

February 2025



Monthly news & updates

Message from Grace Van Zyl Chair, Rotary Action Group For Peace

Dear Peacebuilders,

For over a century, **Rotary has been a driving force for peace**, not just through words, but through meaningful action. From influencing the creation of global institutions to empowering local communities, Rotary's commitment to peace has remained steadfast.

Laying the Foundation for Peace

- 1917 – Rotary International President Arch C. Klumph proposed an endowment fund for doing good in the world. This later became The Rotary Foundation, supporting education, health, and humanitarian aid—key pillars of sustainable peace.
- 1921 – Recognizing the power of global cooperation, Rotary formally incorporated peacebuilding into its constitution, committing to international understanding and goodwill.



Shaping the Global Peace Agenda

- 1940 – At its Havana Convention, Rotary adopted a resolution calling for freedom, justice, human dignity, and respect for human rights—principles that influenced the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 1942 – Rotary clubs from 21 nations convened in London to envision a post-war world where education, science, and culture would drive peace. These discussions laid the foundation for UNESCO.
- 1945 – Rotary played a pivotal role in the formation of the United Nations, with 11 official observers at the San Francisco Conference—second only to one other organization.

Carrying the Legacy Forward

Rotary’s history reminds us that peace is not passive—it is built, nurtured, and sustained through **intentional action**. Today, as members of the **Rotary Action Group for Peace**, we continue this mission by:

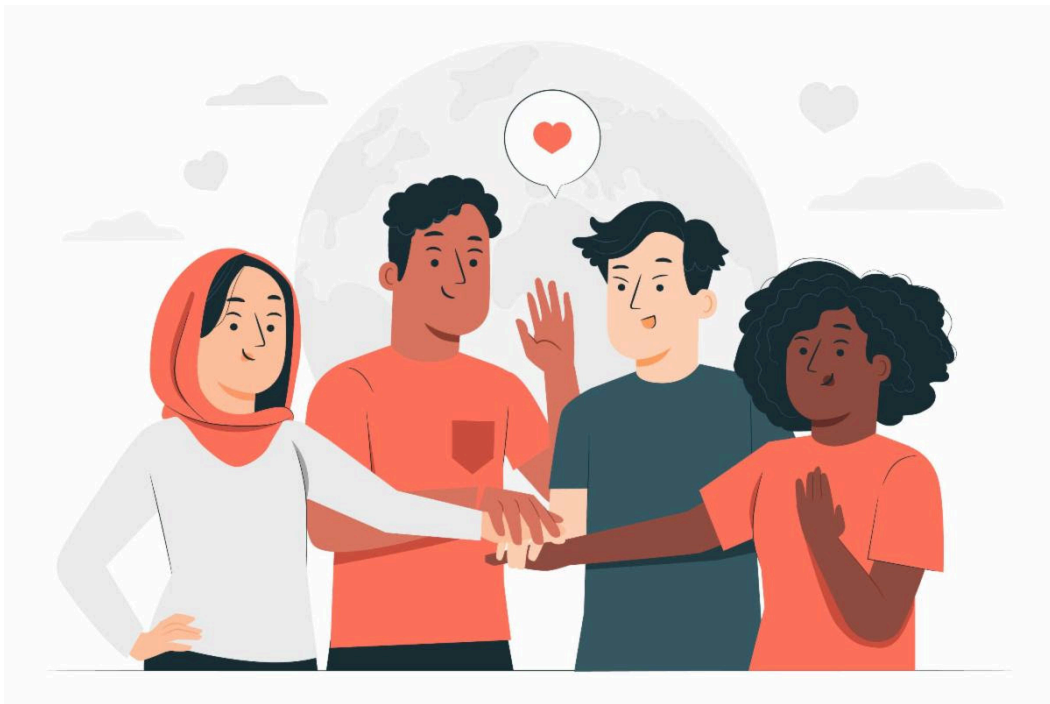
- **Empowering communities with sustainable peace projects**
- **Equipping future leaders through Rotary Peace Fellowships**
- **Strengthening Peacebuilder Clubs to amplify local and global impact**
- **Using our vocations to create solutions for conflict and inequality**

Our legacy is not just in what we have done—it is in what we continue to do. **Every conversation, project, and partnership brings us closer to a world where peace is not just an ideal, but a reality.**

Let’s keep leading, inspiring, and taking action for peace.
Together, we are peace in action.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Grace Van Zyl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

10 Conflict Resolution Considerations *by RAGFP Past Chair Michael Hayes*



1. Ask questions, do not give answers
2. Listen actively
3. Treat everyone with respect and dignity
4. Observe, study interactions, emotional responses to things that are said, body language
5. It is not about blame
6. Understand the problem, is it an issue or the relationship
7. Clarify, clarify, clarify; make no assumptions
8. Everyone must take ownership
9. Feelings matter, everyone's feelings are real because they are owned
10. Follow up often, keep the participants engaged in the solutions

Rotary's Legacy of Peace: 120 Years of Service and a Future of Possibilities

As Rotary celebrates its 120th anniversary and marks February as Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Month, we reflect on its enduring commitment to fostering peace worldwide. From its early days advocating for international understanding to its modern-day peace initiatives, Rotary has remained a steadfast force for good. The Rotary Action Group for Peace (RAGFP) stands as a testament to this legacy, uniting Rotarians in the pursuit of a more peaceful world.

A Journey Through Peace Milestones

Rotary has played a critical role in global peace efforts. Some key milestones include:

- 1917 – Rotary International President Arch C. Klumph proposed an endowment fund, which became The Rotary Foundation, dedicated to

humanitarian service and peace.

- 1921 – Rotary officially incorporated the promotion of peace into its mission at the Edinburgh Convention.
- 1940 – Rotary's principles shaped the framework for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at its Havana Convention.
- 1942 – Rotary clubs convened in London to discuss post-war education and reconstruction, laying the groundwork for UNESCO.
- 1945 – Rotary participated in the United Nations charter conference, providing 11 official observers.
- 1985 – The launch of PolioPlus, Rotary's largest global initiative, significantly advanced health security and peace.
- 1992 – The world's first Rotary Peace City was established in Wagga Wagga, Australia.
- 1999 – The Rotary Peace Centers program was developed to educate leaders in peace and conflict resolution.
- 2002 – The first class of Rotary Peace Fellows began their studies.
- 2012-2015 – Rotary hosted multiple Peace Symposia and established key partnerships for global peace efforts.
- 2017 – Rotary International partnered with the Institute for Economics and Peace, emphasizing positive peace.
- 2018 – Rotary Peace Fellow alumni surpassed 1,000, working in over 100 countries.

Milestones from 2019 to 2025

The years following 2018 have seen even greater strides in peacebuilding:

- 2019 – Rotary launched the Positive Peace Activator Program, training peacebuilders globally.
- 2020 – The Rotary Peace Fellowship expanded to include an additional certificate program in Uganda.
- 2021 – Rotary announced the seventh Peace Center at Bahçeşehir University in Turkey.
- 2023 – Rotary's partnership with the United Nations marked 75 years, reinforcing global collaboration for peace.
- 2024 – Rotary surpassed 1,600 Peace Fellows, with alumni impacting over 130 countries.
- 2025 – The Rotary Action Group for Peace continues expanding its reach, connecting peacebuilders in over 100 countries.

The Future of Peacebuilding in Rotary

As we look forward, Rotary's role in peacebuilding will only grow stronger. With new initiatives, expanded partnerships, and innovative programs, Rotary remains dedicated to its mission of creating a more just and peaceful world.

The Rotary Action Group for Peace invites all Rotarians and peacebuilders to engage in this journey—whether by supporting Peace Fellowships, participating in peace projects, or simply fostering goodwill in their communities.

As we celebrate 120 years of Rotary, let us reaffirm our commitment to peace and service. Together, we can continue making a difference for generations to come.



RAGFP Past Chair Michael Hayes for The Courier of Montgomery County

February is Rotary's Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution month in Rotary. Both are skills that each of us should master. When you consider the state of the world, and the state of our country today, you can see the need for these skills everywhere.

In our own country, people are dividing along multiple lines, whether they are political, social, monetary, racial, or you name it; people are separating into their own villages and societies. That in and of itself is not a problem until we begin to judge others who are not in our village of looks or beliefs. That is where the trouble begins.

Somehow, we have forgotten how to disagree. We often see political parties, celebrities, and the media all publicly disrespect those whose personal opinions, beliefs, behaviors, or even physical appearances are different than theirs. Even though we see others do it, it does not mean it is right. So how do we go about disagreeing with others? The current approach of disrespect and name calling is not acceptable. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

First, treat everyone with respect and dignity. Treat the other person like you feel you should be treated. Be the example. If the other person stoops to disrespectful statements, let them know that personal disrespect is not advancing the discussion and disengage, letting them know that respect for the relationship is more important than the problem.

Second, ask questions, do not give answers. Listen actively and try to understand the basic issues or problem. Is the disagreement about an individual issue or is there a deeper problem in the relationship?

Third, observe, Study the interactions occurring, be sensitive to emotional responses and watch for triggers. Identified triggers are a place to gain understanding. Body language gives information about how comfortable or uncomfortable someone might be at some point in the discussion.

Fourth, clarify, clarify, clarify!!! Make no assumptions, do not “fill in the blanks” if there is information or points that have not been discussed or defined. Take the time to dig into the detail if it has not already been discussed.

Fifth, feelings matter. Everyone has feelings that are real because they belong to the person. “You shouldn’t feel that way” or similar statements should never be used, those type of statements invalidate the other person’s feelings. They will feel they are not heard or that you are saying their feelings do not matter. Listen with empathy. “I am sorry you feel that way” or I did not intend to make you feel that way” are much better approaches. Avoiding blame is another important feelings-based approach.

Finally, if the dispute requires follow-up be certain ownership is shared and communication is a little more frequent than needed.

This world gives us too many opportunities to engage in disputes with others, from Facebook to work to daily life. Life is more interesting when we accept and understand our differences. Investing in respect for others is investing in yourself and your future. Be the example!!!

Los Angeles has never experienced an environmental disaster of the magnitude of the recent cataclysmic fires!

by Dr. Vicki Radel

January 7th the smoke and embers rained in the Pacific Palisades and Malibu area of Los Angeles Rotary District 5280. Firefighters came from all parts of Los Angeles including the Altadena fire department from District 5300 leaving it with one third of its equipment and personnel. This greatly impaired the ability of Altadena firefighters to defend their own residents when additional fires broke out there on January 8th.

PDG Alison Sutherland Peace Cadre, reached out to me as soon as she heard the tragic news and offered to assist in whatever way we needed. After consulting with 5280 DG Albert Hernandez we decided on Trauma Support and he invited DG Mike of 5300 to join forces in the mental health support efforts.

The result was our first of 3 workshops.

Participants from 10 countries (Brazil, Canada, England, Kenya, Iberia, India, Mexico, Spain, Türkiye, USA, Wales) joined demonstrating the global need for our topic. One participant from India spoke of losing her mother to the global pandemic; after the

presentation 2 participants reached out that they had experienced the collective trauma of warfare and several on our zoom were victims of the fires.

Our next session will be held on February 16 at 10 - 11:30am PST all one needs do to join is enter the meeting ID 889 3002 2869 and you'll be in the meeting.

The final session is scheduled for March 2nd at the same time. Individual flier is forthcoming and will we dedicate the session to stories of resilience.

As of February 3rd the fires are contained but not totally extinguished nearly a month after they began. We have luckily benefited from recent rains and thank God more precipitation is coming our way as I write.

Panelists include:

Sheila Gutierrez District 5300 LMFT speciality Cognitive/Behavioral Therapy and EMDR. Critical Incident De-Briefer and Mediates in Family Law Court.

Rudy Hayek District 5300 LMFT, speciality Empty Nest, Life Transitions and Boomerang Generation Issues. Teaches Coping Skills, and Self Management.

Alison Sutherland PDG District 1150 Wales, Grief Specialist. RAGFP Past Chair and Peace Cadre Office.

Dr. Vicki Radel PDG District 5280, Ph.D UCLA Philosophy of Psychology, Harvard and Metta Center Non-Violence. Specialties: Stress/Anger Mgmt. Conflict Resolution and Trauma.

Following the destruction caused by earthquakes in Türkiye in 2023 a digital Trauma Recovery and Sustainable Resilience Guide was created by Dr. Vicki Radel and compiled by PP Arzu Alpagut Secretary of RAGFP. It has since been utilized by Earthquake Victims in Türkiye; Fire Victims in Maui, USA; War Victims in Ukraine and now available to Fire Victims in Districts 5280 Los Angeles and 5300 Alta/Pasadena. Accessible to any Rotarian at:

For more information please contact article author:

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Thank you,

Dr. Vicki

PART II: UNDERSTANDING AND LIVING WITH COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

Rotary
Districts 5280 & 5300



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16 | 10:00AM-11:30AM VIA ZOOM

Please join us for a conversation about understanding and living with collective trauma. All are welcome, including those directly and indirectly affected by the wildfire disaster. This is a complimentary event.

Meeting ID: 889 3002 2869

Pre-registration is encouraged:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/wLuLYYtcTXGyIN2wRwRUZg#/registration>

PRESENTERS:



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Positive Peace Academy



Learn more about the
partnership

Introducing the New Positive Peace Project Design Tool

Rotary and the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) have launched a redesigned Positive Peace Project Design tool, and it's now available to help enhance your service projects! This practical framework aligns your initiatives

with IEP's Eight Pillars of Positive Peace, ensuring that your projects have a more effective and sustainable impact on the communities you serve.

[Click here to download](#)



[CLICK HERE & APPLY TO BECOME A PEACEBUILDER CLUB!](#)

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