

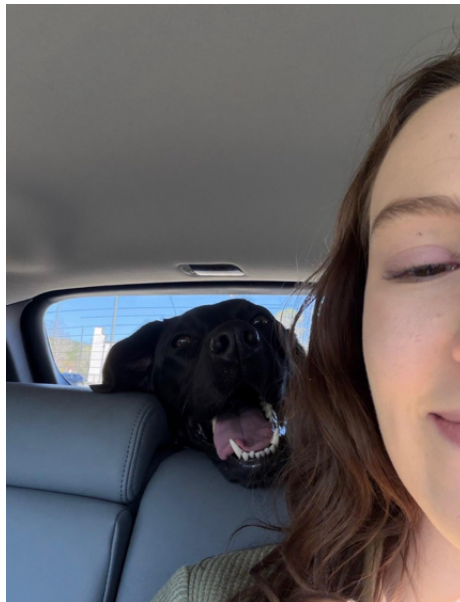
Jennifer K Nichols

Process Art

*Where the process of learning, loving, and living, **is** the goal*



WELCOME!



Kona taking a car ride with our daughter!

I don't know about you, but the entirety of March has felt like the middle to me. Winter wasn't quite finished even though spring is still unfolding around us. For the first time since moving from Minneapolis to Tuscaloosa, we had all of our children (and their dogs) at home at the same time. They came and left at different intervals, overlapping for a tiny bit. It was glorious fun, even though it was also a series of on-going hellos and goodbyes. I am still getting used to this new stage of life with adult children. I don't take these little pockets of time for granted.

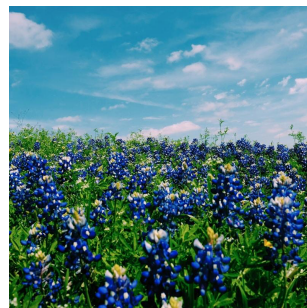
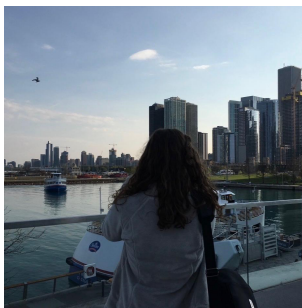
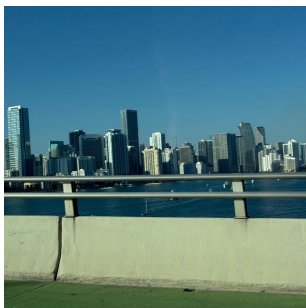
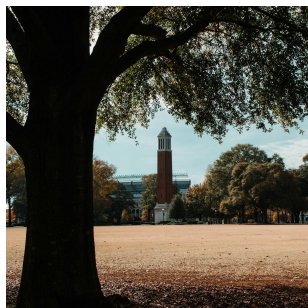


We had a dog party! Kona with our children's golden retriever and yellow labrador

Now we are in a stage where our kids leave home to come home. Then they turn around and leave home to go home. One thing I've learned in my adult life that guides me as a parent with grown up kids is that home is not restricted to a physical place. I have learned that home is a space that exists inside Love. Love itself is a space. C.S. Lewis wrote about this in *The Great Divorce*. On a bus trip from hell to heaven, when a ghost man from hell whines to his wife in heaven she replies, "I am in Love, and out of it I will not go." In heaven, she lived *within* Love. Lewis helped me imagine what it means to dwell in Love. Now, I use my imagination and think about my friends and family living *in* Love. I've discovered that Love is spacious. And when I let myself linger in that image for a minute, I easily find myself at home. Even though we are physically spread far apart in new houses, apartments, and cities, true home is stretchy and plenteous. Yes, I miss my kids. Sure, I'd like to live closer to them. I'm not trying to bypass the emotions that come with that reality. But there is more here inside me when I pay attention that needs to be named. If I open my hands and let go of my own preferred outcomes, I can feel the grace of the kingdom of heaven sweeping me into something much bigger and more glorious than seems possible. Ultimately, that is what I want to be my home.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.

John 15:9



Tuscaloosa, Miami, Chicago, Texas

Jennifer (and Kona)



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A practice of **prayer** for the middle of March

Walking a labyrinth



Joel at a labyrinth in Bath, England!

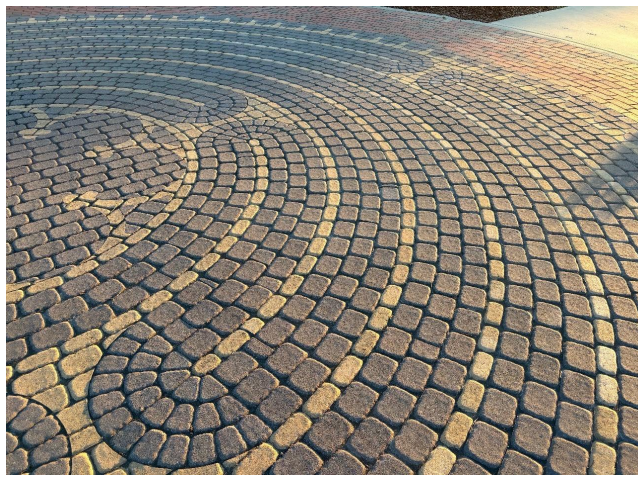
"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. "

Numbers 6:24-26

When my adult children left and my house was still and quiet, I knew I needed to take a walk. They are in the middle of big decisions. They are in the middle of building careers and finding their places in the world. As I thought about all they have in front of them, I knew I needed to pray with my feet. So, I went to my local labyrinth in the evening.

A labyrinth is a symbolic way to take a journey with God. Often when you walk a labyrinth, metaphors surface about your life with God. The walk helps you listen to them. Walking a labyrinth can help you pay attention to longings in your heart and help you ponder decisions. Walking a labyrinth can help you release something to God.

I stood on the threshold of the labyrinth at the University of Alabama and pictured my three grown children. With a full heart, I stepped into the labyrinth and walked the looping trail. I remembered how life, like the trail I walked, is not linear. It loops and turns, and yet, it is just one path--for me and for my kids. We cannot get lost. Going forward on the path, you cannot make a wrong turn. The labyrinth reminded me of God's encompassing love. There on the path, I walked *in love and through love*. In the cool of the evening, walking in a shadow, I came near the center.



Sunlight on the labyrinth in Tuscaloosa, Alabama

All of the sudden, the path swerved and brought me to the outer most edge and into the full light of the setting sun. I heard myself gasp. There I was at a point farthest from the center bathed in sunlight. Unexpected grace enveloped me. The blessing in Numbers 6 came to mind. Pausing, I smiled and pictured each one of the three grown up kids. I kept following the path into the center where I placed each one into God's hands. Then I wound my way back over the one path, weaving in and out of the last of the day's sunshine. Praying with my feet reminded me how my children can never go where God is not.

Acts 17:28

"For in him we live and move and have our being."

Walking a labyrinth is a way to pray with your whole self. It is a way to take a quiet walk with God. Often, the walk itself is the gift. Other times you might gain insight into something particular. A labyrinth invites us to take a pilgrimage in miniature. On this little journey with God, we consider the journey of our lives. A labyrinth reminds us that life begins and ends with God. We walk and discover that we cannot leave God's love. We walk and experience that our life is caught up in God's own flourishing life. This spring, consider finding a labyrinth in your community and take a walk with God.

You can find a labyrinth near you at this website: <https://labyrinthlocator.org>

A question I am asking myself in the middle of March

What am I listening to externally, internally, and in my deepest heart center?

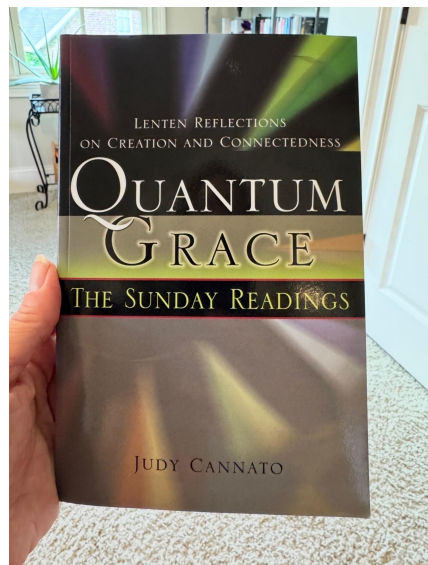
Consider keeping a list of what comes to mind in a journal

In February, I kept a list of questions I wanted to pay attention to. Here are a few of the questions I wrote down.

*What does it mean to be a good steward of language?

*What does a mustard seed of trust look like?

A book that I am currently in the middle of reading.



Although it is a book of lenten reflections, *Quantum Grace* by Judy Cannato is a thoughtful book to pick up and read any time. She has a unique way of connecting what is true in quantum physics to what is also true in our spiritual lives. I'm not usually one to walk around thinking about physics. However, Cannato helps me see what is unseen and discover God's presence in unexpected ways. I am grateful for her thought-provoking work.

What I notice that is beautiful right now.

March

- Our cherry tree blossoms.
- The return of butterflies.
- The bird chorus in my neighborhood.

Naming what is beautiful helps me see all the things coming to life this spring.

Beauty plunges us into the reality of resurrection.

Let's live like this.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills--from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 121: 1-2



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SEE YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF APRIL

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