

Alphabytes

Poems and object lessons following the Alphabet twice through the year.

Advent to Epiphany: A to M

The First Week in Advent

***A**dv^ent Wreath*

We were all running around in circles,
since the fall of Adam and Eve had us spinning out of control.
Waiting, we were, for thousands of sun-cycles,
hoping that the downward spiral might be reversed to an upward one
that leads to a heavenly somewhere.
That heavenly somewhere, thought to be nowhere is now here.
A new circling spiral begins with Advent and its wreath.
The wreath is a circle seared with four lights,
one for each of the four thousand years
since the Biblically conceived time from Adam's fall to Jesus's birth.
They are ages—great spans of time past looked from above, hope increasing with each week's light.

CANDLE ONE: Noah—Rainbow-light; the first of new covenants
after the loss of Adam's.

CANDLE TWO: Abraham—Countless star-flung lights promised
in another covenant: God's own people.

CANDLE THREE: Moses—Fire-light draws this freedom warrior
who leads God's beloved to their own land.

CANDLE FOUR: David—Star-Shepherd and King, head of the house whence Jesus would come.
Feel the flow of the ages. Sense the beginning of a new one for yourself, as the spinning of wheels
taking you nowhere, now engage at this year's beginning with an inward spiraling flight to heaven.

The Second Week in Advent

Bible

A Meditation for the Five Senses

Take your Bible into your hands.

Feel the texture of the text—the cover, the binding,
the wholeness of it, the oneness of its many books.

Gaze upon its completeness. The whole of life is before you.

Smell its fragrance. Inhale the breath of life.

Listen to the silence as the book is closed—
as the curtain down before the play begins.

Now open it . . . pause ...

Descend to the place of the day's reading.

Look to the right and left, front and behind at the countless others
beyond your room, yet within your heart, who read and pray with you.

Hear the reading—don't just read it. Hear it together. Go further...

"Taste and see the Lord is good."

This is communion—a sacramental taste of God inside of you.

The Third Week in Advent

Chimes

Winter is here.

Gone are the birds, the sounds of leaves, the laughter of children
playing in the light-long day.

Windows are closed... Silence pervades.

Thus it is that bells and chimes have special power to awaken the soul
delighting the ear in the silence, even as candles bring joy
to the eye in the darkness.

Be careful of enemy noises seeking to turn the attention to the outer,
the frenetic, the hastenings for things and plans.

We're not meant to despise the gifts and even the shopping.

Just be attentive to those bells and gentle chimes yhat call to inwardness,
to quiet, to a space that is hedged about by the Angel of the Lord
so that there can be announced to your heart as to Mary's:

**"You will conceive in your womb
and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus."**

Luke 1:31

The Fourth Week in Advent

***D**arkroom*

A closed space it is—free from the intrusion of unwanted light f
from altering what happened when once a fleeting beam was admitted,
snatched up by the hungry film, etching an image upon it.
The image is bathed in developer, till slowly, the then conceived,
yet unseen form, can withstand the flood of light all about.

Ponder this darkroom time of the year.
Enter its quiet, protected space, where that image of your very self
etched by your Creator from the beginning,
can emerge unaltered into the fullness of the sun.
Bathe yourself in darkness. Trust it, in faith.
Take time to hold the larger lights at bay
so that the Spirit can baptize you in the holy developer
of that quiet inner touch of love and water and fire.
Hold the self in stillness so that the Word of Life
can continue to make its image upon your face...your heart...
the way you walk and live and love.
Spend time each day in God's darkroom—
even if only to close the eyes for some minutes,
holding in check the pressing claims of others
wanting to make you into their image.
Protect the image of you...It is the only one God ever made.
He waits to see it develop to the full, till your face and the face of Jesus
look longingly at each other forever.

Christmas Week

***E**vergreens*

There are a few trees that defiantly resist the choke-hold of the cold,
squeezing away the green of summer.
They are curved into wreathes twisted into garlands,
clustered as centers for the table.
We invite one to visit us, wrenching it from what would have been
its never changing place, asking it to spend its final days
as a member of our family, reminding us of the Life
that has come to the world in Jesus.
When it's all decorated with lights and ornaments of memory
spend time alone with this Christmas guest.

Recall the places and trees of the past. Welcome feelings that well up.
They are—like the branches—something ever-green inside of you,
memories ever-alive, seeking to be expressed for the deeper healings.
And when the season is past, thank the tree—no longer evergreen—
as it takes its place with all its sister trees
whose leaves have long turned brown upon the ground,
making next summer even more green than ever.

Epiphany Week

***F**rankincense*

Gift of the Magi in worship of their King;
trees from Arabia offer resin resembling stone—
rigid, resistant to change ...apparently.
One would think that pouring these pieces of earth onto hot coals,
the fire would go out.
But no. The rocks melt into fire, into air,
sending sizzling sweet-smelling smoke heavenward,
those present ascending to spaces beyond the pull of earth.

Temperaments, moods, dispositions emanate from us either as incense
inviting to worship lifting others up, or
as black smoke from which the other must flee.

Sit. Drop onto the hot coals of the Lord's love for you.
Let go of what is rigid and rock-resistant within.
Blend your incense with the Word of life both swirling heavenward.
Rise. The day is fragrant because you have been transformed by fire.

The Second Week in Epiphany

***G**old*

Kings and gold go together.
And so the Three Kings bring their gifts of gold to the little King who has none.
Yet the three do not know that this is the One
in whom all the earth and gold is found.

Gold: the ultimate possession. Earth holds it ...Heaven gives it away.
What do you claim and cling to as ultimate in life?
Let go. Nothing can be possessed as yours.

Even your body is not yours, but rather a gift given to you
through the One in whom we live and move and have our being.

Yet there *are* two things that are truly ours: thoughts and feelings.
So go to that place deep within where lie these buried treasures and
give them to the Infant King.
They become gold in the offering.

The Third Week in Epiphany

Homing Pigeon

From thousands of miles away, these pigeons will know how to come home, flying constantly until they arrive. Rest comes only then. How do they do it? The mystery remains, yet we know it has something to do with the angle of the sun and its polarized, ultra-violent rays. In a similar way, the sun is the source for how honeybees make their configured dances, each design a special message for the other bees to know where the flowers are with the nectar. Yet homing pigeons seem to have something else—a memory system creating an internal map for them to follow when clouds get in the way of familiar landmarks below.

Home: there's no place like it, as the carol sings. *Welcome Home*—next to *I love you*, are our favorites to hear. We have been created to rest in God alone. St. Augustine wrote: “You have made us for Yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

The outpoured Spirit of Jesus has given you an innate sense of what will bring you home with the Lord—even now, while heaven may seem far away. The map and manual are the Scriptures. When read with faith, they will imprint the directions homeward, and give the energy to keep flying without stopping until the Sabbath rest is complete in Jesus.

Be at home with the Lord in the Word for some precious time each day. Then, when you go about your day, others will find in you a landmark that will invite them also, to come home to Jesus.

The Fourth Week in Epiphany

Ice Dancing

Each of the two perfected dancers across the smooth arena
could well be doing it alone. Less dependent...less risky...
much simpler, it would seem.

But there is a call upon the two to blend themselves
into one ever-changing figure and form,
folding themselves into patterns of silent sailing
across the slippery, open plane.

They spin in cycles only possible by the pulse of now pulling against,
now yielding to the energies in each.

The Trinity could have chosen that the divine dance be done by them alone.
But They decided to create dancers in their image,
so that all could join together and move through life with shapes and designs
decided by the Creator-Father, completed by Jesus, the Son,
in the power of the Spirit.

Ice dance with the Word each day.
Resist going it alone—decisions, plans, relationships
without the clinging to the Spirit who clings like fire to the soul.
Let the choreography of the day be set by the creative interplay
between you and the Word for the day.
Let all the events and people that move into each hour's rounded space
take their shape from the dance
you've well rehearsed in prayer with your God.
Do not fear that some intrusion need have you fall from the hold
that the Lord has upon you.
Bond and blend with your God today as you pray and dance with the Word.

The Fifth Week in Epiphany

Journal

What would have happened if the sacred writers had not completed the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and moved beyond inward hearing to outward writing? There would have been no Bible—only traditions handed down by word of mouth, along with all the impressions of words to ear alone, instead of words to eye. The Bible needed to be written.

However, in addition to preserving the sacred words, the Lord uses the process of writing itself is a way of accessing the soul of the sacred writer. The open space of papyrus or page becomes the arena within which the Word and the writer through alphabets and languages release the creative Word. A journal is a way for this to continue.

A journal originally meant a book of worship for the day hours. It comes from the Latin *diurnalis*, the word “day” being related to the first syllable. Later, the word came to mean the daily happenings that one records.

From the pages of a journal the personal Word of God can well up from their point of origin—the deepest recesses of the spirit. The outcome is determined by the process. There are some things that will not be understood without the struggle—like ice dancers—with the tugging, pulling and yielding that takes place in writing.

As you move through the hours of the day and interplay with the events that sometimes seek to intrude upon your peace, take time—even mere minutes—to stop, pause, write some phrases that will unleash the Spirit. The Lord is actively using what is happening to you along with the Word for the day as a sacred counterpoint to show you God's will, to unfold God's love. God needs your attentive listening, as well as your obedient fingers in writing to give you a more complete expression of God's purposes in your life.

The Sixth Week in Epiphany

Depending on how early Easter is this week, the Seventh and Eighth Weeks in Epiphany may “leap ahead” to the beginning weeks of the season of Pentecost

Kiln

What a darkroom is to a picture, a kiln is to clay cup.
In the one, light is frozen, in the other shape.
Though we need to be pliable for further ongoing shaping by the Lord,
a time comes when shape needs to be fixed...final,
for only a vessel harden by fire can hold the sacred blood of Jesus,
can be a cup of grace outpoured in love upon the other.

Prayer-time is the kiln. Motion ceases.
The fire of the Word increases until the formless in us
takes on the shape of the Creator, until it is set,
able to withstand being reshaped by the preferences of others.
Stay in the kiln until your shape is set.

The Seventh Week in Epiphany

Laser

Light means more than floods of waves of the right length for the eye to see. Rays can now be gathered into a single length and sent in one selected direction, making three additional results of light possible: sounding, printing, and fusing. So too does the Scripture share in these qualities.

First, there is a **FLOODING** of your being with the passage, bathing all of you in the love-light of the Word. The next day's passage could be introduced the night before, so that you can sleep with it, allowing mulling and dreaming to happen, as God's Word blends with the restoration that so beautifully happens in sleep.

“I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night” (Psalm 63:6)

The Word **SOUNDS** within the soul. Listen inwardly to the movement of the passage.

**“Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard
comes through the word of Christ.”**(

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Then there is the **PRINTING** of the Word, as the laser-like quality of the Word is etched, inscribed and written upon the heart. Here a close, meditative reading takes place. What are you going to remember and also memorize about the passage for the day?

**“Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them
around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.” (Pro. 3:3).**

Finally the Word **FUSES** broken, disconnected parts of the mind, as faulty thinking continues to hurt the heart from sins of the past—yours or others. Allow a laser ray to touch attitudes and ways of thinking that need to be soldered and fused by the Spirit. Where in the body does the ray need to penetrate, bringing healing to your body as well?

**“The Spirit of the Lord has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted”
(Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18).**

Everyday, let the Word of God do *all* that it can
to have you transformed into Jesus.

The Eighth Week in Epiphany

Myrrh

This is the last gift of the Magi to Jesus. Just as frankincense, myrrh is a gum resin from trees in the Middle East. The name in Arabic means “bitter.” It was a gift at the beginning of Jesus’ life, to become one at the end—the gift of a Roman soldier to soothe Jesus’ pain while hanging on the cross. While the gift was accepted at the beginning of Jesus’ life, it was refused at the end—no anesthesia to diminish the pain that transformed death into the beginning of resurrected life for Jesus and for us.

Myrrh is a symbol of suffering. Pain has within it, the power to transform. We often seek to mask suffering through activity. Resist this anesthesia—or any other addiction that seeks to bury the pain. Receive and accept suffering—don’t recoil from it. May suffering be a creative force to purify and transfigure our lives.

Lent and Easter: N - Z

The First Week in Lent

Nadir

I recall as a boy, peering into a pure puddle—the surface unruffled by the wind,
perfectly mirroring the clouds suspended somewhere between
the surface of the water and an endless bottom of a blue, inverted heaven.
The gaze down revealed up.
Searching inward unfolded the outward and far away.
In the nadir of the puddle was the zenith of the sky.

The ashes of our sin mix with the desert sands beneath the feet of Jesus.
The salty sweat of the Savior dries crusty upon his face,
Eyebrows knitted as the ancestral journey from the bottom of the Sea
through the wilderness of temptation and fall is traversed again by Jesus.
The nadir of desert temptation and his faithfulness release the promise of
the zenith of Ascension: both together at once. In the bottom is the top.

The hardest bottom gives a ball its highest bounce.
There is no death, no ashes, no loss, no sin but that they become
the surface to allow the fall to become the rise—
the death to become the resurrection.
Surrender to your Jesus at the bottom of the cross and be lifted to highest heaven with him throughout
these precious days.

The Second Week in Lent

Olive Tree

Yearning to embrace resistant Jerusalem with peace,
hundreds of evergreen olive trees cluster and clutter
the mountain to the east, dancing in the breeze,
waving their branches over the city of tumult
seeking to distract those with fists tight and raised in anger against Jesus.
Other tree branches will lie on the road, dead from grief
when “**Hosanna**” becomes “**Crucify.**”
Faithful over their many years, the olives stretch their twisted,
gnarled branches offering fruits to the press,
dying to oval loveliness, till their blood is squeezed out,
becoming the oil of gladness.

Their oil delights the senses:
Sight: light at night, making a way;
Smell: sweet fragrances added to their substance, lifting mind and heart to wider space.
Taste: foods given tenderness in the mouth.
Touch: dried skin becomes soft and moist, anointed for healing and mission,

divine, heavenly life penetrating to earthy, inward depths.

Hearing: silence only, as its awesome, sacramental power plummets us into the depths of prayer.

The Third Week in Lent

Plumb Line

**The Lord was standing beside a wall
built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. Amos 7:7**

The once plumb people of God had become tilted, warped, crooked, off balance
by rebellion, idol worship, and idleness inclining them to the brink of death.

Take the image to the self.

How is it with you and balance, symmetry, steadiness, straightness and stillness?

Sit and do nothing, till you are plumb.

Let the downward pull of your own weight be as a sign of

the inner weight of God's presence,

pulling you inward until you become nothing but a creature centered

and steadied in adoration of the Creator.

Be kind to yourself, as gentle as the hand that steadies the weight from swinging.

Wait till the weight becomes still and you are just there, before your God.

Then go to the Word for the day that will steady you

through the winds of the world that would have you whirl and be dizzy again.

The Fourth Week in Lent

Quarters

Ponder the ways life is divided into quarters: four sides of house and room,
private quarters for rest, quadrants of a clock's circle, quarter hours,
days and nights, quarter time to march or dance, quarts for liquid,
quarters of dollars and games, four directions, four seasons, four Gospels.

Sit in silence, protected and embraced by the fours about you,
whether walls or winds.
In front and back, to right and left is your God and three more-above,
and beneath and within is your God.
The sum of the sacred numbers, three and four makes the most complete
and perfect number—seven.
In these sevenfold sacred spaces does your Triune God dwell
within the walls of your person, now made sacred by divine presence—
the Trinity embraced by you...you embraced by the Trinity.

The Fifth Week in Lent

Rooster

Peter-surrounded by wrong walls, warming himself by wrong fire,
lingers near, but all too far away from his Lord.
That night of accusation, trial and coming murder
freezes the heart of Peter for a time, wearing out the warning of Jesus
just a few hours earlier: Peter would deny he even knew him.

I wonder which rooster it was whose routine, daily early morning call
shook Peter to wakefulness?
All the quaking mind and limbs of Peter
were shattered by that distant cry in the night.
It scratched his soul into recalling what Jesus said.
And then the rush of goodness in the man as weeping washes fear away,
sadness plummeting him to a sober space of waiting
till Jesus looks at him again with love, another morning not far away.

Calls to awakening: what are yours?
Chimes of clocks ...beeps of watches:
they are all it takes to topple those muscle-bound temptations
that throttle and throw you to the ground in your brand of denial of your Lord.
Let the rooster noises of your days be sounds for summoning the soul to sobriety,
Fresh awakening, new awareness, lifting the self into new and sacred space

with all the joy that the forgiving look of Jesus can bring upon the heart.

Holy Week

Supper

The Holy Week: the blood of Jesus writes a sacred script
across the movement of each day and hour,
the intensity of anguish squeezes blood to the surface of his skin.
The last supper this side of the grave becomes
the first supper in a new way of being with Jesus:
bread and wine bear his body and blood—
a promise, a pledge, a peace of being with him, even as he is soon to be taken away in arrest, trail,
death, returning again in resurrection,
leaving again in Ascension, returning still again in a total,
complete way in the Holy Spirit who lives and breathes
the life of Jesus in Eucharist.

No greater closeness could God give than being food.
Outer receiving joins inner hearing, sealing the sacred promise of
supper with the Master—first, last and always.

**“Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking;
if you hear my voice and open the door,
I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.”** (Revelation. 3:20)

Easter Week

Temple

Well before he broke ground for the First Temple,
Solomon yielded to an inner listening,
A mounting energy from the vision of what was to come.
Then came the day when a long string stretched to its limit,
marked the place where this great edifice would come to rise.
The root of “temple”- as its sister word “tense” is “to stretch, to pull,”
making listless string meet the demands of perfect alignment,
perfect centering, from whence buildings spiral upward and outward.

Jesus breaks ground, stretching to limitless rising,
offering his body as the place within for live, for work, for worship.
Every human created rising from the ground
is to find it breathing Jesus’ risen breath.

No place can confine the presence of such a risen Lord.
No time but that which is stretched about, encircled and defined by
the sacred plummeting of Jesus back into our lives,
resurrecting endless cycles of tedium to a rising spiral of divine energy
welling up from the ground of our being, breaking the soil of the soul,
loosening the death grip of all the “whatevers” in our lives to
the “Who” who lives in our midst.

The Holy Week has birthed a Holy Temple.
Jesus is the sacred space whence to breathe resurrection life,
bursting forth into sacred fire.

The Second Week in Easter

*U*niverse

Stillness and silence do not at first unfold slowly spinning spirals
beyond imagining.
We are blended into a uni-verse: one thing that turns.
Earth daily turns on its axis; the yearly circle of earth revolves about the sun; sun rolling about its
place in the galaxy, turning and dancing
with clusters of sun systems.
Somewhere, there is a center to it all, a still point around which everything turns,
making one pulsing, waving entity adoring the Creator at the living center.

In a single verse of God’s word, a uni-verse exists.
Whether telling of good or ill, lists or wisdom, each verse finds its place
in the whole that turns.
Be part of this wider, spiraling converging mass of text
leading deeper and deeper beneath the surface spinning of life,
to that living center of the whole where all is still, joyous, silent, present, laughing, loving,
tender, holding all together.
God knows your dance, its turnings—whether smooth or jagged.
Stop the spin. Yield to the wider dance until, lost in understanding,
you rest in the One who knows all, loves all,
and keeps you in the rocking, turning embrace.

The Third Week in Easter

*V*ine

“I am the vine, you are the branches.”
John 15:5

Vast stretches of rolling earth blanketed with lines upon lines of vines,
grapes heavy in their moist fruit, held aloft, so their faces can see the sun,
gently bounce in the soft breeze.

Each branch, each twig, each fruit finds who it is as long as the inner wine
of the centering Spirit reaches each one; dead ones cut away and burned.

When one looks at the whole, the vine is seen, not the branches—
as thread is lost in the larger whole, disappearing
so the image in the tapestry can leap forth.

Sit in silence.

Descend till you rest by faith in the Vine, touching the point where who you are,
is lost in the look of the whole.

Be no longer alone, apart, but joined as one to the Vine—
one life coursing through yours, connecting you to all who in like manner choose to define their
being as nothing but the bouncing, bouyant, joyful fruit
in the Vine that lives forever.

The Fourth Week in Easter

Wax

A single tongue of fresh fire burns high above from the noble Easter candle— faithful, sturdy, proud,
fruit of countless bees sealing a people into oneness.

Lost in the stately column, the wax of faithfulness is melted into larger love.

How else could a length of string burn on so long!

Without wax, a flash of flame it would be—quick heat and light,
and then a tiny clump of Ash Wednesday again.

The nectar presence of the Spirit is within,
turning what is offered into sacred wax, embracing, surrounding,
covering the wick so that it can hide the sacred fuel for the sacred fire.

You are wax—and whole candle too.

Surround yourself with believing bees, hiding in a hive of Kingdom life.

Be comforted, for you can burn long, when burning in Jesus.

Be joyful. There is no fire like yours when leaping from such a candle.

The Fifth Week in Easter

Xylophone

Bars of wood—*xylon*—ascending in sound—*phone*.
Hear the sounds of cross-wood making a scale till
the octave, Easter to Pentecost, resonates in sweet harmony.
No more the sound of banging, howling, wailing, crying, shouting
of twisted body made straight, hammers pounding hands,
feet and ears with death-dealing sounds.
Silence alone echoes from the cross as Good Friday evening finds
all bodies gone—dead and living.
Only wind's whistle passes through bare beams braced against the sky.

Now the cross is buried into paper-wood.
Word of God sounds forth as the Spirit knocks and skillfully strikes
the soundboard of the heart, echoing sounds of heaven
from selves once dead, now brought to life
as Jesus' touch of love awakens new music in the soul.

The Sixth Week in Easter

Yoke

Yokes bind, burden, but also bless.
A young ox learns to pull the plow, blended with a brother beast
who knows the pace and patient plodding of the path
for the new seeds' growth.
Never alone—always together as the life-work moves.

So in Jesus, who invites you to take his yoke heavy with the world's weight,
yet light now because the crossbeam yoke has broken the harsh
resistance to love, to goodness, flowing now the lighter,
since always yoked with Christ in the pull-power of the Spirit.
So learn from this meek and humble Lord ever at your side, always teaching, always pulling, till the
whole field of your life is sown with the Word.

The fields are planted.
Yokes and oxen rest while gently day by day, sun and rain draw food and flowers
from the moist earth, soon to send their leaves dancing in the breeze.

The Seventh Week in Easter

Zenith

A half-year has passed since its nadir when winter's cold
felt the warmth of Advent's first candle.
A tiny light won over the enveloping black.
Each day the Sun pushed aside the dark on either end of winter's day and night,
passing through springtime's midway point, on to the summer-zenith
soon to come.

Nadir of Lent becomes zenith of Ascension.
Disciples dizzy from the upward look strain to catch a final glimpse of
their Master disappearing behind the clouds.
From the contemplative, downward gaze upon God's nadir descent
as the Christ in the manger,
to the upward stretch of the eyes to see him
in the zenith of the skies—
God's grace in Christ moves wider and fuller into the year, into life.

What is completed, is beginning again.
Wait with Mary and the apostles in novena days.
The Spirit is coming into the nadir-bottom of your soul,
lifting you now to the zenith-height of heaven's life.

Pentecost: A - M

The First Week in Pentecost

Depending on how late Easter is this week and the next may "leap back" to the end of the season of Epiphany.

Arc

Two points inseparably distant embrace in the union of a fire leap.
Standing rigidly apart, creative kinship bonds the two,
eternally made to face each other.
There is the Father, there is the Son and the leaping love between them:
the Holy Spirit.
There is God—there is you, and the Spirit—arc of fire across the gap.
There is the Bible soaked in sacred speaking;
there is your ear soaked in sacred silence,
And the Word becomes flesh in yours through the leaping joy of the Holy Spirit.

Pause to poise before you listen.
Ready yourself to hear the ageless Word become the now-Word for you—
just for you—as though yours is the only face
that stands before the face of God.

The Second Week in Pentecost

***B**each Ball*

Airless, flat, dusty, hidden, the plastic wrinkled mass made it through
the cold of winter and the hope of spring.
Now breath makes it rise to global fullness, barely touching the earth and water,
dancing freely in the kindred air that puffs about it.
Down it plunges as children play and push it beneath the surf,
pressing upward as though gasping for the very air of which it's made,
joyous in its upward surge as at last the children yield the hold and let it go.

Energies from within the soul seek to make their way above,
pushed relentlessly to drowning depths.
Call these energies by basic, beach ball names:
ANGER, FEAR, SADNESS, JOY, LOVE.
Get out of their way till they rise and dance about
on the sacred waters of your soul.

The Third Week in Pentecost

***C**lock*

As old as my memory, the face of a family clock has been turned toward mine.
In steady, relentless rhythm, the hands weave and wave the minutes
in the space of each hour.

The clock rests beside the person of the hour with whom I seek to pastor,
to listen and share the Word of life.
The face of that other changes often—brows bent in resentment,
arched in fear, bowed in weeping uplifted in joy.
So many changes beside that other changeless face that simply and silently points
to the moment in the hour's space of feeling's shift.
And wisdom comes again:

**A moment's intensity is never greater
than the flow of time. "This too shall pass."**

The Fourth Week in Pentecost

***D**rink*

It's summer and everything is drinking in liquid life all about.
Rounded glasses filled with pleasure or poison, punctuate patios of restful ease.

Your soul too—from what does it drink to quench its endless thirst?
Wells of living water lie silently beneath Bible pages.
Pick up and drink.
Sip slowly and sigh your YES to all that wants to flow into your soul,
until it—like the water-well itself—is nothing but the Lord's liquid life.

The Fifth Week in Pentecost

Eyes

Signs that say "DO NOT TOUCH" adorn the shops of delicate figures.
So let it be for the thoughts and things of the soul.
Look at, but do not touch—or much less handle or wrestle—
those thoughts from darkness and death that thrash about from within,
seeking to have you grasp at them till they topple you and hold you
to the ground, refusing to let go.
Give them—without touching them—to the Lord of all thoughts.

What about those thoughts that lead toward light and life?
Receive them, treasure them, hold them gently in open hands.
Watch the Spirit weave them into creations of delight before your very eyes.
Then, you will not have to touch them, for they will be one with your hands
that touch others till they quiver with life.

The Sixth Week in Pentecost

Firestarter

A block of burnable bits, pressed tight, lodged among logs,
willing to burn and disappear, as long as logs linger with fire.

Clear the space of the hearth of the heart.
Allow your breathing to become quiet, deep, regular, rhythmic—
each exhale as a sacred sigh that sweeps the self
of all the ashes of yesterday's pain, of any concern other than
the one that is about to happen: you becoming the Word.

The minute's meditation presenting the Word is meant
to further the mellowing of the heart, moving it to readiness
to receive the fire of the Spirit to burn on,
just as the bush that lit and warmed the heart of father Moses forever.

The Seventh Week in Pentecost

Gears

He was a brave man who took me on in my later years to learn the guitar.
The music in my spirit grabbed all at once at the fingers, making them spasm
in tightenings and loosenings.

With an accent from Italy, tinged with impatience he blurted:
“You've got to practice slowly. The movements of the hand
are like many tiny gears that must meet and mesh perfectly
so the music's whole can happen.”

Magnify the gaze at the many movements of your heart's hands
that freeze in fear, or ring with rage.
Look at your frenzied heart through the glass of God's Word
till you can see in large space, just how to move.
Then, with joyful ease, your soul will sing the music that magnifies the Lord.

The Eighth Week in Pentecost

Hurricane

Islands where hurricanes abound are so often those of the poor.
Theirs are not storm-proof homes.
When the great winds come, the door in the front and the door in the back
must be open to welcome the unfriendly guest, and show him the way out.
The alternative? A sure explosion from within.

So too with the humble house of the soul.
When the winds of arrogance, judgment, hatred, guilt and shame
threaten to blow the self away, be sure that the door in the front
and the door in the back are open wide, letting all the angry winds
pass straight through, till the gentle winds of the Spirit return
and breathe softly across your soul.

The Ninth Week in Pentecost

Ink

Wood-pounded, mashed, soaked, dried, is what you hold right now—
paper made white to bear pen's piercing mark..

Body—pounded, mashed, soaked, open, is Jesus on that wooden death—
heart pierced to open the sacred flow.

Ink—it means to burn.

Old burnt offerings are no longer needed; only the heart aflame will do for God .

Take the open, white space that waits to serve you.

Pause, pen poised for the promptings of God, calling you to be poet and prophet

Faithful to the peace the Spirit gives.

Let the Spirit shape the fingers as you watch and see the Word become flesh, burning the
paper—burning the heart.

The Tenth Week in Pentecost

Juggling

I never was very good at baseball.

That is why I loved that day on the beach many years ago,
when my body arched above in motion slow,
to catch the friendly Frisbee saucer.

I thought that this must be a game for heaven.

I once saw someone juggle ten of these, flinging them into the upper air
of the circus tent, easily, quietly receiving and dispatching each
as they playfully returned to the hand that made sure
they would be borne on air again.

What patience, what falls, what discouragement must have been
in the life of that artist till he could fling those airy discs
as easily as breathing in and out!

So much comes your way to juggle—you know the list.

Practice slowly—a few at a time, till many plots and peoples
and places can revolve about your life, while you watch it all,
just as the folks in the bleachers do...and the Lord of heaven and earth.

The Eleventh Week in Pentecost

Knots

None was better than Dad at casting a four-ounce weight into the sea,
sinking and searching for a catch.

Before I got the knack, the knot came—huge ...endless...

making the smoothly spinning reel an inert mass of mess,

slowly to be unwound, unpuzzled so that the flow could happen again.

Like a faithful pet, Dad's pole would patiently wait beside him,

as he turned his eyes from the preferred outward, seaward,
longing look, to the close search for the answer, so I could cast again.

Backlashes, they're called—life spinning too fast
for gentle control and directing movement.
Look at the spool of life with its minutes and hours that unroll for you.
How does it feel—this reel?
Wait...watch...letting your Father take your life into his lap, teaching you
how to unravel the knots, so you can cast out into the deep again.

The Twelfth Week in Pentecost

Loops

Look long at the looping of life.
Far and wide it swings out, seeking a point of return to stop,
to gather, to nourish, to let go, to forgive, and with love's energy,
to move out wider yet.

Where are the points of return, of pause for your spirit?
Daily let the Word connection be one of those places
that makes crosses on the face of life.

Let Jesus set fire to that place of intersection, igniting your heart again
launching it into the wide expanse, going freely and joyfully.

That still point will return when rest for the soul will be offered,
only to gather yet wider loops into the harvest of love that is your life.

The Thirteenth Week in Pentecost

Metal Detector

As though itself coming to the end of a long day in the sun,
summer is almost past.

Sands have been pounded, dug, thrown and mixed with many a treasure.
Now is the time for the gentle detective dancers,
armed with Geiger's divining rod, to sweep across the gridded expanse,
eager to catch the beeps of beach buried treasures longing to be lifted,
though hopeless to be returned to the ones who grieve their loss.

Silently buried beneath Bible print lie the treasures of the Word of life,
waiting, hoping that you will make the sweeping dance across its lines,
resurrecting their life in the flesh of the heart.

Sounds of recognition, delight, hope, and strength leap from page to heart.

Note the place.

Catch the treasure lying there, just for you, waiting since the first writing
to have you receive it, so that its revelation power can live in you—
and through you, can touch the heart of the next person longing to believe.

Kingdomtide: N - Z

The First Week in Kingdomtide

Nose

God looked upon a space of clay, reached forward, gathered it caressed it,
shaped it into a mound of nose, then breathed into it and Adam was created.

So it was that the nose was the first part of Adam's anatomy.

Breath from inside God to inside Man came first—an air link that bonded
the two together...essences blending—divine and human.

All of God's creation and the Creator too, are taken in and breathed forth
in gratitude and surrender.

Thus the first sense to be created was smell.

Smells restore to the origin of things: familiar fragrances fly us back
over time and space.

Past becomes present in an instant.

Autumn: season of fullness is season of remembrance.

Children leap to a new school grade. We take the cue and do the same.

Smell deeply.

Let life be restored by memories that though they hurt, can also heal.

Cycles of breath, fill and empty; cycles of life, empty and fill.

The Second Week in Kingdomtide

Oak

The voice of the year changes with each season:

SPRING: former dark and silent mornings now engraved by song of birds from choir branches in the ever increasing light.

SUMMER: soothing swish of full-blown leaves in the breeze.

AUTUMN: rhythmic, crispy crunch of leaves as children march to school.

WINTER: whistle of wind as air skates between frozen branches.

All the sounds come from trees: faithful messengers of seasons' change.

Yet there is one more sound of autumn:

acorns from great oaks bouncing and pinging on sidewalks and streets.

Though most never wed to earth to rise again as another oak,
still are their gentle jolts as the Creator's knocking at soul's door,
that the Word not bounce off and die, but find entry
into moist hearts in any season, there to bear fruit
as Word becomes flesh in yours.

The Third Week in Kingdomtide

Pencil

Hovering over the relentless movement of time from past to future
is the point called NOW.

The goal: perfect at-one-ment with the now,
as the contented feeling of being on a journey,
enjoying the changing landscape, never preferring the scene just past,
or impatient for the beauty to come.

Each moment of the journey is worthy to be journaled, drawn.

The secret: self suspended above the moment, like a pencil standing on its end,
open palm pressing the eraser, balanced to support the hand.

A move away from the vertical...the hand falls.

When guilt and shame push from the present, when fear of future
nudges from now, a fall takes place, a bruise on the spirit.

So take the now and sink into it:

“The Point of Power Is the Present.”

The Fourth Week in Kingdomtide

Quilt

Calendar days are square
so weeks and months and seasons can be stitched together.
Each day's portion of the quilt bears colors, feelings, revelations unique to each—
none to be repeated.
Every minute and hour offer microscopic shafts of colors
of their own to the great quilt.
Though shocking be the present moment's jolting news, stunning one to fear,
time's flow stopping in the gaping of the mouth—still, the intensity
of their colors soon find their place in the expanse of the larger season's quilt.

Live each day colored by the tapestry of God's Word weaving minutes and hours
into a masterpiece of God's making.
No one can destroy what God intends to do. Trust God.
The quilt is in God's hands, though your fingers do the stitching.

The Fifth Week in Kingdomtide

Rainbow

Light and water meet, spreading the parents of all colors from earth's end to end.
God's promise to Noah is posted in the sky again.
But rainbows are rare.
We need regular mindings of God's delightful color presence.
Take the Bible and blend rainbow colors into it,
each day's passage passing one color to the next.

Sunday: Gospel *GOLD*
Monday: Prophet *PURPLE*
Tuesday: Dark *BLUE* of Old Testament Days
Wednesday: Psalm's *GREEN* Pastures
Thursday: New Testament *ORANGE*
Friday: The *RED* Blood of Christ's Gospel
Saturday: Torah's Royal *BLUE*
Color your days with the feel of God's promise.

The Sixth Week in Kingdomtide

***S**streams*

Down the sacred mountain peak of transfigured time,
three streams have been flowing separately,
now converging one upon another, meeting as they join the level earth
in one great, sweet river of adoration:

Evangelical energy in God's total Word
Pentecostal power in the Spirit outpoured
Liturgical light in the dance of worship.

Drink from these three streams as they descend ever deeper into the earth,
meeting the Living Water that gushes from beneath
sending the streams mountain high again—this time, together.

The Seventh Week in Kingdomtide

***T**rapeze*

A short man walks meekly amid myriad faces.
He lifts himself above the crowd to a high trapeze where he can do
what no one else can: three and a half times whirling from his swing
into the arms of his brother who receives him
till they perch on the platform on the other side.
The crowd beneath watches with breath suspended as he spins,
like a machine's gear gone wild in disconnected flight
till it stops with perfect engagement in the cog of the brother gear.
What grace, practice, trust and risk go into these gasping seconds of life!
Arms stretch out to let go and receive.
What will be is grasped only by letting go of what was.

Be as this artist.
Stand with hands outstretched to your brother Jesus
whose arms are cross-stretched to receive you,
taking you into Paradise space now.

The Eighth Week in Kingdomtide

Usher

A modest, humble task, it would seem—pointing out a place to sit.
The root of the parent from ancient Latin gives more life to the pointing.
It means **OPENING**.

Think of the grace of taking one
whose being is closed in fear to what is opening forth:
the mouth of the Word—an opening in God's arms—
an embrace that needs an open heart.

The usher is the link between what is open and closed.
So simple to do—a smile, a hand, a gesture of welcome so gentle
that what is tight in the other becomes loose.
This tiny moment of welcome at worship
opens countless meetings with people after.
Will you let yourself be open to the Lord, so that with this same gift
others can enter into the open side of Jesus
where saving blood and water flow?

The Ninth Week in Kingdomtide

Violin

It soars, it stretches, it strains—so does the sound of heaven sing in the strings.
How joyous must the wood feel, wedded to wire, waiting for the drawing touch!

If the wood would speak, someone once imaged it saying:

“Dum in silvis, silui--Nunc mortua, cano.”
“While I was in the forest, I was silent.
Now that I'm dead, I sing.”

The Tenth Week in Kingdomtide

Well

If you were told to be on the lookout for a thief that wants to get at you,
you would suppose that you would need to see all the avenues of approach,
supposing the enemy would come from without.

But the enemy lurks inside already, lodging between the old stuff
in the cellars of our lives, past generations and experiences
that pile up in uninventoried abandon in the forgotten corners of the soul.

No discouragement, now!

For beneath your house, far below your cellar, there is a well of water alive.

It unleashes its upward surge to refresh, whenever you open the precious Word
expectant to find the Water of life leap forth,
rushing with the Spirit's healing, loving, ever new power
to wash away the debris, filling your house with the fragrant,
sweet waters of life.

You will never thirst again, for Christ has decided never to withdraw
the flow of His blood or His water from you.

But your heart: will it be open?

The Eleventh Week in Kingdomtide

Xerography

It is as taken for granted these days, as writing with a pen:
that ink dust could come to life at electric's command,
lining up perfectly with the blackened image that hovers over it;
in a second comes a copy of a masterpiece of many hours.

Ashes and toner—the same in the Spirit.

When we are spiritually dead—self burned away—
then our ashes are ready to come to life,
taking the shape as a perfect spirit-copy of the master—Christ.

When we have nothing left to hold,
making no changes of shape or contour on our own,
then we can be formed, changed, transformed into the likeness of Him
who died for us that we might live.

Open the Bible.

Let it hover over you, page by page, till you become the flesh version today
of what once was sweat and flesh and blood and praise
in the inspirations of past millennia.

The Twelfth Week in Kingdomtide

Year

Horos: “that which passes” parents the words “year” and “hour.”

Year—a circle, a cycle path of earth about the sun; hour—
clock's hands dropping and lifting in constant dance.
Some despaired in thinking that such cycles
would be endless repeatings of the same—
locked into some predetermined madness.
But spirals they are, not circles.
Returns yes, but an ever-forward movement up,
as “always the same” mixes with “always new,” generating excitement
for the next moment to come.
Now the Bible cycles and spirals in life, making a torque through the very center,
changing routine works and habits into new possibilities .
The Word, ever old, ever new, blends repetitions in passages spiraling themselves deeper into the
soul.
Civic dates becomes sacred days in sacred weeks.
Calendars become soaked in Spirit time, as each day's Word becomes
the Divine presence pressing against the hours and the years,
returning triennially, lifting the soul ever upward.
**“Heaven and earth will pass away,
but My words will by no means pass away” (Matt. 24:35).**

The Thirteenth Week in Kingdomtide

Zoom Lens

I need a zoom lens for this year that is over, an inner eye that can
widen the angle to catch the whole landscape from the first Advent Candle
to the exalted light of Christ the King.
And then a turning of the lens zooms into an hour and minute's meaning,
as each is cycled into days that make wholeness of the year,
as some great search for clues or fingerprints.

A tiny drop of blood carries with it the whole of a life's unique, wide expanse.
So too, the way you live each moment
says something about how your whole year is,
for every moment's *yes* or *no* to life sets the flow of time's next movement,
just as the energy of the flow is released by repentance.
Whatever you see—whether close up or far away—
is filed away in the pages of the Book of Life, ever to be perfected
as you pause and relish each page,
creating change by grace in the empty pages that lie stretched out before you.

