

2024

# Advent Reflections

"The Lord has done great things for us,  
and we are filled with joy." Psalm 126:3



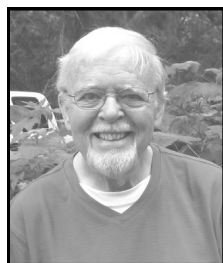
On Eagle's Wings

**25th Anniversary**

## *On Eagle's Wings*

*The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.*  
Psalm 126:3 (NIV)

As we look back on 25 years of ministry, we are filled with gratitude for all the incredible things God has done through *On Eagle's Wings*. Mike beautifully captures the essence of joy that shines through the faces in this artwork, with vibrant colours dancing across the sky and an inukshuk standing tall, reminding us that Jesus is the Way.



*Mike Lee*  
*Graphic Artist.*

We are incredibly grateful to Mike for creating such beautiful artwork for us over the last 25 years and wish him well as he steps down as our Graphic Artist.

Mahsi Cho Mike.

We are grateful for our production team of writers, editors, and proofreaders who have contributed over the past 25 years.

This year we extend our thanks to the following contributors :

Robin Abrol (Editor)  
Emma Abrol (Editor)  
Rev. Maury Arsenault  
Rev. Lee Berry  
June Benton  
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Rev. Kirk Tastad  
Dave Weber  
Rev. Canon Paul Williams

## *On Eagle's Wings*

*The LORD has done great things for us, and we  
are filled with joy.* Psalm 126:3 (NIV)



Dearest Friends,

Welcome to a very special edition of our Advent Reflections. As we look back at the last quarter of a century, we joyfully exclaim with the psalmist that the Lord has done great things for us.

*On Eagle's Wings* holds such a special place in the hearts of northern families, volunteers and supporters. Children who attended our early Bible Camps are now bringing their own children. Volunteers and supporters continue to faithfully help us serve the North - be it in person, financially, through prayer, or all of the above! Our work continues through the Bible Camps we are most known for, and the new programs communities are requesting. Programs like **Caring for the Wounded Heart**, where communities are trusting us to enter the sacred space of their brokenness in order to facilitate healing groups.

As a reminder of the great things the Lord has done, this year's devotions have been selected from previous editions of Advent Reflections. Spanning 1999 to 2024 they are sure to inspire you. Authorial details state the year each devotion was originally published, along with the writer's location at the time. We are grateful for the wisdom and insights they share. Several of the authors are no longer with us, and many have moved to new places. Yet each offers a valuable glimpse into the ministry of *On Eagle's Wings* in that particular year. We also have a short article from our founder, Rev. Lee Berry.

As you journey with us through Advent, we pray you will be blessed by remembering the many great things the Lord has done for us all.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin".



Robin Abrol, Executive Director

## **The Navigator**

*While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

John 9:5 (NIV)

It was a smoky 33-degree day when we boarded our small plane bound for Ft. Smith, NT. As the plane took off, I peered out the window at the thick, hazy sky. The smoke was so dense that I could barely make out the landscape below, which made me wonder, “How on earth do the pilots know where they are flying?” I turned to my sister, who was seated beside me. “Do you think this is safe?” I asked her. She responded by reminding me that the plane is equipped with special instruments designed to guide it, even in conditions like this.

In the midst of the Advent season, we remember that when Jesus came to earth, a star served as an instrument, guiding the wise men to his birthplace. Despite the uncertainty the wise men faced at that time, the star offered clear direction. Similarly, Jesus, the Light of the World, entered our lives to guide us through the uncertainties we face. Just as the pilots trust the instruments in the plane to navigate through tough conditions, we can trust the Lord to be our guide during life’s haze.

**Lord, thank you for sending your one and only Son to earth in human form to be the light in our darkness. This season, may we remember that you are our ultimate guide, illuminating our path and bringing light to every shadow. Amen**

## Tidings of Great Joy

*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)

We all saw the great light. We were those walking in darkness, who encountered the great light that shone upon us. We felt the warmth, we saw the hope, and we tasted the light in our mouths.

How? By those who brought the Good News through their relentless trudging of hills and valleys, frozen lakes, snowy prairies, and rocky tundra. They came with generous hands and tireless feet, but most importantly, with giant hearts. They came to meet us where we are. They piqued our interest and invited us to come and hear good tidings of great joy.

And today they still come. Their hearts filled with the living water that flows from the rock of Jesus Christ. They give their time and energy to help others flourish. They share abundantly with others, to local volunteers and supporters, to the church, the community, and especially to the children's beautiful souls. *On Eagle's Wings* volunteers make known of the One who reigns forever.

**Dear God, thank you for sending people who reflect your love into our lives. May we be empowered by your Spirit to go and share the Good News of your coming to earth. May we reflect your love to others this Christmas, and throughout the year. Amen.**

## Looking to God's Son

*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby... An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them.*  
Luke 2:8-9 (NIV)

I enjoyed looking out of the cabin window at the Retreat Centre on Trappers Lake, for it gave me a full panoramic view of Mother Earth's beauty. But that morning, only half of the lake could be seen due to the dense fog. After being spellbound by the beauty, my next thought was, "How are we going to be able to fly from Yellowknife to Fort Providence with such limited visibility?" We had hoped to fly in early enough on Sunday morning to be able to invite the children to come to Bible Camp. A phone call informed us that we would be delayed due to aviation problems, so Plan B was put in place, which now meant a four-hour drive.

As we were waiting for our ride, I took the time to walk to the large wooden cross placed on a rock ledge near the Center. Beautiful evergreen trees lined the path to the cross. I could see that the spiders had been busy, spinning many intricate webs between branches. The beauty of the web, with a new dressing of fresh morning dew, enhanced the beauty of the area. No Christmas tree was ever decorated as exquisitely as the glistening spider webs with their dew-drop prisms. The brilliance of the web could only be seen when one looked towards the sun. It was symbolic for me of the importance of being focused on God's Son, Jesus Christ. May our Advent season be focused on the Son of God and his gift of life to each of us.

**Dear God, please allow me to be open to the most precious gift you have to offer. Your presence is in all of your creation and is alive within me. May we live our lives looking to your Son. Amen.**

Written by June Benton, La Crescent, MN, 2000  
*On Eagle's Wings* Volunteer

## Advent Possibilities

*A virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel--which means, "God with us."*

Matthew 1:23 (NIV)

The birth of a child can stir up many emotions: joy, happiness, and the endless potential that only a new birth can bring. My wife and I celebrate our birthdays on the same day and we are the same age.

Last year, for our birthdays, we invited our congregation, friends, and family to a celebration. While a PowerPoint showed our northern activities, we asked guests to donate to *On Eagle's Wings* instead of giving gifts - and they did! Most importantly, we wanted to thank God for his blessings, each other, our lives together, and for leading us to our Inuit sisters and brothers in the Arctic.

We went North to answer God's call to teach Inuit children about Jesus' love and forgiveness. We didn't anticipate how much we would learn in return. Arriving in the North took us out of our comfort zones, but the adults warmly welcomed us into their homes and hearts. I'm certain God led us to these people, who have experienced so much change and pain, whose traditional way of life and language have disappeared bit by bit. And yet they are always so gracious.

Advent celebrates the most important birthday of all, Immanuel, "God with us." Jesus is with us now and will be when he comes again. You are invited to celebrate his coming amid life's joys and sorrows, as he leads us to be his witnesses wherever we are.

**O God, we give thanks for how you continue to come to us. As we await the birth of your Son this Advent season, teach us how to love one another as you have loved us. Help us to be present with others to share your gift of love. Amen.**

Written by Rev. Maury Arsenault, Bel Air, MD, 2008  
Former *On Eagle's Wings* Board Member

## Shared Expectations

*You, my son, will be called a prophet of God in heaven above. You will go ahead of the Lord to get everything ready for him.*

Luke 1: 76 (CEV)

Waiting can be hard - whether for Christmas, a firstborn child, or Bible Camp. I often wonder how Elizabeth and Mary felt awaiting their God-given children, knowing these were no ordinary babies but holy gifts from God. The births of John and Jesus brought new life through God's love, and Elizabeth and Mary delivered those divine gifts for all humanity.

As a first-time Bible Camp team heading to Fort Liard, waiting was difficult as we didn't know what to expect. We knew little about the community and people, but we were anxious to get started. Our first connections were with Father Joe, the Catholic priest who serves Fort Liard, and several community members and Elders. We felt an instant attachment to these people who clearly love God and their community. We greatly enjoyed the wonderful kids who came to camp and developed a strong bond with them and Fort Liard. It was an unforgettable experience - just like a mother never forgets the birth of her child. We are looking expectantly toward our next trip there, and pray daily for "our kids".

As Christians we experience this same feeling of anticipation each Advent. And just like Elizabeth and Mary, we need to prepare ourselves for what's to come.

**Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son Jesus Christ. As we wait expectantly to celebrate his birth at Christmas, please help us to wait patiently and to watch for opportunities to share this incredible gift with others. Amen**

Written by Karen MacDonald, Edmonton, AB, 2018  
*On Eagle's Wings* Volunteer



## Waiting in Anticipation

*You too, be patient, and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.*

James 5:8 (NIV)

*...while we wait for the blessed hope...the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus.*

Titus 2:13 (NIV)

I am blessed to work in the Post Office in the friendly community of Aklavik, NWT. We only have two stores, so we depend on getting important items in the mail; people wait with anticipation for parcels they have ordered. Sometimes it is hard to be patient especially when the parcel is a gift for a loved one - or perhaps party supplies for their child who is celebrating a birthday. Waiting is not always easy, but when the parcel arrives, there is joy, and it was worth the wait. Often, I am thanked profusely because I am the one handing them the parcel.

In our small community we appreciate all those who have traveled to give us the good news of Jesus; and we wait expectantly for the glorious day when Jesus shall return in the clouds. Like a parcel coming in, we do not know what day Jesus will come, but we do know there are signs, and it can be hard at times to wait for his return. The question is, are we ready? Have we made room in our hearts for the precious gift God has sent us? Is there room in your heart for Jesus? Now is the time to give him a place in your heart, so you will be ready for his coming.

**Dear Father God, we thank you for those who brought us the good news of Jesus' unconditional love for us. Help us to show his love to others, and help us to wait patiently for his return. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.**

Written by Cindy Knoller, Aklavik, NT, 2019  
*On Eagle's Wings* Volunteer

# Faces of Bible Camp Over the Years

For 25 years, our Bible Camps have brought joy to children across the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Each year, our volunteers witness great excitement from children as they engage with Bible stories, creative crafts, and fun activities. Here are some of the special moments we've captured over the last 25 years.



(2008)



(2003)



(2013)



(2006)



(2010)



(2012)



(2003)



(2008)



(2024)



(2013)

## Redeemed and Transformed

*...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?* Matthew 6:25 (NRSV)

I had been anticipating a visit from one of the participants in a Women's Bible Study group all week. Finally, near the end of the week, her knock on the door meant brief rest from the hustle and bustle of Summer Bible Camp preparation and packing. As she shared her story, it became clear that her life was full of struggles - some familiar to all women, others unique to women in the North, trying to balance her cultural heritage and living in a world dominated by the interests of business and government.

A common thread in her stories was financial difficulties which often impeded her ability to complete projects that were important to her. Instead of focusing on the lack of resources she spoke with genuine joy and deep gratitude about how God had provided exactly what she needed in each instance. It became clear that the key to her dealing with situations in the way that Jesus wanted her to, was to maintain joy and thankfulness at God's presence and provision.

As we prepare for Advent and the coming of our Lord, I remember that God has dealt with the circumstances of the world by sending his Son to redeem and transform it. Thus I am free to approach each situation with joy and gratitude, recognizing God's provision even in the busyness of life.

**Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son to redeem and transform our lives. Thank you for calling us to trust in your presence and provision in all circumstances. Amen.**

Written by Rev. Lesley Hand, Ft. McMurray, AB, 2005  
Former *On Eagle's Wings* Executive Director

## Getting A Peek Inside

*Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 18:3 (NIV)

One little girl caught my attention during a week of Bible Camp in Behchokò. Every day she would arrive with a rolling suitcase and backpack which were about the same size as herself. Her belongings remained always by her side. Several times during the week we encouraged her to leave her suitcase and backpack while we went on our little field trips. She didn't talk much, but you could tell she was considering leaving her things, but didn't. I was curious to know what she was protecting. Her mom told us that she sleeps with the backpack and suitcase. What was so precious? By the end of the week, she eventually allowed me to look in the suitcase. Packed neatly inside were lots of Barbies and a Spiderman doll.

We often protect ourselves and our things like the little girl did. But when we understand that God's love is for everyone, including ourselves, we begin to let our guard down. There was a growing level of trust and compassion between myself and this girl that allowed me to eventually see her precious things. This girl showed me kindness that opened my heart.

Think about baby Jesus and how he came into our lives to share God's love. God gave us his most precious thing - his Son - not so that we can only take a peek inside the Kingdom of Heaven, but so that we can jump right in and receive all the love, trust and compassion that God offers.

**God of love, thank you for giving us Jesus so that we may know how deep your love is for us, and that by looking to him, we might know how to love others. Help us to trust you that we can let our guard down and enter into the life you offer. Amen.**

Written by Amy Rosborough, Lansdale, PA, 2017  
*On Eagle's Wings* Volunteer

Monday, December 9

## Be Irrepressible

*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord.*  
Psalm 122:1 (NKJV)

This summer, things didn't go as planned for one of our Bible Camps and we made a last minute change. A different community stepped in to host us on short notice, and we appreciated their effort.

On the first evening, attendance was low, so Doris, a church volunteer, posted the event on Facebook. What resulted resounds like the angel's message and the shepherds' joyous response. Ten minutes later, two kids arrived - Lana was a boisterous teenager I had remembered from last year, and her eight-year-old brother accompanied her. Lana's mom had seen the post, and soon after Lana grabbed her brother and ran two blocks to join us, bringing the exuberance that is her trademark.

An unsolicited testimony came as she quickly caught up on the activities and said, "I'm so happy I came to Bible Camp ." Didn't she show the same response as those first shepherds, who dropped everything and ran to get in on the experience which held so much promise?

Excitement is sometimes squelched, especially by adults wanting quiet, or by teachers holding onto control, but it comes from a joyful spirit and a personality that is ready to jump into action. What generous gifts to return to God when we are invited to come and experience Christ in our lives.

**Loving God, thank you for giving us a spirit of joy and celebration. Thank you for inviting us to live fully by sharing the gifts of who we are. Thank you for the news that you are always with us. Come, Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.**

Written by Kathryn Scott, Ft. Simpson, NT, 2013  
*On Eagle's Wings* Volunteer

## Start Each Day with God

*Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart: For consider what great things he has done for you.*

1 Samuel 12:24 (KJV)

When I get up in the morning, I often tend to get busy right away without starting off my day with a prayer. In this busy world it is too easy to forget all of the things that God has done for us. In fact, a great way to start each day is by reading the Bible and to take two minutes to count all of your blessings, and then try to have loving thoughts all day long. For when we do that, our hearts become merry and then we are walking in God's light. That will make us feel even more blessed than before! It is written, "The Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which he swore to your fathers. And he will love you and bless you." Deuteronomy 7:12-13

Therefore, let us never forget to thank God for his great love, and all of the blessings that he has given to you and me. Remember when you are counting all of your blessings to count the biggest blessing of them all: having such a loving, caring Heavenly Father who sent us Jesus Christ our Lord, born to live with us and who died for us.

**God of blessings, we thank you for all that you have given us: our lives, our relationships, your creation, and your love. Help us to remember these gifts every day as we come to you in prayer and as we lead our lives each day. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## A Time of Discovery

*You surely know that your body is a temple where the Holy Spirit lives. The Spirit is in you and is a gift from God.*

1 Corinthians 6:19 (CEV)

One year, when I was serving on the Blood Reserve in Southern Alberta, among the Black Foot people, I decided to build a Nativity set in front of the church to bring the spirit of Christmas closer to the people. Someone from the community brought some straw, I found old statues of Mary and Joseph in the church, someone else got a baby doll for the manger, and we put lights all around. Soon, a simple but nice Nativity was ready for people to reflect on and see that the birth of Christ was coming. Many were stopping every evening to take pictures or just to see the reminder that Christmas was coming.

At that time, I had my old dog, a big Alaskan Malamute named Spike. On the first night, he got into the crib and tore apart the little "baby Jesus," So, I lost my baby Jesus! A few days later, a woman from the community mentioned the missing baby Jesus, so I shared the story with her. She then told me that when she noticed the absence, she realized that baby Jesus was no longer in the manger but in her heart, and in the hearts of those around her. She said it was a very nice feeling when she realized that.

"Gee," I thought, "even my dog helped people realize that Christ is in us!" Advent reminds us of Christ's presence within us. The peace and joy we celebrate only make sense if Christ, who is that peace and joy, is in us.

**Father in heaven, this Advent let us discover again that we are your children created in your own image and, because of our baptism, that Christ is in us. Let us rediscover that there is peace and joy in Jesus Christ. In his name, Amen.**

Written by Fr. Les Kwiatkowski, Wabasca, AB, 2010  
*On Eagle's Wings* Supporter



## God Through Creation

*The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.*

Psalm 145:9 (NIV)

Through my job, I've traveled often, meeting new people and experiencing their environments - what they do, how they deal in situations - and soon I realized we all share similar challenges. There's nothing like travel. The packing, preparation, and anticipation. The obstacles of travel, stepping into new surroundings, people, food, and adjusting upon arrival.

This year, I took a float plane ride to a cabin on Sibbeston Lake with relatives. Unsure of what to pack, who would be there and what we were going "to do". After landing, the plane left - there was silence! No sounds until you altered your hearing; then we heard the sounds of life. Squirrels, birds, the breeze, lapping water, and rustling leaves. I was awed by the isolation, and yet apprehensive. That week of boating, fishing, and berry picking revealed the beauty and delicate balance of creation. A Creator wise enough to design nature's wonders is great enough to be trusted with the mysteries we cannot fully understand.

Like travel, Advent means "coming" or "arrival." It focuses on the past and future, celebrating Christ's coming, his presence, and his return, calling us to be faithful stewards with the hope of eternal life.

Each summer, *On Eagle's Wings* prepares "the little ones" for their journey, packing "the Word" to plant a seed, teaching that their destination is the kingdom of heaven.

**Gracious loving Creator, you are our God who hears. You answer our need, anticipation and hope of deliverance. Be with us as we live in expectation and anticipation as you come to us in your Son, Jesus. Amen.**

Written by Martina Norwegian, Fort Simpson, NT, 2010  
*On Eagle's Wings* Board Member

# Where We Go



- Northwest Territories
- Nunavut
- Northern Alberta
- Northern Saskatchewan
- Northern Ontario



## What Good Have I Done?

*But the Angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.*

Luke 2:10 (NRSV)

I have traveled to the North for five years now. It has been more than enough time for me to question why I go there and if I am really doing any good. I’ve always gone to Behchokò, so I have been able to form a relationship with some of the kids who remember me. One boy, my favourite (but don’t tell!) has been in our Bible Camp every year. I met him when he was about eight. Over the years, I’ve met his entire family. He doesn’t come to our sessions much anymore; but he did come for a short time again this year and it was long enough for him to drape his arm around me in a near-manly hug. It was long enough for me to see that he’s now almost as tall as I. Have I made a connection?

The priest who is at St. Michael’s Parish listened intently to my fears and concern. I have expressed concern to anyone who would listen when I tell them about *On Eagle’s Wings*. He listened when I told him that I go home afraid that I did not accomplish anything or wonder what any small child might have learned about God from me. Finally, Father Wes looked at me and said, “Stop it. Stop wondering. Just keep coming and doing what you do. And then, let God do what God does.” On our last night, two boys who were new to me said, “When are you coming back?” When I replied that it wouldn’t be until next summer they hugged me and said, “We’ll really miss you.” I guess God did what God does.

**Lord, keep me from being afraid of your work through me.  
Send your Spirit to lead me to the places where I’m needed.  
Strengthen my resolve even in the light of my insecurity. Let  
me walk with your children toward you. Amen.**

Written by David Weber, Lansdale, PA, 2014  
*On Eagle’s Wings* Volunteer

## A Few Words From Our Founder

*On Eagle's Wings* started with a dream. It was a dream shared by First Nations, Metis and Inuit Christians in remote communities in northern Canada and Christian people and churches in southern Canada and the United States. It was a dream of people from many different cultures, different languages, and religious traditions all working together to share God's love. It was a dream of northern and southern people connected by the Gospel. Respecting each other's cultural and denominational traditions, *On Eagle's Wings* grew from a dream to become a vibrant ministry that touched the lives of northern and southern people along with those who served and those whose generosity made the serving possible.

Soon after arriving in the Arctic, I flew to a small village to visit the Roman Catholic priest who had lived and served there for many years. I wasn't quite sure what to say. I'm sure I fumbled and stumbled with my words as I told him I was a Lutheran pastor and that I was using an airplane to reach out to remote northern communities. Father Jean saw how uncomfortable I was and he finally smiled and asked, "Do you believe in Jesus?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Good...let's get to work." And so it began. The dream became the reality of people from diverse cultures and many denominations becoming family to work, serve and learn from and with each other.

*On Eagle's Wings* grew rapidly. Within a few short years new ministry staff expanded the outreach to more communities in other provinces and generous gifts made it possible to add a second airplane and a permanent home office in Edmonton. With the growth came challenges. With the growth there also came new visions for ways to equip northern Christians for leadership and ministry within their own communities. It was a delicate balance between the excitement of growth and the need to be good stewards of all the gifts and resources people entrusted to us. *On Eagle's Wings* was a family. We needed people to serve and just as importantly, we needed people to make that serving possible.

My friend, Roman Catholic Bishop Denis Croteau reminded me that “Some people Give by Going to the mission and others Go by Giving to the misson.” It takes both.

Early in shaping our dream I met with a group of people who were eager to help. As we dreamed and planned, we wondered how it could work. Would people embrace the vision? Would there be enough money? I left with a busy mind full of questions. As I drove along on the dark, rainy and foggy night I wondered, can we do it? In the dense fog I saw a bright glowing light on the side of the highway. As I got closer, I saw that it was a sign in front of a big church. On the sign it said, “God Will Make a Way.” I got my answer.

As *On Eagle's Wings* celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, God has made a way. Working together, the dream will continue.

Rev. Lee Berry, 2024

*On Eagle's Wings* Founder, Former Executive Director, and Pilot



Left: Rev. Lee Berry in the OEW airplane  
Right: Rev. Berry with the first US Board

## Welcome Changes

*...born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ... you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.*  
Luke 2:11-12 (NRSV)

Everyone in the village knew young Sam - tall, good-looking, and always smiling. At Bible Camp he arrived early, enthusiastically participated, and even helped with clean-up. Sam enjoyed life and shared his ambition to someday become a Pastor.

As Sam became a teen, we saw less of him at Bible Camp. He always stopped in to greet us with the same big smile, but he had changed. His days were spent caring for his younger brothers, doing grocery shopping, and acting as a substitute parent. He worked hard and smiled less. Life in the North is not easy, and it saddened us to watch our friend lose his hope and ambition.

Our eighth visit to Sam's community brought a surprise - Sam was a father! How exciting it was to meet this new baby, but even more wonderful was the change we noticed in Sam. His eyes sparkled again. The big grin reappeared as he told us of the joy of being a parent and how important this new little life was to him. He felt purpose. This gift had given his life new meaning. One baby changing one life so dramatically!

The arrival of the baby Jesus also changed lives. Like Sam, Mary must have felt new purpose as she welcomed her newborn. Mary's baby changed her life, just as Sam's baby changed his. That same Jesus continues to change untold numbers of lives today and for all eternity!

**Jesus, we thank you for coming to us, accepting us as we are, and changing us in ways we may least expect. Help us to continue to seek your help in all we do so that we may serve you faithfully. Amen.**

Written by Polly Stewart, Lansdale, PA, 2009  
Former *On Eagle's Wings* Staff

## Sharing A Gift

*Praise him with strings and pipe...Let everything that breathes  
praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!* Psalm 150:4a & 6 (NRSV)

Her name is Jayda and she was twelve years old that summer we visited her community to teach Bible Camp. She was a quiet girl with a sweet smile that we caught glimpses of every once in a while. The younger children looked up to her and she was patient and kind to them. Some children are willing to share much of their lives with us. Jayda kept things to herself, so we were surprised when she asked if she could bring her fiddle to play at our "End of the Week Celebration Picnic".

It was a perfect evening as we headed up to Jackfish Lake with children and parents and every kind of picnic food imaginable. Swimming and canoeing were the main activities of the evening. As the feasting was coming to an end and most of us were just relaxing around the fire, Jayda asked if she could play her fiddle. As the sweet music began to flow, the quiet girl we knew so little about became a bold and talented musician sharing her music with us. God had given her a special gift and she was not shy about using it.

God gives to each one of us special gifts. Like Jayda, we must be bold in using our talents in his service. He sent his Son as the greatest gift of all and during this Advent time we must share that good news. So, just as the angels sang at Jesus' birth and the shepherds ran to tell the news; we need to continue to tell that story today. Jesus is born! Glory to God in the highest!

**God of creation, not only have you given us the gift of your Son but you have given us many gifts to share with each other. May we use them to ever praise your holy name. Amen**

Written by Suzanne Miller, Camp Hill, PA, 2013  
*On Eagle's Wings* Volunteer

## What Will You Carry?

*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!...See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*  
Zechariah 9:9 (NIV)

As a young child, what I most enjoyed about the Christmas nativity were the animals. I realize that this was quite unspiritual, but it was what fascinated my childhood imagination. It was not until much later that I discovered the scriptures do not tell us if or how many sheep, cows, or donkeys were even there.

Yet, it is my hunch that at the very least there was a donkey. For this simplest of animals demonstrates for us some of the greatest values in the Kingdom of God. A donkey is built simply and practically. It is not flashy, striking or fast. But it is perfect for carrying precious cargo carefully across long distances. A donkey is steady, faithful and enduring.

It is not surprising that thirty-three years later Jesus would again ride a donkey as he entered Jerusalem for the last time; not only fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah, but demonstrating again how God uses the ordinary and gives grace to the humble.

As we walk through this Advent season, we are easily tempted to focus on our desire for significance. Ask yourself: Am I satisfied to be used simply and practically? Or do I want to have a role more significant? Advent reminds us of the irony that a simple and practical donkey would usher in the birth of the Messiah, and later carry the hope of the world towards his greatest victory, the salvation of people.

**Holy God, in this Advent season, as we celebrate you in our lives, help us to honour you by being steady, faithful, and enduring in carrying Christ into our world. Amen.**

Written by Rev. Tim Kerber, Leduc, AB, 2008  
*On Eagle's Wings* Volunteer



## Called to Serve

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor.*  
Luke 4:18 (NRSV)

It was Advent 1983 and the Bishop had phoned to say that he had been unable to find a priest to send us for Christmas. We were on our own. I approached Harry, a member of the congregation, who occasionally read Scripture at our Sunday morning services.

“Sister, I don’t mind reading the Christmas Gospel in Cree but I don’t feel qualified to preach.”

“Harry, I think the Lord qualifies those he calls to serve; but don’t worry, I will give the reflection after the reading.”

When the church bell tolled at midnight on December 25<sup>th</sup>, the church was filled. After reading from the Christmas passage of Luke 2:1-7, I expected Harry to take his seat, when much to my surprise, he began to speak to the people. “This story says that Mary and Joseph were turned away when they tried to find a place for Jesus to be born. Joseph knocked on all the doors in town, and even the manager of the hotel wouldn’t give them a room. Us Cree people, we can’t understand that. We always let people camp in our house, even strangers. But what about letting Jesus into our hearts? Jesus knocks and knocks and we often just ignore him. What would our reserve look like if Jesus were invited into everyone’s heart? This Christmas story is told to teach us a lesson. Let’s all invite Jesus in and give him a place to be born.”

Somehow I didn’t feel like I needed to give my reflection. The Lord had qualified Harry to give the message to his people.

**Loving Father, as we prepare for the birth of your Son, give us the courage to hear and answer the call to serve, knowing that you will qualify us to bring the Good News to the poor. Amen.**

Written by Sr. Bernadette Gautreau, Mexico, ME, 2018  
*On Eagle’s Wings* Supporter

## Longing for Light

*Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.*

Luke 1:78-79 (NLT)

As the season of Advent moves forward, for many in the Arctic, the days grow shorter, darker. For some, there is no sunlight at all; for others there is precious little daylight. We long for the year to end, for the new year to bring us back the light, the sun. For many in the Arctic, life grows darker. Worries pile up, fear crowds in, hope ebbs away. We long for the fear to end, for anything, for anyone to bring us back to the light.

The message of Advent, the announcement of hope, the Good News, breaks into our darkness, physically, emotionally, spiritually. "Don't be afraid! For unto **you** this day, in the city of David, is born the Saviour". Jesus was born to be the physical message that God knows you, dear reader, sees you in all your glory, and God loves you!

"Who, me?" you ask, looking over your shoulder? Yes, definitely you. You are not alone, you are not forgotten, you are precious to God. Indeed, you are so precious to God that the ultimate sacrifice, God's own Son, was offered on the cross so that you could be freed from the sin that mires all of us. Through Jesus' birth and death, you have been freed and can return to the path of peace, peace of heart, peace of mind, peace with God. Advent - God Loves You!

**Dear Father, we give you thanks for all your mercies, and most especially for the great Gift of your Son. May this holy season of Advent bring us the blessing of the sure knowledge of your love, and with that knowledge, may our hope be rekindled, the embers fanned into flame so that we might be warmed deep in our spirits. In Jesus' Name. Amen.**

Written by Rev. Canon Paul Williams, Kugluktuk, NU, 2016  
*On Eagle's Wings* Supporter

## No Room at the Inn?

*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 2:7 (NRSV)

There are many travelers who make their way to Yellowknife throughout the course of the year. Gaggles of tourists come from far off to bask in the amazing aurora borealis - the northern lights that seem to dance and play in the night sky. People come to check out this unique mining town turned city in the middle of nowhere. Others come to the capital from various outlying communities for a variety of reasons. Some come for work, or to see family. Some come and cannot go back.

In Yellowknife, I've seen many people who have come only to find there is no place for them at the inn. Nowhere to stay that is welcoming, warm, private and safe. Many sleep in doorways or stairwells to escape the cold, while some seek comfort in addiction, or warmth in an unwelcome bed.

I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt traveling to Bethlehem, only to find no place to stay. Tired and extremely pregnant, Mary gives birth not in a hospital or hotel, but in a stable. The Saviour of the world is born into the world in a place of last resort - of inadequate welcome. Yet the space in which he is born does matter. It reminds us that there is no space, or place where God does not seek to be present in our world. Rather, God breaks in and dwells with us - all of us. This is part of God's radical welcome in Jesus. There is always room in his love for all people, no matter where they come from.

**Gracious God, we give you thanks that you are a God who is revealed in unexpected places and people. During this season of Advent, make room in our hearts for you and our neighbour. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.**

Written by Rev. Kirk Tastad, Yellowknife, NT, 2014  
Former *On Eagle's Wings* Board Member

# Volunteer Spotlight

## Celebrating 25 Years of Service

This year marks a milestone for *On Eagle's Wings*, highlighting the lasting impact of our work. For a quarter of a century, our volunteers have brought joy, love, and the message of faith to people in some of the most remote northern communities in Canada. The legacy of all of the volunteers before us continues to motivate what we do!

Volunteers are the heart and soul of our ministry, and their impact goes beyond leading Bible Camps. We also have volunteers who serve on our board, in the office, offer hospitality, and much more. In Northern Canada, many volunteers work tirelessly to arrange venues for camps and healing circles, and open their homes to welcome and support our teams.

We want to express our sincerest gratitude to every volunteer who has been a part of our journey over the past 25 years!

Do you feel called to make a difference by leading a camp, serving on our board, or offering hospitality? Visit our website or scan the QR code to find out how!



Volunteers at the 2024 Silent Auction



Bible Camp Teachers 2006



Volunteers helping at the Edmonton office 2023

## **Drawn into the Wonder of It All**

*When the wise men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him.*

Matthew 2:11 (NRSV)

Every year, my family loves to set up a stable and position the nativity characters around the room to pace their progression toward the manger. It gives us an annual inkling of the amazing, though uncertain, versions of anticipation the shepherds, wise men and even Mary and Joseph, may have felt. Even more intriguing is the way each character portrays a response to encountering the long expected one. They humble and inspire me to do the same as I approach the manger each year.

A morning in Cambridge Bay brought a similar experience to mind. Bishop Chris Williams was inviting us to share Holy Communion at St. George's Anglican Church. As we approached the table, I noticed the most amazing felted tapestry above the altar. It visualized several Inuit children and adults kneeling before the "long expected one"...not at the manger, but at the cross. In receiving the body and blood that day, it was easy to actually feel a part of that tapestry with the same measure of joy, gratitude and humility that could only be matched by those who encounter the birth of this amazing Savior, now or way-back-when, in Bethlehem.

Whether we gather in our homes or local faith communities, it's Jesus, God's son, the tiny babe, born to be our Savior that draws us in to the wonder of it all. And, it's the "Matthew 18:20 experiences" we share at Christmas, Holy Communion or even more ordinary faith-filled moments, that sustain it... and us.

**God of Bethlehem, Calvary and Cambridge Bay, draw us into the awesome wonder of your presence this Christmas wherever we are. Amen.**

Written by Mim Campbell, Lakeville, MN, 2013  
*On Eagle's Wings* Volunteer

## One Wee Life

*With all my heart I praise the Lord, and I am glad because of God my Savior.*  
Luke 1:46,47 (CEV)

As I prepared to leave a remote northern community, I waited at the tiny airport. I was not alone. Many gathered including elders, adults, small children and teenagers. Soon a small airplane was viewed in the distance. As the aircraft descended and landed, the crowd started speaking loudly, laughing and even clapping their hands. Children rushed to the chain-link fence to be the first to see. Finally one person, bundled in a red parka to shield from a cold winter wind, stood at the open door of the plane. This is what everyone had been waiting for...a very young woman with a bundle in her hood. As she stepped onto the tarmac, she smiled raising her arms above her head. She reached her hands into the parka's hood and gently pulled out her tightly wrapped baby. The response of joy erupted in tears amidst smiles.

Elizabeth and Mary, kindred spirits, pregnant moms and dear relatives, were together in disbelief and wonder sharing the stories and fears of the upcoming arrivals. Elizabeth knew her son, John, would point the way to Mary's Jesus. Jesus would make an impact on so many. He would be the surprise of a loving God calling all into a family full of grace. No one is to be excluded.

Today, I invite you to stop and wonder at the impact of one wee life, destined for all to love and to teach us all to love each and every one in the family of this world.

**Gracious God, You have sent Jesus to be one of us and to accept us without exception. Thank you. As Mary did, help us to react and respond with joy. Amen**

Written by AnnE Zimmerman, Edmonton, Alberta, 2012  
Former *On Eagle's Wings* Executive Director

## Advent Preparations

*In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.* Isaiah 40:3 (NIV)

Growing up in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories meant that Advent was a season of preparation for Christmas in my family's home. While we weren't particularly spiritual people, we were practical. The weekend after Thanksgiving was reserved for our last trip south, usually to Peace River (800 km away!), to do Christmas shopping. Mom would get all the essentials for her baking, and Dad needed to buy the Christmas goose. Even in a large center like Fort Smith, simple things like currants and goose could not always be found at the store. During Advent, the family would be busy on the weekends. Mom engaged us all in her baking efforts. One of my fondest memories is using blunt school scissors that couldn't cut paper but would slice through gumdrops with ease!

As I have grown older and moved into ministry, I have reflected on Advent not just as a time of practical preparations, but as a time for us to ask the real question, "Are we ready for the arrival of our Lord?" And then take the time to make the preparations. Advent is exciting as we prepare to gather around a tree that will become a cross. In that excitement, we are called to make ready for the return of our Lord.

**Lord God, as we prepare for Christmas, may we not fail to prepare ourselves for this great festival. Help us, amid all the busyness of these days, to find time to think of what Christmas really means: of your love for the world, of the coming of the promised Redeemer, of the mystery of the Word made flesh; and like Mary, may we treasure up these things and ponder them in our hearts so that we may be ready to join in joyful worship on Christmas Day. Amen.**

Written by Bp. David Lehmann, Ft. Simpson, NT, 1999  
Former *On Eagle's Wings* Board Member

## A Child is Born

*For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*  
Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV)

As a child growing up in Edmonton I remember the excitement of the Christmas season. As children, we engaged in family and church traditions that centred upon the baby Jesus. Fast forward several years and many miles. When we were expecting our first child as a couple, we had a unique Christmas season. The idea of waiting on our own child was a totally new perspective. The excitement and anticipation of what was to come, was very real and new. During our time of living and serving in the North, we got to experience many Christmases and to make lasting friendships. The relationships that we built during those early years have stood the test of time.

As a pilot with *On Eagles Wings* I have the privilege of serving the children of the North. Together with volunteers from the USA and Canada, we partner to provide Bible Camps in remote communities. We are able to spend a few moments with these amazing kids, and spread the news about the baby in a manger. Just like the kids we serve, he was also born in a remote community. As we enjoy and celebrate this Christmas season, let us all reflect on the amazing gift of our Lord and Saviour.

**Heavenly Father, we thank you for Jesus the Prince of Peace. We thank you for the beauty of the North. We thank you for our families. We pray for peace and love this Christmas season. We pray that your spirit will fill our hearts with your love. We pray this in Jesus precious name. Amen**

Written by Will Brander, Leduc, Alberta, 2016  
*On Eagle's Wings* Volunteer



## The Best Gift Ever Given

*The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.*  
Psalm 126:3 (NIV)

A cheerful carol began to play as the children sat in a perfect circle and hurriedly passed a small box wrapped in Christmas paper to one another. When the music abruptly stopped, whoever was holding the parcel got to unwrap a layer of paper. Shrieks of excitement filled the air as one child after another removed the wrap only to discover another layer of Christmas paper underneath. The simple game of Pass the Parcel was a real hit at Bible Camp in Tuktoyaktuk on a windy summer afternoon.

The point of our game was to get the kids into a festive spirit. We would be spending time learning about the Christmas story, and how Jesus was the best gift ever given.

As an adult, I haven't played Pass the Parcel in many years. Yet each Advent as I reflect on the mystery of the incarnation, it feels like I unwrap a little bit more of the story and see something new. It is a joyous experience to gain new perspectives, and to uncover a deeper awareness of the great things the Lord has done for us.

After midnight, we will begin celebrating the glorious arrival of our Saviour Jesus. Candles will illuminate our churches. Choirs will sing familiar carols. Families will gather to share meals. Gifts will be exchanged. And in the midst of it all, we will experience God with us.

**Dear Lord, may we be filled with joy this Christmas as we contemplate the great things you have done, not only for *On Eagle's Wings* and the families of the North, but for each of us. Help us unravel a little more of the mystery this year. Thank you for being the best gift ever given.**

Written by Robin Abrol, Edmonton, Alberta, 2024  
Executive Director, *On Eagle's Wings*



# ON EAGLE'S WINGS

## BY THE NUMBERS

OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS

# 15 THOUSAND

Children impacted by  
Bible Camps



# 1,827

Bible Camp in a Bag  
Kits Delivered



# 35

Remote Northern  
Communities  
Visited

Over  
**1,800**

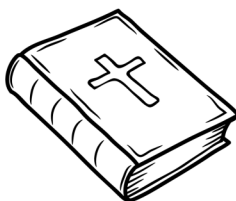


Volunteers

More than

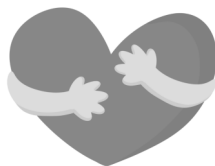
# 4 HUNDERED

Bible Camps Hosted



During 2024, in response to community requests, and in partnership with the Canadian Bible Society, we began running healing groups in northern Canada.

**Caring for the Wounded Heart** workshops provide a safe space for people to begin unpacking their trauma. Through story, art, music, journaling, and skits, people learn how to talk about their pain and listen to the pain of others.



## *A Symbol of Ministry*



Our 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.

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 and Staff*



Robin Abrol  
Edmonton, AB



Wendy Cusick  
Lansdale, PA



Marilyn Goebel  
Spruce Grove, AB



Shauna Huber  
Edmonton, AB



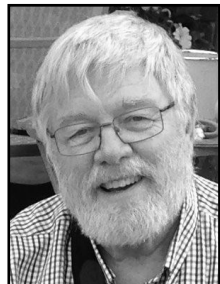
Rev. Tim Knauss,  
Downington, PA



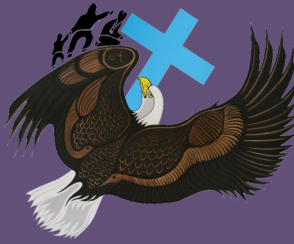
Martina Norwegian  
Ft. Simpson, NT



Stephen Stewart  
Lansdale, PA



Rev. Doug Woods  
Port Hope, ON



*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.*

*On Eagle's Wings*



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