

# POIEMA

*Summer '26*



*Issue 02*

\*

*Local Praises*

‘All the ends of the earth shall  
remember and turn to the Lord, and all  
the families of the nations shall worship  
before You.’ ~ Psalms 22:27

# Editor's Letter

A lot has shifted over the past three months, since submissions first opened for Issue 02. Conflict, hurt and stress seems to be ever-present and ever-growing in our world. We are desperate for peace and desperate for a Saviour to deliver, now more than ever.

My prayer is for the innocent, for the hurt, for the wronged, for the anxious, and for the unsaved. I pray for all the earth to turn their faces upward and receive hope, a hope that is not set in the flawed things of the world, but of things above. Good things. Pure things. When conflict and geography try to divide, the love of God unites us, drawing us closer in fellowship and in faith.

That's the reason why we chose this theme for our second publication. God has designed a gorgeous diversity of livelihoods, faces and testimonies across the Earth, and we wanted to amplify the stories of ordinary people with extraordinary faith. Within these pages, you might find the voice of an old friend, or a bright fragment of a memory from your hometown. Readers, amidst the disarray, we hope that this issue of Poïema Magazine might restore some light and joy in your life as you browse these precious 57 pages of art and literature from Christian creatives around the world. To all of our contributors: thank you for shifting our perceptions by sharing yours. Our hearts are with each and every member of our community, and everyone beyond who are enduring hardship in this broken world. As the Psalmist proclaims: 'For I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me. But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put to shame those who hated us.' ~ Psalm 44:6-7

Sincerely,



Jasmine Krnjaic, Founder and EIC

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# Dinner-Table Theology: Inheriting a Faith That Shows Up

*Cathy Colver  
Garland*

*Our family learned theology at the dinner table.*

Not in tidy lessons or polished answers, but in the spaces where life pressed hardest. I grew up in church, which carries its own dangers: the temptation to confuse proximity with presence, language with love, and doctrine with devotion. Many of my siblings would later study formal theology, church doctrine, and go on to serve in our own churches, but that isn't where we first learned theology. Not really.

My father was a pastor, which meant church was never an abstract institution or set of Sunday morning practices. We lived church all seven days of the week. Through people we loved, people we lost, people whose stories didn't stay in the sanctuary but followed us home and sat down with us for supper. Our table was rarely just ours. My mother's hospitality was legendary in our circles, and the door was always open. Strangers became family, and faith was practiced between bites of food, between hard questions and Dad's terrible jokes, with God close enough to be encountered.

<sup>1</sup> I  
Corinthians  
8:1

Around that table, nothing was off limits. No question was too sacred or unsettling to be brought into the circle. The Bible reigned supreme, and it was common for one of us kids to be sent to fetch my father's copy of the Greek/Hebrew interlinear version so he could read aloud whatever passage might shed light on the topic of discussion. Scripture was not used to end the conversation, but to open it.

For my parents—hippies saved and transformed into disciples during the Jesus Movement—questions were invitations, never threats. If God was real (and we believed he was) then he could withstand our wondering. I grew up knowing, not just in theory, that the Scriptures were more than sufficient: able to teach, rebuke, correct, and train us in righteousness. Not for knowledge alone, which the Bible warns us about<sup>1</sup>,

but to be equipped for every good work God had prepared for us and to face whatever life threw at us.

When someone in our church took their own life, and not long after, our elderly neighbour did the same, I had a ton of questions: Are they in heaven? How do you know? Is that what everyone believes? How could anyone really know what's true?

No one rushed to shut those questions down. Instead, we were guided to pursue God's wisdom more deeply:

What does the Bible say?

What does this situation reveal about God?

Does that match the God revealed in Scripture?

Where is God here?

And how, then, should we respond?

This is theology, of course, but it is also something more lived-in.

looking down to understand who we are because of who he is, and looking around to discern how we might join him in what he is already doing.

I didn't have a word for this training to see God revealing himself. My dad and I would later come to call it revelation; God revealing himself as he pursues us for relationship. This word would eventually develop into a book, but it was forged long before that, at a crowded table and in lives shared as we grew into disciples.

Because of this way of living, my siblings and I inherited a faith rooted in who God says he is, practiced in community, and sustained by the steady presence of God who makes himself known. We not only had ample opportunity to talk about these things; we had just as much opportunity to live them. Faith moved easily from conversation to action.

Sometimes, it meant loading bags of groceries into the car, leaving them quietly on someone's front porch, ringing the bell, and driving away before thanks could be offered. Other times, it meant that we were the ones in need, bringing our lack to God and trusting him to provide.

Truthfully, we didn't have much money. The modest salary of an associate pastor in a small church meant there were moments when mum stretched meals and made delicious soups out of leftovers, always trusting God to provide for whatever guests dropped in.

One particular instance stands out, not because it was dramatic, but because it was ordinary in a way that made God's nearness unmistakable.

The cupboards were bare. The refrigerator, too. We knew it, and so did my parents. That afternoon, my father's mother came over.

She was a woman who walked with God closely and without pretence, accustomed to listening for his voice and trusting what she heard. When she learned of our need, she didn't rush us to the store or quietly slip my parents some cash. She walked straight into the kitchen, opened the cupboards, and laid her hands on them to pray.

She asked God to reveal himself to us as Jehovah Jireh: the Lord who provides. Not in theory. Not someday. But here. Now. In this house, with six children watching.

We followed her motions, all of us trailing behind as though something holy were unfolding—and in truth, it was. There was a steady expectancy in the room. God was being invited to show us who he is.

Within the hour, the mail arrived. Inside was a check from my mother's parents. Money for Christmas presents,

they had written, and for whatever else was needed.

We went to Cub Foods rejoicing, carts as full as our hearts. Cupboards once empty were filled and overflowing.

That day did not make us wealthy. It made us certain.

To this day, my siblings and I trust because we've tested for ourselves that God can and will provide. Not because we were told to believe it, but because we watched God reveal himself. We learned that praise often begins not in abundance, but in lack, when we open the cupboard wide enough for God to show up.

That certainty and the trust that God provides didn't begin with my parents or even my grandmother. It had roots deep in our family history, where faith was lived and tested long before we were born.

<sup>2</sup> Nathaniel Colver is documented in Appletons' Cyclopædia of American Biography (1900), which draws from Justin A. Smith's *Memoir of Nathaniel Colver* (Chicago, 1873)

<sup>3</sup> Hylton, Raymond (2014). *Virginia Union University*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing

My great-great-great-grandfather stood on a mountain in Franklin, Tennessee, and prophesied that there would be a pastor in every generation. There has been often more than one pastor in each generation. That prophetic word is an example of how my family understands calling, presence, and God revealing himself through ordinary lives.

Among our ancestors was Nathaniel Colver of Boston<sup>2</sup>, a contemporary of John Quincy Adams, who preached against slavery and published a book declaring that God would not countenance it. Rejecting the privileges of wealth and power and instead committing his life to justice and education, he was instrumental in establishing what became the first Black college in Virginia<sup>3</sup>, which began as the Colver Institute in Richmond. It was created to teach formerly enslaved people to read and write,

insisting that the gospel of Jesus Christ could never be separated from human dignity.

Building on that heritage, the church my father helped pastor was a racially mixed church in Fairburn, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. He helped to shepherd the congregation through politically tense times with a clear vision rooted in the reconciliation message of Romans, always pointing to the equalizing power of the Gospel: Galatians 3:28, that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. Faith was not abstract in that context—it was lived, embodied in relationships across lines of division, and grounded in the truth that God's presence and provision extend to all people equally.

On a daily basis, we knew my grandmother walked with God in ways that were quietly extraordinary.

She had a gift for hearing his voice, speaking words of knowledge and wisdom that proved true again and again. She recorded them meticulously—dates, names, circumstances—so that when the confirmations came, they were documented for all to see.

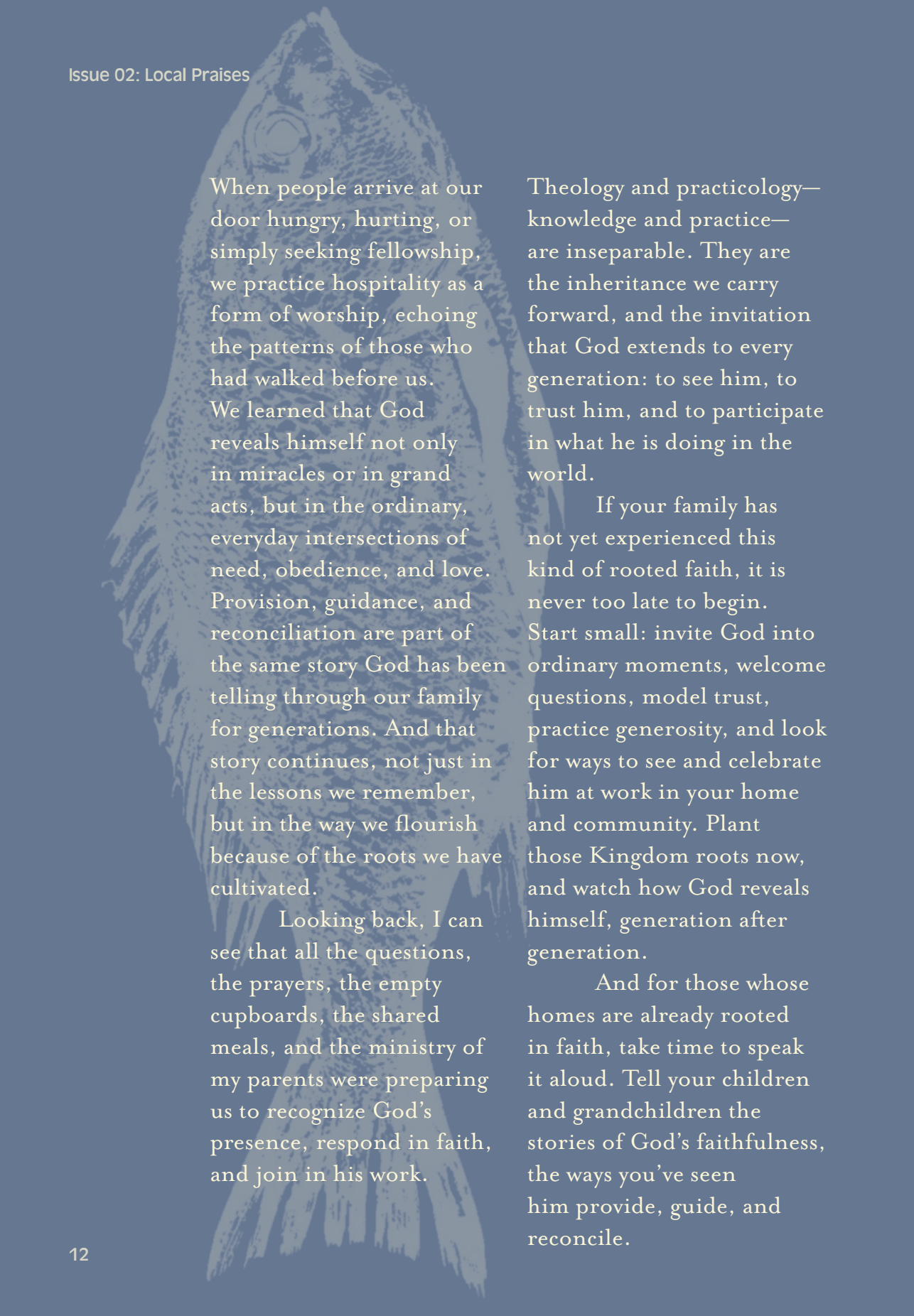
When she passed, we discovered notebooks filled with these entries: who the words were for, when they were spoken, and when they were confirmed. Reading them, it was clear that God had been revealing himself over and over, not for spectacle, but for relationship. Her life was a living record of God showing up, guiding, and inviting partnership across the ordinary moments of daily life.

It was from these examples that my siblings and I inherited our own eyes to see and ears to hear God. We grew up learning to watch for his provision, listen for his guidance, and respond in faith.

Not because we had memorized answers to questions, but because we had seen God move in our family, generation after generation. Provision, justice, wisdom, and presence were not distant ideals; they were realities we could recognize, participate in, and celebrate.

All these acts of revelation—the prophecies, the acts of justice, the ministry across racial lines, the words recorded in notebooks—are not distant history. They are the soil in which my siblings and I continue to grow. The faith we inherited was not only stories to tell (and we've got plenty of those!) but also ways to see, act, and trust.

So, when cupboards are empty, we watch God provide again. When hard questions about life and death press on our hearts, we watch God's wisdom unfold in conversation, Scripture, and presence.



When people arrive at our door hungry, hurting, or simply seeking fellowship, we practice hospitality as a form of worship, echoing the patterns of those who had walked before us. We learned that God reveals himself not only in miracles or in grand acts, but in the ordinary, everyday intersections of need, obedience, and love. Provision, guidance, and reconciliation are part of the same story God has been telling through our family for generations. And that story continues, not just in the lessons we remember, but in the way we flourish because of the roots we have cultivated.

Looking back, I can see that all the questions, the prayers, the empty cupboards, the shared meals, and the ministry of my parents were preparing us to recognize God's presence, respond in faith, and join in his work.

Theology and practicology—knowledge and practice—are inseparable. They are the inheritance we carry forward, and the invitation that God extends to every generation: to see him, to trust him, and to participate in what he is doing in the world.

If your family has not yet experienced this kind of rooted faith, it is never too late to begin. Start small: invite God into ordinary moments, welcome questions, model trust, practice generosity, and look for ways to see and celebrate him at work in your home and community. Plant those Kingdom roots now, and watch how God reveals himself, generation after generation.

And for those whose homes are already rooted in faith, take time to speak it aloud. Tell your children and grandchildren the stories of God's faithfulness, the ways you've seen him provide, guide, and reconcile.

As the Psalmist reminds us, “Tell of his wondrous works to the next generation” (Psalm 78:4). Don’t assume they’ll inherit your trust—invite them into it. Share your questions, your prayers, your meals, and your ordinary moments of reliance on God.

Let them see, touch, and participate in the God who reveals himself across generations.

\* Cathy draws on her experience growing up in church, serving alongside her parents, and witnessing God’s faithfulness across generations. She writes to help others see, trust, and join God at work in their homes and communities.

*Time to Celebrate*





- \* Seyi Odukoya is an expressive acrylic painter based in Lagos, Nigeria. As a multi-versatile artist, his art is mostly influenced by landscapes, nature, and human facial expressions.

abraham aondoana

# smoke and tambourines

The smell of the morning in my village is of yam and  
palm oil,  
and the drums fill the sun before it comes.  
Grandmother calls down through smoke,  
incense winding round designedly round her hands.

Nor sing in some foreign tongue to mine.  
even when my mind forgets:  
shapes of worship transmitted tonally.  
through generations,  
by waters over which our ancestors drifted,  
by markets through which all was bought and sold,  
together with kola nuts and cassava.

The tambourine is shaking in the hands of my uncle,  
more ancient than the town itself.  
Feet stamp on the dusty floor,  
and I know that there is no worship that is not  
vocal—  
it walks through all, through soil,  
through the sky,  
as far as it reaches the borders of the earth.

Every one of the neighbors joins the beat,  
the singing of their voices without a lesson.  
I see the Lord in our laughter,  
in the manner the smoke turns curvy, me-ows to the heavens,  
in the way our roots rise up  
and lift us up higher than we ought to think.

One day, someone far away  
will listen and it will make him wonder,  
where the spirit of praise flows.  
I know: it lives here,  
in our hands we had, and in our mouths, and in our feet,  
and it always has.

\* Abraham Aondoana is a  
writer, poet and novelist.  
He is a recipient of  
the Idembeka Creative  
Writing Workshop 2026.





Aman  
m

# the family tree

The grass, spotted with mould from the moisture of melting snow, crunched and rustled underneath my pink snow boots. In the summer, the grass would stand as high as my waist (I stood at 49 inches last time Mum judged my height with her retractable purple tape measure). In my hands I carried a plastic bag filled with dirt, and out of the top of it grew the smallest pine tree I had ever seen, around six inches tall. Its sapling needles glistened small and pudgy like the fingers of a newborn baby.

‘How come Etta’s tree is bigger?’ My little brother said, nearly hidden in the fragile brown sea of grass. ‘Because she’s bigger. Your tree is little because you’re the littlest,’ Mom said.

Eli, aged two, did not like that. I could tell from the colour of his face, which matched the redness of his hair, that he was about to throw a fit and the only thing stopping him was the vulnerable baby tree he struggled to carry in a bucket.

‘How long will they take to grow?’ my five-year-old sister asked our dad.

‘Look out there by the road,’ he said, pointing in the opposite direction from where we had been walking deeper into the field, ‘Grandpa planted those trees when I was about six.’

Dad said that Grandpa had a ‘green thumb’. Grandpa knew everything there was to know about plants, whether they grew in the woods or in his own garden. I looked over at the pines by the road.

They seemed to tower up into the clear sky forever at three or four times the height of Grandma and Grandpa's pistachio-coloured ranch house in Barryton, Michigan. I imagined young Dad with his shining red hair, like in the picture Grandma showed me with '1974' scrawled on the back of it. He had planted trees with his dad too. I couldn't wait for mine to grow.

In the spring, my shins scratched from the rough grasses that sprouted from the forest floor.

'Dad?' I stepped over a mossy branch lying on the ground. 'Where do I find the morels?'

'First of all, you have to be quiet.' He looked around among the trees as if he were being watched. 'They'll all run away if you aren't quiet—at least that's what Grandpa told me. Look for where the leaves are popping up.'

I looked at the small mountain of floor-cast foliage, pushed up by the wrinkled edible mushrooms that were hiding beneath it. The leaves, brown as they were, could not hide the bright green of the fiddlehead ferns that were just beginning to unfurl. Each fern curled in on itself like the scroll of a fiddle, hence the common name. The air smelled like rain, soon to be accompanied by the scent of mushrooms and ferns frying together in a pan. My mother told me that was the first meal my dad had ever made for her.

When Grandma's birthday rolled around every October, my family gathered together for Cider Day.

What seemed like millions of apples were washed, dried, ground, and pressed until they turned into gallon jugs of homemade cider. Some of us brought bags of deer apples, while other family members harvested from their own apple trees. We didn't care what kinds of apples went into the cider.

Grandma and Grandpa had two hand-operated cider presses in the garage, the rust on them almost as orange as the delicious liquid that trickled down the sides of the old machines. My cousin Brad had made a third press and engraved the names of all the members of our family into the wood.

'401 gallons! Our new record!' Aunt Cheryl announced.

Everyone cheered, and we started to unscrew the cider presses to give them a break. A big crack sounded through the apple-scented air right in the middle of the crowd of friends and family.

'Oh no!' a few voices interjected at once.

Brad's press, the inscription of the family tree, had split open.

After a short silence, we picked up our talking and cheering and laughing again. After all, what was one broken press to a huge family with two more? Two uncles picked up the shattered pieces, and me and my cousins all ran to roll down the hill again.

At Grandpa's funeral, the boy cousins carried his coffin to the cemetery wearing flannel shirts of black and red hunters' plaid.

People brought bags of apples to the graveside and took one each to set on top of his coffin. I didn't know what to do with mine.

I thought of Grandpa walking for miles every day before he lost his leg, canvassing the dirt roads lined with whispering poplar trees and silent pines. I thought of him teaching my dad about where to find morels in the spring. I thought about Camp Neyati, the church camp where he and Grandma volunteered. So many aunts, uncles, and cousins had been through the gates of that camp, hanging out in nature for a week and hearing the voice of God. I thought of the crowded daffodils in his front yard—all the ways he taught my family to bring themselves together through nature. I looked down at my apple.

'Well, I think I'll eat mine,' said Pastor Mark, his Southern twang piercing the Michigan summer air, heavy with the grief of a family. 'That's what Earl would have wanted.'

I smiled. He certainly would.  
I took a sweet bite.

★ Henrietta DuCap writes poetry and fiction in Lansing, Michigan. She enjoys hiking the woods and dunes of her state!



\* *George* is by Amanda Keating: a believer, mother of five grown children and grandmother of four adorable children.

# Opacity as \* Jazz

Bite the diet.

Clean your  
glasses.

Your deciduous  
retaliation by way  
of small gestures  
like swaying, or  
saying 'small song'  
over and over  
again.

Even from  
elsewhere,  
reconsideration  
feels like God's  
Marimba.

caleb merritt

\* Caleb Merritt is an artist living and working in the Treasure Valley.

# From Yard to Altar



I come from a place where prayer had a beat,  
where faith kept time with bare feet on concrete.  
Grandmothers hummed heaven into the day,  
turning small rooms into sanctuaries.  
Our praise rose early, before the sun knew our names,  
wrapped in accents shaped by fire and flame.  
Drums talked back to history, steady and bold,  
telling stories our blood already knows.  
God walked our roads, dust on His feet,  
sat in our kitchens, broke bread, brought peace.  
He learned our laughter, our mourning, our song,  
moved through our family like a lifelong hymn.  
This ain't borrowed worship, it's passed-down praise,  
stitched in our bones, alive in our ways.  
From yard to altar, from soil to sky,  
local songs lift a worldwide cry.  
All ends remember, all hearts turn true—  
one God praised by the many, through me and you.

kimarr brown

\* Kimmarr Brown is woman of faith and purpose, inspired by God, family, and resilience. She believes every challenge shapes growth and every season carries a lesson.

# my wildwood church

by Sarah Watkins

pianism was my Lord-blessing  
through strict lessons and early Sunday mornings  
playing songs the family women  
hummed over boiling pots of jarred jam back five generations  
on the unpolished offwhite keys of the detuned piano  
they said I made sound real good

we would search by our soul's muscle memory  
through the black hymnal  
to find the sheet music  
and when I set to playing congregation, grandmother, mother, me  
would take the voice part no one was singing  
until we made a full chorus raising euphoniously  
*He set me free, yes,  
He set me free!*

with an instrumentalized third verse for hand-shaking  
so the elderly women could come  
pat my shoulders at the piano bench

when the wooden plate  
came around the hard-backed pews  
the little ones dropped in pennies  
with soft rattles like tambourines  
and the bible pages rustled like shakers  
until we all stood on beat  
reading together in unison:  
*greater love hath no man than this...*

\* Sarah Watkins teaches English and Choir for a living, but creative writing is how she really gets her kicks.



\* *His Glory is Raining*  
by Charlise Nasby



\* *Peace Be Still* is by Charlise Nasby, who was saved by Jesus in grade 12 when she was sick and tied down to addictions. Jesus set her free and now she lives for Him.

MORGAN WALLS

# THE SUN CATCHER

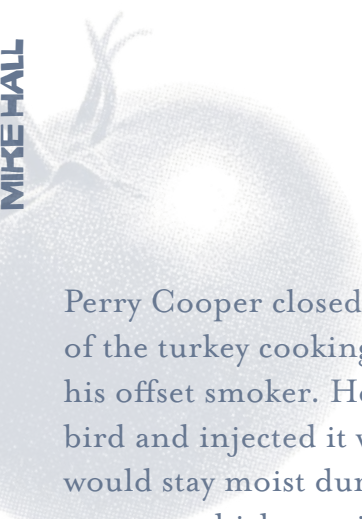
Thread Creek holds me up by the knees  
The net billows into the current like seaweed as  
My toe coaxes in a backward-swimming  
crayfish  
The river, pulled eternally northward,  
Holds in its rushing  
That thing I wish to grasp:  
Sunlight  
Like go<sup>l</sup>d trim  
On a brown silk robe  
Shimmers in its turnings

Now, my mind returns there  
Poised hawk-kneed on Standing Rock  
(long since cracked and fallen)  
It cranes its neck  
And holds the light  
By my mind's eye  
Golden refractions flutter  
On their flowing perch  
Now twisting  
Now spinning fallen leaves  
As they float past

\* Morgan Walls is an author and educator based in Michigan. She also enjoys journaling and her family.

# SECRET SAUCE

MIKE HALL



Perry Cooper closed his eyes and took in the smell of the turkey cooking within the metal confines of his offset smoker. He had carefully seasoned the bird and injected it with melted butter to ensure it would stay moist during this time-sensitive cooking process, which required him to make periodic checks throughout the night. Some might consider this whole smoking thing too troublesome, but not Perry. He had never minded any part of it, because the smell of smoking meat was in his top five favourite smells. One other favourite, his wife Beth's pecan pie, was baking in the oven, teasing his sense of smell and testing his patience—he could hardly wait to cut a slice and let his tastebuds dance their happy dance.

The Thanksgiving feast Beth was busy assembling would commence in only a few hours. Their kids and grandkids would be arriving any minute, filling their house with unbridled energy, all eagerly anticipating their favourite foods: the dressing, potatoes laced with bacon and sour cream, green-bean casserole, ham, baked beans, and turkey. Two kinds of pie—pecan and pumpkin—would be served to complete the meal, leaving all partakers happily seated.

Beth eagerly listened out for the doorbell while she nervously checked her pies, trying to make sure they didn't overcook. Some of the other dishes would need to stay in the oven while the pies cooled, she thought.

She always fretted about the timing of everything. Thanksgiving was the one holiday when the whole clan gathered at the same time, and to her way of thinking, it had to be perfect. Anything less would be unacceptable.

Perry was coming in the back door with the turkey when the doorbell rang.

‘They’re here!’ Beth said as she rushed to the front door to greet their first guests.

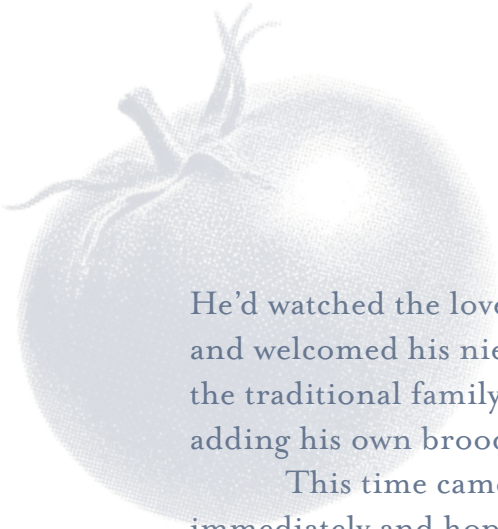
She opened the door and was assailed by her four-year-old granddaughter, Janie. ‘Gigi,’ she squealed as she latched onto Beth’s right leg, her enthusiastic hug sending a thrill through her grandmother.

‘Happy Thanksgiving, Mum,’ her son Brad said as he stooped over and kissed Beth’s cheek. ‘Dad still smoking the turkey?’

‘He just got finished. He’s in the kitchen covering it.’

Sally gave her mother-in-law a hug. ‘Everything smells wonderful. What can I do to help?’

Brad watched Sally and his mom walk arm-in-arm into the kitchen, chattering with each other while he put their jackets away. Thanksgiving at his parents’ place had always been a special time. He could remember his older siblings, Tom and Julie, coming back with their growing families when he was still single.



He'd watched the love they shared with their spouses and welcomed his nieces and nephews as they joined the traditional family gathering, looking forward to adding his own brood to the mix one day.

This time came when he met Sally and was immediately and hopelessly smitten. It didn't take long for them to marry and start their own family with Janie's birth. They'd be giving her a baby brother in about four more months. The memories they were building together as a family always brought a smile to his face—he couldn't imagine his life without them and prayed he would never have to.

Tom arrived shortly after with his family in tow. Little Bobby and Lily latched onto their Papa's legs while he and Tom shook hands. Maggie gave her father-in-law a quick kiss on the cheek before hurrying into the kitchen to help Beth and Julie put the finishing touches on the preparations.

The gathering was finally complete when Julie and her husband, Sam, arrived with their entourage. Their oldest, Jack, was pushing twelve. He was the elder statesman of all the grandkids. His brother Nick was next in line, younger by two years, followed by Brook, who was seven. The three joined their cousins, who were busy running around and playing in the back yard.

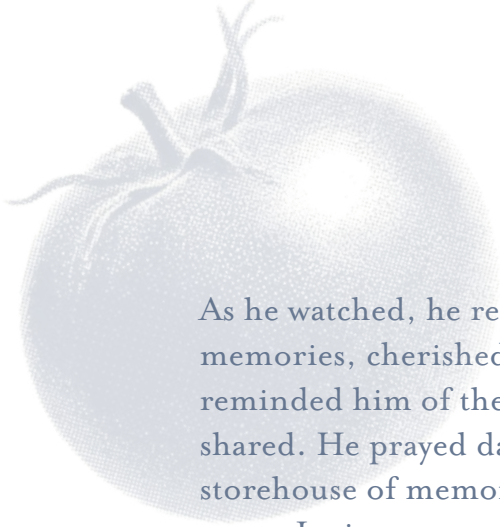
Gigi had placed Papa on guard duty in the back yard, with special instructions to keep an eye on little Janie.

She might be the youngest, but that did not keep her from trying everything the older cousins were doing. She had no fear.

Perry watched as the kids climbed all over the swing-fort-jungle-gym structure Beth had wanted for the grandkids to play on when they visited. He remembered how she kept after him until he finally relented and bought the contraption well before any grandkids were big enough to even climb around on it. Beth insisted it was a good investment because she envisioned a backyard full of laughing and screaming children, climbing and enjoying the wooden monstrosity.

Jack and Nick were both toddling around in diapers when he managed to get the thing assembled, thanks to a terrible set of instructions (whose sole purpose seemed to be to irritate and confuse him). The project had been an exercise in patience and persistence, but the joyful shouts from his grandsons made every minute spent working on the contraption worthwhile.

His joy multiplied with each additional grandchild, his heart swelling as he helped them learn to swing, climb, and slide. His delight did not cease when they no longer needed his assistance. Their squeals and laughter always warmed his heart and brought a smile to their Papa's face. They never seemed to tire from their playing.



As he watched, he remembered. They were great memories, cherished memories, memories that reminded him of the rich life he and Beth had shared. He prayed daily for more time to add to his storehouse of memories with these little ones.

Janie came running up. ‘Papa, can you help me climb?’

He smiled down at this little bundle of energy and said, ‘Sure. Show Papa what you can do.’ He took Janie’s hand and let her lead him to the climbing wall attached to the upper platform.

Janie grabbed the knobs and began to climb with a determined look on her face. Perry kept his hand close as she slowly struggled up the incline, knob after knob, until she reached the platform. She stood up and looked down, a radiant smile lighting up her face. ‘I did it, Papa! I did it!’

‘You sure did. Papa is so proud of you.’

Janie beamed at his words. ‘I want to tell Gigi.’ She went to the slide and came down quickly, her little feet hitting the ground on the run, anxious to get inside and spread the news of her triumph.

Perry checked his watch and saw it was about time for dinner.

‘Time for everyone to get washed up,’ he hollered. He saw small bodies coming down the slide and jumping out of swings, watching them run to the back door and into the house. It was going to be a fun couple of days. It always was.

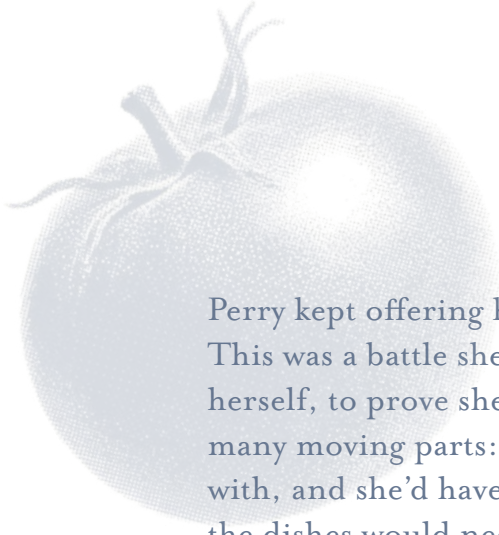
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As Perry looked around the table at those gathered, he thought back to his first Thanksgiving with Beth after they were married. They were living across the country from where they both had grown up and did not have the time or the money to make the trip back for the holidays. They were living paycheck to paycheck trying to make ends meet but could not have been happier. Their life together was full of the promise and euphoria of young love. They just revelled in the bliss of being with each other, no matter the circumstances.

This first Thanksgiving, Beth was bound and determined to make a dinner that would rival anything her mother had ever prepared. She had called her mother multiple times (despite the weighty long-distance charges back in the day) and taken detailed notes about preparing the turkey and sides she wished to cook.

She had always been a very detailed person, confident in every task she had ever undertaken. Why should this Thanksgiving meal be any different? She'd never believed for a second that this meal would give her any problems. That is, until it did.

Beth rose early on Thanksgiving Day to a beautiful clear blue sky, the sun burning brilliantly, with a slight chill in the air. She could not help but smile in anticipation of what she thought would be a fantastic day for Perry and herself. She began her meticulous preparations and worked all morning making what she hoped would be the perfect meal.



Perry kept offering his help, but she kept refusing. This was a battle she was determined to wage by herself, to prove she could do it. The meal had so many moving parts: there was only one oven to bake with, and she'd have to coordinate the time each of the dishes would need to spend in the oven, some cooking together at the same time.

The turkey was the first casualty. It came out overdone, as was the dressing. No amount of gravy or cranberry sauce could save either. The potatoes were full of lumps; the green beans were rubbery; the chocolate meringue pie was drinkable.

Perry could tell Beth was devastated, but he was determined to consume every bit of food she had prepared. It was his own personal battle to wage, and one he insisted on winning. He gnawed on his helping of turkey, chewed and chewed on the green beans, swallowed the lumps in his potatoes, managed to eat his dressing with gravy that was almost paste, and drank his pie from a bowl, yet he smiled through it all.

While he was eating, tears began to trickle from the corners of Beth's eyes. It didn't take a genius to see how upset she was, but he couldn't think of anything to say that might lift her spirits. His mind had drawn a blank and no amount of thinking was going to change that. He helped her clear the table when the meal was done, but no words were exchanged. Perry drew her into his arms and felt her shoulders begin to heave,

\* Mike Hall is in his 46th year as a teacher in Dallas, Texas. He strives to encourage and uplift with his work.

heavy sobs keeping their own sad rhythm, her tears wetting his shirt. Eventually, the crying stopped, and he gave her a light kiss. He looked into his young bride's eyes and quipped, 'Look on the bright side. There's nowhere to go but up.' He saw a smile slowly creep onto her face, and they both began to laugh.

Later that evening they found a McDonald's and threw their budget out the window, treating each other to Big Macs and fries.

'This secret sauce could have saved the turkey,' Beth said, with her mouth full of burger. Beth had to pound on Perry's back to dislodge a piece of beef—he'd almost choked on his own burger from laughing so hard. They completed the evening with a fried apple pie.

Perry could feel the love of those gathered around the table on this special day, all anticipating the delicious meal they were about to eat. The preparation had been flawless. Everything was perfect. He looked at the smile of satisfaction on Beth's face, suspecting she was remembering their first Thanksgiving.

They all clasped hands, bowed their heads, and offered a prayer of thanksgiving with hearty amens sounded at the end.

As plates were being filled, Perry looked at the small bowl setting next to the turkey. He laughed gently to himself, for contained within that bowl . . . secret sauce. Just in case.

# unsubtle grace

Did Dad once light a smoke and know  
this would be his last cigarette?  
The sins of youth live in our heads  
like static, humming dark, alone  
among the forests and the moss growth,  
wild and even, a message sent  
from your secret and savage self  
that knows the road to lead you home.

Don't let me pave the path, your roots  
belong to the breeze and sunlight  
who fertilise the verdant truth.  
Someday, when I retrain my eyes,  
I'll follow your steps back to you  
and run, and breathe the unpaved life.

\* Kevin L Nenstiel is a poet, playwright, actor, freshman composition teacher, and factory worker. His poetry has appeared in journals including the Reynolds Review, the Denver Syntax, and the Carillon.

\* *Helena* (right) by Andrea Theirbach







\*Helena is by Andrea Thierbach, who primarily paints with ink, and now creates works in mixed media and collages. Her works tell a poetic story of transformation and the beauty in all our lives.

In these gusty depths that toss our boat about  
so much that, as I shower, I must hold the rail  
to steady myself as though floating in space,  
my body cannot fathom how these waves we mount

were glaciers once, astride the Bassian Plain,  
a landbridge connecting my home to where we sail:  
a highway joining the now-split continent,  
when pademelon, thylacine roamed about

\* Matthew Pullar is a poet and teacher in  
Melbourne, Australia, where he lives with his  
wife and three boys. He loves exploring the  
beauty of his home and wrestling with the mess  
and complexity of life.

deluge a

matthew pullar

the mainland before devouring dingo came,  
before my family and their oceanic shame.

Grace still gouges beauty from the past:  
here, prison ruins buzz with native bees and grass,

lost language found on living tongues again.  
No rift can stem His new-making tide, no  
flooded plain.

# nd grace

# Where Love was Crafted

*shwtha a*

I remember the taste of elixir,  
that pure water from a flowing  
pond,  
a medicine of love, care, peace,  
and all the best things.  
It lingers—the warmth of my  
grandmother's love.

The swing tied to tree  
branches,  
to-and-fro, happiness dancing  
with fear,  
moments stitched with laughter  
and wonder.  
Nothing can replace those  
magic hours.  
I miss them,  
yet the memory heals my heart.

The good old days, so precious,  
I will keep them forever, safe  
and pure.

The place that taught the art of  
adjustments,  
giving more than mere needs,  
where love was carefully  
crafted, patient and true.

Her caressed hands still soothe  
me  
in dreams, in quiet memories,  
a gentle echo of home that time  
cannot erase.

The hut's warmth, the mud-  
floor fragrance,  
lingering softly, kissing my  
senses.

\* From Kasaragod, Kerala, India,  
Shwetha A is an engineer and  
poet, co-authoring over 25  
anthologies, shaping feelings and  
memories into heartfelt verses.

DORSEY  
REY  
DEL  
WHAT THE WALLS SEE

Darkness is this room's lover.

Not that it wants to be.

It was an arranged marriage decided by the purpose it served.

But off inside the darkness, there's a scratching sound.

And a click.

A stream of light spills in for only one sweet moment as a shadow slips through the door.

She leaves almost immediately, but returns just as fast with a second person in tow.

As they talk, she smiles and flips switches to bring the light in.

An orange glow washes over the backside of the room.

Chairs line up like an empty audience to the silent stage still in shadow.

But then she flicks a button on the board, and the stage is washed in deep blue light.

Down she goes, trekking toward the stage, plugging in the pale Christmas lights at each end that frame wooden boxes shaped like clouds.

The darkness has settled now, a backdrop to a waiting concert—warm and inviting.

And soon, slowly, one after another, more arrive.

They gather in the seats or walk down to finish setting up for the coming performance.

Some take the stage, unpacking instruments and testing mics and guitars.

The girl asks everyone to gather their plans into her hands so she can make them appear through the projector.

She is a picture of peace and warmth—smiles and witticisms, with a slight awkward edge that keeps her grounded.

But behind her eyes, there's a monster she has yet to smother.

The walls see this.

They know.

As she laughs and places her coffee down, the walls don't miss the tremor in her hand.

Then everyone takes their places, and she turns out the light above her as she sits at the computer.

It isn't a performance.

It isn't a concert.

At the front, a man begins to speak, and it is a prayer.

Everyone stands to receive what he says to their adoptive Father, some beginning to sway as the music drifts in on gentle lilts.

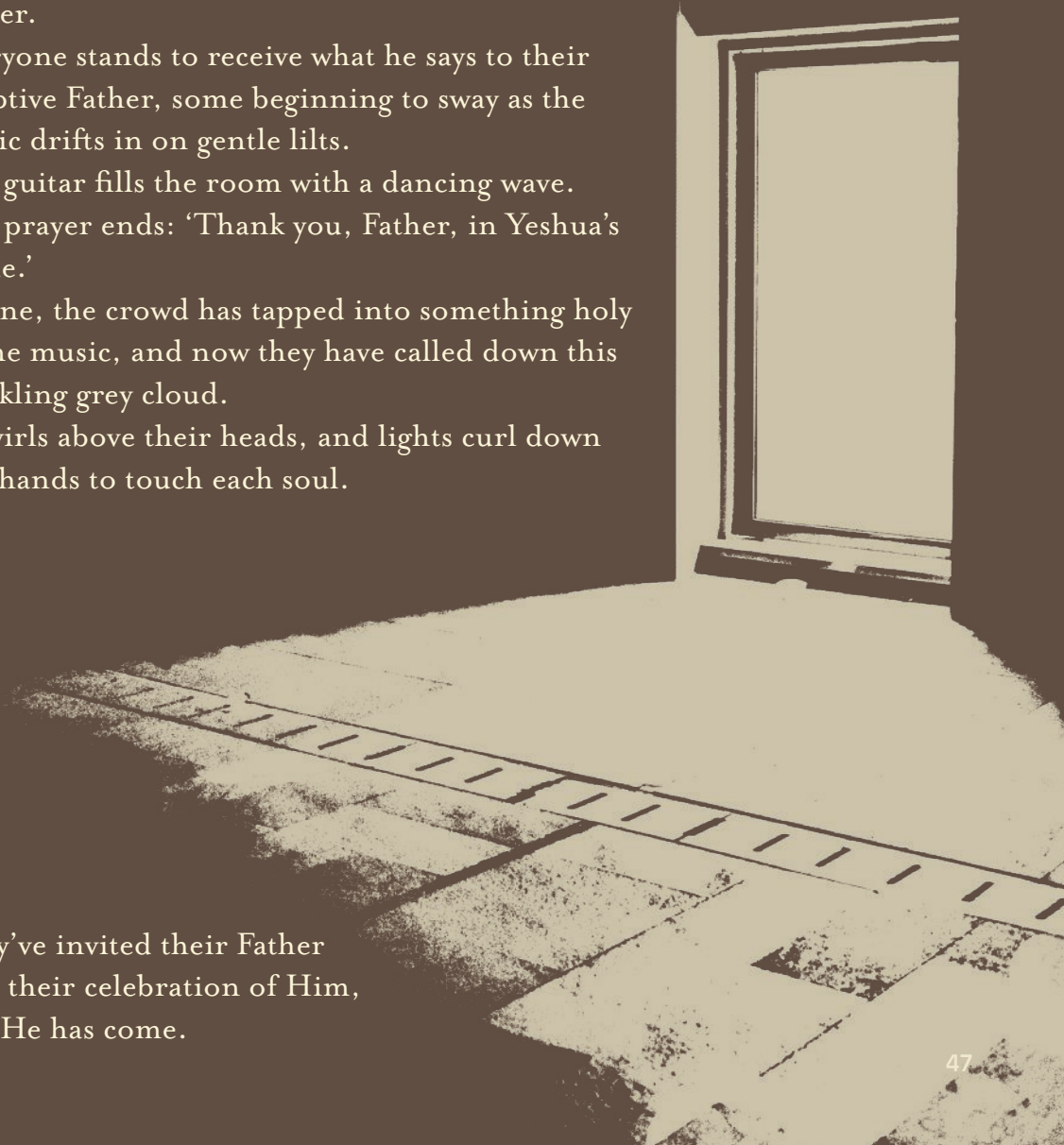
The guitar fills the room with a dancing wave.

The prayer ends: 'Thank you, Father, in Yeshua's name.'

As one, the crowd has tapped into something holy in the music, and now they have called down this sparkling grey cloud.

It swirls above their heads, and lights curl down like hands to touch each soul.

They've invited their Father with their celebration of Him, and He has come.



### *The Nature of This Room*

Once a week, magic stirs within it as the people gather.

For a few hours every Sunday, they come, swelling with good spirit.

And for those hours, this is a church; a living, breathing sanctuary.

Then the room becomes a room again.

Just walls and darkness and silence, interrupted only by the metallic creak of the building's breath.

### *The Return*

But time passes, and later that same day, the door scratches.

It clicks.

No light comes when the shadow slips in.

It is far too late at night.

She has returned.

But there is no warmth now, no peace.

She takes her seat in the back, where she sat during the service.

No computer in front of her.

Only the one light spilling across the backs of chairs.

Her shoulders quake, and her face twists with a sob she refuses to release.

She cries in silence within this place that has become just a building once more.

The shake in her shoulders grows stronger, and the walls can see how the pressure builds inside her, rising from the base of her spine into her mind, until that sob finally tears free, almost a growl.

And with that, the breakdown pulls on her bones like glue.

She lets it all go, crying into the empty sanctuary and clutching her chest.

She yells at her Father, demanding to know why nothing has changed.

‘Have I missed a crucial step?

Did I ignore an open door to escape?’

He doesn’t answer with words, at least not as far as the walls can tell.

But they watch her ease back from the stress, as if she physically steps away from it.

Her lips remain in a frown as peace settles in.

She wipes away her tears and stands.

Her eyes are hard, but not with anger or disappointment.

They’re like stones, determined to endure.

She has understood something here.

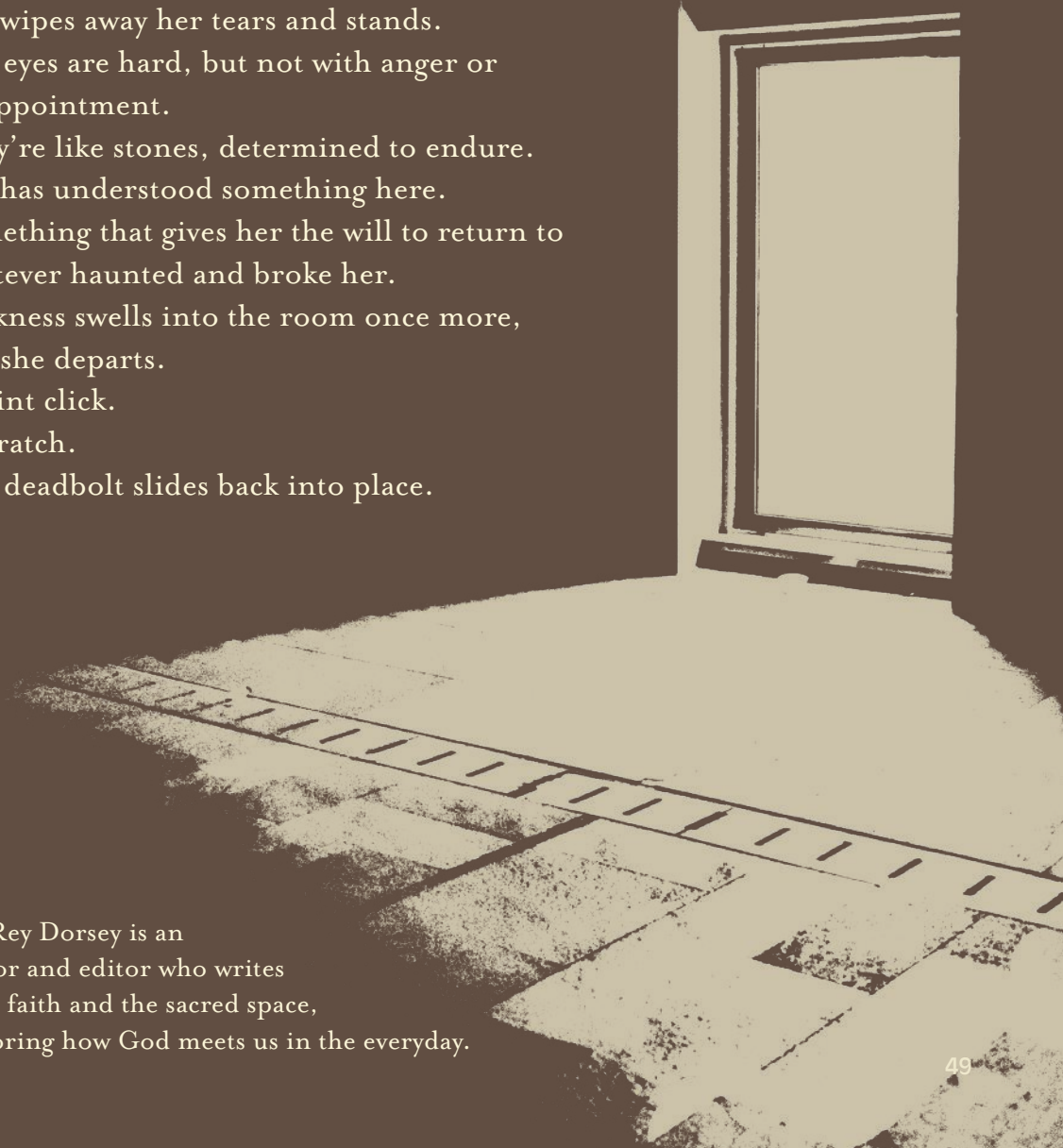
Something that gives her the will to return to whatever haunted and broke her.

Darkness swells into the room once more, and she departs.

A faint click.

A scratch.

The deadbolt slides back into place.



\* Del Rey Dorsey is an author and editor who writes from faith and the sacred space, exploring how God meets us in the everyday.

# SUNDAY

LAVINIA GRACE SEBASTIAN

Awaken  
sleepy  
children, off to  
church we go!  
Through the winding paths,  
and up into the boats!  
We'll row a bit and you will sing,  
across the river to the white building

Little feet in little shoes  
threshing through the forest,  
up and down the slopes we go,  
picking berries as we stroll

Halt! Iguanas pass  
Stop, mouse deer do too!  
Push the branches, hold your lunches,  
Off to church we go!

Bungan's mother made her sweet potatoes,  
Jacob's mother made him bamboo shoots  
with rice

Gleeful children sit on the floor,  
playing games that they adore

# SCHOOL

Pastor's  
here, say  
hello, now sing  
praises to the Lord!

Children clap and children laugh,  
girls and boys play the flute, while  
teachers beat the Kelunthong drums

Now we dance and now we spin  
Now we listen and we pray  
Food is shared among each other,  
Children eat and children play

Sunday school is over soon,  
We wish that you could stay;  
It is now well nearing noon,  
come again another day!

\* Lavinia Grace Sebastian is a poet of Chinese and Indian ancestry. She'd never felt like she knew which culture she really belonged to. Now she knows she's a part of God's kingdom, and every tribe and culture belongs to God.



\* *Called Up the Mountain* is by Barbara Gomez was born in Toledo, Ohio and graduated from the Art Academy of Cincinnati with a degree in Painting. She moved to Phoenix, Arizona after being drawn to the desert by a sense of mystery. She paints her faith.



**\* what  
reminds  
you of  
home?**

\* **Kimmarr Brown:** Jamaican jerk chicken reminds me of home—the smoky aroma from the pan grill, the bold blend of scallion, thyme, and Scotch bonnet, and the warmth of family gatherings. It tastes like culture, celebration, and the heart of Jamaica in every spicy, flavorful bite.

\* **Cathy Colver Garland:** Home tastes like warm split pea or potato ham soup simmering on the stove. My mom always made enough—and when guests came, she stretched it with more water and vegetables. Homemade bread, sweet tea, and a table that made room. Somehow, there was always enough.

\* **Amanda Keating:** I grew up in rural Arkansas in the Ouachita Mountains. The sound of pine trees blowing in the wind, the smell of wood smoke on cold winter day, and the smell of garden vegetables cooking take me back home.

\* **Mike Hall:** When my kids and grandkids gather together with my wife and me, the love we share reminds me of long ago family gatherings when I was young. The memories of those long ago times, filled with joy and laughter, give me a sense of home that I hope I have managed to pass on to my kids.

\* **Andrea Thierbach:** Home is... my heart! Because when I live with an open heart, I am at home within myself and connected to all life!

\* **Sarah Watkins:** Blackberries always remind me of home. We grew domesticated blackberries in our front yard growing up, and there were always little wild blackberry vines along our backyard fence. When I eat a blackberry, it takes me back to being a kid and eating them still hot from the sun in the summers.

\* **Del Rey Dorsey:** Home for me is the ability to play my music loud and dance and sing with it. I've moved around alot, so I make my home feel like a one-man concert.

\* **Kevin L Nenstiel:** Every time we moved to follow my dad's career, one thing always moved with us: my grandparents' piano. Above all else, home for me is wherever my father felt comfortable speed-running through Scott Joplin's 'The Entertainer'.

\* **Caleb Merritt:** Open windows, sitting cross-legged, Sumi-e ink, and London fog all remind me, pleasantly, of home.

\* **Morgan Walls:** I am captivated by the reflection of light in moving water, especially water in the form of creeks like the one beside my childhood home. The image represents more to me than just the nostalgia of childhood. I also see a representation of how the beauty of our invisible God is reflected in creation. Additionally, the creek itself reminds me of the keeper of my eternal home. Just as I watch a leaf float down the stream, He sees my life in every respect—past, present, and future. Under His watchful gaze and guiding hand I will always be safe.

\* **Lavinia Grace Sebastian:** I think of home when I see bougainvillea. They come in many colours and bloom on the hottest days. My papa used to enjoy watching these tiny flowers from our living room. They are also planted in the park, at landmarks and sometimes they grow wild.

\* **Henrietta DuCap:** I have never felt more held by my creator than when I swim Lake Michigan's cool waters, never more seen than when I stand among the uncountable grains of the sand dunes, and never more heard than when I walk in a silent forest as the snow falls.

\* **Abraham Aondoana:** For me, the Evening kitchen smoke reminds me of home, the mixture of firewood, pepper and rain-wet earth. It bears voices: laughter of women, humming of a radio, call of a child. It is the first to teach me that belonging is first breathed, then spoken.

\* **Matthew Pullar:** I am reminded of home whenever I am in a rainforest. I grew up near subtropical rainforest and one of my family's happiest places is walking in any Australian rainforest. But even seeing a tree-fern or a waterfall gushing down a tree-lined rock-face, I feel like I'm home, anywhere in the world.

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We're on the search for volunteers skilled in:

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- Web Design
- Editing (written + visual)

To join us for a 3-month casual internship, with the opportunity to join our team long-term! It's a fantastic opportunity to glorify God with your gifts and talents, gain experience, and help us out at Poiema Magazine.

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*Poiema Magazine* is an art and literary journal dedicated to uplifting a community of emerging Christian creatives who might otherwise slip through the cracks of contemporary art culture. Our goal is to foster more of God's presence in the literary and creative space. So tell us, how does salt and light reflect in your eyes?

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