because they are so deep in grief. So today, gracious God, we pray for those for whom awe feels out of reach. Be with every parent who worries about a sick child. Be with every child who worries about a sick parent. Be with every person waiting on the doctor’s phone call, waiting on the next month’s paycheck, waiting for the next warm meal. Holy God, surround those with broken hearts who are trying to stitch the pieces together, praying that one day they might be able to feel awe again. All the while, we will keep gathering together and turning to you to remind us that you are the God of the impossible. You are the one who floods our world with awe. You are the one who knows our names. Amen.

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