



“Stay with Me” by T. Denise Anderson

Cover Art - Artist Statement

I used to think my mother was cheap. When we’d go on road trips, she’d spend the night before preparing food for the trip. I thought it was because she didn’t want to spend money on fast food. She didn’t. But her reasons had nothing to do with a drive-thru.

My mother was a Black child in the U.S. in the 1950s and 60s. When they went on road trips, they had to leave in the dead of night with everything they’d need for the trip. For Black folks, there was no casual stopping along the way. If you stopped at the “wrong” place, you might not make it home. Her elders taught her what they had to learn themselves, often the hard way. My mom grew up in the Steel Belt, but the family had moved there after leaving the Jim Crow South during the Great Migration for greener (and ostensibly safer) pastures. Her preparations were vestiges of a circumspect upbringing designed to keep her safe.

I was well into adulthood when I realized my family had been refugees in their own country.

The story of the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt takes new significance as I consider not only the experiences of dear ones around the world, but also my own ancestors. My piece focuses on a parent’s desperate grip of their child’s hand as they escape a despot’s fiery wrath, possibly in the dead of night. The colors subtly recall the Pan-African, Palestinian, and Sudanese flags. I remember those left behind, and the lower part of the composition depicts the anguish of mothers whose children were not spared. Rachel still weeps (Matthew 2:18).

Our fears aren’t unfounded. Salvation may have arrived, but the world still isn’t safe. How will we remember Rachel’s children as we resist and rebuild?

-Rev. T. Denise Anderson

*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

First Sunday After Christmas

December 28, 2025

Gathering Music

Christmas Carols By Request

Led by Pam Weis
and Christian McIvor

*Please feel free to call out you favorite Christmas carols from
The Celebration Hymnal #240-290.*

Prelude

"We Three Kings"
Sandra Hunt

John Henry Hopkins
arr. Patti Drennan

Welcome

Anna Beth Cross

Call to Worship

One: In worship, we hear God's story and we ask,

All: "What did God do long ago?"

One: In worship, we hear God's story, so we ask,

All: "What is God doing, here and now?"

One: In worship, we hear God's story, then we ask,

All: "What can I do to respond to it all?"

One: Listen, God is speaking.

All: Listen, it may be time to act.

One: Let us worship our moving, inspiring, with-us God.

All: Amen.

†Opening Carol #258

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

GO TELL IT
Words by John W. Work, Jr.
Traditional Black Spiritual harm. Eugene Thomas

Refrain:

Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born!

Verse 1:

While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold! Thro'out the heavens
There shone a holy light. (Refrain)

Verse 2:

The shepherds feared and trembled
When lo! Above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth. (Refrain)

Verse 3:

Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born,
And brought us God's salvation
That blessed Christmas morn. (Refrain)

Call to Confession

April Alston

Prayer of Confession

Emmanuel, God with us,
scripture tells us that you were a refugee,
but we love to forget that information.

We love to forget every act of gun violence.
We love to forget how many people go hungry,
or how many students do not have access to good education.
We love to forget the injustices in our world that feel too big for us to face.

† *Please rise in body or spirit.*

But you are a God who refuses to forget.
So today we pray: make it impossible for us to overlook the stories of those in need.
Make it impossible for us to sweep injustice under the rug.
Open our eyes along with our hearts, so that the anger we feel around injustice
might fuel a fire for action.
With hope for a better tomorrow we pray,
amen.

Words of Forgiveness

One: Church family,
even when we fail to do justice,
even when we fail to love kindness,
even when we allow fear to override action, freezing us in place,
God still loves us.
So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:
All: **On our best days and on our worst days, we belong to God.
We are invited into community. We are held in God's grace. We are forgiven.
And we are sent to serve.**
One: Thanks be to God for a love like that.
All: **Amen.**

Sung Response "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" (Refrain)

**Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born!**

Anthem "Sing We All Noel" arr. Gary E. Parks
The GraceTones

Blessing of the Meal Bo Prosser

Serving the Meal

Scripture Matthew 2:1-23 GBC Staff

Breakfast & Table Discussion Anna Beth Cross

†Closing Hymn

“What Do You Fear?”

ST. LOUIS / WHAT DO YOU FEAR?
Words by Christian McIvor
Music by Lewis Henry Redner
and Christian McIvor ©2025

In times of doubt and worry, there's a longing in the soul;
We hold tight to our deepest aches and things we can't control.
But if we stop to listen and face what lies within,
Resilient hope will lift our hearts to find God breaking in.

We spend a lifetime laboring toward all that we become
And wonder if it's made a difference when the day is done.
Though struggle lies before us– more justice to fulfill,
There's peace in quiet transformation; God is working still.

We hesitate at times when we encounter the unknown;
We tremble at the thought of meeting hardship all alone.
But God is always with us– our true identity;
With joy, we're stepping forward into who we're made to be.

Chorus:

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 live into our call;
Through darkness, we cry, “Here I am!” to share the light with all.

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. (Chorus)

Benediction

Bo Prosser

Postlude

“Christmas Carol Medley”
Sandra Hunt

arr. Carol Tornquist

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Graphic Design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed
Cover Art: "Stay with Me" by T. Denise Anderson | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

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