

Interfaith Voices Column, November 2019

Reach Out and Beyond

by Alice H. Rampton (601 words)

As we approach the holidays, many of us do so with both joy and trepidation. This time of year, can be stressful, lonely, and full of unmet expectations. Depression is more prevalent during the holiday season and may require professional attention. There may be occasional “down in the dumps” times, which can come and go. When those “down” times plague my small corner of the universe, I try to remind myself of the antidote that helps to chase the blues away - **look outward**. No matter what your faith, looking beyond oneself and reaching out to others has universal appeal and often brings positive results

In 1987, our family, with six children, ages 1-14, traveled to New York and Philadelphia for the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution celebration. We saw this as a good opportunity for us to experience U.S. history first hand; however, our budget was tight. Eating out for our family was expensive in those cities and meal prep was not allowed at our YMCA hostel. One evening we took our children to dinner at a Philadelphia restaurant. When we went to pay the bill, we were amazed to discover that a woman sitting near our table had paid for all of our eight meals! Because of that experience, we always think of Philadelphia as the City of Love. This made our day and we often reflect on this generous gift. Though the woman had departed before we could express gratitude, I can't help but believe that this brought her joy, also. She definitely looked outward as she sat at the restaurant. (Maybe our noisy family helped that!)

Twenty-six years ago, local members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began hosting the annual Corvallis Nativity Festival. This was our way to reach out as a faith-based organization, but we were worried how others would welcome this event. The community responded with attendance, participation through music and volunteers, and the sharing of nativities. Over 4000 people attended in 2018. We are thankful for the friendships developed through the years. The Nativity Festival is open to the public at 4141 NW Harrison in Corvallis on Dec. 6-9, 11:00 am-8:30 pm and Dec. 10, 11:00 am-4 pm. <http://corvallisnativityfestival.org/>
Community members can also volunteer with the festival at:
<https://signup.com/go/UcwPMHT> .

On a much larger scale, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is reaching out with their 4th annual “Light the World” program (www.lighttheworld.org). Two offerings in this program are a downloadable December calendar and downloadable daily

prompts for phone devices suggesting ways to serve and reach out to others. Here are two examples:

1. Think of someone for whom you've had negative feelings lately. Try praying for them.
2. Help people locally or globally through a donation

Throughout the world, there are wars, natural disasters, disease, poverty, and hunger. Individuals face their own battles at home. It can seem overwhelming, but like the woman at the Philadelphia restaurant, the opportunity to reach out is all around us. What better time to start than now? I know I could benefit from quiet pondering of ways to look beyond myself. It's a great attitude changer.

Russell M. Nelson, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said in October, "Giving help to others — making a conscientious effort to care about others as much or more than we care about ourselves — is our joy. Especially, I might add, when it is not convenient and when it takes us out of our comfort zone. Living that second great commandment is the key to becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ."