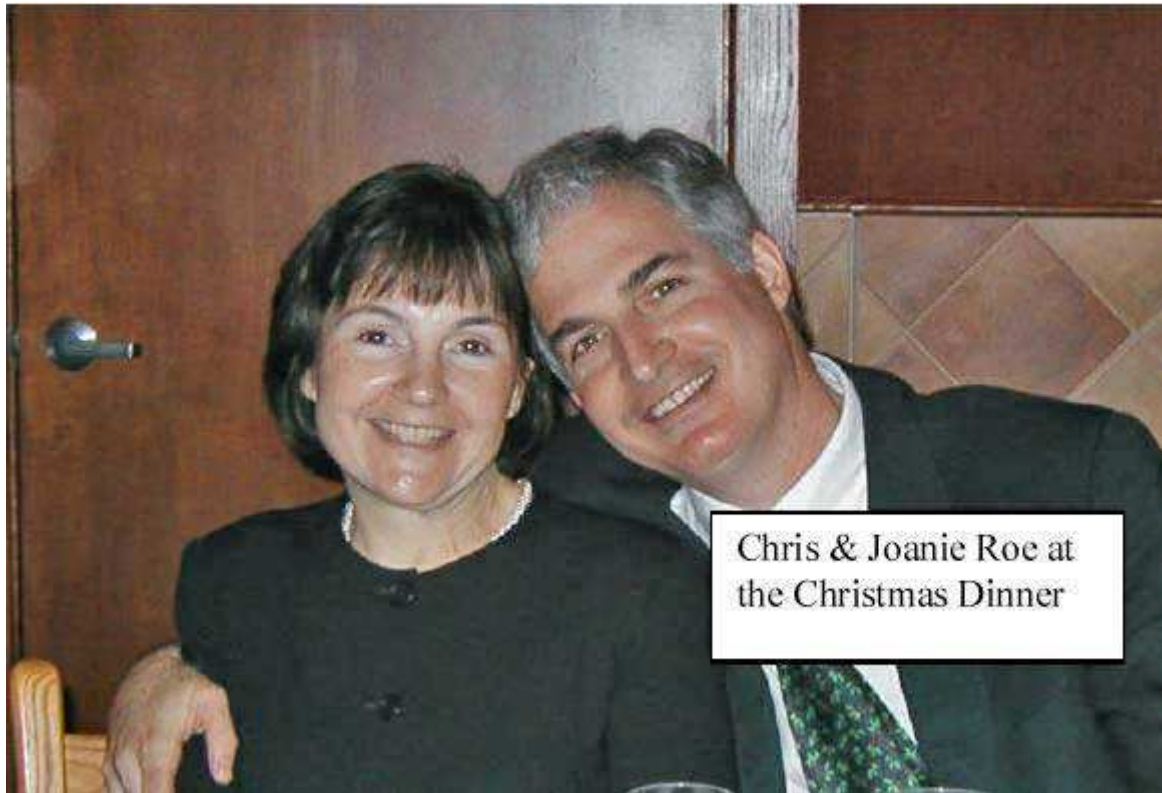


WWME Great Community August 2007

Malvern, Pennsylvania Image Group

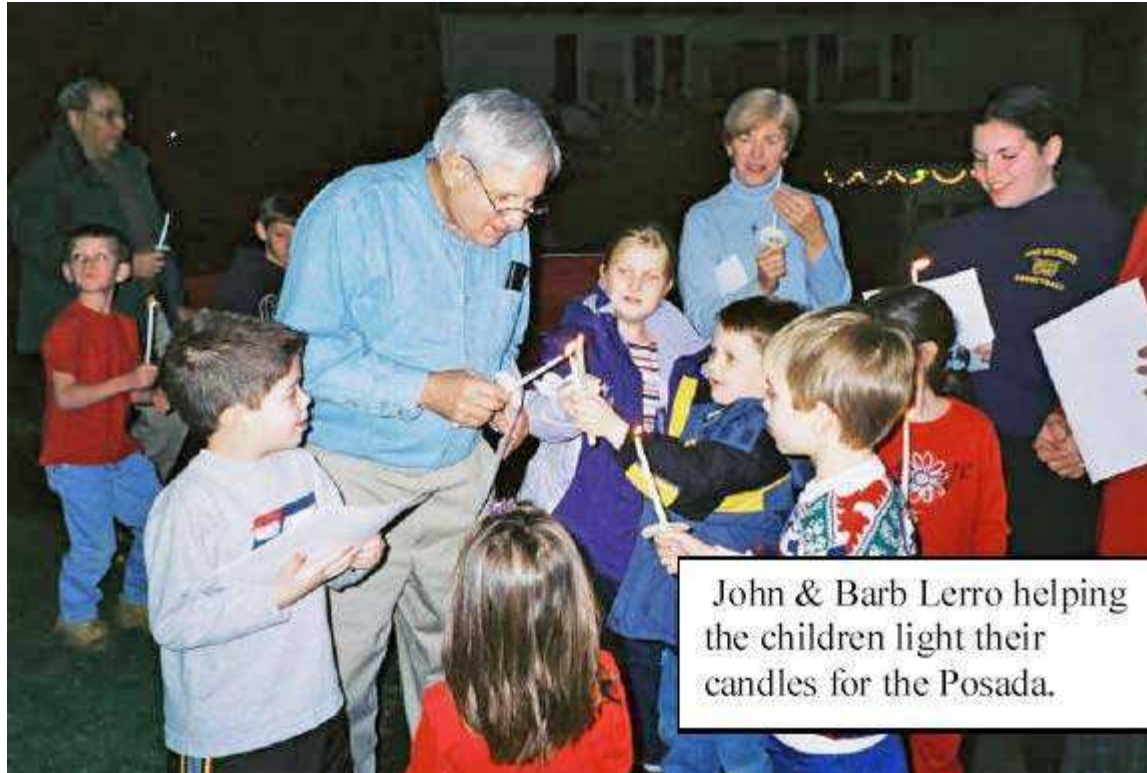
By Chris & Joanie Roe

The Malvern Image Group in the suburbs of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is a stellar community. The current leaders of the group are Chris & Joanie Roe. This sharing circle was created almost 20 years ago when two team couples decided there was a need for a sharing group in their geographical area. Over the years, the group has grown in numbers and now totals about 15-20 active couples. Although new couples are being added all the time, there are typically between 8 and 12 couples present at the monthly meetings.



The monthly community meeting has a workshopped presentation on a topic related to the Weekend or to relationships. This is followed by dialogue and open sharing. In the Philadelphia area, there is also something called Agape at each meeting. The word **agape** is one of the Greek words for love... it's the divine, self-sacrificing love that is altruistic and without limits or expectations. Agape begins with a short time of prayer after the dialogue sharing and just before the social part of the meeting. The couples stand around a table as the host couple begins with a short Bible reading related to the presentation, and then anyone who wishes can mention prayer intentions. They close with a formal prayer such as the Our Father or the Glory Be and then share a loaf of bread and some wine or grape juice as a sign of community—perhaps toasting anniversary couples or celebrating other events. Refreshments are shared after Agape as the couples chat and mingle to get to know each other better.

The Malvern Image also has a core group of five or six couples that meets once a month to plan inviting events and reach-out activities. Any interested couple is welcome to join the core group. The Image serves an area of about 12 parishes currently, and regular pulpit talks and other inviting events are scheduled in each parish. Recently there was a Romance Dinner in one of the parishes where six of the eight couples attending signed up for Weekends. The Malvern Image sends a representative to the Chester County meetings also, so some events are planned in conjunction with the neighboring sharing groups. They are planning on offering enrichments such as Five Languages of Love to the parishes in our area this fall.



John & Barb Lerro helping the children light their candles for the Posada.

The Malvern Image has a monthly electronic and snail mail newsletter that lists coming events such as their annual Christmas dinner, or their annual Family Posada. Many events are planned to include children, and they try to be family-friendly at the meetings when possible in order to accommodate the younger couples with small children. This year they also did a holiday toy drive for the St. Vincent De Paul society and a Sock Drive for a homeless shelter. Whenever a need arises within the community, the word goes out on the prayer chain and couples are there to help.



Portrait of a Great Community celebrating together!

The great example of the many couples who dialog daily and reach out unconditionally has helped to make this a passionate and dedicated group. The current leaders, Chris & Joanie Roe, meet with other share group leaders in the county once a month to coordinate activities. John & Marleen Babiec, another one of our couples, are the Chester county leadership team at the moment. Every two years, a new couple steps up to assume leadership of the group and the other responsibilities are rotated also. This shared leadership helps to ensure continuity and is one of the reasons that the Image is growing. Some of the past leadership couples are going to start a new group in a neighboring area with couples coming off Weekends this year.