

In the Christian church, this is the Advent season, where we remind ourselves of the coming of Christ into our world. Isaiah 9:6-7 speaks of the Prince of Peace—that he will bring both justice & shalom. This is the theme of the 2nd Sunday of Advent. Doug, Jill, Cathy, Pastor Burt and I also recently attended the CCDA conference in Miami, Florida. The theme there was “Seeking the Peace of the City” from Jeremiah 29:4-8. Between CCDA and Advent, we’ve been thinking a lot about peace.

In the past when I thought of Shalom, I often did so within the realm of personal peace. But peace forces us to consider others. Peace (or “shalom”) means wholeness, a condition of freedom from disturbance, whether outwardly (as of a nation from war or enemies) or inwardly (within the soul). It means that nothing is broken, and nothing is missing. For there to be shalom, there has to be mutual understanding.

We have some strange notions about what will make peace in our society. Too often we think that “might makes right.” But “might” means submission and the power to enforce your will. It does not make what we do right—whether as a person or a nation. Some people seem to think: If only that country would allow us to take what we ‘need’ from them—without paying a fair price for it, we could have peace. If my neighbor would only allow my dog to run loose and do his ‘business’ wherever he needed to—without making me cleaning up behind him, then we’d have peace. Some might say, if only those rich people would share... Or if those ‘people’ would only give us our piece of the pie... We look for shalom in having stuff, a gun, a

swagger, a foul mouth, a pit-bull, and a state of the art alarm system. But it does not come.

In our society we want peace, but we are also unwilling to deal with injustice. I don’t mean just social but economic justice as well. If I don’t have a job or work that I can do, when I can’t feed and house my family, that’s unjust. When all that is shown to me on television is beyond reach, the ‘good life’ is held out as the ideal yet is always out of reach, it’s for them and not you, then that’s unjust. When there’s no justice, there won’t be peace either. Society will be made to pay eventually.

We live in a world that longs for peace, yet without the Prince of Peace. God still wants shalom for us and with us, but he has a different standard. This title tells us that He is the *Ruler* of Shalom. He is the prince who rules and reigns in peace. World peace without its prince is impossible. Are we willing to address both the needs we see and the misguided notions of peace in the name of true shalom?

When you attend a conference like this, people ask: was it worth it? The answer is a resounding YES! We met dozens of men and women very much like ourselves, doing work very much like Urban Connections. I left Miami feeling as if we are not alone—or crazy. There are thousands of other believers who have been called and are working for Shalom in the city for the sake of the Kingdom. We are not alone.

To each of you, thank you for your support of Urban Connections, Merry Christmas and God’s Shalom in the New Year.

Pastor T. A. (Tony) Burns

Econ 101

Many people have asked me if the economy is effecting our work in our neighborhood. I think most people know that the answer to this is yes. Of course our work is influenced. We are already in an area ravaged by poverty, dependencies and injustice. So just as many people who had plenty are worried about their houses, the cost of food and gas and their jobs, so are my neighbors worried too. And of course as a ministry, like so many other non-profit organizations, we face new challenges. Does this change our call? Of course not.

Though I suspect we’ve heard it many times now is a time for us to remember that we are called to something special. Micah 6:8 tells us that the Lord requires of us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. We at Urban Connections plan to keep doing that and trust that the Lord will provide for our steps. We want you to know that we are praying for you, our supporters, in this rough time. We hope you will continue to support us too with your love and prayers and in your finances as the Lord leads. Thank you.

Let us Pray...

- for one another as we all meet more people who are in need. Pray that we would listen well to what people need and respond well in love and kindness.
- for our tutors at Fairwood Ave. Elementary. Pray that they would be building relationships and imparting value in the lives of the students they work with weekly.
- for our staff: Doug, Cathy, Burt and Regina and also Pastor Tony at Hope Christian. Pray that as we face challenges in our ministry and personal lives that we would show the love of Christ to others and bring peace and wholeness to our community.
- for our teens. A core group is growing again, pray for April, Brian, Byron, Brittney, Alex and others who are coming every week but face their own challenges with their families and peers. Pray they would show Christ's love and patience.
- for our financial future. We are struggling to meet our commitments, putting off payroll for our staff and putting off activities and house repairs because of cost. Please seek the Lord about whether you might join our support team.

Urban Connections

447 Fairwood Ave.
Columbus, OH 43205
251-0140

www.urban-connections.org

Doug Hartman
Executive Director
252-1376
doug@urban-connections.org

Cathy Alexander
Resource Administrator
252-3726
cathy@urban-connections.org

Burt Manchester
457-4550
burt@urban-connections.org

Current Needs

Canned Baked Beans
Canned Fruit (peaches, pears,
oranges or mixes fruit)
Paper Towels
Napkins
Dishwasher Detergent
Sandwich Ziploc Bags
Aluminum Foil
Toilet Paper
Sponges
Swiffer (Wet & Dry)
Swiffer Duster
Jet Dry

WANTED:

THE STUFF YOU WANT TO GET RID OF

Do you have stuff that works but you just don't need it anymore? We at Urban Connections are willing to get rid of it for you! If you'll provide pictures, we'll sell it at an online classifieds site and the buyer picks it up from you.

We just ask that you donate the money back to UC.

Things we'd consider selling:

furniture, appliances, lawn mowers, baby items,
equipment, tools, computers and more!

Email cathy@urban-connections.org for more information!



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