

Those Who Are Planted in the Lord

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I went with my friends to the church, Episcopal, she joined years ago
when the Mennonites threatened to drive her completely nuts.

You have to understand about Pennsylvania, she says. Our people
have had centuries to master passive aggression. Oh, but that's

another story. This church is all old stone and stained glass,
a feast for the senses, and I'm far from home. So this is the story:

I've never been to an Episcopal service, but I'm game. J. says
it's sad, but since the priest left they don't have incense most weeks.

But there are bells, and the organist plays each verse slower than
the last, as in the church of my youth. The bulletin, ten pages long,

includes every word spoken except the sermon, which leans heavily
on Horton and the Whos. The priest has a sonorous voice and assures us

that a small sound can make a difference. I can only agree.
We kneel twice, get up. When it comes time for communion,

all baptized Christians are invited so I join the line behind a man
and his three young sons. I am given a cracker: *the body of Christ*.

I dip it in the wine, taste red on my tongue as I walk back,
and my friends wait to let me take my seat again.

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There are lines from Psalm 92,

*Those who are planted in the Lord
shall flourish in the courts of our God,
They shall still bear fruit in old age;
they shall be green and succulent.*

J.'s parents are old and declining, P.'s are older still.
They lived good lives, but that doesn't make it easy.

We're all of us feeling unsteady ourselves,
counting out aches and years to retirement,

counting up the pills, testing hips and knees,
figuring out how lucky we stand to be.

Green and succulent. Bearing fruit. Let it be so.