Advent Reflections

“God has given us a mighty Saviour”  Luke 1:69

On Eagle’s Wings
On Eagle’s Wings

God has given us a mighty Savior from the family of David his servant. Luke 1:69 (CEV)

I especially appreciate the way Mike’s cover image this year focuses on the infant Jesus who has been born among us. How can a tiny baby possibly be the fulfillment of God’s promise to send a Saviour? The hint of the cross in the glow of the star subtly reveals the culmination of our salvation. This child who sleeps so peacefully will grow to be the adult Jesus who gives up his life for us so that we may experience his peace—the peace which passes all understanding. Mike, in a year when we so desperately need to focus on Jesus and the peace which salvation brings, thank you for creating an image that reflects the glory, beauty, power and peace of Christ. Mahsi Cho

We are grateful for our production team of writers, editors, and proofreader:

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We appreciate you inspiring us with your stories and insights as we walk through Advent together.

Thank You!

Mike Lee
Graphic Artist
Cover Designer
On Eagle’s Wings

Our God has given us a mighty Savior from the family of David his servant. Luke 1:69 (CEV)

Dear Friends,

I was not sure why I had chosen this verse for the theme of this year’s Advent Reflections. It had jumped out at me when I read the scriptures, but no particular story from the North came readily to mind. It only became clear as I read the verse in different Bible translations. Our theme is a portion of the Song of Zechariah, a canticle I pray each morning in Morning Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer. These are not Jesus’ words, they are Zechariah’s words, the words of a priest, a man with a family, whose life is devoted to serving God and drawing others into relationship with God. In that sense, Zechariah is just like me, you, On Eagle’s Wings’ faithful volunteers, and our reflections writers.

Our writers share their stories and reflections on life and ministry in the North from that same sense of hope and security in Christ that Zechariah expresses. Some write from an abundance of joy and provision. Others write from having experienced great pain and loss through which the power of Christ has sustained them. All have witnessed the truth of Zechariah’s prophecy, the power of Jesus, who comes as a helpless baby, to bring salvation - hope, healing, forgiveness, and mercy.

I pray that our writers’ stories and insights will bless you and draw you closer to our mighty Saviour on your journey through Advent. May God reveal his power in your life and fill you with all joy and hope in believing.

Rev. Lesley Hand, Executive Director
First Sunday of Advent, November 29

**God’s Family and God’s Plan**

*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David the son of Abraham. .... So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.* Matthew 1:1, 17 (ESV)

Each Gospel starts in a different way. Matthew starts with this incredible list of Jesus’s ancestors. It is awesome to think that God had a plan, a plan that appears to stretch back 42 generations! Though in reading the opening to John’s Gospel we see that God’s plan began before time itself. Salvation was always God’s goal as Christ loves all people.

As these Advent days are darker due to COVID-19, let our minds turn to holy habits from of old. Recalling the story of Jesus’s life, death, and life allows us to understand God’s plan for the world in Jesus, a plan that we are invited to be part of. Having heard God’s promises being fulfilled, let us turn to prayer and action.

We prepare for Christmas by praying while wrapping, baking, cooking, decorating, and singing, thinking back to our ancestors who did as we do. We prepare by caring for our neighbours. This year’s preparations take on a deeper meaning as we grow into this new life with COVID-19; now caring involves staying 6 feet apart, wearing masks, and not singing together. Caring also involves calling, sending cards, and dropping off food, things my ancestors did.

May God stir us up in these days to share the good news that Christ loves all people.

*Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Bishop David Lehmann (Anglican)
Diocese of Caledonia
Terrace, British Columbia
Reaching Out With Good News

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

Isaiah 52:7 (NIV)

As a pilot working in the Arctic for the last 30 plus years, I have come to marvel at the vast expanse of the Canadian Arctic. Such an incredibly beautiful and majestic land mass with such a small population. From Whitehorse to Iqaluit and all the vast expanse in between, the distance is over 2000 miles or 3300 kilometers as the raven flies. Even as I am writing this, winter is setting in up North. In a short time, I can expect blizzard conditions, de-icing, and frosty runways. Not long ago, news had to be carried North on foot, by ship, or by dog teams.

When Isaiah was written 2500 years ago, the writer was proclaiming hope and good news. News was carried on foot for long distances in difficult conditions. The first part of the passage speaks to the good news of the release from captivity and the second part of the redemption and salvation of all people by the Messiah. As we enter this Advent season, let us remember the beautiful people of the North and the hope that is promised to all people.

Heavenly Father we thank you for the people of the North. Thank you for the hope that unites us as Christians. Bless us as we celebrate the Advent season. In Jesus’ name. Amen

Will Brander (Baptist)
Former On Eagle’s Wings Volunteer Pilot
Leduc, Alberta
Unexpected, Everyday Jesus

But Jesus called for the children saying: “Let the little children come to me. Do not shut them off. The reign of God belongs to such as these.”

Luke 18:16 (NAB)

Do Jesus’ power and might only come to us through great Christian leaders and clerics? That is not the only way to experience him. There are the unexpected and everyday places.

When I was in the North I frequently visited the local school. One student was Karlaina, a beautiful 12-year-old girl with Downs Syndrome. She could only speak one or two words together. One day in the gym, Karlaina went to her teacher and said, “Ouie”. The teacher asked, “Are you hurt?” No. “OUIE.” “Do you feel pain?” No. “Ouie.” Karlaina pointed toward the gym door. “Do you need to go to the bathroom?” NO! Finally the teacher said, “Show me.” Karlaina led her into the girls’ washroom. Huddled on the floor was a little girl having a severe asthma attack. Immediate action was taken to get help. If Karlaina hadn’t been so persistent, that little girl could have ended up in an extremely critical condition.

Karlaina’s Roman Catholic family strongly fostered kindness and helping one another. Jesus, through Karlaina, reached out and helped the little girl. How often do we think of Jesus working through us as the giver or recipient of some form of his love?

While preparing for his coming this Christmas, let us try each day to bring Christ to someone through a special act of kindness. Let us openly and graciously accept acts of love from others.

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us so much and sending us your Son as our Redeemer. Help us to be grateful for Jesus and to share his love with everyone we meet. This we ask through your Son Jesus. Amen.

Sr. Joan Liss  (Roman Catholic)
Former On Eagle’s Wings Governing Board Member
Waterdown, Ontario
The Quiet Wait

The one who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Revelation 22:21 (NRSV)

Advent has always been my favourite season of the church year. In northern Alberta it follows my favourite outdoor season which is fall, with its blazing yellows and oranges, crisp mornings and new beginnings at school and church. As October fades into November the daylight hours shorten, bringing us again to the dark days of winter.

Advent is a counterpoint: for each week we lose daylight, we gain another flame in the Advent wreath. While our consumer culture shouts at us to mark the season with constant shopping and parties, Advent asks us to wait, listen, be quiet. I love how it builds, from one small candle on the wreath to a full circle of blue or purple and pink lights surrounding the white candle in the middle, the one we light to proclaim that Christ has come.

This year has been a different sort of waiting as we have adapted our lives to smaller social circles and periods of isolation, even gathering as the Church in unfamiliar ways. Despite our anxiety, fear, and grief we look to our Saviour and see him among us as we love and serve in his name, waiting and listening as he is revealed to us again.

Heavenly Father, as we wait and prepare for Christ’s coming this Advent, help us wait in faith that he keeps his promises. He has come, he is with us, he will come again, soon! Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Tara Munn (Anglican)
On Eagle's Wings Governing Board Member
Parkland County, Alberta
Candle Light, Christ Light

Arise shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Isaiah 60:1 (NRSV)

Every winter I count down the days until the winter solstice when I know that every day after that will have more daylight. I live at the 53rd parallel north and during the long nights of December and January we generally only get about 8-9 hours of daylight. I know that there are many communities in the far North that have even fewer or no hours of daylight during this time of the year. These long dark nights help me to slow down, to find more time for prayer, to plan and to connect with family and friends. I spend time preparing my heart, my home; I am sure that you are doing much of the same.

On the Sundays during Advent we light a new candle each week and finally at Christmas we light the Christ candle and we all rejoice. In my home church we light as many candles as possible from that light and remind each other that the light of the world, Jesus, is born and is present in our lives. We remember that our light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon us. This year as you count down the days towards Christmas, towards the coming of Jesus, the light of the world, take time to prepare yourself through prayer and service.

Loving Jesus, we await your coming as the light of the world, we await with open hearts and souls. Bless us in our preparations and in our service. Amen.

Fiona Brownlee (Anglican)
Aboriginal and Rural Communities Liaison, Diocese of Edmonton
On Eagle’s Wings Publications Volunteer
Wetaskiwin, Alberta
Building on the Foundations

The hope.....that God.....promised before the ages began.
Titus 1:2 (NRSV)

“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”
~Sir Isaac Newton.

“Davidi didn’t do it that way...” Davidi was my predecessor in my first parish in Salluit, Nunavik (Northern Quebec). I got heartily sick of hearing what Davidi used to do, or not do, what Davidi said or didn’t say. I had my own ministry—or so I thought. But gradually I came to realize that whatever I achieved was only because of the foundation that Davidi had laid in his five years of service before me.

Jesus didn’t just suddenly appear. His coming was God’s intention from the beginning of time, foretold down the ages by his prophets, and coming to its final proclamation through the ministry of John the Baptist. As John’s father, Zechariah, reminds us, Jesus came from the historic line of David and his birth was the fulfillment of God’s promise made centuries before.

This Advent season let us look back with gratitude to those who came before us, upon whose foundation we can build our ministries for Jesus. Let us thank God that the coming of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour was his loving plan from the very beginning. May our lives be like shoulders upon which those who come after us can stand to see farther than we have seen and do even more than we could ever achieve.

Loving God, thank you for giving us our small parts in your plan of salvation. Help us to be grateful for those who came before us and to be a foundation for those who come after us; for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Bishop Chris Williams (Anglican)
On Eagle’s Wings Hospitality Volunteer
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Everlasting God

Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of his servant David.

Luke 1:68-69 (NLT)

Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, praised God for His faithfulness to all generations: He has been merciful to our ancestors by remembering His sacred covenant.... to Abraham. We have been rescued from our enemies so we can serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness for as long as we live. (Lk 1:72-75, NLT)

We can stand in His presence forever. Our everlasting God is a mighty Savior.

Long before Zechariah, Jeremiah proclaimed the same saving love: I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself. (Jer. 31:3, NLT) Even the writer of Lamentations tells us that, in the middle of life’s adversities, the faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness....(Lam. 3:2-23, NLT)

A few years back, I was honored to be the leader of a spiritual retreat. My theme song was Everlasting God, written by Brenton Brown and Ken Riley. I was so surprised when the church service that weekend closed with the same song. Like Zechariah, I found myself rejoicing: Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord, wait upon the Lord, we will wait upon the Lord. Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord, wait upon the Lord, we will wait upon the Lord. Our God, you reign forever. Our hope, our strong deliverer.

This Advent, our hope is in the everlasting God who has given us a mighty Savior!

O God, you are our God and we will ever praise you. Bless our endeavors and our willingness to wait upon you. Let this Advent season be one of thankfulness and hopefulness. Amen

Vicki McCombs (Lutheran)
Former On Eagle’s Wings Governing Board Chair and Volunteer Bible Camp Teacher
Kannapolis, North Carolina
The Family of Jesus

Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. Matthew 1:16 (NRSV)

It seems that in every community I have joined, early conversations are about family lines and who is related to whom. This is the case whether the move is permanent or temporary – a new call or a week of Bible Camp. This has been true in the North and in the midst of large cities, rural areas, and even campus communities. We want to know the family that we are joining and we want the new among us to know who we are.

In both Gospels that record the birth of Jesus, we learn about Jesus’ family. We learn that Jesus is from the family of David, from which the Kings of Israel are born. We also learn that Jesus is the first born of Mary and that he is the One for whom the world has waited – talk about expectations!

The season of Advent is all about waiting, expectations, and family. We wait for Christmas, and we wait for the time to come in all fullness. There are expectations of us – places to be, meals to share, services to attend. These are moments that a family talks about years later as an introduction for the new members among us.

Through it all, my prayer is that you hear the invitation into God’s family, where we are loved and welcomed.

Gracious God, we continue to thank you for inviting us into this amazing family of faith and life, the family of Jesus. Help us to welcome the new among us and share the stories of this season. Amen.

Rev. Katie Russell (Lutheran)
On Eagle’s Wings Governing Board Member
Sioux Center, Iowa
Monday, December 7

Never Truly Isolated

*Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.*

Psalm 105:4 (NIV)

Volunteers with *On Eagle’s Wings* are provided with training materials when considering a trip to one of the Northern communities. One of the key points to understand is the isolation: many can only be reached by plane or boat. Until you actually arrive there, you can’t understand what this isolation is like. In some communities, I have watched supplies arrive by barge, or been to the grocery store with close-to-bare shelves and heard the residents’ anticipation about the arrival of the plane with more groceries. When we live in communities which are not remote, we do not have these challenges. Often we “run” to the store more than once in a day to purchase a missing ingredient.

During the last year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all of us have experienced isolation as we have never experienced it before. We have been forced to reflect on our priorities, to slow down and withdraw from many activities. We need each other and have found ways to support and encourage others even if we can’t be together physically.

Our relationship with our Saviour is the most critical of all. Focusing on Jesus rather than our difficulties and then focusing on helping others will give us the strength and grace we require to carry on. God bless you with a special awareness of his presence this Advent.

**Precious Jesus, during this Advent season, draw us near to you. In our weakness, give us your strength as we depend on you. Thank you that we are never truly isolated as you are always with us. Use us to your glory. Amen.**

Deana Lemke (Lutheran)
*On Eagle’s Wings* Volunteer Bible Camp Teacher and former Governing Board Chair
Rochester, Alberta
Prepare A Place

A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Isaiah 40:3 (NRSV)

When I was 10, we moved from the east coast to the cold and remote life of Northern Alberta. There, surrounded by pine trees and muskeg, we sometimes struggled to find peace. We lived in a small town where many things beyond basic groceries or fast food required an hour’s drive south to the nearest town, or even further. The town was cut out of the wilderness, surrounded by trees, getting as cold as -50° Celsius in the winter. It could be said that we were in a “desert,” too.

But here we found God’s peace in surprising ways: deer walking through our backyard on a snowy morning, fishing at the lake, or hiking. God comes to us where we are, and shows us his love with the things around us: beautiful sunsets, a mother bear with her cubs, the helping hand of a neighbour,

In this Bible verse, the prophet Isaiah invites us to “prepare the way of the Lord,” to make places where God can be known, loved and followed. Just as God reveals his love for us in the wilderness and northern communities, we are invited to provide moments and opportunities for others to know God too. How can we prepare a place for God for those around us, and share his Good News this season?

Loving Father, you reveal your love and care for us where we are. Help us to share your love with others where they are, that we all might come to know you and praise you forever. Amen.

Mathew McPhee (Anglican)
Summer Intern, Christ Loves All People Virtual Bible Camp
Sylvan Lake, Alberta
Beginnings

*He will be great and be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David and He will reign over Jacob's descendants forever: His kingdom will never end.*

Luke 1:32-33 (NIV)

The season of Advent has always been about new beginnings, with much anticipation about the arrival of our Savior. Likewise, it was with much anticipation that I had the opportunity to rejoin the *On Eagle's Wings* family of volunteers this past year. Reconnecting with *On Eagle’s Wings* has added a warm dimension to my spiritual life on this earth, and brought back many memories of my time spent in the North.

As children of God, no matter our geographic location, we are blessed this season knowing that we will be given a precious gift, the Lamb of God.

**Dear Lord, thank you for the gifts of renewal of faith and hope that this season brings to all of us. May we pray for one another with love through Jesus Christ. Amen**

Wendy Cusick (Episcopalian)
*On Eagle’s Wings* US Office Volunteer and Governing Board Member
Upper Gwynedd, Pennsylvania
Finding the Light in the Darkness

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:5 (NIV)

Rosie was feeling dissatisfied with her position as lay reader in her church. When she first took on the role, she found it exciting and fulfilling. Now it was more like duty than delight, like a job that never ended. As is often true in the North, there were not enough helping hands to make ministry happen, and much of the responsibility fell to Rosie.

Ready to back away from service, Rosie knelt in prayer, laying her burdens at Jesus’ feet. As soon as she began to pray, she felt this overwhelming sense of God’s presence. Her entire body felt warm. She could feel the loving arms of her Saviour wrapped around her. In that moment she no longer felt burdened or alone. She felt an amazing sense of peace and all-encompassing love. The presence of God was undeniable, and Rosie became aware of God and His good and perfect will for her.

Today, Rosie is serving her fifteenth year as a lay reader in her northern Alberta church. Two more lay readers serve with her. God’s light was Rosie’s guide as she knelt to pray those many years ago and still is to this day.

Advent is the perfect time to remember the light that overcomes the darkness and the love of God surrounding us. He is truly all we need.

Loving Father, we thank you for your good and perfect will for us. We thank you that you are the Light guiding us on this wonderful adventure with you. In this Advent Season we ask for more of you, Lord, more of your love and light and joy. When we succumb to the darkness of this world, Father, bring us back into the strength and peace of your light. As we wait for your return, may we continue to serve you with your perfect help and guidance. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Rev. Deacon Danielle McKenzie (Anglican)
On Eagle’s Wings Bible Camp Volunteer 2018
Brownvale, Alberta
Words and Actions of Discipleship

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.


In my foyer I have a collection of icons and statues of Mary from various parts of the globe. They remind me of the different ways in which the gospel is incarnated across times and cultures. They also remind me, in my comings and goings, to model my own discipleship after hers.

This is not always how I perceived Mary’s role in salvation. When I was a child, stained-glass windows portrayed Mary as meek and passive—a bystander, someone acted upon, rather than someone who cooperated with God, in giving birth to the Saviour.

Daily evening recitation of the Magnificat has shaped how I see Mary and it challenges me to be critical and fearless in examining my own response to God.

Mary received the word of God. She pondered it in her heart and she responded. Throughout her son’s life, death and resurrection, she demonstrated her love for him by her presence. No less is expected of me. This Advent, as we accompany the many who cry for our attention, do we follow Mary’s example of discipleship? Do our words and actions lift up those who are bowed down? Do they challenge those in positions of power? Do they give both material and spiritual sustenance to those who are hungry?

God of tender strength, from generation to generation, you have worked marvels in our midst. Grant us discerning minds and courageous hearts, so that we might continue to participate in the hastening of your kingdom. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Fr. Michael Bechard (Roman Catholic)
Executive Director, Northern Bridge Community Partnership
London, Ontario
Did You Know that *On Eagle’s Wings’* GIGGLE Series Bible Camp and Sunday School Curricula are available for your church to use?

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- Northern Alberta / Saskatchewan
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Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12)

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Not shown: Diocese of Mackenzie-Ft. Smith, Garth Eggenberger
I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His story, of Jesus and His love;
I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true,
It satisfies my longings, as nothing else would do.

This beloved hymn expresses how On Eagle’s Wings shares and embodies the story of Jesus and His love as we walk with Northern people. The ways in which we tell the story have grown as more local Northern helpers than ever have become involved in leading Bible Camps in their own communities, and as we reach more communities in winter.

But there are still those in the North who have not yet heard about the gospel of Christ; there are those who long to learn more about it; and there are those who long to be able to teach it to their children. It is important that the work will continue to create opportunities for many communities to hear about Jesus and His love, now and into the future.

You can help ensure that the story can be brought to future generations across the North by making a planned gift to On Eagle’s Wings.

Planned or “legacy” gifts are donations given to a charity, such as On Eagle’s Wings, often through a will. Usually the charity will receive the gift in the future. Some donors see a planned gift as a way of recognizing and supporting the charities that were important to them during their lifetime: one final, memorable gift. Others appreciate that charitable gifts are a way of reducing the tax burden on the estate when the estate is transferred to surviving loved ones.

Planned gifts can take several forms, for example: a bequest in your will, a life insurance policy, retirement assets such as Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSP) or Registered Retirement Income Funds (RRIF) in Canada, or a 401K retirement fund in the US, Charitable Gift Annuities, and Gifts of securities.

Please consider a planned gift that will enable On Eagle’s Wings to continue telling and being the story, now and in the future. Your family, financial advisor, and lawyer can help ensure that your wishes will be carried out efficiently.

I love to tell the story,
‘Twill be my theme in glory,
To tell the old, old story
Of Jesus and His love.
Prepare for the Unexpected

*Our God has given us a mighty Savior from the family of David his servant.*

Luke 1:69 (CEV)

These were among the first words spoken by Zechariah following his period of speechlessness and the birth and naming of his son John. For months he was silent, watching and waiting as his aging wife Elizabeth grew in her pregnancy. When their long-awaited son arrived, and Zechariah could speak, he first affirmed John’s name, then proclaimed God’s fulfillment of his covenant.

As I think about Zechariah’s song I keep coming back to two things – the mighty Savior he proclaimed came as a babe in a manger and his humanness in the doubts he shared when the angel Gabriel told him he would be a father. God comes to us in ways so unexpected that we sometimes have doubts.

On my first trip North I traveled with doubts – would I be a good teacher, would I connect with the children. But God was there, showing himself in unexpected ways. God was in the smile of children and the welcoming communities. In that trip North, and all the ones that followed, God was present in ways unexpected.

As we reflect on this season of Advent we are reminded that God fulfills his promise - he will come again. Until that time, if we can set aside our doubts and open our hearts, we can experience his love in ways unexpected.

**Heavenly Father, help us to feel your presence in our lives, to open our hearts and minds, to see you in ways unexpected and to share your love as we celebrate the birth of a babe, your Son and our Savior. Amen.**

Marcia Baker (Lutheran)

*On Eagle’s Wings* Governing Board Member

Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania
Part Of The Family

*God has given us a mighty Savior from the family of David.*

Luke 1:69 (CEV)

I have just had the chance for a family visit with my sister, her daughter and her two young grandchildren. In three generations there have been so many changes and yet so much stays the same. We see it in our families: familiar faces, behaviours, and mannerisms that are learned and passed on. Our family is our safe place from which we venture out into the world and to which we return time and again knowing that we are accepted and loved.

Like us, Jesus had a family into which he was born, raised, and loved. He came to know the world he had come to save, first through his family of Mary and Joseph, his grandparents, Saints Anne and Joachim. He would have learned all the family stories that had been handed down through the generations and his bond with his family would have helped form him to be the man he became.

By our baptism we have become a part of God’s family. We are welcomed into the fold as God’s children and as brothers and sisters of Jesus. By the mystery of the incarnation we have all become brothers and sisters to one another through God’s gift of his Son to the world.

**Lord, we thank you for the gift of our families and for allowing us to become a part of your family. As we see in God our Father, and see in you our brother, allow us to see in each other a brother or sister so that we may love one another and live as a family in peace. Amen.**

Bishop Jon Hansen, C.Ss.R.  (Roman Catholic)
Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
**Time to be Thankful**

*I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.*

Psalm 89:1 (NRSV)

When I first went to Old Crow, Yukon, many of the people there were saying, “We need a church”. At the time, the old church, St. Luke’s, had been condemned by the Bishop of the day and so services could not be held there; instead, people were holding services in the Heritage Center. The space was physically awkward and not geared for large gatherings like a wedding or a funeral. Any large celebrations had to be held in the school gymnasium; in fact, we held several funerals and a wedding there.

But the people still insisted they needed a church. I spent three years in Old Crow and in that time we managed to buy the old Northern Store for one dollar. The building was moved to church property and renovated with the help of First Nations. The first service was Midnight Mass Christmas Eve 2018. When we started out, it was something less than beautiful, but with skilled hands, planning, and some expert scrounging, Old Crow has a beautiful church building that will serve them for many years to come.

God’s hand seemed to be with this project from the very beginning and his faithfulness toward the people of Old Crow was evident throughout. I often said, “This building served people physically and now it will serve them spiritually. Thanks be to God”.

**Creator God, thank you for your abiding love and faithfulness evident in all we do. Your blessings abound, and we are thankful. In your holy name. Amen**

Rev. Bert Chestnut (Anglican)
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory
Tuesday, December 15

A New Heart

_I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people._

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NRSV)

Advent is a time to watch, to wait and to prepare. Advent 2020 is different because of COVID-19.

How do we live this Advent? We have examples of people who watched, waited and prepared. We have the experiences of people who wandered away, strayed, or deliberately made selfish and sinful decisions, yet the Bible tells us that God sent messengers to call them back. Jeremiah 31:31-34 says that God promised to write a new law - a law of love - on their hearts.

As I ponder the promise, I think about the people I met this past year since I semi-retired. Now I am available to help out, to be 'a filler,' as a friend joked. In the communities of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut which I have visited, I have been touched by the goodness, kindness and love, 'the new heart' of people I have met. One of them was Ralph who died just before his 45th birthday. Ralph, a quadriplegic for 30 years, never had a word of complaint or self-pity; rather he inquired about my well-being and frequently helped me with computer problems. As a health care worker commented, "He was an inspiration".

This year countless people risked their lives to care for us during COVID-19, while others work long hours in search of a vaccine. May Advent be a season of HOPE as we prepare anew for Jesus who brings a new law - a law of love - into our hearts.

_God of promise, write your law of love in our hearts as we watch, wait, and prepare. In Jesus’ name. Amen._

Fr. Joe Daley (Roman Catholic)
Vicar General, Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
Dawn

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us. Luke 1:78 (NRSV)

On a cold morning in January, I waited for the sun to rise in Yellowknife. When dawn broke, it was about 10 a.m. The sun crept across the horizon for about 5 hours. And as the sun traveled, the sky was lit softly with pinks and blues. When the sun had traveled its course, the shining orb nestled into the enveloping horizon of white.

Since time began, the sun has been marking our days and years. In the liturgy of seasons, our memories and hopes are formed and shaped. Zechariah, prophet and priest, sang of hope and deliverance when his son, the great prophet, John was born. John was to prepare the way for the Lord, about whom Zechariah sings, “the dawn from on high will break upon us.”

Time is a relative term, and in each culture time is experienced uniquely. In the in-between spaces of these challenging days, what are we hoping for? What memories are forming that will live in our minds and hearts, and in the minds and hearts of God’s people everywhere? If we take the time to be still, do we see that our Creator God is working through the days and seasons, giving us eternal hope? In God’s time (Kairos), he sent his Son, the Light of the world, to save us. The darkness is being consumed by his glorious light!

Jesus, Light of the world, come. Enter into our days, fill us with peace and hope that only you can bring. Shine your light, opening the eyes of those in darkness and pain. Let all know your saving love. Amen

Lois Graff  (Lutheran)
On Eagle’s Wings Governing Board Member
Huntsville, Alabama
Small and Mighty

And a little child shall lead them.  

Isaiah 11:6 (NRSV)

One of my favourite spiritual writings – since I first read it pasted to the inside of a kitchen cupboard on my Auntie’s farm – is the very famous poem, “Footprints in the Sand.”

Those who know the poem will recall its simple - if sappy - punchline: that at some points in our life (when we perceive two sets of footprints in the sand) Jesus walks alongside us, while at other times (when we perceive only one set of footprints) it is then that Our Lord carries us through our trials and sufferings.

As simple as the poem may be, it has often caused me to think, “How many times (even to this point in my life), has Jesus had to carry me over the sand?” And even where there are two sets of footprints, “How many times have I needed his help just to take the next step forward?”

Our Lord comes to us first as a tiny child, vulnerable and dependent, and carried in his parents’ arms. How easy it is for us, seeing him as such, to forget that even now he is our “mighty Saviour from the family of David his servant.”

Lord Jesus, we carry you in our hearts and in our minds throughout this Advent season, knowing full well that you are the one who really carries us in all of our weaknesses. Come to us, Lord; be with us. We wait with longing for the day of your arrival. Amen.

Julien Hammond  (Roman Catholic)
Mission Engagement, Archdiocese of Edmonton
Edmonton, Alberta
Never Alone

No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you. Joshua 1:5 (NIV)

As we approach our Savior’s birth, let us take a moment to look around us. We see a world filled with strife and uncertainty; a world divided. Nothing over the past year has been “normal.” We’ve dealt with a pandemic that has left us isolated, distanced, uncertain and afraid. We’ve dealt with issues that have divided us by race, economic status and belief. Honestly, many of us feel alone and fearful for the future. These are the times in which we need to cling to God most, but these are also the times it’s easiest to turn inward and fall victim to fear and panic.

But there is good news. We are never alone. Our Father is with us every step of the way and he promises never to leave us. Just as he promised to send a Savior to Earth to save us and give us eternal life, he promises to walk with us through the difficult times. So, as we await the birth of our Savior, Jesus, let’s remember God’s promises are always true and he promised that we’re never alone.

Most gracious heavenly Father, thank you for your promises. Thank you for the promise of your Son, Jesus. Thank you for the promise never to allow us to walk alone. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus in a very unfamiliar world, please help us to have peace in knowing you are right beside us every step of the way. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Jen Canipe  (Lutheran)
Former On Eagle’s Wings Governing Board Member
Harrisburg, North Carolina
Canoe

*When Peter saw how strong the wind was, he was afraid and started sinking. “Save me, Lord!” he shouted.*

Matthew 14:30 (CEV)

In July 2019 I arrived at Trappers Lake Retreat Centre, Yellowknife, two days before others in the Behchoko Bible Camp team. The Centre’s custodian suggested I go canoeing, then left. All alone, I set off to explore the lake. I was amazed to find no other cabins or buildings on it. Paddling back, I shifted to a sitting position from the more stable kneeling position. Soon I reached my paddle out a little too far and was unceremoniously dumped into the water.

“My FitBit!” I worried as I fell into an northern lake. Fortunately, the lake was not too cold. I swam to a small rocky outcropping, pulling the flooded canoe. There I drained most of the water and got back in, but the water around my knees weighed down the back end of the canoe and lifted the front end out of the water. Paddling back was twice the work with a slight wind knocking me off course. I reflected on the risks I had taken canoeing alone. Had the winds been worse, or the water colder, it might not have ended well. I also thought about Peter who jumped out of a perfectly good boat, then had to call out for Jesus to save him.

At birth, we are thrown into the world, and we have to sink or swim. We mostly survive because God has placed us in the care of a family. We often survive a fall off a boat because we learned to swim or others come to our aid. We survive death, because God did not throw us into the world without a Saviour. Peter understood who his mighty Saviour was.

*From danger to danger you are our God, and from you comes the courage to face the day. Amen*

Rev. David Melax  (Lutheran)
*On Eagle’s Wings* IT Specialist
Sherwood Park, Alberta
Sing!

Then Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for He has looked favorably on His people. 

Luke 1:67 (CEV)

Our four children loved to sing. They would gather in a circle and clap and sing. They would create instruments from pots and pans or a broom and dustpan and play and sing. They would sing as we traveled in the car and as we sat around a campfire. They would burst into song in the morning, noon, and night.

Luke’s Gospel barely gets through the second chapter without erupting into song four times: Mary sings that her soul magnifies the Lord. Zechariah sings blessing to the Lord of Israel who “has given a mighty Saviour from the family of David”. The angels sing “Glory to God in the highest,” and Simeon sings a farewell song of peace.

Zechariah sings a song of blessing and prophecy, of praise and promise, and he sings of God’s strength and of God’s mercy.

What will your song be today? A song remembering God’s faithfulness? A song of justice and a vision of God’s reign?

Join Zechariah in singing of a God who makes a way out of no way. A God who gifts with abundance out of seeming scarcity. A God who gives life where this is death. Sing of a God who creates the possible where there is no possibility, who offers grace and forgiveness where there once was only judgement and fear.

Gracious God, give us voices to sing your praise, not only with our lips but in our lives. Amen.

Bishop Larry Kochendorfer (Lutheran)
Synod of Alberta and the Territories, ELCIC
Edmonton, Alberta
Humble Saviour

The time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:6-7 (NRSV)

Advent is a new beginning. After this year the whole world desperately needs a new beginning, to pretend 2020 didn't happen and get a fresh start.

Mary and Joseph were forced to pack up and move to Bethlehem for census. Bethlehem had a reputation as a town out of which nothing good comes. Not even the cheapest places in Bethlehem had a spare room. So, Mary went into labour and had to lay Jesus on hay in a feed trough, wrapped up in torn strips of material.

Wow. Our Saviour was born in a barn and laid in a feed trough. Maybe you can relate. In 2020 many thousands of people have been displaced, lost jobs, struggled to put food on the table, and protect their families from serious health problems. Our Saviour can relate to that. Born in a barn, exposed to deadly germs, attended by cows and sheep, dogs and cats, Jesus is familiar with humble beginnings and endings.

If you have struggled this year let the lowly Baby Jesus guide you into the fullness of life and joy. Selah. (...Ponder this...)

Dear Lord and Saviour, the Christ. Many have suffered untold miseries this year. Help us see past the tinsel and trappings of Christmas that causes pain and loneliness to thousands of people. Help us see the Saviour who had nothing and still gave hope to a dying world. This year the world around us IS dying. Protect the poor and the innocent. Bring hope for a brighter future in which we have a greater appreciation for the gifts we already have. In the blessed name of Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Rev. Terry Tomlinson (United Methodist)
Former On Eagle's Wings Governing Board Member
Papillion, Nebraska
My God is So Great!

[The angel said] “Nothing is impossible for God.” Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant! Let it happen as you have said”. Luke 1: 37-38b (CEV)

As a girl of faith and hope, Mary knew that one day the Savior would come. Imagine her surprise when the angel Gabriel said she would be the Savior’s mother! The Savior surely would be born to a great king or important person, not a regular girl in a small town. It seemed impossible, but she believed what Gabriel said. God could make it happen.

A favorite Bible Camp song says, “My God is so great, so strong and so mighty, there’s nothing my God cannot do.” Mary could have sung this too. Her baby would be God’s Son and grow up to do amazing things. She believed in God’s greatness, strength and might.

Even so, Mary probably had some difficult times. People gossiped, and Joseph wanted to leave her. Mary had to leave her home for a while to get away from the questions.

Sometimes it is difficult to remember that nothing is impossible for God. Not all our problems go away as soon as we ask. Many things in our world seem too big for even God to handle. In this Advent season, we are reminded to wait and watch for what God will do. Jesus came to show us that God is always with us, no matter what happens. We can pray, sing and believe: “Our God is so great, so strong and so mighty, there’s nothing my God cannot do!”

Dear God, thank you for the promise of a Savior. Thank you for sending Jesus to show us how much you love us. Your greatness, strength and might give us hope. Amen.

Jan Davis, Diaconal Minister (Lutheran)
On Eagle’s Wings Bible Camp Curriculum Writer
Hanover, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, December 23

**God invites us into an exciting future**

*I invite you to consider the future as a destination.*

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together. 

*Isaiah 65:25 (NRSV)*

I admit it. I like to recall the past. I enjoy reading about how “things used to be.” I own a 1945 John Deere tractor. It reminds me of summer vacations on my grandparents’ farm.

Advent is the opposite. It is not about the past. In Advent, the church emphasizes hope and future. Advent invites us to think of a beautiful destination somewhere in the future. What a remarkable future it will be. Nothing like the past. People from all over the world will worship one God. There will be no more war between nations; swords will be beaten into plowshares and spears beaten into pruning hooks. A bright future to hope for.

Advent is the season of hope, a season to remind us that we worship the God of things that are not yet, the God of things that will be. Advent is the season to hold up visions of things that sound impossibly remote to us.

We hope for world peace, not as wishful thinking, but as something we are expecting God will accomplish. We want to help. The church dangles these images before us in this Advent season. With faith and perseverance, they can be accomplished. Christian hope invites us to keep the future before us, not to dwell in nostalgia for the past.

**God, you have called us into your Kingdom. Use us to bring about your vision for the world you have created. Amen.**

Bishop Rod Andrews (Anglican)
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
A Strong Centre

Our God has given us a mighty Savior from the family of David.
Luke 1:69 (CEV)

“It’s not that kind of strength,” I explained to the crestfallen boy after his teacher pulled him from a fight. “But you said that if we prayed the rosaries we made, Jesus would make us strong.” It was a tough sell that even if you prayed—and wore the rosary like a necklace!—the strength of Jesus would not protect you if you picked fights with boys bigger and stronger than yourself. Instead, the strength of Jesus would help you overcome the temptation to fight and help you find other ways to settle your differences. Overcoming the temptation was far less appealing to our bunch of active eleven-year-olds than winning a playground brawl.

I appreciate the way many of my northern friends pray “in the strong name of Jesus”. It somehow makes more tangible the many aspects of salvation in Christ that contribute to spiritual strength – courage, faith, perseverance, forgiveness, thankfulness, peace.

According to The Message paraphrase of the Bible, Luke 1:69, Jesus has “set the power of salvation in the center of our lives.” As I reflect on the pandemic and other events of this year I am reminded that we need Jesus’ strong centre in our lives just as much as our group of young boys. As we celebrate the gift of God coming in human flesh, may his gift to us this Christmas be a deepening of our faith and growth in spiritual strength that we may reflect the peace and love of Christ to those around us.

Gracious and loving God let your strength be born into the weak places of our lives. Heal our illnesses and restore our brokenness so that the power of your salvation rests at the centre of our lives. In the strong name of Jesus, we pray.
Amen.

Rev. Lesley Hand (Anglican)
On Eagle’s Wings Executive Director
Spruce Grove, Alberta
Volunteering for northern Bible Camps with *On Eagle’s Wings* provides a unique opportunity to share God’s love and build relationships with our northern brothers and sisters. People volunteer for many reasons. Some feel a deep sense of God’s call to serve; others are drawn by the stark beauty of the landscape, or want to learn more about the people and their culture. Still others simply love children and want to teach them. No matter what the reason, be sure that God is already at work both in you and the people you will visit.

For many, being with children in a northern Bible Camp is the definitive volunteer experience in the North. Bible Camps are held year-round based on the needs of communities. For more information or to request an application form, call 1-866-441-6594 or send an email to oneagleswings.north@gmail.com. We accept applications from individuals and teams.
A Symbol of Ministry

The inspiring logo was designed and painted as a gift to On Eagle’s Wings from First Nations artist, Archie Beaulieu. It is Archie’s response to the powerful words of Isaiah, “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.” It also reflects the land, animals and people of the North.

The eagle is highly respected by all cultures and by people everywhere as a symbol of strength and vision. For many aboriginal people the eagle is a messenger of the Creator. Within the eagle Archie has included other animals of his land and culture. A northern family stands at the foot of the cross, the symbol of new life for all God’s people.

Meet the On Eagle’s Wings Governing Board

Marcia Baker
Blue Ridge Summit, PA

Wendy Cusick
Lansdale, PA

Marilyn Goebel
Spruce Grove, AB

Lois Graff
Huntsville, AL

Cliff Horton
Stony Plain, AB

Tara Munn
Parkland County, AB

Rev. Katie Russell
Sioux Center, IA

Ross Whitelaw
Smoky Lake, AB.

Follow us on: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.  
Isaiah 40:31

MISSION STATEMENT

On Eagle’s Wings is an ecumenical Christian ministry that proclaims Jesus Christ and serves the Church and individuals in remote and isolated areas of northern Canada.

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