

See God at Work in Your Neighborhood

As Christians we are called to be kind, friendly, giving, caring...to welcome the stranger. But what if the stranger is actually your next door neighbor? Or that weird person down the street who wears only black and you see only every now and then checking their mailbox?

Author and 2010 Minister and Educator Retreat leader, Alan Roxburgh, author of *Moving Back into the Neighborhood*, challenges Christians to meet the neighbors. Well, not just meet them. He challenges us to use Luke 10:1-12 as our inspiration and be in relationship with them. Roxburgh believes we are called to “understand that God has invited us to see the neighborhood or community where we live as the parish where we are called to be God’s witnesses.”

He challenges us to become friendly, even friends, with neighbors who are like us, and those who are very different from us, welcoming them, respecting them, honoring them as people. Roxburgh argues that in those relationships we will naturally share our understanding of Christ. “Wait a minute,” you scream. “I’m not interested in becoming a Bible



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Roxburgh argues that you don't have to thump your Bible to share the love of Christ with people in your neighborhood. His philosophy is that God is already at work in your neighborhood and that by entering into the rhythm of the community, being a part of it, your faith will be shared, because it is part of who you are. The “Moving Back into the Neighborhood” approach to ministry is not about bringing people to church, but about bringing Christ to people where they are.

Here at the beginning of Advent, waiting and preparing for Christ's arrival, a poignant verse comes to mind. John 1:14 “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”(The Message). Let this verse become an inspiration to you during Advent. Challenge yourself to become a part of your community. Invite a neighbor to dinner. Have a coffee with the people on your block. Make a new friend in your neighborhood. Welcome the stranger this Advent, and look for ways to move into your neighborhood and see what God is already up to.

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