

Second Sunday of Advent, December 10

## A Lingering Question from the North

*“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us”*

Matthew 1:23 (NRSV)

I wasn't in Yellowknife long enough to truly know the rhythm of winter in a northern community. But in my two years, the number of Christmas parties was notable. And why not have a party, gather with others, and celebrate as daylight rapidly disappeared and we steeled ourselves for the cold to come?

Upon leaving our Christmas Eve service, I was asked. “Is that it, Pastor? After all the work we've done to get ready for Christmas—the decorating, parties, concerts, and shopping—after tomorrow, there are no more celebrations planned. When do we get to *enjoy* Christmas?”

In my next call we wrestled with that question only to realize that by December 26, no church volunteers wanted a prolonged celebration. Still, this year's joyful theme verse beckons, “Let's celebrate. We waited and hoped—now our God is here.”

When do we get to enjoy Christmas? Two thoughts. First, it depends on the choices you make for the Twelve Days of Christmas, December 25 through January 6. Will you keep Christmas lights on, decorations up, a song on your lips, joy in your heart, an open door, and devotions going? Second, it depends only on recognizing that Christmas, the festival of “God with us,” can be celebrated every time you encounter Jesus Christ as the living Word, share in Holy Communion, or celebrate Holy Baptism—where God comes to us, to transform us and our days.

**“O Dayspring bright, awaited long, O Son of Man, incarnate Word”  
fill every day of my Advent and Christmas with the joy that comes  
from knowing you, and that you came to earth to be with us, know  
us, and transform us. Amen**

Rev. Steve Meysing (Lutheran)  
Assistant to the Bishop, Nebraska Synod, ELCA  
*On Eagle's Wings* Volunteer  
North Platte, Nebraska