

*Kairos: The Voice of Austin Presbyterian
Theological Seminary Students*

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Dear Beloved Community

Caitlin Parsons

Jane Austen once wrote, “There is nothing like staying at home for real comfort.” I love Jane Austen more than life itself, but this summer I was inclined to strongly disagree with her. For the past seven (or however many) months, staying at home has not been comfortable. Home has been a place of inescapable boredom and inexplicable busyness, a place of isolation and Zoom fatigue, a place that at times feels suffocatingly small and at other times cavernously empty. Jane may have preferred being at home to being anywhere else, but she’s never spent a Friday night carousing at Crown and Anchor or an afternoon paddleboarding on Lady Bird Lake. There are times when a hygge day at home is pure bliss, but summer in Austin is not one of those times.

And yet, just when I thought Jane and I would have an ideological rift with irreparable damages, the fall semester began. I remembered how good it feels to read postcolonial feminist theology while the rain pours outside. I remembered how nice it is to walk around campus as the weather transfigures from hot to . . . well, hot, but normal hot instead of Texas hot. I remembered how much my professors and classmates make me laugh and ponder and hope. I remembered how wonderful and complicated this community is. I remembered what home feels like.

If you look at Jane's quote more closely—if you exegete it—you'll notice that she doesn't say that staying at home makes you really comfortable; rather, staying at home gives you "real comfort." Staying at home may be uncomfortable for some months to come. But thanks to you, beloved community, it will provide real comfort, too.

Sincerely,
Caitlin Parsons

God of Dry Bones

Emily Grace Clark

God of dry bones

God who spoke the Word and it was so

God of mothers who weep

Because their children are no more

God of motherless children

God of wandering children

God of Holy music, Holy muses,

Holy song in the deepest despair;

God of Ancient things

God of Restoration, Salvation,

And Resiliency

God whose Justice is Joy

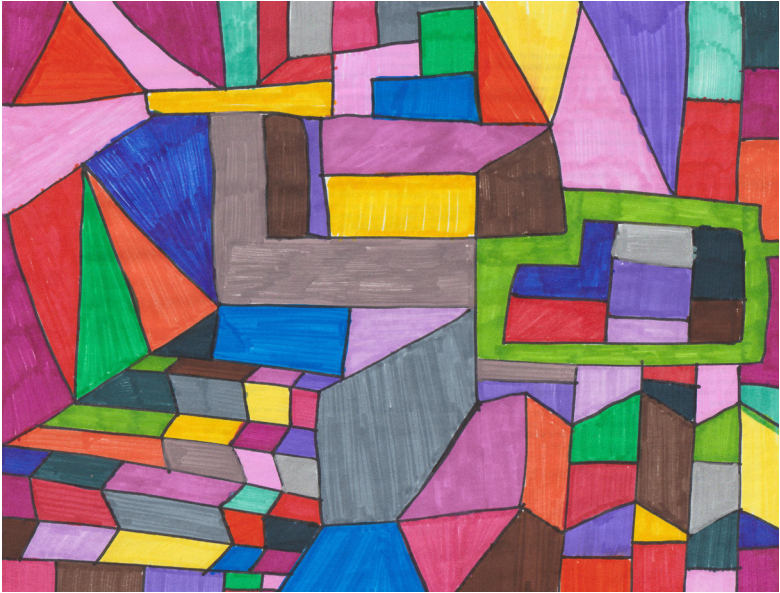
God outside of time

God eternal;

God of the Covenant,

The Rock to which I cling
Bring your Promise of Peace
Pour out your Comfort, unleash your Love
God who neither slumbers nor sleeps
God of every sparrow falling
Unite us in love,
Where we stand or falter;
Balm for every shattered heart
You, who know the stars
You, who know our frailty.

The blood cries out for Justice.
We know nothing of it.



My birth name, the name my grandmother on my father's side decided for her first grandchild is Sarai. In the biblical witness, Sarai is the wife of Abram. She is to become the mother of nations.

It always troubled me that I was her namesake. Firstly, I was born a woman just like her. For years, I've struggled with polycystic ovarian syndrome. It really makes having children hard. Secondly, I knew from a very young age that I am not a woman. I am a very proud, very open feminine transman. That means that I will never let go of my dresses, makeup, or transition fully into a "man's" outfit. I have no need to.

Upon coming to seminary I learned about a different life outside my silo. I feel a little bit more versed in the issues that create the framework of our nation. I'm finding that systemic racism, white supremacy, and white privilege intersect in the disparity of ethnic minorities. I think the lived experience of white as superiors have devalued otherness. I am definitely the other.

In my growth as a nurturing "never-to-be" parent. I learned to nurture and love those around me. In pushing against the patriarchal roles my grandmother





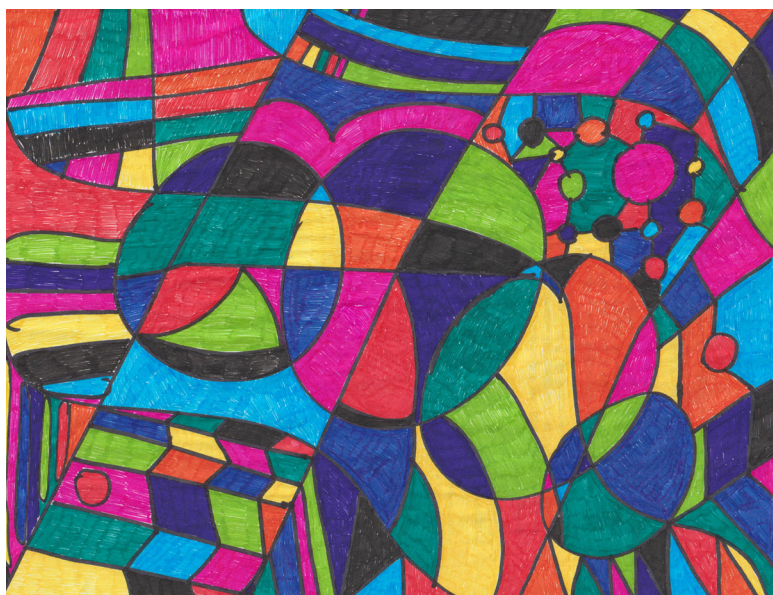




on my mother's side imposed on me, I learned to fully accept my hispanic/latinX culture. To be a hispanic/latinX person is to be a parent. It's ingrained in us from the Catholic influences of devotion to Mary to interpersonal relationships with other families.

I have spent a long time grieving about my inability to be a traditional parent. I don't know if I'll ever fully stop grieving because I live with constant mid-pelvic pain. I grieve extra as the United States keeps separating immigrant parents from their children. I grieve extra as the news of abuse and dehumanization





of these migratory children of God reach the newscasts. And I pray extra fervently for the thousands of known cases of force hysterectomies. A procedure that regular women can't get without a man's approval or because of a documented illness (PCOS being one of them).

How I grieve and pray for these women who have lost their identity as a mother. The thing that makes us hispanic/latinX is gone. I relate so much to these lost identities. It's technically Hispanic Heritage Month. But the empire of colonization has struck again. And all around it feels that the world is silent about the United

States inhumane practices. We matter.

The artwork surrounding this writing are expressions of the grief, the loss, the powerlessness, hopelessness, and ongoing struggle of my personal intersections of being hispanic/latinX, a feminine transman, and a citizen of the United States. I pray that you can pray with me. Pray for those who have lost so much, and those who are in difficult positions at the moment.



Paul Prayed Some Big Prayers

Susan Kerr

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and now that I have finished Introduction to New Testament Greek, those who know better have allowed me to take a course reading and interpreting Paul's letter to the Philippians. I am thrilled, of course, and jumped right in with a brilliant (in my own mind) exegesis of Paul's opening prayer. Needless to say, English translations do not quite capture it. The largeness of what Paul is asking, and the depth and reach of the words he uses are not really conveyed in a "low enthusiasm" phrase like, "...to help you determine what is best..." (Phil. 1:10a, NRSV).

Paul prayed big prayers. He believed tremendous spiritual realities were available and attainable for his little flock then. They still are. Though he could not have imagined us so far in the future, still looking for Christ's return, yet he prayed for the church, and this prayer is for us as well.

I am not quite ready to provide a better translation for you, but I want to offer to God this prayer of Paul's (Philippians 1: 9-11) for all of us who form the community of Austin Seminary this school year, especially for those of you who are new this fall. Please read it and know that it has been prayed for you. May God cause to grow in all of us, more and more, abounding love, tremendous spiritual insight, intimate knowledge of God, and lives ever more holy and free.

A Prayer Over Community

Rev. Megan H. McMillan

Community has been a source of shelter and encouragement since the beginning of time. One's community is a haven, a place of deep comfort and respite, yet a place to be pushed and challenged.

Here we are about to embark on another year together in this Austin Seminary community. While this year sure looks different than others, know that this community is still the same. It is still a place where we come together to learn, a place we come together to worship, a place we come together to fellowship. A place we come together, despite our theological differences, despite our political differences, to love God and love one another.

I was reminded by the book of Acts a beautiful picture of what community should be. In Acts 2:42-47, Luke shares what life is like among believers in the early church: devotion to teaching and fellowship, anticipation of God's work, a strong commitment to one another, generosity, laughter over a meal, and a shared destiny.

People in every time and space have always wanted to be a part of something beautiful, something that isn't manufactured, a community that is authentic and pure. It is my hope and prayer as we venture into this year together, may we hold fast to these words and the snapshot laid out before us in scripture of a

compassionate community. May this community be exactly what you want and need in this particular time and space.

Receive now this prayer and blessing onto this community:

May this place shelter our life.

When we come here,

May all the weight of the world

Fall from our shoulders.

May our hearts be tranquil here,

Blessed by peace the world cannot give.

May this place be a lucky place,

Where the graces our lives desire

Always find the pathway to our community.

May nothing destructive
Ever cross this threshold.

May this be a safe place
Full of understanding and acceptance,
Where we can be as we are,
Without the need of any mask
Of pretense or image.

May this be a place of discovery,
Where the possibilities that sleep
In the clay of our souls can emerge
To deepen and refine our wisdom
For all that is yet to come.

May this be a place of courage,
Where healing and growth are loved,

Where dignity and forgiveness prevail;
A place where patience of spirit is prized,
And the sight of the destination is never lost
Though the journey be difficult and slow.
May there be great delight here.
May this be a place of welcome
For the broken and diminished.

May we have the eyes to see
And the ears to hear
That no one comes without an embrace
And no one leaves without a blessing.
Amen.

Blessing adapted from *To Bless the Space Between: A Book of Blessings* by John O'Donohue

Prayers of the People – A Gardener's Version

Ann Graham

Thank you, God, for ten-foot-tall okra in overflowing raised beds, producing delicious food every day, and giving me signs of your abundant and ever-present blessings.

Thank you for lady bugs that protect my plants, dealing with pests organically and charming me with their active cuteness.

Thank you for rain, for cooler weather, for sunshiny days, and for gorgeous sunsets that remind me constantly of your grace and mercy everywhere.

Thank you, Jesus, for walking with me when I am tired and overwhelmed. I need you. In the crashing storm and in the light breeze, I hear your voice of comfort and companionship. I am never alone.

Lord, in your mercy, gather up all our prayers and concerns like a fall harvest and return to us peace of mind and courage to see us through winter, literally and figuratively. Never let us forget that spring and the resurrection are right around the corner, always present to us through faith.

AMEN.



I'll confess. I love prayer. From formulaic and written prayers, to extemporaneous prayers, I relish at the opportunity talk with God. With great joy and reference I enjoyed each contributor's submission. I hope you enjoyed them as well. I'll leave you, dear reader, with one more prayer. A prayer for Hispanic Heritage Month.—xV

Santo Dios

In the stories of our grandmothers and grandfathers

Of our mothers and fathers

Of our sisters and brothers

We hear your voice

In revolt we acted

That is our legacy

In community we bonded

That is our heritage

In the bounds of renewed identity

We are your children

We, who have been colonized into a foreign language

We, who have found our independence

We, who live out your word in this world

We holdfast to our nationality

We come together as hispanic:

*Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua,
Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru,
Bolivia, Chile, French Guiana, Paraguay, Brazil, Argentina,
Uruguay, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico,
Philippines, Equatorial Guinea*

Viva la independencia

In your mercy lead us, guide us, nurture us

KAIROS
EVENTS

ISSUE 348 RELEASE PARTY
OCTOBER 8, 2020

ISSUE 349 SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE
OCTOBER 28, 2020

ISSUE 349 RELEASE PARTY
NOVEMBER 12, 2020

ISSUE 350 SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE
NOVEMBER 28, 2020

ISSUE 350 RELEASE PARTY
DECEMBER 10, 2020

ISSUE 351 SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE
DECEMBER 28, 2020

ISSUE 351 RELEASE PARTY
JANUARY 9, 2021

*Check out Community Announcements for current
information about Austin Seminary events!*