

# I've been meaning to ask...

a series for curiosity, courage, & connection

## Poetry prayers

Written by Rev. Sarah Are

*There are a number of ways to utilize poetry in your ministry. You might print and distribute these prayers to members in your community, or read them aloud to open and close study sessions. In worship, you could offer a poem as an opening reflection, a meditation during the sermon, a moment of reflection after the sermon, or as a written prayer printed in the bulletin. However you utilize these poems, please include credit as follows: Prayer by Rev. Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org*

### Week 1

#### I've been meaning to ask... where are you from?

## We Are Not Strangers

If you ask me where I'm from,  
I'll tell you about the South—  
about sweet tea, church pews,

slow drawls, sultry summers.  
And if you pause,  
then I may go on to tell you

how I'm from a family of preachers,  
how I stand on the shoulders of generations  
who believed that love could be the answer.

And if you're still listening even then,  
I'll tell you that I'm from strong women  
with tall spines who have carried the weight

of inequality on their backs with children on  
their laps.

And then I'll tell you about  
the kitchens that I'm from,

which have always cooked enough  
food for unexpected guests—just in case.  
Or I could tell you about the car

that carried us into the mountains,  
summer after summer  
so that we could breathe again.  
That's part of where I'm from.

And if you haven't given up yet,  
then I may even mention the dirt—  
the earth that catches me,

the earth that holds me.  
The earth that reminds me of growth.  
The earth that will eventually welcome me home.

You and I aren't really strangers after all.





Week 2

I've been meaning to ask...  
where does it hurt?

## When It Hurts

I can tell that you're hurting.  
It's the way your eyes cast down,  
the way you shuffle through the house,  
distractedly bumping into things.  
It's the restless sleep and  
the quiet space between us which  
turns us into icebergs.  
We float by, silent in the night,  
most everything existing  
under the surface.

I can tell that you're hurting.  
It's the way your prayers were quick  
at first, and then—none at all;  
your silence challenging God,  
*daring* God to say something to the void.  
I can tell that you're hurting,  
but I don't know what that feels like.

Tell me—  
where does it hurt?  
I'm not offering to fix the pain,  
I'm not that powerful.  
However, I am offering to see it.  
Show me your scars,  
and I'll show you that  
you're not alone.





Week 3

I've been meaning to ask...  
what do you need?

## Here if You Need Me

I got the call and almost  
rushed right over.  
I wanted to hold your hand and  
tell you it would be okay.  
I wanted to start a meal train.  
I wanted to bring casseroles and flowers  
and hope of better days.  
I wanted to take my heart  
out of my chest  
and put it in yours  
so that the ache might fade.  
I wanted to speak, and fight,  
with the person in charge.  
I wanted to get justice,  
I wanted to make it fair.  
I wanted to start a campaign.  
I wanted to rewind time,  
to easy, better days.

There is so much that I want to do,  
but it's not about me.  
It's about you.  
So tell me—  
what do *you* need?  
I am here.  
I am listening.





Week 3

I've been meaning to ask...  
what do you need?

## Unlearning Hands

I used to always ask,  
"How can I help?" but  
maybe I can't help.  
Maybe these hands are too small.  
Maybe the boat will sink anyway.  
Maybe your heart has been broken  
and grief has moved in, making itself  
at home in your life.  
Maybe what you need from me  
is not a solution  
or a plan  
or a fix-it strategy,  
but something else,  
something more.

I'm learning to unlearn  
my desire to fix.  
I am learning to unlearn  
centering myself  
in the story of your pain.

When I asked before,  
"How can I help?"  
What I really meant to say  
was, "What do you need?"

What do *you* need?

My hands might be small,  
but they can still hold yours.



Week 4

I've been meaning to ask...  
where do we go from here?

## Flashlight

I wish I could draw you a map  
of the next steps—  
the next conversation,  
the next brave truth,  
the next fumble,  
the next apology.  
Wouldn't it be nice to know  
what's coming?  
Wouldn't it be nice to  
prepare our hearts?

But I don't know where to go from here.  
I am a child with a flashlight—  
deeply hopeful and a little nervous,  
all at the very same time.

What I *do* know is I don't want to go  
anywhere without you.  
So I'm hoping that you will  
take my hand.  
See this truth.  
Trust my voice.  
Look for the good.  
And day by day,  
we can go from here,  
because we were never meant  
to go alone.

And maybe we'll get lost;  
but then again,  
maybe we'll be found.  
So if you're willing,  
if you'll just say yes,  
I will let you hold the flashlight.  
We can find our way,  
step by step,  
light in hand,  
abolishing shadows  
together.

Who needs a map  
when you have  
the light, anyway?



Week 4

I've been meaning to ask...  
where do we go from here?

## The Way Home

Do you think,  
when they got to the end of the  
Edmund Pettus bridge  
they asked,  
"Where do we go from here?"

Do you think,  
when the church voted for all  
people to preach and lead  
that they asked,  
"Where do we go from here?"

Do you think,  
when your parents had their first fight  
with you sleeping peacefully in the next room,  
that they asked in hushed voices,  
"Where do we go from here?"

Do you think that maybe people  
have been asking this question  
for as long as we've been asking questions?  
I don't know for sure,  
but I do know that I want to ask hard questions with you.  
So here it goes—  
"Where are you from?  
Where does it hurt?  
What do you need?  
And where do we go from here?"  
I pray,  
I trust,  
I believe—  
if we keep asking,  
we just might find our way home.





## About the author

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Sarah (*she/her*) is the Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in Social Work, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Columbia Theological Seminary. Sarah loves to combine her love of all things creative with her passion for God. She believes that the Church has a responsibility to open every door to God,

so that those of us who are visual, kinesthetic, or relational learners all have equal opportunity to engage God to the fullest of our abilities. Sarah feels called to live her life welcoming people into the church by using her energy and passion for beautifully scripted words, raw and relevant liturgy, and hands-on worship experiences to engage our longing for God and the need for justice in this messy world. Writing is her most beloved spiritual practice. You can find her daily poems on Instagram and Facebook: [@writingthegood](#) | [writingthegood.com](#)

