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From Chaos to Love

Anniversary Edition (2026)

An Advent Devotional

Discovering God's Presence
In a World Longing for Hope

Welcome to this Advent Devotional

I am so grateful for the colleagues who have offered their wisdom, encouragement, and thoughtful suggestions along this journey. This devotional has been a labour of love—a work of personal healing, remembrance, and thanksgiving for my beloved father, and for the deep foundation of Indigeneity he instilled in me.
Most of all, this journey has been a continuing discovery of what my father taught me so many years ago: that I am beloved by God,
and also by God's Beloved Community.
Rev. Samantha Caravan
Advent 2026

A Note About How to Use This Devotional

From Chaos to Love is an invitation, not an assignment.
There is no single right way to journey through these reflections.
We each encounter words, stories, Scripture, prayer, and silence differently.
Some of us absorb ideas most deeply by reading;
others through listening, conversation, movement, images,
or time spent in quiet reflection.
Some may want to read an entire reflection at once,
while others may prefer to sit with a paragraph,
a sentence, or a single word for a day.
I invite you to use this devotional in whatever way helps
you encounter God.
Read it aloud. Listen to it (the audio can be found on All Saints' website – allsaintspeterborough.org).
Read a little at a time. Skip ahead and return later. Write, draw, pray, walk,
sit in silence, talk with someone else, or simply notice what catches your attention.
If a particular practice does not serve you, leave it aside.
If something speaks deeply to you, stay with it.

There is no test at the end of these four weeks only an invitation:
to notice the sacred, honour the beloved, care for creation,
and allow God's love to move us from chaos toward love.
Come as you are.
Engage as you are able.
And trust that God will meet you on your journey.

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INTRODUCTION

From Chaos to Love is a phrase I first heard from my Inuit father more than fifty years ago. One day I asked him, "What do you think the Scriptures are about?" His answer has stayed with me ever since.

"The Scriptures are a collection of stories between a people and their God. They are stories from chaos to love."

Those simple words became a lens through which I have come to understand not only Scripture, but also my own life and ministry.

Years ago, as an enthusiastic newly ordained priest, I wanted to share what I had learned as an Indigenous child: that despite whatever harm the world placed in my path, God's incarnational[1] love was—and is—present every minute of every day. With the encouragement, wisdom, and editorial guidance of dear friends and colleagues, I put pen to paper and together we created a small six-page Advent study called From Chaos to Love.

As I revisit these reflections almost two decades later, I do so with deep gratitude. Much has changed in our world, in the Church, and in my own life. Yet the heart of Advent remains unchanged, God dwells with us.

This Advent journey unfolds through four invitations. In the first week, *Sacred Moments*, we are invited to slow down and notice, to develop a sacred imagination that recognizes God's presence in the ordinary moments of our lives and begins to see the world through a countercultural lens.

The second week invites us to explore, *Belovedness*[2], and we move from noticing the sacred to recognizing the beloved: ourselves, and every human person, as loved into being by God.

In the third week, *Waters of Life*, creation becomes our teacher, reminding us that we are not separate from the world around us, but part of an ancient and sacred web of life in which water, land, creatures, and generations past, present and future are bound together throughout time and space.

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[1] Definition of Incarnation – page 31

[2] Definition of Belovedness – page 30

Finally, in *Relationship Lived Out*, we ask what it means to live what we have come to see, to allow God's love to become visible through the way we welcome, reconcile, serve, forgive, care for creation, and walk gently upon the earth.

The movements throughout this Advent Devotional are intentional: from seeing, to belonging, to kinship[3], to participation. Advent begins with our attention and ends with our response.

We are an Advent people, formed by God's continuing Incarnation into our lives and into the life of the world. That is profoundly good news in a time marked by polarization, uncertainty, and longing. Advent invites us to seek healing for the harms experienced by Indigenous Peoples, to embrace a deeper ecological discipleship[4], to reorient ourselves to the gift of the incarnation by decolonizing[5] our lives and church – meaning we need to engage in the important work of freeing our understanding of God from every ideology, empire, and system of domination that seeks to enlist the use of the sacred scriptures for its own purposes. And to discover compassionate ways of bridging the divides between loneliness and community, anxiety and hope.

Through the voices of the prophets, Advent calls us to a justice rooted in love rather than ideology. It invites us to dream with God about becoming people of peace in a fractured world. It reminds us that our baptism is not simply a moment in our past, but a lifelong vocation: to seek justice, to love mercy, to care for creation, and to honour the sacred dignity of every human being.

Perhaps Advent's greatest gift is this: in Jesus the Christ, God continues to bring love out of chaos—not only in Bethlehem, but in every human life, and in creation itself.

May these reflections encourage you to notice God's presence in your own story, and may this holy season renew your hope, deepen your love, and awaken you for the first time, or again to the sacred work of becoming Christ's presence in the world.

[3] Definition of Kinship / Creation as Kin – page 31
[4] Definition of Ecological Discipleship – page 30
[5] Definition of Decolonizing/Decolonization – page 30

WEEK ONE
SACRED MOMENTS
GROUNDED IN GOD'S LOVE.

In God we live and move and have our being.
Epimenides of Knossos, 6th c BCE
Acts 17:28, 60-62 CE

Many years ago, when I was leading a confirmation class I said, "Everyone who is Holy put up your hand." As I looked around the room at the 13 fresh young faces I was entrusted with, they were confused, and none of them had their hands up. They did what many of us do, confused being holy with being sinless or perfect. What followed that evening was a wonderful conversation about sacredness[6], about being in right relationship, being dedicated to a divine purpose, about being set apart from the world's order to follow Jesus the Christ.

In this first week we are going to talk about sacredness and the sacred moments of our lives. Before we do that let's talk about decolonizing sacredness. From the very first human prayer, we have wrestled with how to remain focused on God, and, millennia later, on Jesus, while the cultural and political forces of the world around us continually seek to define the Divine in their own image.

Decolonizing sacredness is the ongoing work of freeing our understanding of God from every ideology, empire, and system of domination that seeks to enlist the sacred for its own purposes.[7] It is a return to the way of Jesus, whose life reveals a God of radical love, mutuality, justice, humility, and abundant welcome.

Throughout our lives, we move from one event to another, one relationship to another, one task to another—all within the course of a single day. What is the liturgy of your life—in work, at home, in play, in learning, and in prayer? How many people do you cross paths with each day? How many do you truly see? How many do you know?

My Inuit father taught me that all life, all creation is interconnected, in relationship with one another, supporting one another. The river waters the tree, which creates the very air we breathe, trees breathe together, they bear fruit, to feed both animal and human, all the while sheltering animal and bird alike. The very dust of the stars in the sky is the same dust that we come from and return to. Whales sing in dialects unique to their

[6] Definition of Sacredness – page 32
[7] Definition of Decolonization – page 30

family pods. Hummingbirds remember everything. Every sunrise is an act of annunciation. Every river reminds us of our baptism. Every seed waiting beneath frozen ground bears a silent witness to hope.

Creation itself keeps Advent.

Among God's creatures, we alone possess the capacity to reshape creation on a vast scale—for healing or for harm. When relationships within our interconnected networks are broken, then all are affected.

Martin Luther King Jr. described this beautifully from a jail cell in Birmingham, when he wrote that we are "caught in an inescapable network of mutuality..."

The work of Advent is not simply preparing our hearts for Christmas; it is participating with God in the healing of relationships.

During this first week of Advent, thinking of our Life as a Series of Sacred Moments gives us the opportunity to consider anew the impact that we have on the world around us, and which it has on us. Looking through a sacred lens and being mindful of our day-to-day lives what parts of them need to be disentangled from the systems of domination in our world. This is not an easy task as some of the systems support our lives. We may even work for a company or organization whose mandates are contradictory to Micah's call to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. What kind of sacred imagination do we need to develop so we are people who cannot be co-opted by nationalism, racism, patriarchy, or consumerism? What kind of sacred imagination allows us to develop right relationships, recognize the image of God in every person, remove barriers that prevent people from flourishing, be attentive to those whom society overlooks, and are willing to examine systems that privilege some while disadvantaging others?

Sacred imagination teaches us to see the land not as property but as gift; neighbours not as strangers but as relatives in God's Beloved Community[8].
It invites us to tell the truth about the harms of colonization, not in order to remain captive to the past, but so that together we may participate in God's work of reconciliation[9].

[8] Definition of Beloved Community – page 30
[9] Definition of Reconciliation – page 32

Sacredness begins with attention.
Before we can change ourselves or the world,
we need to learn to notice where God is already at work.

We find the basis for this courageous sacred imagination in the life and witness of Jesus the Christ. Jesus himself seems remarkably resistant to being recruited by political agendas. When people wanted him to become a nationalist king, he withdrew. When asked about imperial taxes, he refused simplistic answers. When Pilate questioned him about kingship, Jesus described a kingdom "not from this world"—not meaning detached from the world but not operating according to the world's logic of coercion and domination.

One of the most striking features of the Gospels is that Jesus continually disappoints those who want him to reinforce existing power structures. The religious establishment finds him too disruptive. The Roman authorities find him too threatening. Political revolutionaries are disappointed when he advocates for peace, not violent uprisings. He does not fit neatly into anyone's ideological project.

Jesus is the ultimate parable!

In Christ we discover not only what God is like, but more excitingly, God's dream of what humanity was created to become. More than we can ask or imagine. What if we thought of our daily lives as the possibility of a series of sacred moments. Might our lives become less a collection of things to do and more an unending melody line in the symphony of God's Beloved Community?

What would happen if we donned the armour of light, became more patient, grumbled no more? What if we stopped looking for the day of Christ's coming again and instead held the needs of others before our own, thus participating in the building of God's Beloved Community today?

What would happen if we truly considered ourselves to be 'beloved of God?' We are, after all, created in the image of God. Reflections of God, we are creative, thinking, artistic, moral, and relational beings, through the Pattern of Life of Jesus the Christ we are called to live a life of compassion and justice for all.

Consider this—the unsung story of Christmas, the unsung story of the babe of Bethlehem, is the untold potential God holds in the human person. The Saviour of the world entered the world exactly as we did, as a totally dependent infant, dependent on

the people around him for his very life. Mary and Joseph's child must be fed and cared for, taught his ABCs, and right from wrong; he must be encouraged and nurtured.

And consider on whom God depends for this, human persons just like you and me. People who, when in this 21st century serve the stranger, smile at the lost, and feed the hungry, participate in the nurture and care of the babe of Bethlehem. The child has come—the Prince of Peace reigns; we live in the realm of God, we are part of God's Beloved Community, no waiting required!

May we nurture a sacred imagination where all creation is held together in Christ, and that every sacred moment is an invitation into right relationship—with God, with one another, and with the whole created order.

Sacred imagination teaches us to see the sacred.

Let us pray;
Creator God, from the chaos of the world's beginning, you fashioned love.
Breathing life into every living creature, you entrusted creation with the freedom to become. Our lives, too, are a journey—from the chaos we create toward the love you continually offer. Where there is chaos, reveal to us your works of love already in motion.

Where your love is hidden, help us to recognize it, and where love is needed,
make us willing to become its expression.
Give us the sacred imagination of the mystics, that we may learn to see you in all things and all things held within your love.

May our lives become reflections of your mercy, your love, and your justice,
not because we have done it perfectly, but because we have learned to join you
in the holy work already unfolding around us. Amen.

This week's spiritual practice: Nurture your sacred imagination.

The work of Advent is not simply preparing our hearts for Christmas;
it is participating with God in the healing of relationships.

WEEK TWO

BELOVEDNESS[10]

LOVED INTO BEING BY GOD.

As a child I did not pass as easily for white as I do now. My skin was darker, my hair was black, my eyes appeared to have no pupils. I was often mistaken for Mexican, Italian, or just othered. My friends were other children who were also sidelined because of the colour of their skin, the texture of their hair, an accent, or any other physical attribute that separated them and me from the dominant white culture. At a public school in Toronto, in grade five, I remember making a speech as part of a class assignment about our personal heritage. I begged the teacher to excuse me; I would do anything else. She asked why I was so nervous and I remember telling her that the others would hate me more than they already do. Her response? "Oh, that's all in your head. You're fine." The day came and I made my speech and I told the truth: my mother was English but died when I was very small and my father was born in Greenland and is an Inuit. I did not get the next sentence out before another kid yelled, "you are a mongrel, I knew it." That evening I was crying and telling my father how ashamed I was, how no one liked me. I wanted him to go to the school and make it right; his response is something I am still growing into.

My father in a warm but firm voice encouraged me,

> "Sammy, other people's racism is their problem, do not own it for yourself. We cannot change them, but we also cannot allow them to change us."

I am convinced it was that moment in my life when I decided that every human person was equal, valuable, and should be loved for no other reason than they draw breath, no matter what. It is still a core belief, a part of my deepest soul that I continually nurture and learn. As such I am still growing into the reality.

In our sacred stories, we find the foundation for belovedness in the Elder Testament[11] and the book of beginnings, Genesis. The Creation stories do not use "beloved" as a title for humanity, but they lay the foundation for our understanding of it. Throughout the Creation story, after each creative act, God pauses, sees what has been made, and declares it good. At the end of creation, God sees everything that has been made and declares it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Humanity is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27).

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[10] Definition of Belovedness – page 30

[11] Explanation of Elder Testament – page 30

This is foundational: our human dignity is not something God awards us for right belief or behaviour. Our dignity—and our belovedness—is present in the very act of our creation.

Then there is Psalm 139, that beautiful and intimate poem of our creation: "You formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb." The Psalmist reminds us that we are known by God before we have done anything to earn that knowing. We are loved into being.

Throughout the writings of the prophet Isaiah, we find the language of being precious, honoured, called by name, and loved. "You are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you" (Isaiah 43:4). The biblical story keeps drawing us toward an understanding of human life as something held within the love of God.

And then, in the Younger Testament[12], we hear the word "Beloved" spoken over Jesus himself. In the first chapter of Mark, as Jesus rises from the waters of baptism, a voice from heaven says, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). This is important for us to hear because before Jesus does anything, Jesus is declared beloved. Before the healings, the teaching and preaching, before the feeding of the five thousand, before walking on water, before the cross, death, and resurrection—before any accomplishment—Jesus is beloved.

Belovedness is not a status we earn through good behaviour or religious performance, it is our foundational identity as children of God. It is with this understanding that over time I have moved from the construct of the Equality of the Human Person to something deeper: the understanding that in becoming human, God forever sanctified human life. Every person we meet bears a dignity that Christ himself chose to share. For the child called a mongrel, this belovedness has become for me a lifelong passion and learning.

We live in a world where labels are often used to divide rather than understand, where people are sorted into opposing camps before they are ever known as beloved children of God. Is it possible that the equality and belovedness of the human person is not based on the colour of our skin, the texture of our hair, the accent we speak with, what pew we worship in, or what we have and what we do not have?

[12] Explanation of Younger Testament – page 30

Might our equality and belovedness be based on our ordinary ability to share life? Is it possible that the equality and belovedness of the human person is based on the gift of life itself, and its delicate interconnectedness with the other, and with all of creation? We have stories of faith that span thousands of years, and they tell us that God gives humanity the choice to participate in the co-creation of God's Beloved Community. God imbues us with the ability to know and reason, the ability to create, to procreate, and love, to choose right over wrong, and good over evil. We have been given shared responsibility for "every living thing that moves on the face of the earth." This begins with people, extends to the animal world and encompasses the ecology of the entire planet. How is it then that war rages, inequality is far more acceptable than it should be, and otherness is an acceptable way of wielding power?

For three years Jesus wanders around Galilee with a rag tag band of misfits, healing, forgiving, feeding, teaching, and blessing everyone he encounters. Not one time does Jesus ask for their Synagogue membership card before engaging in conversation, healing, teaching, or anything else. He ate with sinners and still does around our eucharistic tables. He had a particular passion for the poor, the widow, and those marginalized by the oppressive systems they were living under.

Jesus redefines who belongs.
Where did it all go wrong?

This Advent, how is God inviting us to begin again?
Advent reminds us that God enters a divided world not to condemn it but to reconcile it. Every act of welcome, every barrier removed, every table expanded, every friendship restored bears witness to God's dream for humanity.

Belovedness is not simply an ethical principle,
it is the shape of God's Beloved Community.
Belovedness teaches us to see one another.

Let us pray;
God, you loved us before we ever took our first breath.
Before we could accomplish anything, before we could understand or believe,
you called us beloved. When despair takes hold, may we remember the love that is already present.
When harm is done, may we join you in overturning the tables that keep people from flourishing. When someone is pushed to the margins, may we stand beside them and

make room. When we encounter another person, may we learn to see the beloved before we see the label.
Teach us to recognize the shape of your Beloved Community
already emerging among us—in welcome, in justice, in forgiveness, in tables made wider and barriers made smaller. And when love is needed, may we become its hands and feet.

May our lives bear witness to the truth that no one needs to earn their belovedness. For we are loved into being, and we are invited to love one another into belonging. Amen.

This week's spiritual practice: Seek out belovedness.
Notice it. Receive it. Create it.

"Other people's racism is their problem, do not own it for yourself.
We cannot change them, but we also cannot allow them to change us."

WEEK 3

WATERS OF LIFE

CREATION REMEMBERS.

Have you ever been in an open watercraft on the open sea or ocean? It is humbling. The year my Aatta (grandfather) died, my father and I ventured to Greenland, and it was the first time I realized how insignificant I was. Sitting beside my cousin in a large seal skin watercraft, I was struck by the vastness of the water, and the depths of it I could not see. Although saddened by Aatta's death I remember being overcome with the beauty of the place, the smell of the ocean, and meeting a whole new family and way of life. I was eleven years old and my cousins and I would run and play all day.

One day I thought we should try hopping from one ice floe to another. This alarmed one of my older cousins who in no uncertain terms told me it was dangerous. 'Maybe, but it will be fun.' I was entirely unaware of the dangers that lay in wait under the water. So, there I was dressed from head to toe in my beautiful seal skin winter wear. I made several successful jumps from the middle of one ice floe to another, and I also missed a couple. I thought it odd that not one of my many cousins even attempted the fun I was having. I was getting ready to jump again, and just as I leapt into the air my uncle came out of nowhere and hauled me up by the back of my jacket and set me back on solid ground. "Look," he demanded, and pointed to the water, I turned and saw the nose of an Orca whale coming out of the water. It may have thought I was dinner. Later that evening my father reminded me that not all our kin are friendly or life-giving, but they are our kin and learning to honour them is a lifetime of work.

One summer, many years later I visited a dear friend who lives in Western Newfoundland, we took a day trip to Port au Choix where the archeological remains of a long ago Inuit Village stands. This Paleo Inuit village would have been around some six thousand years ago, and the Inuit of that day would have paddled hundreds of miles in open ocean to follow the seals to hunt them. As I stood on the rocks of the shore and the water lapped up over my shoes, I was moved to tears by the connection I experienced through the water with people who lived and died thousands of years before I ever existed. And more amazing still, the water lapping over my shoes was part of the same ancient water cycle that has sustained life on this planet for billions of years. The same water my beloved father's body was given to when he died. Water is our kin. It remembers, carries, connects, and refuses to let life become disconnected. Ageless life-giving water—a testament to the strength of our baptismal life.

Water plays such an integral part in the life of all living things, not just physically, but spiritually. The creation story in Genesis begins not with dry land, but with water. Before the stars in the sky, the trees, before animals of any description, before humanity, there is the deep, deep waters. It is in these mysterious deep waters that the first life on earth is created. The waters were not simply an empty space waiting for God to fill them, the waters are part of the divine mystery from which all creation emerges. God separates the waters, gathers them, makes room for dry land, and then calls upon the waters themselves to bring forth life: 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures.' (Genesis 1:20)

Creation is not a collection of separate things. It is an interconnected web of relationships. We do not live alongside water; we live because of it. I wonder if this is one of the things Creation tries to teach us, when we are willing to listen: nothing exists entirely on its own.

The water teaches us relationship.

That evening after ice floe hopping my father's lesson was not that creation is always safe or gentle. The lesson was that creation is a relationship and that we are all interconnected. The Orca did not exist for me, neither was the ocean mine to conquer, the whale was living its life, and I had entered its world without understanding the relationship. Not all kin are friendly or life-giving, he reminded me, but they are our kin. Learning to honour them is a lifetime's work.

Perhaps that is where our creation theology could begin, not with the question, 'What can this part of creation do for me?' but rather, 'How do I live rightly within this sacred relationship?'

From Genesis to Revelation the biblical story begins and ends with water. The water brings forth living creatures, a river flows from Eden to water the garden. Over, and over, and over, our sacred texts speak of God's life flowing through all of creation like water. Later the prophets dream of rivers bringing healing; Moses led the people of Israel through water. A little later in the story, Moses, using his staff, causes water to gush from a rock and the thirsty Israelites drink. The Psalmists speak of God as the source of all living waters. Jesus is baptized in water, walks on water, and turns water into wine, he even calls himself 'the living water'—and then at the end of his earthly life water flows from his side. Water plays a prominent role in the sacred stories of our faith; there is even a boat or two mentioned. Then our sacred story ends with a river of water of life flowing from the throne of God.

It is through the water at birth that the Divine emerged into this world, a helpless child, whose entire existence now depended on two human people and their ability to love and nurture him. Water holds the very nature of the incarnation[13] in its molecules. Before any of us ever breathed air, we floated in water. Before Jesus drew his first breath in Bethlehem, he too was carried in the waters of his mother's womb. The God who created the seas chose first to encounter humanity through water. Without the waters that covered the earth, through which every child is born, by which all creation is sustained, and in which we are baptized, our relationship with God would be unimaginable.

What if our deepest identity is not found only in our biology but in our participation in the life of Christ? What if Advent is an invitation to not simply believe in Jesus, but to become a place where Christ is formed, to allow the life, and love, and presence of God to be formed and birthed in us for the sake of this world?

To see water as our kin is sacred imagination at its best. It asks us to see beyond water as a resource or commodity and to recognize water as part of the sacred web of creation. Water connects all time and space, all creation, all life into one sacred family. In baptism we enter this relationship consciously, joining ourselves to the Creator, to Christ, and to the whole created order. What if baptism is God's way of saying that nothing in all of creation is beyond redemption? Water touched creation before humanity existed, it touched Jesus, it touches us, it will touch generations after us.

That is incarnational redemption. That is Advent!

Creation teaches us to see our kinship[14].

Let us pray; God of living waters, you knit us together in the waters that cradled us before we ever drew our first breath, and through water you bind us to one another and to the whole of creation. The water that touched us has touched generations before us and will touch generations yet to come. It has flowed through the bodies of our ancestors, through rivers and oceans, through creatures great and small, and through the story of your people. May we remember our kinship.

When we are tempted to see ourselves as separate, may we recognize the life we share. When we forget our dependence upon creation, may we remember that the earth is not ours to possess but the home we share with all your creatures.

[13] Definition of Incarnation – page 31
[14] Definition of Kinship – page 31

May humility become our clothing and gratitude our way of life.
May our lives honour the water, the land, the creatures, and one another
as sacred gifts within your beloved creation.
And wherever creation is wounded, may we join in the work of healing.
For we are not separate from your creation.
We are part of it, held within it, and held within your love.
Amen.

This week's spiritual practice:
Engage with all the water in your life this week as kin. Notice it. Listen to it. Give thanks for it. Notice whether anything in your relationship with water changes.

Water is our kin.

WEEK 4

RELATIONSHIP LIVED OUT

LIVING AS A REFLECTION OF GOD.

There are eight core societal values that have shaped Inuit communities and that shaped my own childhood and being.

- Respecting all people, fostering healthy relationships, and caring for others.
- Being open, warm, welcoming, inclusive, to create belonging.
- Serving and providing for family and community as a measure of true leadership.
- Making decisions collaboratively through extensive discussion, listening, and shared consensus.
- Mastering skills organically through close observation, mentoring, and individual practice.
- Collaborating and working together selflessly toward a shared, common goal.
- Being highly innovative, adaptable, and resourceful when solving problems.
- Treating the land, ice, water, wildlife, and environment with deep respect.

These core values are not rules posted on a wall. They are a way of being in the world. I learned them through watching, listening, participating, being corrected, and being loved. They taught me that relationship is not something we occasionally enter into; relationship is the place in which we live and move and have our being. The epistle of John says it best, we love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19).

My father never wavered from his Indigenous[15] beliefs. To honour my mother who was church of England he sent me to church every week and taught me the scriptures. It was a great gift to learn the scripture outside of the colonized interpretation of the church. Despite being exposed to Christian formation and encouraging it in me my father never came to Christian faith. I asked him once why he was not willing to be baptized and follow Jesus. His answer was to review the core values with me and then he asked me – other than belief that Jesus is the Son of God, and that he suffered, died, and was resurrected – what is different between what you believe and what I believe? Does not Jesus want the same community of hope and justice that I want? There are many different shaped containers in which the Divine resides.

My fourteen-year-old self-did not have an answer, I was not sure why I loved Jesus, certainly part of it was in becoming an Anglican I was honouring my deceased mother.

[15] Definition of Indigenous – page 31

Over the course of my life my father's question has been sitting in the back of my heart, and it has taken me many years to discover in Jesus something my father himself never embraced. For me Jesus is not simply the teacher of a way of life that benefits all creation. In Jesus the Christ I encounter the Creator who lives them perfectly, who embodies love, mercy, justice, humility, and radical welcome; who willingly enters into the suffering of the world and died at the hands of the oppressor, who rose again so that love has the final word over every form of chaos.

I have come to believe that the Divine meets people in many different places and traditions. For me, it is in Jesus the Christ that I encounter the fullness of God's love. This is the container that speaks most deeply to me.

At the same time my father's question has been the impetus behind a wide and honest welcome into God's Beloved Community[16]. I believe you can belong here before you believe, you can belong here and believe, you can belong here and never believe, just belong.

And perhaps this is where faith becomes relationship rather than simply belief. If Christ is the revelation of God's love, then following Christ means allowing that love to become visible in our own lives.

Jesus does not simply tell us to love our neighbour. Jesus shows us what love looks like when it takes on flesh. Love feeds, welcomes, and forgives. Love tells the truth. Love challenges systems that diminish human dignity. Love sits beside the grieving. Love notices the person everyone else has overlooked. Love washes feet. Love crosses boundaries. Love refuses to let violence, hatred, or death have the final word. This is incarnation[17] lived out in our day to day lives.

It may seem remarkable that the core values I learned from my Inuit upbringing are so deeply resonate with the core teachings of Jesus the Christ. Maybe it is not remarkable, maybe it is inevitable, because lives rooted in sacred relationship naturally bear the fruit of justice, mercy, peacemaking, hospitality, generosity, hope and love. Not because they are moral obligations but because they are natural consequences of restored relationships, and the Divine energy that holds all things together.

When we understand ourselves as belonging to one another,
the way we live changes.

[16] Definition of Beloved Community – page 30
[17] Definition of Incarnation – page 31

When we understand the land, water, animals, and all creation as kin,
the way we live changes.

When we understand every human being as beloved,
the way we live changes.

When we understand Christ as God-with-us,
the way we live changes.

One of the most precious gifts of Advent is the opportunity for the incarnation breaking into our lives. Every time we repair a relationship, feed a hungry person, ask for or grant forgiveness, seek mercy, work for peace, seed hope, and love with wild abandonment we are living our best incarnational selves. We are only limited by our sacred imagination.
Then how shall we live?
How might we become God's Beloved Community,
welcoming all - believer and non-believer alike?

Mary said yes.
Joseph said yes.
The shepherds said yes.
The disciples said yes.
The women at the tomb said yes.
At seventeen years old, standing at the baptismal font, I said – yes!
Yes, to reconciliation.
Yes, to forgiveness.
Yes, to hospitality.
Yes, to justice.
Yes, to creation.
Yes, to courage.
Yes, to love.
Yes, to becoming the people God dreams us to be.

Every Advent, God asks again, and we are offered the opportunity to keep saying yes to God in the ordinary moments of our lives. What will our answer be?

The incarnation is eternal.
God is not finished with us.
God continues to enter this world through human lives.

So, go now into the world as people of sacred imagination.
Notice the sacred.
Honour the beloved.
Care for creation.
Repair relationships.
Walk gently upon the earth.
Love without fear.
Become the answer to your own prayers.

LET US PRAY;

God of love, you have never stopped entering our world,
calling us into relationship with you, with one another, and with all creation.
You have shown us the way of love in Jesus the Christ, who welcomed the stranger,
made room for the excluded, fed the hungry, crossed boundaries,
forgave those who caused harm, and chose love even in the face of violence.
May we recognize your way already unfolding around us.
Send us into the world as people of sacred imagination, people who notice the sacred, honour the beloved, care for creation, repair relationships, walk gently upon the earth, and love without fear. May we become, in our own small and ordinary ways, the answer to our prayers. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

Is to nurture and live into your sacred imagination.
Choose one or two and at the end of the day, ask yourself; Where did I notice God today - you may notice something immediately, slowly, or not at all. Was there an opportunity to participate in God's love already at work? There is no correct spiritual response.
Notice the sacred.
Honour the beloved.
Care for creation.
Repair relationships.
Walk gently upon the earth.
Love without fear.
Become the answer to your own prayers.

I believe – you can belong here before you believe,
you can belong here and believe,
you can belong here and never believe, just belong.

Reflection Guide for Individuals and Groups

Week One

Sacred Moments

Grounded in God's love.

Reflect

Take a few moments to sit with these questions. You do not need to answer them all. Allow one question to stay with you.

1. Where or when have you experienced a sacred moment in an ordinary part of your life? What made you notice it as sacred? What might have been different if you had not been paying attention?

2. Where might God already be at work in your life, your relationships, or your community that you have not yet noticed?
What helps you recognize God's presence? What makes it difficult?

3. What might it mean for you to see the land, water, people, and creatures around you not as separate from your spiritual life, but as part of your relationship with God?

Pray

Let us pray;
Creator God, from the chaos of the world's beginning, you fashioned love.
Breathing life into every living creature, you entrusted creation with the freedom to become. Our lives, too, are a journey—from the chaos we create toward the love you continually offer. Where there is chaos, reveal to us your works of love already in motion.

Where your love is hidden, help us to recognize it, and where love is needed,
make us willing to become its expression.
Give us the sacred imagination of the mystics, that we may learn to see you in all things and all things held within your love.

May our lives become reflections of your mercy, your love, and your justice,
not because we have done it perfectly, but because we have learned to join you
in the holy work already unfolding around us. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Nurture your sacred imagination.

This week, practice noticing.
Choose one ordinary part of your daily life—a morning walk, your first cup of tea or coffee, the people you encounter at work, the water you drink, a tree outside your window, a conversation, a moment of silence.

Before moving on to the next thing, pause.
Notice.
Where is life present?
Where is love present?
Where is healing happening?
Where is God already at work?

At the end of each day, write down one sacred moment you noticed.
You might discover that sacred moments were there all along.

Wonder Alone or Together

If you are sharing this devotional with others, resist the temptation to find the "right" answer. Instead, wonder together.

What happens when we begin to see ordinary moments as sacred?

How might our relationships change if we approached every person we encounter as someone in whom God is already at work?

What changes when we understand creation not simply as something God made for us, but as part of the sacred community to which we belong?

Where do you see signs of God's movement from chaos toward love in the world around you?

And perhaps the most important question:
What are we noticing now that we might not have noticed before?

The work of Advent is not simply preparing our hearts for Christmas;
it is participating with God in the healing of relationships.

WEEK TWO

BELOVEDNESS

LOVED INTO BEING BY GOD.

REFLECT

Take some time with these questions. You do not need to answer them all, and there is no "right" answer.

1. When in your life have you experienced being loved simply because you are you—not because of what you have accomplished, believed, or contributed?
What did that experience teach you about God?

2. Where have you learned to measure your own worth, or the worth of another person, by labels, accomplishments, appearance, belief, or belonging?
What might change if you began instead with belovedness?

3. Jesus continually crossed the boundaries that determined who was considered worthy of belonging. Who are the people or communities you find difficult to see first as beloved? What might it mean to encounter them differently?

PRAY

Use the prayer at the end of this week's reflection (page 12), or simply sit quietly with these words:

I am loved into being.
I do not have to earn my belovedness.
My neighbour is beloved;
So is the stranger;
So is the person I do not understand;
So is the person I struggle to love.

Allow the words to rest rather than trying to solve anything.

Spiritual Practice
Seek out belovedness.

Notice it. Receive it. Create it.
For one day this week, pay attention to the people you encounter.
Notice the person who serves you.
Notice the person who is overlooked.
Notice the person who seems lonely.
Notice the person whose opinions differ from yours.
Notice the people you instinctively move toward—and those you instinctively move away from.

Before you see a label, a role, an opinion, or a difference, practice seeing **the beloved**. Then, when an opportunity arises, create a small act of belonging: make room, listen, offer welcome, speak a name, share a table, or simply let someone know they have been seen.

At the end of the day, ask yourself:
Where did I notice belovedness?
Where did I participate in it?

Wonder Alone or Together
If you are sharing this devotional with others, resist the temptation to turn these questions into a discussion that needs to arrive at an answer. Instead, wonder together.

What does it mean to you that Jesus was called Beloved before he had accomplished anything?

If every human person begins with belovedness, how might that change the way we understand welcome, justice, forgiveness, or belonging?

What would our church, our communities, and our world look like if we truly lived as though no one had to earn their place at the table?

And perhaps one final question to sit with:
Who might God be inviting you to see differently?

WEEK THREE

WATERS OF LIFE

CREATION REMEMBERS.

REFLECT

Take some time with these questions. You might choose one and sit with it rather than trying to answer them all.

1. Think of a time when you encountered water in a way that made you feel small, connected, grateful, or changed. What did the water seem to teach you?

2. We often think of water as something we possess, use, manage, or consume. What changes when you begin to imagine water as kin—as part of the living web of creation to which you also belong?

3. If nothing in creation exists entirely on its own, what relationships in your life are sustaining you right now?
What relationships might you have forgotten or taken for granted?

PRAY

Use the prayer at the end of this week's reflection (page 16) or simply sit quietly beside water if that is possible.

Let yourself remember:
I am not separate from creation but in relationship with creation.

The water that has touched me has touched generations before me
and will touch generations after me.

I am held within the life of God.

I am held within the life of creation.

If you have access to water, place your hands in it. Listen to it.
Let it remind you that you belong.

Spiritual Practice

Engage with all the water in your life as kin.

For one week, notice water.
The water you drink.
The water you use to wash your hands.
The rain, or snow and ice.
The water in rivers, lakes, and oceans.
The water that grows your food.
The water that sustains every creature you encounter.

Before you use water, pause for a moment and give thanks.
Ask yourself:
Where did this water come from?
Who and what depends upon it?
How am I dependent upon it?
How might I honour it?

If you can, spend some time beside a body of water without trying to accomplish anything. Simply notice.
Listen.

Wonder Alone or Together

If you are sharing this devotional with others, wonder together rather than searching for a single answer.

What does it mean to say, "Water is our kin"? Does that change the way you think about water, creation, or your own place within the world?

The Genesis story imagines the waters themselves participating in the emergence of life. What might creation teach us about God if we listen to creation as more than something God made for human use?

If baptism joins us not only to Christ but to the whole created order, what might that mean for the way we live our baptismal vocation?

And perhaps sit with this one together:
What would change if we stopped asking, "What does creation need from us?" and began asking, "What relationship is creation inviting us into?"

WEEK FOUR

RELATIONSHIP LIVED OUT

LIVING AS A REFLECTION OF GOD.

REFLECT

Take some time to sit with these questions. You do not need to answer all of them, and there is no "right" answer.

1. Think about the relationships that have shaped who you are, the good, and the not so good. Who taught you, by their words or by the way they lived, what it means to love, belong, forgive, or care for another person?

2. Jesus shows us that love is something we *do*, not simply something we believe. Where in your ordinary life might you have an opportunity to make love visible—to welcome, repair, forgive, listen, feed, encourage, or make room?

3. If you truly believed that every person, every creature, and the earth itself was an integral part of God's Beloved Community, what might change about the way you move through the world?

Pray

Use the prayer at the end of this week's reflection (page 21).

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Live your sacred imagination.
Choose one or two of the invitations below and carry them with you through the week:

Notice the sacred.
Pay attention to an ordinary moment in which you sense beauty, wonder, connection, or grace.

Honour the beloved.
Look at another person—not as a category, label, role, or problem, but as someone beloved by God.

Care for creation.
Do one small thing that honours your kinship with the earth, water, animals, or another living thing.

Repair relationships.
Where it is safe and appropriate, take one small step toward repairing a relationship.

Walk gently upon the earth.
Notice one way your choices affect the wider web of creation.

Love without fear.
Allow yourself to offer kindness, compassion, forgiveness, or welcome without worrying about whether it will be returned.

Become the answer to your own prayers.
Think of something you have been praying for in the world. Ask yourself:
Is there some small way I can participate in making this prayer reality?

At the end of each day, pause and ask:
Where did I notice God today?
Where did I participate in God's love already at work?

You may notice something immediately. You may notice something later. You may notice nothing at all. There is no correct spiritual response.
The practice is simply to **notice, participate, and remain curious.**

Wonder Alone or Together

You could use these around a kitchen table, in a small group, with a friend, or simply as questions to carry into your own week.

What does it mean to you to say that relationship is not something we enter into, but the place in which we live and move and have our being?

Where do you see God's Beloved Community already taking shape—in your family, neighbourhood, workplace, church, or wider community?

What might our world look like if we understood love not primarily as a feeling, but as a way of living?

I believe—you can belong here before you believe,
you can belong here and believe,
you can belong here and never believe, just belong.

A Few Words Along the Way

A glossary for this Advent Devotional.

Belovedness

The understanding that our worth and dignity come from being created and loved by God, rather than from achievement, status, belief, productivity, appearance, or social approval.

Beloved Community

A community shaped not by sameness or agreement but by love, justice, mutuality, dignity, welcome, reconciliation, and shared responsibility.

Decolonizing / Decolonization

Decolonizing is the ongoing work of examining the ways colonialism has shaped how we understand God, Scripture, the Church, other people, ourselves, and the created world—and of discerning what needs to be reclaimed, changed, or released. Colonization is not only a historical event. Its effects can continue through institutions, relationships, assumptions, language, theology, and systems that privilege some people while diminishing others. Colonialism has also become deeply intertwined with other systems and ideologies of domination, including racism, patriarchy, misogyny, consumerism, the exploitation of creation, and assumptions about whose knowledge, culture, bodies, beliefs, and ways of being are considered more valuable than others.

For this reason, I use the words *decolonizing* and *decolonization* broadly throughout this devotional. I am not suggesting that every form of injustice or domination is the same as colonization. Rather, I am inviting us to examine the ways these forces can become entangled with one another, shaping our relationships with God, with one another, and with creation—often without our being conscious of them.

To decolonize our faith is therefore not to reject Christianity, nor to romanticize Indigenous cultures. It is to ask honest questions about whose voices have been heard, whose have been silenced, who has benefited, who has been harmed, and how the Gospel might call us toward relationships rooted in dignity, mutuality, justice, humility, reciprocity, and love.

In this devotional, decolonizing is an invitation to return again and again to the life and teachings of Jesus and to ask: What belongs to the way of love, and what has been added by empire, domination, fear, or human power? In other words, what helps us move toward love, and what keeps us in chaos?

Ecological Discipleship
Following Christ in ways that recognize our relationship and responsibility to the whole created order—not simply caring about the environment but understanding creation as part of our life with God. It is the living out of the baptismal promise where we promise to strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation and respect, sustain, and renew the life of the earth?

Elder and Younger Testaments
We use the terms "Elder Testament" and "Younger Testament" rather than "Old" and "New" as an expression of racial equity, theological care, and our ongoing commitment to confronting antisemitism. These terms acknowledge that the Younger Testament emerges from and remains deeply connected to the Elder Testament, rather than replacing or superseding it.

Indigenous
The term Indigenous, in its broadest sense, refers to peoples who have longstanding relationships with, and have inhabited, their lands since time immemorial, prior to colonization. In the Canadian context, Indigenous Peoples is an inclusive term encompassing First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, each with their own distinct identities, histories, cultures, languages, traditions, and relationships with the land and with Canada.
Alongside a long and painful history of colonization, the word Indigenous also carries the remarkable resilience, strength, and tenacity of peoples who continue to reclaim and revitalize languages, traditional ways of knowing, cultural practices, spirituality, and relationships with the land. It speaks not only of what has been lost or harmed, but of what has endured, survived, and continues to flourish.
For me, Indigenous is therefore not simply a description of where a people come from. It is an intergenerational kinship that speaks of belonging, relationship, identity, and the enduring responsibility to care for one another and for all of creation.

Incarnation
Is the Christian belief that in Jesus the Christ, God enters fully into human life, including ours. In this devotional, incarnation also points us toward God's continuing presence and love within human lives and the created world.

Kinship / Creation as Kin
Kinship reaches beyond our understanding of family. It describes a relationship rooted in our profound dependence upon one another and upon the whole of the created

world. It is woven into our very being the same stardust that formed the universe courses through every living thing.
Kinship invites us to see ourselves not as separate from creation, nor as master's over it, but as participants within a vast and sacred web of life. We belong to one another. We belong to the land, the water, the animals, the plants, and the air we breathe. What happens to one part of creation ultimately affects us all.
To understand creation as kin is to recognize that our relationship with the natural world is not simply about stewardship or responsibility. It is about relationship, reciprocity, gratitude, and belonging. Creation is not merely something God has given us; creation is the community in which God has placed us.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the ongoing work of restoring right relationship where relationships have been damaged by harm, injustice, colonization, and broken trust. In the Canadian context, reconciliation includes facing honestly the history and ongoing consequences of colonization and the harms experienced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

Reconciliation, then, is not simply forgiveness, forgetting, or returning to the way things were. Sometimes reconciliation begins with truth-telling, listening, accountability, reparative action, and a willingness to change relationships and systems that continue to cause harm.

For Christians, reconciliation is deeply rooted in the ministry of Jesus, who continually crossed boundaries, restored relationships, welcomed those excluded, and called people into a new way of living together. In this devotional, when I use the word *reconciliation*, I do so with an awareness of its limitations and with the hope that our work together might move us toward relationships shaped by truth, justice, humility, and love.

Sacredness

The recognition that God's presence and holiness are not confined to particular buildings, stained glass windows, organ music, liturgical practices, moments, or people, but can be encountered throughout life and creation.