



What do  
you fear?

WHEN YOU'RE AFRAID,  
GIVE ME YOUR HAND

## **“In Too Deep” by Nicolette Faison**

### **Cover Art - Artist Statement**

My inaugural contribution to *A Sanctified Art* in 2023 focused on the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth. After having a challenging pregnancy of my own, I used my art to explore the divine connections of people who carry pregnancies and how that special type of relationship benefits the community. But even after reading these pregnancy stories time and time again, I have struggled to sit with Joseph and how he processes all of this change with his new wife. Somehow life is always in alignment with the text, and now, as I process a divorce, I think more often of what it would feel like for someone else to come in and try to fit into my established family system.

This made me think of a Joseph who can't sleep well at night, as his mind is uneasy with the words of Gabriel in his ear. I wanted Joseph to have an uncomfortable sleep form with a clenched fist that shows us he is tense even while he dreams. His foot is raised up in a way that looks almost as if he could pop up at any moment. Funny enough, this is how I slept throughout my own pregnancies. His hair, while luxurious, has flowy movement to it, leaning into the uneasiness. The soft spiral pattern in the background also implies movement. We don't see Joseph often in holy art. We receive the occasional holy family portrait, which is often not detailed, but Joseph does not really get his own place in the story. He is almost like the forgotten father after Jesus comes of age, so his time is really now. I don't think his position needs to be a cornerstone for the birth story; however, as my own life changes, I can appreciate the importance of his devotion and obedience to God.

In the artwork, the angel Gabriel is talking to Joseph as he sleeps, with silver locs reminiscent of God from the children's book I illustrated, *God's Holy Darkness*. This is a nod to my own work, which honors holiness as brown, coarse textured, and wise. Why wouldn't an angel both resemble God and the people they are called to speak to?

The dreamy pregnant body we see in the top left is styled in an outfit that is a nod to Beyonce's 2017 Grammys performance costume for the song, "Love Drought." At that time Beyonce was pregnant with her twins, Sir and Rumi, and gave one of the most outstanding performances someone so far along could provide. Her full costume also included a golden headpiece that resembled that of an icon, a goddess even. How appropriate for a woman of faith carrying twins—performing a song from an album where she experienced betrayal, heartbreak, and reconciliation—to perform at this last supper-like table in such an outfit, knowing her marriage and pregnancy could have killed her. In my painting, the pregnant belly is celebrated with rays beaming from it followed by soft clouds, reminding us this is a dream. The color choices are bright, detailed, and whimsical to keep us in the fantasy. There is vibrancy here because, while Joseph is uncomfortable, this is still some thing to be celebrated.

-Rev. Nicolette Faison

# The Worship of God

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

## Gathering Music

"Precious Lord, Take My Hand"  
GBC Worship Band

PRECIOUS LORD  
Words by Thomas A. Dorsey  
Music by George N. Allen arr. Thomas A. Dorsey

"Serving Together"

Words and Music by  
Christian McIvor ©2025

"We Shall Overcome"

Traditional Black Spiritual  
arr. William Farley Smith

"Do Not Be Afraid"

Words and Music by  
Christian McIvor ©2018

## Prelude

"There's a Song in the Air"  
Cynthia Griesedieck

arr. Cindy Berry

## Welcome

April Alston

## Call to Worship

One: Here in worship—

**All: we pray together,**

One: we stand together,

**All: we sing together,**

One: we listen together.

**All: Here in worship—  
we are not alone.**

One: So when life gives you reason to grieve, to fear, or to worry,  
remember this moment.

**All: We are not alone.**

One: Let us worship our with-us God.

# Lighting of the Advent Candle

Trish Boone and Mia Ng

## † Opening Carol #275 “Sing We Now of Christmas”

FRENCH CAROL  
Traditional French Carol

Sing we now of Christmas, Noel sing we here!  
Listen to our praises to the Babe so dear.  
Sing we Noel, the King is born, Noel!  
Sing we now of Christmas, sing we all Noel!

Shepherds on the hillside heard the angels sing:  
Glory, honor, praises to the infant King.  
Sing we Noel, the King is born, Noel!  
Sing we now of Christmas, sing we all Noel!

In the town they found him; Son of Mary mild.  
Sleeping in a manger was the Holy Child.  
Sing we Noel, the King is born, Noel!  
Sing we now of Christmas, sing we all Noel!

Wise Men sought and found him, treasures did they bring;  
Bowing down they worshiped Christ, the King of kings.  
Sing we Noel, the King is born, Noel!  
Sing we now of Christmas, sing we all Noel!

**Mary, Joseph, and Jesus**

Luke 2:1, 3-7

Sumner Eshleman

**Carol 262** Stanzas 1 and 3

“Away in a Manger”

**The Angels**

Luke 2:8-14

**Carol 278** Stanzas 1 and 3 “Angels We Have Heard on High”

**The Shepherds**

Luke 2:15-20

**Carol 265** Stanzas 1 and 2

“The First Noel”

**The Wise Men**

Matthew 2:1-12

**Carol 288** Stanzas 1 and 5

“We Three Kings”



## Offertory Anthem

“O Bethlehem”  
GBC Choir

by Christin Kieckhafer

O Bethlehem, how still you lie.  
Above your dreamless sleep silent stars go by.  
O Bethlehem, how dark the night.  
Within your shadowed streets shines the everlasting Light, the Light.

O Bethlehem, how silently he came.  
Greatest gift from heaven, without wealth or fame (wealth or fame).  
O Bethlehem, how great your hope and fear.  
Lay to rest your wearied past, Your Promised One is near. He is near.

O Bethlehem, the Heavens shone bright!  
In a field not far away, shepherds witnessed the sight.  
O Bethlehem, how the angels sing!  
O hear them proclaim the birth of the King of kings.

O Bethlehem, He's come to us (come to us).  
O Bethlehem, He abides with us (abides with us).  
O Bethlehem, hear the angels tell  
How the Great I Am has become Emmanuel.

O Bethlehem.

## †Doxology for Advent

VENI EMMANUEL  
Words by Thomas Ken  
15th Century French Melody

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
praise Christ, all people here below;  
praise Holy Spirit evermore;  
praise Triune God, whom we adore.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

## Pastoral Prayer

Steve Rose

## Reflection

*When You're Afraid, Give Me Your Hand*

Bo Prosser

## †Carol #251

“It Came upon the Midnight Clear”  
Stanzas 1, 3-4

CAROL  
Words by Edmund H. Sears  
Music by Richard S. Willis

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:  
“Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven’s all-gracious King”:  
the world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

And ye, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low,  
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,  
look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing:  
O, rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing.

For lo, the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,  
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,  
and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

## Celebrating Community

Anna Beth Cross

## †Benediction

Bo Prosser

## †Sending Song

“What Do You Fear?”  
(Excerpt - see insert for notated lead sheet)

Words and Music  
by Christian McIvor ©2025

When neighbors are at risk– in need of help, support, and care,  
Their voices we will amplify, our power we will share.  
As systems of oppression increase disparity,  
With love, we’re reaching out our hands in solidarity.

In this uncertain world, we’re asked each day, “What do you fear?”  
The answers move us closer to our God, who’s always near.  
With courage, trust, and action, we’ll live into our call;  
Through darkness, we’ll cry, “Here I am!” to share the light with all.

## Postlude

“Prepare the Way”  
Pam Weis

Swedish Folk Tune  
arr. James Mansfield

*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*

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Graphic Design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed  
Cover Art: "In Too Deep" by Nicolette Faison | A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org)

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Bo Prosser, Interim Pastor  
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