



# ADVENT

*The Coming of Christ*

**HOPE**

**PEACE**

**JOY**

**LOVE**

Illustrated by: *Christina Edwards*



## **How to use this guide.**

This Advent devotional is designed as a weekly guide, focusing on each of the four Advent candles; Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Each week there is a devotional thought, reflection questions and a Visio Divina guide for each picture.

The practice of Visio Divina (Latin for divine seeing) is a prayer practice that creates space to listen and pay attention to the Holy Spirit. Based on the 6th century monastic practice of Lectio Divina where the object of prayer is a passage of scripture, Visio Divina allows the Holy Spirit to speak through images.

We pray that this guide will inspire you during this Advent season.

We would like to thank the following people who helped create this guide.

### **Creative vision and artist.**

Cadet Chesney Edwards

### **Devotional thoughts and reflection questions.**

Captain Mark Braye

Captain Joyce Downer

Lt. Zach Marshall

Captain Indira Albert

# Hope



# Hope

This painting represents the Advent candle, Hope. We see hope from the very beginning represented in the Dove. In Genesis, Noah sends a dove from the ark after the flood. When the dove brings back a branch, Noah and his family are filled with hope that the flood has ended, and God keeps His promises. My hope is that when viewers see the white dove, they are reminded of the hope that Jesus brought to so many as they waited for His birth on Christmas Day. Like the Prophets in the Old Testament, we hope for the Messiah to return (Isaiah 9:6-7) as this is what He promises us after His death and resurrection. I also painted the rays of sunlight into the darkness to symbolize that the birth of Jesus Christ gives people hope, allowing all those who believe in Him to receive His light in this world.

Cadet Chesney Edwards

# Hope

by Captain Mark Braye, Corps Officer  
Niagara Orchard Community Church, Ontario Division

“Hope” is most commonly used to describe a feeling of expectation and want; a desired outcome; wishful thinking. We say, “I hope it doesn’t rain Wednesday, we’re planning on going to the beach,” or, “I hope I did well on that math exam.” One of my biggest hopes is for the Toronto Maple Leafs to win The Stanley Cup in my lifetime. “Hope” in contexts like these is an optimistic outlook of an unsure set of circumstances. It could rain and ruin going to the beach on Wednesday; it’s possible you didn’t do well on that math exam; and it’s very possible the Toronto Maple Leafs do not win The Stanley Cup in my lifetime.

The Season of Advent is a season of hope of a different sort. “Hope” in the Scriptural, theological, and spiritual sense is the confident expectancy and trust of what God has promised. Hope is trust and belief in good things when things are bad. When we sing, “My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus’ blood and righteousness,” we are not singing about a desired outcome or wishful thinking; we are singing about a profound truth and a trusted theological reality. In this sense, hope is not simply optimism, hope is firm assurance.

A vital text for Advent is Isaiah 9:1-7. The passage helps us tell the story of the hoped-for Messiah and it is full of hope-language:

“But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” - Isaiah 9:1-7

We can read and hear the confident hope looked to in the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ: "...there will be no gloom..." and "...a child has been born for us..."; "He will establish..." and "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." These words are not describing wishful thinking in a desired outcome; these words are describing a confident trust and firm assurance in God and the hope residing in the person and presence of Jesus, looked forward to during this beautiful season of Advent.

### **Reflection Questions**

What are some of your hopes?

Where do you place your hope?

What are some other Biblical texts that speak to hope?

How can we share our hopes and Hope with others?

### **Prayer**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13, NRSV)

### **Notes**



Henry Edgerton





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Find a comfortable position where you can gaze at the picture.

Settle into God's presence by connecting with your breath.

Move your awareness from your head into your heart.

Know that God can be known through many different forms and images.

Be present. Be open.

### **Eyes to See: Allow your eyes to gaze gently on your image.**

Let them sweep the whole of the picture.

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What part inspires you?

Where do you experience resistance?

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### **Open Heart: Take a second longer look.**

Open your imagination.

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What insights have you gained?

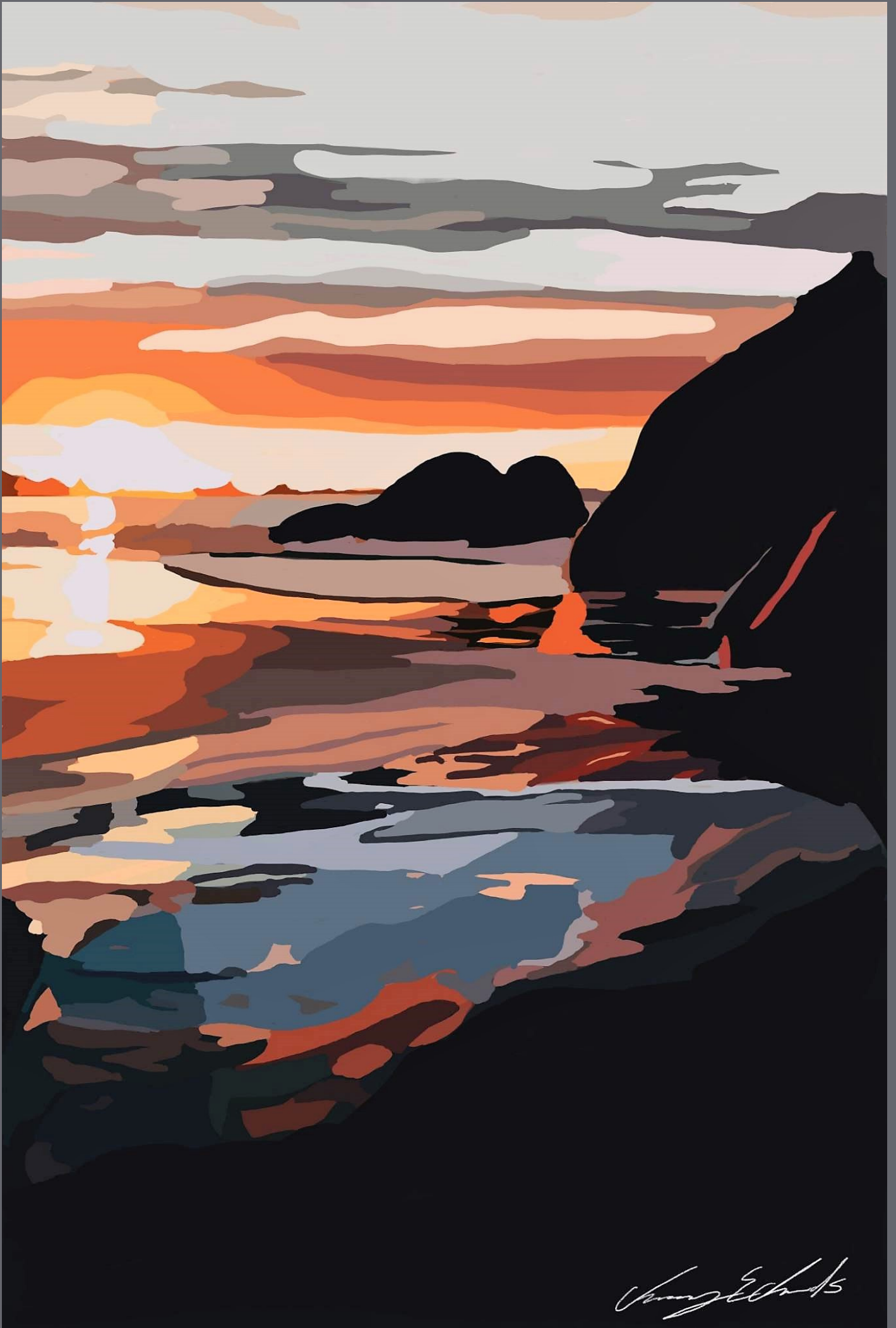
What invitation is growing in you?

What work would you like to do today?

Enjoy. Let go. Rest. Enjoy a few moments of stillness in this space.

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# Peace



*George Edwards*

## Peace

This painting of a sunrise represents the Advent Candle, Peace. In the Christmas story, the angels appearing to the Shepherds proclaim, "Peace on Earth," Luke 2:14. Like the birth of Jesus, a sunrise symbolizes a new beginning. Sunrises remind us that we can let go of the past and put all our anxieties onto the Lord, and he will fill us with peace for the new day ahead. The birth of Jesus Christ brought peace into this world and allowed all who believed to put their trust in Him as He guides us through each new day. My hope is that the contrast between the dark and the light in this painting will remind the viewer that when they go through the darkness of this world, they can still trust God to give them the strength to be that light in people's lives who may not know the peace of knowing Christ brings.

Cadet Chesney Edwards

# Peace

by Captain Joyce Downer, Divisional Candidates Secretary  
British Columbia Division

*“Glory to God in the highest Heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.”  
-Luke 2:14*

A sunrise is an invitation for us to look up, to praise Creator in the heights. It serves as a reminder of the expansiveness of our Lord; demonstrating in beautiful colour that the Heavens belong to God, along with the sky, the ground, the waters, and everything the light touches.

“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!” - Psalm 150:6

The sunrise invites us to experience in real time the majesty and power of God, to praise and exalt the Lord. There is a visible transformation of the whole world as the sun breaks over the horizon. As the sun’s light rolls out across the sky and the water and the land wrapping it with a multi-coloured quilt, warming everything that it touches and covers.

But, even if awestruck by the transformation, the sun can still feel distant. Perhaps as you watch the sunrise, the light still feels out of reach. You notice there are corners where the sun’s rays cannot touch. Hidden behind a small hill or underneath a large rock, you still sit in the shadows and shudder in the coldness of that dark space that the warmth of the light didn’t reach.

Friends, this is the beauty of our God. That the Son provides more light than the sun. Our Saviour was sent down from the Heavens to meet us in the darkness. Christ journeyed to earth as the Prince of Peace, to show up in the spaces where even the light of the sun cannot reach.

The dawn signals a new beginning. It also offers us certainty in the sun rising and setting each day. In the same way we have assurance that the Prince of Peace is with us... yes, present with us in the dark spaces, in the cold shadows not warmed by the sun.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”  
-John 14:27

This scripture reminds us that the peace Christ offers is not of this world. Peace is offered to those of us on “whom his favour rests.”

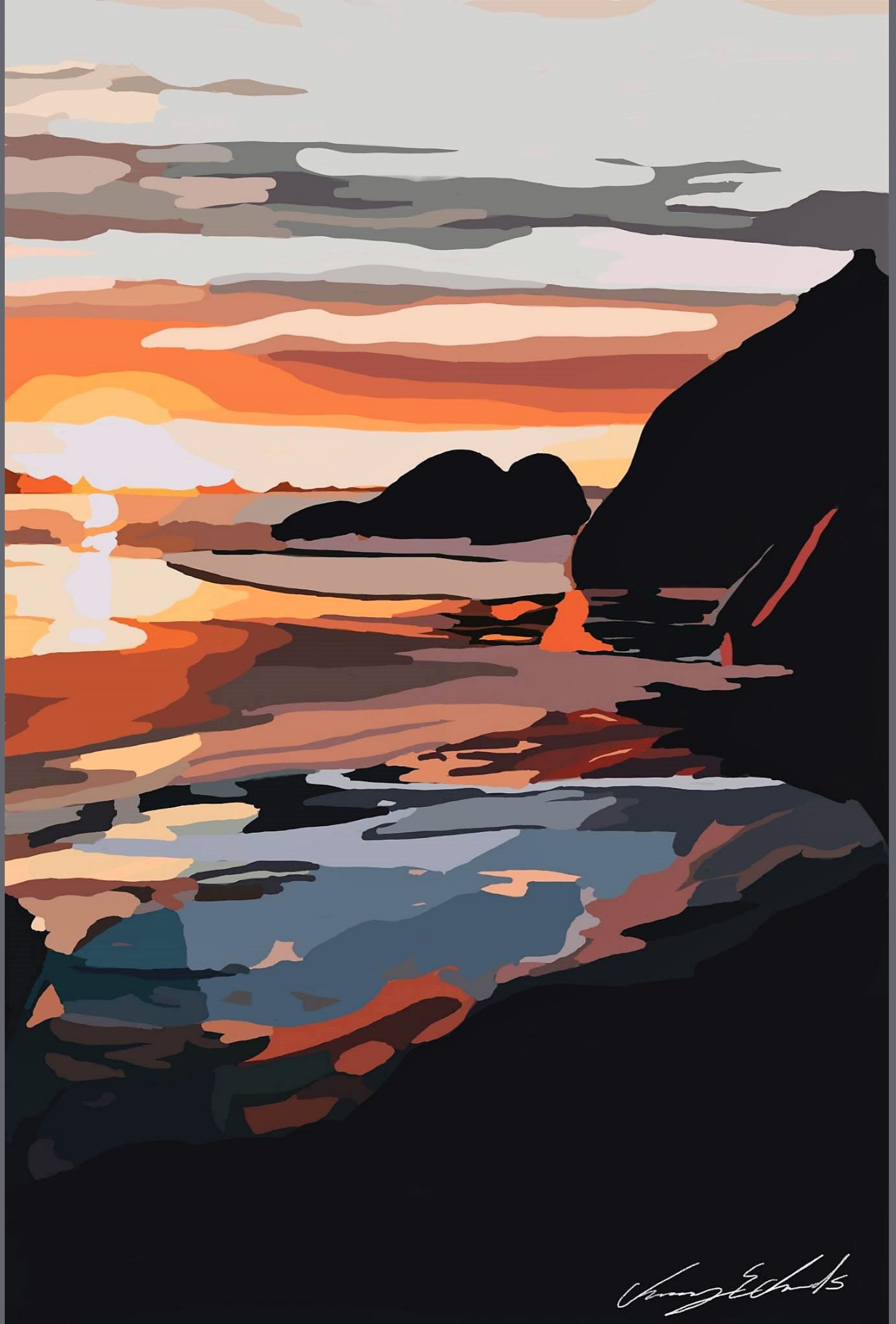
May you have confidence and assurance this advent season that Christ came to give YOU his out-of-this-world peace. As you watch a sunrise on a cool morning, might you experience the wonder and majesty of God’s Creation while also imagining yourself being wrapped in the warmth of a beautiful, colourful, patchwork quilt that is the peace of Christ.  
He is our son (sun).  
And He is our peace.

### **Reflection Questions**

Recall a time in your life where you experienced the deep (not-of-this-world) peace of Christ.

What place or circumstance in your life right now do you desire to experience the Prince of Peace?

### **Notes**



George E. Edwards '15



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What invitation is growing in you?

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# Joy



*Cheng Sheng*



# Joy

This painting represents the Advent candle, Joy. Otherwise known as the Shepherd Candle, this candle reflects the Joy that comes through Jesus's arrival and the everlasting life he has given us. I painted mountains and valleys to represent the highs and lows we will experience as we go through life, even when we know Jesus. When we believe in the coming of Jesus Christ, we will be filled with Joy, knowing that we are the sheep, and He is our shepherd who will guide us through anything. I also painted a creek going through the mountains as a symbol of the long and windy path many went through to witness the birth of Jesus and the joy, they felt knowing that God was fulfilling His promise of the coming Messiah. My hope is that when the viewer sees the river and the mountains, they are reminded that even when they may feel they are lost within the windy path of life and in the deepest of valleys, they can trust God and allow Him to guide them no matter what they are going through.

Cadet Chesney Edwards

# Joy

by Lieutenant Zach Marshall, Corps and Community Ministries Officer  
Community Church of Lethbridge, Alberta and Northern Territories Division

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.” - Luke 2:8-20 (NIV):

The traditional reading that accompanies the Joy Candle is Luke 2:8-20, telling of the shepherds tending their flocks and suddenly being involved in a divine announcement. I think the reason that this passage is read with the Joy Candle is because of what the angel says in verses. 10-11:

“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”

In nearly every translation of the Bible, you will see this phrase “good news of great joy.” This is a twofold statement that I want to unpack.

## 1. Good News.

Do you ever notice that good news stories never make the front page of the newspaper? In fact, when we check out the news today, we are often met with stories of hardship, oppression, and disenfranchisement. Good news doesn’t sell papers or make people visit news websites.

The arrival of Jesus Christ was no different. Not many people were expecting it, and even fewer were talking about it.

When the angels visit the shepherds, they attribute three titles to the infant holy: Savior, Messiah, Lord. Those who were familiar with the Jewish scriptures would have been well acquainted with the idea of Messiah coming to save their people. It was thought that the Messiah would be someone with political and military might, ready to overthrow the government at hand and usher in the lived Kingdom of God. They were to be a mighty ruler who would have the interests of Israel at heart. That seemed like good news.

But the confusing part is that we are told that Messiah is a baby. Where is the might in that? Where is the man who would fight for Israel? This is great irony of the birth of Jesus. The Savior of the world did not come in might or power; He came in meekness and humility. This is a not-so-subtle hint at what the Kingdom of God is all about.

## **2. Great Joy.**

There is a difference between joy and happiness. Happiness is very much dependent upon our circumstances. It is often not something that we can control. We will be spontaneously happy when things in our lives are good. We will also be spontaneously miserable when our lives are not good. Being joyful, on the other hand, is an intentional act of faith. We can choose to have joy despite our present circumstances.

So, how does the good news of the arrival of the Messiah empower us to have joy despite our circumstances?

Because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can have joy always. When we lack strength, we can have His. When we lack wisdom, we can look to His. When we are alone, we can be with Him.

The birth of Jesus Christ was indeed good news that brings great joy because of the personal indwelling of His lifeforce that is now ours.

Borrowing from the words of the popular Christmas hymn penned by Isaac Watts, here is a challenge for us all: "Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let Earth receive her King! Let every heart prepare Him room."

## **Reflection Questions.**

How does the good news of Jesus impact your life?

How does the great joy of His indwelling empower you to live differently?

How will you prepare your heart to receive Him anew this Advent?

## **Notes**



Chung Shik

## Visio Divina



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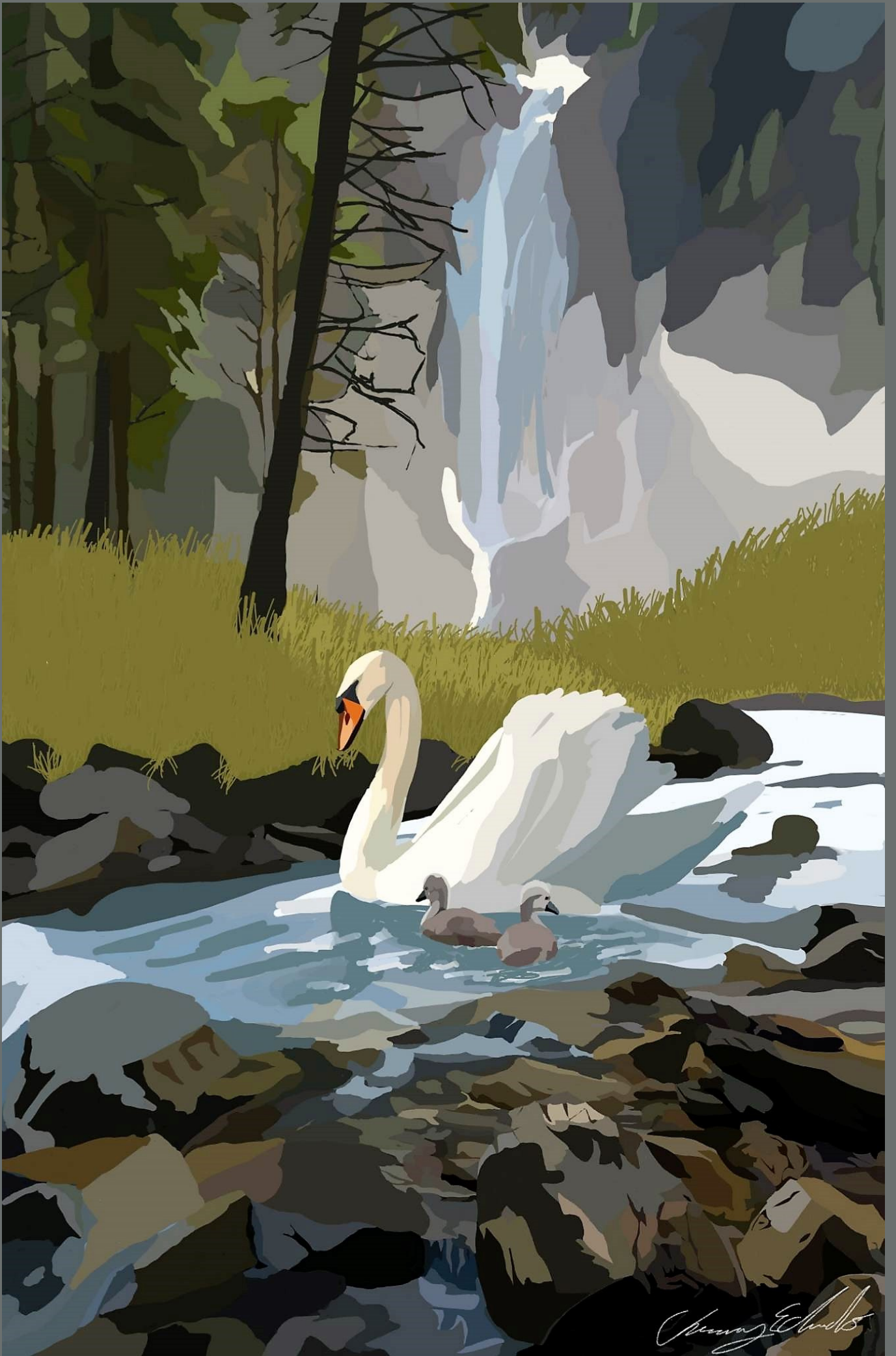
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# Love



*Shirley Edwards*

## Love

This painting represents the Advent candle of Love. Love plays a huge role in the Christmas story. Like a mother swan, Mary has a motherly love for Jesus, and we see the love God the Father has for His people when He sent His one and only Son to save us. I hope that the trees, waterfall, and calming nature in the background will bring the viewer a sense of peace, joy, and hope, knowing the love that Jesus has for them. Like the baby swans in this painting, we are God's children, and we are called to follow Him. When we choose to follow Him, He will forever protect us and love us through the rough times on this side of heaven.

Cadet Chesney Edwards

# Love

by Captain Indira Albert, Corps officer, Montreal Citadel  
& Divisional Candidates Secretary, Quebec Division

“The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.” - Jeremiah 31:3

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while [a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.” - Luke 2: 1-7

God created human beings to yearn for love. We come out of the womb craving, even requiring, unconditional love. As we grow, disappointments, wounds, and trauma can shut down our hope that we will ever find such love. When this happens, we may attempt to fill our need for love with some poor substitute that it doesn't work very well. Yet, the season of Advent invites us to turn away from our distractions and to pause to be intentional to soak in God's love for us. We look into the manger and behold a baby—a priceless gift of love. God gave us His eternal, flawless, Son, Jesus because He loves us. Jesus himself said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life," John 3:16.

Is there anyone in the world you would give up your son, daughter, grandchild, niece, or nephew to save them? Wouldn't you have to love whoever needed to be saved just as much as you loved that wonderfully precious child? Could you make that decision even if you knew the child you loved would survive death? Honestly, I don't believe I could. When I look at my two precious teenagers, I think to myself, I would trade the universe, every star for YOU." And yet, this is what Advent teaches us about God's love for us.

“I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me“ - John 17:23



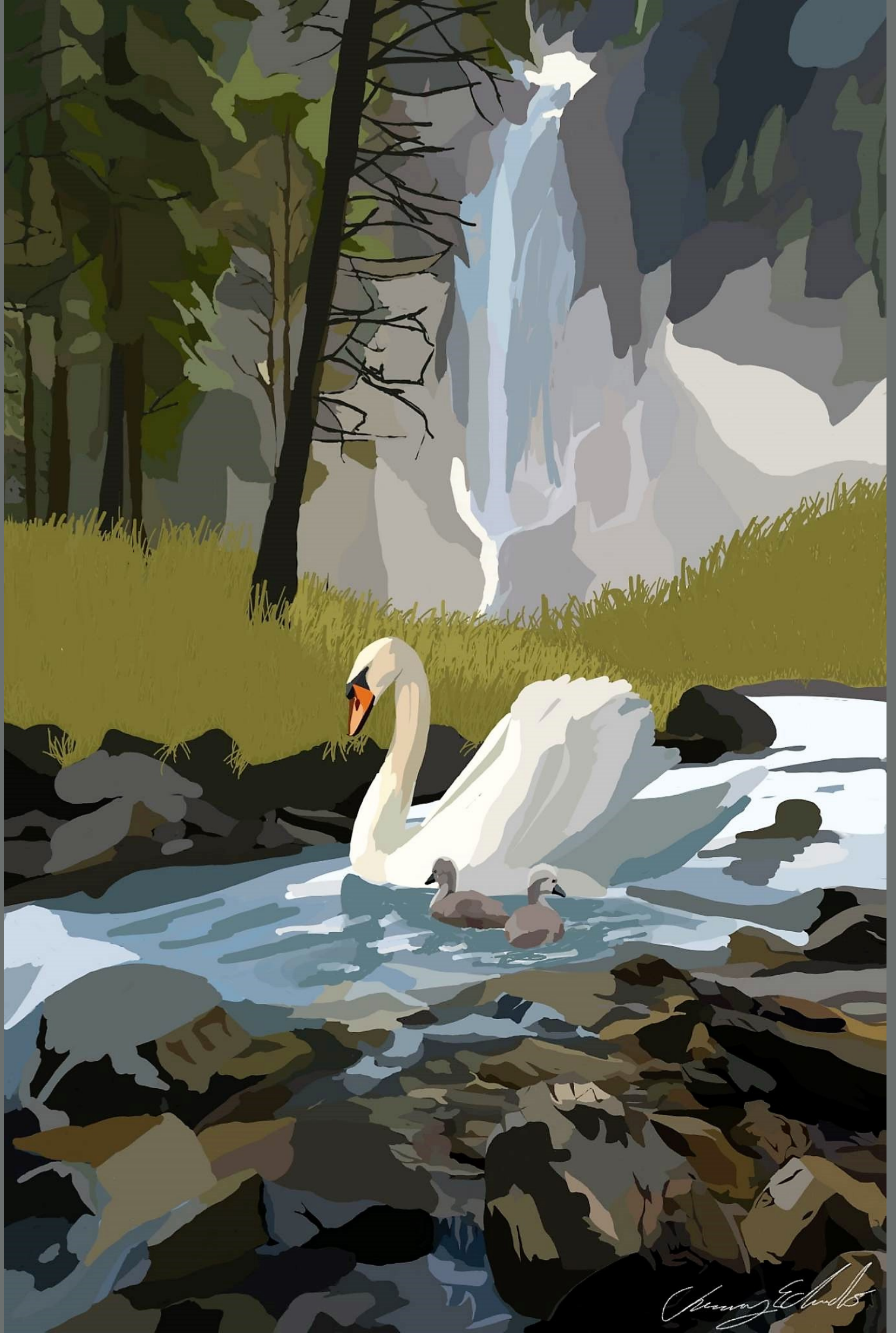
God's love for us and His Son are perhaps the two most beautiful words in all of Scripture. And Jesus love for us is the same everlasting, infinite love by laying his life in the cross for us, this love knows no equal neither a rival. There is no greater and unconditional love. God did the unimaginable: He loved you so much that He gave His Son to save you and so that you will live a life in abundance.

### **Reflection questions.**

How does the unconditional love of God, as expressed in the birth of Jesus, bring hope and purpose to your life?

How does the sacrificial love of God, seen in sending His Son, inspire you to live a life of selfless love?

### **Notes**



*Cherry E. White*

## Visio Divina



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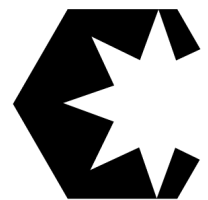
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Giving Hope Today



**CANDIDATES**  
Canada & Bermuda