

## A Reflection on Outreach: Meeting in the Middle

We are blessed to have a good spirit of Inter Faith and Ecumenical cooperation in our community. One of the things that we do together is to support a ministry for homeless women called *Room In the Inn*. From week to week these women, who are engaged in some kind of meaningful work or activities during the daytime hours, are housed at night by various congregations in the community. This rotates around on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

Once or twice a year our little Episcopal Church takes our turn to provide the overnight lodging, but is assisted in other aspects of the ministry by other congregations in our particular neighborhood. Together we work with representatives from the Jewish, Methodist, Lutheran and Episcopal congregations – all several blocks from each other.

For the past two years it has been great fun for the youth from the synagogue down the street to gather with the youth of our church for what has become our annual Cookie Bake. This weekend we just finished rolling out dozens of cookies, cut into various shapes and baked for the cocoa and cookie treat that will be offered next week.

This Sunday afternoon, as a small group of our youth walked out to meet our friends coming up the hill, I was reminded of our experience last year – which was our first meeting of this kind. One of your youth commented as we first gained site of our new friends situated at the bottom of the hill. “Is that them, they look so small?” I wondered with them what it might look like as we got nearer. “Oh, I know,” said another one, “It’s like art – it’s a matter of perspective – the further away, the smaller they look.”

Sure enough, as our friends came closer and crossed the street - we all stood together introducing ourselves getting acquainted with each other. There we were – no longer up hill or down, small or large, us or them - but all standing on equal ground. Each bringing our own tradition - ready to serve together in compassion and love. How appropriate it seemed that the women would be hosted the last week of December that year. And as the calendar sometimes affords us, the dates for Christmas and Hanukkah overlapped. So each group with their own respective cookie forms prepared both Christmas and Hanukkah cookies to be enjoyed by our grateful homeless guests who had provided the occasion for this gift of love on common ground.

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