



*The  
Hallowed Ground*

*Poetic Reflections*  
by OLIVIA LEE

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*The*  
**Hallowed Ground**

*Since the creation of the world, God's  
eternal power and divinity have become  
visible through the things he has made.*

**Romans 1:20**

## Preface

In the book of Exodus, we read of Moses in the wilderness approaching a curious phenomenon to discover its meaning—a bush that was burning without being consumed. As he approached, he was told by a voice to remove his shoes because “the ground whereon thou standest is hallowed ground.” Here, in this unlikely place, Moses encountered God’s presence and understood, despite his amazement, God’s call to him. It has been my experience that, as I approach each situation expectantly and open to God’s presence, God is able to speak to me in diverse and amazing ways and, as the hymn-writer so aptly expressed it: “every place is hallowed ground.”

This collection of poems speaks of life as a journey, whether one travels the face of the earth or remains a lifetime at home. It is a journey that involves constant growth and learning—about oneself, about others, about life, about God. For all these different kinds of learning to take place, however, the journey must be undertaken on many different levels. These poems reflect my experience of finding God’s presence everywhere, teaching me, nourishing me, inviting me to new discoveries. It is my hope that they will encourage the reader to make similar discoveries.

*Olivia Lee*

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# “From a long way off they saw”

Hebrews 11:13

He showed me a vision  
of a far-off country  
El Dorado  
glowing beyond a misty  
horizon,  
city of wholeness and love.

And my heart replied,  
“Yes, Lord, I will follow,”  
gratefully joyful  
feeling already, “it’s part of me now”  
yet I wondered so many were left  
by the wayside  
such a beautiful vision,  
could they not see?

And the first few steps were made  
without effort;  
He drew me along, glad  
I had come  
and I called to my friends  
to partake of the wonder  
to follow along  
the path of new birth.

But the path grows steep  
rock-studded and  
twisting

till the place I am going  
and that whence I came  
are lost from my view  
and the sureness fades  
into short-winded gasps  
that can barely sustain me  
over each crest  
and I wonder, somehow, if I've strayed  
from His side  
and why has the path imperceptibly faded  
into a barren and windswept nothingness.

But then I recall the "saints" gone before  
"they didn't think back  
to the place they had left;  
if they had,  
they'd have had the chance  
to return"  
and I know that returning  
is not what I want  
I know that He's there  
calling me onward  
for did He not leave the ninety and nine  
to seek the one  
that was lost?



## In the City

*He brings me into the banquet hall  
and his banner over me is love.*

**Song of Songs 2:4**

# Intimations

(on Bayview Ave.)

Do you see—  
all you who drive by—  
this stark

November city  
washed in lemon mist  
aslant in fingering shafts

of light

ordering

shaping

winter's grey

and sullen clouds

around a flat

and muted sun

and do you reflect  
that only through cloud  
can the eye gaze full  
on the source  
of light?

*“Blessed are they that mourn;  
for they shall be comforted.”*

Matthew 5:4 (KJV)

# Condensation

This copious deluge  
in rivulets silvering  
screen and casement—  
    no more a window  
    nor yet a mirror  
    but filmed distortion  
casting inward  
the searching eye—  
like Living Water  
dissolving the old  
encrusted certainties  
scouring clean  
the gritty residues  
begriming hope and love  
that vision might  
again be clear  
and free to grow  
in truth.

*If I do not wash you,  
you will have no share in my heritage.  
John 13:8b*

# From My Window

(a hospital view of Toronto)

Modest red-brick  
“single-family”  
shops and dwellings  
like a time-warp  
southward spread beyond  
the tramp of glass  
                    and steel  
demure  
in August haze

and the antimacassar  
elegance of summer’s foliage  
muting in church-spire dignity  
traffic’s intermittent  
crescendo:

                    clamorous trolleys labouring beneath the lazy  
                    drone  
                    of a single-engine  
                    plane

heart-pound of a city  
benevolently stayed  
by granaries, cranes  
and portly hulks  
stolidly guarding  
the water's edge  
and etched in profile  
on sparkling azure

where the scudding canvas  
of myriad tiny craft  
briskly proclaim the freedom  
of a city's soul.

*...and he who enters into God's rest,  
rests from his own work as God did  
from his. Let us strive to enter  
into that rest.*

Hebrews 4:10–11

# Freeway

(401, Toronto)

This sculptured swath  
of sparkling motes  
alive in winter's  
brittle sun, heedless  
spans the random ends  
of careless urban sprawl  
thunderous weaves  
its massive route  
drowning every other song  
pulsing transfixed  
to the horizon's edge  
as sundry lanes  
in rhythmic descent  
bleed their trade  
to the city's heart

relentless stream  
of seething life  
perpetually  
ebbs and flows—  
a cosmos all its own—  
obscuring landscape,  
    fields or trees  
inarticulate  
    testifies  
to endless  
human busyness.

*They worship the works of their hands,  
that which their fingers have made . . .  
and there is no end to their chariots.*  
Isaiah 2:7–8

# Colours

Only a waiting-room  
encounter:

I, securely comfortable  
in my whiteness  
casually clad  
in colourful  
non-descript attire

he, youthful  
handsome and  
decisively black  
immaculately clad  
in white

enquired of me  
the meaning  
of “poignant”

saying, “I’m reading  
about South Africa  
and I don’t like  
to read past a word  
I don’t understand.”

*When he comes, however, being  
the Spirit of truth, he will  
guide you to all truth.*

John 16:13



# Hospital Visit

Expendable, consigned  
to a remote and desolate niche  
decently concealed  
in the somewhat chaotic wake  
of unexpected death—

hospitals

do not strive to serve

such pre-emptive ends—

or the untimely

arrival of kin

left now in solitude to wait

the imminence of order

and routine—the established

way of dying—

silently I mused, And could it be

that God was also caught

somewhat unprepared?—

promised “refuge” seeming

theoretical at best

where there is no time

for consolation

though still within—

embedded like an anchor

in the soul—pressed the truth:

God's promises are  
"fire-tried," not in vain

*"I will not leave  
you orphaned"*

when one appeared—

*"a cloud as small  
as a man's hand  
arising from the sea"*

far down that long  
and fateful hall  
my eyes transfixed  
by her advancing, knowing  
she was sent for me  
and in her hand  
I saw the book  
and knew it as  
God's sacred word—also  
meant for me

and there in that disjointed place  
a bond was formed that superseded  
culture, age and race—

I knew you—  
"the good Samaritan"  
reaching out to touch my need

*"Such as I have  
I give you"*

offering condolence,  
recounting for me  
her ministering aid  
to an anguished, dying soul  
speaking the words  
I had come to speak  
over and over  
affirming God's love—

*“Exceeding abundantly  
above all that we ask  
or think—”*

And I could receive her  
as sent by God,  
not needing to know  
who she was:  
Was she an angel or merely a patient?  
I never returned  
to know.

*“At that the devil left Him and  
angels came and waited on Him.”*

Matthew 4:11

## New Life

Strenuously had we laboured,  
limestone and interlocking brick  
neatly ordering our patio—  
limestone to ensure  
no untidy growth  
could sprout and mar  
its uniformity—

painstakingly checked  
then levelled to exacting  
standards, each repeating  
row of institutional brick  
wedged aesthetically  
in predetermined pattern  
and chinked again  
with sterile sand  
tucked round each  
separate brick--  
though winter's yearly frost  
heaves and thwarts our best  
endeavours.

And strange to say,  
in all that crushed  
and sterile stone—  
inevitably exposed to

nature's errant whims—  
can yet be found fertility  
to nourish vibrant life,  
defiantly exploding  
through geometric cracks,  
gloriously indifferent  
to a hostile world's indictment  
deeming its extravagance  
merely weeds.

And even I, though loving order,  
can celebrate a preference  
for the luminous velvet green  
of a softly cushioning moss  
persistently embracing  
the sedately patterned  
brick.

*The wind blows where it will. You  
hear the sound it makes but you do  
not know where it comes from, or  
where it goes. So it is with everyone  
begotten of the Spirit.*  
John 3:8



## In the Country

*Take my yoke upon your shoulders  
and learn of me, for I am gentle  
and humble of heart.*  
**Matthew 11:29**

# Thoughts of Paradise

I sat today and hearkened to  
crescendo'ed growls  
of distant thunder,  
the threatening gloom  
of a late March storm  
yielding halcyon  
thoughts of summer:  
memories warm  
with cottage leisure  
the heady fragrance  
of rain-drenched earth  
stirring my heart  
    with expectation,  
freed from schedules  
    and obligations

albeit brief,  
and clouded soon  
by shadowed threats  
of separation—  
the intrinsic cost  
of glorious freedom, ever  
tinged with poignant longing—  
for how can the heart  
embrace a place  
in the way the soul



enfolds a friend  
and I sadly muse  
that the heavenly city prepared by God  
is forever here  
only partially born.

*I also saw a new Jerusalem,  
the holy city, coming down  
from God...and there shall  
be no more death or mourning,  
crying out or pain, for the  
former world has passed away.*

Revelation 21:2,4

## Lake Reflections

The mirrored calm of early morn  
encircled soft in fronded mists  
drinks deep in quiet reverie  
each image from above—  
the spired firs, the shadowed clouds,  
driftwood sculpture, arcing hawk—  
whatever truth is given

and challenges this fretful soul  
rippled soon with each new dawn:

Care's habitual whisperings  
unaware resumed again  
with every day's agenda  
mindless of the soon lost art  
of simply  
being still.

*Be still and know  
that I am God.*  
Psalm 46:10 (RSV)

# Zephyrs

Blow wind of God  
and rustle the dry  
leaves of vexation  
that have overlaid  
and stifled my soul

Ripple the tranquil surface  
whip into waves the hopes  
and reachings of my spirit  
too long at rest  
beneath the slick  
of resignation

and stir the depths  
with the cool freshness  
of Your presence  
breathing in Your life  
and fullness.

*And suddenly a sound . . .  
like the rush of a mighty  
wind . . . filled all the  
house where they were.  
Acts 2:2*

# Giant White Pine

Plumes of feathered  
green intensity  
skyward lifting  
in gracious celebration  
towering over  
poplar and birch  
yet massively rooted  
deep in the earth

languid, predominant.

Here is no mood, no chafing  
emotion, no haughtiness  
no will to subdue

though underneath  
nothing can grow

scarcely it shows  
    even seasonal change  
dignified bearing  
disease and new birth  
scars of suffering  
living and dying



# Seaworthy

Nylon taut-snapped  
as an errant blast  
unforeseen by heedless eyes  
ponderously draws a reluctant keel  
upward from restraining depths—  
    tiller and sheet  
impulsively wrenched in wild alarm  
propel the craft  
pitching leeward, perilously lurching  
trough to trough  
    where seasoned hands  
perceiving the squall  
would trim the sails, power the vessel  
more to the wind, through each gust  
send it scudding over the waves  
onward to the intended goal.

Even so my soul  
precipitously rocked by emotional storms  
ranting, grieving  
    raging, repentant  
flung precariously  
    shoal to shoal  
while guided by my wilful hands  
    unyielded  
to the skilful grasp of One who holds  
its highest good.

*What sort of man is this  
that even the winds and the sea  
obey him?  
Matthew 8:27*

## “Like a thief in the night”

(1 Thessalonians 5:2)

Last night it rained,  
sudden, unannounced,  
with scarce an hour’s  
distant rumble, no ominous  
sultry haze, burdening the air  
just a clear complacent evening,  
and we slept.

Till lightning came, faint sheets at first  
then crackling, strident  
fulminations east to west illumining—  
a pyrotechnic pageantry, scored  
through by shuddering peals  
exploding on all sides  
and finally pelting, driving  
rain like hail, a cataclysmic symphony  
invading our retreat and spellbound  
we could only stare, await  
its total repertoire.

Morning was quiet  
weary boughs dripping residual tears  
not grieving devastation  
in the limpid early light



rather pondering the freshness  
of a fragile new beginning, strewn  
with random prunings  
from austere chastened woods—  
their branches flung disdainfully  
across the furrowed traces  
of the night's torrential purging.

And stillness reigns  
the world in hushed expectancy  
awaits the softly dawning miracle  
and the first redemptive  
bird-song, arresting  
in its purity

# Rebirth

Softly sighing  
through verdant profusion  
awash in the drenching  
crescendo of rain,  
weaving in oneness  
the interlaced boughs  
of myriad trees--  
    as in the fullness of love—  
nourishing, ministering  
lavishly cleansing  
the artless array  
of decay and new growth  
old wounds and disease;  
covering traces of  
human misuse  
as, bound into oneness,  
the land deeply drinks  
the celestial outpouring  
  
for rain unabsorbed,  
    vulgarly etching  
patterns in grime,  
can only convict.

*...the water I give shall  
become a fountain within...  
leaping up to provide  
eternal life.  
John 4:14*

# Shadows

Gaily sunlight flits and dances  
over latticed boughs  
gleefully probes the woodland depths  
and splashes off the knitted plane  
of a sparkling, sapphire lake  
entwines itself in silken warmth  
of gentle summer breezes  
and speaks of joy, awakening—  
—once—  
profound celestial longings.

But darkness cannot be denied  
for now I know within this frame  
a threat so deep it seems, sometimes,  
perhaps it is not there, yet here  
amidst the health and sun  
of playground northern lake  
the menace weighs on each delight  
rendering bliss more distant now—  
perchance no more than wistful hope—  
no birthright to be grasped

and the hungry, questing soul perceives  
more truth in shaded vaults  
of deepening glades, bedappled  
by a gentler sun that won't deny  
its suffering, but softly clasps  
its inner grief, confirms the truth  
of mystery  
in the midst  
of all we see and know.

*When the face is sad,  
the heart grows wiser.*  
James 4:14

# Farewell to Summer

Blankly as a vacant  
schoolroom slate  
this ethereal northern lake  
no longer rippled blue  
lies black and mute  
beneath the autumn haze

ominous reflecting  
the dark and sombre wreath  
of autumn's brilliant palette  
encircling its shores  
forbearing the intrusive din  
of time-defiant skiers  
    greedy to prolong  
    their summer's liberation  
engulfs their rude persistence  
in a vast and cosmic stillness

pondering perchance  
the days of coming desolation  
prologue to the solitude  
of earth's hibernal slumber  
beneath the cerulean vault  
of winter's frost-bright days.

and I with heightened vision  
turned suddenly within  
can reflect in quiet gratitude  
on the harvest of this time:

the wealth of peace and beauty,  
joyous friendship, warmth and rest  
bountifully accrued  
to illuminate my soul  
through long, grey months  
of urban cold.

Bemused, I watch young castlers  
ignore the looming portents  
of swiftly passing time  
and race the pending doom,  
of hungry, lapping waves;

the lowering sky now gently fades  
to a fragile, limpid blue  
stirring deep remembered scenes  
of treasured laughter  
in the singing summer heat.

*He leadeth me beside  
the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul.  
Psalm 23:2 (KJV)*

## “As waters wear away the stones”

(Job 14:19)

Shoring up the earth, ancient boulders  
licked by playful, lapping waves  
slashed and pounded in the raging storm  
pulverized  
                    by ice and stress  
to shifting, formless sand,  
                    creating now  
a cushioned arch for myriad  
leisure feet.

The rain, my child, has levelled out  
the bar where once your castles rose  
the measured spatter of countless drops  
dissolving crenelated walls,  
tunnels, turrets, roads and moats  
of intricate design,  
blending now with elements  
the structure of your dreams  
and shaping once again  
the restless, fickle sand.  
We grieve to see them pass  
and we ache to grasp forever  
such monumental insights,

these times of larger vision  
that behold eternal truth  
that swell the heart, rejoice the mind  
and satisfy the soul;  
shield them from the restless tide  
of unrelenting change.

But time leaves only memories  
to shape the texture of our being  
and we must grieve forever  
or move on and shape anew.



## Far Away

*Remove the sandals from your feet  
for the place where you stand is  
holy ground.*  
**Exodus 3:5**

## Plain Vision

Addictive haste—  
contagious in the freeway  
race, the thrill of power,  
the pride of place,  
unwilling to be trapped  
between the hurtling mass  
of eighteen wheels or lose  
a minute on the clock—

beyond the crest  
and jostling climb,  
can yet give way to awe:  
surprised by nature's  
panoramic canvass,  
as the pavement dips  
in gentle slope,  
          flinging wide  
the far horizon, vast  
as Salisbury's fabled plain  
o'erhung by lowering clouds.  
Sun-streaked, the land  
reveals its wealth: a random splash  
of rippled ponds and richly foliated  
verdant woods strewn among  
the neatly furrowed fields

And still, with footprints everywhere,  
of man's unresting presence,  
a primal knowledge stirs within:  
a beneficent Creator.

*Since the creation of the world ...  
God's eternal power and divinity  
have become visible, recognized  
through the things he has made  
Romans 1:20*



till looming far beyond,  
half-obsured in drizzling mist,  
a mammoth, lowering headland  
deflects its onward course  
and broods unmoved, unmoving  
above the murky turmoil.

*You have not drawn near to  
an untouchable mountain . . .  
nor gloomy darkness and storm. . . .  
No, you have drawn near . . .  
to Jesus, the mediator of a  
new covenant.  
Hebrews 12:18, 22 & 24*

# The Life of an Ocean Wave

Mile after endless mile  
this ponderous swell relentlessly  
heaves, rolling,  
                  churning  
driven betimes to a towering fury  
surging, ebbing restlessly onward  
bound for a distant shore

there to break  
impetuously tumbling  
regaining momentum, joyously  
dancing in breathless release  
crowned with lace  
scrambling further and further  
finally subsiding  
                  pouring its substance  
into expectant sands.

*I give no thought to what  
lies behind but push on to  
what lies ahead. . . . Life  
on high in Christ Jesus.  
Philippians 3:13, 14*

# Jasper Park

Clarity startles  
unfamiliar senses  
like a sudden  
spiritual awakening,  
the arrested stillness  
friezing delicate petals  
in bright relief

where stark-shadowed firs  
    sentinel  
emerald Beauvert  
    plunging deep to  
sun-pebbled depths  
exquisitely framing  
the ancient grandeur—  
of Pyramid Mountain  
    hefting its might  
through tattered remnants of cloud  
as shafted light scans the epic seams  
delicately tracing  
    the variegated strata  
    of infinite  
meticulous  
majesty.

*How great are your works, O Lord!  
How very deep are your thoughts!*  
Psalm 92:5

# Floreana

(in the Galapagos Archipelago)

Mid ancient pyramidal cones—  
creation's sculpted monuments—  
carpeted in verdant hues  
beneath a clouded canopy  
this island paradise conceals  
remote from tumult, crowd and grime  
sequestered from the curious  
Eden's primal pool

assaulting noise-addicted ears  
with prehistoric hush  
waves of silence washing o'er  
congested urban senses

entranced for timeless moments  
by the stately, fragile dignity  
of flamingo choreography

(the camera's quiet whirr  
updating reverie).

*Where were you when I  
founded the earth?  
Tell me, if you have  
understanding.  
Job 38:4*



## New York, 1973

In the seething  
immunity of this people—  
blaring echoes  
    compressed  
between concrete and steel—  
a palpable soul  
still can speak:

    wispy little park clutching  
        primly  
a tattered gentility  
in the onslaught of time  
and shadowed violence—  
    ("Park closes at 9:00 p.m.")  
and everywhere fences

pamphlets and hawkers  
of innumerable causes  
shout the thirst within  
    vulnerability being hard  
    on such terms

yet withal—even here—  
a miracle, an answered prayer  
and widening circles  
    of hope and joy  
    from the sweet, clear  
    pebble-splash

God with us.

*Where can I go from your spirit?  
from your presence where can I flee?*  
Psalm 139:7



painfully aware  
of all my blessings,  
fighting back defensive  
thoughts: “Shall I be called  
to account for this?”

*You see me  
as One who has life ...*

Can it be there are  
exceptions?

You, too, Lord,  
observed such pain  
and paused to ask: “Do you want  
to be healed?”  
but even that was only one—  
content for the rest  
to merely condemn  
the rich indifference  
to Lazarus.



# Cervinia

Relentless marching  
slabs of rock  
define the valley's tortuous  
    course  
thrusting shoulders  
rough and bare  
through winter's delicate  
    embroidery  
careless  
of the glaciated clefts  
and even time itself

till suddenly  
in fanfare mute  
these towering walls  
flung wide  
    display  
        one far-distant  
        bridal peak  
        ethereal  
in the roseate dawn—  
intimation of glory—

“*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus...*”

swells singing  
in the wondering heart  
yet distantly  
enthralled

till faint within  
a memory stirs:

“Blessed is  
the One who comes ...”

raised from death’s  
crude agony  
to welcome in  
the awe-struck gazers  
    and planting deep within  
the glory indescribable  
of everlasting light.

*I have come to the world  
as its light.  
John 12:46*

## The Pantheon, Rome

Cool, empty twilight  
refuge from the noontide's  
blistering heat, affords  
no startling revelation  
but transition  
into timelessness  
ethereal and sublime  
homecoming  
    breathed  
through every longing fibre  
captive to the throbbing  
organ swell, full-throated  
searching every shadowed nook  
and gathering the pervasive gloom  
through dancing sunlit motes  
like incense swirling  
heavenward toward the skylit dome  
    and all  
for one eternal moment held  
transfixed in this one shaft  
of mystery-burdened light.

*I saw the Lord seated on a  
high and lofty throne, with  
the train of his garment  
filling the temple.  
Isaiah 6:1*



## Perge

Ancient ruins overgrown—  
reclaimed by earth, her own—  
echo softly in the breeze  
the shouts and cheers of centuries  
from stone to toppled stone

marbled friezes still define  
in skilled and intricate design  
the saga of a populace  
capricious flung across the face  
of this deserted plain

yet tell of triumphs, hopes and faith  
of habits and of marketplace  
of profits reaped from human flesh,  
from plundered goods and temple lust:  
the apostle's early gospel stage

left now for guides with entourage,  
the footsteps of the curious  
clambering over gate and column,  
proud pediments that have become  
a humble place of rest.

*My kingdom does not belong  
to this world.  
John 18:36*

# Mereyama

(The Mountain of the Nightingales, Ephesus)

Circling aloft  
climbing higher again  
beyond frenzy of commerce,  
the dust of the plain  
till softly through foliage  
a refuge is gained  
mid silvering olives  
and lilting refrain.

Strange how the silence  
drifts round the hill,  
the babel of language  
suddenly still  
awed by the mystery  
of this ancient mound  
and reverence for Mary,  
the mother of God.

*Seeing his mother there  
with the disciple whom he loved,  
Jesus said . . . , "There is your mother."  
From that hour onward  
the disciple took her into his care.  
John 19:26,27*



And eyes that once had searched and strained  
to penetrate the mystery,  
unequal to this glorious power,  
are shielded from its brilliancy.

Nor yet will we have grace to know  
how dark has been this earthly night  
until our time-dulled eyes perceive  
the dawning of eternal Light.

*Who is this that comes forth  
like the dawn, as beautiful  
as the moon, as resplendent  
as the sun?  
Song of Songs 6:10*

# Cappadocia

Hauntingly the muezzin  
at twilight's mystic hour  
intones across a barren plain  
    deep-ruptured from the dawn of time  
    carved by storm, by armies plied  
    pursuing every empire's greed  
    dead-weary from the centuries  
transfigured in the amber glow--  
a benison of peace.

This ancient near-exhausted land  
whence prayer has risen  
from church or mosque  
pious through millennia  
a haven for the hungering souls  
retreating this world's vanities  
and armies of antiquity  
to find their peace with God.

Souls cradled in the very scars  
of this tormented earth  
whose random sculptures  
pierce the sky, till even  
the very land itself  
engulfs the heart  
                    in awe

and all the while the trinket vendors  
camped at every curb and turn  
plead and plead incessantly  
a bleak reality.

*The poor you will always  
have with you but you will  
not always have me.  
Matthew 26:11*

## In Leisure

*If out of joy in their beauty  
they thought them gods, let  
them know how far more excellent  
is the Lord than these....*

**Wisdom 13:3**

# Time

The broad potential of  
the distant future  
is narrowing  
down to the  
finite  
neck  
of  
this  
present  
blending  
like sand  
imperceptibly  
in the wide base  
of past experience.

*God gave Solomon wisdom and  
exceptional understanding and  
knowledge, as vast as the sand  
on the seashore.  
1 Kings 4:29*



# Trees

I love to gaze at trees  
etched against the sky  
finitely embossed  
upon infinity  
    their lofty soaring boughs  
    so rhythmically free  
    reach deep within my thoughts,  
    to arrest “necessity”  
and liberate my soul  
bound by earthly ties  
but mortally inset  
upon eternity.

*That they might be called  
trees of righteousness, a  
planting of the Lord.  
Isaiah 61:3 (KJV)*

## Seasons of the Soul

Wisping, silvery autumn mists  
enfold the over-heated earth  
in tranquil invitation:  
a gratifying pause to ripen  
summer's lavish feast  
even so, the grace-blessed soul  
craves a season of respite  
from the burgeoning inner light  
that has stirred its long-embedded roots,  
challenged old, complacent concepts,  
half-formed in early springtime  
and stored in dusty bins  
deep inside the mind,  
bins whose hardened sides  
now are strained to overflowing  
and grateful for receding light,  
more ordered time and leisure  
when compassion's inner magic  
can imbue each shining fruit  
with sacrificial hues—  
as God's eternal truth  
embraces human frailty  
bringing forth a harvest  
fully-ripened  
in His time.

each ample field, now gathered in  
is ploughed and diligently dressed  
preparing once again  
the furrows of the soul  
for yet another harvest

then mercifully abandoned  
to winter's blustery chill--  
bearing its own risks and trials  
while the husbandman withdraws

But autumn yet has left its seed  
and winter's not in vain:  
the weary soil, restored by rest  
awaits spring's beckoning call  
and fruitful branches, pruned  
and trimmed to spur potential yield  
learn patient acquiescence

till the gurgling thrill of thawing streams  
heralds springtime's vibrant dawn  
and the soul, long dormant, athirst for light  
flings aside its tattered shawl,  
unabashed by storms' debris,  
naked now, brown-earth expectant,  
vulnerable to life's renewal.

*See how the farmer awaits the  
yield of the soil. He looks forward to  
it patiently while the soil receives the  
winter and the spring rains.*

James 5:7

# The Kite

Dipping

tossing

climbing

step by step

to distant heights

plunging then

with sickening speed

tortuously twisting

searching still

the upward draught

till higher

farther

yearning taut against

the straining cord

it pierces hands

that gave it flight

till cramped and bloodless fingers  
reluctantly unfold  
release their prize  
and set it free  
to probe exalted realms

as love that knows no bounds  
relinquishes its treasure  
and though the aching heart  
be stabbed, it says:  
I love.  
Be free.

*Though the mountains leave their  
place . . . My love shall never  
leave you  
Isaiah 54:10*

## Wilderness Blessings

Not the path I would  
have chosen, fraught  
with torment, pain  
and sleeplessness  
and cravings no less real  
for being spiritual, mercilessly  
wrenching inmost depths:  
my sheltered inner being  
    and yet I chose  
—or was this choice?  
thrust rock-hard  
on faith professed  
    (embraced in safer times)—  
left only with the chance to be  
a hypocrite or not!





## Of Things Unseen

Wind of my childhood  
wildly tossing skeletal branches  
wailing higher and higher  
in frenzied crescendo  
then falling, subsiding  
to restlessly stir, building again  
in gathering fury  
hurling itself in shuddering  
percussion  
    testing the walls  
of my sheltering home.

Wind—  
in my childhood you taught me  
of safety, nestled in warmth  
from your powerful voice--  
around and around me but never disturbing  
soothing my dreams  
murmuring strength.

Wind—  
in my youth you taught me  
of challenge, tousling my hair  
and nipping my cheek,  
hustling onward into the distance  
out of the distance  
forever beyond.

Still in adulthood, you fill me with yearning  
stirring desire deep in my soul  
freely to move without ties  
or commitments, seek new horizons  
create new designs.  
Yet where you would lead  
I cannot always go  
then carry my prayers  
on your powerful wings.

*The wind blows where it will.  
You hear the sound it makes  
but you do not know where it  
comes from, or where it goes.*

John 3:8

# Wildflower

Delicate tendrils  
dare to plant  
in barren nooks  
their fragile roots  
thrusting toward the warming sun  
mid random, jagged  
mounds of rock, their deeply tinted  
tiny blooms frail testament  
to life and faith.

As love that yearns  
to reach full bloom  
in rocky, unreceptive ground  
crying, “O Jerusalem!  
“How often I would  
“fold you to me!”  
painfully accepting even death  
death upon a cross!”  
and trusting  
a redemptive God.

*Your attitude must be  
that of Christ.  
Philippians 2:5*



## In Relationships

*My wish is that we might  
be mutually encouraged by our  
common faith.*  
**Romans 1:12**

## Behold Your Kin

Illusions just like crystal  
shattered on the polished hearth  
ruthlessly fragment  
in the glaring light of truth,  
exposing all I treasure  
as inconsequent to you,  
the bond I had assumed  
revealed as a mirage  
and pain's divisive wall  
explodes violently within

hurling family  
    friends--  
        yes, even God  
and all creation —  
randomly beyond  
the crater's jagged rim.

Till now alone  
    and flotsam  
on a stretch of vacant beach  
I am no more related  
to any living thing

unmoved by sparkling waters  
I strain for half-expected comfort  
in the whispering  
    autumn breeze  
remembering its caresses  
    but they  
somehow fail to touch  
the gaping inner void

leaving only listless silence  
until at last, before  
the soul's agnostic eyes  
aimlessly ascends, unbidden  
the faintest wisp of prayer  
disclosing, faint at first,  
then growing ever clearer  
the myriad kindred faces  
of all who share such pain:  
    divorced, bereft  
    abused, abandoned  
    or deprived  
becoming one in anguish shared  
with me and one another

ultimately one  
on distant Calvary  
with One who suffered there  
the utmost separation  
to comfort and to heal  
an alienated world.

and recreate this seared, contracted soul  
till waters lapping deep  
within can gently cleanse  
and fill once more,  
till breezes can caress the ache,  
heal the wounds and breathe  
forgiveness,

planting soft within the soul  
the precious seeds  
of love

and I can pray.

*Woman, behold your son!*  
John 19:26



# Presence

Faithfully patient  
for a moment of quiet  
when I, released  
from all to whom  
my time is given,  
can turn my thoughts  
to you  
    dear friend,  
and you are there  
to absorb my hurts  
my joys, concerns  
and deep frustrations  
wherever I am  
in loving attentiveness  
always God's presence  
to me.

*And know that I am  
with you always ...  
Matthew 28:20*

# Transience

Shadow-like does sadness  
stalk the deepest joys of life--  
primordial sense of the ruthless  
march of unrelenting time  
tramping on through poignant hours  
to memory's beckoning door,  
ajar, yet poised to firmly close  
on all the heart holds dear:  
"This, too, shall pass  
"Form falls away  
that form may be revealed"  
Life's dust nourishing  
life again  
    and desperately  
the spirit strains to rise above  
the treadmill crush  
as fragile wings beat hard  
against each fleeting pledge of light,  
finding solace in another realm  
beyond this mortal stage  
    where lies  
the mystery of eternal life,

sole comfort of the plighted heart:  
promise even now  
that knowledge here can grow beyond  
constraints of space and time  
in widening arcs of faith and hope  
and all-pervasive love

absence and death  
then meaningless  
where hearts may touch and speak  
to each in timeless, all-embracing  
light.

*...that by his death he might ...  
free those who through fear  
of death had been slaves  
their whole life long.  
Hebrews 2:14,15*

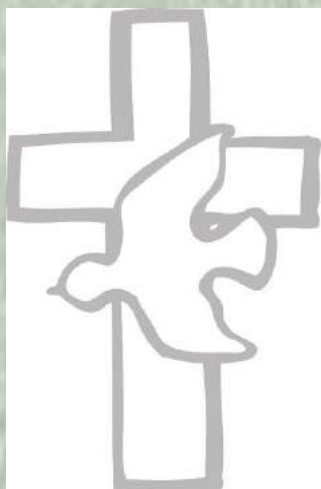
## “And you gave me drink”

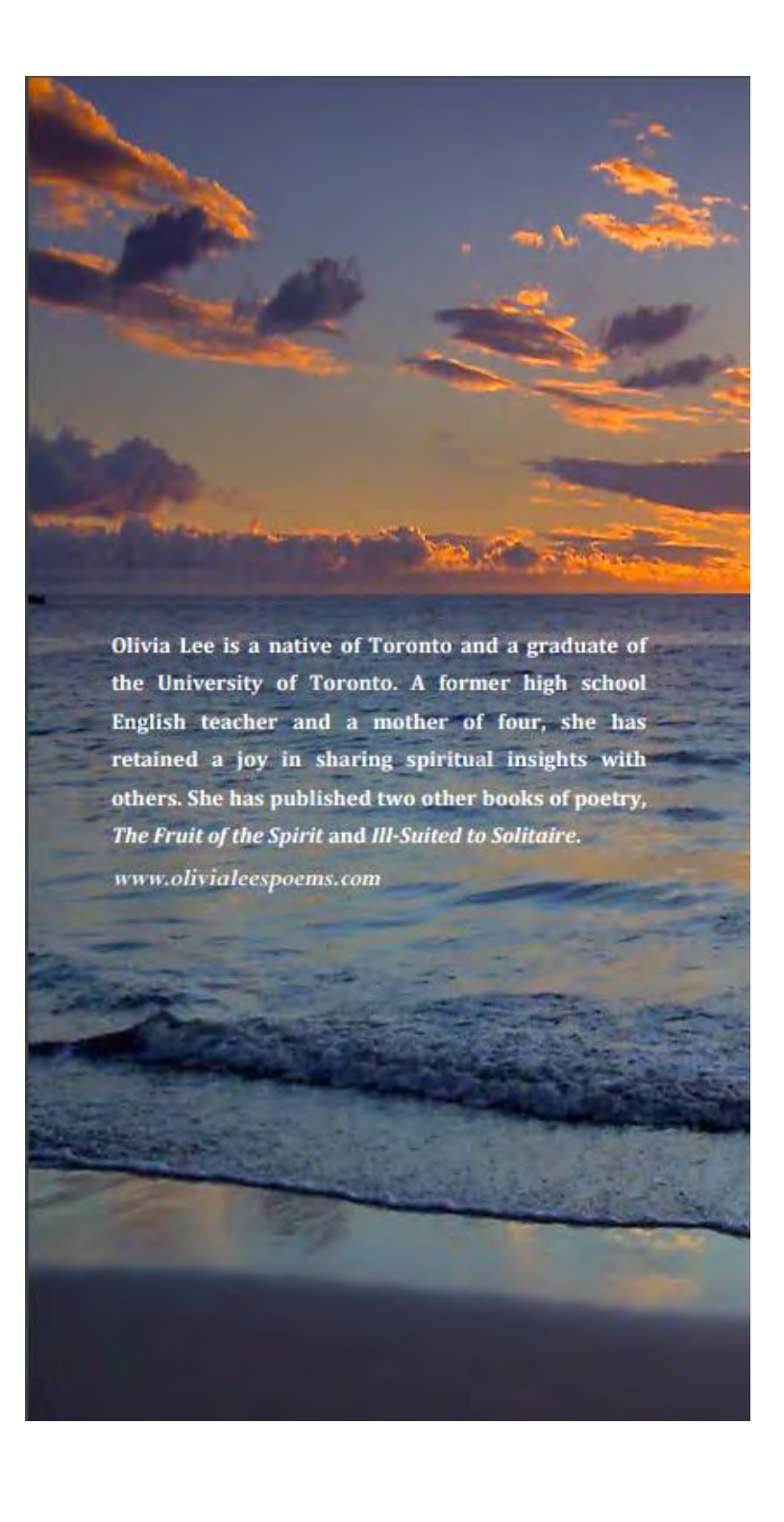
(Matthew 25:35)

Eyes at last that met my eyes  
with care unflinching, penetrating  
deep within my troubled heart  
telling me 'twas safe to speak  
to drink the solace of a listening ear  
an understanding heart

to drink and drink with grateful pleasure  
assurance of a God who hurts  
and cares and seeks and heals  
till burden-weary, aching shoulders  
feel release and hope is born.

With wounds unbound and open now  
to healing light and growth and truth  
awareness grows of others' pain  
awaking pity deep within  
till, gently stirred, the longing grows  
to be a vessel pouring out  
the grace so freely given.





Olivia Lee is a native of Toronto and a graduate of the University of Toronto. A former high school English teacher and a mother of four, she has retained a joy in sharing spiritual insights with others. She has published two other books of poetry, *The Fruit of the Spirit* and *Ill-Suited to Solitaire*.

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