

Call to Worship *by Jane Dunkel*

One: This morning, we come from our living rooms, our kitchen tables, our gardens, even our bedrooms, to create — through the airwaves — sacred space with one another.

Many: We ask God to be with us in this space.

One: We welcome all that is Holy and Divine.

Many: We breathe deeply in God's Presence, and in the gift of being together.

One: Often, during this time, we look for guidance in wisdom of ancient, familiar texts,

Many: And we relax into the comfort of these stories just as we would into an old, favorite, worn chair.

One: Today, we listen to new voices,

Many: Voices that have long been ignored, discounted, repressed or silenced.

One: As we listen, we ask that You:

Many: Open our ears to hear the rhythm, cadence, and beauty of those who testify;

One: Open our eyes to see new images through their words;

Many: Open our minds to new ways of thinking about your Spirit;

One: Open our hearts to a greater understanding of all that is Holy.

Many: Together, we take a deep breath

One: And, with eager anticipation,

Many: Wait to hear your call.

God is a Mother

by Kaitlin Hardy Shetler

god is a mother
and with that
sentence
the world stops

the world always stops
when woman and
divine
commingle
as if the
feminine
dilutes the
miraculous
when in reality
it embodies it

when jesus turns water
to wine
they clap
but when women turn breasts
to milk
they cringe

a broken man's body
is celebrated each sunday
while a broken woman's body
is just hidden away

and it's no wonder
that mother is a word
used by men
to demonize those
who don't claim the name
and weaponized to shame

those who step out of line
because
their ideal
woman
plays the role of nurturer
and silencer
in pews
built and led by them

but
when god
becomes mother
she is neither quiet
or compliant
she leads confidently
she questions authority
she commands respect
which might be the problem

for mother god
did not gather us up
carelessly
but took her time with it
she fed us milk
birthed our souls
and broke her body
and the permanence
can be uncomfortable

and to disentangle god
from motherhood
is impossible
but
to disentangle god
from womanhood
is sinful

because seeing god as mother
is one step closer
to seeing god in me
and it's in that
i am truly
born again

A Real Scandal of the Birth of God (A Christmas Poem)

by Kaitlin Hardy Shetler

sometimes I wonder
if Mary breastfed Jesus.
if she cried out when he bit her
or if she sobbed when he would not latch.

and sometimes I wonder
if this is all too vulgar
to ask in a church
full of men
without milk stains on their shirts
or coconut oil on their breasts
preaching from pulpits off limits to the Mother of God.

but then i think of feeding Jesus,
birthing Jesus,
the expulsion of blood
and smell of sweat,
the salt of a mother's tears
onto the soft head of the Salt of the Earth,
feeling lonely
and tired
hungry
annoyed
overwhelmed
loving

and i think,
if the vulgarity of birth is not
honestly preached
by men who carry power but not burden,
who carry privilege but not labor,
who carry authority but not submission,
then it should not be preached at all.

because the real scandal of the Birth of God
lies in the cracked nipples of a
14 year old
and not in the sermons of ministers
who say women
are too delicate
to lead.

The Sacred Wild

by Arlene Bailey

Once upon a time,
All of life coexisted
in harmony and beauty.
The sacred art of the
Cosmos and Nature
dwelling side by side.
Shades of blue and green,
Earth and Water,
intermingling into
azure and emerald
holding life so precious.
All was beautiful.
All was sacred.

Once upon a time,
Woman was sacred,
her body treasured
and her voice heard.
She was Mother, Sister,
Lover, Warriress, Queen.
Sovereign unto herself,
she was power and grace,
creatrix and destroyer.
She was Nature personified.
Holding life in her hands,
Woman carried the Cosmos
within her body and
stood at the portals
of life and death.
Protected and Inviolate.
She was Hallowed.
She was Sacrosanct.
Once upon a time,
She was the Past.
She was the Present.
She was the Future.
Once upon a time.
All of life coexisted
in harmony and beauty.
The sacred art of the
Cosmos and Nature
dwelling side by side.
Once upon a time.

Mother's Prayer

by Rebecca Solnit

Our mother who art underfoot
Hallowed be thy names
Thy seasons come
Thy will be done
Within us as around us
Thank you for our daily bread
Our water, our air, and our lives
And so much beauty
Lead us not into selfish craving
And the destructions
That are the hungers of the gluttons
But deliver us from wanton consumption
Of thy vast but finite bounty.
For thine is the only sphere of life we know
And the power and the glory
Forever and ever
Amen