December 2021 Reflection

Christmas Presence

By Joanne and Dave Pfeifer, Covenant Companions

The smell of baking cookies is a childhood Advent memory that both of us share. For us, the scents of vanilla, cinnamon, and chocolate herald the coming of Christmas as surely as the angels heralded that very first Christmas. We looked forward to building similar memories with our own children.

And so, the one unique tradition we built with our children was to make plates of cookies and take them to share with our neighbors. We would always bake all kinds of cookies and trays of fudge. We would laugh and share stories during our baking marathon and our daughters would go to elaborate lengths decorating the cut-outs and spritzes. After the baking was done, as a family, we would pack up the treats, bundle up and head out into the winter with our deliveries.

Some neighbors would accept the gift with a perfunctory "Merry Christmas" and close the door. Others would open their door and invite us in for a visit. One neighbor would greet us with a plate of her own homemade cookies, leading to an exchange of stories and recipes. Another neighbor would greet us with small gifts for our girls and a welcome into a warm living room for conversation and laughter.

In a small and ordinary way, our annual Christmas cookie giveaway is a parallel for God's most profound and extraordinary gift of Jesus to each of us. As Christmas approaches, we know the knock on our door will be coming: God standing before us with a look of joy, eager to offer us the gift of his Son. How will we choose to receive this gift? What are our gifts to share during this Advent season? How can we reach out and touch people's lives? How can we make a difference in our world today?

One of the most precious gifts that we can give to others is our time: Our time to hear and listen to each other's stories. To take time out of our busy agendas and just sit and be present to each other is a true gift, as is letting others share their gifts and talents with us. Is God calling us to reach out to someone this Advent or even perhaps is God calling us to reach out to spend more time with him?