

# Flourishing as Friends of Jesus (who really like jazz!)

Some Notes for the Reflection on March 1, 2017



Here are the words that attracted by attention most  
in the last song that Darlene sang:

*I believe in the best of you  
Together we will see life through  
No matter what may come our way  
I'll walk beside you all the way*

At the heart of the flourishing that the Gospel offers  
is this affirmation that God, in Jesus Christ, is our friend,  
a faithful and true friend like no other,  
a steadfast and enduring friend with no peer.

Most of us can't handle that kind of friendship when it's first offered.

We're all like the prodigal son.

We desperately want it, long for it, hunger and thirst after it.

But we are convinced that we are not worthy of it.

After all, we are mere dust and ashes.

We came from dust and will return to dust.

Who are we to deserve this depth of love and acceptance?

But that's the provocative promise of the Christian faith.

You have already been accepted as a beloved friend of God.

You do come from dust, but that dust has been inspired  
by the life-giving breath of God.

You are filled with the *ruach* that initiates and sustains all of creation.

It's the energy of a life-giving friendship with God  
will never leave you.

That's what I see through these beautiful words.

*I believe Christian thinking and social witness  
can be understood analogically with jazz music.  
Like jazz, Christianity is a dramatic and musical  
performance. Like jazz, Christian thinking and  
acting are improvisational, creative, and  
hopefully forward looking. Like jazz, they  
exemplify a dynamic of constraint and possibility.  
Constrained by the norm of God's Word,  
Christians seek to creatively engage their world  
in light of the Word. In their work and witness,  
Christians use the materials at and – principally  
the language and example of the prophets and  
Jesus in the context of their life – to creatively riff  
for justice, love, and shalom in the present and  
thereby open us a new future.*

Peter Goodwin Heltzel, *Resurrection City: A Theology of  
Improvisation* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Wm. B.  
Eerdmans, 2012), p.21

