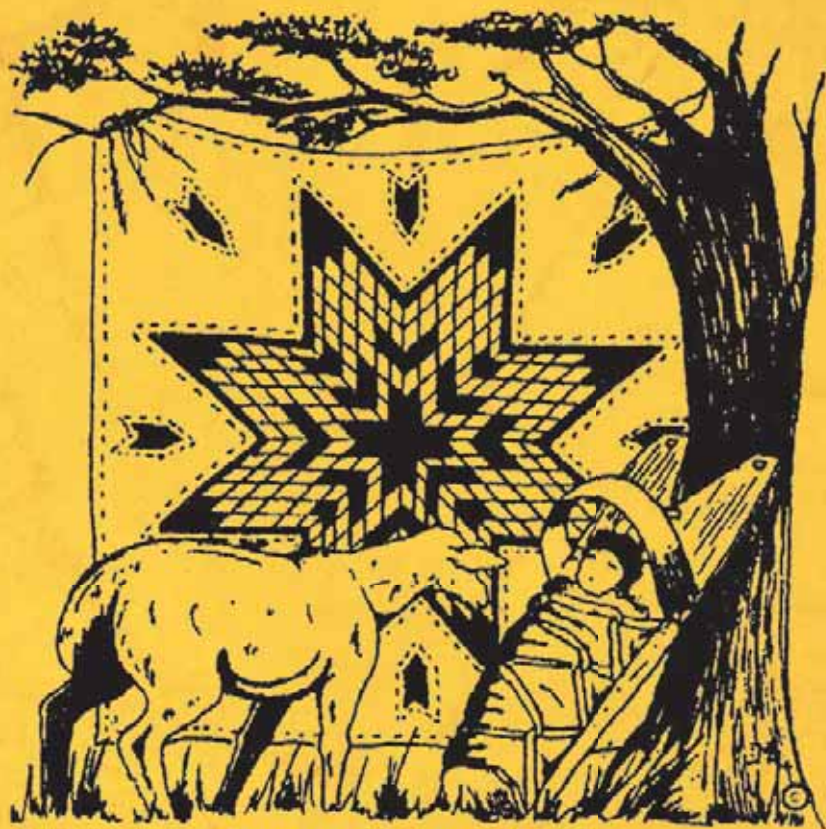


# ADVENT DEVOTIONS



2011



**Lutheran Indian Ministries**  
*Christ's Kingdom — Every Native American Nation.*

*A Ministry of Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S.*



# Lutheran Indian Ministries

*Christ's Kingdom — Every Native American Nation.*

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## **LUTHERAN INDIAN MINISTRIES COMES TO PUBLIC TELEVISION**

For their 2011-2012 season, the public television series, *Visionaries*, filmed at three of our ministry locations; in Southeast Alaska on-board our vessel the M/V CHRISTIAN, on the campus of Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, and on the Makah Indian Reservation in Neah Bay, Washington. *Visionaries* focuses on non-profit organizations that change lives through leadership and empowerment. Viewers will “spend a day in the life” of three culturally unique areas where ministry outreach to Native people is thriving.

*Visionaries* has chosen to profile Lutheran Indian Ministries in a 30 minute documentary in its 17th Season because it is a vivid example of an organization that promotes leadership skills and self-determination among Native Americans in many areas of North America. Lutheran Indian Ministries is often the only consistent Christian presence in the more than 120 Native American communities it serves.

The *Visionaries* series airs on public television stations across the country and is accessible to over 64 million households. The *Visionaries* is presented by public television station WGBY in Springfield, Massachusetts and distributed to PBS stations throughout the United States. The documentary is scheduled for release this fall of 2011.

Please contact your local PBS station to inquire when the program will air in your area, or you may call our office (888) 783-5267 or visit our website, [www.lutheranindianministries.org](http://www.lutheranindianministries.org), for current information and to obtain a copy of the documentary for public viewing.



## Lutheran Indian Ministries

*Christ's Kingdom — Every Native American Nation.*

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Dear Friend in Christ,

I am honored to share with you our 2011 Lutheran Indian Ministries Advent Devotion Booklet.

Lutheran Indian Ministries. This name may surprise you. In this day and age of political correctness, you may question our wording. But, we Natives refer to ourselves and to each other as Indians. Let me reassure you, as a Makah – as an American Indian – this name sends a positive message of its own: We are Indians ministering to Indians. This wording reflects one of the great things God has been doing among American Indian, Alaska Native and First Nations people. He's been raising up Christian leadership from within. After decades – centuries even – of misunderstanding Christianity as a white man's religion, Native men and women are working hard to share the message of Jesus Christ.

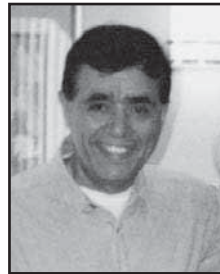
For the past 26 years of Lutheran Indian Ministries, *Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S.* has been sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the far reaches of the north, including Alaska, and more recently in remote Native communities in the lower 48 states. God has blessed this ministry with opportunities to identify, recruit, train, equip and empower American Indian, Alaska Native and First Nations people for service in the church and in their communities. I am particularly grateful to see Native people becoming pastors and deaconesses. Your prayers and your faithful support have made this possible.

This booklet is our thanks to you for your faithfulness to this ministry. It has been a joy and a privilege, throughout the years, to be able to share our ministry stories with you and how lives have been changed through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Without your partnership this would not have been possible.

May you be encouraged in your own faith as you read and contemplate the message of these devotions.

God bless you!

Rev. Dr. Don Johnson  
Executive Director



## SUNDAY • WEEK ONE

### Genesis 12:1-3

# *A Time for New Beginnings*

*“The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.”*

*“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

Our first steps, are steps *out* - But at the same time, every step is a step *into*. We’re going someplace we’ve never been before.

As God called Abram out of a culture of idolatry, He wasn’t simply calling him away from something damaging, destructive and sin laden, but His calling was a calling into something new and fresh, not only into a new place geographically, but also a new place spiritually.

Often when we are going through a time of God’s dealings, times of brokenness and humbling, all we can see is the pain and the change and it sometimes terrifies us. “Where are we going?” Like Abram we are going someplace we have never been before. We are not just, in a “law” sense, being called to take steps “out” - out of a sinful or dysfunctional past, a “Thou shalt not...” pattern - but in a very “Gospel” sense we are being called “into” a new place of liberty, growth, and wholeness, a wonderful place of being hidden away in Christ, and in a deeper sense, a walking into the finished work of our great Redeemer and Friend.

God was at work in this scary time of change in Abram’s life. Through this time of change God would be changing Abram — not simply his address, “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse: and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” What an awesome promise, in a world that makes people small, God was making Abram great, and an instrument of blessing.

In this season of Advent we can look back to the fulfillment of all that God had promised Abraham. Jesus was the promise realized in all that His birth, life, death and resurrection accomplished for our salvation.

The next time you find yourself wondering, “God, what is going on with my life. It feels like everything is coming apart. My life and my family seem to be falling apart. Where are you taking me right now?” Trust God through it all. Know that He is not simply bringing you *out* of something diminishing and destructive, but *into* something large and wonderfully life transforming. Connecting you by faith and obedience to something important for His Kingdom.

*Lord help me not to become so overwhelmed with the sins, failures and hurts of my past that seem so present in my rear view mirror. Open my eyes to see the Emmanuel glory you are presently working in me. Open my eyes to see who I am in you. Make my life a blessing to someone today. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Winston Wilson  
Neah Bay, Washington

MONDAY • WEEK ONE

Isaiah 42:16

*Darkness Into Dawn*

*“I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.”*

My good friend Leonard, a commercial fisherman, taught me that if one needs to run the boat in the dark, its better to start in the morning darkness and move into the light. That is to be preferred to going from daytime into the dark.

The difference is the light. When a person enters into the light there is safety, visibility, less anxiety. It is better to enter a new anchorage in the light, than groping around in the dark. The light gives perspective.

As Sharon and I travel in Southeast Alaska, we are hearing from various native spiritual leaders, a vision of light. They see God breaking down the darkness that is keeping His light from the people. They sense that revival is in the wind. The only disagreement is from which village the revival will originate! But the visions are coming from the Tlingit and Haida people. God is speaking to them and they are not afraid to prophesy.

God has heard their prayers, and the darkness will be destroyed and the people will walk into the Light. One friend related how he sees the light from God as water on a mountain held back by a dark mass part way down the slope. Salmon milling around directionless in the ocean represents the people. But soon, thanks to the Spirit of God, the darkness will be destroyed; the waters will flow and call the people home, just like the salmon.

It is humbling to be able to walk alongside people of vision, who know the power of darkness, and yet they are confident in the power of the resurrection of Jesus, that will bring their people into the Light.

*Lord, Help us to move from darkness into your light. Give us courage to walk alongside others in their journey into the light. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Rev. Stan Berntson  
Skipper  
M/V CHRISTIAN  
Southeast Alaska

## TUESDAY • WEEK ONE

Luke 1:38

### *Mary the Forerunner*

*“I am the Lord’s servant, Mary answered. May it be to me as you have said. Then the angel left her.”*

Mary went against the norm of her day. Not by her own choice initially. She was a young woman, unmarried and minding her own business. But God, the Creator of all things and the Author and Finisher of our faith, had a plan and a purpose for Mary.

Mary had no idea that God had a plan for her life. Or that the plan would bring about a wonderful change in the world, even the universe. And that a baby would be born to her who would be the cause of all of this. Through the child Jesus, there would be restoration, healing and reconciliation for the whole world. But then there was this situation. Mary would be His mother!

Mary could have been stoned to death for bearing the baby Jesus. She was not yet married to Joseph. Mary was thus susceptible to criticism, hatred and violent acts. But God preserved her through all of that. Mary trusted God and faithfully did as God wanted. Against the standards of faithlessness that was so much a part of her world, she nevertheless found favor and obeyed God, eventually giving birth to the child Jesus, the Savior of the world. Mary was one who received the Word by faith and obeyed in faith.

Her faithfulness had a great impact on our world because of its connection to God’s plan to save mankind through Jesus.

It is a good message for us. When God asks of us to carry out a difficult assignment, even one that seems to go against the norms of the day, may we like Mary say, “I am the servant of the Lord. May it be as you have said.”

And just like Martin Luther who heard a Word from God and went against the winds of change in his day to declare truth, may we too be faithful when God calls. Because it is not about a man, it is about who Jesus is and how His Word brings His Kingdom into every situation. We are His servants.

*Holy Spirit, help us to be steadfast in our faith and examples to our families and communities so that we might be used of you to be bringers of light and truth to our often dark world, even when it is difficult. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Patricia Main  
Haskell LIGHT  
Lawrence, Kansas

## WEDNESDAY • WEEK ONE

Luke 4:18

### *Why He Was Sent*

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

These words summarizing Jesus’ purpose in coming into our existence were a quote from Isaiah Chapter 61. He said them in a synagogue in Nazareth, His home town.

You might have thought that His words would have been welcomed by the familiar people of His youth. But as we know, the people who should have known and loved Him the most could not get past their own prejudice and self limited view of themselves. Their thinking is typical of all those who feel marginalized and therefore defensive about themselves. Usually, such people draw fences around themselves to keep out new ideas. Their thinking went something like this. No one from Nazareth should think themselves to be more important or knowledgeable or assume things as lofty as Jesus’ proclamation appeared to them to be. Who did He think He was? Like disgruntled shoppers, they wanted Him at the old price, the way they remembered Him and not what He had become, the Messiah with a message they needed to hear. Thus, they not only rejected what He had to say, some became angry enough to want to harm Him. And in doing so, they could not experience the healing, comfort or especially new life Jesus came to offer them.

When we get caught up in our self, whether it is to think more highly of ourselves than we should or the other side of the same coin; to think less of ourselves as in rejecting who God made us to be, we hinder the message of salvation and healing that Jesus brings. The key to receiving the healing and salvation that He offers is a spirit of humility and willingness to hear and receive Him. It is “a broken and contrite heart O God, you will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17)

As we discover from the whole context of Scripture, it is not who we are or think we are that merits our salvation or excludes us from it. It is never about us. It is rather about who Jesus is and what He has done to accomplish our salvation and healing. We are therefore most ready to experience His salvation and healing when we come to Him with a broken and contrite heart, poor and emptied of self will and a willingness to receive what He has to offer.

*Oh Father God, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to bring healing to us and our sin broken world. May we receive all that He has to offer in a spirit of humility and openness. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rev. Dr. Don Johnson  
Executive Director

## THURSDAY • WEEK ONE

Isaiah 51:16

### *My Mouthpiece*

*“I have put my words in your mouth...”*

It's a cold rainy evening and I'm sitting in the gym on the reservation staring at a casket that holds the body of yet another one of our youth. An overdose of drugs is the cause that took this young man's life prematurely. I watch as the grieving parents try to get through this wake, while friends and family members are shuffling in and out. I watch as the elders, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and great grandparents walk slowly into the room one by one to take a seat, as they endure another service of a lost young one. This is a scene that has repeated itself for too many times in the last several years. For a split second I almost feel as if I can't breathe, thinking of what words of comfort I have to offer this family, this time. Just as I am feeling totally powerless, I look at the candles burning next to this young man's body, flickering and cutting back and forth through the darkness of the room. I start thinking of Christ's birth and how He came into the world to bring light into the darkness. To reprove the world of sin and bring hope to all peoples. Just when I didn't expect it, I felt God's strength within me. I felt strong again and was able to speak words of comfort and hope to those that needed to hear it. I had no need to think about what I was about to say; the Holy Spirit put the words in my mouth and they flowed out freely. Even in the hardest times of grief, He is our mouthpiece.

God's light filled the room that night, just as the light of Christ filled all the world over 2000 years ago. The light He brought then gives us hope beyond the darkness we see so often in a sin darkened world.

*Thank you Lord, for always giving us the words to say and directing our path, so that we are always ready to offer a prayer and word of hope to those that are suffering in grief and sorrow. In the precious name of Jesus. Amen.*

Cathy Benzler  
Port Angeles, Washington

## Volunteer Ministry with Lutheran Indian Ministries

At Lutheran Indian Ministries, we invite men and women of faith to join us in helping to bring Christ's Kingdom to Every Native American Nation.

Our Volunteer program is two-fold; Vacation Bible School and Servant Events. Volunteers must have a spirit of adventure and a sensitivity to the fact that they are guests of the people who invite them into their community.

We seek volunteers with a clear and positive commitment to Jesus Christ, a willingness to adapt God's Word for Native cultures, and the ability to "rough it" without the normal comforts of home.

To learn more about becoming a volunteer with Lutheran Indian Ministries, please visit our website, [www.lutheranindianministries.org](http://www.lutheranindianministries.org).

If you already know that you'd like to volunteer, please complete and return the form below.

**I am interested in becoming a volunteer.**

*Please send me an application form:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_

(C) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Send to:* Lutheran Indian Ministries  
Attn: Director of Volunteer Service  
3525 N. 124th Street, Suite 1  
Brookfield, WI 53005-2498

## FRIDAY • WEEK ONE

Psalm 46:10

### ***LOST?***

*“Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”*

The other day I got lost—not out on the road or in the bush—I got lost in my computer. I got in, but couldn’t get out. It was stuck and I was stuck. I couldn’t move forward—couldn’t back track. I was overwhelmed by my inability to handle the little electronic machine in front of me. In desperation I shut it down. Miraculously, when I turned it on, the screen read: “Windows was improperly shut down. Do you want to search for the problem or start windows normally?” I hit the key to start normally and all was well.

In life we all make errors (sometimes unintentionally) and we get lost. Sometimes we make choices that also take us into “lostness” and there just doesn’t seem to be any way out. In desperation some turn to drink or drugs or suicide for a way out.

But maybe the best way to handle our “lostness” is just to shut down—shut down and let God take over. He is the one that can restart us. Maybe we need that quiet time the Psalmist spoke of: “Be still and know that I am God.” *God* is the KEY to restart life and move on to new and better things. Maybe the old phrase, “go with God,” has some significance, for through Christ He has said: “Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Christ has become the key for us to move out of our “lostness.” In Him we can “have life and have it abundantly.” As we use the right key, we can move on.

*Lord Jesus, with your coming in the flesh, with your suffering and dying for our sins, you have not only become the KEY to eternal life, but the KEY to life here and now. Rescue us from our lost times and lead us on the way of life. In your name we pray. Amen.*

Rev. Layton Lemke (Retired)  
Former Board Member and Volunteer  
Norwood Young America, Minnesota

## SATURDAY • WEEK ONE

Isaiah 9:2b

### *Ambassadors for the Light*

*“Those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.”*

We have really been cognizant of the amount of daylight given each day this winter. When the dark October storms come, there is almost a heaviness that accompanies it. Everyone who lives up here knows that the season of darkness is on the march. Each day, the radioman announces how many minutes of daylight we have lost. Not a very cheerful way to start the day.

Although I am not a morning person, Stan is. He jumps out of bed, whether there is daylight or not, ready to be on the move. He would rather get the boat started on her way in the dark, and motor into the morning light. Leaning on lessons learned from an experienced mariner and friend, he knows this is the safest strategy. The days are too short. Better to head into the light from the dark. The only other option is to start late, and arrive in an unfamiliar harbor or anchorage in the dark, unable to see the hazards around you.

There is a faith lesson in this for us all. When it's morning, I think about how wonderful it would be to stay curled up and pull the blanket over me. It takes some convincing for me to make a move, especially if it looks as dark as midnight outside. Yet as the morning light creeps into the room, it transforms everything around me, and my attitude as well. I guess God knows some of us need that extra help! It is good to celebrate the coming of Light this season. It becomes a reality later in December, with the birth of Christ, as well as the lengthening of days after solstice. We cherish every added second of light each day after.

I read somewhere that the real task as a Christian is to be an ambassador to the Light. A messenger, or representative, sent on ahead. We can't be the Light; we can only reflect Jesus to others by our life and witness. And in the process, pointing the way, reassuring others of its reality. We hope that as the Light has transformed our wayward lives, we can be a beacon for others to know this hope.

*Help us to be your light in a dark world, Lord. Thank you for the privilege to be an ambassador to that hope, that there are brighter days ahead, in this world and the next. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Sharon Geldaker  
First Mate and RN  
M/V CHRISTIAN  
Southeast Alaska

## SUNDAY • WEEK TWO

Isaiah 26:4

### *Ice Road Peace*

*“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” Isaiah 26:4 (KJV)*

As Linda and I crept forward on the ice road leading out onto the large frozen lake we prayed. “Oh Lord, keep us safe and please hold us up on this frozen lake.” We had travelled from Sioux Lookout through the forest for almost seven hours and were now far from where we started. We were heading north to visit Linda’s Cree community of Muskrat Dam. It was just a few days after Christmas and the message of it was fresh on our hearts and minds. But we still had a long way to go and it was very cold. It was dark now and we wondered if the word we had from the road crew was in fact accurate. I spoke to them just before leaving home and they insisted that the ice was now thick enough to carry a pick up truck.

In fact one of the crew members was my brother-in-law. He is Cree and has lived and worked in this part of the bush all his life. He now leads the crew out of Muskrat Dam, where we were heading, and is usually the first to test the ice on the lake and then to cross it with any vehicle. He told me that he had just tested the ice and that it was strong and that he would meet me half way across the first big lake. It stretches out close to four miles and the lake is deep.

I have traveled over this lake several times on ministry trips since this experience. But, never have I been one of the very first to drive across it at the beginning of a winter road season when the lakes first freeze up. This took extra faith. There were so many unknowns. There were no tracks to follow. There were slushy spots that suddenly came up. But there was no turning back.

I have often thought of the spiritual lessons that can be learned from travelling on these ice roads and lakes. In the night of our lives we have just enough light to see but we must trust in the one who knows the way. This makes inner peace possible as we travel. You trust, as you press forward, that there will be light on the road ahead of you as you keep moving in faith. God knows the “road conditions” ahead of us and He will not take us down a wrong path. I trust God in my life because He has been faithful in the past. I cannot see Him, or the road ahead of me, in the way I would always like. But, I know His word tells me that I can trust Him and my experience tells me I can trust Him. The Bible says that Jesus came to hold me and embrace me and to carry me over the rough roads and waters of life.

What ice road have you been travelling on? How has God been calling you to trust Him? The angels praised God and told the shepherds that peace was on its’ way. In fact the Prince of Peace was coming. *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests,”* the angels thundered and declared. (Luke 4:14) It all comes down to this in the bigger picture of our lives. Who are we putting our trust in? If our faith and trust is truly in Jesus Christ, the one who came to us on that first Christmas Eve and now reigns over all, then perfect peace is ours. If our trust is in anything else we will be disappointed.

By the way, we did cross that lake safely. Just remember the next time you cross an ice road. If you want perfect peace you know where to find it.

*Oh Lord we long for your perfect peace and for real Shalom in our lives. Lord, grant us the insight to see that we find this peace in you. Thank you for coming to us, that first Christmas, and for completely providing the way. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

Rick Martin

## MONDAY • WEEK TWO

Matthew 13:16 ESV

### *Ears to Hear*

*“But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.”*

One of the songs that we sing in our school’s weekly chapel service is an old time favorite “Jesus Loves Me.” You probably know the words and many of you know the actions as well. “Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong; they are weak but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.”

All of our students of Jesus Our Savior Lutheran School hear [*pun intended*] in Winnebago, from 2nd grade on down to our three and four year olds, this song. At one chapel service I was going over the motions, like putting my index finger in the palm of my other hand to symbolize the nails, and I asked a question, “What do we call a person who is not able to hear?”

You will be surprised by the answer. The answer was ‘Choka!’ I am sure that most of you do not know this word. ‘Choka’ in Ho-Chunk means ‘grandfather.’ The teachers and I had a good laugh at that response.

As one grows older, often times, he or she becomes hard of hearing. This is different than selective hearing when one hears what he wants to hear and refuses to hear what he does not agree with. The sad truth is that many who hear about Jesus and His love for each and every person refuse to accept His love.

The second verse goes like this: “Jesus loves me! He who died Heaven’s gates to open wide. He has washed away my sin, lets His little child come in. Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.”

Jesus’ love is universal. He paid with His life for the sin of the whole world. His offer of grace extends to one and to all. ‘He is the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.’ [1st John 2:2 ESV] That is why Jesus came the first time. He will come again real soon, His second Advent.

The other day at the Little Priest Tribal Library, I ran into a boy that I had shared the love of Jesus with while he was staying at the Youth Shelter. He said to me ‘I remember you.’ That made me smile. More importantly, he went on to say that he remembered a song that I taught him. The song was “Jesus loves Me” and he began to sing it. I joined him in singing it right then and there. By the grace of God this young boy had ears to hear and eyes to see Jesus as His Savior.

*Aho Mauna waza hanach guzra, Creator ~ You indeed are the teacher of all things. We praise and thank you for sending your Son the first time in order to pay for the sin of the world. Forgive us when we fail to heed your gracious invitation to come to your houses of worship. Bless your people with ears to hear and eyes to see. In Jesus our Savior’s name we pray. Amen.*

Rev. Ricky Jacob  
Winnebago, Nebraska

## TUESDAY • WEEK TWO

Colossians 3:15-17

### *A Gift of the Heart*

*“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,...with thankfulness in your hearts to God, And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

As I age, I start to think in terms of generations. What is it that I have received and what am I passing on? When I look over the years, one of the important things that stands out to me, is the attitude of thankfulness my grandparents and parents practiced. Can an attitude be given one person to another? Perhaps not, but there is a saying, “most of what we learn is caught and not taught.” And in order to catch something, we must come into close proximity; into relationship.

A trip to my grandparents house usually took place during the Christmas season. My grandfather sat at the head of the table surrounded by twelve grown children and multiple grandchildren, of which I was one. He led the meal by a lengthy prayer of thanksgiving. While we ate until we thought we would burst, he was satisfied with my grandmother’s bowl of hearty soup and fresh bread. You see, he had no teeth. This amazing man faithfully did his chores at the barn twice a day by touch until he was ninety years old. He had lost his sight as a young man. There was no complaining - only gratitude for continued strength and health.

I have memories, too, of my father coming home after being gone for weeks at a time after working in the mines or the woods. Words, for the most part, were an unnecessary commodity for him. He talked with his eyes and with his smile and with his taking care of us. He would delight us with a crate of oranges, pounds of raisins, nuts, and the once yearly bag of ribbon candy. It would be time to butcher, hunt, cure meat, make sauerkraut, cut and haul wood, and mend the henhouse. The tension my mother felt from carrying the responsibility of our care would ease as we settled in for the winter.

By way of contrast, consider what happened to the children of Israel? In the book of Malachi we hear the heartbreak of the Father for his ungrateful children. When He tries to reason with them they ask, “How have you loved us? (1:2&7) Why do you not accept our offerings? (2:14) Where is the God of Justice? (2:17)” and finally, “It is vain to serve God.” (Mal.3:14). In spite of their self-centeredness, in the last words of this book, the Lord promises, “I will send you Elijah. . .And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. . .” After hundreds of years, Gabriel repeats this message to John’s father, Zechariah, as our Savior is preparing to be born into the world. Do we, like the children of Israel, meet Him with questions of unbelief? Or do we relax in His loving kindness thankful for all of His blessings?

*Father, forgive us for our complaining nature. Thank you for your eternal love. Take out our heart of stone and give us a heart of love. Help us to remember that what we live is what we are passing on. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rosemary Sternbeck  
Olympic Peninsula  
Washington State

## WEDNESDAY • WEEK TWO

### Deuteronomy 4:31

## *A Loving Father*

*“For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you....”*

Some of the happiest days of our lives are the days when our children are born. When they are growing up, if they stumble or make bad choices, we still love them just as much. When they become teenagers and start thinking on their own and doing what they want to do, we don't love them any less.

When God created mankind in His own image, male and female alike, He gave them dominion over creation. Unlike dominance, He meant for humans to be stewards and to take care of the land and everything in and on it. God created each of us with our own identity—each person special and unique with different gifts and callings. Just think how much our Heavenly Father loves us to make each one of us different. When we make bad choices or take the wrong path in our lives, He still loves us and will never turn away from us, no matter how far we fall from Him. He always draws us back to Himself, forgives us and picks us up from where we fall. God's grace is always there for us.

In John Chapter 3:16-17 it says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but shall have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

*Dear Lord, I thank you for always loving us and never giving up on us, no matter how often we fall. I thank you for sending your Son into this world to remind us of your unconditional love for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Tom Benzler  
Port Angeles, Washington

## THURSDAY • WEEK TWO

Luke 2:8-20

### *Good Tidings of Great Joy*

*“So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.” (vs.16)*

This section of Scripture has always astounded me. Jesus, God’s only Son, who had been in heaven in eternity, who set the foundations of the earth and built everything on it, was now born in a forgotten, lowly stable.

What were the angels thinking of this night? The Christ had always been with them—they knew no differently. They saw Him create the earth, create man, destroy with a flood, and now He was a man just like everyone else. For nine months He was inside Mary, His earthly body forming within her, and suddenly He was thrust upon this earth and there wasn’t even room at the hotel! Were God and the angels so excited and thrilled that they could no longer contain themselves? Is that why, in an almost empty pasture, close to Bethlehem, on a cool dark night, the angels, who were bursting at the seams, suddenly showed themselves to some shepherds? Wait! Shepherds? The Prince of Peace, the King of kings, omnipotent, was just born a man to take away the sin of the world and the first people to know of it are *shepherds*? Like I said, this is one of the most fascinating Scriptures!

So these poor, lonely shepherds were out in the fields, living the life as they had been raised—the only life they knew. Suddenly, without warning, something happened for the very first time ever. Angels appeared out of nowhere and declared, *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord!”* And this was followed by a whole angelic chorus praising God.

Now if this isn’t the quintessential “growing and going! As if *that* weren’t remarkable enough, these shepherds actually got up and left their sheep. They then went into town to see with their own eyes this miracle of miracles. Not only that, but afterwards they went out and spread the message around town (something I am positive they were *not* told by the angels to do). But how could you *not* tell everyone? How could you hold this inside of you? For the angels and the shepherds, this was an unprecedented event. Never before or after in all of eternity has it or will it ever be duplicated.

And yet, isn’t it easy for us to be lazy and just sit around? After all, it happened about two thousand years ago. This is all we know—we were brought up this way. Isn’t that more reason to go out and spread the Gospel—to be ready in season and out of season to give an answer for the hope that lies within us? Do we—do I—really believe this happened? Do I really believe that Jesus is the Son of God? So why would I *not* go out and tell everyone?

*Father God, help us to reveal your Son and His majesty and love to the nations. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

Rev. Will Main  
Haskell LIGHT  
Lawrence, Kansas

## FRIDAY • WEEK TWO

### Isaiah 53:3-4

# *The Suffering and the Glory of the Servant*

*“ . . . a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering . . . Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.”*

The Old Testament prophesied the coming of the Messiah, the one who was going to save the people from their sins. Other Scriptural passages of prophesy include him as “*a man of sorrows and one who knows what it is like to suffer*” as well, as “*one who carried our sorrows.*” Not only did Jesus the Messiah come to bring eternal salvation but Jesus is also very concerned about what is happening to us in our earthly existence. He is concerned about what we are going through in our lives and what we are feeling. Isaiah says that he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.

As well, He himself was familiar with suffering while he was on this earth. The scriptures teach us that not only is Jesus God but he is also fully human. It is in His humanness that He can understand what we are going through and therefore able to comfort us in our pain.

A good part of our work involves encouraging and supporting people who have lost their loved ones through death. Losing a loved one through death is one of the most painful experiences in life. It is a kind of pain that makes one feel very alone. It is a kind of pain that makes one feel they are dying. Secular counselors refer to it as “*a process of suffering*”. The Psalmist calls it, “*the valley of the shadow of death.*” The experience of death is both. It is a process of suffering and it is walking through the valley in the shadow of death. It is in these times that it is very important to know that there is One who has gone through this kind of suffering and has overcome it.

If you are feeling alone in your grief this season, please remember that there is One who knows and understands how you feel. Jesus the Messiah has come and He is the One who is able to help you, emotionally, physically, and spiritually walk through your valley of the shadow of death. Others may fail you by not really understanding what you are going through but Jesus the Messiah does. Other times, when your grief and pain may be more real than the presence of the Messiah in your life, take heart for He is there with you in your darkest pain. The man of sorrows who is familiar with suffering is with you in your grief. You are not alone.

*Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that you help each one of us to keep looking to you even when life is very painful. Help us to remember that you have already overcome these dark experiences of our lives. Help us to remember that you bring light and you bring life to us. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Linda Martin  
Sioux Lookout, Ontario

## SATURDAY • WEEK TWO

I John 4:10

### *Unconditional Love*

*“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”*

Growing up, I was an inquisitive child. I was always pushing the limits, but I also always wanted to help others, which I took upon myself to do. I spent a lot of time at my Nana and Papa’s house. They loved me unconditionally and I knew it.

My Papa grew beautiful Concord grapes, which were turned into the yummiest Concord Grape Jelly. It was a treat each season when the first batch was made and I got to be the taste-tester.

Then, one year my Papa got sick and as an inquisitive child I overheard the grown-ups talking that the doctor said my Papa should drink a glass of red wine before bedtime. That season, when Papa brought in his boxes of grapes and put them on the porch, I had a great idea to help him! I knew he was going to make his famous jelly. But since I heard he needed a glass of red wine for his health, and since I saw an episode of “I Love Lucy” stomping grapes into wine, I figured I could help him get better. So, I took off my shoes and into the boxes I went smashing all the beautiful grapes with juice running all over the porch. Papa came looking for me and when he opened the door I took one look at his face and knew I wasn’t helping him at all. He never said one harsh word to me but took me and cleaned up the purple stains on my legs and feet.

Needless to say, we didn’t have grape jelly that year and I saw a bottle of wine in his refrigerator from the store. I learned a lesson that day, even though I was never yelled at or lectured about what I had done. I always remember the look on my Papa’s face—that was enough punishment for me. But I knew he never loved me any less. He always walked with a quiet strength.

When we think of Christmas and the birth of Christ, we picture this child lying in a manger in a stable surrounded by Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and the animals. Do we see anything past that? Do we see a triumphant King lying in the manger—so strong—but humble at the same time? Do we see the Son of God who came to serve others? Do we see a Savior who came into the world—who loves us so unconditionally that He gave His very life to save us from the grip of sin and death?

*Heavenly Father, I thank you for loving me unconditionally and sending your Son to save the world from a sentence of death into life everlasting with you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Cathy Benzler  
Port Angeles, Washington

*“And the Gospel must first be preached to all Nations.”*  
Mark 13:10

CHRIST CAME TO SAVE ALL PEOPLE OF EVERY NATION, INCLUDING EVERY NATIVE AMERICAN NATION. AND THAT’S OUR MISSION.

## Raising Up Native Americans to Reach Native Americans

At Lutheran Indian Ministries, our focus is to identify, recruit, train, equip and empower native people for ministry in their communities. Thus our ministry of help, healing and sharing the hope of the Gospel to Native Americans can be carried out by an increasing number of clergy and lay leader field staff who are American Indian and Native Alaskan. They know what it’s like to be both Christian and Native American. They know what Native Americans face because they themselves have confronted the same brokenness and wounding that has resulted from many years of neglect, forced change and the isolating reservation system.

And these Native clergy and lay leaders often use traditional languages, music and stories to share Christ’s message of love, compassion and redemption.

Bible studies, workshops and leadership training are designed specifically to encourage, enable and equip Native believers to not only take ownership of their Christian faith, but to take it to the rest of the world, and especially to their own people.

Instability resulting from centuries of culture clashes and neglect now translates into alcohol and substance abuse, high rates of suicide, and generations of poverty — a curse passed on from generation to generation to individuals and entire communities.

Add to these the fact that our mission fields are



*Continued on page 22*



## *Christ's Kingdom. Every Native American Nation*

typically hard to reach — both physically and spiritually.

And today it is estimated that less than 5% of Native American people know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

### **You Lift the Bowl**

In Matthew 5, Jesus tells us, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”

The generosity and faithful prayer support of caring Christians like you is what makes the ministry of the Lutheran Indian Ministries possible. You lift the bowl and uncover the Light of Life found only in Christ for all Native people to see. You help to put it on the stand to give light to all the “houses” of every Native American tribe and nation.

*Please consider providing a generous gift of support today to help us continue shining the life-changing light of Christ's love into the hearts of Native Americans.*



## SUNDAY • WEEK THREE

John 14:1-3

### *Ginny*

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”*

As I write this, I am on my way home from Minnesota after saying goodbye to my sister Verginia (Ginny). She died earlier this week. It has been a difficult winter. Sharon and Jubilee (faithful dog) stayed behind on the boat to keep the generator running to maintain battery chargers and refrigeration. The harbor didn’t have an electrical hookup.

Travel has been testy this winter. Travel windows have been small and often times they close quickly. Cold temperatures and strong high pressure winds have created frequent icing conditions. There have been many harbor days and rearranged schedules. Making an extensive itinerary is almost a joke. As soon as it is published and the float plan emailed, we have to modify it. And then Ginny died. Cancer.

I caught a small plane in Kake, Alaska and flew to Juneau. Then I flew to Seattle and from Seattle to Minneapolis. Then by car from Minneapolis to Windom, Minnesota. All because Ginny died. It’s hard to believe it’s true.

We held the funeral service in the Lutheran Church in Windom. The pastor was great. He knew Ginny and that always makes things better. The Good News of Jesus was proclaimed beautifully. We cried and laughed—because she died—because she lived. The pastor told one of the best Ole and Lena jokes I have ever heard. He knew my sister. Of my three older sisters, she was the youngest...65.

Because there was so much snow on the ground in southwestern Minnesota we couldn’t bury her body. That will happen when the grass is green. Our family will gather at the Amo Lutheran Church Cemetery. My parents are both buried under that prairie sod. We will again lift up the promise of eternal life offered by our God. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Can’t deny that. But, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. So Ginny goes beyond dust to new life.

Goodbye, Ginny. See you at the banquet!

Have a blessed Advent, friends. Celebrate the promise of new life.

*Thank you, Lord Jesus, for seeking out our loved ones with your love and for offering to take them home. In your name we pray. Amen.*

Rev. Stan Berntson  
Skipper  
M/V CHRISTIAN  
Southeast Alaska

## MONDAY • WEEK THREE

Colossians 1:6

### *Christ Is the Light*

*“For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him.”*

During Christmas I always take the time to ponder on what a beautiful place we live in, here on the Olympic Peninsula. Families come here from all parts of the country to vacation and visit since we have the ocean, National and State Parks, rivers and waterfalls close by. All of God’s creation enjoyed by so many. But, everything is not as great as it may look. 80% of the people that live here are unchurched and on the reservations the number is greater. We are always in need of prayer because of the spiritual battle between light and darkness. On our Native American reservations throughout North America the darkness is even more evident. The broken homes, alcohol and drug abuse, suicides, teen pregnancies and poverty, all of this requires much prayer. Sometimes, you feel like giving up, but that is not what God has called us to do.

It is, of course, not just in these places that we see the affects of sin and the devil’s work. More and more in our country and the world, we see the manifest evil of man’s rebellion against God.

But we have good news as believers! We know that Jesus has come from Heaven to shed the light of salvation and hope of redemption for all mankind.

As believers, we are called to witness of His light and life to all men. That light is from Christ and the light always dispels the darkness. As we enter this Advent season, let us remember the lasting light that shines in a world of darkness.

*Heavenly Father, I thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, into this world, to give us hope and forgiveness of our sins. I am forever grateful. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Tom Benzler  
Port Angeles, Washington

## TUESDAY • WEEK THREE

Hebrews 4:14-15

### *Trying to Understand*

*“Since we have a great high priest, Jesus the Son of God, who has gone into heaven, let us hold on to the faith we have. For our high priest is able to understand our weaknesses. When he lived on earth, he was tempted in every way that we are, but he did not sin.”*

While attending a welcome home party for a Native man who had just come back from doing six years in the state penitentiary, I ended up talking with one of the men there. During our conversation he looked right at me and said, “Mark, you’re one of the few white guys I know who’ve really tried to understand Indian people!”

As I later reflected on this man’s words, I thought how Jesus was the original one to “understand people”. He came into this world as one of us, born into a life with all the problems, pains, and pleasures that are familiar to us. As the writer of the Book of Hebrews states, Jesus is able to truly understand us and our weaknesses because He has walked the trail with us. He has experienced all the temptations that are so common to us. The temptation to resent those who have hurt us or spoken ill of us; the temptation to think primarily of ourselves and our own needs; the temptation to find our security or significance in money and the things money can buy; the temptation to be lazy, lustful, or loose with our tongues. Yet in all these temptations, Jesus never once gave in to the desires of the flesh. He never sinned. So his death was the perfect sacrificial offering.

Now He is able to be our perfect high priest and mediate God’s life-transforming power to us as we struggle along our earthly way. And, He is able to help us become a co-worker with Him in bringing the Good News of His salvation to others. For that process we need to begin, as He began, by learning to understand those to whom we are sent. I believe this involves listening long and hard to people. It means thinking about what they tell us and trying to see not only how sin has affected their lives, but how the Gospel can be presented to them in a way that will truly hit them as “Good News”.

*Lord Jesus, thank you that you can understand us because you came to be one of us. Thank you that your coming has brought us forgiveness, hope, and new purpose. Help us truly understand others, as we try to help them understand you. Amen.*

Rev. Mark Peske  
Bemidji, Minnesota

## WEDNESDAY • WEEK THREE

Isaiah 11:5

### *Holy Attire*

*“Righteousness will be his and faithfulness the sash around his waist.”*

Appropriate attire for situations we are going to face sends a message that we are serious in what we are doing. When my son and I are out hunting, we wear camouflage, giving us the ability to hide in plain sight. When we ride ATVs, we wear helmets. Safety is a must. When we are boating, life jackets are mandatory. When I feel that I need to be taken seriously in a meeting, a tie or clerical collar can send a message portraying competence and capability. Also, wearing my ribbon shirt with my clerical collar shows that I am both Dakota Sioux and a man of God. How we dress shows what we value.

Isaiah gives us a glimpse of what the Messiah will wear as an important part of His wardrobe. In Isaiah’s day, when one prepared for action, he tied up his flowing robes with a belt so as to not be slowed down or otherwise hindered. Jesus was prophesied here to be a man of action in the battle against sin and death. But His weapons would not be swords or spears but righteousness and faithfulness. He is righteous and faithful in His mission and this Advent season He invites us to follow and clothe ourselves in the belt and sash of His goodness. So clothed, we may never make the world’s top ten best dressed list, but in God’s eyes we are clothed in glorious splendor.

*Wonderful Father, your love knows no boundaries. Clothe us, today, with valor, courage, righteousness, and faithfulness so that the world will look upon us and know that we belong to you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rev. Will Main  
Haskell LIGHT  
Lawrence, Kansas

**Matthew 24: 6,7**

## ***Signs of the Times - Beginnings of Birth Pains***

*“You will hear of wars and rumors of war, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.”*

Advent is always a good time to reflect on Jesus’ birth. What hope and joy it brought to the entire world. His birth, life and death and resurrection accomplished not only our salvation. It meant that all of God’s creation too had been redeemed from death and decay and that it too would one day be restored to God’s original intent. The restoration of all things will one day become a reality when Jesus returns once more in all of His glory.

But when will that day come and how will we know it is soon? It seems to be closer than ever. All that one has to do is read the newspapers and read about the wars and “rumors of wars” as well as note the geologic signs within the earth itself to see evidence of what Jesus said would characterize some of the signs of His soon coming. The U.S. geologic survey reports for example that on average, 15,000 earthquakes occur every year. The numbers appear to be increasing as tectonic plates deep within the earth push against one another until finally the stress gets to a tipping point and suddenly releases its pent up energy. The results can be catastrophic as evidenced by the mammoth 9.0 on the seismic scale earthquake that struck Japan or the one that hit Haiti.

I have experienced earthquakes, having grown up on the far end of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. They can be frightening to experience as anyone can attest who has ever had the misfortune of being where one has occurred. The good thing is, with modern technology, we can better predict their likelihood and do some things to prepare for them. Even this is not always fool proof. No people were better prepared than the Japanese for the tragic seismic event that they endured. There simply was too little time to prepare given the location of the quake and its relative proximity to their land. My community on the Makah Reservation is similarly placed; adjacent the ocean with a major fault running just off the coast. We must be ready when the fault gives way some day.

There is a message in the frequency of these geologic and political events occurring ever more frequently and without warning. It is one of hope, joy and preparedness for His Son’s return. All that is unfolding on the world scene and in the earth are signs of Jesus’ soon return. We must have faith when He comes. It is like birth pains. It is temporary, a necessary condition of the present. Soon we will see Jesus face to face and He will restore all of His creation to perfection. And none of the sadness and darkness of the present will be reality any more. Let us be prepared by having faith in Him.

*Lord God and Father, gives us peace amid the tumult of our present age and enable us to trust in your goodness and see the future you intend for your children by faith. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rev. Dr. Don Johnson  
Executive Director

## FRIDAY • WEEK THREE

Luke 1:79

### *The Way of Peace*

*“The sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

My step-father passed away peacefully Christmas Eve. It’s been two years since my mother’s passing into glory. It had been a difficult time for my step-father following her death. He had spent his life loving and caring for her and missed her deeply. We don’t grieve as the world grieves, but we do grieve, and we grieved together.

Being the closest sibling, it was my privilege and honor to spend a great deal of time with my parents the last couple of years they were with us. I realized that the closer a person gets to eternity the more important are their thoughts and words. My mother told me things I had never heard, some of them were hard to hear. There was pain, healing, and blessing in all of this. Then she was gone.

My stepfather and I had never really been close. Unfortunately we had not spent much time together. The busyness of life sometimes separates family. The last few years, living in the same community, had begun to change all of that. He was a good man, and a good husband. After my mother’s passing, I knew he would need time and attention. In the last two years we spent much time together. We grew very close. Out to lunch, over for dinner, just sit and visit, we laughed and cried and mourned the loss of my mother together. When my wife, Rosemary, was out of town we would have a bachelor’s night at my house. He wanted to come to church with us. It was pretty hard on him to travel one hundred fifty miles round trip. But he really wanted to be there. He said that he and my mother had prayed to see the day I would become Pastor. Their prayers were answered. He was there the night of my ordination. He got very sick that night; never quite recovered really. He told me it was the best day of his life. He had pictures of me and him of that day he kept hung on his living room walls. We would have communion once a week, just the two of us. He became my father, he became my best friend. He was a man of peace.

On December twentieth he laid down and would not get up again. I sat with him for those four days. On Christmas Eve there was no more talking, no more reading of Scripture. I just held his hands in mine. I remembered a Scripture that was very important to me at my conversion. “Mark the perfect man the end of that man is peace.” Because Jesus appeared He has become our light in the darkness. He has truly guided our paths into the way of peace. Because He appeared we would never be the same. I wept as I gazed at my stepfather, a perfect man of peace. I thanked the Lord for the gift of this man. I thanked Him for letting him go in peace.

*Thank you, Jesus, for being a man of peace and for appearing and showing us the way of peace. In your name we pray. Amen.*

Rev. David Sternbeck  
Olympic, Peninsula  
Washington State

## SATURDAY • WEEK THREE

**Hosea 1:10 and Revelation 2:17**

### *New Beginnings: A Restored Name and Identity*

*Hosea 1:10 “Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’*

*Revelations 2:17 “I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.”*

Our native people are in many ways a broken people—a people whose very identity and culture has been purposefully diminished and distorted. Many years ago, men would be working in our village for white fishermen (who either couldn't pronounce their names or didn't want to try to learn how to pronounce their names) and they would be given white-Anglicized names. These names became the family names that after many generations have come down today and mark the various family clans within our village—an identity imposed upon them by an outside world. From time to time, and at great expense, our people have a name-giving ceremony. It is a potlatch at which an ancient family name is given and restored to an individual. My wife and I were blessed to be invited to one of these recently. It is a time of great feasting and gift giving, all at the expense of the family giving one of their own family members a new name. It is rich with native culture and deep reverential meaning and significance, as well as a time of joyful celebration.

Whenever I think about that part of my native roots, I consider the great expense which our loving Father went to in sending His Son to restore to us a new name and identity. We had lost so very much through the fall—so much so—that we are a dim shadow of the humanity God placed in the garden. You may have family members for whom your heart breaks. How you long to see them restored to God and His plan. I think of the many individuals whose identity has become: divorced, abused, cancer, addicted, and so many other things that diminish us.

What a joy to know that in Christ we have a new name and identity—sons and daughters of the living God—and that one day Jesus will look in our eyes and give us a name that connects with the very personal story of our walk and relationship with Him—a name that at the deepest level is just between the two of us—a name that restores what sin and hurt have taken away from us.

*Oh Lord, as I think about the effects that sin has worked in my life and family, I pause to hear you say to me, “You shall no longer be called broken, crushed, and damaged, but now you are beloved, accepted, and forgiven.” Lord, open my eyes this new day to walk in a new name and identity. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Winston Wilson  
Neah Bay, Washington

“I will bless you ... and you will be a blessing.”

*Genesis 12:2*

As God blesses us, we are called to bless others. One of the ways your blessings can be greatly multiplied is by becoming a monthly partner with this ministry. By giving monthly, you will enable us to plan more effectively to bring Christ's Kingdom to Every Native American Nation. And your monthly giving makes it possible for us to be better stewards of your gifts.

And we make it easy for you to do. You can give by credit card or electronic funds transfer (EFT) from your checking account by simply filling out the form below and sending it back to us in the enclosed reply envelope.

Lutheran Indian Ministries is committed to protecting your privacy. The information you provide here will be kept in strict confidence.

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I authorize Lutheran Indian Ministries to charge my credit card OR automatically withdraw from my checking account \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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quarterly on March 31, June 30, September 30, December 31 beginning in the month of \_\_\_\_\_ and continuing until further notice.

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(last 3 digits on the back of your card)

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(Please print)

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Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Checking Account # \_\_\_\_\_ Routing # \_\_\_\_\_

Please include a blank check marked "VOID" with this completed form and send to Lutheran Indian Ministries.

Signature of Account Holder \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Account Holder \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I (we) will notify Lutheran Indian Ministries in writing of any changes in the account information or termination of this authorization 45 days prior to the next due date of the pre-authorized debit.

[www.lutheranindianministries.org](http://www.lutheranindianministries.org)

## SUNDAY • WEEK FOUR

Luke 2:18

# *You are Not Forgotten and He Knows Your Name*

*“and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.”*

The shepherds found out, that first Christmas night, that God had not forgotten them. God had, it seemed, been quiet for many years as there are indeed four hundred years of silence between the Old and the New Testament. Yes, sometimes God may seem silent in our lives and this may have been the same feeling the shepherds had. There they were working away in some back field in the middle of some dark night and in the middle of some cold, lonely winter. But then God showed up. Just read Luke chapter two!

This is the hope we all have. When things are hard in the world, and even when our own personal world seems to be falling apart, God has and will continue to show up. And He often does this in ways we never expect. I wish we knew the stories of these shepherds. What were their names? What families were they from? What hard times were they going through? What tragedies had they faced? How alone were they feeling? Had they given up hope that the Messiah would ever come and bring freedom from the Romans and their own poverty?

This past year I heard a powerful, true story. A man had been run over by either a big truck or bus and was left for dead. The truth is that the driver wanted to make sure he was dead, so he drove over him the second time to ensure that this man could not retaliate. The driver and vehicle then disappeared. We were told that this is not unusual in that part of Mexico. But somehow this Mexican man miraculously survived. What also touched me was the fact that it was a learned seminary professor of mine that was telling the story. This doctor of philosophy and Biblical scholar is very learned and is respected in many academic circles. But this professor was so moved by the faith of this uneducated humble man who, though crippled, was still serving in his church in Mexico. He is not bitter but is reaching out to others powerfully! While the professor was visiting this church in Mexico, this faithful but crippled man handed the professor a gift he had made for him. It was a beautiful wall hanging with the words from Isaiah 40:1: ***“Comfort, comfort my people says your God.”***

I have often quoted this verse when comforting people—especially those going through deep grief. In fact, there is a Steve Bell song I often sing which is based on all of Isaiah 40 and it always seems to minister to people. During this Advent season, you may want to read this chapter, too. (You may also want to read the chapters just before Isaiah 40 which tell about King Hezekiah who was a complete failure and was told that he would die. He was very sick—but he cried out to God anyway—and ***God comforted him with new hope and blessed him*** to become one of the most successful kings in the Bible).

I do not know the stories of the lives of the humble shepherds but I do know they saw things that night that many learned scholars will never see. It could also be that one of them was crippled or sick in some way. It could well be that they all were very, very poor and were just barely making it in life. But God had not forgotten them. And He has not forgotten you! During this Advent season, know again in a new way that, like the shepherds, God is always there and just as He knows every star in the universe by name, He knows your story and name too! (Isaiah 40:26)

*Dear Father in Heaven, please help me to remember that you know my name and that my way is not hidden from you. Thank you, Lord, that you come to all of us no matter how low we may be and that our lives are so important to you no matter who we are. Help me to walk in the truth that you do hear my prayer and that you do long to bless me as I cry out to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Rick Martin  
Sioux Lookout, Ontario

## MONDAY • WEEK FOUR

Luke 2:36-38

### *Waiting for the Redemption of Jerusalem*

*“There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.”*

Our Elders are very important to our First Nations People. They give us guidance, strength and share their wisdom. They blazed a very difficult trail. They are the ones who went before us and have gone through so much tribulation and hardship. Yet, they never lost their desire to love their families—to show us the “old ways” of our culture—and give us more than I can express here.

I had the privilege of knowing my Kokum, who was promoted at the age of 93. She lived on the Poundmaker First Nations Reservation and was a descendant of Chief Poundmaker. She was a midwife, horticulturist, herbalist, historian, hunter, trapper, good bannock-maker and always a hard worker. She showed us love. More importantly, she loved Jesus and prayed often.

In Luke 2:36-38, Anna, the prophetess—at an old age—also seemed to be a hard worker. She devoted her life to prayer and seeking the Lord. I’m sure the Lord spoke to her on a daily basis through her prayers. Then, she saw the redemption of Jerusalem in front of her—the King of kings—face to face. The day that she had been praying for and anticipating arrived—to see Him—Jesus, our Savior, Redeemer, Prince of Peace.

I thank God for my grandmother—for her steadfast prayers—for my parents who model my grandmother’s devotion to prayer. Every generation plays a role in seeing to it that the Savior touches the next generation.

During this Advent season, continue to thank Jesus for being our Redeemer, our Savior. And thank Him, not just during Advent, for He is our Redeemer and the Redeemer of our families and communities today and every day.

*Jesus, you are the Redeemer. Bless us and our friends and their families. May you manifest your delivering power today and throughout this Advent season. Thank you for the answer to all prayers, for we know that not one of them goes void. In your precious name. Amen.*

Patricia Main  
Haskell LIGHT  
Lawrence, Kansas

## TUESDAY • WEEK FOUR

### Jonah 2:9

## *Deliverance Belongs to the Lord*

*“But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord.”*

We recently heard an excellent sermon about Jonah. It wasn't about the whale, or even about the entire story. It was about Jonah on a boat. That really caught my attention, because I live on a boat. I know what happens to the insides of me! Not only do I get scared, but I often get sick.

After that, I usually do what Jonah did. I go to sleep. That seems to be the best way to handle it. And I hope that when I wake up, Stan will have found a way to calmer waters, or the storm will have petered out.

I'm not so proud of the way I react to gnarly waters. I wish I had a stomach of steel and the faith to fight every fear. But it doesn't seem to be a prerequisite for this job or for God to use me. Even when Jonah was doing exactly the opposite of what God asked him to do, God used him. After they woke him up, Jonah told the crew of his boat that the storm they were caught in wasn't caused by just any god of those days. It was because he was running from the One who created the earth and the sea. He admitted his frailty and witnessed to the one true God. Then he went overboard.

Read the book of Jonah to re-familiarize yourself with it. It's really not about figuring out the whale thing, or the plant, or even who deserves mercy and who does not. It's about one guy's relationship with God. They dialogue and interact with each other—in some very contentious ways. Jonah responds by being passive-aggressive—and selfish. Pretty human. But God is the hero. He saves the boat crew—He saves Nineveh—(and the animals). And He saves Jonah! And after all is said and done, that's what Jonah was mad about. He admitted he ran away, exactly because he knew God was “gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; ready to relent from punishing” (Jonah 4:2). Jonah didn't want to help save people he didn't like—and God did.

I like the story of Jonah. It's about spreading the Good News about God's unfailing love for us, no matter what we do. And—the only one who upchucks in the story—is the fish☺

*Lord, thank you for watching out for those of us who spend our days on the seas. More than that thank you for your unfailing mercy and love for ALL people of every land by sending your Son, Jesus, through His birth at Bethlehem. Keep sending us to bring that message of hope to every port and every person we meet—no matter what the distance—no matter what the cost. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Sharon Geldaker, First Mate/RN  
M/V CHRISTIAN  
Southeast Alaska

## WEDNESDAY • WEEK FOUR

Galatians 4:4

### *The Right Time*

*“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son...”*

Several months ago I had the privilege of baptizing a Native woman named Patsy who said she wanted the joy of the Lord to shine from her face every day. Some weeks later, she began telling me about a young woman she knew named Ashley who was interested in possibly meeting with me to find out more about God’s Word and the message of Jesus. But even before I could contact her, we found ourselves together at a small party being held at a mutual friend’s house. When Patsy saw we were both there, she introduced us to each other. It turned out that I was well acquainted with Ashley’s sister who died two years ago of a drug overdose. As we talked together, we found several other “connections” that we had, even though we had never met. These little bonds helped us warm up to each other right away. In a few moments, Ashley was eagerly introducing me to her boyfriend, Jim. Then she introduced me to her two young boys and said, “This is Mark. He’s going to come over to our house and teach us all about Jesus!”

Not only did I go away from that gathering praising the Lord for another open door for His Word, I went away marveling at how God prepares situations beforehand so that, when the time is right, everything is in place for His will to be done!

God chose just the right time for the coming of His Son. The world was at peace, travel was increasing, and the whole Jewish nation was in a state of eager expectation for the coming of the Messiah. God had set the stage perfectly for the most important event in history.

The proclamation of the Gospel is still the most important event in the life of every single person. And God is still at work to prepare the way, to set up connections, to weave together the lives of the messenger and the listener in such a way that it’s the “right time.”

*Lord, thank you that your timing is perfect. Help us to stay in step with you. And help us to open our mouths to speak your Good News when the time is right. In Jesus’ name. Amen!*

Rev. Mark Peske  
Bernidji, Minnesota

## THURSDAY • WEEK FOUR

John 1:14

### *Shortcuts—The Easy Way*

*“The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

One of the things the girls enjoy most in Girls Club is using the sewing machines. They love seeing the pieces come together as they get closer to finishing their project. They sometimes get in a hurry and make mistakes. I can hear my name called urgently from several different corners of the room at once. Some mistakes can be altered easily. Some of them I look at and shake my head, saying, “That won’t work—it will have to come out.” Then there is the inevitable sigh of disappointment, or a hand on the hip and an eye roll, or perhaps the beginning of tears. I try to be encouraging. I let them know that anyone that sews has had to rip out a seam and start over. I tell them, “This is part of learning. We do something and sometimes we do it many times before we do it well.” But being human, we all want things to come easily—without cost or effort.

Sometimes we forget that Jesus was fully human. He was born into our world the same way we are. He learned to walk by falling down and getting up again. He was dependent upon His parents for shelter, food, and guidance. In fact, He must have seemed to His community like most other boys growing up. People in His hometown of Nazareth were surprised when He started His ministry. They wondered, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? Where then did this man get all these things?” (Matthew. 13:54-56)

To be sure, Jesus was also fully God. Hebrews 4:15 tells us: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” In every temptation (inner battle), He chose to serve the Father.

We want life to be easy. We try to find short cuts and shrink back from doing our best. Even when we put in much effort, perfection escapes us. What young person has not cried out in frustration or pain, “You don’t understand; you don’t know how I feel!”? Ah, but Jesus knows. He was born as a babe and walked upon this same earth. He grew through childhood and teenage years. His was not an easy road. Isaiah 53:3 says: “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He was born to identify with our humanity and save us from our sin.

*Father, we thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, the Word made flesh. Help us to remember we can rely on Him to understand our every need. Help us to remember that as we walk this short life, He will never leave or forsake us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rosemary Sternbeck  
Olympic Peninsula  
Washington State

## FRIDAY • WEEK FOUR

Matthew 8:5-13

### *On Speaking the Word*

*“Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; but only speak the word and my servant will be healed.”*

There is power in God’s Word. Consider the creation of the universe. God spoke and there was light and in all the days of creation that followed, everything made was in response to His Word. In all that He created we see displayed evidence of His amazing power, authority and love. And when Jesus came into the world, we see the Word made flesh among us! He became the Incarnate Word of God we can trust for salvation.

Amazingly, when Jesus came into the world people did not often readily embrace Him or trust Him. We know this from all the many oppositions He encountered even among the very people who should have known better. Sometimes, however we have an exceptional example of someone who truly trusted Jesus. The story of the Roman centurion is one example of someone who recognized the power and authority of Jesus and who then trusted Jesus to meet his plea for help.

How he heard of Jesus is less important than how he responded to Him. He believed Jesus had power and authority to simply utter a command and whatever He said would be done immediately! No questions, no doubts, just belief that Jesus could accomplish by utterance of His word, anything.

Thus when the centurion’s servant became ill, he appealed to Jesus to heal him. As one who had exercised authority over men himself, he readily understood command and authority. Jesus needed only to “speak the word” and his servant would be healed. And as the story relates, just as the centurion expected, his servant was healed.

Jesus commended the faith of this Roman centurion who understood better than most, true God authority. The Roman officer did not question or doubt the authority or power of Jesus as others so often had. Instead, he humbly submitted to the Son of God and believed that whatever Jesus commanded would be done. This good and wise man knew that behind the spoken Word is a powerful, faithful God who merely had to speak and “it was done.”

In this season of Advent, let us be reminded that the Word of God has come among us and that He came to be a giver of light for our darkness. Jesus has thus become our Savior and Lord. And like the trusting Roman centurion, let us place our confidence in Him for all of our circumstances.

*Dear Father God, you have sent your Son, Jesus, to be the Incarnate Word. We give you thanks and praise for His sacrifice that gives us eternal life. Grant us grace to trust Him in all of our circumstances. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rev. Will Main  
Haskell LIGHT  
Lawrence, Kansas

## SATURDAY • WEEK FOUR

Luke 2:25-38

### *The Need to Watch and Wait for the Messiah*

*“He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” (vs. 25b)*

Max Lucado, in his book, “God Came Near,” writes of the night the Messiah was born: *“Meanwhile the city hums. The merchants are unaware that God has visited their planet. The innkeeper would never believe that he had just sent God into the cold . . . They were all too busy to consider the possibility. Those who missed His Majesty’s arrival that night missed it, not because of evil acts or malice; no, they missed it because they simply weren’t looking.”* (pg. 6) Lucado goes on to say that not much has changed in the last two thousand years. Not many people knew that Jesus, the Messiah, had come and was born that particular night. It is still the same today.

You and I are now the people two thousand years later. Many of us live as if we are not aware that the Messiah has come. We may not be living in the time of “waiting for His birth” but we are living in a time in which the Messiah has come already. We should be aware and understand the eternal significance and meaning of His birth to all humanity for all time. Christmas is a season set aside to remember this. Yet, like the ancient people on the night the Messiah was born, we can keep missing Him because we are not looking.

But there is hope for us. Luke, in the New Testament, writes of two people who had been watching and waiting for the arrival of the Messiah. The first one mentioned is Simeon. He is described as being a righteous and devout man. *“He was waiting for the consolation of Israel.”* (Luke 2:37) Anna was another righteous and devout person. She also recognized the baby Messiah when He was brought to the temple to be presented to the Lord. She went up to Joseph, Mary and the baby and “thanked God.” *“She spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.”* (Luke 2:38) Anna had been waiting and watching!

My challenge and question this season is this: “Are we waiting and watching for Jesus who is our Messiah? Are we watching for His work and presence in our lives? Do we recognize Him as He moved among us? Or are we like those people in the ancient days who did not recognize the Messiah’s birth? Or are we like Simeon and Anna who had been watching and waiting and therefore recognized the Messiah when He came!

*Dear Jesus our Messiah, we pray that you would help us to watch and see you in our midst this season. We pray that you will open our hearts so that again the eternal significance and the meaning of your birth will become fresh for every life. In your name, we pray. Amen.*

Linda Martin  
Sioux Lookout, Ontario

## *The Steward's Journey...Your Legacy of Faith and Love*

### **Reflections on Stewardship**

Stewardship is an expression of faith. When we practice stewardship, we give glory to God as the giver of life, the source of all we have, all we are, all we will become. "The earth is the Lord's," the psalmist says, "and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." Psalm 24:1

As men and women of faith, we are pilgrims on a journey, caretakers of the gifts God entrusts to us. Stewardship means accepting God's gifts gratefully, tending them responsibly, and sharing them in a spirit of justice and love. So, when we return home to the Father, we hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant...Come and share your master's happiness!" Matthew 25:21

### **Planning Your Estate**

A Will is the most important element of responsible stewardship. It allows you to express your own choices regarding the distribution of your possessions once you have returned to the Father.

A Will also safeguards the interests of your family and loved ones. If you die without a Will, you have no control over what happens to your estate.

Constructing your Will is a very prayerful experience. We can make our family and loved ones a priority; we can consider the needs of our church and the ministries we support. A Will helps advance the Kingdom; it is a living act of faith.

Should you choose Lutheran Indian Ministries as a recipient of your generous support, it is important to clearly state your intentions by using our full name, address, phone number and tax I.D. number: "Lutheran Indian Ministries, a ministry of Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S., Inc., 3525 North 124th Street, Brookfield, Wisconsin 53005, (262) 783-5267, Tax I.D. #39-1509253. If your Will or Estate Plan was completed prior to April 1, 2005, and includes the Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S., it is important to update this information. Because the laws of each state are different, we always encourage you to seek the advice of a qualified attorney before finalizing your Will.

### **Charitable Trusts and Gift Annuities**

Charitable giving methods, such as Charitable Gift Annuities and Charitable Remainder Trusts, provide unique stewardship opportunities.

A Charitable Gift Annuity gives you the satisfaction of not only helping a ministry you support, but it also provides you the practical benefits of a fixed rate of return, along with charitable tax benefits.

Your rate of return depends on your age at the time the agreement is made. The older you are the higher the return for the rest of your life.

## *The Steward's Journey...(continued)*

Your tax-free benefits can be determined at the time you create your annuity. After your death, the annuity principal will be used to assist the ministry of Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S. and the people we serve.

A Charitable Remainder Trust offers substantial benefits in the form of estate, gift and income tax deductions, as well as favorable income for one or more persons you designate.

### **The Stewardship Journey**

Our Christian vocation invites us to become good stewards of the gifts we receive. The Spirit focuses our energies. Stewardship provides the guiding principle, directing our path, our journey of faith.

*Please send me the information I have checked.*

- The Lutheran Indian Ministries, *Christian Estate Planning Guide*.
- Charitable Gift Annuity application.

I am currently affiliated with:

- Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me. My phone number is: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Please detach and return this form to the address below. Thank you!

Lutheran Indian Ministries  
3525 N 124th Street, Suite 1  
Brookfield, WI 53005-2409  
(262) 783-5267

[www.lutheranindianministries.org](http://www.lutheranindianministries.org)

- I have already remembered the Lutheran Indian Ministries in my Will or Estate Plan.

**Lutheran Indian Ministries shares the Gospel of Jesus Christ with Native North American Nations encouraging them to proclaim Christ's Kingdom to their own and to others.**



## **Lutheran Indian Ministries**

*Christ's Kingdom—Every Native American Nation.*

*A Ministry of Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S.*

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