

Walk With Me?

A Year in Word
and Wonder



MEREDITH DOSTER

for and with those who come alongside

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An Opening

Not too long ago, another year found me. Time – past and present, passing and precious – remains mystery and miracle in one. How, then, to keep meeting and making this thing called life? It seems I have spent lifetimes practicing – instruments and lessons and manners and more. These days, I am leaning into a different kind of practice. It's a work and walk and witness that compel a kind of wonder that surfaces what matters most.



seeds.

sustenance.

seasons.

sufficiency.

salvation.

surrender.

silence.

sweet,
sweet
surprise.



I inherited a glorious assortment of my grandmother’s mason jars several years ago. The jars keep calling for me. They seem to be preaching the whole truth and holy gospel that labors of love are work, too. They seem to be asking for a kind of reclamation that gives as much as it takes. Time comes at a cost. Yours. Mine. Ours. Theirs. The jars seem to understand that some rewards are waiting right here at home.

My grandmother was many things, including a devoted steward of the garden she grew each year. Not one for wasting or wanting, my grandmother canned with commitment, preserving precious things for her household and others. Each spring, summer, and fall, my grandmother shipped home-canned goods to wherever my family happened to be living. I remember my mother’s excitement when these boxes arrived, each packed as carefully as the jars containing pickled beets and okra, stewed tomatoes, relishes, and jellies.

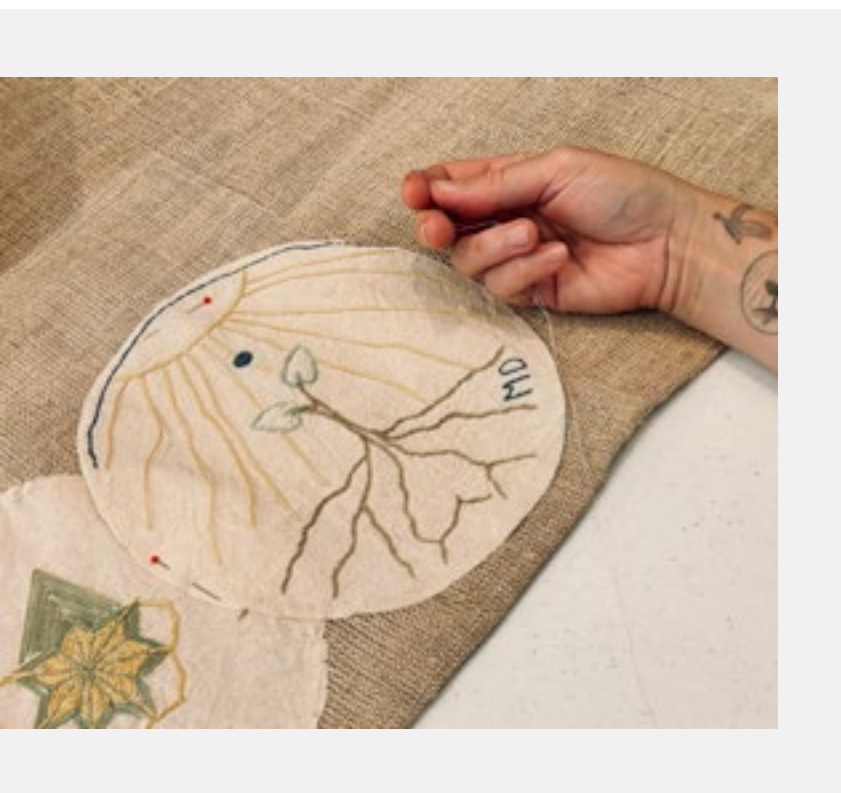
It remains both joy – and journey – to keep becoming the kind of person that grows the kinds of things that warrant preservation. My grandmother’s jars are perfectly sized to serve up our favorites. The thick-walled pint jars are the water glasses we refill several times each meal. The tall, narrow jars are just right for the okra we forget to pick before it overgrows. The gallon-sized are perfect

for the peaches we pickle for the holidays. I am mindful that size and shape are material to what each jar can – and cannot – hold. In my daily quest for the “just enough,” sufficiency shows up in a metric measured by the headspace required for things like air and water,

heat and pressure. Even so, I sometimes overfill jars beyond their capacity. What does the promise of more-than and too-much sound like? It is a crack you can hear as the bottom falls out.

If only we could hold in our hands other things we stress and strain to the point of breaking.

If only we would.



A final batch of jars came my way after my parents made a pilgrimage to rural northeast Arkansas where they cleaned out the last storage unit holding remnants of my grandparents' lives. The boxes sat under my carport until I had time to honor the depths of so much emptiness. Some homecomings are piecemeal and these offerings from my grandmother's kitchen became vessels for the holiest of communions. When the time was right, I carried box after box to the kitchen counter where each jar made its way into the sink. Once there, a simple liturgy found me:



pick up.

handle
with care.

wash.

rinse.

repeat.

As dirt and dust swirled down the drain, elements returned to their own. The heft and hope and holiness and humanity of these jars – in these jars – begs for reverence. Returned to their shiny clean glory, these jars are returning for me still. Together, we are putting up (with) a birthright that is both fertile ground and glass refracting.



I love the jars that line almost every shelf in our home. They remind me of things made for filling up and sharing, washing out and repurposing. Even as these jars call to mind what it means to use and re-use, to be used and used up, they aren't the only things speaking. Now that each box is empty, I find my gaze shifting from content to container and back again. There is always more to notice, and I am mesmerized by my grandmother's handwriting scrawled across boxes and the occasional lid that was left behind. The notes I can make out catalog a careful process that began by planting living things to harvest. If the jars are teaching process and patience, these boxes carry stories, too, including those about the many childhood meals supplemented by the work of my grandmother's hands. One small box that once held pint-sized mason jars hangs framed on the wall to the right of my desk. It's similar to several others I have already recycled. This one, though, has the mailing label my grandmother wrote out to the Cincinnati address where my family was living the year I was born.

I don't know what matters more: that my grandmother grew and processed and canned and shipped the vegetables that nourished my mother through her pregnancy, or that this box kept making its way from home to home, transporting living proof of what it takes to feed one another. This label that shows the distance love will travel to grow a family? It is testimony to fruits of all kinds of spirits. Some inheritances beg questions. Others show up as practices of being and knowing and believing and becoming.

Perhaps one day soon, these newest companions will make their way back to the kitchen counter where they will be sterilized, packed, and submitted to all kinds of pressure. For now, they watch and wait for their turn.

An Invitation

I once gifted myself a season of quiet fellowship. Each week for an entire year, I dedicated Thursdays to listening and learning and loving and letting go – sometimes on my own and often with a cherished friend. The day was rarely prescriptive, but rather a practice of many things: a walk at the pace of the possible; a meandering conversation to accompany the cooking and sharing of a simple meal; a table set jar by jar, each packed with things that matter most.



grace.

goodness.

grit.

generosity.

generations.

gathering.

grasping.

glimpsing.

grafting.

giving.

As the year unfolded, worlds turned and things changed. I did, too. Thursdays became a portal to the sacred ordinary, my weekly practice an anchor for everyday glory. Most of my days begin on a long walk across small town and country roads with hounddog Ezra. Something happens when our days are rooted, routine, revered. Formation sits in the small actions that grow our capacities to be present – with ourselves and with all others.

I no longer have a guest at the house each Thursday. But I journey with those who walk with me by sending a picture and meditation that finds me each week. Sometimes, I ruminate on the ground beneath my feet or the vast skies above. Often, I am cataloging quiet joys that find me in the garden. The work of accompaniment sits in all kinds of places.

Would you walk with me? It remains unclear who is accompanying whom, but the jars keep showing up. As do I. As does my grandmother. May we keep listening for the gifts we are born to share with one another. I pray these jars hold just enough – for you and for me.

LET us begin – again and again and again.

Meredith



FIRST QUARTER

Fall



WEEK ONE

Practice makes possible.

Greetings, friend!

In the beginning was word and it mattered.
In the beginning was question and I wondered.
In the beginning was chaos, and it created.
In the beginning was wisdom, and it was everywhere.

In the sun and the moon.
Will you remember?
In the blessing and the boats.
Will you journey?
In the known and no longer. *Will you sing?*
In the blinding and untitled.
Will you bear witness?
In the water. *Will you pour?*
In the story. *Will you proclaim?*
In litany and in liturgy. *Will you be?*
Or maybe not.

In the beginning was a practice,
and it was alive.
It was flesh and bone, river and earth.
It was road to nowhere and eternal return.
It was resurrection morning, all day long.
It was holy difference
and the same old thing.
It was sum and parts,
everything and nothing.
It was life and death,
and all manner of hubris in between.
It was breath. It was body. It was enough.

In the beginning was here. It was also there.
We were, too. And it was good.

*Where are you
beginning?*

*What is your
practice?*

*When will enough
be enough? How will
you know?*



WEEK TWO

Walk in wonder.

Greetings, friend!

Today and every day, hounder Ezra and I head out for our morning perambulation. While the routine is fixed, the route varies. Sometimes, I lead. More often, Ezra lets us know where we need to be. Just now? Two deer darted across the road. Ezra and I watched in quiet wonder before one of us started hollering. I am grateful for pathways that find and bind me to practices that keep walking me home. Ezra is, too.

Happy Thursday! May this day find you and yours and ours and theirs unleashing a kind of reverence that speaks – and barks – in all registers and volumes.

What makes you holler?

To whom are you bound?

Where is your wonder?

Why are you reverent?



WEEK THREE

Light (in) the darkness.

Greetings, friend!

Thursday once more. It's a beautiful day here in the mountains. I am grateful for the bright light—it is boon and balm and blessing. And bittersweet, the way the hard and the harsh and the harm and the holy are reshaping so many worlds—not just mine or yours, but ours. And also always theirs.

There are big things to tackle and tend to and turn over and transform these days.

May we keep looking and listening for one another, and the other, too.

Love for the long-haul, y'all. And blessings on practices that sustain. So appreciate your accompaniment.

What breaks your heart?

Where is the light?

How are you loving?

To whom are you listening?



WEEK FOUR

What remains.

Greetings, friend!

This time last week, some were making ready. Today, many are simply making it—over and across and through. With so much up-ended and turned-up and over-flowed, it's no small wonder that some geese found us on a walk a few days ago.

In perfect formation, the flock headed for a recently harvested corn field. The land can look so desolate after the stalks are processed. But the birds know to keep looking, to seek out that which has been cut down. There is something to the kernels left behind. I'm not sure what, but may the gleaning hold us to a future harvest.

Meanwhile, there are neighbors and friends and families and strangers to love and care for. Yours. Mine. Ours. Theirs. And amid the cleaning and cooking and coordinating and chaos — there is grief deep and wide. The impact of so many things is staggering. We can't yet count the loss. And numbers might not capture the fullness of it all anyway.

Even so and always — gratitude. For this day. For kindness. For mercies big and small. And for you.

What are you grieving?

When is your harvest?

Why (not) today?

How about tomorrow?



WEEK FIVE

Birds of a feather.

Greetings, friend!

Day by day, week by week, the world is changed and changing still—much like the season at hand, whose annual lesson in falling forward lands differently this year.

Can I hold the relinquishing and remembering and repairing and recovering and reconciling and reconfiguring and rallying and rebuilding and resting and raging and rejoicing lightly enough to keep leaning in and letting go?

It is a work, this walk. Even so:

On their way to warmer places, beloved birds are leaving precious pieces of themselves behind. There is good teaching in tender offerings, and joy in so many discoveries.

May we keep noticing that which remains. May we bless the remnants. May we be them, too.

Love from my heart to yours. Today and every day.

*What are you holding tightly?
And too lightly?*

*How are you being and
becoming and blessing?*

*Who are you sticking with and
to and up for?*

*When will you, too, be a
remnant?*



WEEK SIX

Practicing preservation.

Greetings, friend!

There is an old pear tree below our house that produces beautifully each year. Even when nothing else makes, the pears come in strong. Bless and alas – I don't really like pears and often pick only enough to share with those who do. The many neighborhood deer watch and wait for the rest to ripen and drop. There are more than enough to keep them well fed away from the garden.

This season, I've been thinking about things that keep showing up, seemingly no matter what. Things like possibility and pain and peace and purpose and so. many. pears.

A few days ago, I made a small batch of mostly applesauce with a few pears cut in. Even with a 10:1 ratio, I can still taste them. Surely, that means something, too.

It seems that the pears are preaching, friends, and Grandma's jars know when to answer the call. It is good and right to preserve that which sustains. Even when we're still figuring out things like taste and time and testimony.

Life remains tender, friends. Even so, the jars are holding. Bless them. And you and yours, too.

What are you tasting these days?

Where are you showing up?

For whom are you preserving?

Why are you tender?



WEEK SEVEN

Brumation bound.

Greetings, friend!

Look who recently joined me among the last of the cherry tomatoes. Turtle friend was a steadfast companion during blueberry heydays, but hasn't been a regular visitor of late. It was good to cross paths before we bed down for winter.

While some here in the mountains are heading into a seasonal slowing of sorts, others continue to ramp up and build back. I am reminded of all those carrying worlds on their shoulders. So many places that used to be so many things are forever changed and changing still. Perhaps turtle friend holds something for you and yours?

What are you carrying?

Where is your home?

How is your heart?

Meanwhile and always, may we keep leaning in and lifting together in the wintering and working ahead. May we be home and heart(h)place for one another, too. Today – and every day.



WEEK EIGHT

Signs following.

Greetings, friend!

A while back, I made a hand-painted sign that greets those who pull up the drive. It reads:

MORNING GLORY
ALL DAY LONG

Earlier this summer, I planted a morning glory vine at the base of the sign and got busy watering and waiting and wondering. While the vine grew and grew, blossoms did not appear—until just a few days ago, long past anything resembling the right season, when our very first morning glory bloomed.

There are signs, friend. Followings, too. And then there is the practice of signs following. At heart, it approximates the timing of things that come together in sometimes beautiful and often bewildering orchestration. It reminds me how much lies beyond my own lifetime of seeing and being and knowing. It asks me to keep watching and waiting for the signs to return. It models a walk that is the work of beginning – again and again and again.

My grandfather – now 98 years young – has always planted by the signs. I do, too. It is not perfect. But it is a practice. And this week among weeks? It grew something glorious.

My worlds include those grieving and celebrating all kinds of outcomes. This is the tender offering I have to share. It is not a bridge, but a blossoming. May it hold something for you today. And may signs welcome and welcoming – for you and for me and for us and for them – come in again soon and very soon.

What are you following?

*Where are you blooming?
In what color?*

*Why do you welcome
some but not others?*



WEEK NINE

Heron healing.

Greetings, friend!

Coming and going, I find myself driving along formerly-familiar stretches of road, orienting anew to that which is shifting still. Amid towering debris piles and high water marks and so much too much, my eyes keep scanning. Seeing is not always believing.

The Little Ivy empties into the French Broad near Marshall, North Carolina. During the hurricane, this normally tiny creek swelled and swallowed things whole. Bless. Just the other day, I caught sight of heron friend flying low along its banks. With no one around, I parked in the middle of the road and reveled – in a quietly persistent beauty that softens and stills the persistently disquieting.

Some things are returning these days. Others are not. For that which stops us in our tracks? And reminds us to look up, too?

A tenderness that expands. And gratitude.

Are you flying low or soaring high? Why?

What is returning to you?

*Where are you looking?
For what?*



WEEK TEN

The least of these.

Greetings, friend!

Pausing along the way and remembering things big and small. It is good to keep noticing. Eyes and hearts wide open?

Me and mantis friend are practicing. Praying, too.

Today and every day.

What are you looking for?

What can your eyes not (yet) see?

How is your practice?

And your prayer?



WEEK ELEVEN

Suns and daughters.

Greetings, friend!

On my walk earlier this week, a sunflower caught my eye. Somehow, it was growing out of a crack in the pavement. Late in the year, it was preparing to bloom.

What to make of the beauty that finds us between rocks and hard places, no matter the season?

On this particular Thursday, some will be feasting and others fasting. Some will be near and others far—off and away. We do not celebrate the same things at the same time in the same way. May we remember these differences and call them by name—hard. hopeful. holy.

What season are you living?

Where are you cracking open?

How is your hope?

Whatever this day holds for you and yours—may something welcome find you in an unexpected place.

As for me and my house?
We shall ponder the rogue sunflower and give thanks.



WEEK TWELVE

Armchair philosophers.

Greetings, friend!

My mom recently shared this picture of my father and grandfather “watching” evening television together. At any age, a nap is surely a gift. As is the grit and generosity and grace of care.

My parents and grandfather just celebrated their ten-year anniversary as a team of three. Before becoming housemates, they could not have imagined this season. Sometimes hard, always holy, this chapter is holding—and growing us all.

I think a lot about comings and goings: the way we preserve some and not others, the way we hold tight while learning to let go.

It is my truth that something is being remembered and reclaimed by this trio working out how to live — and die — together. It is many things. It is not easy. Even so. Most evenings? The generations rest and the ancestors rejoice. It is (more than) enough.

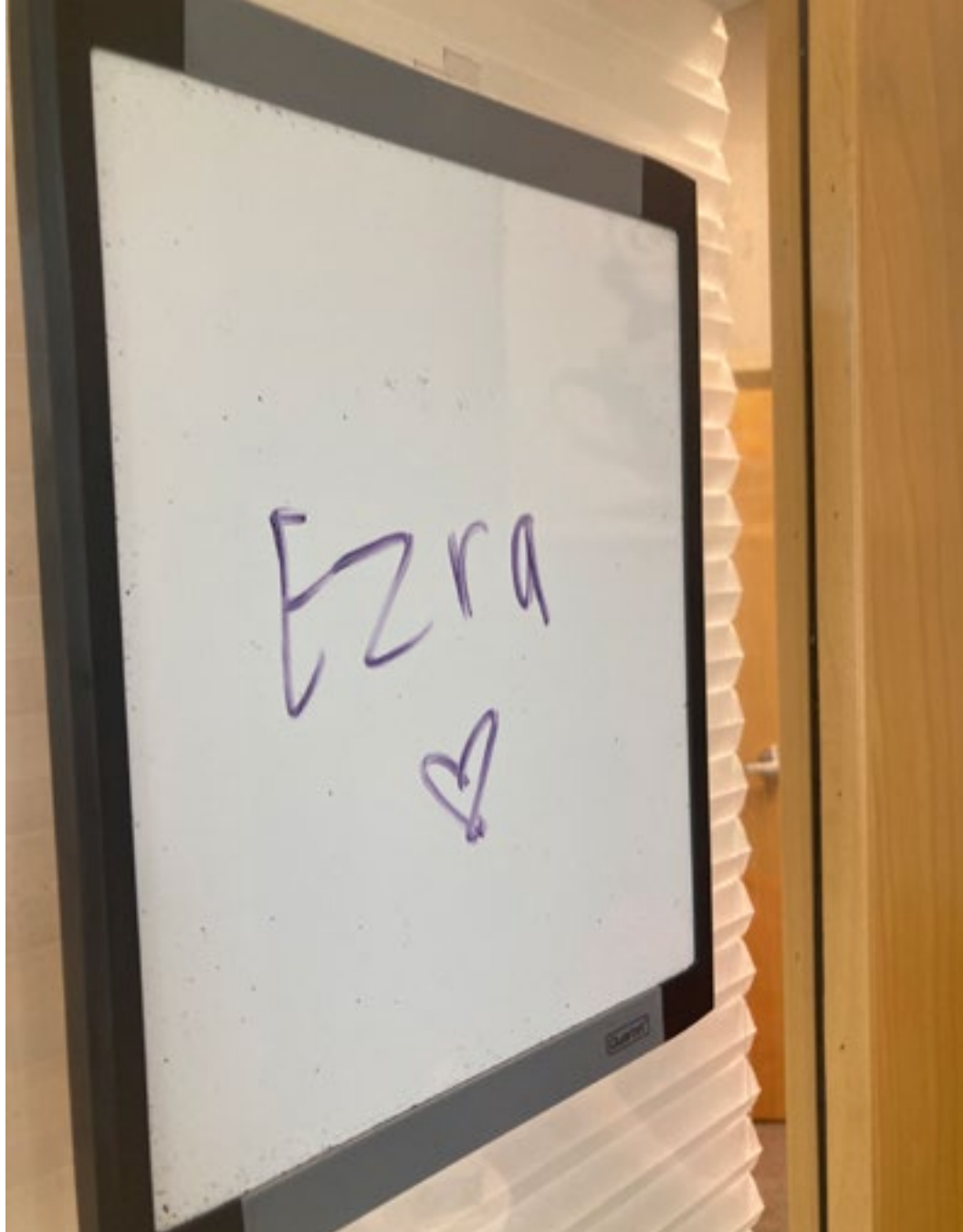
May love and care cover you and yours, too.
Today, and every day.

What do you care about?

Whom are you caring for?

When do you rest?

How are you living? What about dying?



WEEK THIRTEEN

Seeing is believing.

Greetings, friend!

Ezra and I are just in from our customary morning stroll. You might be aware that my beloved hound has been without sight since Saturday. We are holding tight to that which keeps possibility before us: walking, praying, wondering, practicing, witnessing, pondering.

We are ever mindful that hope soars among our feathered friends. And so we are especially grateful for the many birds that keep finding us these days.

*Where are you blinded?
What about blinding?*

*Why are you surprised?
What about surprising?*

*Who are you
accompanying?*

There is so much light, y'all.
Even when we can't see.
Would you remember us as
we slow all the way down to
learn new ways of moving
through the world? We covet
and appreciate your prayers
and accompaniment. Ezra
does, too.



SECOND QUARTER

Winter



WEEK FOURTEEN

Prospering with poultry.

Greetings, friend!

Introducing, the year of the chicken! Surely, every practice needs some poultry? To bok-bok beauties and blessings of care borne in the giving and receiving.



What are you growing?

*Where do your learning
curves lead?*

Why (not) care for others?

How about yourself, too?



WEEK FIFTEEN

Homegrown generosity.

Greetings, friend!

It's bitter cold in the mountains this week. Even so, especially so – I am grateful to be processing a mess of my grandfather's mustard greens. Aren't they gorgeous? It is some kind of holy to hold and honor the fruit of someone else's labor. It is some kind of love to keep giving and grounding and growing one another. Welcome sharing warms the heart. So, too, gracious receiving.

For as long as I can remember, I have been picking and eating my grandfather's greens. No matter the season, sustenance has been measured bag by overflowing bag of homegrown produce. What a gift!

It is good and right to be sowing seeds of my own these days. Even so, especially so – I am grateful to be noticing tender transitions at hand and ahead.

May we keep growing and sharing things that sustain. And may we keep making ready—today and every day.

*What would you give up
to pass on?*

*Where will your final
stand be? What if you sat
down along the way?*

*How can you keep
sharing?*



WEEK SIXTEEN

Can I get a witness?

Greetings, friend!

It's still bitter cold here in the mountains. Snow, ice, and temperatures well below "normal."

Thankfully, we are faring well—hens are laying, dogs are lazing, and so. many. birds are keeping close.

It's a wonder-filled work to watch over one another. The birds, too, are bearing witness. Perhaps you recognize this one? I call her Grandma.

What are you trying?

Where are you flying?

How will you keep dying?

Why will you be remembered?

It's a season for so many things. I'm keeping an eye on my feathered friends. Surely, we try and cry and fly and die together? May we be known by our generosity and care.

From my window to yours,
warmest wishes. Literally.
The warmest.



WEEK SEVENTEEN

Tender timing.

Greetings, friend!

Even in midwinter's bitter cold, a tender opening. I wonder about this tenacity. What is the measure of (im)perfect timing?

From my Thursday to yours—a hope for the many things aiming to be and become this year. May all manner of welcome things blossom and bless.

What kind of beauty is barely there?

Where is time taking us all?

How do you balance tenderness and tenacity?



WEEK EIGHTEEN

Enough is enough.

Greetings, friend!

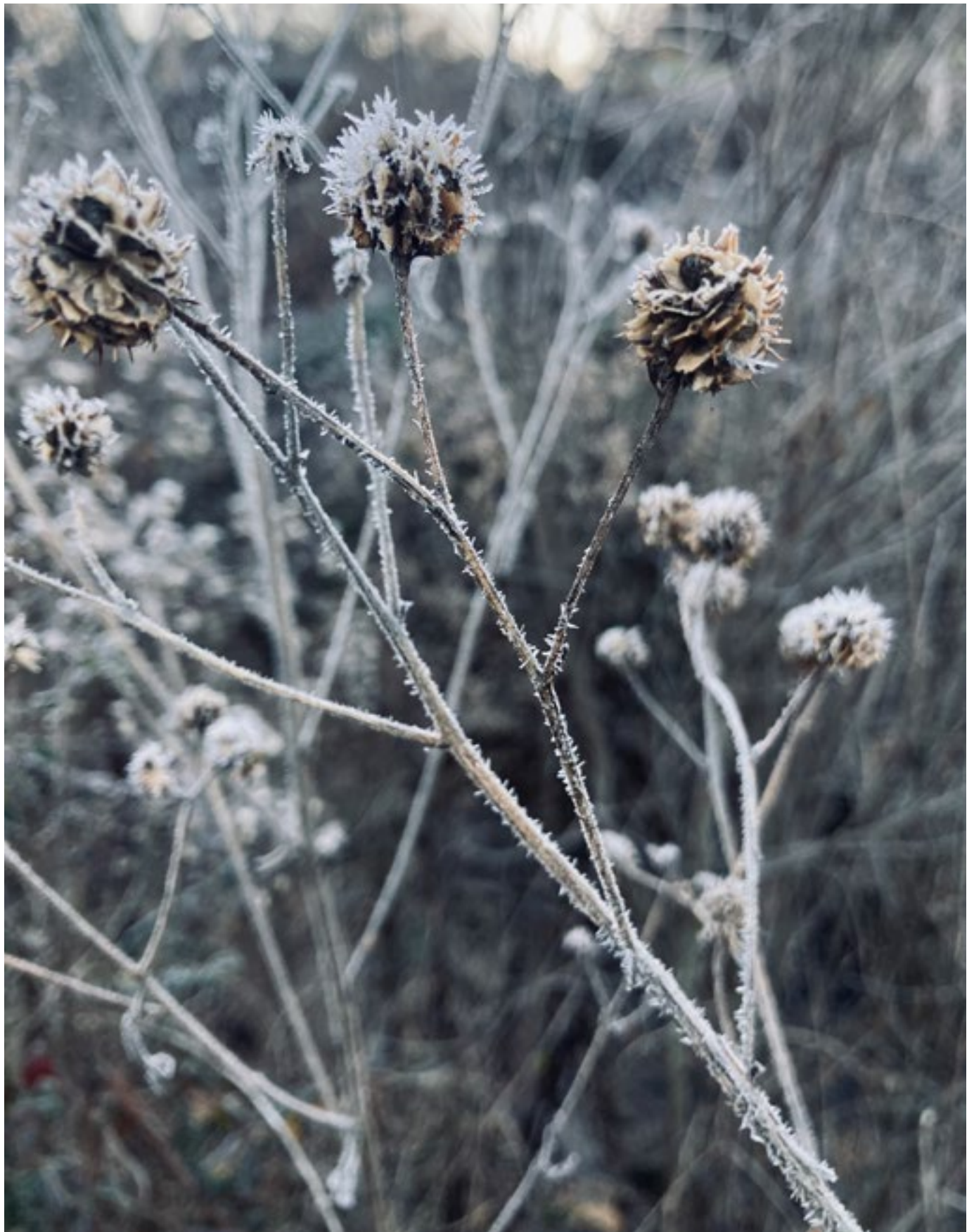
From bird to broth – a practice that honors life in the giving and in the taking. At this time of year, I often have stock brewing on the stovetop. A low and slow simmer? It serves up so many things. Soup. Satisfaction. Surprise. Sufficiency.

From my Thursday to yours, a blessing.

What are you stewing (on)?

Where is your stock (pile)?

How do you measure the measure of enough?



WEEK NINETEEN

Frost to grow on.

Greetings, friend!

Firsts and lasts and things without beginning or end. Winter blossoms, y'all. And the blessed frost that is surely a benediction. May hearts and minds and hands and feet – yours. mine. ours. theirs – keep searching and striving for beauty. May we keep sharing. As hounder Ezra keeps teaching me: so much is right under our noses. May there be time to smell and savor more than roses.

What are you sniffing out?

Why are you striving?

How are you savoring?



WEEK TWENTY

Getting started.

Greetings, friend!

And so it begins – again and again and again. As for me and my house, we’ll be in the garden. Forever and ever, amen.

What are you sorting?

Where are you see(d)ing?

Why are you preparing?

How are you beginning?





WEEK TWENTY-ONE

Room with a view.

Greetings, friend!

Some mornings find us greeting the day in beloved places that used to be home, too. Sun's up, y'all. As is this truth: that practices – and people – follow and find and form us – wherever we go.

*Where are your people
and places?*

What about your truths?

How do you greet each day?



WEEK TWENTY-TWO

Blest be the tie.

My grandfather recently asked my Dad for help with his tie. The tenderness of firsts and lasts and generations in between: breathtaking. beautiful. bittersweet. Forgetting is a whole and holy and hard thing. When hands no longer remember how, the heart steps in and steps up. It is a softening. There is more to come, surely—and also always today.

What are you remembering?

How are you forgetting?

For whom are you stepping up?

What about softening?



WEEK TWENTY-THREE

Make a wish.

Greetings, friend!

Wishing watching wandering waiting
wanting witnessing working walking
watering. Thursday – again and again.
Practice makes possible, y'all. Love
from my wondering to yours.

What do you wish for?

Who is your witness?

How is your practice?

If not now, then when?



WEEK TWENTY-FOUR

Practicing resurrection.

Greetings, friend!

In just a few days, at first light, I will head outside to mark the official start of my spring gardening season. There is miracle and magic and mystery and more in sowing mustard seeds on Resurrection Sunday.

I am reminded that practices humble and hopeful grow us from cradle to grave and beyond.

I am grateful for wild mustards flowering, showing me that it is almost time. Almost.

I am getting ready. Today and every day.

What are your markers of a coming season?

Where do you see and sow magic?

How are you, too, a miracle?



WEEK TWENTY-FIVE

Eggciting times.

Greetings, friend!

At long last and in perfect timing, a precious gift.

Meanwhile, bird biology is a whole thing. Of our six starter chickens? FOUR turned out to be roosters. FOUR.

Blessings on those who lay and those who leave and – always always always – on those who live and love no matter what. Deeply grateful for those joining in our chickening. For a village that shows up for roosters, too – we give endless and abundant thanks.

What surprises you? Why?

Where is your village?

Anyone missing?



WEEK TWENTY-SIX

Under my skin.

Greetings, friend!

Today's practice looked a little different. Some things are worth remembering – forever.

What will you endure?

For what purpose?

How does (im)permanence shape your being?



THIRD QUARTER

Spring



WEEK TWENTY-SEVEN

Dancing at dawn.

Greetings, friend!

“I like to rise when the sun she rises,
early in the morning. And I like to
hear them small birds singing, merrily
upon their lay-land. And hurrah
for the life of a country girl, and to
ramble in the new mown hay.”

What makes you rise up?

*How do rituals make your
world go round?*

When do you dance?





WEEK TWENTY-EIGHT

Jars and joys.

Greetings, friend!

Greasy beans and purple hull peas are in the ground. While seed and soil do their work, I am preparing new beds and tending young growth across the garden. Right on time, the last of last year's fruits have made it to the front of the shelves. As for me and Grandma's jars? We. Are. Ready. For you and for me and for us and for them. Won't you stop by? Any season's glory is surely worth sharing.

Where is your work?

How are you preparing?

*When will you be ready?
For what?*



WEEK TWENTY-NINE

Pass the peas.

Greetings, friend!

Spring showers bring May flowers?

Amen, and amen.

What is springing up for you?

Where are you flowering? How so?

How does it feel?





WEEK THIRTY

Sweet sojourner.

Greetings, friend!

A sweet traveler found me earlier this week. The littlest of these can be so many things: lucky, lovely, liberating—alive. May welcome sojourners keep coming along for the ride. May we count ourselves in that number.

Where are you traveling?

Who is on board?

How are you lucky?

When are you (most) alive?



WEEK THIRTY-ONE

Raised right, rinsed thrice.

Greetings, friend!

First mess of homegrown green goodness this year. From heart to hope to harvest, blessings on seasons at hand – yours, mine, ours, theirs. May that which we nurture grow all manner of things to share.



What is your heart seeding?

Where are you sowing blessings?

What is your hope harvesting?



WEEK THIRTY-TWO

Friends and flowers.

Greetings, friend!

Grandma's lilies bloomed this week. Lisa's moon flower, too. The daisies and sochan Sarah shared a few years ago are popping up everywhere. Dale and Erin's Jerusalem artichokes are being shy—surely they'll come up in their own time. Meanwhile, Tanya's Granny's sister-in-law's greasy beans are climbing high.

So many generations growing strong, and also always going back into the soil. Thank you for seeding and sharing with me.



Whose beauty and bounty surrounds you?

Where are others sowing into you?

How are you sharing?



WEEK THIRTY-THREE

There's no place like home.

Greetings, friend!

There's a walnut tree growing right off our front porch. It's not what I would have chosen— location and species aren't ideal— but the birds love it. Our feathered friends use it as a “waiting room” for the feeders that hang off the porch rafters. Humbling, hopeful, hard – how a home wants to be so many things. Like this spider web.

Where are you at home?

When are you humbled?

*How do you notice what you
cannot (yet) see?*

Tender, the things we
can't see until we walk
right into them. Eyes
open, friends? Hearts,
too? It's Thursday.
Love from my walk
to yours. Today and
every day.



WEEK THIRTY-FOUR

Sharing summer.

Greetings, friend!

Can one picture capture the fullness of a practice? Our household is once again blessed to have my sister's kiddo with us – three full weeks this summer!

What are we doing? Making hay while the sun shines! And also standing watch over harvests at hand and ever ahead. Surely, we are growing one another. Bless, but it is glorious.

Who is in your (extended) household?

How are you growing the next generation?

What does that look like?



WEEK THIRTY-FIVE

Way over yonder.

Greetings, friend!

How we rejoiced over yesterday's rain. And the rainbow? A double portion. Grateful for that which falls from and fills the skies. May that which finds you be a blessing – today and every day.

What makes you rejoice?

Where is your gratitude?

Why are you blessed?

How are you a blessing?



WEEK THIRTY-SIX Falling forward.

Greetings, friend!

It might not be Thursday, but that might not be the full measure. No matter the timing, a practice carries. Would you join me and my family in wishing this elder well? Grandpa Ford fell in his garden last weekend and is navigating the first few days of a long and hard recovery. Seasons, y'all. They keep right on coming. Me and my garden – and my precious grandfather – are some kind of ready. To grow. To go. To let go. And to grow some more.



What is tripping you up?

Where are you falling forward?

What about behind?

How are you recovering?



WEEK THIRTY-SEVEN

Being and becoming.

Greetings, friend!

Morning glory, as sun and seasoning transform so many things. From my walk to yours – a blossoming, a blessing, a becoming.

What are you transforming?

How are you being transformed?

Who are you becoming?



WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT

Ancestors among us.

Greetings, friend!

Barefoot beet picking in Grandpa's garden this morning. The bittersweet work of succession is sown into this season's harvest – yours. mine. ours. theirs. It is tender to bear and be and become, y'all. It is also time. Heading home to process a gracious and generations-deep bounty. And to check on gardens of my own.



What feels bittersweet?

Where are you heading?

When is your time?

What about theirs?



WEEK THIRTY-NINE

Deerly beloved.

Greetings, friend!

Yesterday's gardening companion. We stood and stared and shared in a long moment before stepping back into our days. Never alone, y'all. Not in the work of sowing nor sorrowing or sav(or)ing neither. May we keep finding ourselves quiet enough to notice those walking with and near and all around. May we keep looking—for you and for me and for us and for them.

What does your quiet hold?

Where are you (not) alone?

How are you walking?

With whom?



FOURTH QUARTER

Summer



WEEK FORTY

Bathing beauties.

Greetings, friend!

Feathers. Friends. Feathered friends. Signs following, y'all, in all four directions. To the under-foot and over-story and the blessed ever-enough. May all manner of welcome things keep finding you and me and us and them.

Where are you looking?

What are you glimpsing?

How are you reflecting?



WEEK FORTY-ONE

Turtle time.

Greetings, friend!

Turtle friend visits most evenings while I am blueberry picking. Have you ever heard a turtle? They're pretty quiet—the blueberries are, too. I keep following their lead. There's nothing quite like looking out and listening in for one another. Or noticing the steadfast, insistent approach of life. Of love.

Wishing you and me and us and them a harvest bountiful enough to share. And a quality of stillness honoring of kinship and care.

When are you still enough to listen?

What finds you in the quiet?



WEEK FORTY-TWO

Busy bees.

Greetings, friend!

Early mornings in Grandpa’s garden hold tender things – truth, trust, tomatoes. This mustard seed has been flowering for a while now. Soon, it will go to seed. Today, it is feeding ground for those who repay kindness with something even sweeter. Y’all. Holy ground and growth and goodness? Happening here and there and everywhere.

Where do you look for sweetness?

How about kindness?

What will your truths seed?



WEEK FORTY-THREE

Eternal return.

Greetings, friend!

I planted amaranth for the first time a few summers ago. Since then, it keeps showing up – in the driveway, at the edge of a bed, in the middle of the summer beans.

Sowing is surely something.

Self-seeding another.

Sometimes, my eyes get so busy looking for the fruits of my own labors that they overlook the lift and life and love of a voluntary return.

This amaranth will soon dry on the stalk before withering away. There's not enough to harvest and there's a teaching in each and every life cycle that takes us all the way – to the garden, to the ground, to the grave.

Anyway, plant-friend promises to be back next year. And for that, I give abundant thanks.

*What is showing up
in your life?*

*Anything returning,
right on schedule?*

*Where are you in
your own lifecycle?*

*When do you give
thanks?*



WEEK FORTY-FOUR

Everyday, everywhere holy.

Greetings, friend!

Late season sweetness as we wind down our annual summer staycation. Grateful for days measured in morning porch sits, afternoon naps, and the deliciousness of riding around with bare feet on the dash. “Beneath every there is a here?” It is good to be home.

What does summer taste like to you?

Where do you find sweet joys?

When will you rest?



WEEK FORTY-FIVE

Bellies, buckets, berries.

Greetings, friend!

Before our time here, someone long gone planted blueberry bushes at the top of the drive. For the past several years, the bushes have produced a gracious plenty – just the right amount to enjoy over the summer.

This year? Something more bewildering more bountiful more beautiful is happening. While sufficiency is always enough, abundance is the only word that captures the umpteen gallon freezer bags of berries put up for another season.

I’m still unsure what to make of this unexpected surplus. It is the sweetest grace and most welcome surprise. We surely have far more than our household could ever eat and the bushes are preaching the holy gospel of sharing. Would you stop in for a visit? We’ll have pie ready and waiting.

Where are you finding surplus?

Is it surprising?

What makes for enough to share?



WEEK FORTY-SIX

In the blink of an eye.

Greetings, friend!

You might remember that Ezra spent a few months without his sight earlier this year. That's a story for another day, but it was a scary time made less so by the skilled hands and huge heart of veterinary ophthalmologist Dr. Petra Lackner.

When I first met Dr. Lackner, in the panicked early days of Ezra's blindness, I immediately heard an unmistakably East German accent. You might remember that one of my chapters sits in that former country, too—yet another story for yet another day, but there was joy in our meeting.

Some mercies find us when we need them most. How fortunate we were to cross paths with Dr. Lackner who brilliantly figured out an improbably rare diagnosis. She did not make empty promises. There were no guarantees. And yet, several months later, Ezra regained just enough of his vision to reclaim most of his beloved routines.

Why remember this particular darkness now come and gone? For all the reasons, friends, including this one:

Dr. Lackner was diagnosed with late-stage cancer as Ezra was almost back to his new normal. On what would be our final visit, I brought flowers as East Germans do. We talked about our gardens and our mothers. We celebrated her resounding success with Ezra's eyes. I said thank you over and over and over again—in all the languages. We acknowledged the likelihood that we would not meet again.

And we did not.

I have been calling the animal hospital every few weeks to ask about Dr. Lackner. When I called in yesterday? The receptionist let me know that she died a few days ago.

It is tender to lose those who aren't really ours at all. I did not know Dr. Lackner personally, but she helped our blind dog to see. She will always be the person who knew just what to do when we did not. We miss her in ways that are almost surprising. There is grief in her passing. It is profound.

For moments and seasons of connection – however fleeting – a word and a witness. For a healer named Petra Lackner, I give thanks. Ezra does, too.

May her memory be a blessing.

Whose memory are you holding close?

Whom are you grieving?

Where are your ancestors?

When will you become one?



WEEK FORTY-SEVEN

All the days of my life.

Greetings, friend!

Where is life and love and light finding me in this season?
Sometimes, in the sprouting seed. Often, in the dawning day.
Always in the tending of that which grows – you. me. us. them.

What are your futures?

Are you fallowing (yet)?

*Anything disappearing into
the morning fog?*

Could it be you?

I am humbled by those
watching and walking and
witnessing as a coming
frost bears down. Not yet,
but soon – a fallowing. May
we keep being and making
ready. Surely, goodness and
mercy will follow.



WEEK FORTY-EIGHT

Ready?

Greetings, friend!

With heavy rain falling and so. much. more in the forecast, I'm claiming Thursday a bit early. Every day is a great day to make ready, y'all. Also always this one.

Love and light to those navigating storms big, small, proverbial, and otherwise. Catch you on the other side?
May safe passage by yours and mine and ours.
And theirs, friends. May it be theirs, too.

How do you prepare for the unknown?

*When will you be ready?
For what? And why?*



WEEK FORTY-NINE

The sisterhood.

Greetings, friend!

In an ongoing season of almost-incomprehensible human-to-human harm, these Three Sisters remind me of teachings with roots and branches. However you are navigating this Thursday, may a kind of growing and grieving and giving and grappling remember that which is yours and mine and ours – and also always theirs.

How are you (becoming) human(e)?

What are you learning from the worlds you inhabit and share?

When will circles include yours and mine and ours and also always theirs?





WEEK FIFTY

Last call for tomatoes.

Greetings, friend!

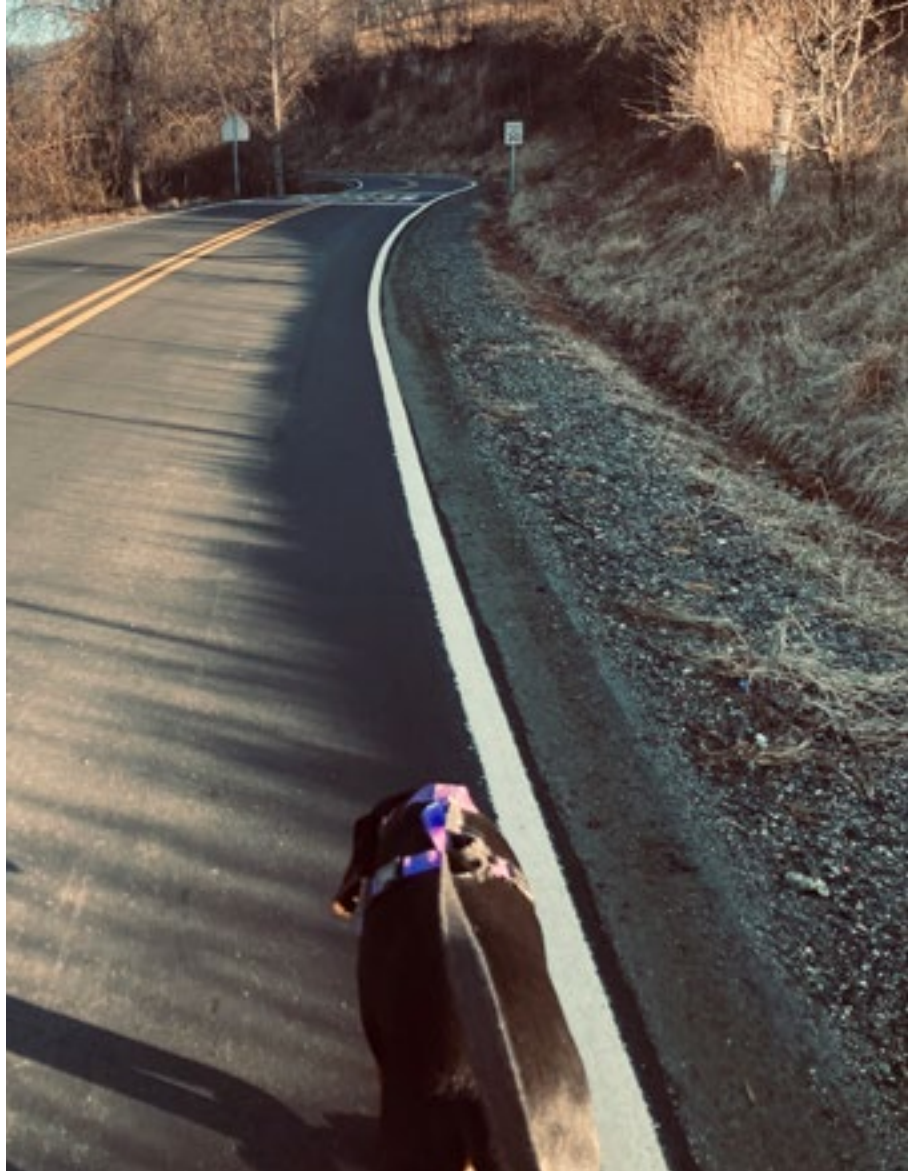
A new season is on her way. This time of year can seem some kind of final – with the falling and furrowing and feeling and fallowing. Even so, it is not forever. I am grateful for seasons that teach so many things – like comings and goings, and a certain return come spring. Meanwhile, the last of the summer light is glorious. It shines brightest in the kitchen where windowsill tomatoes are ripening still.

May lasts and firsts keep finding you, too. It's almost time to begin again.

What is ripening on your sills? And in your soul?

Where are things beginning to turn?

Can you still see the light?



WEEK FIFTY-ONE

Sharing the road.

Greetings, friend!

My favorite days begin just like this: on a long walk across back roads with best boy Ezra. I've always been a walker and love to see and be seen on foot. Ezra does, too, especially as he regularly enjoys treats at local businesses we pass on our way through town.

Sharing any road takes some doing. Pedestrians and country drivers aren't always the best match and it's not my goal to take anyone by surprise. But five plus years of best practice later? People are looking (out) for me and for this precious hounder. I take care to keep looking and listening and learning, too.

When cars pass us in either direction, I head to the shoulder. I stop walking. Ezra sits. And we smile and wave.

What roads are you traveling?

Anyone you stop for along the way?

How do strangers become friends?

Every. Single. Time.

Isn't it joyful that almost everyone slows a smidge, moves over a bit, and waves back, even just a lifted finger or two? Not to mention postman Dennis who throws treats out the mail van window for Ezra. As for those who miss me and get too close for comfort as they speed by?

Grace for today and bright hope for tomorrow.



WEEK FIFTY-TWO

Back to the top.

Greetings, friend!

Cheers to another year of promise and possibility and pain and purpose and perseverance and pitfall and prosperity and potential and poverty and plenty and piety and perspective and passion and parsing and pursuing and problem-sleuthing and planting and so. many. peas.

Just enough? Surely, a worthy metric. Sending love for beginning—again and again and again. I'll be back tomorrow, and next week, and next month, and next year, and the next, too. Until then and always, peace be with you—and all the other Ps too.

What is the measure of a year?

What about a lifetime?

Where is your practice taking you?

Would you bring me along, too?

Walk With Me?

A Year in Word and Wonder

MEREDITH DOSTER