

ROCKS ON ROCKS ■ TEXTILES + THE EMPTY TOMB ■ SOUL-FORMING SONGWRITING
BORN-AGAIN BLUES ■ LESSONS FROM LITTLES ■ PLANTED HOPE
ONE UGLY DUCK ■ ...AND MUCH, MUCH MORE. *THIS IS VISUAL HYMNAL.*



visual
hymnal

ISSUE NO. 2

Notes From the Editors

Thank you so much for spending time reading and enjoying the first issue of *Visual Hymnal*! We are so grateful that this is something our community is loving, and we love seeing each new creation come in. This issue will focus on themes of resurrection and victory over death. Sometimes it can be difficult to celebrate when we feel weary—we all have seasons that are burdensome. It is my hope that this issue will meet everyone where they are, whether our hearts are light or heavy. We can all praise our Savior for His victory, and look forward to what is to come.

Leah Shewmaker

You know how I said last issue was the biggest print project I'd ever worked on? Well, scratch that. THIS one is a little bigger. All of us at *VH* are just absolutely blown away at the positive response and contributions from so many people in and around the Center Point Church community. Thinking back to the release party night, it was such a wonderful celebration of God's work and gifting within our little borough of Christendom. I personally felt so encouraged and inspired by that time of fellowship, and I know many others experienced the same. We are delighted to present this, your second issue of *Visual Hymnal*. Enjoy.

Sara Davis

I don't know the first thing about quilting. My last foray into that art form was a third-grade class project—a pioneer quilt to which we each contributed a single square. My mother was not a quilter either, but somehow she found herself with the job of sewing all the squares together, so she asked a neighbor to teach her. On the appointed day, I marched into school with the finished quilt and spread it across a table as my classmates gasped and pointed and talked over each other, marveling at how their individual designs—their covered wagons, cows, lassos and mountain landscapes—had come together into something larger and lovelier.

This magazine puts me in that same privileged position. I get to welcome a wealth of creative works from my community, watch as someone else (hi, Sara!) arranges and stitches them together, present the finished whole, and say, "Look what we made!"

This project also feels a bit pioneering, with its intergenerational range of contributors, its wide-open call for creative work of all kinds, its rootedness in a particular community paired with an invitational reach outward to a wider one, all tied together by a simple commonality: that we're Christians, embracing our God-given creativity to the best of our ability. We don't claim to be anything more, or less. In fact, perhaps pioneer isn't quite the right descriptor; maybe we're merely pilgrims.

Thankfully, someone who does know about quilting is featured in these pages (hi, Mary Jane!). Textile artistry, as it turns out, became one of the unintentional themes of this issue. That's part of the wonder of a collective project like this: how patterns and motifs emerge as the quilt comes together.

Happy Eastertide, fellow pilgrims. He is risen, and he is making all things new.

Katie Hautamaki

VISUAL HYMNAL

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In This Issue

Notes From the Editors.....	2
Contributors	6
Art + Community: Galentine's Glass Painting	9
Arts Around Town.....	35

POETRY

<i>newspaper thoughts and from the perspective of a dandelion</i> , by Autumn Kloth.....	5
<i>Regarding a Duck</i> , by Brian Douglas.....	7
<i>God's Love</i> , by Rachael Davis.....	7
<i>A sonnet of water</i> , by Jennifer Drury	22
<i>Death of Death</i> , by Julia Iszler	27
<i>Planting Seeds</i> , by Daniel Hautamaki.....	31
<i>Parochet</i> , by Madeline Jeffes.....	32

MUSIC

<i>Redeemed and Restored</i> , playlist curated by Leah Shewmaker.....	4
<i>The Sky Has Finally Opened</i> , playlist curated by Daniel Hautamaki	8
<i>Why Fades a Dream</i> , song performed by Leah Shewmaker and Dean Peiskee	20
<i>Spirit-Filled Christian</i> , song by Dean Sinclair.....	25

NONFICTION

<i>Like a Little Child</i> , reflection by Holly Hawkes.....	15
<i>Take and Eat</i> , essay by Katie Hautamaki.....	17
<i>The Washing of Feet and the World to Come</i> , reflection by Nancy Main	23
<i>Oh How Good to Sing Together</i> , interview by Katie Hautamaki	28
<i>Of Hobbits and Homemakers</i> , essay by Ginny Laffitte.....	33

VISUAL ART

<i>Victory Over Death</i> , illustration by Leah Shewmaker	7
<i>Sloss Iron Works</i> , photos by Sara Davis.....	10
<i>A Princess and a Puppy</i> , photo by Sara Davis.....	12
<i>Children's Sunday School</i> , photo by Caroline Jackson.....	14
<i>He Is Risen</i> , drawing by Verity Hawkes	15
<i>Through His Wounds We Are Healed</i> , drawing by Nora Hautamaki	15
<i>Golgotha</i> , painting by Annie Hautamaki.....	16
<i>He Is Alive</i> , drawing by Nora Hautamaki	16
<i>Lost For Words</i> , painting by Ellen Sanders.....	18
<i>As Sure as the Sunrise</i> , painting by Ellen Sanders.....	19
<i>Sunrise Cityscape</i> , painting by Caitlyn Middlebrook	21
<i>The Biggest Surprise</i> , painting by Annie Hautamaki.....	21
<i>Montauk Rocks</i> , photos by Daniel Hautamaki	22, 27, 31
<i>Quilt</i> by Mary Jane Sinclair and Krista Boeger	24
<i>A Colt, the Foal of a Donkey</i> , linocut print by Aaron Deininger	26
<i>Resurrection Fern</i> , painting by Mike Houghton.....	32
<i>Empty Tomb</i> , cross-stitch by Danica Middlebrook.....	34

Redeemed and Restored

Curated by Leah Shewmaker

Let's set the Eastertide mood with some tunes. To play, go to the Spotify search bar, click on the camera next to it, and scan! Grab a mug of cozy tea, coffee or anything you fancy and enjoy spending time in this zine. As you peruse, feel free to listen to this playlist, curated in theme with Eastertide. Some of these songs are clearly Easter songs, while others are linked to the concept of resurrection and victory over death through lyrics or musical themes.

He Came to Die – Psallos

Passover Song – Paul Zach

Jesus Is Betrayed by Judas – Poor Bishop Hooper

What Have We Done? – Kings Kaleidoscope

This My Soul – The Gray Havens

Jesus Is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns – Poor Bishop Hooper

Jesus Is Crucified – Poor Bishop Hooper

One Righteous Man – Kings Kaleidoscope

Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb – Poor Bishop Hooper

The King, Pt. Two – Sarah Sparks

Creation to Salvation – Drakeford

It Is Finished – The Modern Post

Alive (feat. Beleaf, Braille & Derek Minor) – Kings Kaleidoscope, Beleaf, Braille, Derek Minor

Rapids – Tekoa, Rory Mckenna

Tightrope – Jon Guerra

Joy Will Come – Paul Zach, Liz Vice, Charles Jones

Resurrection Day – Rend Collective

See The Conqueror – Jenny & Tyler

I See a King – The Wood Drake Sessions

Jesus Paid It All – Kings Kaleidoscope

In Christ Alone – Kings Kaleidoscope

Who Shall Condemn – Psallos

Psalm 116 (I Love You, Lord) – Mission House, Jess Ray, Taylor Leonhardt

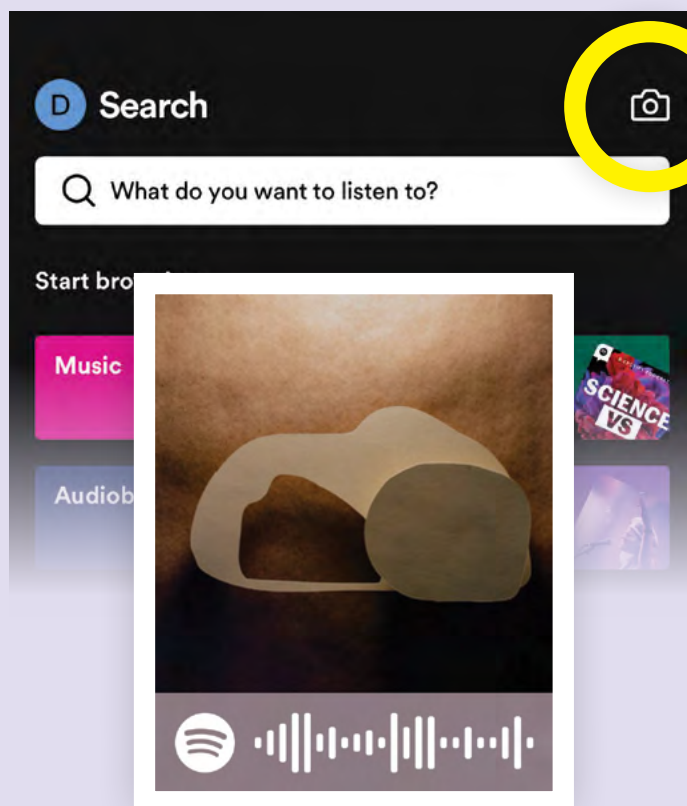
More Than Conquerors – Rend Collective

You Brought Me Back to Life – Citizens

Because Jesus Christ Is Alive – The Sing Team

The Strife Is Over – Citizens

DAY OF VICTORY – Rend Collective



newspaper thoughts

By Autumn Kloth

black and white shoes in the mirror she sees her-
self in the glass and smiles wide only
because a friend hurt her
wait, the shoes have changed look closer they have
rainbows and carry lightning bolts at the
same time it's not a secret
tell all she lights up the world using
lightning bolts

everything happens as it should but it's
8:23 pm and under the
bridge it should be quiet,
no wake or the water will stir and see
you're not normal something's off something's
different; then the lightning
will strike and they'll come for you they'll dis-
own you unless you pretend nothing's off
unless you smile like
the girl with the rainbow shoes and
lightning bolts

a toy spider thrown in the pool every-
one laughs but me for it looks soft
and glad to die and smiles
i hear lightning above and everyone's
getting out of the pool for it's dangerous
and i'm tempted i'm lured
to play the game the spider is but i
remember the girl with the rainbow shoes
and the loud lightning bolts
how brave she is; God smiles and i
ask God for His lightning bolts and i grab
the lightning bolts and i
decide to wear them and then i wait for
His rainbow so i'll be able to wear
it too just like the
lightning bolts

from the perspective of a dandelion

By Autumn Kloth

i wish i was
as pretty as a flower
so i could be nurtured
in a field of beauty

and inspire many
pretty things like
being in a young girl's
lost dream

or feel the gentle
whisper of a butterfly's
wings that brings
admiration from Them

or hear the peaceful
buzz from a bumble-
bee that wishes to
visit me in spring.

i wish i was
as pretty as a flower
so They would not
consider me a weed.

Contributing Artists

Ginny Laffitte is a Tallahassee native, FSU grad, and home-maker. She and her husband Trey are members of Four Oaks Church in Midtown.

Aaron Deininger was saved by the grace of God at the age of 29. He enjoys being Catherine's husband, Bonnie's dad, Howdy's dog-dad, and baking bread.

Danica Middlebrook has been stitching since she was a girl. She and her military family have lived in Tallahassee and attended Center Point since summer 2022.

Julia Iszler moved to Tallahassee two years ago and, despite a fierce love for her alma mater, has developed a special place in her heart for this city, which she largely credits to her church. When she's not palpating necks or rehabilitating memory, you can find Julia elbow-deep in sourdough starter or jogging around Cascades with friends.

Leah Shewmaker is in her first year of her master's degree in opera performance at Florida State University. Previously, she worked as an arts and entertainment reporter for *The Villages Daily Sun*. She earned her bachelor of arts in writing rhetoric and technical communications and bachelor of music in voice performance at James Madison University in Virginia.

Jennifer Drury is a sinner loved by Jesus, thankful for her amazing husband, sweet kids, and great jobs, both as a homeschooler and a classical teacher. She loves truth, goodness, and beauty in many forms, from sunsets to poems to water molecules.

Nancy Main is a wife, mother of three, and grandmother of five. A retired nurse, she has lived in Tallahassee for 37 years and been a Christian for more than 50. She is a member of Four Oaks Church East.

Daniel Hautamaki grew up in a small South Carolina town steeped in the Southern Appalachian way of life. He writes about the everyday profound intersections of life and faith. Daniel lives in Tallahassee with his wife Katie and their three children.

Katie Hautamaki lives in the house she grew up in and takes long walks around her wooded neighborhood. She enjoys writing about her life and interviewing other people about theirs. The essay is her favorite genre.

Mary Jane Sinclair is a daughter, a sister, a mother, a wife, a grandmother and a fellow pilgrim enjoying the beauty and the challenges of the Christian life here on earth. She is proud to be a native Floridian but developed a love of having four distinct seasons in Cincinnati, Ohio. She has enjoyed sewing for most of her life, lately gaining an appreciation for quilting from her mother and grandmother who were both very talented in all kinds of handicrafts.

The Lord revealed the love of Jesus Christ to **Dean Sinclair** when he was 22 years old. Since then he has served God around the world in business, government, and the Body of Christ. Occasionally that includes singing the blues for the Lord.

Autumn Kloth is a junior-level Florida State student studying statistics with a concentration in mathematics. From a young age she has loved reading and writing, a passion she shares with her father. For Autumn, writing is a way to honor God through admiring the beauty of this earth, appreciating the words He has given us to use, and reflecting on the complexity of human nature.

Madeline Jeffes is an FSU graduate student from Hernando, Florida. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in organic chemistry. She enjoys orchestra music, teaching chemistry, playing the flute, and sharing food with friends.

Brian Douglas has been a landscaper, salesman, security guard, researcher, writer, teacher, and occasional haircutter/auto mechanic. But today he is the pastor at Center Point Church in Tallahassee.

At the age of 10, **Mike Houghton** was wonderstruck by his Uncle Charlie's impromptu sketch of a banana plant growing in the backyard of his Miami home. Ever since, Mike has aspired in varying degrees to create similar moments for others.

Ellen Sanders is from Franklin, Tennessee, and is studying social work at FSU. She has been drawing, painting, and crafting for her entire life and is excited to share her work.

Sara Davis grew up in the age of Left Behind vs. Harry Potter and, frankly, is still working through all that. Spoiled rotten by her husband, she enjoys homemaking, hosting raucous Super Bowl parties and the more-than-occasional midday nap. Mom/coach/private chef to three kids who seem to just keep growing. Sometimes she designs magazines.

Holly Hawkes currently teaches third and fourth grade at home. Mom of three and wife of Jeremiah, she has a master's of public administration from UGA and is part owner of the Green Bay Packers.

Caroline Jackson, a Georgia native, longtime Christ follower and amateur artist, is fueled by coffee and naps. She's trying to convince her six extroverted roommates (one husband and five young offspring) that the quieter things in life—time outside, books, more coffee, more naps—are the coolest things in life, too.

God's Love

God, he loves us,
God he cares for us,
God his mercy will
never run dry He sent
his son for us so that
our sins may be forgiven
His love we cannot
obtain it.

His mercy is like a
stream that never goes dry
We throw his love
away but he loves us still
every day. We will not
be turned to dust
for he sent his son for us.

Rachael Davis



Victory Over Death
Ballpoint pen
Leah Shewmaker

Regarding a Duck

By Brian Douglas

A muscovy duck
Stands right in my way
Refusing to move
I stop suddenly
He just looks at me

He is so ugly
Wagging angrily
It is not at all
Intimidating
But he does not know

He is the center
Of his consciousness
I exist only
To serve his quest for
Handouts of breadcrumbs

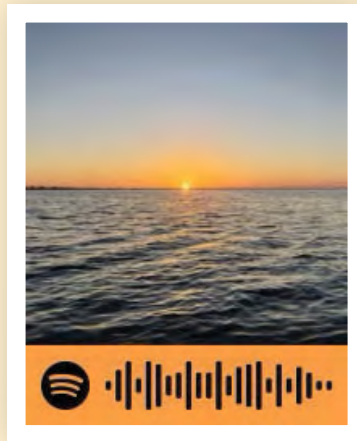
What's a duck's purpose
In the universe?
His diet is slime
He leaves more behind
Waste added to waste

Is this creature worth
Anything at all?
Not to me, and yet
One watcher says this
Duck is delightful

The Sky Has Finally Opened:

A Lesser Lights Playlist

Curated by Daniel Hautamaki



This playlist is an aural triptych arranged with three cycles of seven songs each, separated by an instrumental frame, echoing the emotional journey of Easter weekend.

We confront our mortality with songs about death, loss, and grief. We ask “How long?” and “What now?” as we cling to hope that our despair and brokenness is not final. And then, like the sun breaking the horizon, we rejoice that all will be made right and new. This Easter season, allow these songs from outside the church to challenge and encourage you to experience the pinpoint where heaven and earth join together, and light breaks through.

Atlantic City – Bruce Springsteen

Hurt – Johnny Cash

Speed Trap Town – Jason Isbell

Fix You – Coldplay

Long Ride Home – Patty Griffin

Goodnight, Travel Well – The Killers

Jordan And The Nile – Jason Hawk Harris

Gabriel's Oboe – Enio Morricone, Yo-Yo Ma, Roma Sinfonietta

Every Grain of Sand – Emmylou Harris

Deep Dark Wells – Joe Pug

Upward Over the Mountain – Iron & Wine

Hold You Dear – The Secret Sisters

When Will I Be Changed – Josh Ritter, Bob Weir

Hurts (But It Goes Away) – The Head and the Heart

Rainbow – Kacey Musgraves

Sonoran Desert Holiday – Ron Nelson, Dallas Wind Symphony, Jerry Junkin

From This Valley – The Civil Wars

When the Ship Comes In – The Chieftains, The Decemberists

Peace Train – Yusuf / Cat Stevens

We Found Love – Rihanna, Calvin Harris

Ring Them Bells – Sarah Jarosz

Ain't No Grave – Crooked Still

White Berets – Jason Hawk Harris

Gallery Times
glass painting

*“Filling a space in
a beautiful way.
That’s what art
means to me.”*

— Georgia O’Keeffe, in
Art News, December 1977



Rachel Wilson

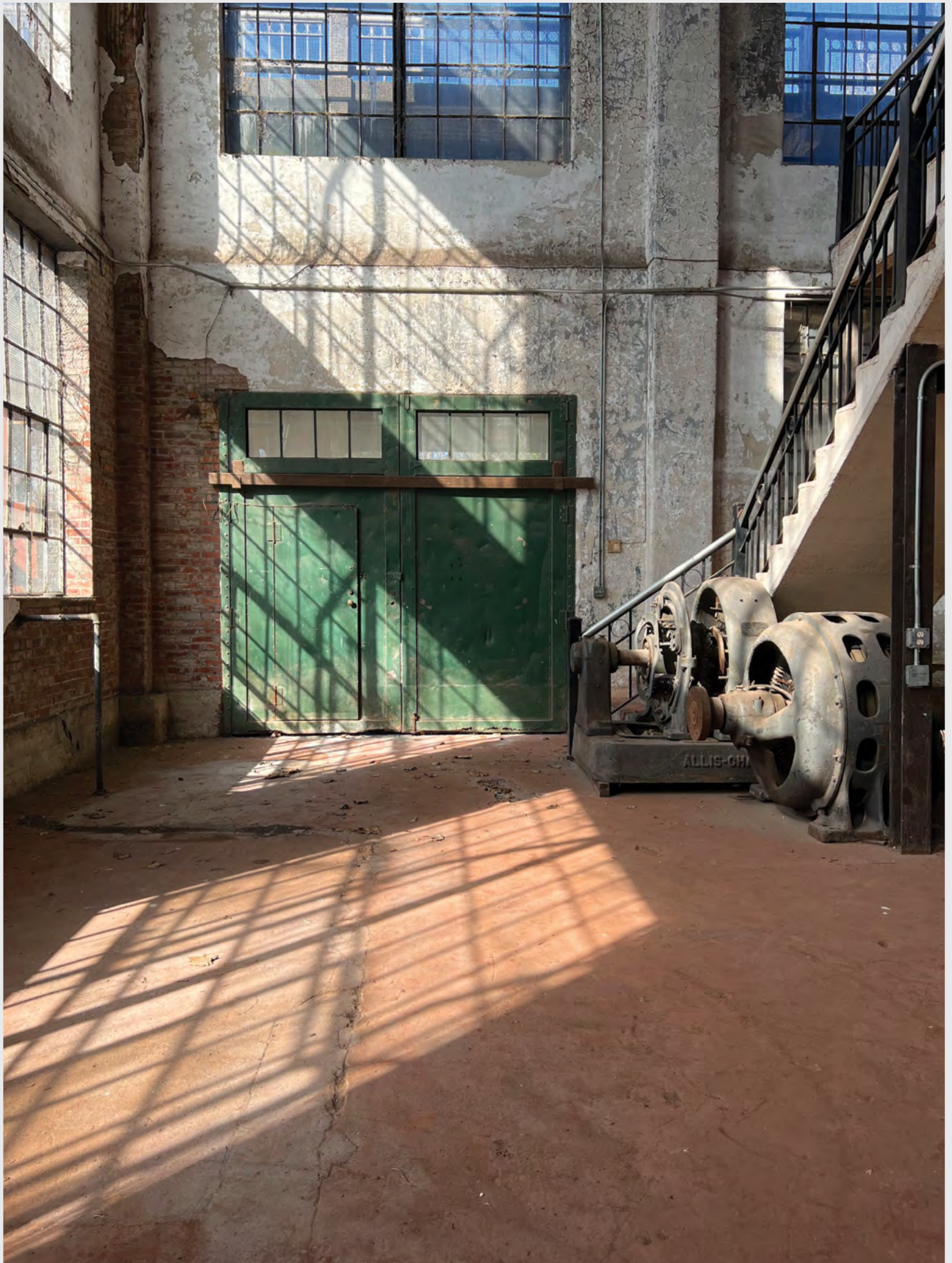


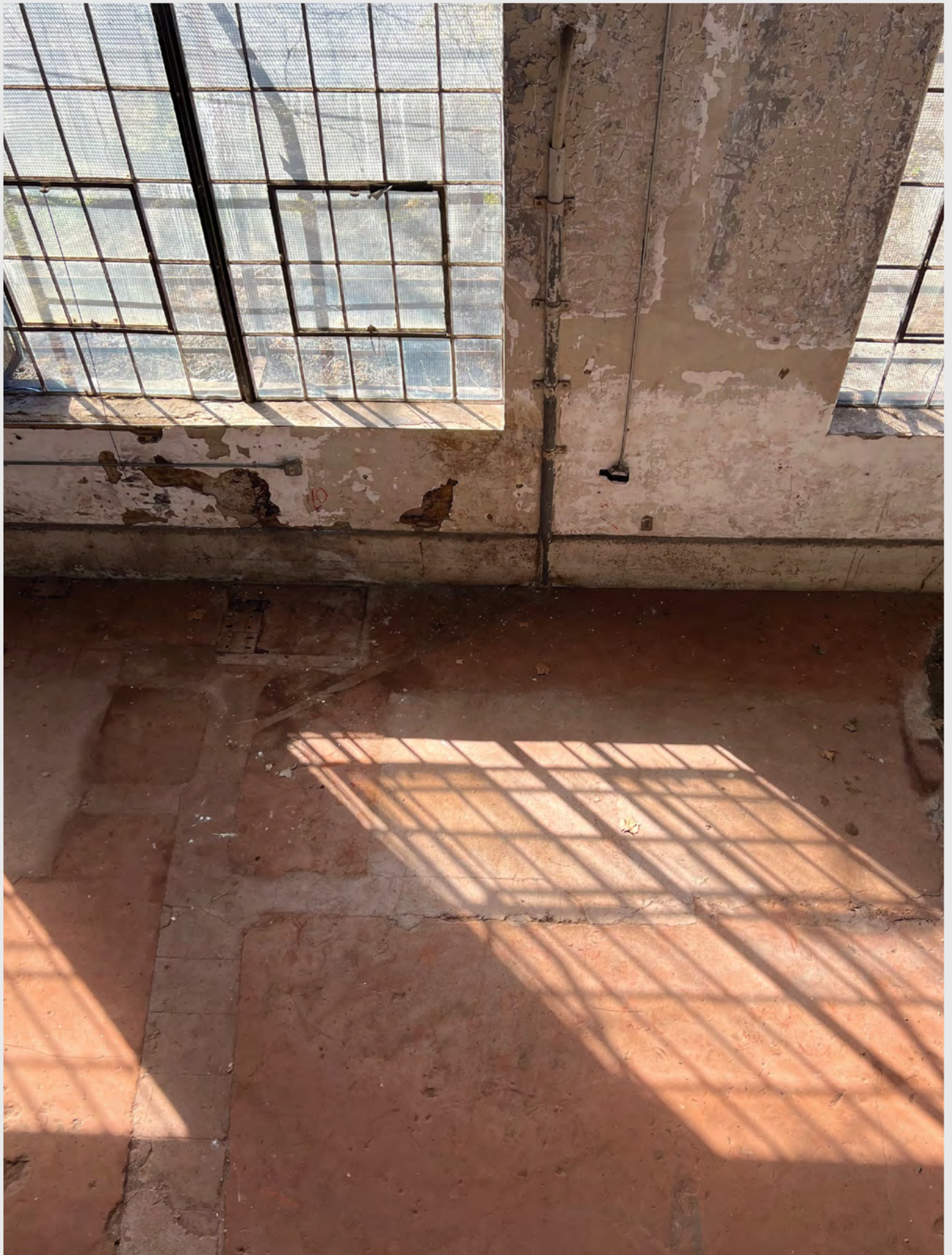
Destiny Lile



Madison Henzel + Rachel Beltrami







Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark, Birmingham, Alabama, Photos by Sara Davis



A Princess and a Puppy, Photo by Sara Davis





Children's Sunday School
Photo by Caroline Jackson

Like a Little Child

By Holly Hawkes

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a **little child** to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as **little children**, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this **little child** is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." **Matthew 18:1-4 NKJV***

In this passage, Jesus directly calls our attention to little children. (Was the child Jesus called to himself a crazy "Phineas," like my 5-year-old? Was it a melts-you-with-her-smile "Juniper"?) This was a shocking assertion. Children were marginalized in Hellenistic first-century society.

In 2024, there are times I feel my resume is being wasted by my nursery work or homemaker occupation. Other times, by God's grace, I get it. I understand. I see beautiful childlike faith in the nursery. In Sunday School, Phineas says, "Jesus died on the cross for my sins." Micah says, "Jesus loves me." Evie shouts, "He is coming back!" And they get it.

Jesus is for babies and toddlers, for elementary kids and teens, for folks of all ages with special needs and limited cognition. His love and saving work aren't dependent on what our brains process. Come to him as a little child. And take baby steps of faith. ■

**with added emphasis in bold*



He is Risen
Markers on paper
Verity Hawkes



**Through His Wounds
We Are Healed**
Ballpoint pen and crayons
Nora Hautamaki



Golgotha
Watercolor
Annie Hautamaki



He Is Alive
Ballpoint pen and crayons
Nora Hautamaki

Take & Eat

By Katie Hautamaki

When my grandfather neared the end of his life, and his wife and children gathered in his hospital room, my uncle presented him with a rock—I think it was from the hospital gift shop—engraved with the word HOPE.

My grandfather tried to eat it.

He died a few days later, in the early hours before the sun rose, on Easter Sunday.

I was a college student at the time, an English major, and I took this anecdote as a reminder that human experience is a mysterious interplay of the wonderful and the ridiculous. It made me think of a line by Annie Dillard: “Wherever we go, there is only one business at hand—that of finding workable compromises between the sublimity of our ideas and the absurdity of the fact of us.”^[1]

Once I became a mother, I found I no longer needed such reminders. I lived with people who threw tantrums because they wished I was wearing different pants, who invited the tooth fairy to their birthday parties, who intended to become prophets when they grew up, who thought gray tufts of Spanish moss were beards hung in the trees by old men who no longer wanted them.

I found, too, that one of the hardest parts of raising small children was watching them struggle to accept, first, the reality of death, and then, the inevitability of it. I think this is because it’s so absurd. To be born, to grow and learn and live, only to not, anymore? It seemed the most ridiculous thing they had ever heard. My son was incredulous in the face of it: “Everyone dies? But what if I don’t want to?”

Belief in resurrection came easier. They accepted the doctrine without question and applied it with all manner of interpretative liberties. “Remember I told you that G.G. went to heaven?” I asked my son as I packed for my grandmother’s memorial service. “Is she back?” was his quick reply. One summer morn-

ing I pulled my three-year-old daughter from the pool after she slipped off the ledge during her swimming lesson, her teacher too distracted by the other children to notice. As I dried her off, my hands shaking under the towel, she told me, “It’s okay, Mom. God can make me come alive again.”

I found, too, that one of the hardest parts of raising small children was watching them struggle to accept, first, the reality of death, and then, the inevitability of it.

When my youngest child was born, I received a package from an out-of-town friend. Among the baby gifts—a board book version of *Jane Eyre*, a soft rattle—she included a white ceramic egg cradled in a small brown nest. The egg is stamped, in black type-set, with the word HOPE. At first I kept it on the baby’s dresser, but my toddler kept trying to eat it, so to this day it sits on my kitchen windowsill.

One Easter, before the sun came up, I filled my children’s baskets with jelly beans, crème-filled eggs, and rock candy. My daughter held her clump of pink sugar crystals up to the lamplight, turning it slowly.

“Can I eat this now?” she asked.

“Yes,” I said. “You can eat the whole thing.” ■

^[1]Dillard, Annie. “An Expedition to the Pole,” in *Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982).

Candy photo by Karolina Grabowska





Lost for Words (cover image)

Acrylic on canvas
Ellen Sanders

During the couple of hours it took me to paint this, I listened to Pink Floyd's Lost for Words on repeat. This song describes being stuck in a cycle of hatred, anxiety, and defensiveness, but eventually choosing to forgive, breaking free from the control that darkness has on you. Although I had no plan or reference when I began this painting, it became a dynamic, layered piece of artwork that represents changing directions, growth, confusion, and renewed life.

As Sure as the Sunrise

Acrylic on canvas
Ellen Sanders

I painted this piece during a time when I was feeling stagnant, and my initial motivation was simply that I was bored. With most of my artwork, I don't start with a plan; I let ideas come together in a natural way. I added the verse after I had painted the sun and butterfly, and in the end I created a testament to the rejuvenating, cyclical nature of God's love. Just as a butterfly leaves its cocoon or a flower blooms, God's goodness grows and emerges over time. No matter the depths of our sorrows, we can cling to the hope of God's promise; it is the only sure thing we have in this world.



Why Fades a Dream

Performed by Leah Shewmaker and Dean Peiskee
from *Dream Cycle* by Irene Britton Smith

“Why Fades a Dream” is the last piece in composer Irene Britton Smith’s *Dream Cycle*. I learned this piece for *Harlem: Renaissance and Rediscovery, A Celebration of Art Songs by African American Composers*. Each year one of the voice faculty professors at Florida State organizes a concert to celebrate the compositions of black composers and poets; this year’s concert featured this work by Smith (1907-1999) and poet Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906). What makes Dunbar’s text special is how it takes on different meanings as you look at it from different angles. Informed by the composer’s musical ideas, I read this poem as a lament. I see the dream as a longing for a better world, with justice and beauty. But as reality sets in after the shimmering dream, hope is lost and the dream fades. Expressing grief and sorrow over the fallen nature of the world is innately human—and biblical. But the laments we see in the Bible always point back to God, our Savior, what is to come. “Why Fades a Dream” ends before this lifting up of the soul. Even if we don’t see justice, kindness, and beauty shine in this life, as Christians, we know the story is not over. Victory will resound. ■

Why fades a dream?

Paul Laurence Dunbar
(1872-1906)

Why fades a dream?
An iridescent ray
Flecked in between the tryst
Of night and day.
Why fades a dream?—
Of consciousness the shade
Wrought out by lack of light and made
Upon life’s stream.
Why fades a dream?
That thought may thrive,
So fades the fleshless dream;
Lest men should learn to trust
The things that seem.
So fades a dream,
That living thought may grow
And like a waxing star—beam glow
Upon life’s stream—
So fades a dream.



Sunrise Cityscape
 Watercolor, acrylic,
 and craft paint
 Caitlyn Middlebrook



The Biggest Surprise
 Watercolor
 Annie Hautamaki



Photo by Daniel Hautamaki

A sonnet of water

By Jennifer Drury

Precipitation falling slowly by,
Nature's elixir soaks into the ground.
Sweet wondrous water, molecule of life,
From heaven's bounty, wealth pours gently down.
In winters hence it blankets all the world
With frozen glory, crystals each unique.
Here gathered up, against the beaches curled,
It cools the sand as joyful children shriek.
Yet we cannot control its awesome pow'r.
In drought and deluge, swift destruction waits.
What quickly cleans brings damage in an hour,
What buoys some makes others sinking weights.
Craved and feared, we are ever in its sway,
But He who made it holds the night and day.



The Washing of Feet and the World to Come

By Nancy Main

John 13 describes Jesus washing the disciples' feet in the Upper Room on the night he is arrested. It's a familiar account for many and the instruction for Christians to serve one another is easy to see. What isn't so obvious is what Jesus is telling us about the coming kingdom—the kingdom his death will bring.

The Jews are expecting a Messiah who will usher in a triumphant reign, bringing liberation for Israel from their oppressors. Jesus is demonstrating that the kingdom that they, and we, are part of will be quite different. His actions are confusing to the disciples—certainly to Peter—as he demonstrates service, humility, and self-denial.

The disciples know that a Jewish teacher would not stoop beneath his status and position to wash feet, a task reserved for the lowliest servants. Jesus's willingness to do this is a foreshadowing of his laying down his life and dying a criminal's death on the cross.

Jesus is demonstrating that the kingdom that they, and we, are part of will be quite different.

John tells us that Jesus himself gathered the towel, poured water in the basin, and began to wash. This was his task alone to perform, just as the cross would be his alone. No one could possibly assist.

Peter is quick to recognize the unseemliness of Jesus's action and tries to refuse the washing of his feet. Jesus replies, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Likewise, we have no share with Jesus if we don't receive by faith the washing of his blood to forgive our sins.

Afterwards, Jesus tells the disciples that a servant is not greater than his master, and so they must wash one another's feet, just as he has done. Bit by bit, he is telling them that his kingdom will not come through power and dominance, but through humility and death.

Jesus's command to the disciples, and to us, is to lay down our lives, die to self, and serve.

Jesus's power was revealed through his death. What looked like defeat on the cross was actually the defeat of our enemy, Satan, and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus's command to the disciples, and to us, is to lay down our lives, die to self, and serve. It is so characteristic of God to design such a precise way of getting at what is wrong with us—our pride—and so like him to efficiently expose our self-centeredness and self-rule.

With the washing of the disciples' feet, we see Jesus demonstrate what he had been teaching them all along. The laying down of our lives in service as we proclaim Christ is how the kingdom is spread. With this knowledge and by the power of the Holy Spirit the disciples were sent to proclaim Christ and his kingdom. They did so by death to self, humility of service, denial of comfort and, in many cases, literal death from persecution. We are called to do the same. ■



I made this quilt with my daughter, Krista. I sewed the quilt pieces together to make the quilt top, then together we placed it on the batting and backing, pinning it all over to keep the three layers together. The most special thing about it is that my daughter free-motion quilted it with her Singer treadle machine. She designed a wind pattern through the sky and a leaf pattern through the garden.

The backstory is: I went to pick up our kitchen knives from a local quilt shop (near our home in NC) that does knife and scissors sharpening. I saw this beautiful quilt on display outside, and inside there were kits (the different fabrics packaged together) for it. The store owner said, "We have a class for that quilt on the next two Mondays." I went home and hesitantly told Dean about the quilt and the price of the class and fabric, and he immediately said, "You should do it." So I went back to the store that day, signed up for the class and bought the kit! That started me on a quilting binge for the rest of the summer. I think I made five in a few months. I'm not spending as much time in front of my sewing machine or slicing fabric into squares, rectangles, and triangles now, but I still enjoy the mathematics of putting shapes and contrasting colors together.

– Mary Jane Sinclair

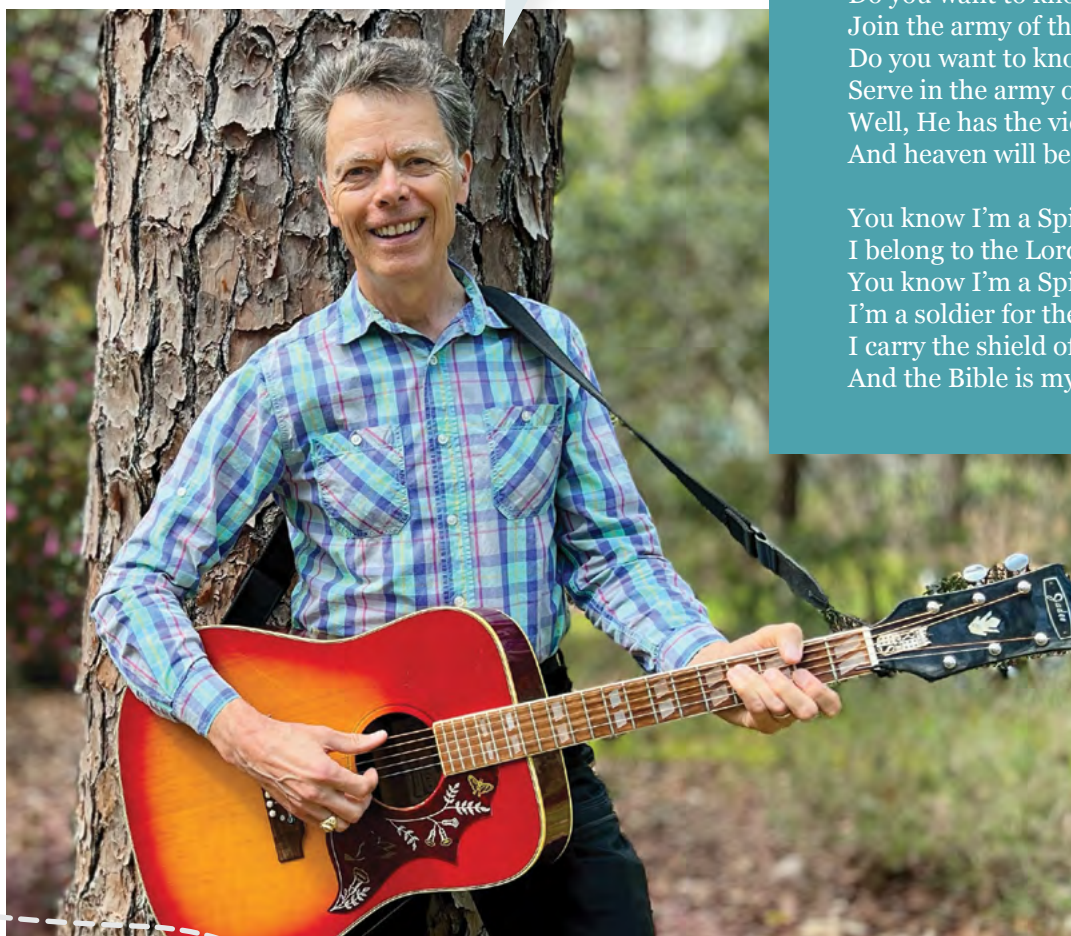
Jewel Bargello Quilt

Mary Jane Sinclair and Krista Boeger

Pattern designed by Tiffany Hayes

Kit available from NeedleinaHayesStack.biz

“What I enjoy about the blues as a genre is that the music is pretty simple and it makes bold statements. I thought I could do the same thing and make a bold statement about the Lord.”



Spirit-Filled Christian

By Dean Sinclair, 2009

You know I'm a Spirit-filled Christian
I belong to the Lord
You know I'm a Spirit-filled Christian
I'm a soldier for the Lord
I carry the shield of faith
And the Bible is my sword

You know that Jesus is the King
He is able to save everyone
You know that Jesus is the King
And He is the only one
Who can defeat the power of sin
Because He is God's perfect Son

Do you want to know Jesus
Join the army of the Lord
Do you want to know Jesus
Serve in the army of the Lord
Well, He has the victory
And heaven will be your reward

You know I'm a Spirit-filled Christian
I belong to the Lord
You know I'm a Spirit-filled Christian
I'm a soldier for the Lord
I carry the shield of faith
And the Bible is my sword



Photos by Daniel Hautamaki

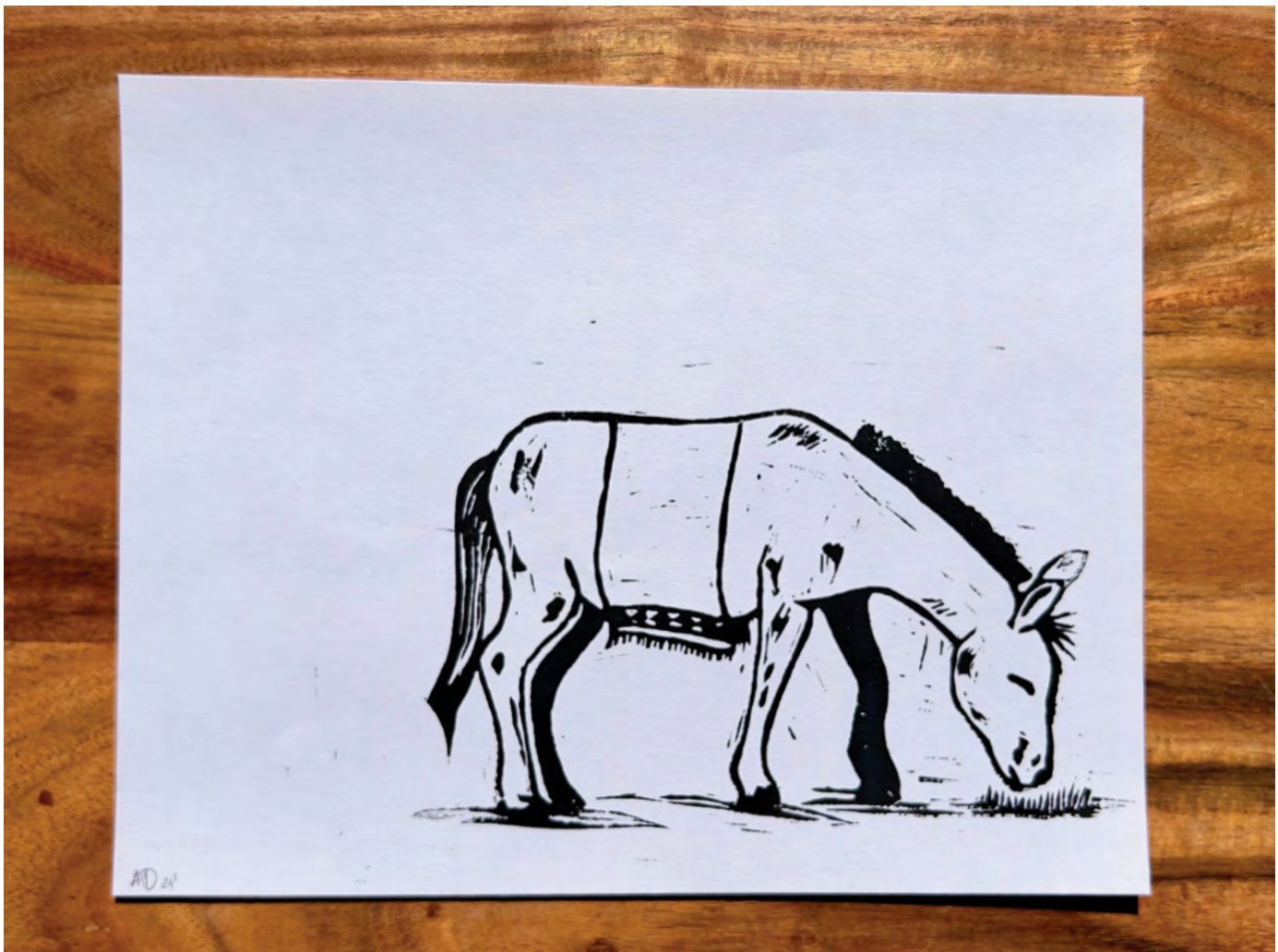
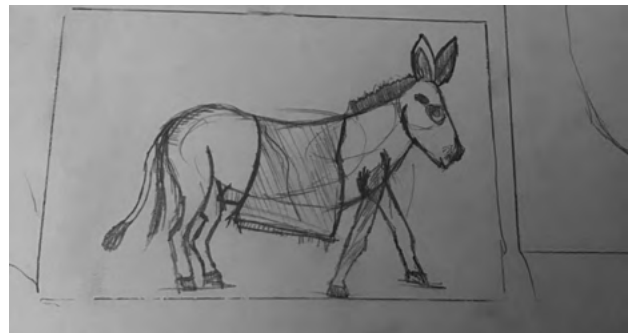
I once heard it said in a sermon that when Michaelangelo was asked how he made the statue David, Michaelangelo replied that he started with a piece of marble and removed everything that wasn't David. The sermon illustration compared this process with sanctification. While this piece is far from David, relief printmaking is a sanctifying kind of art. You start with a block of wood—or in this case, linoleum—and carve away everything that isn't your subject. It's a process that rewards patience and persistence.

One of my favorite lines in the Bible is when Jesus is entering Jerusalem and he tells the Pharisees that if the people are quiet, "the very stones will cry out" (Luke 19:40). I thought about this and was moved by the thought of the lowly donkey our Savior rode into King David's city. Nothing says Easter to me quite like our Savior, coming to pay the ransom for His people, arriving on the back of a lowly donkey.

A Colt, The Foal of a Donkey

Linocut print

Aaron Deininger



Photos by Aaron Deininger

Death of Death

By Julia Iszler

Fresh license
Bright eyes
A badge giving me a front row seat
Eager to see goodness and mercy

I do some days
Celebrating the restoration of words to a tongue loosened
Or when my spoon passes water through cracked lips
Belonging to a man connected to life by plastic tubing

That brisk tug back
A reminder—not home yet
An exhausting ebb and flow
Floating between redemption and darkness
Sweet and bitter, flavors changing as I pass doorways
People laughing
Neurons dying
Hands curling powerfully around weights
White blood cell count rising
Heart rate falling
Limp limbs restored to flexing muscle
Breath slowing
Tears flowing

‘I’m scared’
The words leave his body in a whisper
A dozen machines whirring around the bed
He holds my hand just after learning my name
Half a dozen children written out of the will
But I can’t say ‘me too’
Stoic uniform

Do you think the proof of victory is those who stay
Sitting by the bedside
Steadying shaking limbs
Wiping fevered brows
Holding cold hands
Changing soiled linens
Spoonng medication disguised as vanilla blobs
into a mouth that cursed them the night before
Mirroring our Maker’s gentle touch
with every don and doff of gloves

I’m learning that my work is a mix
of restoration and sacred shuttling of souls from earth

Maybe the silent scream of grief
as I calmly inform patients and families
of devastating prognoses
is just as loud to the heavens
as the wailing of a mother dressed in black

The resurrection of Jesus has to be real
It must
Praise God!
White sheets will not cover us for eternity
Praise God!
Families will not be missing fathers, brothers,
daughters, spouses
Praise God!

Until then I keep a mental stack of charts
Initials of those I can’t wait to squeeze
on the day that death dies.



Photo by Daniel Hautamaki



Oh How Good To Sing Together

The Wood Drake Sessions' Kirk Sauers on Songwriting As Spiritual Care

By Katie Hautamaki

In March of 2020, friends Kirk Sauers and Paul Ransheim began meeting to write songs. Years before, the pair had written together in Nashville. Now, with Kirk in Georgia, Paul in Colorado, and the pandemic everywhere, they met over Zoom.

“The unknowns of those first few weeks led to both of us bringing our fears and frustrations to the table,” Kirk said. “After a number of months, we found ourselves with a handful of songs born from processing our faith through turbulent times.”

They also had a name: The Wood Drake Sessions. It came from Wendell Berry’s poem “The Peace of Wild Things,” in which a despairing narrator finds rest amongst creatures who—like the birds of the air and the lilies of the field—“do not tax their lives with forethought of grief.”

After an encouraging response to two initial recordings, Paul and Kirk turned their handful of songs into the debut album *From the Valley to the Golden Shore*, released in 2022. But they didn’t do it alone. Crowd-funded through Kickstarter, the record features collaborators on almost every track: well-known artists like Sandra McCracken, Wendell Kimbrough, Liz Vice,

Leslie Jordan, and others. The album’s “plurality of voices” reflects the intention of The Wood Drake Sessions, which is disarmingly simple: to make music for the church to sing together.

Visual Hymnal caught up with Kirk by email to ask about songwriting, his own formation in music and in faith, and his hopes for the project.

Tell me about your songwriting process. How does the seed of an idea develop into a song?

Sometimes a phrase or a line leads the way, and you follow your musical gut. I remember the phrase “Oh how good to be together” was said one day as we were on a Zoom call (funny enough, it was March of 2020, when no one was together). But we felt the power of that line in the midst of the world trying to test online community as the norm. The song unfolded pretty quickly when that phrase was said.

Sometimes a melodic line leads the way. We released an Advent song called “Where the Light Is Gone” this past year. That song was born at the end of sitting for two or three hours trying to write an entirely different song. At this point, we were actually writing together in person. We decided to

call it for the evening and get dinner, because we were just getting nowhere; no compelling song was coming. But as we both were putting our instruments away, I was unconsciously picking a melody on the guitar, about to put it down. Suddenly we heard and felt something compelling, and then sat for another couple hours and wrote the song. That melody line is the melody of the chorus.

No matter how the song is inspired, we want the songs to be something honest, striking the core of our humanity. This is why we often ask questions in our songs, because our faith is often in the midst of working itself through our real questions and doubts. Questions like, “What if my world should fall when I’m left betrayed, all my riches fade, and I lose it all?” or “Will there be a day when your goodness fades, in waves of grief or fires of pain?” Each time we write, we really hope to dig into the real parts of our hearts through the process—our fears, our questions, our worries—bringing those into the light of God’s promises.

How does knowing you are writing songs meant for gathered worship—for believers to sing together—affect the way you write?

Our desire is for hearts to feel what is true in our songs as they sing—to engage both the heart and the head. One approach to that, as mentioned before, is to let questions into the songs, some of the questions that strike the core of us. The Psalms are filled with questions to God that lead to deeper faith in God. Often I think of Psalm 13. It begins by asking questions like, “How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?” But this interaction with God leads to a deeper trust: “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD’s praise, for he has been good to me.” When we bring the real feelings of our doubts and concerns to God, God in turn works his assurances in a powerful way back into our hearts, in a way that helps us feel his promised love over our lives.

Also, as best we can, we try to tap into imagery. Not just to say what is true to the head in our lyrics, but to give a picture for the heart to receive. One line that comes to mind is our song “Grace Will Prevail.” It says, “Grace will prevail in the wreckage and storm and the brokenness washed on the shore.” These painted pictures help us imagine and feel the truth of God’s prevailing grace.

You’ve moved around the Southeast a good bit. Does your location affect your songwriting?

In some ways it does. Living in Nashville, I wrote a lot of songs, because there is such a strong, connected, encouraging community; the community pushed me to write more songs than I do now. However, living away from Nashville in Augusta, and now Birmingham, has challenged me to go deeper with songs for an extended time, to spend time developing the songs, and letting them sit and bloom through time. This can be weeks and months long—in a few cases, years. Often in Nashville, I would write a song, and move to the next one very quickly. There was more quantity, but I think living away from Nashville has helped me in the work of revisiting, reshaping, and discovering what a song should be, and that has been a great thing for me.

Did you grow up in the church?

I did! My story is a testimony of the power of a good friend. I had a great friend who took his faith very seriously early on in his life, around 12-13 years old. I so enjoyed and admired him that I began to go to church with him, get involved in youth group and summer camps, and I even began to play guitar through his influence. This really led me to take my faith seriously early on as a teenager, and through his friendship, I became involved in the life of the church.



Paul Ranheim and Kirk Sauers, Photo credit: KT Sura

What were some of your formative experiences with music in church?

Those early days of church and music are deeply tied for me. Church is where I discovered the guitar and the world of songwriting. It was a vibrant community filled with so many great people, many of whom were excellent musicians and songwriters. Everyone played a guitar. People were always writing and sharing songs. It was there that I met a local Atlanta musician named Mike Kinnebrew (who is a really great artist). He led a group of high schoolers in a Thursday night Bible study. I often look back and think of how much I grew in my faith through those times together. And to be around Mike was to be inspired not only to love God more, but also to be a songwriter and find my voice in music.

Who are some of your musical influences?

Always a tough question, and tempting to make this a long list, but a variety of artists from James Taylor, Rich Mullins, Emmylou Harris, Fernando Ortega, and lots of '80s and '90s era country music!

Your first album features many collaborating artists. Do you intend for your future albums to as well?

We do. I think this approach is a part of who we are. I think the variety brings interest for our listeners, and it's so fun to hear other gifted artists bring these songs to life, sometimes in ways we never could have if we had sung them.

What are your goals and hopes for The Wood Drake Sessions?

Our goal is to keep writing songs that help people feel the truth of God's word. We desire to keep making songs for the life of the church to sing together and hope our songs help us all to enjoy God, find rest in God, and inspire us to love our neighbors well. ■

KIRK SAUERS

OF THE WOOD DRAKE SESSIONS



Saturday, April 27

5:30 pm

Center Point Church
(1200 S. Monroe)

Free concert; Barbecue dinner
will be served (\$5 suggested
donation per plate)



Event Sponsored by
Center Point Church + RUF @ FSU



Planting Seeds

By Daniel Hautamaki

Like a seed
in the ground
Christ was laid.

I know that
you are planted
in plastic trays
under artificial lights
in my shed
where it's cold
and it's quiet.

You are there because I still hope.

Rise!

Parochet

By Madeline Jeffes

"My life is but a weaving
Between my Lord and me."

And by what merit does this patient lacing come to be?
Does beauty make the Artist condescend to choose the weave?
Is cunning wit a currency, His favor to achieve?
Could riches or could power turn His thoughts towards our days?
Or piety, obedience, the blessings of His gaze?
It seems the King of Glory does not need the works of man,
And were His kindness earnable, I know not one that can.
For me to claim my tatters warrant love would be untrue;
My tapestry is mended because His was torn in two.

**From "The Weaver" by Grant Colfax Tullar*



Of Hobbits and Homemakers

By Ginny Laffitte

Samwise Gamgee has been a favorite literary hero of mine for many years, but it wasn't until I recently finished reading Tolkien's *The Two Towers* aloud to my boys that I pinpointed why. Perhaps in the beginning it was his grit, his humor, his love of a well-seasoned meal, or his unrelenting suspicion of Gollum that drew me in. With this last read, something deeper stood out. It's that he's not an adventurer or a warrior—he's a gardener. Rotund hobbit Sam, trained in plants and pruning, finds himself on the edge of Mordor battling Shelob, an enormous, sinister spider creature.

I am a homemaker, raising five children. This life was not modeled for me growing up. I was not trained for it, and I couldn't have foreseen it. Though motherhood is among the dearest joys of my life, on the hardest days it feels a bit like Mordor is steps away. At times we all feel the dread of being unprepared for what we face, regardless of circumstance. Life holds deeply complicated challenges and no one is immune. God in his mercy continues to pour out His grace, making us capable even when we are not.

Sam is not a "big Elvish warrior," as the orcs wrongly assume when they see Shelob's defeat. He is just Sam. I am just Ginny. You are just you. But the Lord will equip us as we all journey home.



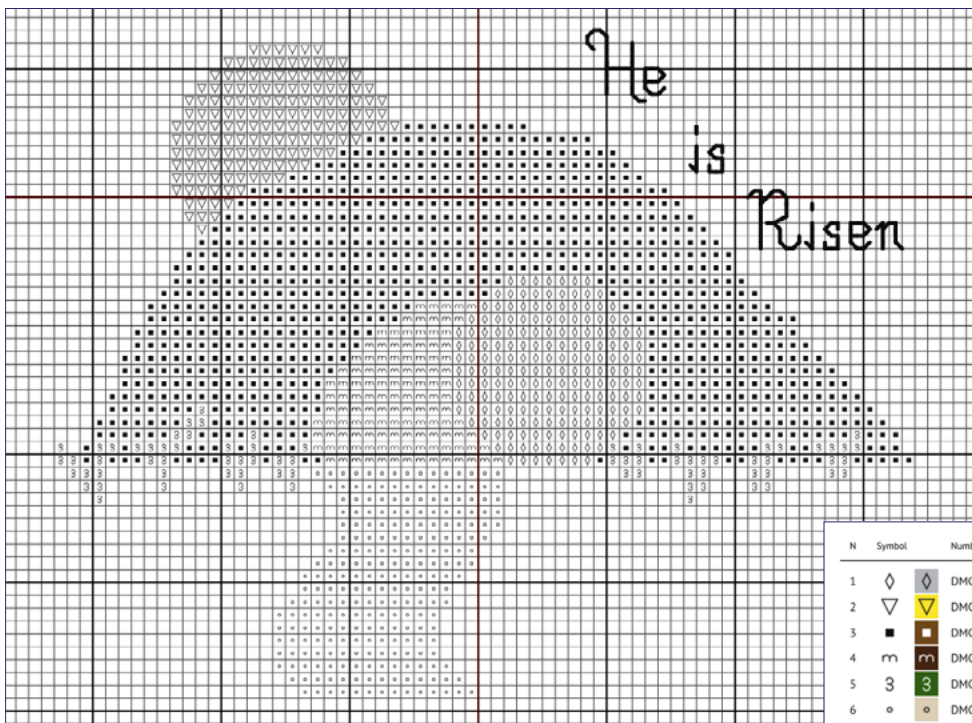
Resurrection Fern

Watercolor painting

Mike Houghton

The branches of the oak tree behind our house are lined with resurrection ferns, and I decided to paint a piece that I found lying on the ground. I also found the following description of resurrection ferns on a plaque in the woods on a recent hike with Kim:

"The resurrection fern is probably the most abundant epiphytic fern in Florida. An epiphyte is a plant that grows on another plant but is not parasitic. The fern is found throughout the state, usually on the branches of old live oaks growing in shaded hammocks. During periods of drought the fern shrivels to a dormant, dense, brown mass and appears lifeless. After rainfall the dried ferns 'resurrect' into a lush, deep green fern."



Empty Tomb

Designed and stitched by
Danica Middlebrook

Try it yourself with
Danica's *Empty Tomb*
cross-stitch pattern
downloadable on
[visualhymnal.com!](http://visualhymnal.com/)
This pattern calls for
DMC thread, available at
Michaels or JoAnns.

N	Symbol	Number	Name	Stitches
1	◇	DMC 02	Tin	185
2	▽	DMC 307	Lemon	154
3	■	DMC 829	Golden Olive - Very Dark	861
4	■	DMC 898	Coffee Brown - Very Dark	123
5	■	DMC 905	Parrot Green - Dark	74
6	○	DMC 3033	Mocha Brown - Very Light	237

ARTS AROUND TOWN

What local happenings are you (and your kids) participating in? We'd love for you to share with us your upcoming concerts, plays, recitals, art exhibits and more so we can spread the word. Plus, we want to know what you're excited to attend—workshops, craft fairs, food festivals, live performances, film screenings, book events, plant sales, and more. Tell us what creative things you're doing in and around Tallahassee via email at visualhymnal@gmail.com!

**Word of South: a festival
of literature & music - FREE**

April 26-28

Cascades Park

wordofsouthfestival.com

**Kirk Sauers of The Wood Drake
Sessions - FREE**

April 27

Center Point Church

*Barbecue dinner (\$5 suggested
donation per plate), co-
sponsored by Center Point
Church + RUF @ FSU*

Opera Scenes Performance - FREE

(featuring Leah Shewmaker)

April 28 at 2 pm

Opperman Music Hall

Nelson Mass by Joseph Haydn
*(featuring Peter Schamp
and Leah Shewmaker)*

April 28 at 4 pm

Ruby Diamond Concert Hall

Tickets at tcchorus.org

**Chamber Opera: World premiere
of *The Saturday's Sorrow***

by DaSean Stokes - FREE

(featuring Leah Shewmaker)

May 8 at 7:30 p.m.

Opperman Music Hall

**Gallery Exhibition: *From Grief
to Grace*, paintings by artist**

Paula Gasparini-Santos

May 23-June 29

LeMoyne Art Center

lemoyne.org

Opera: *Glory Denied*

by Tom Cipullo

May 31 and June 1 at 7:30 pm

Opperman Music Hall

tickets.music.fsu.edu



Cover Image by Ellen Sanders



Visual Hymnal exists to celebrate the creative work of the people of Center Point Church and beyond. We are interested in exploring the intersection of Christian faith and creativity; we also just love seeing what our friends are making. Writing, visual art, music, pottery, sewing, crafting, cooking, gardening—we want to showcase it all.

We welcome submissions on any theme or topic. Our next issue will be released during Ordinary Time; please send us your work by **May 1**.

Visual Hymnal is run and funded by a small staff of dedicated volunteers. Want to get involved or support this project? Email visualhymnal@gmail.com or talk to Leah, Sara, or Katie!

VISUALHYMNAL.COM