Namibia Poems and Paintings

Poems by Jim Blackburn, Art by Isabelle Scurry Chapman

From September 25, 2025, until October 11, 2025, Jim Blackburn, Garland Kerr, Isabelle Chapman, John Chapman, Paula Whitney and Dyann Blaine travelled to Namibia from South Africa and then across Namibia in two vehicles. The poems and paintings begin with our group of six mongooses led through Jo'berg Airport by lead mongoose Paula. We landed in Windhoek and were greeted by rain and also by Mari, Paula's good friend as well as Magret and Susi. From there, we went southwest into the desert to see the red sand dunes and dead trees on the dried lake bottom, the classic Namibia image at a place called Sossusvlei which means dead marsh. On the way, we stopped at the Valley of a Thousand Hills and Solitaire which was a real treat. And then after a night in Desert Hills, perhaps the classiest overnight place of the trip, we headed to the coast to Wlotzkasbaken (locally called Flatska phonetically) to Paula's friend Mari's wonderful home that she shares with Tanya. It is hard to describe this beachfront community or the artistic home that Mari has built, but it was wonderful.

After two days, we then drove up the Skeleton Coast where we met the seal colony at Cape Cross and the brown hyena in Terrace Bay which at the end of the Skeleton Coast road on the map. Then we went inland and northeast, eventually arriving at Etosha National Park after two nights along the way, both places with beautiful vistas and lots of rocks. Etosha was wonderful game-watching, and then back down to Mari's place on the coast. There we saw flamingos and learned more about the desert and met Salume'. And then Tanya

and Mari took us back to Windhoek with a last night outdoor dinner that was superb. It was a fabulous trip that hopefully has been captured by these images and poems. By the way, the image accompanying the poem "Back at Mari's" is a depiction of a part of the floor of her home. Hope you enjoy this tribute to Namibia and fun journeys. Blackburn

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Lead Mongoose

Packing to depart Morukuru
On a day that promises rain.

Out the window, I see motion,
Fur flowing like water,
The collective of banded mongooses
Moving alongside our room and within rocks
At the edge of the cleared pathway,
Ten furry bodies scurrying, constantly moving,
Some dashing ahead, some digging,
All flowing in a direction
When a sound causes all to rise up and search,
Standing on back legs like meercats,
Heads alert in the direction of the sound,
And then the leader sends them back
To their business.

Now at the Jo'Berg airport,
Racing inside, looking at signs,
Heads alert on a swivel,
Searching for direction,
Pulling bags,
Dashing for the bathroom,
Looking for check-in,
Looking for Paula, the mongoose leader,
Who points one direction to some,

Another to others, and we scurry about
Until we are checked in and then dash
Down the corridor into international departures,
Duty-free shopping shining like a million grubs
For our small collective moving down the corridor.

And like the banded collective in the wild,
Our leader kinda restores order,
Bringing calm, finding the diner,
Delivering full bellies
For the flight to Namibia.

So welcome to Earth Church,
Pull yourself up a pew,
We all need a leader
For the mongoose in you.

Smelling The Earth

We have arrived in Namibia,
Greeted by the
Rain
That seldom falls,
Rain
Welcomed as a long-lost friend,
Life giving
Rain

In a place
Where life is constantly on edge,
A place you either love
Or hate
For there is no room here
For indecision.

At check-in the
Rain
Comes again,
Pounding the earth that is dry
And welcoming,
The Earth embracing the
Rain,
Hugging it to its bosom
As would a mother her child,
Rain
That means life in this country
That is harsh,
Rain
That means survival in this place
That you either love or hate
For there is no room
For indecision.

And then at our lodging,
The greeting committee
Of Marie and Susie and Margaret,

Providing arrival comfort,
Food and drink and warmth,
New friends up from the coast,
And Margaret asks about the
Rain,
Can smell the Earth responding to the
Rain
And we all take a deep breath
And inhale the scent of the Earth
And celebrate the
Rain
And the Earth
That we can smell.

So welcome the Earth Church
Where the desert's your pew
Here you can smell the Earth
When the rain comes anew.

Valley of a Thousand Hills

Driving from Windhoek on C26,
Transiting from pavement to gravel,
Gravel that led us from beautiful grasslands
To less and then to virtually no grass
Along a road where the washboard
Became more and more prominent,
Moving deeper toward the desert,

Moving toward our destiny for the
Next few days if not for life as we turn
Into the even more difficult road to
Valley of a Thousand Hills.

The sunrise comes in strong,
A penetrating fireball in a
Blue sky and yellow-brown landscape
That in yesterday's sunset showed the
Barest hint of green from shoots
Emboldened by the short gift of rain,
A gift not in evidence today when no
Clouds can be seen.

The Valley is pockmarked by
What they call hills,
Clearly different from the mountains
Nearby,
Neighbors looking strong and brown
Across the plain of small hillocks
That catch the light and toss shadows,
View changing, impression changing
With each alteration of the sun's angle.

No rocks can be seen amongst the hillocks
In a place my geophysicist friend Dr. Clark
Would love, a place where the
Rocks once moved and where wavy

Lines are the dominant feature within
The rocks where what must have been
A seabed rose up toward the sky,
The Earth roaring that it was and remains
Alive.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
And watch the Earth
Reveal itself to you.

The Quiver Tree

The tree stands out in a landscape
With few trees,
A type of aloe that grows in the desert,
A tree named for the use of its hollowed

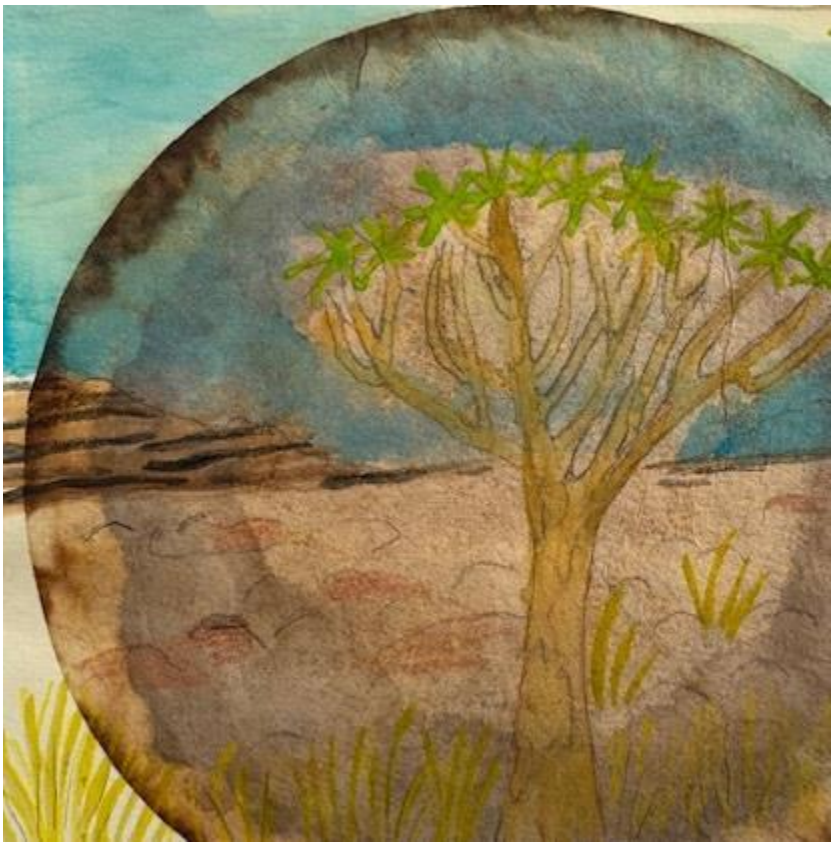
Bark for quivers for arrows,
A tree that reached out and touched my soul,
A gentle touch, a greeting
From a fellow inhabitant of the Earth,
A touch that communicated a common
Bond shared by us all,
A bond based on the Earth and its
Ability to create, to make,
And to sustain us all.

The quiver tree is one with the dry,
The absence of water not an impediment
But simply the way it is,
The tree taking what is given
And asking no more,
Conveying its contentment to me,
One Earthling speaking to another
About the way that life is
On this beautiful planet,
A planet of variety, fabulous variety,
Variety that makes me smile
As I see more and more
Never seen before by my eyes
That are full and feasting.

The quiver tree and I part,
Both richer for the exchange
That let us both share our views

Of the wonder of the Earth,
Of the fabulous nature of life on Earth,
Of the wonderful ability of beings
Of different types to reach out and
Touch the soul of each other,
As we did in the Valley of the Thousand Hills
In Namibia.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
Here we greet other beings
And talk with them too.



Solitaire

Sitting at the Solitaire Lodge
Looking out on the garden of cactus.

And we thought the road was bad
From Windhoek to Thousand Hills,
But no – we had no idea how bad
The road could become,
100 kilometers of washboards punctuated by
Rises in the road that concealed the cars
Returning from Solitaire which is the
Place where all travelers converge,
The crossroads, the nexus, the place
To be.

And what a road trip,
The ostrich dashing
Before Paula's Land Rover,
Perhaps a near miss
But not really as Paula
Saw It coming and
Slowed for the striding ostrich,
A scene not seen before,
Not your normal Texas road experience,
A bonus along with Oryx and Springbok
And the Quiver Trees.

And then Solitaire,
The one and only stop,
The jumping off place for the desert
With its red dunes and chiseled trees,
The place like the bar scene
From Star Wars where all travelers come
Before departure,
Traffic constant,
Faces new and changing,
Expressions varied but all intent,
Off to the desert scene tomorrow.

So welcome To Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
The service here in Solitaire
Is just right for you.

Ghost Water of Sossusvlei

The fossil trees reach out to me,
Testimony to what a changing climate
Can do,
The trees now dead for over 900 years,
Dead from a change in the rain,
Dead from a change in the river,
The area now called “Deadvlei”
For dead marsh,
Deaths that are predictive of our future

‘Less we act soon.

The trees rise out of a water body
Long since departed,
Sedimentary layers filled with
The ghosts of water that once lived here,
Ghosts that can be seen dancing
Above the hardened mud,
Mud left behind
When the marsh died.

And listen – open your ears –
For these water ghosts
Have much to say about our current
Human condition,
About how what we are doing is voluntary,
About how what is now happening is within
Our control,
Unlike their situation which was simply
The Earth making adjustments,
A situation we can avoid
If we could only find the will
To act in our own best interest.

And I look up and see the ghosts
Now climbing the red sand hills that
Surround and impound the ghost water
Where the grove of dead trees lives on

As it has for 900 years,
Dead trees trying to tell us
Something important,
Water ghosts trying to gain our
Attention,
But are we too busy to listen?
Are we too busy to hear?
Are we too busy to save ourselves?
Too busy to hear the ghosts of the water
And the spirits of the dead trees speaking
Amidst the majestic red sand dunes
Of Namibia.

So welcome to Earth Church
Come and pull up a pew
Here we have some guest speakers
To speak of climate with you.

The Namibian Coast

The desert is brown and yellow and black,
The vegetation sparse and responding to a lack
Of rainfall suitable to grow most anything,
And soil too sandy for most plants to cling.

It gets drier and sandier as you approach the coast,
The desert environment a most reluctant host,
But then you see the dunes up ahead,
Dunes that are brown instead of red.

And beyond the brown appears the blue,
And the ocean sings it song to you,
A song that makes you want to jump,
A song that creates the throat with a lump.

There's water there but no drink for you,
But it's oh so beautiful with its blue hue,
And the gulls fly together in a small flock,
And there's fish galore at the local dock.

This ocean is cold as Antarctica is near,
A powerful force that wise men fear
Yet it's oh so rich and full of living,
A desert so lean, an ocean so giving.

The beach is sand with rocks and shells
And kelp placed there by ocean swells,
And oh such a place to wander the beach,
It seems like heaven is within reach.

Yet this seems an ocean full of mystery
The fog slips in, the feeling misty,
The ying and yang of the daily tides,
The seals on the waves, taking their rides.

Perhaps it's the contrast of desert and coast
That makes this place seem like the most

Interesting place I've lately encountered,
Subtle and sublime, a place to be counted.

So welcome to Earth Church
Here the beach is your pew
And this place in Namibia
Has much to show you.

Mari's Castle

There's an artist's house on the Namibian coast
Whose owner is not one likely to boast
But it's spectacular beyond my wildest imagination
A source of fantasy, a source of fascination.

Whale bones define the property line
With ocean artifacts old and fine
A horse sculpted from the wood that drifts
A horde of pieces of nature's gifts.

The color's like a rainbow on a sunny day,
Reflecting the sun, showing the way,
To live a life where creativity's in charge
Where statements are made, sure and large.

And inside the character only increases
With plenty of nooks and innovative creases
Without a doubt it will your mind astound
Many jewels lie waiting to be found.

And then up the stairs even more awaits
It's a stairway to heaven with open gates
For upstairs is a library against one wall
With an open view that is sure to enthrall.

And there's art strewn around like a castoff thing
Beautiful works that make my heart sing
And a sculpted rock with a head within
For my mind, a challenge, for my soul a win.

And this is a house filled with love and fun
Where all the pieces are merged as one
A work of art that lives and breathes
A home, a site, a place that pleases.

And there is a moral to this Namibian piece
Where creativity reigns, there is peace,
And peace is needed in the world today
And we will survive, somehow, some way.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
We come to Mari's castle
To renew the spirit in you.

The Welwitschia

We went to see the Welwitschia today,
A plant that had a lot to say
About the way of life in the desert dry
And about how time can really fly.

This plant's over 1500 years old
An amazing age where it's dry and cold
Where the wind blows hard and water is short
It's life was no holiday, no desert resort.

In the car our bets were placed with glee
On just how tall this plant would be
We were driving a long time to see this tree
Whose old age defied the desert ecology.

But this was no tree we soon learned
But an aloe-like being that's a bit sunburned
With architecture like an alien being
What a strange organism we were seeing.

And then the Welwitschia spoke to me
Sharing some info from its history
It said a long life requires good design
And the right temperament – you cannot resign.

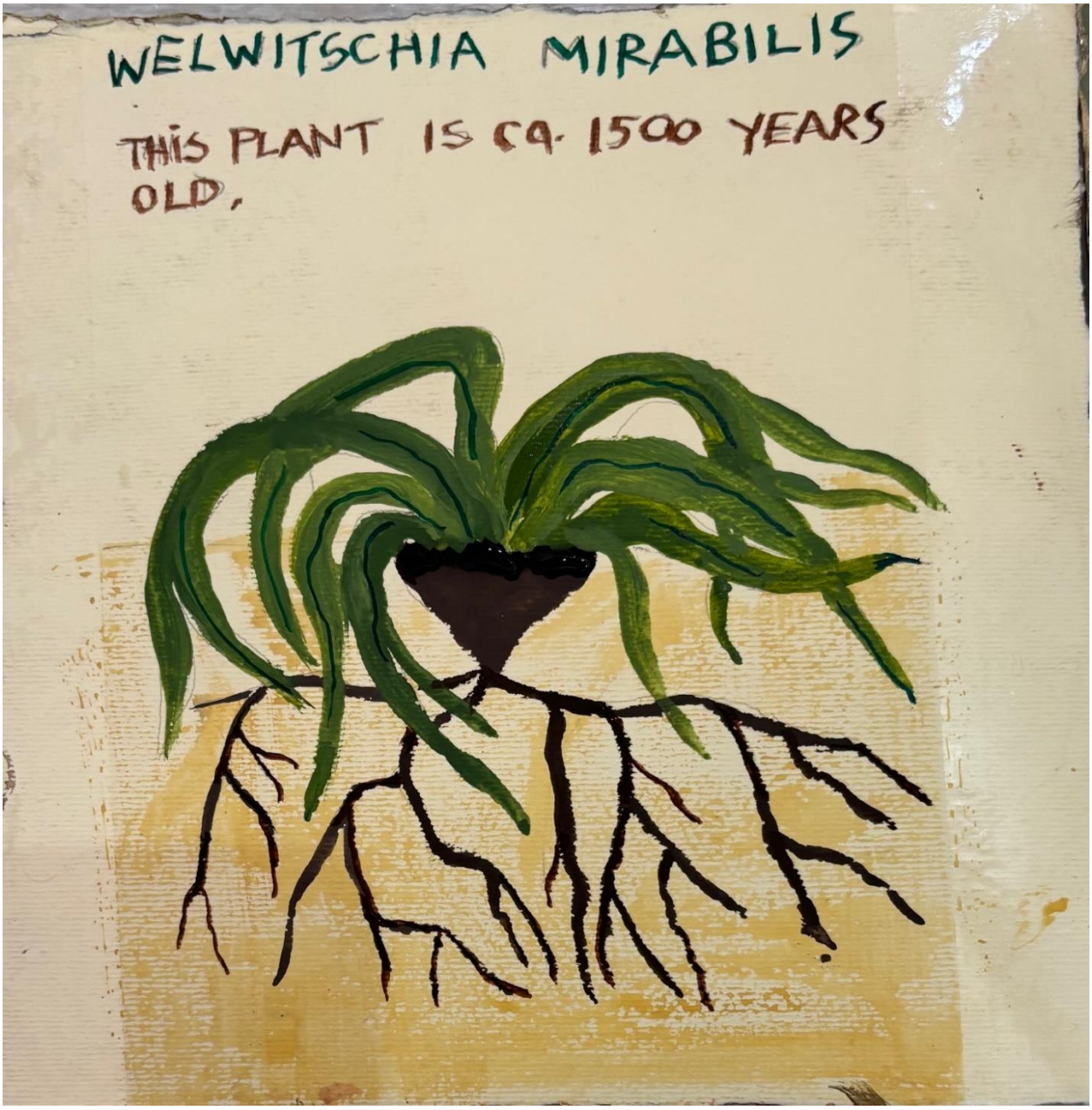
For a good design, he pointed underground
And much of this plant there can be found
For its roots are a large part of its mass
For hydro-efficiency it's the top of its class.

And this plant told me that life is a gift
But you must conserve and exercise thrift
Nothing should be wasted that touches your space

And to be excessive is way off base.

No doubt about it – it had much to say
About how to better live life today
Our sustainable thinking we should greatly expand
And we might increase our projected lifespan.

So welcome to Earth Church
Come and sit in your pew
And listen to the Welitschia
Explain life to you.



The Seal Colony

On the Skeleton Coast road we saw the sign
For a seal colony adventure next to the brine
That was being mined to bring forth salt
So we turned at the spot and came to a halt.

On opening the doors we were hit with the smell
And I'll add that the sounds were disquieting as well,
Grunts and snorts rising from behind the fence
And we found an adventure not repeated since.

Behind the fence the bodies were spread
Layin' here and there as if they were dead
But then they would grunt and roll on over
This was only the beginnin' we'd discover.

From the boardwalk the colony did not disappoint
Seals were covering the entire rocky point
Seals were everywhere you could see
On the land, in the water, seal ecstasy.

Some were feeding and some were tussling
And down to the water the young were hustling
And then some would come back in from fishing
And most seemed to be sleeping, snoring and dreaming.

And out in the water was a large congregation
It looked to me like a seal celebration,
A couple a hundred just floating and flippering
And beyond that group individuals were fishing.

Never have I seen so many seals
A wonderful scene that gave me chills

Such a fabulous assembly of living beings
But oh the smell of pooping and peeing.

I hadn't expected so many fur seals
But that's just the way that Namibia feels,
Miles of what seems like nothing to me
And then an explosion that's wonderful to see.

Perhaps that is life in a singular view
There is so much wonder not visible to you
Until one moment you open your eyes
And then what you see is guaranteed to surprise.

So welcome to Earth Church
Here Namibia is your pew
And make room for the seal
That has a grunt just for you.

The Skeleton Coast

The hyena owns the night on the Skeleton Coast,
Two hundred miles of drama that is simply the most,
A place that is known for the skeletons of boats,
The sea always angry - attacking what floats,
Boats that have lain against the beach,

Some broken by the rocks within the reach,
A coast of amethysts and lovely diamonds
That make sane people chase vague horizons,
Chasing myths of wealth and what could be,
If only, if only, if only it could be. . .

If only it would rain, for it is dry,
If only plants would grow kinda' high,
If only the fog would go away,
If only the wind would not blow today,
If only the ship would not run aground,
If only that diamond I had found,
If only, if only, if only.

But the sun again rises and reveals
The subtlety of the desert and how it feels,
The beauty of the succulent that fights the sun,
The purple and pink of the light having fun.
The reflection bouncing back from the hills,
The beauty of the rocks and of the rills,
And don't forget fish,
As many as you wish
A coast of dreams that sometimes come true,
A coast overlooked by those without a clue.

Though looking different the ocean and desert
Both have salvation without effort,
For the lion moves from behind the dune,

Chasing the springbok to its ruin,
And the seals feed daily on the sea's wealth,
Swimming so fast, such grace, such stealth,
Both living where you thought they could not,
But have no doubt, you're in a spot.
Where the night belongs to the hyena brown
With hips thrown down and a nasty frown
As it howls and yips outside your room
Good luck waiting for your sleep to resume.
But out here on the Skeleton Coast
I'm living life to the uttermost,
I take a deep breath – glad I'm alive
As I watch the hyena find a way to survive.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
Here on the Skeleton Coast,
The hyena choir's just for you.

The Giddy Zone

On this trip we've entered the giddy zone,
You're in here with friends, not alone,
The symptoms are several, all severe,
For certain your sanity is appearing unclear.

The zone first wraps your brain in fog,
You think the hyena's a big brown dog,
You try to pet it, but it snarls at you,
So you move on to breakfast, feeling blue.

You wonder why the dog was not very nice,
Perhaps it's so shaggy because it has lice,
But then you figure out that it's a hyena,
And you let out a scream – mama mia!

And then at breakfast you cannot stop
Talking about nothing virtually non-stop,
The air is intoxicating, no whiskey required,
You're a car in the sand – just simply mired.

And then you hear check out's before ten,
And we're about to pack up and do it again,
We're risking our minds for that's what's at risk,
But we don't give a damn - we're simply adrift.

So here's the message from the skeleton coast,
Just let it all out and you'll get the most
From a vacation that's delivering all you could want,
Just say you can and not that you can't.

And up in my brain the wheels are engaged,
Feeling no pain – not the least enraged,

For mellow is where the giddy resides,
And heavy is the place where time bides.

For now the giddy zone has us in hand,
We're a happy bunch - this mongoose band,
And we're off to see Namibian wildlife,
And in the giddy zone we know no strife.

So welcome to Earth Church,
Pull yourself up a pew,
Here the giddy zone
Will welcome you.

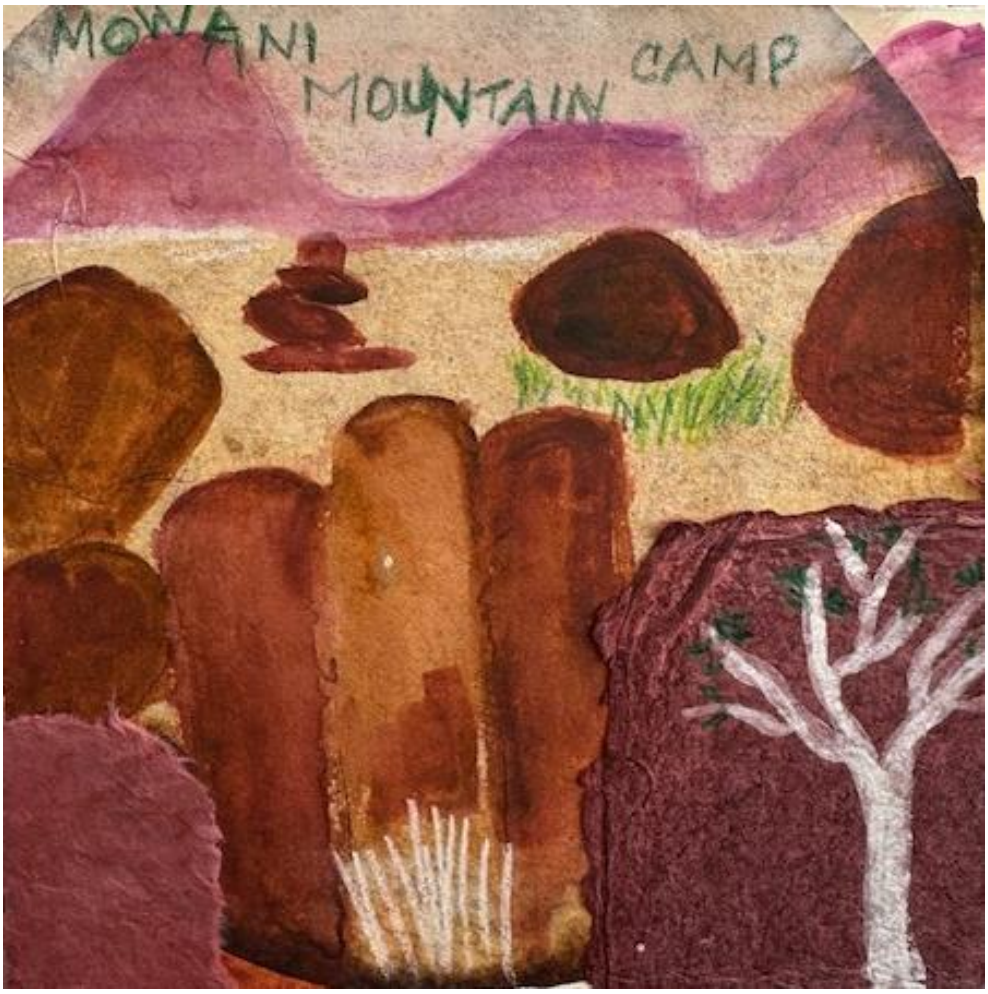
Namibian Rocks

Namibia has rocks, lots of rocks,
Rocks of all types and descriptions,
Rocks that make up mountains,
Rocks on the beach that are smooth

And wonderful to the touch
And that come in all colors,
Rocks that rise from the desert
In every form and shape,
Rocks made from the
Sediments that were deposited
Long ago,
Now risen from the ocean floor
And marked by long flowing lines
Marking the sides of the mountains,
Rocks made from lava that boiled
And bubbled eons ago,
Part of a huge lava flow
That also now resides in Brazil,
A remnant from the time
When Pangeea parted,
A phenomenal event on a scale
We cannot imagine,
Rocks sculpted like beacons,
Markers, signals, communicators
Of the way from here to there,
Followed by the elephants and
The birds and the jackals,
Rocks that are fractured,
Aggregated in ways defying imagination
And seemingly gravity,
Landscapes littered with rocks,
Big rocks, rocks strewn about,

Hanging from here,
Gathered there, seemingly random,
As if a giant with a nutcracker
Had walked through the valley,
Leaving the fractured rocks
Behind for us to come across
Centuries later and simply
Marvel at the wonder of rocks.

So welcome to Earth Church
Here the rock is your pew
And we gaze at the new day
Which brings awe to you.



Damara People

A long time ago when the world was younger
There were a people with a survival hunger
That came to live amongst the grass and rocks
And survived on animals and occasional cocks.

And they found a place in Namibia land
A place to settle for their migrant band
A place with water and shelter from the cold
A place where with luck they could grow old.

They learned which plants could cure an ache
And they even made beer for heaven's sake
By rubbing two sticks they could make fire
And they slept on the ground by the campfire.

And then they made art on the rock walls nearby
That told their story and neighbors dropped by
And would add what they knew for collective good
And a map was created that they all understood.

And the art was of animals – some with great meaning
The giraffe – for example – was about water and drinking
For the giraffe was tall and talked with the Gods
And they painted many to increase rain odds.

And there also was the ostrich of such great value
The egg was perfect and they all knew
That the egg held water better than any
And made egg jewelry which was very pretty.

And today the Damara live two realities
Continuing the past yet with modern practicalities
A bit of a ying and yang of existence
Living in today but with historic persistence.

And after our visit to the village and the relics
I feel I've had a lesson in Namibian kinetics

I’ve learned of the path they’ve walked to today
And that insight will help me as I find my way.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
Here we learn from others
They have much to teach you.

Etosha Pan

The Etosha Pan stands out on the map,
A huge blue area without a gap,
An inviting image in the dry late winter,
And all who thirst are welcome to enter.

But in the middle of October reality hits,
For then water is found only in bits,
A waterhole here, a drying pond there,
And a lake full of water would be really rare.

The Pan's surrounded by a small rise,
And what lay behind was a big surprise,
For as we came up over the rim,
What we saw could become part of a film.

The pan was dry out to the horizon,
And the animals were motionless out in the sun,
A water arc that would do Noah proud,
The spring at the edge had drawn a big crowd.

The ostriches and giraffes stole the show,
Of each species there were 30 or more,
The ostriches seeming as large as elephants,
And giraffes when drinking did a special dance.

A hundred or so springbok were lying around,

And oryx and wildebeest also were found,
A huge congregation, an animal convention,
It seemed that reality'd been put in suspension.

It is hard to explain the impact of this scene,
So visually perfect, so aesthetically serene,
Peace on Earth seemed possible in that moment,
My faith in the future had a chance to foment.

And driving back to our lodge before dark,
I knew something special had occurred in the park,
I saw a scene that would forever remain,
Embedded as hope within my brain.

So welcome to Earth Church,
Pull yourself up a pew,
Here we know that nature,
Can help to heal you.

In The Presence of Genius

The Guinea Fowl move as one,
Together,
A progression across the landscape,
Quick,
Moving as comets crossing the savannah
Sky,
Vulnerable but with a
Strategy.

The flamingos feed in the bay
As one,
A mass of pink against the blue,
Heads down,
Plowing the sediment
For worms and crustaceans,
Hungry but with a
Strategy.

The wildebeest move together,
A herd with heads up and down,
Grazing but ever alert for the
Lions
That are always near,
Listening for the warning calls
From the springbok and zebra
And the giraffe that sees
All,
Nervous but with a
Strategy.

The Earth speaks to us
In various ways,
Not so much in code as in
Implementation,
Showing us the way to succeed
If we would only look and
Learn,

Genius evolved over eons,
Balance, proportion and survival
Skills,
All there for us to observe,
To replicate, to use
If we were only smart enough
To appreciate genius when it
Comes before us.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
Here we search for the genius
That is the Earth’s gift to you.

The Termite Mound

Termite mounds spring up from soil,
Some look cylindrical, some like a boil,
But when you look you do not see
Their role in Namibian ecology.

Consider the source of all of that dirt
Where did it come from – how much work?

There are no scrapes, no signs of gathering,
But something occurred, some kind of happening.

The secret is the world beneath the ground,
That's where the termites can be found,
The digging of tunnels is the source of the mound,
For a fabulous network exists underground.
So the termites dig and remove and build,
It's mainly above-ground where they could be killed,
Adding a bit here and another bit there,
Building with caution, building with care.

And the termite tunnels allow them to move,
To gather their food, to find their groove,
For termites are tasty, an edible treat,
And many are waiting for something to eat.

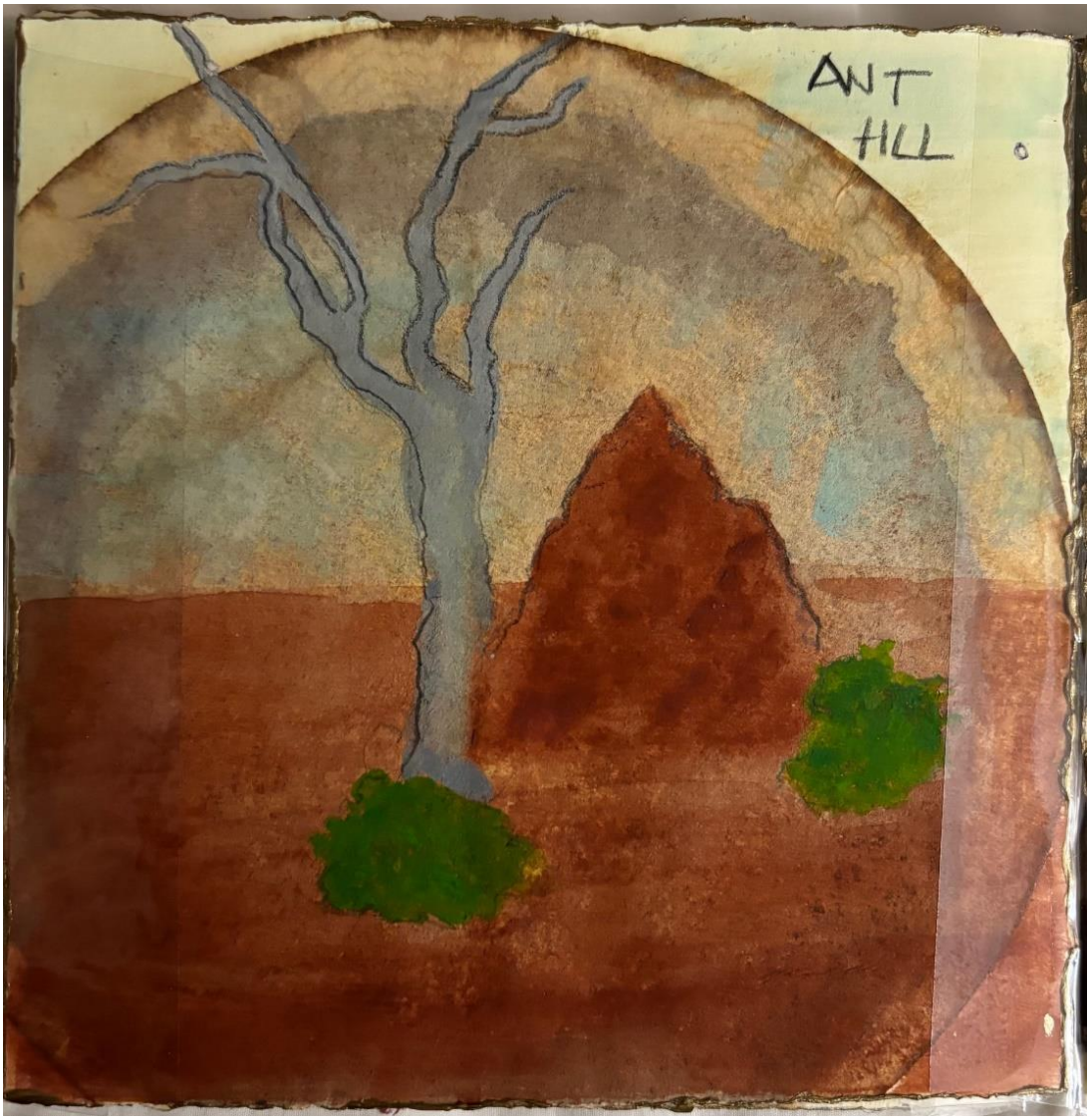
And they all work for the good of hive,
They work together to stay alive,
One for all and all for one,
Working to gather the elephant dung.

For the dung of the elephant is oh so good,
Containing the elements of the neighborhood,
With bits of wood and grass and leaves,
And bountiful nutrition to meet your needs.

So the termites recycle essential elements,

Cleansing the Earth, providing their condiments,
And also creating an amazing home,
A landscape anomaly where antelope roam.

So welcome to Earth Church,
Pull yourself up a pew,
Here we love termite mounds,
And the good termites do.



Lions At The Waterhole

The days have been dry,
Water is scarce,
Yet a few pans
Still hold enough,
Just enough,
But enough.

The zebras and the wildebeest
March through the still barren
Deciduous trees along trails
Beaten into the dirt by months
Of usage,
And there it is,
Water, beautiful water,
But the kudu and oryx and springbok
Are not moving forward,
The queue building behind them,
And then the scent comes with
The light breeze,
The scent of lions,
The scent of danger.

And so all the thirsty animals
Wait, watching,
Seeing the lions stand and move,
And drop back down,

7 females and 3 males
And 5 cubs,
A pride that has quenched
Its thirst after feasting,
And now they sleep.

The zebras move first,
Maneuvering to come into the water hole
On the side away from the lions,
The flock of guinea fowl scurrying
Quickly to the water,
The zebras and then the wildebeest,
And then the oryx and the springbok
Slowly, ever so slowly,
Moving to get water,
Jumpy, spooky, scared
But thirst conquers fear
And they come and drink
And leave, meeting their needs
In spite of their fear,
Finding the way, finding the path
In the face of danger.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
Here we learn to act
When danger faces you.

JC and JB

There once were two wildebeests named JC and JB,
And two happier guys you would never see,
All day they spent, grazing and dazing,
They felt their lives were simply amazing.

And yesterday they were talkin' and feelin' dry,
So they decided to give the waterhole a try,
They ambled on off with the zebra and oryx,

It was time to get their daily fix.

As usual at the waterhole there was a queue,
But something ahead was causing much ado,
For the line was stopped far from the goal,
A cause for investigation by the brave and the bold.

So JC and JB undertook an investigation,
To determine “what the haps” with this situation,
Brother zebra said they stopped because of the lion,
Concerned it was time for her to dine.

Now the boys didn’t want to meet the lion,
And they were sure thirsty – no denying,
They snorted around and pawed the ground,
But no good solution was there to be found.

So JC said to JB why don’t you go first,
And JB told JC he had the worst thirst,
Who’s gonna make the very first move?
They had to take care – there was much to lose.

And then they saw the guinea fowl flock,
As they circled to the other side of the block,
A flanking move that definitely succeeded,
And their masterly plan was suddenly completed.

So JC and JB moved stealthy and slow,

And they got to the water in spite of the foe,
And two happier guys have never been seen,
High hooves ensued - it was quite the scene

So welcome to Earth Church,
Pull yourself up a pew,
Here we watch the collective,
To gain insights for you.

Back At Mari's

We are back from Etosha here at Mari's
Where here on the coast there's always a breeze,
And a fog bank and cold that chills to the bone,
But here at Mari's we are not alone.

We are greeted back as long lost friends
As if we'd never left – we're back again,
And Magret and Justin also drop by
A bit of a party – a way to say hi.

It seems we're a part of this beach community,
Long lost friends returning from their journey,
It's all so wonderful being welcomed in,
If feel my soul healing from deep within.

And the next day Salume takes us to the desert,
To show us secrets within the desert dirt,
We drive out into the flat desert plain,
And you think "Just what is there here to gain?"

And then the secrets are exposed to you,
For Salume's an expert in desert voodoo,
She explains the succulents with leaves so smooth,
She knows the plants for your aches to soothe.

And we study the lichens of orange, grey, and black,
About how they exist – how they have the knack
Of living at the edge of organic habitation,
What a great surprise, this desert education.

This trip's been a study in less is more,
And water's the key to opening the door,
To understanding the meaning of desert life,
Harsh and beautiful forged by strife.

And Salume' intrigues us with all that she knows,
She was once a guide and her expertise shows,
With the desert rocks she is so precise
Putting them back just right – so very nice.

This is a trip unlike any before,
It's like I've walked through a brand new door
That opens the Earth to me more than ever
I know this experience will be with me forever.

So welcome to Earth Church
Take a seat in your pew
Come and join with us
We will find something new.

Flamingos

The flamingos were spread across the bay,
I'd come to hear what they had to say,
Each flamingo was distinct, pink and clear,
They were talking to me without words to hear.

The water was blue against a bluer sky,
A magical sight for the hungry eye,

Flamingos feeding as far as I could see,
The Earth unfurled in her full majesty.

Flamingos feeding with heads in the water,
Doing a dance – father and daughter,
Shuffling their feet, moving their knees,
Capturing my soul in the strong coastal breeze.

The head always moving and coming up now,
Does it use its head as a form of a plow
To force up the worms and other good eats?
The whole of the moment a visual treat.

And then one flamingo decides to fly,
And color spreads across the morning sky,
The beautiful pink with black on the wings,
The beauty stunning – it makes my heart sing.

There are moments when nature simply grabs you,
There is nothing to say and nothing to do,
But to simply enjoy being in its grasp,
Unrelenting – spellbinding – making you gasp.

I'm left with an experience that will last for years,
A sight for the moments when you are feeling tears,
For what I've been given has the power to lift,
This visual experience is a wonderful gift.

So take it when it comes, for it’s supreme,
A feeling that is perfect for a queen or king,
But a title’s not needed to enjoy this sight,
Nature’s free for all and will leave you just right.

So welcome to Earth Church,
Pull yourself up a pew,
Here we let nature reach
Deep inside me and you.

The Go Away Bird

The wind has dropped,
The threat of rain has cooled us,
The hot hills now friendlier,
More welcoming, embracing
Those who have braved
The most difficult pass in Namibia,
A pass through the mountains
That will bring us to Windhoek tomorrow
For departure

On the balcony of our mountain room,
Serenaded by a parade of birds,
The loveliest being the thrush with the
Peach underbelly singing the nicest song,
When suddenly
Five large gray bodies come hurtling
Into the barren tree,
Shouting “go away, go away,
Go away”, the famous grey lourie,
The “go away” bird talking to me.

And tomorrow I shall go away,
Going back to the USA,
Back to my home on the Texas coast,
A place I love,
A place needing changes,

A place that is changing but slowly,
A challenging place to which
I will return - renewed, restored,
Strengthened in my resolve that
There is much more that can and should
Be done,
Strength inspired by the Namibian spirit,
Strength inspired by the Namibian will
To survive,
Strength that exists from the indigenous
Natives that existed for millenia before
The whites came,
Strength that exists in the whites that
Made a living in a harsh place,
Strength from the oryx that has learned
To live with little water,
Strength like that required by
The early settlement of Texas,
A time perhaps not so different in
Important ways from today,
And I come back thinking that I –
Now an older if not old man –
Might still be able to make a difference,
And to that end, I will try.

So welcome to Earth Church
Pull yourself up a pew
Here we find strength in others

That will certainly help you.

Earth Rules

The Earth has rules about how thing should be,
Rules that have evolved over centuries,
Rules that keep our place in order,
Rules that apply regardless of border.

We circle the sun in a particular way,
That brings the night and gives the day,
And our axis swings to change the season,

We don’t ask why, we’re given no reason.

And then there are cycles that keep us going,
In earlier times, we had no way of knowing
That there was a balance that we should maintain,
A balance about temperature and about rain.

And there are also cycles for fish and birds,
Migration for life - beauty beyond words,
Again with a balance about meeting needs,
Finding right conditions, providing the seeds.

To this fine-tuned creature, we were born,
A coat of many colors to be worn,
A gift that shows we are part of the whole,
A gift that makes Earth a part of my soul.

But we don’t yet understand that to survive,
We must follow Earth rules in order to thrive,
We must emit carbon in a frugal manner,
And the circular economy must become our banner.

So the carbon cycle shall become my guide,
And with the hydrologic cycle, I will abide,
We’ll save the wetlands and liberate the soil,
Over time we’ll find alternatives to oil.

Adherence with Earth rules will phase in slow,

There is much to change, there is much to know,
But I can do it with the Earth in my soul,
With Earth rules in place, I am again whole.

So welcome to Earth Church
Find the Earth Rules in your pew
And bring along your soul
We've something healing for you.

Namibia

Namibia comes at you on its own terms,
Not fully packaged, no easy dining,
But rough, like the raw diamonds
Mined in the mountains,
Diamonds found on the coast

To be traced back into the source veins.

Namibia is a beetle that stands
On its front legs,
Collecting condensate from the fog
0n its back,
Drinking from its front legs
As the water flows
Toward the ground.

Namibia is a sand dune
Stretching wide and high,
In some places red,
In other places brown,
Mobile yet stable,
Flexible, shape-shifting,
But well adapted.

Namibia is a heart that beats
With the rhythm of evolution,
The throbbing of the drums
Evoking the rain that once again
Brings life,
The north wind promising and then
Delivering the water that is sacred,
Water the young are taught not to waste,
Turning off the spigot to brush
Their teeth every night and day.

Namibia is a welcoming set of arms
That embrace and hold you tight,
Inviting you to return,
New friends made from
A wonderful collection of souls,
Some you might have known before,
Kindred spirits, fellow travelers
Through space and time.

So welcome to Earth Church
Where Namibia was my pew
Here the services were awesome
And they're waiting for you.


ORYX