

Stephanie Paulsell: Good morning, and welcome to morning prayers. Would you stand and join with me in responsive reading number 100, in the slim black book in your pew, on page 50, number 100.

Stephanie Paulsell: May all lands be joyful before you, oh God, serve you with gladness and come before your presence with a song.

Congregation: For we know that you are God. You yourself have made us, and we are yours. We are the people, and the sheep of your pasture.

Stephanie Paulsell: We shall enter your gates with thanksgiving, go into your courts with praise, give thanks to you and call upon your name.

Congregation: For you are good. Your mercy is everlasting, and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

Chior: (singing)

Sienna Lies: I'd like to start this morning with a liturgy by Douglas McKelvey. "Meet me, O Christ, in this stillness of morning. Move me, O Spirit, to quiet my heart. Mend me, O Father, from yesterday's harms. From the discord's of yesterday, resurrect my peace. From the discouragement of yesterday, resurrect my hope. From the weariness of yesterday, resurrect my strength. From the doubts of yesterday, resurrect my faith. And from the wounds of yesterday, resurrect my love. Let me enter this new day, aware of my need, and awake to your grace, O Lord. Amen."

Sienna Lies: So, I want to start today by giving thanks to Stephanie and the Memorial Church for inviting me to join you. I'm so honored to be here before you on this first week of Advent, and during this time as the church concludes a semester focused on very important theme of pilgrimage. Last time I was here, I spoke about the lessons that I learned walking the Camino Santiago, a pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint James, the Apostle and Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Sienna Lies: I first walked there in 2010, and stayed there for about five years, continuing my own work along the way. But instead of sharing those lessons that I learned on my work and the many walks I did since, I want to talk about the pilgrimage that we all are on. The pilgrimage that we're on here, and in this season. Technically defined, a pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place. In Spain, that sacred place is Santiago. You walk more than a thousand kilometers to reach that place, this destination. And once you're there, I can testify that you are overcome with emotion, with accomplishment, and a rawness that our daily lives don't allow us to always achieve.

Sienna Lies: But for a pilgrimage, you don't need to go to Spain, you don't need to go to Mecca. You don't need to go around the Island of Kumano Kodo in Japan, or the Abraham Path in the Middle East. The pilgrims way is everywhere. It is here.

When you walk outside the doors of this chapel, of this church, you will find yourself on the Camino, your Camino. On my own first walk, I met people facing unimaginable grief. A young man who wouldn't talk to anybody. We learned he had just lost his fiancé to suicide days before his wedding. We then understood why he was silent.

Sienna Lies: I met only children, like myself, facing the extinction of their family. We didn't understand why they would weep when they saw mothers and sons walking together, an experience they would never be able to have again. We met individuals facing disease hoping for a miracle, and you didn't quite understand how this simple action of walking was an accomplishment, or a promise. Those individuals are right outside this church. Every step towards Santiago, was a step in the direction of one's miracle, one's relief.

Sienna Lies: But the people that traveled to Santiago were not so different from those of us sitting here. They are us. They're very much us. And this is the lesson for this Advent, and holiday season. More than any other lesson I learned on that Camino, is the respect of the journey of others, is the most important and critical in our age. As a daughter, a learner, politician, teacher, environmentalist, anything. We have to open our eyes to recognize the journey of others.

Sienna Lies: If I can leave you with one thing today, it is to keep your eyes open in the same way that we would admire the beauty of every person, and every message that seemed to magically present itself as we walked on that long journey to Compostela. I challenge you to do the same, to see the journey of those around you. Passion and empathy allow us to experience a depth of love for the other peer that I continue myself to strive for and experience on the walk, the literal one that I'm on today.

Sienna Lies: Once you become in sync with those around you, you will begin to see how we are all on that same path of pilgrimage. And this revelation I believe will allow us to truly start change, movement and save the world. Simple but true. And that's the charge I have for you today, and one that I continue to challenge myself to live by. This season and beyond. Thank you. For a final reading. I want to share with you a reflection by Oriah, the Mountain Dreamer.

Sienna Lies: "It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing. It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you'll risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive. It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals, or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain. I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it, fade it, or fix it. I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness, and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, to be realistic, to remember the limitations of being human. It

doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself. If you can bear the accusation of betrayal, but not betray your own soul. If you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy. I want to know if you can see beauty, even when it is not pretty every day. And if you can source your own life from its presence. I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand at the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, "Yes."

Sienna Lies: It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone and do what needs to be done to feed the children. It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back."

Sienna Lies: Thank you. If you'll please join me in the Lord's prayer, which you'll find on the back of this program.

Sienna Lies: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Stephanie Paulsell: Would you stand for our hymn, number 103, Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence? Number 103.

Congregation: (singing)

Stephanie Paulsell: Sienna, we're so grateful to you for inviting us onto the Camino that is all around us, and helping us feel the claim of others' journeys on her own. Thank you so much. We invite you downstairs to Memchurch cafe for coffee and cookies and fellowship following this service. Hope you can join us. And now may the movement of God's Spirit awaken our imaginations, enliven our senses, and lead us into life. Amen.