

# Incarnation and Redemption – A Natural Connection

Rev. Patrick Stephens

*Fifth Week of Lent*

*Thursday April 7*

## Scripture

### **Psalm 19:1-2**

The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.  
Day to day pours forth speech  
and night to night declares knowledge

## Reflection

A clue to the scale of importance with which the authors of the gospel stories perceive the events of Jesus' life is discovered in plain sight. Have you ever noticed descriptions of the sky in the Gospels?

First, a mysterious star guides wise visitors to the birthplace of Jesus. Later, Jesus warns about the signs of end times. And, at his death, there is a solar eclipse. Whether we, as readers of the bible choose to pursue historical and scientific explanations for these descriptions of celestial phenomena or not, the message of such descriptions remains: The earliest tellers of Christian story understood the events of Jesus' life as having universal, cosmic significance.

Our understanding of the solar system and universe continues to develop. Certainly, the access we currently have to knowledge of our planet's relationship to the sun, moon, stars and other planets is well beyond what could have been imagined in Jesus' time.

When I look up at the night sky, take in a sunrise or sunset, observe an eclipse, or watch a meteor shower, I am always moved to wonder. These displays are so grand, and yet they occur right before our eyes with regularity. When I witness these cosmic signs of God's creativity and power, I am moved by the magnitude and beauty of what I am seeing.

Beholding such magnificent cosmic beauty is part of the action of entering into the story of Jesus. When we witness the events of the cosmos, we enter into a story that is far bigger than anything we can control. God's creative, loving, redeeming energy is on the move in our world. Are we prepared to take part?

## Prayer

*Creator of the universe,  
As we behold the magnificence*

*Of your power,  
Revealed in the beauty of the sky,  
We stand in awe and wonder.  
You design the patterns of moons and planets.  
And you call us to join you  
In the story of the Good News,  
Which is brought to light through your Son:  
Jesus Christ our Morning Star.  
Help us to know the fullness of your grace,  
is day and always. Amen.  
Rev. Patrick Stephens, St. Barnabas Anglican, Deep River, Ontario*

### *Ride for Refuge shifts into high gear*

After the Covid-19 pandemic struck in March of this year, nobody was sure how this year's Ride for Refuge was going to play out, but now with the Ride behind us, we are pleased to announce our most successful campaign ever!

Our original goal was to raise \$25,000 for our partner in Uganda, St. Jude Family Projects. Undaunted by the pandemic, the Ride organizers, Blue Sea Philanthropy, created a Freestyle category, allowing people the flexibility to choose an activity of their choice. With two weeks left to go in the campaign, we had met the initial goal, then boosted it to \$30,000. We quickly blew past that target too and moved the finish line to \$35,000, then surpassed that as well, thanks to the overwhelming support for our participants across Canada. Our final target was \$40,000, and we are proud to say we exceeded that goal as well.

As of today, PWRDF has raised \$42,000, our largest amount ever, more than doubling what was raised last year. Out of the 128 charities across Canada that participated this year, PWRDF is currently ranked 8th. With the ride freestyle option, 59 participants undertook all kinds of activities to raise funds while staying safe and socially distant.

From the traditional walking and cycling to reading Agatha Christie mysteries and knitting baby blankets, this year's participants really got creative. One of the biggest fundraisers was none other than Primate Linda Nicholls, who held two Facebook Live Hymn Sings, taking pledges and hymn requests raising nearly \$3,500. Many participants experienced the rugged beauty of Canada's wilderness:

- James Mesich, a former Youth Council member, hiked with his father for nine days on the Lake Superior Coastal Trail.
- PWRDF Board member Cynthia Haines-Turner and PWRDF Diocesan Rep Mona Edwards (right) hiked to the top of Gros Morne Mountain in Newfoundland.
- And PWRDF staffer Carolyn Vanderlip and her partner paddled their kayak in 11 different bodies of water in Ontario.

St. Jude Family Projects teaches sustainable agriculture techniques to mostly women and youth from rural Uganda and across Africa, improving livelihoods and food security while also protecting the environment.

St. Jude's founder, Josephine Kizza Aliddeki, is amazed with the success of this year's Ride for Refuge. "I am happy to hear the good news," she said before attending Praying with PWRDF on Zoom in October. As part of this campaign Josephine and her son Daniel also participated in two webinars with PWRDF supporters. "Thank you for such a great opportunity. We appreciate the support from PWRDF staff and Canadians so much."

**Read the whole story on our website at**

<https://pwrdf.org/ride-for-refuge-shifts-into-high-gear/>