

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT:

### ***Northern Lights (2020)***

Acrylic on watercolor paper

**Rev. Margaret Carroll Thompson, MFA, MDiv, BCC**

#### Abstract

Artist's Statement for the cover art of *IJPS* volume 7, issue 1: Northern Lights, acrylic on watercolor paper

*Keywords:* spirituality; creativity; Northern Lights; climate change

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This painting of the Northern Lights is one of 100 acrylic paintings on watercolor paper (each 22x30 inches), that will eventually form a large-scale “quilt” depicting a year of seasons in the woods of Northern Minnesota. The images will be paired with poems and/or prose to enhance their impact.

As climate change transforms our Minnesota woodlands, I seek to capture in my paintings both the beauty and the destruction that occur. The series depicts aspects of the environment that will last, as well as what we will lose.

The woodlands of Minnesota have inspired my painting for 20 years. They teach me that in every cycle of dying, new life rises up. Similarly, in my work as a chaplain over the last thirty years, I have witnessed much death, and have seen new life rise up out of the ashes of loss and grief. Life and death are inseparable, a continuous cycle posing a question whose answer always asks a more beautiful question.

I write this while the coronavirus wreaks havoc upon the world. A friend recently sent me images of 33,000-year old French cave paintings. Seeing the poetry in these ancient images still so full of life, I am reminded that life has a way of continuing. This realization gives me hope.

Painting for me is a way to speak out about issues of social justice that compel me to action. Theologian Walter Brueggemann, in an interview with journalist Krista Tippet quoted in her book *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living* (2016, Penguin Random House, p. 54), stated that the intellect alone loses transformative power in addressing social justice issues, no matter how important they are. Art, poetry, and music, he claimed, present the issues in such a way that the whole brain of the person is involved, activating and empowering the person's capacity to be an agent of transformation.

My goal is to make art that has the sort of galvanizing, transformative power Brueggemann describes, so that world is a better place for our children, grandchildren, and generations to come.

Rev. Margaret Thompson received her Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts from the School of The Art Institute of Chicago in 1978, her Master of Divinity from United Theological Seminary in 1988, Board Certification in Chaplaincy from The Association of Professional chaplains in 1993, Certification in Spiritual Direction from The Cenacle Retreat Center in 1997, and ordination in the United Church of Christ in 2013. Now retired from chaplaincy, she lives in Minneapolis Minnesota, and does spiritual direction. She has a beloved cabin in the north woods of Minnesota, where she paints.

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