



How does a  
weary world  
rejoice? *We trust our  
belovedness*

Cover Art: “Beloved” by Lauren Wright Pittman, Inspired by Luke 3:21-22  
Digital painting and collage

Luke’s account of Jesus’ baptism is brief and vague. He was baptized among “all the people” (Luke 3:21) by an unnamed baptizer, and until he prays, the scene is rather unremarkable. During his prayer, however, an iconic scene unfolds with the heavens opening, the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove, and a voice booming from heaven.

As I considered how I might visually respond to this text, it was difficult to imagine this event with a beginner’s mind. I’ve seen lots of imagery of Jesus in the water with clouds breaking open and a dove descending, or Jesus bursting out of water into a beam of light. These images are powerful, but I wasn’t sure if creating a similar image would be helpful, or if I’d be offering insight into the text that hadn’t already been visually explored.

I began to meditate on what was unspoken and implied in Luke’s account, and one moment that stuck out in my imagination was the moment Jesus was underwater. How did Jesus feel when he held his breath and descended into the river?

This image offers a snapshot of Jesus right before he steps into his calling, on the threshold of spectacular affirmation. He is completely suspended, embraced, and upheld by the waters of baptism. The water’s surface is choppy. The future is unknown and precarious. His path is a lonely and formidable one, eventually leading to his suffering and death.

Despite what is to come, Jesus reaches toward the surface. Two fish are drawn to the light of his halo, foreshadowing his companionship with fishers and his miraculous feeding of the five thousand. All of creation is leaning into his call. This is what trusting your belovedness feels like—muscles and bones relieved of gravity’s burden, serenity, weightlessness, oneness with creation, and the warmth of God’s love permeating every cell of your body and every corner of your soul.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

*With Christ as the Cornerstone, we will build a church of living stones,  
where every member is a minister and is equipped to express God’s love  
by word and deed to all people.*

*Based on 1 Peter 2:5, 6*

# The Worship of God

Baptism of Our Lord

January 14, 2024

## Gathering Music

“Shall We Gather at the River”

HANSON PLACE;  
Words and Music by Robert Lowry

“As the Deer”

AS THE DEER;  
Words and Music by Martin J. Nystrom

“Broken Vessels (Amazing Grace)”

Words and Music by  
Joel Houston and Jonas Myrin

“Fierce”

Words and Music by Chris Quilala,  
Joshua Silverberg, and Mia Fieldes

## Prelude

“Come, Holy Spirit, Dove Divine”  
Cynthia Griesedieck

by H. Percy Smith  
arr. Cindy Berry

## Welcome

April Alston

## Call to Worship

One: There are some days when I need the reminder that I belong to God.  
Do you ever feel that way?

**All: Yes. We do.**

**The world can be a harsh place; we often need that reminder.**

One: Well then, let us care for one another.  
Let us speak the truth we each need to hear. Church, you belong to God.  
You are God’s beloved.

**All: Friend, you belong to God. You are God’s beloved.**

One: Let us worship the God who knows our names.

**All: Let us worship the God who calls us beloved. Amen.**

† *Please rise in body or spirit.*

## ✠ Opening Hymn

“There’s a Sweet, Sweet Spirit!”

SWEET, SWEET SPIRIT;  
Words and Music by Doris Akers

**There’s a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place,  
and I know that it’s the Spirit of the Lord;  
there are sweet expressions on each face,  
and I know they feel the presence of the Lord.**

### **Refrain:**

**Sweet Holy Spirit, sweet heavenly Dove,  
stay right here with us, filling us with your love;  
and for these blessings we lift our hearts in praise;  
without a doubt we’ll know that we have been revived  
when we shall leave this place.**

**There are blessings you cannot receive  
till you know him in his fullness and believe;  
you’re the one to profit when you say,  
“I am going to walk with Jesus all the way.” (Refrain)**

*During the last stanza of our Opening Hymn,  
all children are invited to come forward for today’s children’s sermon.*

## **Children’s Sermon**

April Alston

## **Pastoral Prayer**

Anna Beth Cross

## **Offertory Anthem**

“Like a River that Overflows”  
GBC Choir

by Ken Medema

Like a river that overflows, bringing life to a desert land:  
is the Spirit that lives within us, that's the reason we sing!  
Hallelujah! That's the reason we sing!

Like a wind that is blowing free, bringing with it the rains of spring:  
is the Spirit that lives within us, that's the reason we sing!  
Hallelujah! That's the reason we sing!

Like a mother who feeds her young, so that they may grow brave and wise:  
is the Spirit that lives within us, that's the reason we sing!  
Hallelujah! That's the reason we sing!

Praise the One who has made all things;  
Praise the One who gives Love a name;  
Praise the Spirit who lives within us, that's the reason we sing!  
Hallelujah! That's the reason we sing!  
Hallelujah! That's the reason we sing!

‡ **Doxology 817**

“O Bless the Gifts”

LAMB OF GOD;  
Words by Samuel Longfellow, alt.,  
Music by Twila Paris

**O bless the gifts our hands have brought;  
And bless the work our hearts have planned.  
Ours is the faith, the will, the thought;  
The rest, O God, is in Your hand.**

‡ **Prayer of Dedication**

Blair Andrew

**Scripture Reading**

Mark 1:1-11

Tobie Steele

**Sermon**

*“We Trust Our Belovedness”*

Chrissy Tatum Williamson

**Silent Reflection**

**Invitation**

Chrissy Tatum Williamson

‡ **Musical Response**

“I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry”

WATERLIFE;

Words and Music by John C. Ylvisaker

*(Words and Music on the next page)*

**Celebrating Community**

Steve Rose

**Benediction**

Chrissy Tatum Williamson

**Postlude**

“Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah”

Pam Weis

arr. Lani Smith

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