

Becoming

(John 1:14)

J. BARRIE SHEPHERD

This flesh you bear so flagrantly today
will wear you down across the weary years
replete with tears and sudden terrors
leading to a fearful steep, crossed sticks,
tossed stones, and shattered bones,
to bear an everlasting name that never hurts
nor utters condemnation.

This too, that clings and wrinkles
with the wear and tearing of the days and decades,
for all its geologic faults and crannies,
climbs toward another hilltop where the dark descends,
all veils are ripped apart and, with a gasp,
compassion is reborn across the thighs
of history with all its hurting.

[J. Barrie Shepherd, before retiring, served as head of staff at The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York and also at The Swarthmore Presbyterian Church. He is the author of twelve books, hundreds of published poems, and has delivered the Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale and the William Belden Noble Lecture at Harvard.]