

Ashes ALIVE



*Easter is messy and fleshy. The Easter season – every season – holds joy and grief.
But hope – hope – is springing up from this old ground. Because God makes beautiful things out of the dust... out of us.
-adaptation of "Beautiful Things" by Gungor*

GATHERING MUSIC + GATHERING OUR THOUGHTS

You are invited to introduce yourself in the chat window. Share what's relevant: name, pronouns, location, context or connections (your job, roles or interests.) Do you have a favorite flower? What do you like or dislike about spring?

["Come As You Are"](#)

The Many

***Come you who've been wounded / All you who've lost hope
Come you who are longing / for what you don't even know.***

***Come you hungry for justice / Aching for heaven on earth
Come you who've been tossed aside / Don't remember what you're worth***

Chorus:

***Come as you are / Come you weary
Come and lay your burdens down
Come as you are / Bring your hopes
Bring your doubts and your scars / Come as you are***

***Come you who have been cast out / All you who've been shamed
come you who are looking / for that mystery you can't name***

***Come you crying for mercy / Hoping for peace on earth
Come you carrying questions / All you who've been so hurt***

Chorus

***Oh you misfits and prophets, and you sinners and saints
Oh you broken and needy, weird and weary and faint
All who seek to simply open their eyes / All who need to find a safe place to cry***

Chorus



WELCOME + CANDLE LIGHTING

Rev. Melissa Guthrie (she/her)

You are invited to light your own candle or observe the flames. You, yourself, are a beautiful light.

A QUEER CALL TO WORSHIP

[from enfleshed](#)

James Knudston (they/them)

God is calling us

Out of the places we hide

Out of insecurity

Out of shame

Out from under that which silences love and justice.

Come out, people of God!

Though we may be afraid

Though we will be at risk

Though the cross stands as a threat

God calls us to courage!

Our God is a god of resurrection. Of new life after devastation. Of hope in the grip of evil.

And so we dare to proclaim, with pride and faith, our truths:

We believe in the power of love.

We believe in solidarity with the suffering.

We believe we are each valuable.

We believe that our togetherness is transformative.

The world is longing for Holy truths that reveal, voices that speak real words of hope.

Come out, people of God!

A READING + REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Melissa

A reading from [Ashes Alive: Lenten Devotionals Written by LGBTQI+ Christians and their friends](#)

I am a highly sensitive person. I feel deeply. And my feelings—a whole range of feelings, from joy to grief—my feelings flow (flood) from my eyes. I used to joke that I had faulty tear ducts. I've learned to embrace the abundance of tears; my wife still seems surprised when I begin to cry and she still asks, "Are you crying?!" or "Are you crying again?!"

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Yes. Just yes. I'm crying. I might cry. I'm about to cry. It's a spiritual gift? Curse?

I've read the John 20 text many times ([John 20:11-20](#)). So many times. Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene and to the other disciples, too. To a woman first. A woman who first shares the good news, "I have seen the Lord!"

In this text and in this season I am struck by the sense and splendor of sight: Mary's eyes, the eyes of the disciples, our eyes. And Mary's tears. I imagine Mary continued crying when she **saw** her Teacher. Tears that release grief. Tears that rejoice in newness.

Mary stood outside the tomb crying... Angels asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus...

What has been taken away from you? What is being taken from our queer siblings, especially our trans siblings and young LGBTQ+ kin? What are you, what are we, taking from others or from Creation?

Our gospel text tells us Mary and the disciples **saw** the Lord. How have you seen the Lord? Take time to describe the experience through all your senses. If an encounter doesn't come to mind, keep in mind the risen Lord may not match our expectations. Where are you looking? And who will you tell of the good, good news?

Do you sense something new in this season? Will you share with others and will you join in shaping something new? We are invited to share—we have a responsibility to share and to shape the beloved kin-dom.

Mary sees and Mary shouts, "I have seen the Lord!"

Honoring the diversity of how we experience the world and the divine, every time I imagine seeing the Lord I am claiming an experience, an embodiment of the divine. May all of us sense the Lord with us and for us.

OUR REFLECTIONS

In general: Why are you here? What resonates with you about "Ashes Alive"?

On grief: What has been taken away from you? What is being taken from our queer siblings, especially our trans siblings and young LGBTQ+ kin? What are you, what are we, taking from others or from Creation?

On joy: How have you seen the risen Lord? Do you sense something new in this season?

Ashes ALIVE



PRAYER

Rev. Ari Douglas (they/them)

MUSICAL REFLECTION

["Beautiful Things"](#)

Gungor

*All this pain
I wonder if I'll ever find my way
I wonder if my life could really change, at all
All this earth
Could all that is lost ever be found?
Could a garden come out from this ground, at all?
You make beautiful things / You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things / You make beautiful things out of us
All around,
Hope is springing up from this old ground
Out of chaos life is being found, in you
You make beautiful things / You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things / You make beautiful things out of us
Oh, you make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things / You make beautiful things out of us
You make me new,
You are making me new
You make me new,
You are making me new
(Making me new)
You make beautiful things / You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things / You make beautiful things out of us
Oh, you make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things / You make beautiful things out of us
You make me new,
You are making me new
You make me new,
You are making me new*

STONES + FLOWER PETALS

Melissa



CLOSING PRAYER

Holy God, God of tears, God of grief and loss and joy and newness, may we honor our bodies and the bodies of every sibling. May we see the sacred in one another and in our daily lives. When we cannot see through our tears or through injustice, help us listen for our names to sense something new. May we reshape systems; may we invest in practices that build the beloved kin-dom. May we get our hands dirty sharing Love, love that is resurrected all around us and through us. May it be so.

BENEDICTION

Rev. Dr. Kim Leon (she/her)

LEADERS

Rev. Melissa Guthrie (she/her) is the Executive Director + Minister with AllianceQ and the editor of *Colors of Hope: A Devotional Journal from LGBTQ+ Christians*. Melissa and her wife, Leah, live in Greensboro, NC, with their kids and a small zoo. Leah recently brought home a two-day-old kitten “to foster.” They named the kitten Gin. Surprise: Gin is not leaving.

James Knudston (they/them) is a multiply disabled intersex artist and community advocate. They embody a spirit of creativity, an intrepid sense of adventure, and a dogged faith in the power of love for all.

Rev. Ari Douglas (they/them) is openly nonbinary-agender and bisexual (their gender and others), and is the pastor of Portsmouth Union Church in Portland Oregon, a union of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Methodist Church. Ari is a M.Div. graduate of Phillips Theological Seminary and is attending there for their D.Min. focused on teaching clergy and laity how to be activists. They are the father to an eleven year old autistic child, and step-fur-parent to two cats.

Rev. Dr. Kim Leon (she/her) serves as Chaplain at Boone Hospital in Columbia, MO. She leads the Open and Affirming team at First Christian Church (DOC) in Columbia where she is a member. Kim enjoys competing in crossword puzzle leagues and tournaments.



ANNOUNCEMENTS + NEWS

If you provided your mailing address when you registered, you will receive some AllianceQ "spread love" swag and a plantable Colors of Hope bookmark (think messy dirt and fleshy hope as you tend to the wildflower seeds). We hope you will stay connected with us.

[PRIDE Pre-Party](#) on Monday, May 22, 5 p.m. PT | 6 p.m. MT | 7 p.m. CT | 8 p.m. ET

It's Harvey Milk Day! Pride - and the fierce urgency for hope - must stretch beyond a single month, filling every single day and every single space with color. Register now by clicking the link. We're looking for party planners, too ;)

[These Bodies: PRIDE Month Community Groups](#)

Beginning the week of June 6, a new 6-week session where you can drop in for one, some, or all of the gatherings. Registration for these groups will open soon. We are ecstatic about the theme: These Bodies. We'll use the same-named song from [The Many, "These Bodies,"](#) and explore the following topics:

- Queer Bodies in History
- The Bodies Where We (Want to) Belong
- Body Art
- This is my body... a celebration of Holy Communion

[General Assembly Art + Activism Banquet Dinner and After Session, Kindom Language Workshop](#)

General Assembly is July 29-August 2 in Louisville, KY, and AllianceQ is showing up and bringing a great show. Drag minister Ms. Penny cost is our special guest. Plus some challenges and uncomfortable invitations. Because we're turning tables of injustice. The early registration closes soon; you want in on the discount! We're also looking for help with all things GA. [Here's a link to our General Assembly Planning Team Info Form.](#)

We are hosting a **second annual Colors of Hope Retreat** in the North Carolina mountains! October 9-12. Details and registration opening soon. Save the dates!