

Wandering Heart

Figuring out faith
with Peter

Poetry Prayers *Poems for Lent-Easter*

Written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

There are a number of ways to utilize poetry in your ministry. You might print and distribute these prayers to members in your community, or read them aloud to open and close study sessions. In worship, you could offer a poem as an opening reflection, a meditation during the sermon, a moment of reflection after the sermon, or as a written prayer printed in the bulletin. However you utilize these poems, please include credit as follows: Poem by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org



ASH WEDNESDAY

Wandering Heart: "Tune my heart"

Tune My Heart

Tune my heart.
Like an old violin,
like a worn down piano,
I have been left out in all manners of weather;
I have been left alone for far too long.
So like a concertmaster
with a steady hand,
tune me up.
Listen and learn
the cracked keys,
the broken strings.
Memorize the forgotten intervals
that even I did not know.
And then, when we're ready,
When this creaky heart is tuned,
teach me a new song.





ASH WEDNESDAY

Wandering Heart: "Tune my heart"

Alignment

I have never tuned a piano, but I understand it takes hours. Small notes plucked repeatedly, like rain on a tin roof. Some things cannot be rushed. Some things require a steady hand, a listening ear, the intimacy of familiarity. Tuning an instrument and falling in love are both like that. Maybe that is why we pray to God, "Tune my heart," because we are desperate to be pulled into alignment. We are desperate to add our voice to the song, to get lost in a dance, to be in harmony with the melody of the universe. I've never tuned a piano before, but still I pray: *Pull me into alignment. Show me the notes to sing.*





THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Wandering Heart: "Jesus sought me"

All This Time

I put my headphones in.

I walk quickly.

I look toward the ground.

I create one million barriers
of independence,

but *still* God seeks after me.

God leans a rainbow over the sky.

God sends sun after the rain.

God blankets the earth with wildflowers.

God allows music to carry
and laughter to rise,
all so that I might notice.

And when I do notice,
the unfurling that begins in my soul
is slow and holy and burning.

I am not alone.

God has been chasing after me
all this time.





THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Wandering Heart: "Rescue me from danger"

Rescue Me

I'd rather not need rescue.

I'd prefer a five-step plan
and a quick-fix solution.

I'd prefer stubborn insistence
over honest vulnerability,
because rescue requires
asking for help.

Rescue names
the rising water.

Rescue sees
the tired, treading feet.

Rescue feels
the swell of the wind
and the rain at a slant.

But when the floor falls out
and the world is on fire
and my small hands
cannot fix the hurt welling in me,
the prayer that slips out
is *rescue*

rescue

rescue me.





THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Wandering Heart: "Praise the mount"

Praise the Mount

I have stayed quiet before.

I have held my tongue

while passing mountains.

I have slipped my hands deep into pockets,

despite the music that invites me to dance.

I have glimpsed a new moon and a new love

and have acted as if it was something other than a complete, God-given miracle.

But not today.

Not today.

Today I will dance.

Today I will tap my toes all the way to heaven's gates.

Today I will point out every shade of gold and periwinkle that we pass.

Today I will talk about my faith like we talk about the weather—

early and unprompted, comfortable and unashamed.

Today I will tell you that God did such a good job with freckles, willow trees,

and your entire being.

And I will not be embarrassed by my own conviction.

I will not swallow my praise.

I have stayed quiet before,

but not today.

Today I will sing.





THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Wandering Heart: "I'm fixed upon it"

Open Hands

We are born with the ability
to wrap our fingers around another,
to hold tight to what we know.
Maybe that's where the instinct comes from—
this clinging,
this sinking,
this holding on.
Maybe that's why Peter cries, "Never!"
when Jesus must leave.
From the very beginning
we've known how to hold tight.
So I pray:
open up my hands.
Uncurl my fingers
one by one.
Loosen the grip
that I hold unyielding.
Remind me that birds must fly
and children must grow
and leaves must fall.
And even though
we are born with the ability
to hold tight,
we can learn how to love
with open hands.





THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Wandering Heart: "Teach me"

Teach Me

Teach me about the ways of the wind,
about the ways of the world,
about the ways of the heart.

Teach me about the soft crook of my lover's arm,
and the way two souls can hold each other close.

Teach me about forgiveness, about the language of *I'm sorry*
and the softness of sincerity.

Teach me about abundance, about *seventy-times-seven*
and *all the days of my life*.

Teach me about joy, about its contagious weaving
and its soul-healing.

Teach me about mercy, about open hands and deep breaths.

Teach me about the dawn of time and the stars in the sky.

Teach me what matters most.

Teach me what is mine to do.

Teach this achingly curious heart
until I run out of questions
or I run out of days.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,
and I will have a life well-lived.





PALM/PASSION SUNDAY

Wandering Heart: "Songs of loudest praise"

Courage

We summon every ounce of courage.

We give ourselves pep talks
and we call our friends.

We dig deep within.

We practice the words out loud,
rolling them around in our mouths,
imagining the response.

We deal out every "what if" card our brain holds on to
and spend absurd amounts of time
imagining all the ways it could go wrong.

And then finally, blessedly, we say it:

I love you.

To speak the truth of your heart takes courage.

It always has.

But please,
summon your courage,

join the parade,

and speak with conviction.

For God has been saying to the world since day one:

I love you.

What is your response?





MAUNDY THURSDAY

Wandering Heart: "Streams of mercy"

With My Outside Voice

We've been taught
to wait our turn,
to ask politely—
we do not want to appear greedy.
We've been taught:
just a pinch of salt,
just a dash of sugar,
nothing in excess.
We've been taught:
raise your hand,
keep your voice down,
no talking in church.
We've been taught to
never make a scene,
but I simply cannot abide.
I am one part questions,
two parts hunger.
I am a million prayers
and deep hope
wrapped up in one.
I am famished and hopeful,
eager and humbled.
I am using my outdoor voice inside.
I am saying,
Not just my feet,
but my head and my hands!
I want to go where you go.





GOOD FRIDAY

Wandering Heart: "Prone to leave the God I love"

The Next Line

There are some truths that are like the sun,
if you look at them too long they may burn you.

You may never see the same again.

And yet, nothing can grow without the sun.

So we summon our courage
and speak the truth of our lives.

We sing, *prone to leave the God I love*.

We let the honesty of those words crack our hearts in two.

We admit it to our fight-or-flight, boomerang nature,
and before the grief even begins to pass,

God is there.

God is turning toward us,

closing the distance,

inviting us to sing

the next line of the song.





EASTER SUNDAY

Wandering Heart: "And I hope"

Easter Morning

I cannot stay away on Easter Morning.

Like Peter,

I would run if I could.

Stop the car,

pump my arms,

take the church steps two at a time,

all to know —

Did it happen?

Did it *really* happen?

Is evil no match for love?

I'd slide down the center aisle.

I'd grab the mic to ask

the angels,

the heavens,

the children,

Were the stories true?

And in response, the choir would sing, "*Alleluia.*"

The children would flower the cross.

The preacher would tell me the stone was rolled away.

The people would pass the peace,

and welcome strangers,

and make room in the pews.

And with faith over doubt,

I would hope.

For I imagine that all of that ordinary holiness

would be enough for Peter,

and it would be enough for me.





Inspired by "The Lanyard" by Billy Collins¹

Here's My Heart

As a child I made a nativity set for my mother—
pinch pot clay, uneven angel wings,
hair made with the help of a garlic press,
Joseph's staff rolled out like I was God
and it was an earthworm.
There was nothing beautiful about it,
nothing whispering of talent,
but I made it for my mother!
So I wrapped
that questionable piece of art in a box
and gave it to her
like I was handing her a Picasso.

*Here, mother,
you carried me in your womb.
You bandaged my knees when I fell.
You made soup when I was sick.
You rocked me to sleep as an infant
and sewed my costumes by hand.
In return, I made you this haphazard nativity!*

And in my childlike mind,
I thought that the small white lamb,
molded from a lumpy piece of clay,
could somehow make us even,
could somehow balance the scales,
could somehow pay her back.
And bless my mother,
because in her grace,
she smiled and she displayed that
hodge-podge nativity set
on the mantel
as if it were her pride and joy.
(I believed that it was.)

Maybe that's the way it is with God.
I say, *Here's my heart*
and God smiles.
And God takes it.
And despite the ragtag nature of my
human-hearted faith,
whatever I can give always ends up on
God's mantel.
Whatever I can give always calls for
pride and joy.

¹ "The Lanyard" from *The Trouble with Poetry: and Other Poems* by Billy Collins. (Random House, 2005).





About the Author

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Rev. Sarah Speed (*she/her*) is the Associate Pastor for Young Adults and Membership at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in Social Work, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Columbia Theological Seminary. Sarah loves to combine her love of all things creative with her passion for God. She believes that the Church has a responsibility to

open every door to God, so that those of us who are visual, kinesthetic, or relational learners all have equal opportunity to engage God to the fullest of our abilities. Sarah feels called to live her life welcoming people into the church by using her energy and passion for beautifully scripted words, raw and relevant liturgy, and hands-on worship experiences to engage our longing for God and the need for justice in this messy world. Writing is her most beloved spiritual practice. You can find her daily poems on Instagram and Facebook: [@writingthegood](#) | writingthegood.com

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