

CHANGING THE WORLD

WITH

GOODWILL



ALEISHA KEATING recommends that we focus personally and in our communities on spreading the Christmas message of peace in Earth and goodwill to all.

Death, sickness, isolation, separation from families and friends, unemployment and financial insecurity, boredom and loss of freedom are synonymous with COVID-19. Amid the uncertainty, disruption and loss of the pandemic, communities worldwide have united to face new and evolving challenges. We often think of community in terms of our immediate whānau (family), friends, our physical neighbours, and those who share our interests. These communities have been vital during COVID-19 — they have been the means by which we have banded together and adapted to change.

The support has taken all kinds of shapes — Europeans singing to their

neighbours from their apartment balconies; others cooking meals and delivering groceries to the vulnerable; some translating health messages into languages for migrants and refugees to understand; health workers caring for the sick; and for most of us the simple act of mask wearing — showing that community is real.

This Christmas, in the face of continuing global challenges like COVID-19 and sustainability issues such as the crisis of climate change, Luke's Gospel message of "Peace on Earth" and goodwill to all people will cause us to reflect on what that might mean for us.

What do peace and goodwill mean when we're navigating a

turbulent time, when many urgent environmental, social, economic and public health crises are swirling around us?

How can we come together as communities responding to this Christmas message and create positive change now and into the future?

Supporting Healthy Communities

Healthy communities are dependent upon healthy members. During the pandemic restrictions we prioritised people's physical health which is good. But also, we need to attend to the effect of restrictions on people's mental well-being. Where fear, anxiety and panic developed in the

community, we found increasing signs of depression and anxiety.

Attending to Mental Health

Fortunately, we are learning to recognise the importance of mental health, and its impact on other aspects of our health. We see that it is vital we support mental health in the community alongside physical health.

Conversations about mental well-being are more commonplace and many people have taken on the practice of checking in with one another more regularly.

Giving mental health attention is one way we can increase peace on Earth and goodwill among all people.

At an individual level, peace can mean tranquillity of our mind and soul.

Collectively, peace may encompass harmony among different groups. We can express goodwill in kindness — to ourselves and particularly to others. Kindness nourishes our mental and spiritual well-being. And by consciously tending our own needs, we become better able to function in the community more effectively and lovingly.

The way we develop goodwill will vary. It can be through exercising, or by taking time for hobbies. It may involve regular spiritual practices — times of quiet, prayer, meditation, reflection, stillness — inside or outside in nature.

And as we care for ourselves we extend goodwill to others — to the community. This might involve forming community networks for checking on one another, or introducing regular events where members can come for support and are able to share their emotions and stresses without feeling judged.

This is one positive crystallised by this pandemic: the prioritisation of mental well-being in both ourselves and in our communities, so that we can embody peace and goodwill in our lives.

Challenge to Spread Goodwill Globally

The current global issues highlight our interconnectedness in Earth and also our disparateness. COVID-19 has spread rapidly and affected every part of the world. The climate crisis affects

life in Earth. Despite these crises affecting us all, global cooperation is not always forthcoming.

Our recent experience of the rapid production of vaccines against COVID-19 bears witness to the worldwide cooperation of scientists and other experts working for the protection of the Earth community.

But we've also seen where local political and economic interests, national protectionism, scapegoating and competition, have allowed some countries or states within countries, to put their own interests before the common good.

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Similarly, COP26 called for countries to work together to stop Earth's climate from overheating. Although the conference achieved promises from countries, some of the richest countries did not give the most affected countries assurance that they heard their pleas for restraint and will take necessary steps to reduce their emissions. The global community needs effective global action.

Our Efforts Help Peace and Goodwill

Now, with so many urgent crises around us, we are called to extend goodwill further, to the global community. We must be aware of our place in global society and our ability to forge change at a local level, which can have broader impact beyond our immediate community.

What might this look like and how might we spread goodwill further, for instance to our Pacific neighbours whose lands are drowning because of sea level rise?

We can't always see or experience the impact our actions, such as practising social distancing and mask wearing to stop the virus spreading or taking one fewer car journey a week to reduce global carbon emissions.

It is easy to feel powerless or despondent in the face of global challenges where there is an apparent gulf between the urgency of the action needed and the rate of

governmental action.

But collective actions can bring change. At the local level, there are many actions that we as individuals within communities can instigate that could have far reaching implications. For example, actions like driving or flying less, reducing food waste and changing our diets are effective ways of reducing carbon emissions. Websites like Get Greener (www.get-greener.com) can be helpful.

How could our community make it easier for people to drive less? Perhaps we could share transport more frequently, opt for car-free alternatives

such as cycling or walking to local destinations, or help address safety issues which prohibit active and/or sustainable transport options?

We now know that food wastage — happening often in our households — produces more carbon emissions than flying, plastic production or oil extraction. So reducing food waste in our homes is an easy way to lessen carbon emissions and community members of all ages can participate. How can our community support others to reduce food waste?

Uniting as local communities to address global problems can help strengthen relationships within communities and spread goodwill to others around the world, particularly those more vulnerable. Through imbibing Luke's gospel message in our hearts and actions we can strive towards common goals in both our local community and the global community. As the American anthropologist Margaret Mead said: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever has.” 🌱

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