

2023 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL
YEAR A

WEEK FIVE



WATER IN THE DESERT



water in the desert



40 days of creative contributions from the
Christ Church Cathedral community and beyond

TABULETS CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

What is Lent? What is this project?

DAY 23

ASTONISHED

MAR 20

Sarahmarie Specht-Bird

DAY 24

ABUNDANCE

MAR 21

Katie Schallick

DAY 25

GOD FIXES

MAR 22

Quninton Jefferson

DAY 26

WITH FREE HEARTS

MAR 23

Noel Julnes-Dehner

DAY 27

TABERNACLE
OF STICKS

MAR 24

The Mooney-Bullock Family

DAY 28


THE SONG OF MARY:
MAGNIFICAT

MAR 25

David True

INTRODU CTION

WHAT IS LENT?



Lent is a holy season of the liturgical year where the body of Christ around the globe intentionally enters into a time of fasting, self-examination, prayer, and works of love. As Christ emerges from the waters of baptism, he is immediately driven out into the wilderness for 40 days to be tested and purified, marking the beginning of his public ministry. And in the Hebrew narratives, the desert is the place where the people of God wander for 40 years after being delivered from slavery in Egypt, waiting for and wandering toward a new life and new land.

The wilderness is treacherous and disorienting. It is a place of liminality and deconstruction - the space in between where we have been and where we are going. All of us have to journey through the unknown at some point, and it's always hard, but it's the only way to get where we're called to go.

WHAT IS THIS PROJECT?

For each of the 40 days of Lent, our team, in partnership with the Liturgical Arts Collective, asked members of our significantly creative and insightful Cathedral community to read, reflect on, and respond imaginatively to their appointed scriptures for that day from the lectionary, holding in mind a general theme of unexpected sustenance in desolate places, or "water in the desert."

We find in the readings during this six-week season stories of angels tending Christ in the wilderness, quail and manna from heaven, plumes of cloud by day and pillars of fire by night to guide our wandering, water flowing out of rock...

In a chaotic, distracted, and fearful world, noticing beauty is like pure drops of water from heaven to the parched soul. Art and beauty can touch the deepest part of the human heart and aid our collective healing and liberation. The goal for this project was not to create a bunch of "really good art," (although the works are stunning,) but to build something meaningful together through our shared devotion, contemplation of scripture, and responding to the Holy Spirit in our midst through our various mediums. So within a few weeks of being prompted, we strummed, typed, smeared, scribbled, sang, scrapped, recorded, prayed, and listened, and this devotional is the result. We hope this is a gift to you, wherever you might be led, on your Lenten journey.



DAY 23
MAR 20

ASTONISHED

BY SARAHMARIE SPECHT-BIRD

*"When his parents saw him
they were astonished."*

Luke 2:48



The word "astonished" stood out to me in this passage because it gets at the heart of the feeling I experience when God shows me something I wasn't expecting. I love it when I can feel God laughing: revealing something to me so obvious that I can't believe I didn't see it before. I can picture this same astonishment on Mary and Joseph's faces when they see Jesus in the temple. I can imagine them laughing, asking each other why they were even surprised. I think God loves our astonishment. I think it makes Him chuckle.

CLICK
HERE FOR
SCRIPTURES
OF THE DAY

We get caught up in the moment.
We leave the temple, thinking he's with us,
start heading home from the festival
in a crowd in the sunlight: full, jostling
travelers moving thoughtlessly onward
through the dusty streets
lost in the talking, lost in the day—
It's so good to see you! How's the family?
Did you hear about so-and-so—
we're not paying attention,
and we've lost him,
and when we realize it, we've gone so far.

And so we turn around.

We should have known all along
where we could find him
In the house that is our Father's home
looking so at peace with himself
and offering us a kind of knowing
answering questions upon questions
those questions born of questions
we can never comprehend—
Why were you searching for me?—
and yet
the longer we look, the more we can see
the peace beneath his countenance
the knowing that lies under it all

And we are astonished.

Every time, somehow, astonished
that what we are looking for
was right where it made sense to be
all along
that what we seek
should already be so obvious
that the source of our searching
and the source of our finding
are exactly the same.

DAY 24
MAR 21

ABUNDANCE

BY KATIE SCHALLICK

CLICK
HERE FOR
SCRIPTURES
OF THE DAY



illustration based on
Ezekiel 47:1-9,12

GOD FIXES

BY QUINTON JEFFERSON

Today's readings from the Psalms, Isaiah, and John's Gospel address "rejects" – those bowed down, those prisoners, those in their graves. These "rejects" are not glad and happy, nor fit and able; they are not a Christian's Christian. They are individuals God is with.

There is a woman who went through a dark time, but no one knew about it. It was not confided, it was not disclosed, it was not discussed. One day, her loved ones arrived to help her with a task. Upon their arrival, the loved ones breathed in, experienced, and saw the difficulty, the problem, the situation. The loved ones did something wonderful; they gave her room; they allowed grace to enter. They said, "We'll fix this."

Who says that?

God says it repeatedly. To the person bowed down with weights of economics, the -isms, physical ways, God says, "I'll fix this." To the person imprisoned emotionally, physically, spiritually, God says, "I'll fix this." To the person in his grave – dead from guilt, dead from injury, dead from isolation, God says, "I'll fix this."

How or why does God say these things? What could prevent God from saying these things? Who is God to say these things? When does God remain silent? From where does God say these things? What encourages God to say these things to "rejects"?

*The God that suffers with
With words of strength
Steadies heaven and earth*

*The God of today in high-rises
And no rises
In green and brown spaces
Says, "I'll fix this."*

*This, that, and the other
Time after time
Raining grace
In everyone*

*The God of the Psalmist
The God of the Prophet
The God of the Wanderer*

Returning to the woman, some loved ones were furious they had to help; they had to "waste" their time; at her for not saying something earlier. Other loved ones were heartbroken and felt sorry for her while others were numbed.

Humans are made in God's image. God says, "I'll fix this" while feeling a range of emotions. Scripture regularly mentions God's anger, joy, loneliness, and sadness. Those emotions are part of God's love. And still, God fixes.



WITH FREE HEARTS

BY NOEL JULNES-DEHNER

DAY 26
MAR 23

CLICK
HERE FOR
SCRIPTURES
OF THE DAY

The Collect: Almighty and most merciful God, drive from us all weakness of body, mind, and spirit; that, being restored to wholeness, we may with free hearts become what you intend us to be and accomplish what you want us to do; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



How I wish that prayers were spells cast by wizards. We would only need to say the first part of this morning's Collect, "Drive from us all weakness of body, mind and spirit" and suddenly we would be able to do whatever we like. A magic wand would whisk away my need for back surgery last summer and months of rehabilitation and restriction. We fool ourselves that accident and illness only strike others, that diet, exercise and youth will save us. But the moment comes to all of us and to our loved ones, when the physician says, "I don't like the way that looks." We are handed an unasked-for limitation of ability, of time.

It is then that we struggle with the second part of the Collect, the definition of wholeness. It doesn't mean perfect health forever, because there is no human life exempt from limitation of ability and time. Not even for Jesus, who would have died of something, if not from crucifixion. Knowing his days were numbered, he prayed he would not need to drink from the cup of pain and death. When he realized that the cup was for him, he offered his will to God.

That is the wholeness referenced in the Collect, that 'with free hearts we become what God intends us to be and accomplish,' in the context of our situation. I am not saying this is easy. I haven't been an inspiration. I groan, swear at setbacks, complain. I miss activities I once did with ease, and I mourn all that I took for granted and all that I will lose in the future. But as Jesus said in today's reading, "I can do nothing on my own." I too am counting on the promise of the presence of the Spirit. Every day I sit in silence, loosen the grip on my heart, and listen for what might be mine to accomplish and to be. And wait to see what happens next.

Tabernacle of Sticks

BY THE MOONEY-BULLOCK FAMILY

timelapse based on John 7:1-13

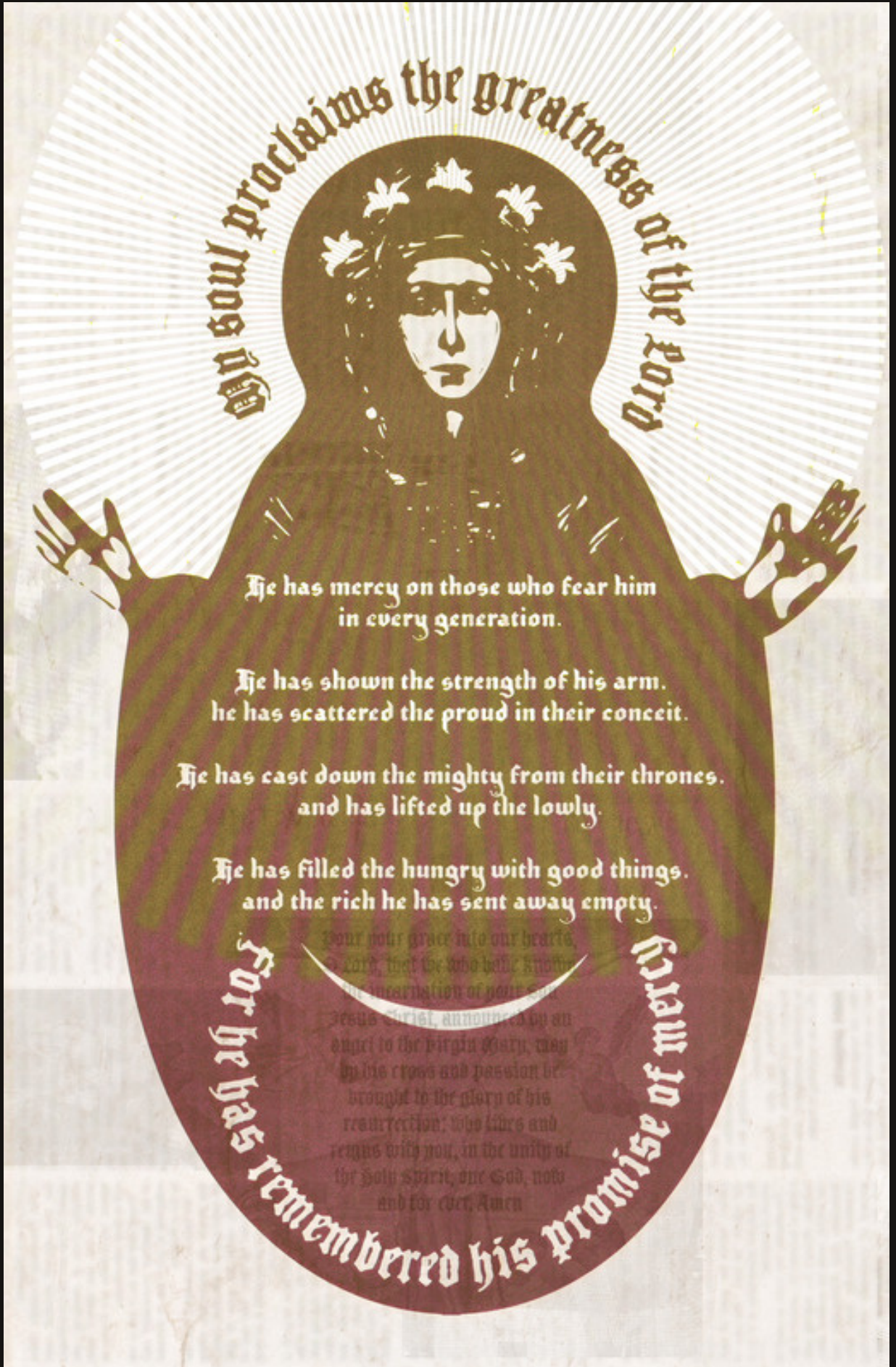
DAY 27
MAR 24

CLICK
HERE FOR
SCRIPTURES
OF THE DAY

THE JEWISH FESTIVAL OF SUKKOT: FEAST OF BOOTHS

*What would it be like to live
in a shelter of earth, wood, and sky?
How would we encounter the Holy?
What would provision feel,
sound and taste like?*

SONG OF MARY: MAGNIFICAT



BY DAVID TRUE

illustration

CONTRIBUTORS



SARAHMARIE SPECHT-BIRD

Educator, Writer, Hiker

Sarahmarie Specht-Bird (she/her) is an English teacher, writer, and long-distance hiker. When she's not on a trail somewhere, you can find her here in her home city of Cincinnati, likely crocheting, making a zine, or looking for cool mushrooms. You can read more of her work at sarahmariesb.com and on Instagram as [@srirachamarie](https://www.instagram.com/srirachamarie).



KATIE SCHALLICK

Graphic Designer

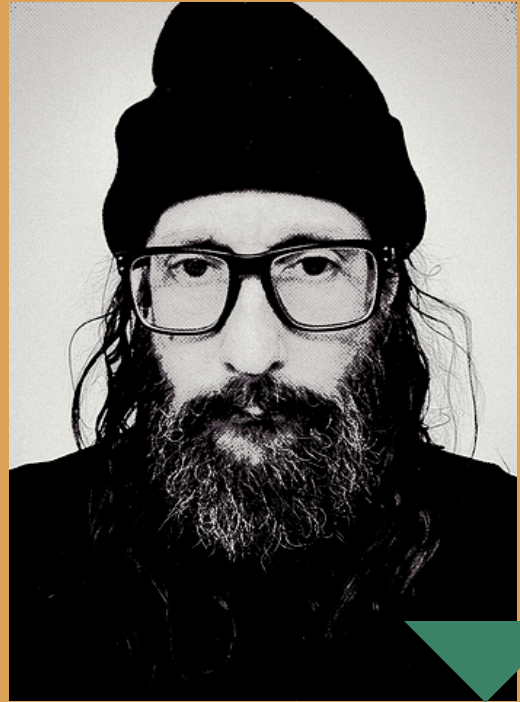
Katie Schallick is a freelance graphic designer who loves 'n lives with her partner, Logan and cat, Freckles.



NOEL JULNES-DEHNER

Writer, Priest, Filmmaker

Noel Julnes-Dehner is a priest, honorary cathedral canon, documentary filmmaker, and with her husband Joe, co-founder of Summer Camp Reading for upcoming 2nd-4th grade struggling readers. Christ Church Cathedral hosts one of the sites for SCR. She also plays tennis and pickleball.



DAVID TRUE

Multidisciplinary Artist

David True is a multidisciplinary artist from Cincinnati, Ohio. He currently works creating immersive ideation experiences and trainings; though most of his energy goes to raising his six kids (+ four cats) with the love of his life.



THE MOONEY-BULLOCK FAMILY

The Mooney-Bullock family (Ryan, Jesse, Abel, Leo, Maggie, Sylvia) lives on a small farmstead in the city, tending chickens, goats, ducks and bees. With a lot of wild space around, they are exploring how we can coexist together in and with the natural environment, and having fun making stick forts.



2023
LENTEN
DEVOTIONAL

Christ Church Cathedral
318 E. 4th Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

www.cincinnatiacathedral.com
hello@cccath.org
[@christchurchcathedralcincy](https://www.instagram.com/christchurchcathedralcincy)



For more information and
ways to get involved, contact:
liturgicalartscollective@gmail.com