

# between

Advent Reflections and  
Practices for the Holy "Not Yet"



beautifulē



what did i see to be except myself?  
i made it up here on this bridge  
**between** starshine and clay.

—LUCILLE CLIFTON, *won't you celebrate with me*

Creator's Word became a flesh-  
and-blood **human being** and  
pitched his sacred tent among us,  
living as one of us.

—JOHN 1:14, FIRST NATIONS INDIGENOUS TRANSLATION

If we are to remember our cosmic origins,  
if we are to recognize the **star-stuff in our**  
**bodies**, if we are to understand our  
biogenetic connections one to another,  
then we need more mystery, not less.

—REV. DR. BARBARA HOLMES, *CRISIS CONTEMPLATION*



# Welcome, Beloveds. I am glad that you are here.

In Christian tradition, the season of Advent is when we both prepare our hearts to anticipate the incarnation of God through the birth of Jesus, and anticipate the promised second coming of Christ. It's the time of year when we can reflect on our waiting, our longing, our unfulfilled desires, and all the places in life where we find ourselves between seasons—in the holy 'not yet'.

Before moving too quickly to Christmas, we get to pause and lean into the present moment, whatever this moment looks like in your life. Maybe this year has stretched you in ways you couldn't have imagined a year ago. Maybe you have enjoyed a "me season" where life has met you with blessings and the fulfillment of many dreams. Maybe you have experienced loss that shattered your heart into little pieces that you are still trying to gather up. Either way, we are all together in the present moment between something—between what was and has been, and what will ultimately be. Advent is the perfect time to settle in.

In addition to being between life circumstances, we also carry a 'betweenness' in our bodies. We are, by design, created to be between 'starshine and clay,' as mystic and poet Lucille Clifton wrote. Like Jesus, we are both cosmic and carnal. Our own bodies teach us to hold the in-between.

As we embark on this Advent journey together over the next four weeks, you are invited to consider the following devotional reflections and creative contemplation exercises themed on four things that have served myself and others well in the between spaces: grief, beauty, rest, and imagination.

Take a deep inhale. Now slowly exhale.

Breathe these words:

**Here in the holy 'not yet', I can settle while I'm between.**

—Leonetta



# How to Use This Guide

For each of the four weeks of Advent, there is a devotional reflection, art, a set of journaling exercises, a breath prayer, and a creative contemplative practice related to that week's theme. The themes all speak to invitations that can serve us well during the between seasons we find ourselves in; grief, beauty, rest, and imagination. I encourage you to give all the exercises a try. But above all else, let the Spirit guide you to what is generative and helpful. Move and skip around the content of the guide as it best suits you. This year, the fourth Sunday of Advent falls on Christmas Eve so feel free to begin week four exercises early or extend them throughout the Christmas week.

In addition, on page 30, there is a "Playlist for the Holy 'Not Yet'" that can be played throughout the weeks. Don't wait until the end of Advent to discover this resource! The songs were curated to reflect the season and to encourage you. Finally, there is some collage art by collage artist Yvonne McCoy included in this guide that I hope will also speak to you. I encourage you to use the art as a gateway to deeper reflection using a practice of Visio Divina, or 'divine seeing.' Hold an image in your gaze and notice what comes up for you in response. What stands out to you? What emotions or thoughts come to you as you look upon the image?

However you engage the resources, let the journey be your own without any judgments or expectations.



# grief



Week 1: December 3 - December 9

17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken  
by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:  
“A voice was heard in Ramah,  
Lamentation, weeping, and great  
mourning, Rachel **weeping for her children,**  
Refusing to be comforted,  
Because they are no more.”

-MATTHEW 2:17-18

One must say yes to life and **embrace it**  
whenever it is found—and it is found in  
terrible places; nevertheless, there it is.

-JAMES BALDWIN

There is no chance that we will fall  
apart There is **no chance**  
There are **no part**

-JUNE JORDAN, POEM NUMBER TWO ON BELL'S THEOREM, OR THE NEW  
PHYSICALITY OF LONG DISTANCE LOVE



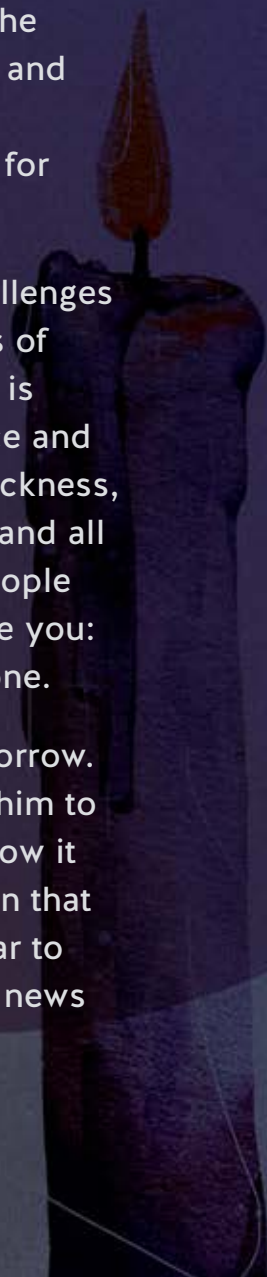
Week 1: December 3 - December 9

# Grief

This time of year can be both the best of times and the worst of times—all at the same time. Even though I will lean into my annual holiday traditions of going to the Nutcracker ballet, adorning every nook and corner of the house with my collection of nativity scenes from around the world, and watching too many Hallmark holiday movies praying to see some Black people, I will do so weaving in and out of joy and sorrow. There is much to grieve in this season. Personally and collectively. The last few years of my life have brought waves of disappointment. Chronic illness chipped away at the contours of my family, and once smooth areas have become jagged and painful to touch. For far too long, we have found ourselves between treatments, between therapies, between illnesses, and always pining for healing.

Our collective hearts have also been breaking. In addition to the challenges in our personal lives—relationship struggles, caring for parents, perils of parenting, financial hardships, and more—the social fabric of society is ripping at the seams. Polarization is at an apex of crazy. Gun violence and mass shootings are dominating our “thoughts and prayers.” Anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, and Antisemitism have fueled violence in the streets, and all this while state sanctioned oppression and war is killing innocent people before our eyes. Don’t let the glad tidings of comfort and joy deceive you: there is room for your grief in this season, and you do not grieve alone.

It’s easy to forget that the birth of Jesus happens in the context of sorrow. It is this birth that activates the fragility of King Herod and compels him to begin a mass murder of all young children in Bethlehem or as we know it today, Occupied Palestine. The collective punishment that children in that time experienced as a result of the birth of Jesus seems eerily similar to the present day reality of many in that same region. Daily, we watch news



reports that seem to mirror the biblical Christmastime tragedy referred to as the Massacre of the Innocents (Matthew 2:16). There are still voices in Ramah (or modern al-Ram) weeping and mourning, with many of us joining them from all around the world, in sorrow.

So this is Christmas. A time for grief. It is in this time that we allow ourselves to feel into our sorrow and be held within it by a God that chose to be born into a world full of pain.

There have been times in the past few years that I have been scared of my grief. I feared that if I allowed myself to fully feel into the depths of sorrow that I might fall into a space that I might never ascend from. Gently easing myself into and out of touching my own pain created not a pit of despair, but a path to my own liberation. In grief, we learn to accept what we cannot change. We acknowledge the chasm between what we would hope for, and what is before us now.

I have learned and experienced that anger is a secondary emotion. Behind it, is actually deep sadness and grief. I believe that grief is also a secondary emotion. Behind it, just under its skin, is actually profound love. We grieve because we love.

While this season of longing and waiting is here, let's allow our grief carry us deeper into our own hearts and into the heart of God. There, in between our hope for the future and our present reality, may we together find a little more spaciousness for our own healing and the healing of the world.



# Journal Reflection Questions

1. In the words of social justice activist and public theologian Ruby Sales; “Where does it hurt?”
2. Is there grief in your life right now that has been difficult to feel? Does focusing on the love beneath your grief open up more space to feel?
3. As you watch the sorrow and grief in war-torn areas around the world, how can you express your grief?
4. Grief need not be a solo act and lament is often a communal practice. Who are the people in your life with whom you can be honest with about your sorrows?



## Breath Prayer

Throughout the week, we invite you to find a few moments to center and focus on your breath.

***Inhale:***            **My grief is rooted in love**

***Exhale:***            **I will not be afraid of sadness**



## Week 1 Grief Contemplative Exercise

# Draft a Love Letter

Creator God knit us together with the capacity to feel all of the feels. There are no emotions too big or too difficult for God, even our most agonizing grief and anger. If you examine your own grief, you may agree that it is an emotion fueled by love. For this exercise, we're going to get underneath our grief, identify what we deeply love, and speak to it.

### What you will need:

- Any medium you want to use to write a letter

### Description of the activity

Take 15 minutes in contemplative solitude to reflect on an area of grief in your life. Some of us might have several areas of present pain. If this is you, ask the Spirit to support you in choosing one.

Contemplative solitude can happen a number of ways and there is no right way to do it. It can look like sitting quietly in a meditative posture, going on a walk, or participating in a communal experience like a healing circle or connecting at a soul level with a friend. Whatever form it takes, allow yourself to hold the question: what is grieving my heart in this season and why?

Once you have identified a grievance you want to explore, take a few more moments to pause and consider: What does this grievance reveal about the love behind my sorrow? If I were to focus on the love that fuels my grief, what would I say?

After sitting with those feelings, it's time to write. Your invitation is to write a love letter to the person, place, or thing behind your grief. For example, if your grief is about the challenges of a child's illness, you could write a love letter to the child. If it is about the state of race-based violence against Black people, you might write a love letter to Black people. If your heart is broken about the war and atrocities happening in Palestine and Israel, you might write a letter to the Palestinian or Israeli people. If you are grieving something about yourself, write a love letter to you!

As you prepare to write, consider some components of a good love letter; recalling a memory, sharing what you love about the recipient, sharing how the recipient changed you, and reaffirming your love and commitment.

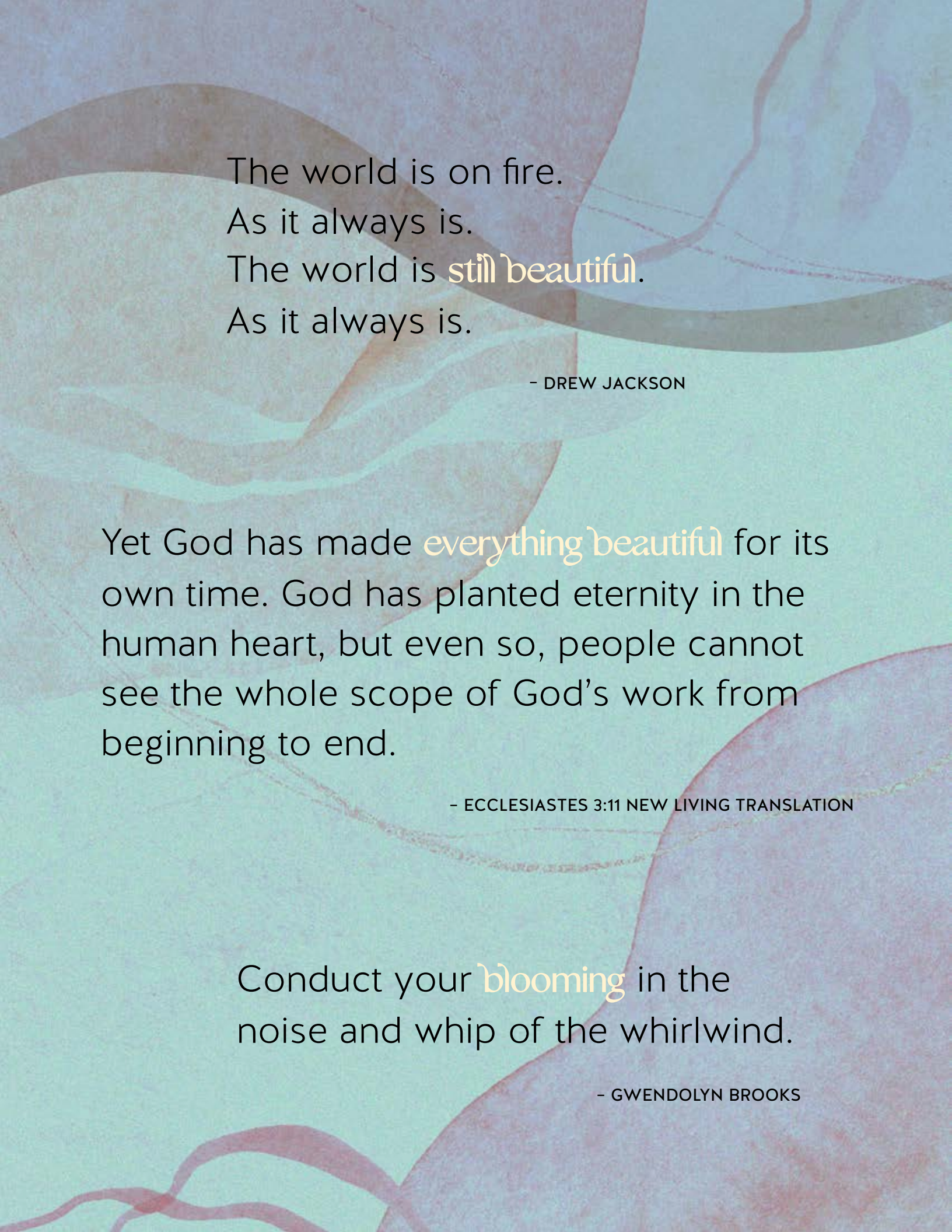


# beauty



Week 2: December 10 - December 16





The world is on fire.  
As it always is.  
The world is **still beautiful**.  
As it always is.

- DREW JACKSON

Yet God has made **everything beautiful** for its own time. God has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

- ECCLESIASTES 3:11 NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

Conduct your **blooming** in the noise and whip of the whirlwind.

- GWENDOLYN BROOKS



Week 2: December 10 - December 16

# Beauty

I love creating beauty. Whether it is making a four-foot long fruit charcuterie board with honeycomb, persimmons, figs, pomegranate, and all the best of the season's harvest presented over fresh green garnish, or thoughtfully curating a color-coordinated wellness gift set for a friend, or just making everyday things a little more delightful with intention, I am an aesthete through and through.

Beauty sometimes catches our breath and startles us with wonder like, "how can it be that a sunset can create those kinds of fuschia and purple brushstrokes across the sky?" or "how can the palette of fall colors throughout nature give us so much vibrant life in the midst of their own death?" And at this time of year, there is a type of beauty that is abundant in the twinkle of holiday lights, the scent of pine needles and the warmth of cinnamon that makes us feel cozy and nostalgic.

I liken beauty to God. It is everywhere, all the time, with us in both the most glorious and most harrowing of places. It is up to us to perceive its presence. Beauty is not just superficial attraction, it is whatever draws us into a more true and honest connection with the Divine. Because of this, beauty is not just relegated to pretty things like charcuterie boards. It is not set aside for those who do not suffer. It is not merely accessible to those with enough wealth, power, and privilege to insulate themselves from the 'ugly' things of life.

Today I watched a video of a Palestinian journalist and father whose home had been bombed. The father dug through the rubble that once was his home searching for his five children. His bare hands were no match for the rugged mountain of concrete, but he persisted anyway. "I need to find them to say goodbye—to bury them," he says through tears that carved river beds down his ash-covered face.



With the help of an also battered and grieving community, he does find the bodies of his children. “You beat me to paradise,” he says tenderly as he wipes the brow and kisses the face of one child recovered from the rubble.

As the tears now come down my face it isn't just the sheer ludicrousness of war, or the pain of loss, that sears my heart. It is the devastating beauty of the love of a father. Love that would literally move mountains for the possibility to hold you one last time and say goodbye. How can this be that something so gritty and so steeped in sorrow can evoke beauty at the same time?

An honest reflection of the Christmas story is beautiful in contrasting ways. God coming to us through the womb of an unmarried teenager as a vulnerable wiggly baby, to have an animal feeding trough as a first crib, and then to immediately flee from a maniacal infant killer is a tale of hard things (Matthew 2:16). Yet the story holds beauty in unexpected places—a shining symbol in the night sky perceived by those wise ones who recognize its meaning. The message of liberation that comes to the shepherds keeping watch, “one has come that will set his people free” (Luke 2:11).

When the angel Gabriel visits Mary and begins to tell her of the honor bestowed upon her, the angel describes the beauty that is to unfold; a son to be born, one that will be greatly honored and will lead a never ending kingdom and more. In between the reality of what is, and the foretelling of what is to come, the beauty of the vision captures Mary as she considers it and her simple retort is, “How can this be?”

Finding beauty in unexpected places is a spiritual practice. We do not ‘beauty-wash’ the horrors of our personal pains, or those communal horrors too often born from lies of supremacy. But we can recognize beauty as our inheritance as children of God. Beauty reminds us that we are not simply enduring the suffering of our lives without glimpses of the eternal. Between all we hope for and what currently is, beauty is all around us, wooing us deeper into the present moment and deeper into our connection with the eternal.



# Journal Reflection Questions

1. When you think of beauty, what comes to mind?
2. When was the last time that you have been gobsmacked with wonder and glory of something beautiful and thought, "How can this be?"
3. Think about something that you are longing for in this season. Where in this scenario can you identify beauty or something that reminds you of your divine nature or the divine nature of others involved?
4. What do you do when you recognize something as beautiful? How do your body and heart respond?

The background of the lower half of the page features two lit candles on the left, with a large, glowing, textured orb on the right. The entire scene is set against a dark blue gradient background.

## Breath Prayer

Throughout the week, we invite you to find a few moments to center and focus on your breath.

***Inhale:*** Beauty is my birthright.

***Exhale:*** In joy or sorrow,  
it cannot be kept from me.



## Week 2 Beauty Contemplative Practice

# Beauty Hunt

“I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don’t notice it. People think pleasing God is all God cares about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back.”

– ALICE WALKER, THE COLOR PURPLE

Beauty is always present and wooing us to deeper awareness. In this practice, you will walk around in search of beauty in your natural surroundings.

### What you will need:

- Time and space to take a walk

### Description of the activity

Set aside 20 minutes to take a walk. Leave your earphones at home to allow yourself to be more present to the natural sounds and beauty of your landscape.

As you walk, your task is to come into greater awareness of something that brings you delight. Maybe it is the sight of a parent dotting on a child, the shape of an icicle formed from the slow dance of melting and freezing, or the feeling of the leaves or snow crunching under your shoes. Whatever draws you in, give yourself a few moments to study and appreciate the sound, shape, texture, feeling, or emotion that is bringing you delight.

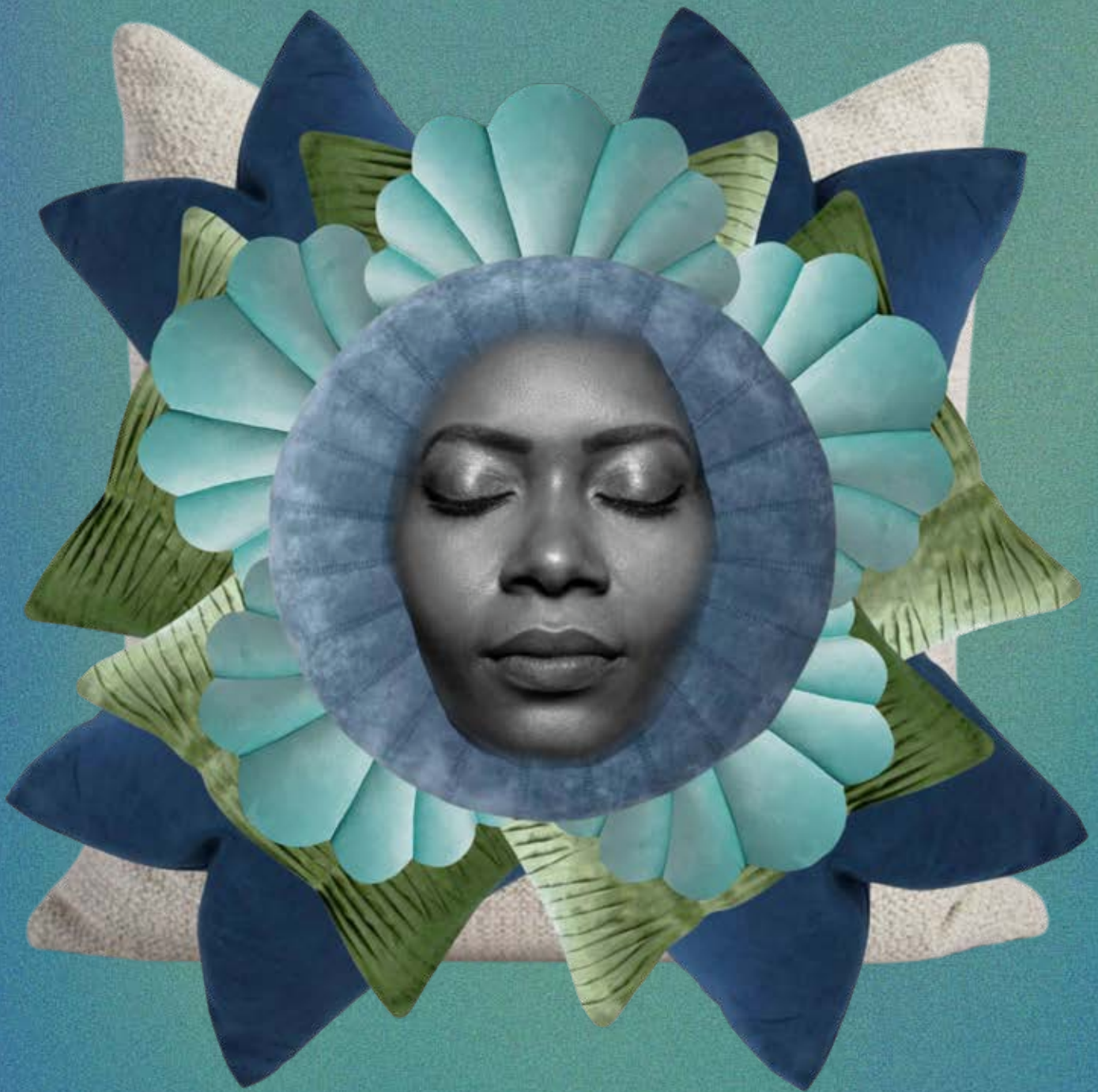
One particular invitation I invite you to on your beauty hunt is to look up. Be sure to take a moment to look up at the sky and consider its expanse. We often move about our days without considering the vast beauty above us.

Like the wise people who recognized the star of the newborn king, ask God to allow you to continue to perceive the beauty and glory around you as you conclude your walk.

As you prepare to write, consider some components of a good love letter; recalling a memory, sharing what you love about the recipient, sharing how the recipient changed you, and reaffirming your love and commitment.




Week 3: December 17 - December 23



rest





Truth is I'm tired.

-TAMELA MANN

Rest is not the reward **for our liberation**, nor something we lay hold of once we are free. It is the path that delivers us there.

-COLE ARTHUR RILEY, *THIS HERE FLESH*

Rest is a meticulous **love** practice.

-TRICIA HERSEY, *REST IS RESISTANCE*

Week 3: December 17 - December 23

# Rest

After months of midday rendezvous with my therapist, she became a bit exasperated and picked up her little white board to draw a picture for me. “This is you,” she pointed with the dry erase marker, making a dot that looked like she had poked a hole in my sketched out chest. I appeared to be inside a wheel—my limbs stretching out like spokes in four directions. “You are being stretched to the point of breaking.” She said, as gently as she could muster. “It’s you, or the job,” she concluded, “You have to choose.” Despite this dramatic visualization, it was still months before I exhausted all my fears and excuses and very reluctantly chose myself and quit my job.

It was during the sabbatical that followed when I learned that rest does not come easy for those of us conditioned for production. “You have to stay three ahead because you will be put two back” was the refrain I heard on the drive to school in the morning from my father who wanted to prepare me for the world in which I would have to prove my worthiness.. Being in a Black body, identifying as a Black woman, meant working hard to keep up. The bodies of Black women have always been desecrated in this country to serve the needs of a system that did not love us back. Our intellect, our wombs, our creativity, our labor, our compassion, and our advocacy have laid the foundations of the experiment we call America.

Between the whispers of capitalism, grind culture, strong Black women tropes and the perpetual need for a strong Black woman, rest does not easily fall upon us like the morning dew.

For me, even without the daily demands of employment, exhaustion still managed to keep pace with me. I was doing much less, but my anxious heart and thoughts were still keeping me stretched. True rest was still evading me.

Exhaustion is not the rest that you choose in your sovereignty, but the kind that chooses you when you have nothing left in you to meet the moment



of your life. One of my favorite bible stories is about exhaustion. “I’ve had enough, Lord,” the prophet Elijah prayed before asking for his life to end and falling asleep under a tree with the hopes of not waking up. (1 Kings 19:3-9) Instead, he awakes to an angel who brought a warmed little cake and a carafe to drink, and the invitation to “get up and eat”. Elijah does, and then goes right back to sleep. Maybe he had the ‘itis’. But most likely, depression. IYKYK. After more rest, the angel comes back to Elijah with more goodies and again invites him to, “get up and eat,” noting how difficult the journey will be without sustenance. A bit more rested and restored from care, Elijah gets up to meet the moment of his life.

I have been visited by this angel before, too. In times when life was too much, I have received the text, “dropped off dinner at the door. Made too much.” (I knew that last part was both a lie and a grace offered to allow me to feel better about receiving.) Or the angels who have sent Doordash. “I know you have a lot going on, I just want you to have a break.” Sometimes rest happens in the tender embrace of community.

As the realities of our life stretch us to the point of breaking, as we wait between reality and hope, rest is required medicine. The birth and life of Jesus points us to this truth, especially in times of chaos. We hear no accounts of what newborn baby Jesus was doing, but like most newborns, I bet he was getting his rest on. We don’t hear much about his activities for the next thirty years and when we do, it is activity balanced with personal retreats, solitude, and long walks on the beach (and *on* the beach).

Jesus did not delay rest until life made room for it. If he could take a nap in the kind of storm that causes his friends to feel their death is imminent (Matt 8:24), perhaps even in the hardest, craziest times of our lives we can choose to rest as well. If Jesus can take time away from the crowd, full of people desperate with urgent needs, perhaps all won’t go to hell if you take that time away for yourself, too. The (fill in the blank: children, partner, job, parents, dog, etc.) will be alright while you rest. In times of crisis, “putting your oxygen mask on first” isn’t selfish or individualistic, it actually is just a necessity if you want to be of any real service to those around you.

Especially for those of us who have been historically and presently denied rest, rest truly is resistance, as Tricia Hersey says. It offers an invitation to settle into the moment that is before us, even as we wait on relief and healing in our lives, and liberation and justice for our communities and world.

I've learned the opposite of rest is not doing. The opposite of rest is being unsettled. And being unsettled can happen while physically doing nothing at all. In the same, we can be at rest when our lives and schedules are full. If you enjoy a good steak (or grilled portobello for my vegan siblings,) you know that resting time for this meal is critical. In the time between the 'fiery furnace' and the joyful consumption, resting allows the retention of more flavor, the redistribution of goodness to permeate all the way to the center. This is how it is with us. We rest to keep our essence. We rest to stay whole. And we can rest while we work, when we are sad, when we are busy, and while we wait.



# Journal Reflection Questions

1. What is your relationship with rest? Does it come easy for you? Why or why not?
2. What does rest or feeling settled look like for you? How do you know when you are rested?
3. What ideas about rest have you picked up in your journey? Is there anything that might need to reframe in the season of Advent to allow you to enter into the rest of this season?
4. What are the practices of rest that allow you to settle your heart and/or any anxiousness? If not a current practice, what might you like to try?



## Breath Prayer

Throughout the week, we invite you to find a few moments to center and focus on your breath.

***Inhale:*** I am created for more than production.

***Exhale:*** Resting keeps me whole.

## Week 3 Rest Contemplative Practice

# Settle Down List

Resting is more than sleeping and more than the absence of activity—it is about settling yourself. If you are reading this and you are exhausted, I encourage you to stop what you are doing and go take a nap. This activity will be here when you can return to it!

### What you will need:

- Something to write with and a piece of paper

### Description of the activity

Each of us have things that help us to settle our bodies and experience rest. For this exercise, I invite you to take ten minutes of reflective silence and consider when you feel most settled, rested, and at peace. Ask the Spirit to bring to your attention any past practices that have helped you to feel settled.

After reflecting, take some time to write down as many things as you can think of that create rest in your life. Here are some settling activities that might speak to you if you get stuck:

Read a book  
Try a centering or meditative prayer  
Take a bath  
Walk in nature  
Listen to a soothing playlist  
Visit a museum  
Sing in the shower  
Aromatherapy  
Go on a bike ride  
Get a massage

Slowly enjoy a delicious meal  
Sip on a cup of tea  
Take a yoga class  
Connect with a friend  
Try box breathing exercises  
Do a face mask  
Journal  
Take a social media break  
Set aside screen-free time  
Paint with watercolors

Once you have your list of things that help you to settle, set an intention to do at least two of those activities over the week. If they cannot happen for some reason, commit to trying again the next week as you prioritize your own rest.

Finally, just as God created each of us uniquely, what settles our bodies might not look the same. If you try something and it turns out it wasn't restful or settling, pivot to a new opportunity.




# imagination



Week 4: December 24





“Imagination is one of the most **powerful modes of resistance** that oppressed and exploited folks can do and use.”

—BELL HOOKS

“They seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were **watching God.**”

—ZORA NEAL HURSTON, *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

“**Imagination** is the only weapon in the war against reality.”

—ALICE WALKER



Week 4: December 24

# Imagination

My bestie and I were standing in between sets at the Beyoncé Renaissance tour, all decked out in chrome outfits that made us look like a 90's girl group—balloon pants and tube tops, the same but styled different—when the LED screen read “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” Yes, Queen. You be knowing. I noted to my bestie, “I believe that. I actually do think that is true.” The concert wasn't the time or space for dialogue (of any type) so we quickly moved back into our chrome-colored, musically induced state of communal joy. (IYKYK)

I had been thinking a lot about my own recent diminishing imagination. How my ability to hold onto it had become slippery in my grip as the unrelenting demands of adulthood crowded out whimsy. Imagination often invites us outside of our notions of certitude and our learned sense of what is true. It requires leaning into possibilities unproven and likely unseen. It is clear that this comes much easier for young people, those not long on this side of the womb. It is why I could make elaborate wedding cakes with my Easy-Bake Oven and hosted world-renowned pool parties at Barbie's beach house whenever I fancied putting together all those little pool chairs. It was how I solved the homelessness crisis in elementary school one night after watching the news: easy—everyone with an extra room in their home should take someone in. For the young, there is less learned “knowledge” or perceptions of knowledge to crowd out imagining what could be.

In the beginning of Derecka Purnell's book *Becoming Abolitionist* she invites readers to suspend the almost inevitable retort that comes when folks start talking about abolishing the current police state; “If not police, then what? What will we have instead?” Since most of us have never seen a governance model that delivers community safety and centers restitution, recovery, and restoration, it is difficult to imagine the idea that something else is better—especially if it means letting go of what currently is.

The “between” phase is too scary, too hard to access, too mysterious. Our limited capacity for the unknown challenges our ability to dream something new, something radically better. For many, even in the frustration with the current state—be it policing, politics, relationships, jobs, and more—we often struggle to reach toward something new and different if it means completely releasing something or somewhere we have grown comfortable. Even if ill fitting, we often cling to what we know.

Enter brown baby God who was to be given the name ‘Jesus’. Born into a scene of poverty and chaos fit for a nonprofit winter appeal letter, who would have thought, who would imagine a king? (that last part in my Whitney Houston voice.) In the same way it is hard to wrap our mind around a world without prisons, or communities without policing, it was equally hard to imagine Jesus. He was not a liberal (or conservative) reformer, but rather offered a radical reconstruction. He was new wine for a new model of wineskin the world had not yet seen. Born to defy the binary of flesh and spirit and boldly proclaim something new—something ‘between’ for our liberation.

Deciding to bring God close, to house impermanence in the permeable was an act of great love that we absolutely needed, though probably most could not imagine. It took the prophets to see it. It took the people who Richard Rohr says reside “on the edge of the inside,” or those who Howard Thurman would call, “those with their backs against the wall,” or those who Dr. Barbara Holmes would say have insights, “beyond the veil.” It took the imagination of those who reside outside the comforts of the center to help us all prepare for what might be possible.

So when the prophets of our time—those trying to create new wineskins and those most often proximate to the edge—tell us of their dreams for the future, believe them. Or at least as Queen Bey and Purnell invite us, suspend your questions long enough to allow your imagination to flow.

Advent is the time for this. It is the time of hopeful anticipation. It is the time for watching and waiting. Of hoping and trusting for what is to be. It’s here, that imagination is knowledge. Imagination is knowing in the dark mystery of the wait, new possibilities are about to be born.



# Journal Reflection Questions

1. What in your personal life, or in our world, needs radical reimagining in this season?
2. What might be holding back your imagination?
3. Who or where are the prophetic voices in your life that help you see beyond your limitations? If not present, who or where might you find those voices?
4. How can you see the birth of Christ as an invitation to imagine and dream?



## Breath Prayer

Throughout the week, we invite you to find a few moments to center and focus on your breath.

**Inhale:** I will not be confined by what is.

**Exhale:** I am free to imagine my (our) liberation.

## Week 4 Imagination Contemplative Practice

# Imagination Collage

Inspired by the amazing collage art in this guide by artist Yvonne McCoy, you are invited to make an imagination collage of your own!

### What you will need:

- Creative materials: magazines, photographs, newspapers that can be cut
- Scissors
- Glue stick, double sided tape, or mod podge for adhesion
- Something to base your collage on (cardstock, cardboard, canvas, etc.)

### Description of the activity

Imagination can be hard to access as we live into the constraints of our lives. In this exercise, you are invited to first take 20 minutes of solitude to reflect on where you might be invited to imagine something better in your life. Perhaps this is a version of yourself that continues to grow and evolve in the new year, or perhaps it is a new vision that Spirit has laid on your heart for a hope you want to see in the world; the end of war in Palestine, a world without prisons, or maybe it is imagining the liberation of or healing of a loved one. Set an intention for what you want to imagine and spend the solitude time imagining what the fulfillment of that intention might look like.

After sitting with your intention and allowing yourself to visualize it in solitude, begin to comb through your creative materials for images, words, emotions, and landscapes that resonate with your vision. Do not overthink this! The images and things you collect need not be literal interpretations. This is where your unique creativity and quirkiness can show up. Maybe your imagination draws you more to color, or textures. Maybe you use different images to build a new collective image.

After you have identified and cut out images or words for use, begin to lay them out on your collage base. Play around with ideas and images, there is no right or wrong way to present your creative imaginings. Play around with ideas and imagery remembering your intention for the collage and what you want to see reimagined. When you have settled on an image, use your adhesive to affix your pieces to your base. We encourage you to share your creation with someone (and me too! [@leonettae.](#))



# Playlist for the Holy “Not Yet”

- Seasons Change by Antione Bradford & Shua
- Come, O Come Emmanuel (feat. IAMSON) by DOE, iAmSon
- Follow That Star by Renwick Duesbury
- Zan Vevede by Angelique Kidjo
- Joyful, Joyful by Jazmine Sullivan, Pentatonix
- Who Would Imagine A King by Whitney Houston
- Now Behold the Lamb by Kirk Franklin & the Family
- Hallelujah by Fantasia
- O Holy Night by Mahalia Jackson
- Refugee King by Liz Vice & Hannah Glaver
- Come, O Come Emmanuel by Sharon Irving
- Advent Song by The Porter’s Gate
- Sunshine by Peters Collins
- Matter of Time by Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings
- I Am Blessed by Desiree Dawson

Listen to the entire playlist on Spotify [here](#).





# Christmas Reflection

Christmas Day - December 25

## **So this is Christmas!**

The Incarnation is here. God drawing near gently reminds us that the Divine meets us in the midst of our uncertainties, doubts, and yearnings—right in the between spaces.

May this Christmas be a celebration of the beauty found in the waiting, an acknowledgment of the holiness inherent in the 'not yet.'

In the sacred dance between what has been and what is yet to come, may the Spirit of Christmas infuse our lives with a deep sense of wonder, purpose, and an abiding peace that transcends the temporal.

In the 'not yet' and between spaces of our lives, we embrace the gifts of grief, beauty, rest, imagination, and more, finding the fertile ground for miracles to unfold and for our own story to continue its beautiful, unfolding narrative.

May the birth of Christ be the birth of us all: fully present, cosmic and carnal, between stardust and clay.



# With Gratitude

Thank you for being a part of this community during this sacred season.

I would love to hear how your Advent went, what stirred up in you these last few weeks, and any other feedback. You can reach out to me [here](#).

This project is a labor of love, self funded and offered for free. If you were blessed by this project and can support offsetting the costs associated with its production, feel free to make a donation of any size through Venmo at @Leonetta-Elaiho or through Zelle through the QR code.



***Between: Advent Reflections for the Holy 'Not Yet'*** was curated and written by Leonetta Elaiho.

Leonetta is an aesthete, a creative contemplative, spiritual companion, nonprofit and philanthropic consultant, and founder of Beautifulle.com. She thrives at the intersection of culture, spirituality, and justice.

Beautifulle is a space for contemplatives, creatives, bodies of culture, and their allies to find support to live a life in awareness of the beauty that is always wooing us towards meaning and mystery. To stay connected for additional resources in the new year!

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