

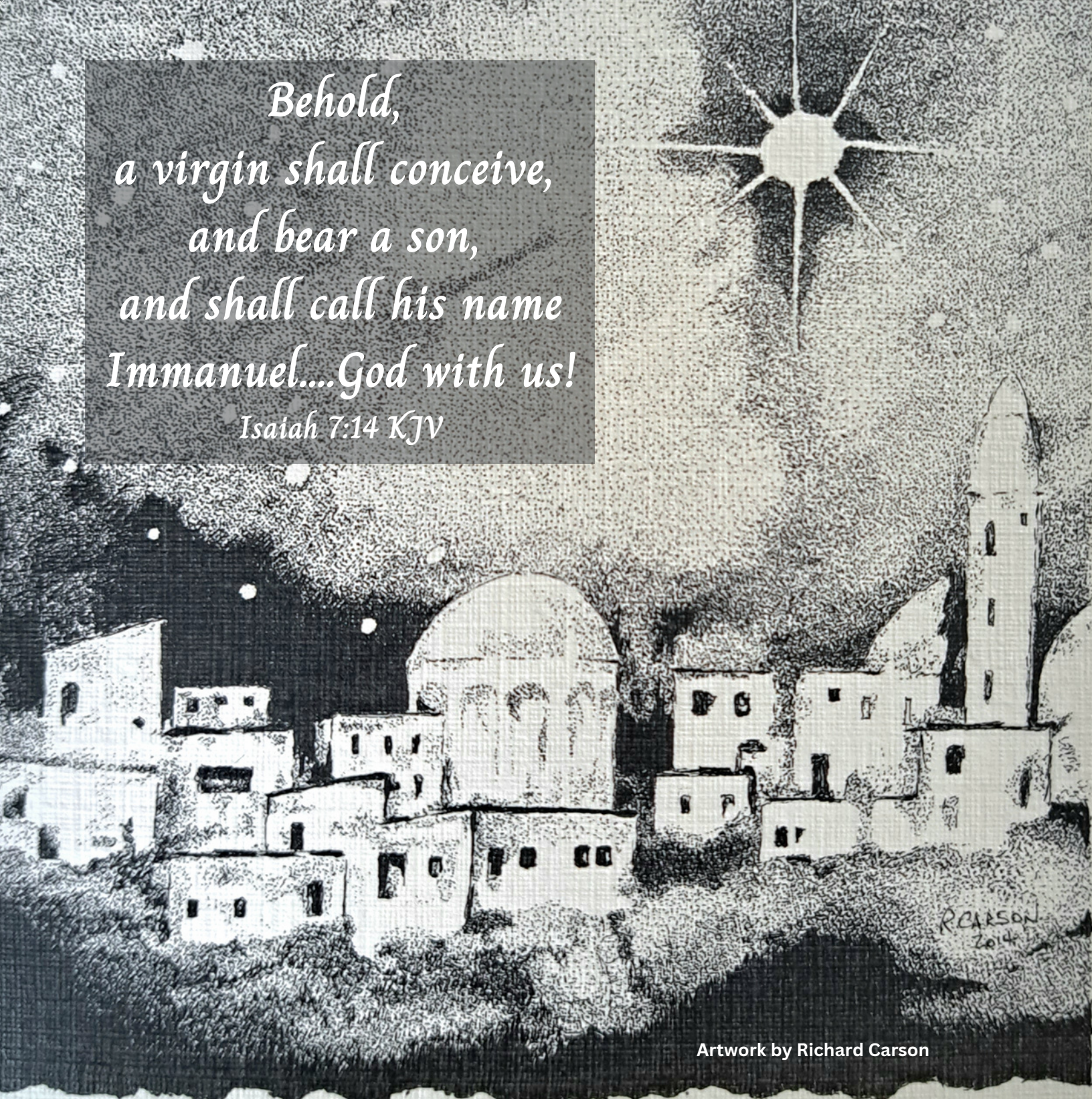


ST. THOMAS ANGLICAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER
DECEMBER 2022/ ISSUE 2

I WITNESS...

*Behold,
a virgin shall conceive,
and bear a son,
and shall call his name
Immanuel...God with us!*

Isaiah 7:14 KJV



RCARSON
2014

Artwork by Richard Carson

A Note From Your Pastor

The word "Immanuel" means God with us. We sometimes forget that there are many ways in which God can be with us. God can physically be with us. Moses is an example of one who was able to be in the physical presence of God. However, God can be with us through a still small voice, an Angel, a vision or another person. These stories in this edition speak to the many ways God can be with us. I pray that you too will recognize the different ways God is with you and be a witness to His faithfulness.

Pastor Jonathan

***And be sure of this:
I am with you
always,***

***even to the end of
the age.***

Matthew 28:20b NLT



Artwork by Richard Carson

Love is Eternal

Before the pandemic in 2019, a friend and I made a trip to PEI and spent time exploring around the island. Road-tripping used to be a favorite pastime for me and my son Jared and although he'd been gone for 5 years by this time, I found I was missing him dreadfully on this particular trip and was thinking of him a lot.

On one beautiful sunny day, we were wandering along one of the beaches searching for sea glass and I was thinking how much Jared would enjoy this too. As I took in the beauty of the surroundings and thought how I would describe them, I felt that Jared was 'close' and it was a bittersweet feeling.

Concentrating on looking for sea glass, I came across two stones that just absolutely seemed to demand my attention. As shown in the picture, one is a letter 'J' and the other is a heart...I picked them up with astonishment, rooted to the spot and speechless for some minutes, but absolutely certain that God had communicated Jared's continuing love to me!

The feeling of God's love and comfort and presence comes to me each time I look at this picture. It reminds me of the promise of 1Corinthians 13:8, "Love is eternal" as written in the Good News translation or "Love never ends" as in the English Standard version. This picture is on my desktop and serves as a reminder that God is with us, He knows what we are feeling at all times.

- Ellen Zimmerman



***Love is eternal.
There are inspired
messages, but they
are temporary;
there are gifts of
speaking in
strange tongues,
but they will cease;
there is
knowledge, but it
will pass.***

1 Corinthians 13:8 GNT

The Goodness of God

This is the story of a journey I took with my friend Lynda almost 27 years ago. It was a time before cell phones, iPads, social media, and instant communication. It was a journey taken with much nervous excitement and fear of the unknown and discovery. It was also taken with much prayer and support from our church community.

My friend Lynda had been having some ongoing issues with her left ankle with pain and swelling. She had been seeing her orthopaedic surgeon who had done multiple tests, x-rays, and even a bone biopsy with no definitive diagnosis. From October to the end of January, people in our Mothers Union group, Bible study, and members of our congregation prayed for Lynda and laid hands on her asking for healing, peace, and guidance for a medical diagnosis.

It culminated with a trip to Toronto early one Monday morning at the end of January in the middle of a snow storm to see yet another specialist. I remember sitting on the tarmac as the plane was de-iced three times saying to Lynda "We are going on an adventure. We will laugh. We will cry. But we will have a good time no matter what". God and the prayers of our family and friends went before us, and we arrived at our appointment in downtown Toronto at Mount Sinai Hospital with five minutes to spare. It was quite a feat with Lynda on crutches in the snow.

Over the next several hours Lynda was x-rayed, had a long conference with the doctor whose name was Wunder and an MRI. The MRI was made possible due to a cancellation because of that same snowstorm. After a long exhausting day, we were told to come back the next day for a definitive diagnosis and a plan of treatment.

Next on the agenda was a place to stay. Again, miracle of miracles, we got the last room available at Toronto General's residence. It didn't matter that the only bathroom was at the other end of the building. We had a warm clean place to lay our heads for the night. Bright and early Tuesday morning we were back at Princess Margaret hospital with much anxiety and trepidation waiting in a tiny examination room. Lynda was then seen by the orthopaedic intern and interviewed by a resident. Finally, the surgeon came in with good news and bad. The bad news was Lynda had angiosarcoma in her left ankle. The good news was it had a 90% cure rate with amputation below the knee and very little chance of metastasis when caught early. This had been caught early. We were then left alone to come to terms with this new information. We clung to one another to cry, and to comfort each other, and yes to laugh because this was an adventure. Only Lynda could make a joke about her socks lasting twice as long, and finding a right amputee with which she could share the cost of shoes.

The rest of the day was taken up with more tests, a CT scan and yet another MRI and a surgical date was set for February 7. The day was exhausting with lots of hurry up and wait, forms to fill out and people to talk to. Then it was back to Toronto General's residence to see if they had another room for the night. And yes God provided. Hallelujah! The day was not over yet. Family and friends waiting at home and praying had to be informed. What a tearful and fearful task. God gave us the words to say, and he was there to uphold and comfort us and those waiting at home.

Day three. Back to the hospital to see the social worker to help find a place to stay. Yet again God provided; Ronald McDonald house. For the first time ever it was opening to adults with cancer. We were the first two adults to stay there without children. Awesome!

As we settled into our lovely new room, we decided the only way to cope until surgery was to deny it. We were on an adventure and we were going to have fun with me pushing Lynda in a wheelchair exploring the streets of downtown Toronto.

***Don't fear, because I
am with you; don't
be afraid, for I am
your God.***

***I will strengthen you,
I will surely help you;***

***I will hold you with
my righteous strong
hand.***

Isaiah 41:10 CEB

In the meantime, people from home sent cards of love and phone calls of hope. We even received a care package from home brought to us by a gentleman from church who was in Toronto on business. God was holding us close to his heart, and covering us with his loving peace and grace, and even giving us joy and laughter.

The day of surgery came all too soon. While the orderly took Lynda down to the operating room I was told to go to the first floor waiting room to be with other families whose loved ones were in surgery. Lynda's surgery was to take about an hour to an hour and a half and Dr. Wunder said he would phone down to the waiting room with the results. He was not expecting any surprises.

Waiting was endless. I read, and I prayed, and I try to maintain a calm and peace but after two hours of waiting, I started to succumb to fear and tears. As I was feeling desperate, my pager from Ronald McDonald house went off. There was a message of encouragement and scripture from our dear sweet Sunday school superintendent. In God's perfect timing He had heard my pleas and answered my prayer. Peace was restored and my heart was calm to wait some more. Two and a half hours later the doctor called. The surgery had been a success, and all the cancer was removed. Lynda would be back in her room in about an hour. I was left to wait again.

I arrived at Lynda's room as they were moving her off the stretcher into her hospital bed. She was moaning and crying in pain. It was a shock to see where her leg had once been a stump in a bulky bandage. It was expected, but still a shock. As we waited for the pain medication to take affect, I tried to comfort Lynda, telling her she was loved, and everything would be all right through my own tears of exhaustion and sorrow. Overwhelmed and emotionally spent, I walked out of that hospital room into the comforting arms of Mount Sinai's Anglican hospital chaplain. What are the odds of the chaplain being there just at the right moment? God provided yet again! This kindly chaplain help me compose myself and allowed me to vent my emotions so that I in turn could phone home and update, family and friends. It was more than I thought I could manage, but yet again, God gave me the words and the strength to accomplish this task.

The hospital recovery went remarkably well. The hospital staff commented about the lack of need for IV morphine for pain and how well Lynda took to her crutches. The little corner of Lynda's hospital room was surrounded by love in the form of cards of loving encouragement on the walls and beautiful flower arrangements. Staff said what amazed them most was the laughter and smiles that emanated from that little corner during a most difficult time of adjustment and shock. We knew we were being upheld in prayer by those at home. What a gift!

Looking back it was a momentous, life-changing journey Lynda and I went on . It cemented a special place for each other in our hearts. For me this adventure also reaffirmed the goodness of God in His caring for us through this life trial. He provided shelter, support and love around us and we were never alone. He gave us a peace that allowed us not only to cry and grieve but to laugh and have joy as well. I so feel blessed to have had this experience especially with a friend like Lynda.

- Megan Torfe

*Then the Spirit
lifted me up and
brought me into
the inner court,
and the glory of
the Lord filled the
temple.*

Ezekiel 43:5



Artwork by Richard Carson



God is In This Place

I attended a "Wholeness Through Christ" session in Sault Ste. Marie years ago. I met Rev. Andrew Hoskins there. I found out that he pastored St. Thomas Anglican Church. I was attending St. Luke's Anglican Church when I was in Thunder Bay at the time. I decided to attend church at St. Thomas Anglican Church just to hear Rev. Hoskins' sermon. At the beginning of the service, when the Reverend started to pray, I saw a vision. I saw seven bright, white figures standing in mid air surrounding the altar. There was one figure standing mid air at the front. While the Reverend was praying and he was saying, "...lift me up so I can lift you up..." I saw him starting to rise and became merged with the bright white figure standing in mid air in the front. I thought, "God is in this place!" I've been coming to St. Thomas ever since.

- Elsie MacDonald

One More Reason

"There are many times and events in our lives that shape and define us. Sometimes they are not always obvious, and other times they are. In many ways I have lived a pretty charmed life. I have loving parents and siblings, a huge extended family, an ever present church family and supportive friends. In the mid 1980's I was in a difficult marriage with two young boys. Money was always an issue and I felt overwhelmed most of the time. Like so many of us, I got up each morning, put a smile on my face and went about my day. On this particular day in late fall I went to Tuesday Morning Bible Study at the church. I had with me my youngest son and two or three other children I babysat. I left home knowing that there was nothing to feed them for lunch, and I mean nothing at all, and I felt sick with worry. I honestly didn't know what I was going to do but I had go since I was one of the group's leaders.

These were different times, I had never even heard of a food bank and didn't even know that my own church had a food cupboard. I felt very much like everyone else was doing right and I was doing everything wrong or my kitchen wouldn't have been bare.

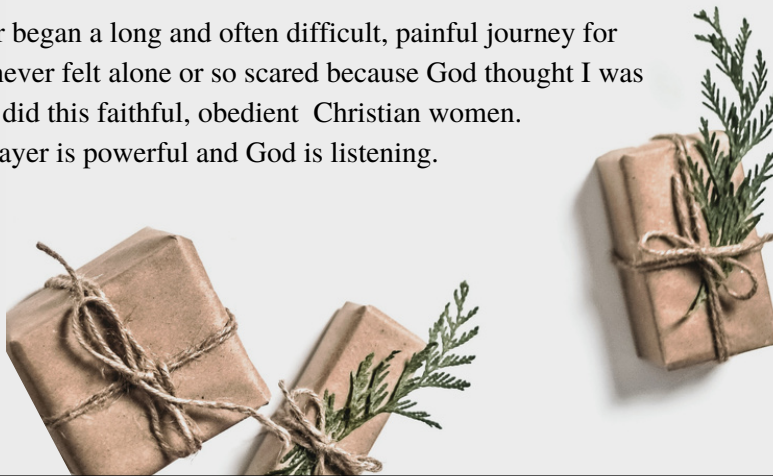
During prayer time I silently begged God to fix me and help me out of this terrifying situation. At the end of our study I gathered up my kids and drove home. I remember yelling at my son in the car, not because he was doing anything wrong, but because I was so scared. My house had a big front porch. Sitting on the floor neatly to one side were four large paper bags of groceries. Milk, bread, Kraft dinner, peanut butter, meat, vegetables, fruit, everything I needed. In one of the bags there was an envelope and inside was a note and a cheque. The note said..."God put it on my heart to do this for you today" and the cheque was enough to pay our overdue bills and buy more groceries.

This came from someone in my church whom I hardly knew and was a little afraid of. I called her and cried my thanks and she said it was all God's doing, please give Him the credit.

That answer to prayer began a long and often difficult, painful journey for me, but one where I never felt alone or so scared because God thought I was worth helping and so did this faithful, obedient Christian women.

Please believe that prayer is powerful and God is listening.

Faithfully
Janis Barker



**Every good gift,
every perfect gift,
comes from above.
These gifts come
down from the
Father, the creator
of the heavenly
lights, in whose
character there is
no change at all.**

James 1:17 CEB

