

Wednesday, December 6

Presents or Presence?

A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

John 13:34-35 (NIVUK)

On the third day of the On Eagles Wings Bible Camp in Wha'Ti, the syllabus focused on the Christmas story. There were two words that sound similar but have significantly different meanings. The first was 'presents', the other was 'presence'. No kid would miss the association between Christmas and presents, but associating Christmas with 'presence' ... I wondered about that.

It is not always easy to describe how a spiritual life is understood, but at some point it involves others, meeting and being with them, celebrating the gift of their presence even if they were strangers initially. The kids in the afternoons with us may not have been able to define 'presence' but they experienced 'presence'. The afternoons were intentionally focused on them, what they thought, what they expressed, what they were doing.

In a broader context 'presence' is the awareness of all of creation, including ourselves and the people in our lives. It's not a deeply theological term. It is openness to the gift of being in the world and celebrating it, like celebrating the birth of any child. After more than a thousand years of Jewish history, a child was born to a life that transformed the understanding of the inner life of human beings and their place in the Cosmos. Emmanuel was his name....God with us, present among us.

Father, there are people, who have hearts that need to be cherished, treasured and loved for who they are. Give us opportunities to open our hearts and our minds to their presence in the world. Amen.

George Jason (Lutheran)

On Eagle's Wings Governing Board Member & Volunteer Bible Camp Teacher
in Wha'Ti, Northwest Territories
Ponoka, Alberta.