

Hyun Jin Moon's Family Peace Association: Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Howard Self
December 24, 2022



There is much to appreciate this end of year as we experience God's deep love for humanity in our closest relationships. With the holiday season bringing us together, we may visit members of our family, spend time with our neighbors, meet old friends or even make new ones. With every passing year, the world around us continues to expand with every relationship that we build, growing our God-given family.

Below are some [toolkits](#), [stories from FPA members](#) and [video and reading recommendations](#) to assist in making your experiences together that much more unforgettable. To our extended family, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year of 2023!

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Inspirations for the Season



Letting God Work through Me to Touch Others

by S.T.

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Building a Family that Serves Together

by Nathan and Maruko Breland

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Putting Love into Action in the Community

by Mike Yakawich

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Inviting God in for a Run to Remember

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Recommended Readings and Videos



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Resources for Kids



This activity set includes pages with figures and backgrounds you can cut out to re-enact your own nativity scene. It is a great way to complete a lesson on the true meaning of Christmas after watching a video on the first nativity. Find the activity [here](#).



A colorful storybook about a little girl's experience of God's immense and unique love for her through the beautiful sunset. You can read this story on your device or print it out [here](#).

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Building a Family that Serves Together

May 4, 2021



Reflections by Nathan and Maruko Breland

We can't help but feel that *God designed the family to serve the world together*. When a family serves together with God as their center, with each family member adding unique value, they become an unstoppable force of goodness.

We recently assisted with a kids clothing giveaway, where families came and dropped off clothing that their children had outgrown, and could pick out new clothing for their children from the ones other families had donated. Although Mom could have simply gone to the event by herself, we made it a point to go and serve together as a family. Each of us played a different role: Mom sorted the clothes, Dad went out and bought refreshments for everyone, and our toddler son greeted all the families with his smile and cheer. Each member of the family, though varied in age, had something unique to offer.

This reminded us of the tradition we have consciously been building since the day we got married.

When we were newly married, we received advice from a mentor couple that became one of the guiding principles of our marriage: "Do public service together." Doing service together has been beneficial all around: for the people on the receiving end of the service; for each of us as we live for something beyond ourselves and strengthen our character and faith; and it deepens our relationship. We're very grateful for this "secret ingredient" we were given early on in marriage, and we're happy that as we now raise our son, it has become part of our family culture. We'd like to share some of the experiences that we have been so grateful for.

One particularly memorable experience was a few years ago when we were asked to help out at a week-long youth workshop where high school students were learning about God and cultivating their spiritual lives. The participants were spending the nights on-site. Mom was the advisor of the workshop and understood the importance of having a supervisor present at nighttime. At the same time, she couldn't stay away from our then-nine-month-old son for six nights.



During the process of figuring out a solution, we were asked by the staff if our whole family could stay each night at the workshop site. It was a situation we hadn't seen before. We had heard of "dorm parents," but not with a nine-month-old baby in the mix. In many practical ways, it didn't make the most sense, but we understood that the purpose was for the spiritual benefit of the participants and staff of the workshop, to have a family that could supervise and

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be mentors if needed. So we agreed to it.



We were surprised by the experience. Mom felt tremendous gratitude that she could be with our son and with the youth participants and staff of the workshop, watching all of them learning and growing. Although Dad was out working during the day, he provided an important presence at night as a father figure who brought a sense of stability and protection. Although we were worried that our baby would distract the participants, instead, he brought lots of joy to those present and helped the newer participants feel more comfortable with his warm smiles. He, too, greatly benefited from the love that he was surrounded by during his time with all his “uncle” and “aunt” figures.

The workshop staff expressed how much the culture was impacted by having not just an adult supervisor on-site, but a whole family present. They said it helped to create a stable and safe environment where the participants and staff could focus on the workshop. Some of the staff members, who were college students, shared with us later that they were thinking about marriage and family in their future, and were inspired to see an example of a couple and family serving together.

Serving the greater good as a family isn't always the easiest or most convenient path. At times, we've struggled to decide whether or not to give up some major personal family plans. But whenever we chose to follow God's call, we never regretted it because we saw and experienced His incredible love at work right in front of us. And those moments have had a lasting impact on our family relationships and culture. When we, as a family, live for the sake of the greater community and world, our family also grows closer together and reaches new levels of unity. It's a total win-win. As we reflect on these experiences and those of other families who have taught us this way of life through their example, we can't help but feel that this is part of God's amazing design for the family.



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Putting Love into Action in the Community

Dec 15, 2021



By Mike Yakawich

My wife, Yukiko, and I have raised five children in Billings, MT. We had a wonderful journey living on the South Side where Yukiko and I started the ministry. It was a time of pioneering. We had to be creative, innovative and resourceful. Certainly, by the grace of God and many good people, we were able to prosper under the "Big Sky". We both met great men and women who embraced us and cared deeply about us.



One person who comes to mind is "Grandma Betty". She was born in the neighborhood where we lived. She married and had two children. Grandma Betty kept a good eye on our family. She was a strong Catholic devoted to her faith. She lived her faith by expressing such welcomeness and kindness to our family, especially in the early days of our work when it was lonely and we were facing some persecution

due to our faith. Subsequently, Grandma's children and four grandchildren became very close to our family. Even to this day, Grandma Betty's children and grandchildren call us "Aunt Yukiko" and "Uncle Mike". Later, I was honored to help conduct her funeral.

We met another great pair, of many others, Tiny and Chris. We met them one day when we were blessing the neighborhood. Tiny, the wife, initially teased me for what we were doing. I think that we, like many, were tested to see if we were sincere or not. Well, we became like family, and over the following years they would always invite us to their home for Christmas and other holidays. When I had taken some trips overseas for my mission work, this couple picked up our kids from school or invited the family over for dinner as ways of helping my wife out while I was away.

Our family, along with others in the community, launched a substance abuse prevention program (The March Against Drugs and Violence). It began with a dozen kids and some parents. Over the years, we gained sponsors and it grew to an annual event that includes over 300 participants. We had guest speakers from the area who were recovering addicts speaking on why abusing drugs was so harmful. Our children and others were always so willing to help haul the chairs and tables for set up and take down.



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Often, our children and other youth would comment, "It is nice to see we are not alone taking a stand against drug abuse." They found so much more value in this effort than one could imagine.

Community service also included wonderful homemade cookies and strawberry jam made by my wife. We could always share some good will with such treats which later created such a reputation that people looked forward to her treats. Whether she gave them to our business contacts, the friends in the neighborhood, the teachers at our kids' schools or fellow city councilmembers, outreach and service with something homemade made mouths water and hearts melt.



There were many personal benefits in doing community service that came about as "collateral blessings". The volunteer services were not done for this reason but my children came to tell me how they realized that doing community service has so much additional value. They earned college scholarships through community service, and even gained letters of recommendation to attend college or receive funding for their education due to their community service investment. In fact, the Governor

of Montana issues a \$1K scholarship for any senior in high school who conducts 100 hours of community service. Our children found this not so hard to do, especially when they and their parents are in the habit of doing community service.

Nevertheless, community service was fun as well. There was usually plenty of free food, pizza and treats at most service projects, which everyone enjoyed. There was normally a lot of SWAG that partnering agencies would bring to information tables. We even had at times pictures of one of our kids appear on TV or the local newspaper, which was maybe an inspiration for them. Well, I think they did not care that much about that, but it was a great witness to their school teachers, friends and family.

Our children's Catholic school teachers knew that we were not Catholic. When the teachers saw them or their parents in the local media, it was a powerful witness. In fact, we even had the Catholic High school band that our children were part of come out and perform at our events, such as the Community 9-11 Celebration of Life.



In the end, people usually care more about who you are and what you do than what you believe or think. Actions do speak louder than words.

