

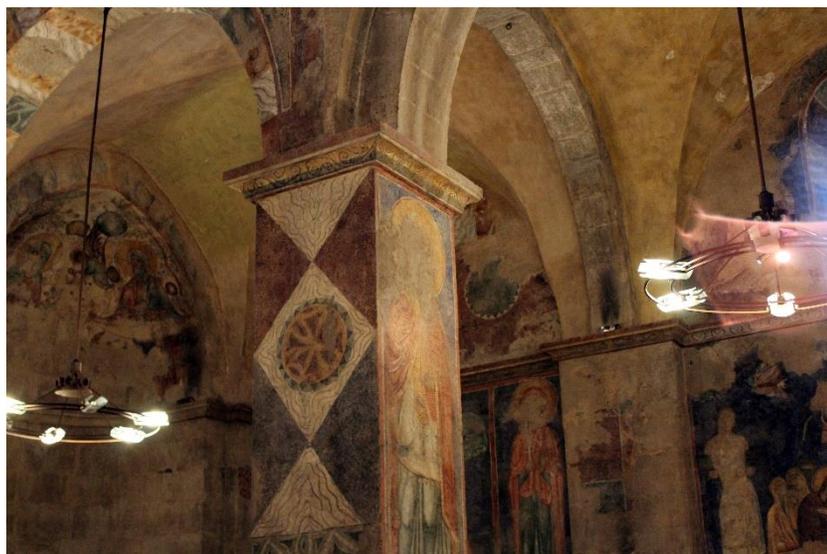


ST. ELIZABETH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Ancient manuscripts attribute one of our Gospels to “Luke,” whom patristic writers identify as a companion of Paul, possibly the “beloved physician” mentioned in Colossians or the Luke that Paul mentions in his letter to Philemon. Luke may have been a Gentile or a Hellenic Jew, as he seems to be focused on different concerns than the Jewish Matthew or John. He was likely a Roman or perhaps a Syrian, and his classic, polished writing style is evidence of a well-educated, brilliant storyteller and a bit of a historian. He thinks more like a Greek philosopher than like a Jewish theologian, and yet the Greek translation of Jewish scripture that we know as the Septuagint is foundational for Luke. Although he has a clear respect for Jerusalem, it was not his home either geographically or culturally, and he may not have ever even visited Judea.

Luke’s Gospel gives us a unique set of resurrection stories. Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary, the mother of James show up at the empty tomb, but never encounter the Risen Christ and the angel does not send them. Peter sees the empty tomb and is astonished, but does not hear the voice of Christ in this version. Then comes today’s story about two people who encounter, but do not recognize Christ. Finally, Christ appears to the Eleven, but there is no mention of a unique experience for Thomas. Christ then leads the Eleven to Bethany, blesses them and ascends to heaven. All this happens, according to Luke, on the same day.

We often refer to the story in today’s lectionary as the “Road to Emmaus,” but as one scholar has noted, a more appropriate title might be the “Road back to Jerusalem.” We are not even certain where exactly Emmaus was! The most likely candidate is a town now called Abu Ghosh according to some ancient authorities who read a longer distance in the text. The ancient name of the town, Qiryat Yearim, shows up in Jewish scripture as one of the resting places of the Ark of the Covenant. It is also the site of a pool of water where a detachment of Rome’s Tenth Legion was garrisoned. There is now beautiful French Benedictine monastery built over the pool with a church covered with frescoes (right) that were defaced in the late 14th c. C.E. when Muslim soldiers used it for a horse barn.



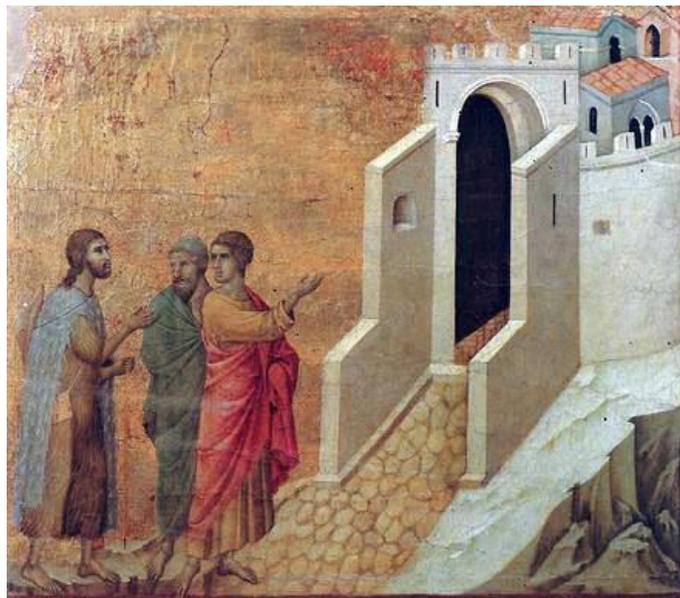
Preparation

Some Christians celebrate Easter and Christmas, and then return to a familiar pattern of hymns, readings and sermons. Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Catholics and many other denominations keep some version of the Great Fifty Days of Pascha, the season that lasts until Pentecost. We are now two weeks into Pascha. If we were gathered at church, we would have our finest vestments on the altar, which would be surrounded by beautiful flowers and bearing new beeswax candles. The newly blessed Paschal candle would be lit and standing in a place of prominence right between the lectern and the baptismal font. We would light our best incense and sing some of our favorite hymns. We'd gather at the table to celebrate with our best port and some home-made bread.

While we are temporarily separated (and then, only physically so), consider taking this as an opportunity to bring some of that intention home. Home worship is the oldest form of Christian worship with more than a little Jewish influence. Jesus was familiar with seders held in the home and the Risen Christ shows up at two mealtime gatherings – once in Emmaus and again (Luke 24:13-35) and again in a Jerusalem apartment (Luke 24:36-43).

And so, if you can, invite the Risen Christ into your home with a white tablecloth and a new white candle on the table or desk where you are collected. Maybe you want to set out some greens or flowers, or just pictures from magazines if that's all you access to. You might set out a favorite cross or rosary and spend a moment summoning up a sense of gratitude and forgiveness before starting this service. Do it with friends or family by phone. Offer it with loved ones no longer living or saints that you admire. Listen to some liturgical music like this: [youtube.com/watch?v=sjlzehAJT9Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjlzehAJT9Y) or [youtube.com/watch?v=I5fYXDsh_YU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5fYXDsh_YU) for a longer taste of heaven as you pray. (I find "praise" music distracting, but if you love it, go for it!) And, as always, notice that our worship is voiced in the plural – "we," "us" and "our" – because we may be temporarily apart, but we are also always bound together in Christ.

Second Sunday of Easter 26 April 2020



Centering

Make the sign of the cross as the leader says: May the light of Christ in glory rising scatter the darkness of heart and mind. (+) Alleluia! Christ is risen.

All respond: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

The leader prays: O God, your Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of the bread. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in his redeeming work, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Word of God for the Third Sunday in Easter

The Gospel is the primary reading of the day and should always be read. The Gospel follows after a reading from Hebrew Scripture, a Psalm and a reading from the early church, should you choose to read all the texts for the day.

A reading from Acts: Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke forth to them, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified."

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children and all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to him." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." Then those who received his word were baptized, and there were added in that day about three thousand souls.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

(The response: Prayed together or by alternating verses) Psalm 116: 1-3, 10-17

A prayer of one saved from death, and a promise in gratitude to God

I love the LORD, for the LORD has heard
the cry of my appeal.

The LORD was attentive to me
in the day when I called.

They surrounded me, the snares of death,
with the anguish of the tomb;
they caught me, sorrow and distress.

I called on the LORD's name.

O Lord, my God, deliver me!

How can I repay the LORD
for his goodness to me?

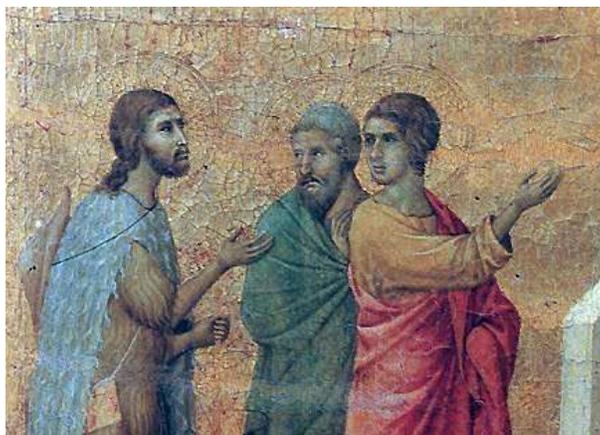
The cup of salvation I will raise;
I will call on the LORD's name.

My vows to the LORD I will fulfill
before all the people.
O precious in the eyes of the LORD
is the death of the faithful.
Your servant, LORD, your servant am I;
you have loosened my bonds.
A thanksgiving sacrifice I make;
I will call on the LORD's name.
My vows to the LORD I will fulfill
before all the people,
in the courts of the house of the LORD,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

A reading from the first letter of Peter: ...if you invoke as "Father" him who judges according to each person's work, without personal partiality, then pass the time of your sojourn in reverent fear, knowing that your liberation from the futile conduct of life handed down by your fathers was bought not with perishable things – silver or gold – but rather with precious blood of the Anointed, as of an unblemished and immaculate lamb, having foreknown before the foundation of the cosmos, yet having been made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who, through him, have faith in the God who has raised him from the dead and has given him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God. Having by obedience to the truth purified your souls for unfeigned brotherly love, love one another fervently from a pure heart, having been regenerated not from perishable – but rather unperishable – seed by a living and abiding word of God.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God



A reading from Luke: On that very day two of them were journeying to a village sixty stadia away from Jerusalem, the name of which was Emmaus. And they were talking with each other about these events. And it happened that, as they talked and debated, Jesus himself approached and journeyed along with them; but their eyes were constrained so as not to

recognize him. And he said to them, “What are these remarks you exchange with one another while walking?” And they stood still with saddened expressions. And in reply one of them, Cleopas by name, said to him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and ignorant of the things happening in it these days?” And he said to them, “What things?” and they said to him, “The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, a man who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people. But the chief priests and our rulers both handed him over for condemnation to death and crucified him. But we had been hoping that he was the one about to liberate Israel; and, in addition to all this, it has reached the third day since these things occurred. But some women among us also astonished us, having come to the tomb early in the morning. And, not finding his body, came and told also of having seen a vision of angels, who say that he lives. And some of those with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said, but did not see him. And he said to them, “O fools, and with hearts slow to believe in all the things of which the prophets spoke: Was it not necessary for the Anointed to endure these things and to enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he expounded to them the things concerning himself in all the scriptures.

And they approached the village to which they were journeying, and he made as if to journey further on. And they urged him intently, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening, and this day has now set.” And he went to stay with them. And it happened that, as he reclined at table with them, he took the loaf and blessed it and, having broken it, he shared it with them; And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, “Was not our heart burning within us while he spoke to us on the road, as he opened up the scriptures to us?” And, rising up in that same hour, they returned to Jerusalem and found the Eleven gathered together, along with those who were with them, saying: “The Lord truly has been raised and appeared to Simon.” And they related the things that had happened on the road, and how he had been recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

Sermon: Peter writes about our liberation from the futile conduct of life handed down by our forebears or, in the New Revised Standard Version, the futile ways inherited from our ancestors. He is not here claiming that Christians are succeeding where Jews have failed.

Peter is reminding us that it is futile to look for liberation in the self-absorbing and insecure worldly power of Empire; reminding us that our help will be found only in turning to the mystical Divine energy that infuses creation and all the children of God with holiness.

Luke shows us how that might look in action. At first, Jesus is just a stranger for Cleopas and his wife (and, yes, I'm among those who like to imagine Cleopas walking with his spouse). They ask if Jesus is a visitor to Jerusalem. He lets them reel out their information about things that happened in Jerusalem over the past few days. And then Luke ends their news reporting with brilliant storyteller's flourish. The two travelers walking toward Emmaus tell Jesus that those who went to the tomb in the morning did not see the Risen Christ.

The Risen Christ that, of course, they don't see walking beside them.

Jesus' two students are remembering him – just not in the way that he taught them to do only days earlier: “Do this in remembrance of me” at Eucharistic table. They don't recognize what they aren't looking for.

They can recall a victim. They saw what Romans soldiers and a handful of Judaeen religious leaders did to Jesus. They did not see what he did for them. For us.

They can recall a hoped-for earthly king. They saw an influential leader for the 12 tribes of Israel. They didn't see a perfect manifestation of God's loving-kindness and teaching sent *through* Israel for all people, for all time.

They can recall a failure and a dead man. They were looking for a Superman, a magic man. They are still looking for life among the dead. They have some facts and a little knowledge, and no understanding, let alone wisdom. And now they are walking *away* from Jerusalem and *toward* a Roman-held town

Fortunately for them, this is the third day. Now, the number three is more than just information about a length of passing time. The number is symbolic. This third day is the day of revelation; the day that their information will be bathed with understanding.

Our God is revealed through shattered hopes, delayed dreams and bread broken.

And on this day of revelation, we hear Jesus call the two fools. More than a few preachers like to add an irritated tone as though Jesus were seriously annoyed at idiots. Fortunately for us, Luke's Greek allow us to imagine a more compassionate and skilled teacher. “O unminding ones,” the Risen Christ says to them, “and tardy of heart to trust...” I prefer this more patient Jesus as I am myself so often in a state of “unminding and tardy of heart to trust.”

Then the Risen Christ, still a stranger, reminds the two of all the information they have collected. Only now, it is set in the context of greater knowledge with a vision of complete understanding inspired by God's own wisdom.

And the two followers do exactly the right thing. They ask this brilliant resource to stay with them. He re-enacts the Last Supper and then vanishes from physical sight.

We are part of a tradition among other traditions that claim humanity to be essential partners in God's transfiguring energy. The gift of the Holy Spirit, God's own breath, inspires us to relax our constricted views on ourselves, on each other and on the world around us.

In this way, God lifts our sight beyond the boundaries of alienated isolation and wakens us to our membership as children of God in the transcendent unity of the Divine. There is always that within the human soul that recognizes the presence of God and awakens to it. It is the original light of creation glimmering within every created thing.

Having been created by the Word of God ourselves, we can never completely forget it, even in the worst of circumstances. Catching a glimpse of this larger reality, we can seek to live and act by principles that radiate the loving-kindness of God.

There is a unique kind of wholeness that can emerge only from brokenness. And while there is a great deal of brokenness all around us, there are also moments of brilliance; shimmers of light that cause our hearts to burn within us. Flickers that turn us away from the road to Emmaus where walls of earthly Empire wait to enclose and enfeeble us. Flashes that turn us back to where the Risen Christ is showing up in all sorts of new ways.

Let me show you one of those. Jennifer and I were watching the “One World: Together at Home” broadcast put on by Global Citizen and the World Health Organization. We found the whole event uplifting and encouraging.

And there among the impressive array of musicians and celebrities, athletes and sponsors from around the world, was one segment about a woman named Shirley Raines. Shirley lives in Long Beach, California, where she worked for 26 years until she was laid off last year. She lives on unemployment that will run out soon.

Even so, she puts all her energy into running a non-profit called “Beauty2TheStreetz” that she created to help people living on the streets of Los Angeles. For years, she has been feeding people and giving them free haircuts and styling, make-up, hygiene kits, beauty products and clothes, most of it donated by an increasing stream of volunteers, TV personalities, local food trucks and restaurants, and cosmetics companies.

Shirley herself is hard to overlook. She is tall and bubbly. And her hair, eyelashes and eyebrows range from neon green to hot pink to the entire rainbow. These days, in addition to her enormous hoop earrings, Shirley wears a rhinestone-studded mask and does her best to maintain appropriate safe physical distancing.

Because instead of cutting and dying hair, and curling eyelashes every Saturday, now she hands out up to 200 baggies with donated hand-sanitizer and vitamin C, often with one of 600 hamburgers that she buys each week. She used to cook but now relies on donated money.

She started helping people experiencing homelessness as a way to cope with the death of her first-born son, just days before his third birthday in the early 1990s. The experience, Shirley says, left her feeling broken for many years. Three years ago, she started her own non-profit.

Shirley told an NPR radio affiliate about what she experienced on her first visit to Central City East in Los Angeles. “When I came out here,” she said, “I’m like, ‘oh, my God, this is where all of *me* are. These are all the broken people.’ I felt at home.”

And then there was the moment on the One World broadcast that brought her to my attention. When asked why she is still serving these people in spite of the personal risk, Shirley’s response could not have been more beautiful. “Because,” she said, “I love them.”

Resurrection life, do you see, is not lived in the refuge of some fortress held together by the illusion of human might. Those are the futile ways handed down by our ancestors.

Resurrection life emerges from the embrace of human vulnerability made sacred by the presence of the Holy One walking beside us. Resurrection life is given meaning in broken bread that replaces pride with peace and hatred with harmony.

Those of you who practice Evening Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer are familiar with the prayer inspired by this Gospel reading. I commend it to all of you through these days when the Divine presence may be obscured from our view; days where our focus on what *was* may dim our minds and slow our hearts to trust in what *is* and is still to come.

“Lord Jesus,” the prayer goes, “stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love.” Amen.

Silence and stillness

The Nicene Creed

Leader: Let us reaffirm our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he (or “she” or no pronoun) is worshiped and glorified.

He (she/who) has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need

These intercessions may be used, adding others in each household:

Leader: God the Father, your will for all people is health and salvation.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: God the Son, you came that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: God the Holy Spirit, you make our bodies the temple of your presence.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: Holy Trinity, one God, in you we live and move and have our being.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & The Middle East, the Most Reverend Michael Lewis, Archbishop, Jerusalem & the Middle East & Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf.

In the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, we pray for St. Luke, Renton; Our Lady of Guadalupe, Renton.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: We pray for our neighbors at Navos, for Neighborhood House, for Hospitality House, for Operation Nightwatch, and for the safety of those in military service, for the safety and stamina of healthcare workers, for first responders and for their families. We pray for those on our long-term list.

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others, offered silently or aloud.

Leader: Lord, grant your healing grace to all who are sick, injured or disabled, that they may be made whole.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Grant to all who are lonely, anxious or depressed, a knowledge of your will and an awareness of your presence.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Grant to all who minister to those who are suffering wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Mend broken relationships, and restore to those in distress soundness of mind and serenity of spirit.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Sustain and support those who seek your guidance and lift up all who are brought low by the trials of this life.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: We pray for the repose of the souls of Ginny and Jeff, and for their families in mourning. Grant to the dying peace and a holy death, and uphold by the grace and consolation of your Holy Spirit those who are bereaved.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Restore to wholeness whatever is broken by human sin, in our lives, in our nation, and in the world.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: You are the LORD who does mighty wonders.

All: You have declared your power among the peoples.

Leader: With you, LORD, is the well of life

All: and in your light do we see light.

Leader: Hear us, LORD of life:

All: heal us, and make us whole.



Let us pray.

A period of silence follows, and then:

Leader: Hear the prayer we offer for all your people. Remember in your mercy those for whom we pray: heal the sick, raise the fallen, strengthen the fainthearted, protect those who serve, and enfold in your love the fearful and those who have no hope.

In the fullness of time complete your gracious work. Reconcile all things in Christ and make them new, that we may be restored in your image, renewed in your love, and serve you as sons and daughters in your kingdom.

Through your anointed Son, Jesus Christ, our LORD, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit we lift our voices of thanks and praise:

All: Blessed be God, our strength and our salvation, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Pater Noster/Our Father/The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Prayer of spiritual communion

Most Holy Christ, we trust that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We love you above all things, and we long for you in our souls. Since we cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into our hearts. We embrace you as though you were already there and we unite ourselves entirely to you. Never permit us to be separated from you. *Amen.*

Concluding Prayer

Days pass and the years vanish and we walk sightless among miracles.
LORD, fill our eyes with seeing and our minds with knowing.
Let there be moments when your Presence, like lightning,
illuminates the darkness in which we walk.
Help us to see, wherever we gaze, that the bush burns, unconsumed.
And we, clay touched by God, will reach out for holiness and exclaim with wonder,
“How filled with awe is this place and we did not know it.” Amen.

Blessing

Make the sign of the cross as you say: May Christ, (+) who by death has destroyed death, give us all courage and joy in believing. Amen.

Giving Thanks at Table

Leader: Prove yourselves innocent and straightforward, children of God beyond reproach.

All: Shine in this generation like stars in the sky.

Leader: God is generous with all His gifts and holy in all His works, living and reigning for ever and ever.

All: Amen

Leader: Grant eternal life to all who do good to us in your name.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us bless the LORD.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: May the souls of the faithfully departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

All: Amen.



“Even when our lives are touched by glory itself we remain here [“at once justified and a sinner”], always with further need to swim in conversion. There is always more study, work and prayer to do...but underneath is always, even from the very beginning, a deep glory calling us from one degree of glory to another, holding up to the ‘always’ a deep ‘not yet’ that keeps us swimming in hope.”

~ **Rev. Dr. Robert Davis Hughes III**

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