

ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 PEACEBUILDER NEWSLETTER
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CLIMATE CHANGE, DISRUPTIONS, CONFLICTS AND PEACEBUILDING

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In these newsletters of the Rotary District Peacebuilders, we want to invite readers for contributions and ideas, suggestions and possibilities for our efforts to promote the foundational skills for promoting peace, i.e., nonviolent conflict resolution, improved communication and cooperation, successful negotiation and mediation as well as the critical and creative thinking that can help communities move through obstacles and difficulties. You can look through previous newsletters that have been archived on the District 5440 website:

<https://www.rotary5440.org/SitePage/peace-building-newsletters>

Robert N. Meroney

NOTE: Bob Meroney is an Emeritus Professor of Fluid Mechanics and Wind Engineering with a long career at Colorado State University. He has been an active member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club and regularly researches a range of topics on modern life, issues and politics that serve to spark deeper conversations among friends and colleagues. If you have questions or ideas, you can contact Bob: Robert.Meroney@ColoState.EDU.

CLIMATE CHANGE CAN LED TO CONFLICT AND TRIGGER WAR

In 1988 the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to provide the world a clear scientific view of climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts.¹ Today, 195 nations are members of the IPC, and thousands of scientists from all over the world contribute to the work of the IPCC. All research and reports are stringently reviewed, critiqued, and alternative explanations explored. To date five Assessment Reports have been released in multi-parts. At the end of 2007 the IPCC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The Sixth Assessment Report should be finalized in 2022.

This October 2018, the IPCC released a *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*.^{2,3} The dramatic report provides the most extensive warning yet on the risks of rising global temperatures. (2018 is already on course to be the fourth warmest year in the 20th century.) It predicts the “most likely” arrival at 1.5 degrees C by 2030 will mean “rapid far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.” The report details impact on coral reefs, fisheries, arctic ice, weather, poverty, and social upheaval including wars and migration.

There is an extensive body of research including economics, political science, and ancient and modern history that argues that climate changes can and will cause increased violence across

¹ <http://www.ipcc.ch/index.htm>

² McGrath, Matt (2018), *Final call to save the world from 'climate catastrophe'*, BBC News, Science and Environment, 11 pp. <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-45775309>

³ IPCC (2018), *Global Warming of 1.5 °C*, WMO and UNEP IPCC SR1.5, 34 pp. <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>

12,000 years of history.^{4,5,6} Most recently, there is evidence that supports the idea that global warming helped push Syria into civil war since drought, crop failures, and high food prices helped fuel the early unrest in Syria.^{7,8} Military strategists in the Pentagon have previously taken the idea of climate wars seriously;^{9,10} however, after President Trump announced he was withdrawing the United States from the Paris climate accord the current administration has chosen to question the significance of climate change, and recent Pentagon strategy documents have removed all references to climate change.^{11, 12}

Not everybody agrees that there is a direct link between climate change and increased conflict.^{13,14} Much of the doubt about the relationship results from the inherent complexities of war and peace. Given so many political, social, economic, and environmental factors it is difficult to apply quantitative analysis, come to strong conclusions and predict the future of conflict. There is no doubt that impoverishment and human insecurity will arise from climate change, but it is not proven there is a causal relationship to war. Interceding and mixed with these causes are the additional human traits fighting for the same goals of power, territory, money and revenge. Some would argue that scarce resources could also lead to cooperation, international intervention, and resolution of conflict. Smith and Vivekananda (2007) proposed 12 recommendations for addressing climate change that might avoid conflict:⁴

1. Move the issue of conflict and climate change higher up the international political agenda.
2. Research the indirect local consequences of climate change.
3. Develop and spread research competence.
4. Improve knowledge and generate policy through dialogue.
5. Prioritize adaptation over mitigation in fragile states.
6. Develop the right institutional context: good governance for climate change.
7. Prepare to manage migration.

⁴ Smith, Dan and Vivekananda (2007), *A Climate of Conflict: The links between climate change, peace and war*, UNICEF, 48 pp https://www.preventionweb.net/files/7948_AClimateOfConflict1.pdf

⁵ Illing, S. (2017), *How climate change could lead to more wars in the 21st century*, Vox.com, 6 pp. <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/11/14/16589878/global-climate-change-conflict-environment>

⁶ Burke, M., Hsiang, S.M., and Miguel, E. (2013) *Quantifying the Influence of Climate on Human Conflict*, Science Vol. 341, Issue 6151, 1212.

⁷ Kelley, C.P. et al. (2015), *Climate change in the Fertile Crescent and implications of the recent Syrian drought*, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA, 112 (11) 3241-3246. <http://www.pnas.org/content/112/11/3241>

⁸ Meyer, R. (2018), *Does Climate Change Cause More War?*, The Atlantic Newsletter, 10 pp. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/02/does-climate-change-cause-more-war/553040/>

⁹ UN Climate Change web site, October 14, 2014 <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-threatens-national-security-says-pentagon>

¹⁰ McGeehan, T. (2017), *A War Plan Orange For Climate Change*, Proceedings Magazine, Vol. 143/10/1.376, U.S. Naval Institute, 11 pp. <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2017-10/war-plan-orange-climate-change>

¹¹ Ali, Idrees (2017), *Pentagon strategy document will not include climate change: official*, 2pp. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-military-climatechange/pentagon-strategy-document-will-not-include-climate-change-official-idUSKBN1EF2H4>

¹² Alton, Adam (2018), *New Climate Censorship Tracker Comes Online*, Scientific American, ClimateWire, 4pp. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/new-climate-censorship-tracker-comes-online/>

¹³ Notaras, Mark (2009), *Does Climate Change Cause Conflict?*, Our World, United Nations University, 4pp. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/new-climate-censorship-tracker-comes-online/> <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/does-climate-change-cause-conflict>

¹⁴ Burke, M. et al. (2010), *Climate and Civil War: Is the Relationship Robust?* Working Paper 16440, National Bureau of Economic Research, 17 pp. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16440>

8. Ensure national adaptation plans of action are conflict-sensitive.
9. Climate-proof peacebuilding and development
10. Engage the private sector
11. Link together international frameworks of action.
12. Promote regional cooperation on adaptation.

Even limiting average world temperature change to 1.5 degrees C will result in incredible stress among nations stressed by drought, social disruption, and poverty. Large adaptation and mitigation investments, and behavior changes will be required to limit impact to even moderate levels. The IPCC special report predicts the need for annual world investment in just energy systems of around \$2.4 trillion between 2016 and 2035! ³

Yes, such investments appear gargantuan, but given the implications of climate change to the occurrence of peace or war, can we afford to ignore or discount the likelihood that climate changes could destroy international peace?

Lloyd Thomas

NOTE: Lloyd Thomas, Ph.D. is a longstanding member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club, a licensed psychologist and a life coach. Contact him if you would like to receive his newsletters. He can be reached through email: DrLloyd@CreatingLeaders.com

CALLING FOR GENTLENESS

A human life is extremely fragile. Have you ever noticed how almost everything in our environment is “tougher” than we are? Why, just this morning I bumped into the handle on the refrigerator and generated a small black, ugly bruise on my forearm. Please don't ask me what I was doing in order to bump into the refrigerator! But having done so, I was reminded how important being gentle is.

We just concluded a difficult, tense mid-term election. I am now calling for us, as Americans, to be gentle with each other...no matter how we voted! Now more than ever, we need to practice gentleness with ourselves, with our friends and relatives and with our fellow Americans. Here's why.

Our skin breaks or cuts easily. We bleed so readily. And with very little effort on their part, inanimate objects can maim our bodies, and even snuff out our life. A small projectile, often called a bullet, traveling at a relatively slow speed, is enough to penetrate our skin, flesh and bone. A bigger projectile commonly referred to as the automobile, with the help of people called drivers, kills over 53,000 of us every year in the United States alone.

Not only do solid, hard objects hurt us, our environment is filled with more subtle powers, which are toxic to our well-being. Chemicals in the air, or inhaled by choice, inflame our lungs. Toxins in the water sap our health and kill our sources of food. Little creatures, named bacteria and viruses, which we cannot see without the help of a microscope, devastate our bodies, deplete our health and murder us and our relatives.

The greatest source of danger to our human lives is however, other humans. Our human species is unique in its ability to attack, decimate and destroy itself. It requires little effort for us to kill ourselves or others. It is not the ease with which our lives are erased however, which results in so much human destruction. It is our own aggression, powerfully equipped

with the tools and technology of death, coupled with the fragility of human life itself. Throw into this crucible a learned sense of worthlessness about individual human life, and you have an enormously dangerous mixture.

The antidote for such a mixture would seem to be "gentleness." Gentleness is a way of functioning, a style, a manner of being. It is probably learned beginning in the womb. It is certainly developed from birth and throughout life. Starting with the manner in which the parent feeds the child, gentleness begins. Gentleness evolves by the way in which children experience others behaving toward them. As children observe and imitate the actions of others, gentleness grows or withers. How we see others responding to threat, handling their fears, using their anger, and protecting themselves from pain; each contributes to, or detracts from, the blossoming of gentleness.

Gentleness is probably rooted in our genetic make-up. If it were not so, we would not be gentle with our offspring. I am always impressed with the gentleness of a lion as she carries her cub between her big, sharp teeth.

Gentleness is a manner of communication. It may express thoughts and feelings like: caring, acceptance, security, guidance, support, nurturing and love. Even powerful feelings of anger, fear and sadness can be expressed with gentleness. Gentleness is not weakness, it is not submission or "being a wimp". Gentleness may not be as exciting to watch on television, nor sell many ads, nor attract a lot of attention, but it may save human life on the planet. For gentleness is born of courage, self-confidence, inner security and a sense of well-being. It is the most appropriate way to relate to the precious fragility of Life.

Gentleness can express inner strength, self-awareness and secure personal power. If you feel secure and confident within, you can afford to be gentle with yourself, others and all creatures animate and inanimate. It expresses Albert Schweitzer's philosophy of 'reverence for Life.' If you practice gentleness in your life, you can become a living part of your environment. You belong to Life with all its fragility. Be gentle with it and you might enjoy being alive a whole lot more...regardless of the election outcome(s).

Lindsey Pointer

NOTE: Lindsey Pointer has been working on the use of restorative principles in the criminal justice system. She defines herself as a restorative practices facilitator, trainer and researcher and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Restorative Justice at Victoria University in New Zealand with support from a Rotary Global Grant Scholarship and the Fulbright Program from the U.S. State Department. If you have questions or ideas, contact Lindsey: lindseycpointer@gmail.com

RESTORATIVE PRINCIPLES FOR HEALING:

HOW WE CAN REPAIR HARM TO THE PLANET

The restorative justice process revolves around three key questions:

1. What happened?
2. Who has been affected and how?
3. What needs to happen to repair the harm and make things right?

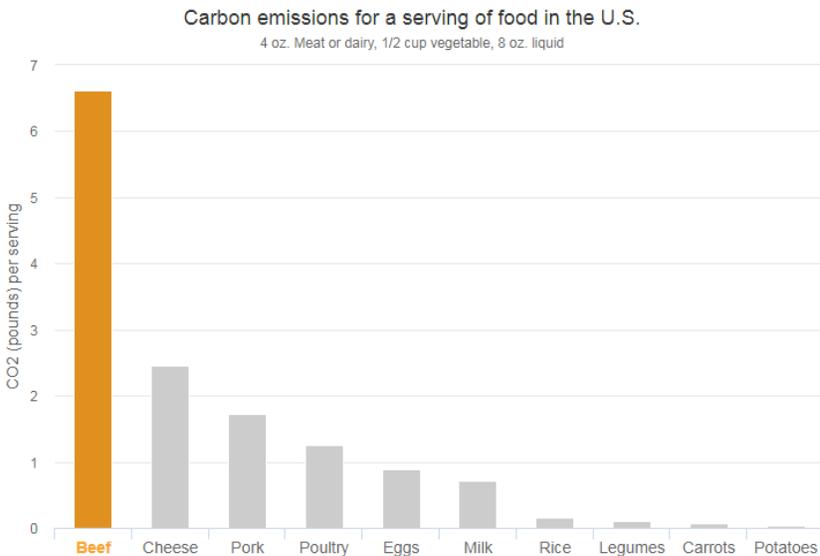
These three questions are the building blocks to a powerful alternative justice process, but also hold wisdom for other areas of life. I frequently use these three questions working through conflict in my personal life, and they are also a helpful lens through which to view the issue of climate change.

It is not a novel approach to apply justice frameworks generally used for people to the environment and animals. In New Zealand, the Whanganui River has the rights of a legal person. Along the same vein, I recently saw a with animal rights lawyer Steven Wise, who is working to change the legal status of animals from "things" to "persons." These changes in legal status are an attempt to extend the respectful treatment we have created laws to uphold beyond human-to-human interactions to impact the way we interact with the planet and other species.

The benefit of the restorative framework is that it is something we can each apply to the issue of climate change individually. We can educate ourselves about what is happening and gain an understanding of the wide range of negative impacts (to different ecosystems around the world, to animals, to the safety and livelihood of fellow human beings, etc.). We can work to understand the interconnected web in which all life exists. We can then push for collective responsibility to make things right through activism and voting, but can also take the important step of personal responsibility, making changes in our own lives to repair the harm and make things right.

If you are looking for ideas of changes you can make in your own life or things you can do, check out the [website](#) for the Sustainability, Energy and Environment Community (SEEC) at the University of Colorado Boulder. They have a great collection of actions you can easily take in your own life to work towards making things right with our planet. This includes ideas for how to use less and cleaner energy, buy fewer and higher-quality products, choose sustainable transportation, as well as policy information and other resources. Each of us can play a constructive and restorative role in our own lives and our interactions with the natural world.

One particular action I would like to highlight has to do with making climate-responsible decisions in the food you eat. This is an action that often gets less attention than other lifestyle changes such as transportation, recycling, and reusable products. Everyone eats and it offers an easy daily opportunity to do something good for the planet. The best thing you can do is eat less meat. As the website explains, "A typical family of four that decides to cut their meat intake in half could avoid roughly three tons (6,000 pounds) of emissions annually." This graph offers a great illustration of the impact you can make with some simple changes to your diet!



William M. Timpson

*NOTE: Bill Timpson has been on the faculty at Colorado State University in its School of Education for many years and a member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club where his focus on sustainable peacebuilding in Burundi, East Africa, has been supported by two Global Grants. What follows is adapted from his 2009 book, *147 Tips for Teaching Peace and Reconciliation*, co-authored with an international group of peace scholars that included Ed Brantmeier, Nat Kees, Tom Cavanagh, Claire McGlynn and Elavie Ndura (Madison, WI: Atwood). If you have questions or ideas, contact Bill: william.timpson@colostate.edu*

IMAGINE POSSIBILITIES AND ACT

Violence can destroy possibilities and cripple the spirit. Yet, somehow, people do survive, finding hope and inspiration in different places, their creativity rekindled. Andrea Taylor has learned many lessons from a childhood that left her too often traumatized. In particular, she has found so many new and positive experiences through an exploration of creative outlets. “I like to remember the line from George Elliot, ‘It is never too late to be what you might have been.’ As an injured or neglected person progresses through Maslow’s (1959) hierarchy of human needs, something begins to happen, unexpected things, wonderful things. Von Oech (1986) talks about the four roles involved in the creative process—explorer, artist, judge, and warrior—and it is at the point of Maslow’s highest stage of “self-actualization” that they can spontaneously appear.

“For me, it was the artist. I began to imagine possibilities and to act on them. I had not sensed any creativity in me during my turbulent childhood, into adolescence, or well in to my adult life. Then one day it happened. I began to paint—simple, focused watercolor. This demonstration of deep heart-healing has brought about a wonderful new dimension to my life. I have met new friends. I have ventured out into new territory—hanging my paintings in public places, selling them to people across the country! As a teacher, I believe that what I do must reach further than the thing just done. It is my hope that I can reach those students who need my help to become who ‘they might have been’!”

When has creative exploration helped you move past old hurts and seen new possibilities? When have you helped others take those first steps?

Del Benson

NOTE: Del Benson is a Professor and wildlife specialist for Extension at Colorado State University. His work is with wildlife and recreation enterprises on private land, conservation education, hunter attitudes and behavior, public input to resource management decision making and campus environmental management. He had conducted research on land management for wildlife and recreation in Colorado, Morocco and Honduras. His 1999 book Wildlife Stewardship and Recreation on Private Lands received The Wildlife Award for Conservation Education. Another book of his, Living With Nature and Wildlife: Doing Our Part, is a primer for students and teachers to learn, in simple terms, how the environment works and how people can do their part to manage it.

SUSTAINABILITY, CLIMATE AND PEACE

Peace needs nourishment and safety to sustain – Dr. Delwin E. Benson Professor, CSU

Our one-world and skies above were, are, and will be explored and exploited by the only inhabitants who are capable to model the future and to significantly change it. Will change happen soon enough to affect human- influenced sustainability, climate changes, peace, and how are they related?

Making peace with the earth, climate, and humans in sustainable ways is gaining attention. Unfortunately, uses of the earth affect living sustainably and create conflicts that affect living peacefully.

Obtaining resources to survive is what humans do and environments can reach limits of capacity. Humans discovered wild animals to eat and wear, seeds to plant and store, soils to build homes and walls, animals to domesticate, spices that preserve and flavor, silk to clothe and beautify, wood to warm and cook, and fossil fuels to extract that drive economic engines. Humans developed transportation systems to exchange goods and services and words to influence others. Paths taken are littered with altered landscapes, overuse, soil erosion, air and water pollution, plastic bottles, human bodies, space debris, and new ways to convey words. Climate is changing based on the long-term averages of temperature, air pressure, humidity, precipitation, sunshine, clouds, winds, air quality, and hydrologic outcomes. Humans must cope with new demands on the lands, waters, air, and peoples and decide whether to use scientific evidence about sustaining humans and the resources they need.

Abraham Maslow's (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs) theory about a hierarchy of human needs suggests that basic physiological needs must be met before more intellectual and altruistic needs are possible. Essentially, humans must have food and shelter first or they die and cannot have **Physiological** success. Protecting resources and humans against threats is called **Safety**. When humans and resources are safe, they seek **Love/Belonging** to the family, tribe, community, country, and planet. Recognition from others in the family and society develops **self-Esteem**. Leaders are also elevated in status and **Esteem** if they provide safe and sustainable resources for their peoples. **Self-actualization** is the final and transcendental state of giving oneself to needs beyond oneself which reflects how Rotarians are secure to focus on matters of peace. The needs overlap, and humans might revert backward or

progress forward on the pyramid, but they are not likely to progress to higher levels when basic needs are not met.

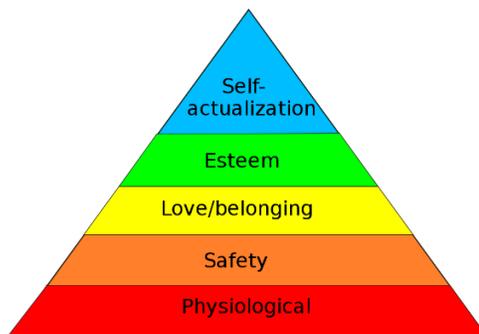


Figure. Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Humans contest about control of natural resources, safe links to those resources, and for cultural ideologies and practices to survive. If the planet is not sustainable, then it begins to crumble. People change also, whether from the top, bottom, or middle of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Self-actualization diminishes without abilities to become what we desire. Esteem fades from distrust. Humans seek to belong with those who protect safety of resources, cultures, and basic physiological survival.

Models have variability, yet they suggest that climate is changing rapidly. We need sustainable actions toward our one-earth now or peace will remain a more distant construct. A glimpse at what scientists are saying includes:

<https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/climate-change.html>

<https://scied.ucar.edu/longcontent/predictions-future-global-climate>

<https://climate.nasa.gov/effects/>

<https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>

<https://www.wwf.org.uk/impactofclimatechange>

Not all persons believe that we can reverse a deteriorating climate and that it is not human caused. People generally do not live peacefully with others or practice ecological sustainably because their interests are too personal and short-term. Humans fought over territory, resources, security, and freedoms. We need new approaches. We can want less, treat others with civility, and clean up after ourselves. Youth need more manners and adults need more restraint. The consequences of those actions are positive. The risks of not changing our human and environmental ethics and behaviors are negatively grave.

Humans are the only beings who can change the course and outcome of how the earth, skies, and humans will survive and live in peace. We must heed warnings from history and science about how humans affect basic philosophical capabilities and the consequences of thoughts, words, and actions. We can seek to become more self-actualized no matter our conditions, and then we can

thoughtfully discuss peace, sustainable living practices, and climatic outcomes that are healthy. We must help others to rise to that level. The earth will sustain in some form, but without thoughtful and peaceful actions, humans might not be in it.