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Kokanee Concerns

We are reminded in the Gospels and in the Baptismal Covenant that we are called to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbour as ourselves. We are reminded also to strive for justice and peace, respecting the dignity of every human being, and strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, respecting, sustaining, and renewing the life of the earth. *Kokanee Concerns* is a weekly publication from the Anglican Parish of Kokanee that identifies items of concern in both the local community and the wider world, for which we can advocate, act upon, pray, and learn on a weekly basis. Consider the local community, the wider world, and your place in both as you reflect upon the topics each week. This week, please consider these thoughts in relation to our responsibilities as peacemakers and as carers of creation and of the community around us. How do we act as agents of Peace? How do we care for Neighbour?

Peace,

David+

Concern in our Neighbourhood . . .

In our discussions this week, Sue Basek and I focused on the theme of *Peace*. As Christmas lights fade, there is some worry that centred, ongoing discussion and dialogue concerning peace may get lost in the busyness of the starting of a new year. As humans there is a pattern of dimming our focus of peace, harmony and justice/right relations in the face of planning and preparing our own lives for the newness of 2024. Sometimes New Year resolutions focus solely on self-improvement, personal dialogues and goals.

From a neighbourhood perspective, how can we live a life focused on peace with those with whom we interact closely in our everyday lives?

Continuing my new discoveries of life in the Nelson/Kaslo and surrounding areas, I have read about the ongoing work of the [Mir Centre for Peace](#) through Selkirk College in Castlegar. My partner and I attended a symposium sharing information about the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, where Raja Khouri and Jeffrey Wilkinson, authors of *The Wall Between* shared their perspectives on peace making in light of the current conflict.

I have also been enjoying the interactions with the Nelson Multifaith Collective, that meets monthly, ensuring dialogue between individuals of differing religious and spiritual practice, focusing on peace and harmony, as well as other justice efforts. Our work this month is preparing for an event honouring the UN's World Harmony Week (February 1 - 7). Please stay tuned for upcoming information.

There are so many simple ways that we can be agents of peace and harmony in our own lives. Think of the relationships that nurture daily. Consider how you might enact methods of healing, reconciliation, and kindness, with each encounter that you make with neighbour, friend, family, and stranger. <http://www.everydaypeacebuilding.com> is a simple website that I have found that offers ten practical ways to build peace for individuals in their lives. Consider how you might move forward into the freshness of this new year and build relationships that bring hope, love, healing and transformation with all those round about you.

Submitted by David Burrows

Concern in the World . . .

Today is the celebration of Epiphany, a time to continue the theme of light breaking through the darkness of our lives, a time to think what this really might mean, and how we as a global community could bring this into our world.

One word that is used a lot during this time is 'peace', and more specifically the lack of it in our lives, in our world. It seems a straightforward enough concept as in, no fighting, but as with many simple things, not easy to achieve. A quote from Ursula Franklin sums it up nicely, "... it is not merely the absence of war; it is the presence of justice and the absence of fear." When was the last time you felt absolutely at peace; absolutely secure?

Franklin's definition seems to echo in the words of a nonviolence activist living in the West Bank when, in the wake of Hamas' brutal Oct.7 attack and as Israel's retributory assault was gearing up. Ali Abu Awwad wrote, "Now more than ever, we all must refuse to use violence to

justify more violence. We [must] not allow our pain to blind us to what is most needed: mutually guaranteed sovereignty, security, and dignity for both Israelis and Palestinians.”

On a scale of 1-10 our perceived peace, justice, and security are perhaps around 1.5 in comparison to way too many peoples and places in the world, but lack of peace reigning within, certainly can affect how we live our lives without.

Enter the Christ Child. The message of compassion, justice, peace is the central theme of the Christian faith. Jesus points us to see the Divine spark within us as our individual and then corporate ‘Way’ of bringing about a holy world of sacred peace – Divine Love and Light within and without.

We can see many of examples of these sparks of the divine in-breaking around our world, near and far... in the midst of terror and chaos small sparks of love and light happen when we allow Holy Spirit the space and time to work in and through us.

In a world of division, comes the (award-winning) project of reconciliation and peacemaking, known as the Peace Cathedral in (the country of) Georgia. Within the walls of this building are the plans for creating a mosque (underway) and a synagogue, spaces where each of the monotheistic religions who share the same roots, can honour and share each other’s space together.

Called the House of One, the idea comes out of the existing Peace Academy in Georgia, where since 2015 Muslim, Christian, Yezidi (members of a Kurdish religious minority) children have come together to learn and share. People need to come together and start talking to each other. Prejudices and misunderstandings are being broken down through the encounters of the children. This works wonderfully and the children feel like real friends after a while. They know exactly who is Christian, who is Muslim, or who is Yezidi, but that is not important. They appreciate and love each other just as they are. The children are then the little peace ambassadors when they return home to their families and schools as they spread this spirit in their homes and schools, and then slowly throughout the country. We must encourage and support this process of exchange all over the world, whenever and wherever we can.

How can each of us bring a bit more light into the world this year? If we translate light as being understanding and compassion, or at least empathy, then does communication seem a key aspect and tool of this? Communication is not only talking however, but listening, and listening well. To be completely open to what the other is saying, is perhaps our most difficult task. To not be forming our next sentences before we’ve heard and digested what is being said to us, is for me, a lifelong goal. This is the Deep Listening with Open Heart, Open Mind that it seems the Peace Academy, Peace Cathedral / House of One is working to spread in our world. May we emulate this in our lives.

Submitted by Sue Basek