

voicēs
ISSUE THREE | SUMMER 2021

CONTRIBUTORS



Bonnie Betourney enjoys gardening. She decided to try something new last Spring during the “Stay Safe, Stay at home” order and picked up a paintbrush and hasn’t put it down yet.



Lauren K. Chard is a native New Yorker, Paul Smith’s College graduate and lover of the Champlain Valley mountain ranges. She enjoys photography, gardening, and cooking, all while living in pastoral Bridport, Vermont with her very talented and loving husband, Tom.



Thomas A. Chard returned to his art studio, A Far Shore, in western Addison County, after raising four children and successfully completing a 30 year career in Veteran programs with the State of New York. He is a juried artist, as well as poet and photographer. Thomas has exhibited in solo and artist group shows for many years throughout Saratoga county in NY and many locations in the Adirondacks. He is known for always saying “Keep your brushes wet.”



Deborah Dickerson has had poems appear in Voice, Zig Zag Lit Mag and Tiny Seed Journal.



Matthew Dickerson is a fiction and non-fiction writer, song writer, and digital-storyteller. He was selected as artist-in-residence at Glacier National Park in 2017 and Acadia National Park in 2018 to do digital storytelling through word and image. His most recent non-fiction book, *The Voices of Rivers*, was released in April, 2019. *A Fine-Spotted Trout on Corral Creek* is due out in September.



Alice Eckles is a fine art painter, entrepreneur, author, and painting experience leader. She invites you to learn more and get in touch from her website: <https://www.AliceEcklesStudio.com/>
Art for joy!

CONTRIBUTORS cont’d



Abigail Gong is eight years old, and her favorite show is Avatar: The Last Airbender.



Georgia Gong likes to dance as the last rays of the golden sun filter through the leaves and the trees bow their leafy heads as the monarchs swirl around, adorned in color and light.



Campbell Gong says her “age is unclear and I have too much imagination, and sometimes I wish I was a firebender.”



Jean Panicucci has been writing poetry since she was a child. She enjoys reading and playing the piano.



Kathleen Smith writes about pivotal experiences in her life through the lens of short-term mission trips. She affirms that God does, indeed, show up in unexpected ways that enriches her faith. Enjoying life with her husband, singing and making music, visits with family, gardening and dreaming of other travel fill Kathleen’s days to the brim.



Melinda Rowe Williams Creating things and making music all her life, she worked as a graphic designer, now teaches piano to 22 students, has “craft days” with friends, and shares a home with the ever faithful dog, Maggie.

GOD'S PROMISE by Jean Panicucci

The firmament became dark and low
Gone was the beauty we used to know.
A strange turbulence settled over the land,
Mankind was alarmed and riots were fanned.

The blackness of depression set off an alarm,
Is God angry, saddened, spreading His arms
Telling mankind this is not from above?
“I’ve created you with my abiding love
But somehow you have lost the way.
For this transgression you are destined to pay”.

What goes on beneath this darkened sky?
“I can see you and hear your cry
I created you and this bountiful world.
I have given you dominion over this priceless pearl”.
We pondered what our fate would be
While our confusion only caused enmity.

At last appeared a gleam of light,
A sliver of hope in the gloom of night.
Perhaps a smile from the shadow of God
Revealing Himself with an ethereal nod?
That gleam of light had a colorful hue,
Could this be a sign coming from you?

An ancient covenant came to mind.,
Could this be the one between God and mankind?
“I will set my bow in the cloud as a token to man
That the water will no longer flood the land.
I will not destroy the beautiful earth,
I will send ‘streams in the desert’ to bring forth new birth”.

Can we not hear the words He has spoken,
See the glory that shines by His radiant token?
Our help is in Him by a wave of His hand,
“Humble yourselves and I will heal your land”.

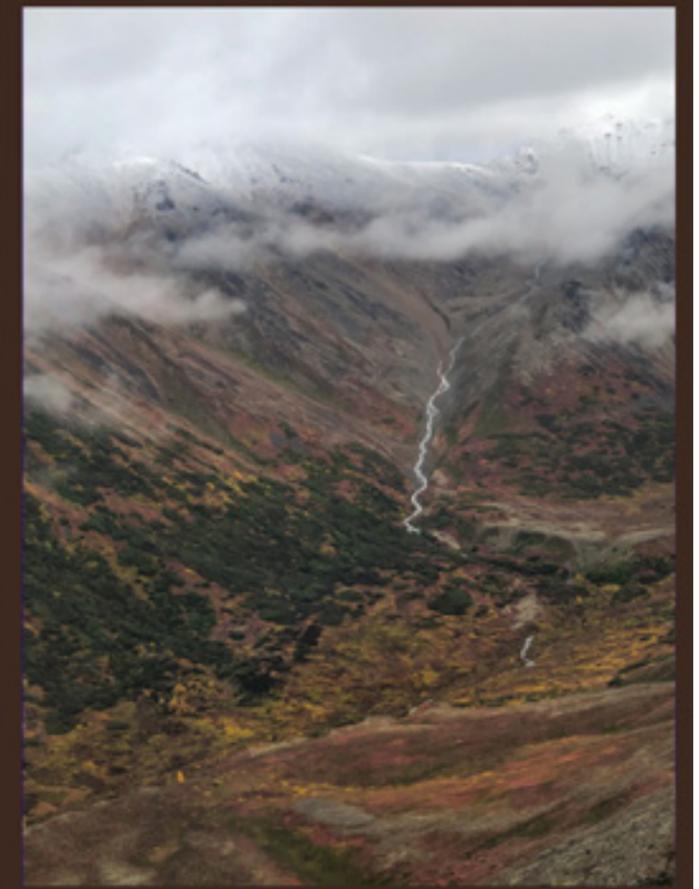
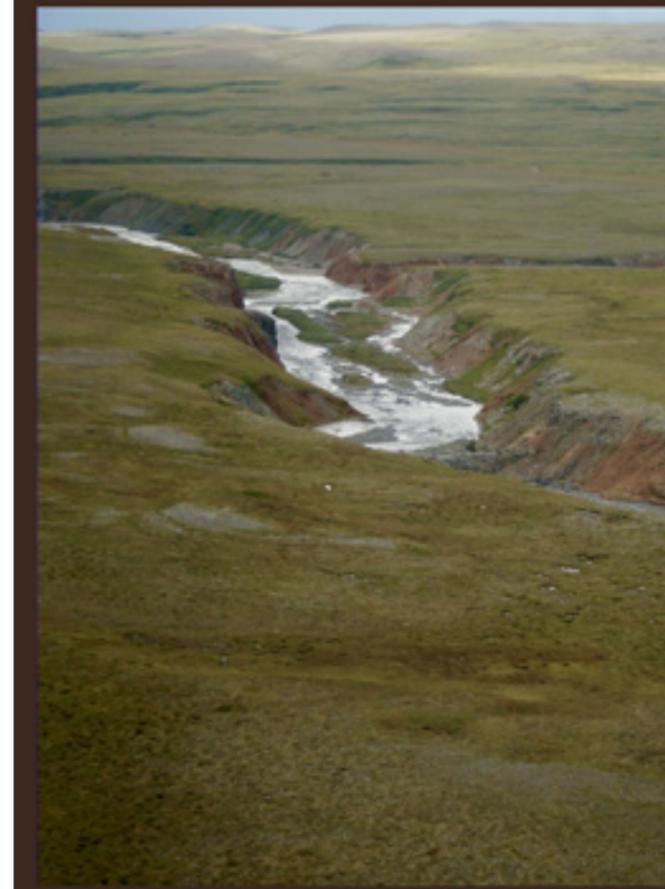
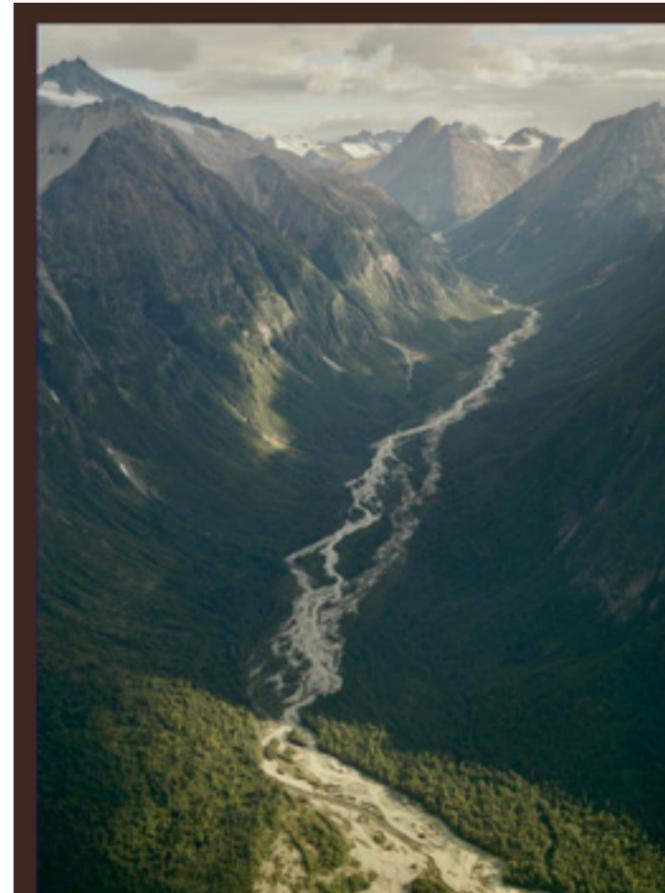


Rose
by Melinda Rowe Williams

Rivers: An Aerial Perspective

Matthew Dickerson

When walking a riverbank, I rarely see more than a few dozen yards ahead: only to the next bend or cascade, but not to what's around that bend: where the river will take me if I keep following it. Even from atop a high bank overlooking a tundra river in Alaska, my view while fishing is usually limited to a few hundred yards. Over the past six years, however, I've taken several trips to the Bristol Bay watershed (including Lake Clark and Katmai National Parks). I've had the delight of being flown in little planes over the Alaskan landscape, and viewing rivers and streams and waterfalls and even rivers of ice from the a few hundred feet up. Between propellers, wings, and windshield smudges, my aerial photos often end up blurry or washed out. Yet there is something about that aerial view I appreciate. I can follow the bends of the river for miles. It gives a wonderful perspective of what is behind and what is ahead: how the paths come together: the broader shapes that emerge from the myriad little bends I usually can't see past.



LOVE IN HAITI

by Kathleen Smith

“Whatsoever you do to the least of these, that you do unto Me.”

(Matthew 25:40)

Part 1

Live music greeted us as we walked across the cracked, boiling tarmac to the small cement block building of Toussaint Louverture International Airport. “That’s not music,” a Haitian woman behind me loudly stated as we walked by the smiling men playing accordion, guitar and maracas. We pressed into the crush of hot, sweaty bodies in customs, scanning the crowd and wilted-looking officials in snappy uniforms, until we spotted our host, Tom, a large white man rapidly speaking the creole equivalent of “They’re with me.”

Luggage and bodies stuffed into the large Land Rover my eyes took in the piles of garbage, building rubble, dogs, and people everywhere as we merged into traffic. Behind a chain link fence next to the road a naked man was dumping a bucket of water over his head next to a make-shift tent -- “tent city” I remembered from the news. Within a few minutes I had to close my eyes to this Third World “normal”. A 7.0 earthquake had practically leveled this area the previous year and a church member was moved to go and provide whatever humanitarian aid he could. Upon his return home, his gripping report reached into my heart and others resulting in a small team forming to do likewise. We didn’t really know what kind of “help” we could offer in just a week’s time, but it was an opportunity to put our Christian faith into action and follow Jesus way beyond the edges of our comfort zone. The saying, “If not us, who? If not now, when?” echoed in my mind. My thoughts were interrupted as horns blew and colorful “tap-taps” squeezed through the throng. Tom squeegeed the sweat off his brow with his thumb and tapped the horn again as a U.N. Jeep cut in.



Later that day I stared down from the cement balcony of our host’s re-constructed three story concrete home-church-supply depot and school to the courtyard below. Framed by orange colored blossoms of the poinciana trees, young children in pink uniforms sat on long wooden benches, eyes on the teacher at the front. He spoke and they repeated, again and again. “I’d love to visit the schools and interact with the children,” I had written in my journal. The next morning I would have that opportunity, which came wrapped up with a lesson in humility.



Day One “Kathleen, I’d like you to help me distribute the shoes and kits to the children,” Tom’s wife Beverly invited. Boxes of new canvas shoes had arrived and it was my job to take off the children’s shoes, and try on the new shoes. “Chita souple -- please sit” I said with a smile, inviting the first child to sit while the others pressed in to see. Their large

brown eyes were serious and they hesitated as I patted the chair, smiling again with every bit of love in my heart. Squatting in front of them on the cement floor my legs stuck together under my thin skirt and I struggled to untie the heavily frayed and knotted shoelaces. Next came the torn dirty sock too large and folded under the small foot. Canvas shoe in hand, I tried to fit it on the wide brown foot in my lap. Very few actually fit as the cut was too narrow. “Hunh,” I thought. This company that so generously donated shoes hadn’t considered the type of feet they would need to fit. Was this an example of “help” that wasn’t really help at all? I was instructed to add the shoes nonetheless to the plastic bag of hygiene supplies in hopes that another family member might wear them. It felt like failure as I so wanted to please this child, and every child, who surrendered their foot to me. “Okay, bye-bye!” I said brightly as I stood, picked my skirt off the back of my sweaty legs and pressed the bag lightly against their chest before inviting the next child to sit.

Day Two The heat and humidity were more intense than I had ever experienced. Our team member, Frank, helped Tom clean a supply room while the girls and I were in an air-conditioned room collating teaching booklets. When they took a break, their shirts were soaked through. It was challenging to keep up with water consumption and the May heat and humidity sapped your energy. No wonder people moved slowly! By late afternoon the heat and humidity reached an intensity that only a daily thunderstorm would mercifully clear. At night a church up the hill from our building held outdoor revivals with call and response singing that went on for several hours. It was unlike any singing I’d ever heard -- more like shouts than the singing of which my ear was accustomed. Directly across from our compound was a small barber shop where a few men loitered and laughed while a large boom box on the ground blasted pop music until the evening. As the revival ended, I watched people slowly walking back down the hill, tossing trash from the bridge over the dried up stream bed; worse, men used it as a urinal. Much later, as I laid sweating on my cot, earplugs in, I dreamed of being in the countryside where it would be tranquil and cool.



Day Three The Land Rover is finally fully loaded with barely room for seven adults and we begin our journey to the village of Arnoux. It is a distance that in Vermont would take us a short time. We were on the road nearly all afternoon with much of the time at a standstill in one traffic snarl in “Port” after another. The main road had been badly damaged in the earthquake and now there was large equipment trying to make repairs. It was chaos. No one seemed to be in charge, equipment narrowly missed traffic, and even young children crawled in and out of the craters carrying dirt in buckets. Every time we stopped, men pressed in against the vehicle to stare at the Blancs, especially our two teenage girls. “Lady! Lady! Look here!” a hawker begged as he waved souvenirs outside my window. Tom debated whether we should continue or try again the next day. Gradually the traffic eased and we left the city behind. The secondary road surface was no better but there was less traffic and no construction so we made better time. Finally we turned off the main road onto a Class 5 dirt road. “Here’s where the epicenter was!” Tom shouted and we noted the obvious long crevice and shift in the road bed from one portion to the next. The scenery might’ve been beautiful but the frequent swerves or bone-jarring crashes in and out of enormous potholes and mud wallows made it difficult to do anything but hang on. I got a quick glimpse of people washing clothes in a nearby muddy stream. Tom had told us that the U.N. was responsible for the cholera outbreak in Haiti pre-earthquake. A unit had been moved from Nepal where there had been cholera. They had set up camp and discharged their waste into a local river -- a water source that the locals depended on. “Help” gone wrong, again.

...cont’d on Page 18



Adirondack Pond oil on canvas
by Thomas Chard



Summer Peonies oil on canvas
by Thomas Chard



Iris
oil on canvas
by Thomas Chard



Peaceful Valley oil on canvas
by Thomas Chard

FATHER by Alice Eckles

Forgiving father, creator of heaven and earth,
It is only to your
Authority I bow, and in my secret heart
I turn to you as my
Thou. Poppa, you
Hear my prayers
Everywhere I go even in the places
that cause me dread and sorrow.
Your Son
Resurrected is the way you gave me to hope, joy,
life and salvation.



mixed media
by Alice Eckles



A Long Day on the Ice

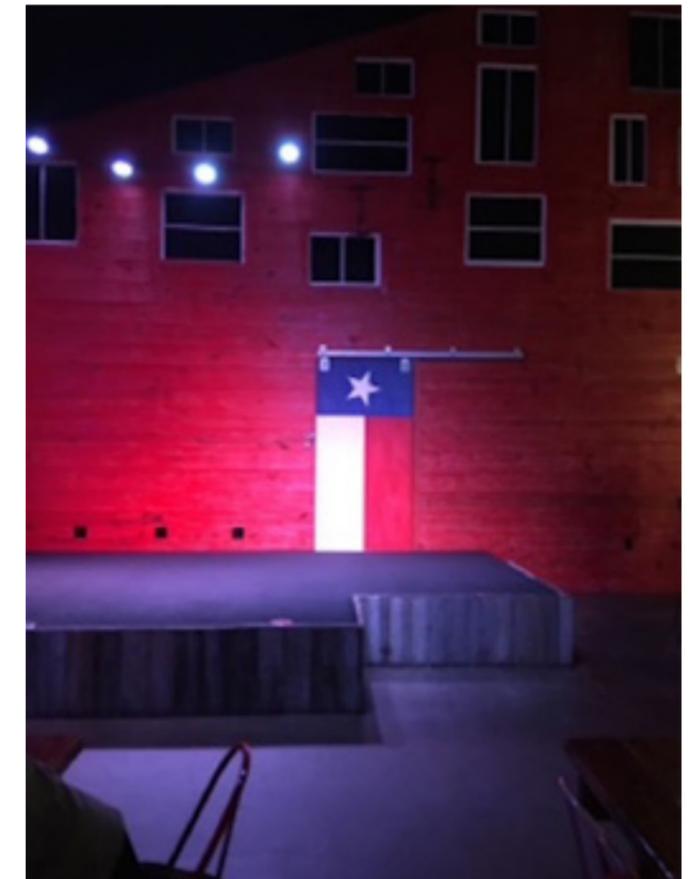


Lines

Lauren Chard, photographer

Super

Texas Stage





Dark Shadows oil on canvas
by Thomas Chard

What Women Do By Deborah Dickerson

My friend is in the hospital with the disease we have all worked so hard to avoid this past year. He is hooked up to tubes and requests prayer. He claims that he isn't a good Catholic.

Whether he is a good Catholic or not isn't for me to decide. Jim was my friend (bordering on boyfriend) in middle school—a band nerd like most of my friends. He played Billy Joel hits on piano, played trombone and sang in our musicals including the lead in *The Music Man*.

I had just come across a line of a hymn so I use the words as a prayer for Jim. "Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow;"

Janet keeps a phone line open to his room for the duration of his hospital stay just so she can hear him breathe. I tell him, "That's what women do." In the depths of night, we walk the halls of our homes, listen for the breath of our children, listen for the breath of our lover.

As the moon slides past my window, I place my hand on Matthew's back to feel the rise and fall of his lungs.



Mallard
by Abigail Gong



*Les Canards en Matin:
Green Winged Teal*
by Campbell Gong

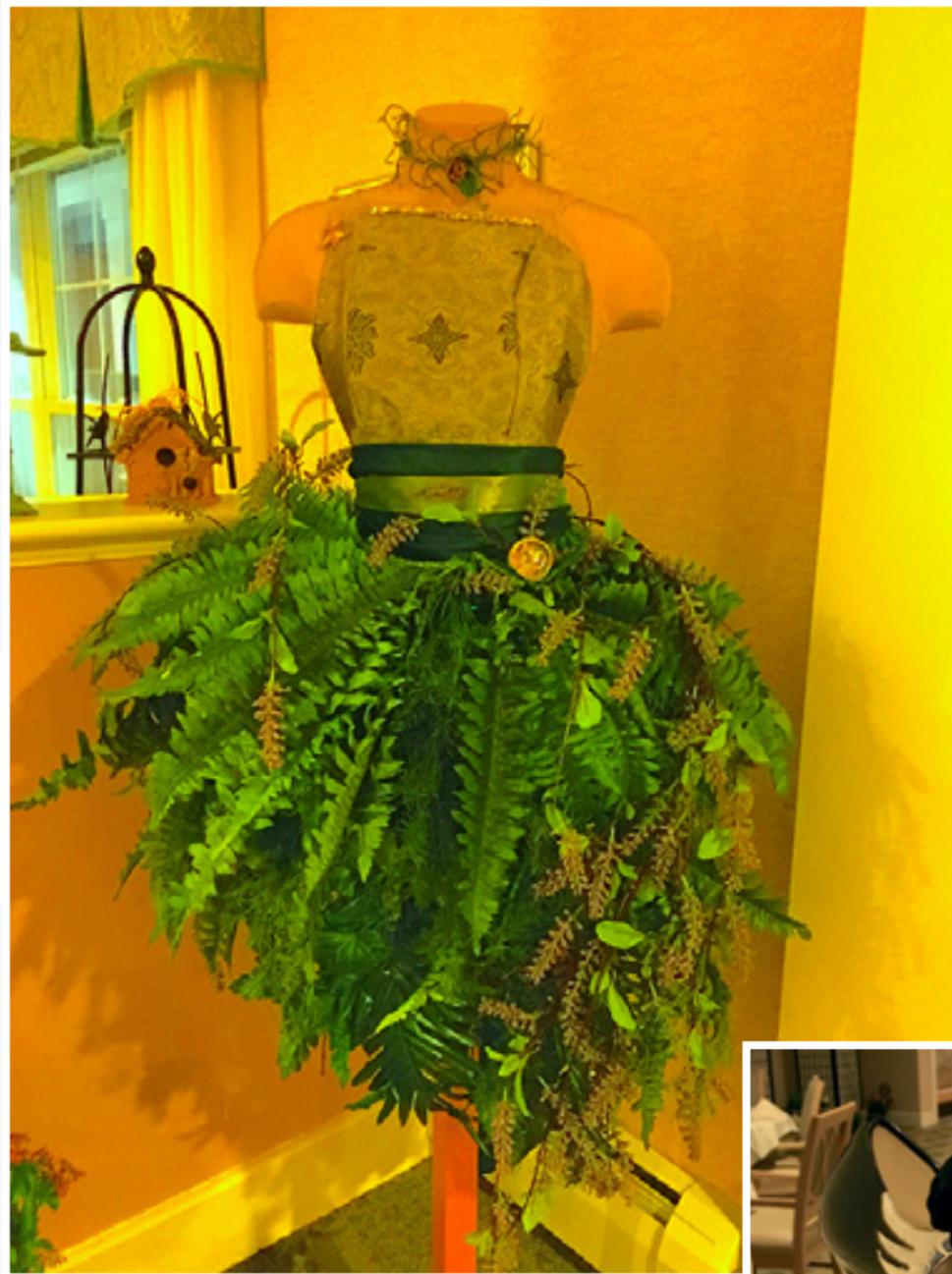


Tundra Swan
by Georgia Gong

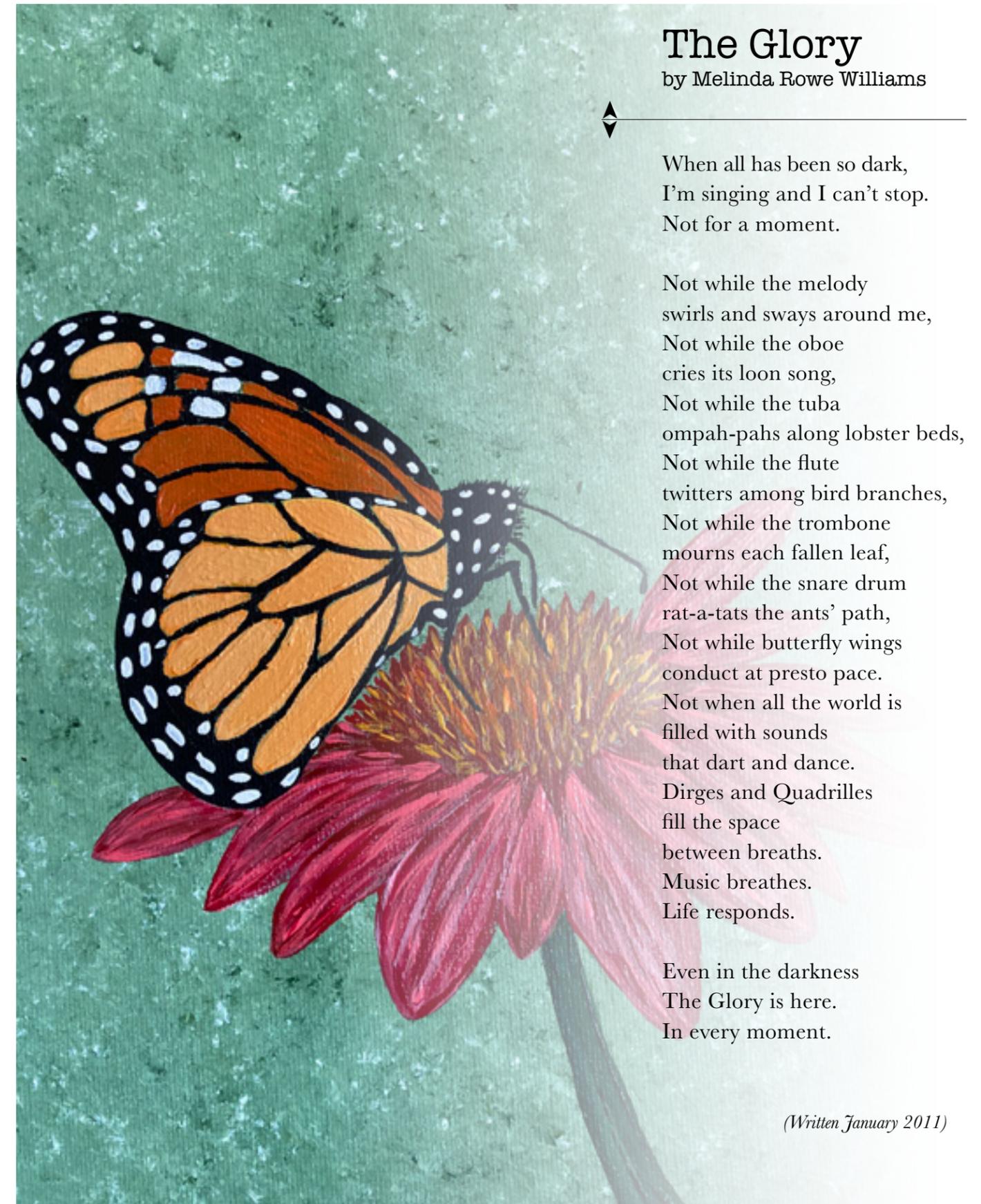


Praising Pelican acrylic
by Bonnie Betourney

From the 2021 Flower Show at EastView



*Flower Girl
Mannequin*
created by
Judith Doria



The Glory

by Melinda Rowe Williams

When all has been so dark,
I'm singing and I can't stop.
Not for a moment.

Not while the melody
swirls and sways around me,
Not while the oboe
cries its loon song,
Not while the tuba
ompah-pahs along lobster beds,
Not while the flute
twitters among bird branches,
Not while the trombone
mourns each fallen leaf,
Not while the snare drum
rat-a-tats the ants' path,
Not while butterfly wings
conduct at presto pace.
Not when all the world is
filled with sounds
that dart and dance.
Dirges and Quadrilles
fill the space
between breaths.
Music breathes.
Life responds.

Even in the darkness
The Glory is here.
In every moment.

(Written January 2011)

Magnificent Monarch acrylic
by Bonnie Betourney

Part II

Day Four The heat and humidity felt slightly less stifling in the village but the city noises were traded for country noises: turkeys gobbled, roosters crowed, goats bleated and dogs barked. It was early morning before the dogs stopped fighting and I had just slid into sleep when a generator turned on. “Ugh” I groaned. Was there no peace anywhere?! Beverly murmured, “That’s for your coffee, Kathleen.”

This was destined to be my grumbly day, in spite of the heavily sweetened coffee and kindness of the Haitian pastor’s wife, referred to as “Mrs. Pastor.” Not enough sleep and the heat compounded the culture shock I felt. I didn’t have a clear idea of what our schedule would be as plans were somewhat fluid.

There is nothing like having all your props removed to see who you really are.

Times for rest or interactions were also fluid. Eventually I had to let go of my “need to know” and simply offered help or engaged in my limited way with the Haitians around me. This was a much-needed lesson in simply being present to Love. The children were shy at first but a cultural wall came down when I joined them in jump rope. Maybe women of my age didn’t do that, but it was okay in my book!

The shoe and kit distribution was one thing I knew how to do and it gave me even more contact with the children, which I loved; I felt useful. I learned that they walked many miles to get to the nearest school and they were required to have shoes. Their clothing was clean and neat

and I was shocked to see the typical house they lived in which was small and rudimentary with no electricity or running water. Poverty did not always equal squalor or laziness. This was a good lesson to learn as my understanding was formed on rural poverty in the States and the entitlement trap it fostered. Would Haiti end up adopting that faulty model as a result of having too much handed to them post-earthquake, I wondered?

It was also school sponsorship day and I watched the children line up for their picture to be taken. The Pastor handed off several goats to the beaming older children who I assumed were graduates. Their family members looked on with pride and Tom and Beverly shook hands with each one. I was glad to witness this ceremony which helped me to understand their beneficial two-fold help: livestock that provided financial help and food, and education that fostered future opportunities.

Day Five There is nothing like having all your props removed to see who you really are. Our morning prayer times were critical for reorienting myself toward Jesus and His kingdom on earth. Practically speaking, that meant petty inconveniences were diminished and I was able to be more outwardly focused. My appreciation for our missionary hosts grew. They were the “real deal” with a deep commitment they had made to the people of Haiti backed up with more than four decades of co-labor. Their “come to Jesus” invitation was built on meeting the very real needs of financial stability, education and most of all, the gospel. They did not sugar coat any of Haiti’s desperate poverty and centuries-old oppression. Theirs were not band-aid attempts but systemic work proven over time.



At the end of another hot day, I relaxed on my Army cot, longing for a shower. I was tired and to be honest, a bit weary of serving on a team. One of our teenage girls had already come shrieking down the hill from the latrine, and breathlessly announced she’d seen a tarantula. With broom in hand, I bravely (maybe foolishly?) marched up to do battle (besides I needed to use the latrine). Thankfully, the tarantula had been dead for a while with just the fuzz left, but I didn’t linger...it was enough to feed my overactive imagination and night was coming. I quickly returned to our room, trying to quell the fear that a spider or snake or fill-in-the-blank was right behind me. Relief filled me as I returned to my cot.

Our missionary host, Beverly, looked up from her book and told me that Mrs. Pastor had a treat for me -- a bucket bath. “Oh, how wonderful”, I thought, even as I puzzled over the word “bucket”. I took my towel and clean clothes, my shampoo and soap and happily followed her, in my flip-flops, to a cement block corridor behind the small block house. It was very dark without electricity in this part of the compound. Mrs. Pastor beamed at me as I walked toward her. Did she know I had been a bit uncomfortable the previous day showering in an outdoor stall that was private but for the places where the walls didn’t quite meet? Or was I given this honor due to my age? I felt grateful but scared, too.

Beverly chatted with Mrs. Pastor as I accepted the bucket of hot water, stammered a “messi” and stepped into the dark enclosure. I shut the door behind me and noticed there was no latch. “Trust me,” the Lord whispered. Okay, how fast could I do this? Gradually my eyes adjusted and I found a dry spot in the corner for my clothes. I got down to the business of washing off, spongeful by spongeful, all the dust and sweat and fatigue of the day. Within a few minutes, I stopped, amazed as I heard a woman’s voice lift in song. It was a beautiful pure voice with words that were heartfelt, expressing love for her Savior. Who could that be, I wondered? I peeked through a chink in the block wall but could not see her. Love was present as her song calmed my jangled nerves and refreshed my spirit.

Later that evening, Beverly told me Esther’s story. Several weeks earlier, she had heard the gospel and accepted Jesus as her Savior. Because of that, her parents decided she had a mental illness and were ready to bring her to the Witch Doctor. She had fled to Pastor’s family in a neighboring village. Since the earthquake, mission organizations reported record numbers of converts to Christianity. There was a new hope of Christian revival as people broke with voodoo. Esther was thriving in her new family and a song was always on her lips. It reminded me of my “first love” for Jesus decades before and some of the resistance I had met within my own family, although certainly not life-threatening.

Day Six We painted, we ate, we painted some more; bright blue paint on cement block walls with brushes that seemed inadequate for the task. Our team valiantly worked on through the morning hours, then took a break for the mid-day meal. It was spaghetti noodles with cooked carrots and onion and fruit juice to drink. One of the older Haitian men who had been working on another construction project joined us. He accepted a heaped-up plateful and then sat on the step outside. Before long, he came back for seconds. I wondered how his stomach could hold the quantity of food. Beverly explained that he ate that way because he didn’t know when he might eat again. Another lesson learned.





The children discovered our teenage girls and swarmed them every time they were within reach. Many small black hands on white skin; caressed light straight hair; even looked into mouths! The teens laughed and laughed and so did the children. No barriers to Love here.

We hadn't practiced our puppet skit much at all. Thankfully Tom knew the art of translating. The children laughed and responded in all the expected (and hoped for) ways. The Haitian teens on keyboard and drums played a loud and raucous rendition of "Power in the Blood," every voice shouting out the words, and then it was time for us to share our testimony. Have you ever had your salvation story translated into a different language? I remembered my first time around a campfire in Romania and the rhythm I learned of speaking in clear phrases uncluttered with vernacular and then waiting while the translator repeated in the native language. I remembered to pause for a reaction from the listeners. Now during those pauses with every eye on me, I felt the Holy

Spirit move in my heart and experienced God's beautiful presence and love for those in that cement block church -- the teachers and children, my teammates, the pastor, myself -- all beloved by God. It was a holy experience.

Day Seven I finally recognized some of the children and had picked up a few creole phrases as I attempted to communicate. It was bittersweet to pack up for our return to Port Au Prince. One more long, hot day of travel and then a time to decompress at headquarters before we boarded our return flight in the morning. Over the past five days, we grew closer to one another through shared difficulties and triumphs. Our service made a mark on each of us.

As I looked out the window of the plane climbing above the island of Hispaniola, storm clouds already gathering, I reflected on the personal journey I had made that week. When our team left Vermont with our gospel-themed puppet show script in hand, candy and toothbrushes in our supply bags and happy determination in our hearts, I was excited to share Christ's love as I served the people of Haiti. From the serious brown eyes of the children as I untied their knotted shoelaces, to the beautiful song during my bucket bath and the experience of sharing the Truth through personal testimony, I encountered and participated in the work of the Kingdom of God. Jesus didn't need my small offerings of service but had invited me to be present in His Love. And I was. ☺