



# Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

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## Bishop's Christmas Letter 2024 "God with us"

Dear Friends,

This Christmas marks my first holiday season without my beloved mother Elaine. She left us in February after a brave struggle with heart disease, and her absence is deeply felt. The air feels different this year; the festive lights seem dimmer, and the carols echo with a bittersweet tone. We all miss her radiant smile, the warmth of her hugs, and the simple joy of gathering around the table. The laughter and stories that once filled our home are overshadowed by our sense of loss. I know many of you carry a similar weight of loneliness during this time, and while the ache of missing Mom will linger, I find solace in the belief that she is now embraced by God's love.

As I reflect on my feelings of loneliness, I'm reminded that even in moments of deep sorrow, we are never truly alone. God's comforting presence surrounds us, guiding us through times of darkness. The very name of Jesus encapsulates this promise. In the Gospel of Matthew, we find these powerful words: **"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God with us."** (Matthew 1:23).

This promise of "God with us" is a powerful reminder that God's unwavering love and presence surround us, no matter our circumstances. The Christmas story speaks to the depths of our hearts, reassuring us that hope prevails even amid our grief. The birth of Jesus, a precious gift to humanity, unveils the extraordinary depth of God's love for each of us.

As we remember our loved ones this holiday season, I'm reminded of a beautiful story I heard from a friend. A few years ago, she experienced her first Christmas without her father, who had always been the heart of their family's celebrations. His laughter and stories filled the room, and she feared the holiday would feel empty without him.

Determined to honour his memory, she decided to host the family gathering at her home despite her sadness. On Christmas Eve, as she prepared the house, she hung a large ornament on the tree - a cherished piece that her father had lovingly crafted many years before. As she placed it among the lights and decorations, she closed her eyes and recalled their time together, the laughter shared, and the lessons learned.

That evening, as family members began to arrive, she welcomed them with open arms, even as her heart felt heavy. Sensing her sadness, one of her younger cousins asked, "Why does the tree look so beautiful this year?"

Her answer broke the dam of her emotions. "It's beautiful because it reminds me of him," she replied, her voice trembling. "Each ornament tells a story of the love we shared."

Inspired by her honesty, the family began to share their memories of her father, recounting funny and heartwarming stories. They laughed until tears streamed down their faces, and each shared memory ignited a flame of love that seemed to fill the room.

What unfolded was a night of connection, healing, and gratitude. They cooked together, reminisced, and comforted one another in their grief. She realized that by sharing her vulnerability, she had invited God's love into their midst. Their gathering was more than just a celebration of Christmas; it became a sacred space where love transcended loss.

As we gather this year, let us remember that the essence of Christmas is found in the relationships we foster and the kindness we show one another. In commemorating my mother this Christmas, I feel a strong urge to honour her legacy of love and compassion. I encourage you to reach out to someone who may be feeling lonely by offering a listening ear, sharing a warm meal, or simply spending time in their presence. Let us acknowledge the abundant blessings we have, even during challenging moments. By embodying the values our loved ones imparted - love, compassion, and faith - we can respect their memory.

As we gather with our families and friends this season, let us treasure these moments that weave the fabric of our lives. May we actively seek ways to extend warmth and kindness to those around us. Together, we can keep the light of hope and love glowing brightly in our hearts.

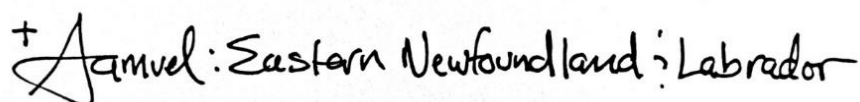


As we read in the Gospel of John about Jesus, **"In him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."** (John 1:4-5)

May we illuminate these darker moments with the light of our togetherness, allowing God's love to shine through us and for us, reminding us all that we are never truly alone.

I wish you all a Christmas filled with peace, the warmth of love, and the comforting presence of "God with us."

In Christmas Light and Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel: Eastern Newfoundland; Labrador". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Right Rev. Samuel Rose  
Bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador