

Poems for Advent - Epiphany

Written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed



FROM
GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

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: Prayer by Rev. Sarah Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

The First Sunday of Advent | FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

There's room for every story

ROOM

I asked God—
what about my
fingernail-biting habit
or the way I leave all the cabinets
open in the kitchen?

What about the way I can be dramatic,
drumming up a fight, only to
hand out apologies like souvenirs?

What about the way I second-guess myself,
let shame drive, or stay quiet when I
have something to say?

What about the way I chase accomplishments
like a dog with a bone?

What about the doubt, or the fact
that I'm terrible at prayer and
cannot help but yawn during church?

What about
What about
What about?

My baggage might be too big for the van.

But then
God called me by my first and middle name,
which always means business,
and said:

Who told you that you were too much?
Sugar, there is so much room for you here.

So that's when I grabbed a seat
and we hit the road
and I knew right then
that the rumors were true.

There is room.
There is room.
There is room.

God meets us in our fear

LOVE COMES RUNNING

I remember
the first time I was afraid.
I was a child.
It was a nightmare.
*(You remember those pesky
monsters under the bed.)*

I remember
minutes felt like hours.
I begged
the sun to rise.
*(Fear always begs
the sun to rise.)*

Eventually,
after minutes that felt like hours,
I cried out.
My dad came running.
He sat at the edge of my bed.
He said there is no reason to be afraid.
He checked the closet and the floorboards.
He rearranged my pillows.
He said, *"I can stay."*

And that's when I learned
that when you are afraid,
love always comes running.
Love says, *"I can stay."*

That's what God does for us.
God sits at the edge of the bed.
God checks the closet and the floorboards.
God says, *"Be not afraid."*
God stays until sunrise.
Love always comes running.

We can choose a better way

INSTRUCTIONS FOR A HARD CHOICE

First, you must take a deep breath.

Let oxygen dance through your lungs.

Exhale it slowly. Allow the hurt, the shame,
the anger to rise up in you. Let your mind run wild,
like a million loose horses. Let the narratives unfold, unroll,
a river of choppy water. Ask yourself how you got here. Look
down at your feet. Roll your shoulders back. Remember who you
are. Take another deep breath. Then, walk it back to the beginning.

Instead of looking at your feet, look at hers. Imagine where she stands. Imagine what he needs. Dry the
river of false stories in your mind. Turn rushing water into a dry creek bed, certainly not clean enough to
drink. Call the horses. Bring them home.

Watch as they shake off the dust of the day. Name what
you're feeling. Inhale again. Now you are ready
to choose a better
way.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

We see God in each other

WHERE I SAW GOD LAST

The dimple in your right cheek,
the child playing peek-a-boo from his stroller,
the abuelita who spends her afternoons
in the park by 86th; the teenagers on the subway
who cannot control their laughter; Neil, my neighbor,
who always asks about you, the mother who whispers
a dozen times a day, "*thank you, Jesus, thank you, Jesus, thank you, Jesus*"; the saxophone player at
42nd street, the poets,
the artists, the garden volunteers; the metro car driver
who sticks his head out the window to make sure we're all aboard; the man who gave up his seat on
the subway, the kid in the
dinosaur pajamas who cannot be convinced they're not
school attire; the teachers, the nurses, the taxi cab drivers;
the woman at the end of the block with her yappy dogs and her
books in the window, the lovers that lay sprawled out on park blankets,
the runners, the daydreamers, the sidewalk chalk artists;
John from upstairs whose favorite flowers are yellow tulips, the Persian man at the grocery who tells
me to be safe when I leave,
my grandmother in Georgia; my neighbor, the stranger; *thank you, Jesus, thank you, Jesus, thank you,
Jesus.*

Christmas Eve

FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

We tell this story

EVERY YEAR

My heart and I have an agreement.
Every year we show up here—
here in the sanctuary,
here with the candles and the tall ceilings,
here with the creaky church pews
and the songs of silent nights.

My heart and I have an agreement.
Every year we show up here—
at the end of the year,
after another 12 months
of humanity, of me
trying to
keep it all together,
trying to
keep my head above water,
trying to
keep up appearances.

Every year we show up here.
We drop it all.
We leave it at the door.
We come into this space
and I could swear it feels different.

Maybe it's God.
Maybe it's hope.
Maybe it's love.
But whatever it is,
I need it
every year,
so we show up here.
Tell us again the story of tonight.
My heart needs it.

Christmastide | FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION

God dwells with us

EVERYWHERE AND ALWAYS

Right here.

That's where God is.

In the sun that turns our bedroom gold,
in the creaks of this old house, and in birthday candles on the cake;
in clean sheets, sock feet, and porch-sitting;
in pancakes for breakfast and pancakes for dinner;
in the swell of a lit candle, in fireplace conversations;
in your grandmother's carrot cake, and the smell of evergreen.

God is in the seed-starters on the porch,
and the space between my bones;

in garlic butter, early mornings, and twinkle lights.

Certainly in dancing and laughing, in cups of coffee,
in the art hung on the fridge, snail mail, long phone calls,
and *oh how I love yous*. God is right here.

God pulled up a seat. God has traveled all the way to the heart.

Tell the next generation.

Epiphany | FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

We keep seeking

A BLESSING FOR THE SEEKERS

Blessed are you who turn your face up to the sky,
who open your arms to feel the wind,
who notice all the things that we should notice.

Blessed are you who are fluent in wonder
and familiar with awe.

Blessed are you who, even now, dream dreams,
who have not lost hope,
who swear the glass is still half-full.

Blessed are you who plant trees
and sing the harmony,
who tell the children how this world can be magic.

Blessed are you who
walk and seek
and turn over every stone,
pointing out all the corners and colors
that God lives in.

Blessed are you.

Amen.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed, *Founding Creative Partner of A Sanctified Art*

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed (*she/her*) is the new 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](#)

A Sanctified Art LLC is a collective of artists in ministry who create resources for worshipping communities. The Sanctified Art team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God. Learn more about their work at [sanctifiedart.org](#).

