




# LOOK AROUND!

by Laurie Ziliak

**As we near the end of 2020, it's hard not to reflect on what a challenging year it has been.**

Much has been lost, and as we moved from spring to summer to fall, it became clear that none of us would see a return to life as we knew it, at least not any time soon.

My classroom experiences have highlighted this reality. The teaching life I once knew is gone, at least as far as I can see. Online or remote teaching has become much more prevalent, and any classroom interaction needs to include as much consideration for safety and community-building as for content.



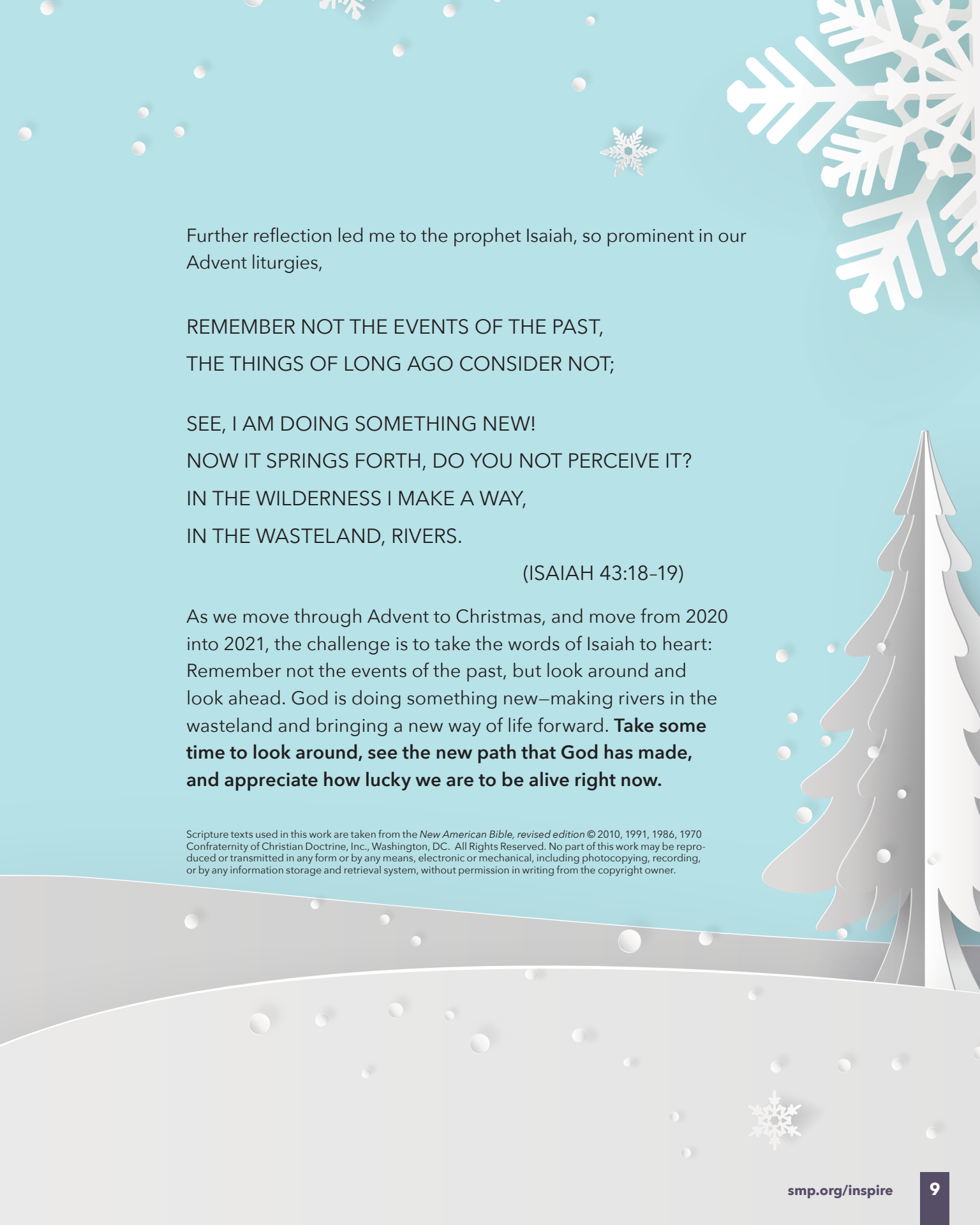
As I was reflecting on the changes that have taken place since March, I found myself—as I have many times in the past eight months—angry, and mourning all that has changed and been lost. While in this space, a song from the musical *Hamilton* popped into my head with the lyrics, **“Look around, look around at how lucky we are to be alive right now!”** (from the song “The Schuyler Sisters”). My initial reaction was that of cynicism. I wasn’t feeling very lucky and would much rather have life look like it did one year ago.



But I took the lyrics to heart and looked for all the positives around me. **The more I looked for the positive, for the ways I am lucky, the more I saw.**

I have had to be more intentional about connecting with my extended family, and as a result, have spent more distant but focused time with them. The same is true for teaching. Although I'd rather not have to adjust to the changes, I am lucky not only to have a job but to have a job that allows me to continue to work and interact with young people. My time with students is less, but I am able to virtually meet with them one-on-one and get to know them in ways I wasn't able to before.





Further reflection led me to the prophet Isaiah, so prominent in our Advent liturgies,

REMEMBER NOT THE EVENTS OF THE PAST,  
THE THINGS OF LONG AGO CONSIDER NOT;

SEE, I AM DOING SOMETHING NEW!  
NOW IT SPRINGS FORTH, DO YOU NOT PERCEIVE IT?  
IN THE WILDERNESS I MAKE A WAY,  
IN THE WASTELAND, RIVERS.

(ISAIAH 43:18-19)

As we move through Advent to Christmas, and move from 2020 into 2021, the challenge is to take the words of Isaiah to heart: Remember not the events of the past, but look around and look ahead. God is doing something new—making rivers in the wasteland and bringing a new way of life forward. **Take some time to look around, see the new path that God has made, and appreciate how lucky we are to be alive right now.**

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