

Bodies at worship (Palm/Passion B) (*Philippians 2:5-11*)

Every knee shall bow, even our knees.

by [Katherine Willis Pershey](#)

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The *kenosis* hymn in Philippians moves from creed to vision, foretelling a time when the one who was buried in shame is exalted in glory.

Cradled within the hymn is the essential Christian story. It is a canticle of power—the power of humility and love and compassion. It is a story of God reaching out to a wayward creation—not in anger or judgment but in grace and forgiveness. And it is a vision of profound hope, in which all traces of violence and cruelty and evil are healed and the relationship between God and humankind is finally restored.

This text is about the role of Jesus Christ in God's agenda to redeem a broken world. But biblical readers are given a significant role as well. We are part of the vision of joyful worship. Every knee will bend, including *our* knees. Every tongue will confess, including *our* tongues. We are counted in that choir.

After a year of worshiping in diaspora, from the comfort of our couches, this vision of profoundly communal and physically demanding worship is especially poignant. When I follow along with my church's pre-recorded worship, I don't so much as stand for the doxology, choosing to "rise in spirit" rather than remove the cat from my lap.

But even before the pandemic, I've pondered the lack of physicality of worship in many Protestant traditions. Our primary postures for worship are sitting and standing; kneeling is a distant third. (And yet, despite the relatively undemanding nature of our worship, many churches still manage to make it inaccessible to people

with disabilities on account of unwelcoming ecclesiastical architecture.)

Like droves of other westerners, I found what I was missing on a yoga mat. Though the practice found in the studios dotting strip malls across America is often stripped of its traditional spiritual context, even the most diluted classes begin with an invitation to set an intention. As often as not, my intention is to worship God with body, mind, and spirit.

Each physical posture becomes an expression of devotion. As I lower myself into a child's pose, I remember that in Christ, God took on human form. As I extend my arms and expand my heart for star pose, the doxology spontaneously erupts from deep within me. And as my knee bends for a kneeling crescent lunge, I imagine doing so at the name of Jesus, alongside a heavenly host of saints and sinners stunned by the exquisite glory of God.