

“I will ponder the glorious splendor of your majesty... You open wide your hand and satisfy the needs of every living creature.”

- Psalm 145

### **Painting the Psalms**

[Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church](#) has a history of being open and rich in artistic tradition. Our new Sacred Arts Room continues this tradition.

This Lent, our regular Great Wednesday evening formation offerings will include a class called Painting the Psalms. The Psalms seem purpose-made for the season of Lent. They are filled with words and images that express our deepest and strongest emotions, no matter what the circumstance. Some psalms express joyful praise for God’s acts of deliverance; others express repentance and confession of sin. Still others cry out to God in longing. The psalms express the deepest emotions of the human heart.

Painting the Psalms is for everyone, those with no artistic leanings and those seasoned artists in our midst. Our mediums are acrylic paint, our hands, and the meditation of our hearts. We gather together and reflect on the Psalms in a way that intertwines the creative arts and the beauty of poetry.





Like other iterations of the [Painting Table](#), the setup is key. Tables are arranged so that everyone is part of a group, not painting on their own. Supplies are shared, and the art is done in community. The end result is not the painting that is created. It is the conversation, sharing, and listening that takes place around the table. While there is grief, sadness, and loss, there is also hope. There is an opportunity for celebration as we gather together.

### **A New Sacred Space for Painting**

As a teacher, watching people of all ages meditate on scripture and create from those meditations is always deeply moving. This year, I add to that with the joy of being in a new space, Palmer's new Sacred Arts Room, a room fully dedicated to the sacred arts. The church has long had a tradition of hosting gallery space for artists. But we have not had a dedicated space in which to create art.

The room we occupy has served this faith community in many ways. It's been the parish hall, a preschool classroom, and a Sunday school room. For a number of years now it has sat empty. Its very emptiness has called out for a new way to serve Christ in the community that encompasses Palmer, the Texas Medical Center, Rice University, the City of Houston and beyond.

We didn't have to do much to create a space to experience the sacred arts. We gave this room a new name and filled the space with old tables, chairs, and art supplies. We offered it to our community, "Come and create!" This is a room that will be used by all ages, for grief groups, cancer support groups, journaling classes, art classes, writing workshops, and more.

Two upcoming events describe the function of our Sacred Arts room, for the community we serve and the community we are. The second Tuesday of each month will bring a group of exceptional teenagers into this space. These young people are students with Archway Academy, the largest "sober" high school in the nation. It meets here at Palmer. I will lead a Painting Table session with the students who are part of Passageway, Archway's program for youth who are less than 30 days in treatment.

During this holy season, the Sacred Arts room will be available for quiet and creative reflection on Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. It will be a place where those in the congregation and the larger community can come and ponder the ashes of Ash Wednesday with charcoal and paper or the Last Supper with finger paints and canvas.

I find myself inspired by the poet Mary Oliver:

Instructions for living a life.

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.

### **Read More about Faith and Art**

Interested in creating meditative painting with your hands? Roger talked with Building Faith in [Lent 2014](#).

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*Roger Hutchison is an artist, author and the Director of Christian Formation and Parish Life at Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church, Houston, TX. He is the author of [Under the Fig Tree: Visual Prayers and Poems for Lent](#) and [The Painting Table: A Journal of Loss and Joy](#). Roger regularly offers workshops for children, youth, and adults on how to express their thoughts and relationship with God through the art of painting with one's hands, a technique accessible to all. Roger's work and reflections can be found at his [website](#).*