

# MISSIONAL INITIATIVES

## Monthly Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2023

Contributed by Karen Wilk, Neighbourhood Life Lead

### An Advent Text Reflection: Share Peace

*Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. (Luke 10:5–6 NRSV)*

Jesus tells the seventy to first offer peace to the Samaritan villages where He has sent them to remain. I wonder if the Spirit has also sent us to remain with our neighbours and share peace. After all, peace is one of the gifts of Christmas celebrated in this Advent season: Jesus *is* the Prince of Peace.

Speaking peace was a common greeting in ancient Middle Eastern culture as it still is today in many places. In North America, however, our simple 'hellos' often lack the same warm intention. I wonder what would happen if Christ followers began to greet others with peace.

But then, as now, *sharing* peace might require more than just a friendly gesture. Jesus is instructing his followers to announce Shalom to the marginalized and shunned Samaritans. In his book *Missional: Joining God in the Neighbourhood*, Alan J. Roxburgh writes that Shalom is a declaration of "the promise of Jubilee and the rule of God among [us]." It's a proclamation of God's Kingdom! God's Kingdom come!

As such, it might be interpreted as a direct challenge to the PAX peace that the Roman rulers of Jesus' day, secured by war, violence, cruelty, power, and control. They kept peace with the end of a sword! Unfortunately still today there are rulers, and those who want to be rulers, who do the same.

Jesus, however, models, teaches, and embodies another way to peace, and another *kind* of peace. Sharing Shalom peace might not be as peaceful as it seems. In fact, it was a direct challenge to the Roman rule of dictatorship, oppression, and injustice, and as such, risky and dangerous business—so much that it led the Prince of Peace to the Cross.

But here in this account, the seventy come back rejoicing (Luke 10:17)! God uses their experience of working alongside and sitting at the table of the other to show them that the Spirit is out ahead of them and at work in their neighbours, *Samaritan* as they may be.

So I'm wondering, how will we share Shalom, the peace of Christmas, with our neighbours —'samaritan' as we think they may be—this season?

<sup>1</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 157.

## A Dozen Ideas for Sharing Peace and Joining God in Your Neighbourhood This Advent:

1. Thank God for the opportunity to share peace with your neighbours (Luke 10:5). Ask the Spirit to help you be a person of peace and comfort, a non-anxious presence, amongst your neighbours.
2. Make simple Christmas greeting cards for your neighbours that include a personal note of gratitude and encouragement. As you do, think about what you can repurpose and reuse. Cut out the illustrations from last year's cards; decorate with scrap ribbon, yarn, wrapping paper, coloured paper scraps, and small buttons or beads. Try to avoid buying anything new! If possible, have a card-making party with your neighbours and share your craft supplies (another way to steward resources). Enjoy some drinks and snacks and, as the Spirit leads, have a conversation about peace: What has brought them peace over this last difficult year? What does peace mean to them?
3. Encourage and express your appreciation for the staff at your local school, daycare, seniors' residence, or other local organization. Prepare a tray or basket with homemade treats or perhaps some ready-to-eat fruit or special beverages (like apple cider or festive sodas). Drop it off with a Christmas greeting and note of gratitude.
4. Find out what's going on in your neighbourhood—is the community/neighbourhood association hosting a holiday get-together, a kids' time, an artisan's market, a skating party? Invite some neighbours to join you there.
5. Plan a local outing together with a neighbour—to the playground, the toboggan hill, the local library, or other neighbourhood meeting place, or perhaps to admire all the Christmas lights and decorations on your neighbourhood streets!
6. Who in your neighbourhood have you been meaning to get together with – why not book a date to eat together this week? Keep it simple and informal.
7. Volunteer with a neighbour to help set-up or clean-up at an event in your neighbourhood (those are always the hardest volunteer slots to get filled).
8. Invite another neighbour to join you in offering to babysit for a family or two so that the parents can go shopping or on a date.
9. Offer to drive a neighbour, who is unable to do so on their own, to an appointment or to run some errands; get to know one another better as you travel back and forth.
10. Have a neighbourhood baking exchange—everyone brings 2 dozen of a favourite homemade holiday treat and an empty cookie tin or plastic container. Participants then pick 24 different



goodies to take home, which means everyone has a nice variety of holiday treats! Serve drinks and visit with one another... you might want to exchange recipes as well.

11. SOCKING: Begin a "[You've Been Socked](#)" initiative in your neighbourhood. Put a few treats, a small Christmas decoration, or tree ornament in a small stocking (all of which can be handmade or purchased with minimal cost – keep it simple/replicable). Secretly leave it at the door of a neighbour with the instruction sheet and 'poster.' If possible, sock a few neighbours to get the initiative going; choose those whom you think are most likely to participate/pay it forward – and watch for the socking to spread!
12. On December 21, **Light the Night** to encourage everyone on the shortest day of the year (Winter Solstice). Create a parade of light in your neighbourhood green space by having your block or your whole neighbourhood (small group, congregation) make [Luminary Candles](#). (We made sets of ten for each household and then sold them as a fundraiser for a local centre that helps people with housing, food security, community building, etc.) Set a time to meet outside, light them all, and enjoy the display together. If possible, serve hot chocolate!
13. It's a Baker's Dozen: Sign up for our **Advent in the Neighbourhood** Webinar.



Many of your neighbours may have no idea what Advent is, but most of them likely get into the festive spirit and are eager to give, gather, and share some holiday cheer! All of this makes it a wonderful opportunity for followers of Jesus to discover and unite with the Spirit on God's mission in their neighbourhoods during this season. Join us on **Monday, December 4, 7:00–8:30 p.m. ET** (Eastern Time) in which we will reflect on the God who became one of us, the shift from "come TO" and "do FOR" initiatives to doing and being WITH postures and practices. You'll also hear a lot of creative ideas and tips for engaging our neighbours, including how to bear witness to the One Whose Advent is near – even at holiday socials!

Led by Dr. Karen Wilk, the Missional Initiatives Team Neighbourhood Life Lead and long-time practitioner.

Sign up for the webinar here: <https://forms.gle/Q8nR7KT3eUCqTd26A>.