

Benediction

Dayna Patterson

Here's the truth: My faith remains
tepid. Lukewarm as summer rain.

Spew-worthy. A compass in fragments, I saved

pieces: base plate, arrow, needle.
Reassembly is beyond me. Millennia ago,

I stood on a street corner & thumped

my brick of scripture. Made my mouth
a spout. A megaphone. In the forest of now

there are a thousand paths

with no signs. Where is the boat launch? Where the islands
cleaving mist? My feet fall

led by whim, by tug. I try

anyway. What I can't name
I name new, sift

old silt for any speck

that glitters. What shines
in the palm: bird call, blue eggshell.

A breast, handcup of milk. God

has lived in a stone house
hewn by men's hands

for so long. I seek

entrance to earthen chambers, mounds
that swallow solstice. There I see them,

Elohim, female & male, but choose

her: Mother, the hem
of her robe a garment

I'd like to touch: her face

my mother's face, her eyes
my daughters' eyes. I want a god

soft as dough, yeasty, caught in a wooden bowl

at the edge of dawn's field, rising
on my stove. But, oh—if there's anything

I can expressly say *I know*, it's this: I bear witness

to my penchant for bitter soil,
barren figs. Tending my goats, I make a house

of doubt. I build sanctuaries

of sand, altars to unknowing,
cover them with my thoughts'

intricate lace, upon which I place a nest,

a cradle. And yet, I confess I believe
this world can't be healed, its bleeding

staunched, unless

we listen
to midwives who for ages

have been coaxing forth

from their own minds our hidden
Mother. So let's

ready salves, unguents, salt & muslin for her

urgent redelivery, what could be
this earth-redeeming,

salvific Mother-work.

You, Dear Reader, could be a midwife.
Who am I to say? Maybe

you already are

massaging perineum with sunflower oil,
hands bracing her crown.