

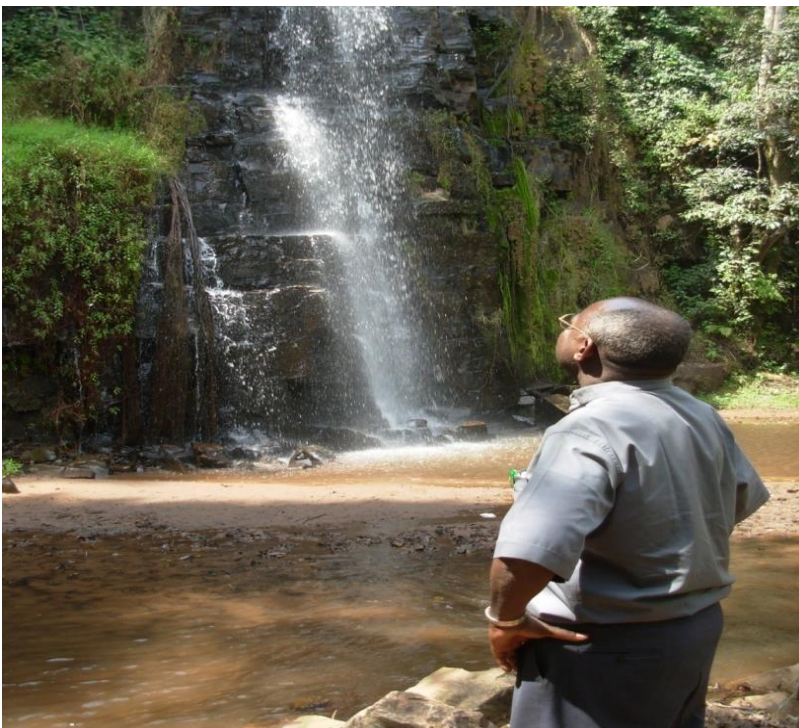
ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 PEACEBUILDER NEWSLETTER
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SPIRITUALITY AND HEALING

William M. Timpson, Lloyd Thomas and Del Benson
Fort Collins Rotary Club
Lindsey Pointer, 2017 Rotary Global Grant Scholarship Recipient

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. See the Rotary District 5440 website for past issues: <https://www.rotary5440.org/sitepage/peace-building-newsletters>

UTILIZE CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES FOR COUNSELING AND PEACEBUILDING EDUCATION

William M. Timpson, Ph.D. is a professor at Colorado State University in its School of Education and a member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club. 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).



Above: Father Apollinaire Bangayimbaga, Ph.D. is a priest and the Rector of the University of Ngzoi. He has played a leadership role in our peacebuilding efforts for many years, insisting that “emotions have much to do with violence and war. We must learn to think clearly and not just react.”

In Burundi, East Africa, my experience with our Global Grant on promoting sustainable peace and reconciliation is that leaders in the community and church deserve much credit for helping to keep the peace during the civil war that ravaged this small impoverished nation of eleven million after independence in 1962. The legacy of colonization had weighed heavily in triggering tribal conflicts as first the Germans and then the Belgians enshrined the minority Tutsi as rulers of the majority Hutu, some 85% of the population.

Achieving a sustainable peace and some reconciliation for old wounds means much more than the cessation of violence. It demands serious study. For example, those studying to become counselors and teachers are in need of understanding their own world views and cultural perspectives as well as those of their clients and students. Spiritual and religious beliefs and practices are important aspects of this cultural perspective taking. In a course developed at Colorado State University, Nathalie Kees created an environment where counselors and teachers can experience a variety of contemplative practices from many of the major world religions and spiritual traditions.

The experiential nature of this course is helpful in two ways. Students are able to experience, in a non-threatening way, some of the beliefs and practices of religious and spiritual traditions that may be very different from their own. Secondly, students can choose to incorporate various practices in their own lives and professions in whichever ways seem appropriate. Examples might include; practicing mindfulness meditation as a way of staying centered and present focused when working with clients or students, individually or in groups. Experiencing mindfulness meditations such as Buddhist Tonglen, Hindu Yoga Nidra, and Christian Centering Prayer, helps students see the universality of some of the practices and beliefs of major world religions. Mental health practitioners and teachers from various spiritual traditions serve as guest presenters and allow students to ask questions in a safe and non-judgmental atmosphere. Transferring new awareness and understanding to their personal and professional lives is done through discussions, papers, and projects; drawing upon literature in the fields of counseling, teaching, religion, and spirituality.

Of course there are counter examples where religious practices in Europe and the language of peace were spun toward a military defense of the church with "just war" theories. In the Americas Spanish priests often operated in parallel with soldiers to recruit, control, exploit and convert Native peoples. In other parts of the world religious schools have indoctrinated some who then are willing to be used as suicide bombers.

For those who want to argue that humans are hard-wired for aggression, that violence is part of their DNA, we note the powerful role for learning among humans, that the "savage beasts" that cannot be trusted to lay down with the lamb can also be interpreted as a Biblical call for a peacebuilding curriculum that can tame that savage beast into a humbler, more sensitive and caring individual. In other words, what some refer to as "toxic masculinity" can be learned and unlearned.

SPIRITUALITY AND HEALING

Lloyd Thomas, Ph.D. is a longstanding member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club, a licensed psychologist and a life coach with a long history of writing regular columns.

Religious and spiritual beliefs are central in the contemporary resurgence of alternative healing. Meditation courses are being taught to healthcare professionals. Medical schools are teaching courses in spirituality, religion and healing. Harvard Medical School offers a course called, "Spirituality and Healing in Medicine." Beth-Israel hospital offers nursing courses in Buddhist meditation and other eastern spiritual techniques to help "ease their patients' mental

pain of suffering and death." The American Psychological Association published three books in three years dealing with how religion and spirituality can be integrated into behavioral medicine and psychotherapy. The publication, "The National Psychologist" reports that it is now becoming widely accepted "that the many forms of spirituality and religion form core belief systems that cannot be separated from individual therapy."

As far back as January, 1999 the professional journal, "Alternative Therapies In Health and Medicine," there appeared the following statement: "During the last 25 years there has also been a significant increase in people adopting spiritual practices including meditation, the martial arts, t'ai chi, chanting, yoga, sweat lodges, and goddess circles, all of which often induce intense spiritual experiences. Based on these trends, one might predict that patients will report an increasing role for religious and spiritual experiences in coping with pain, illness, death, grief, recovery from substance and sexual abuse, and many other areas."

Perhaps you and I, as well as healthcare providers, need to be aware of the effective value of spirituality in the healing of our lives. Perhaps we need to unite behind a more understandable and universal spirituality. Naomi Remen, in her article, "On Defining Spirit," describes this kind of spirituality. She writes, "The spiritual is inclusive...perhaps one might say that the spiritual is that realm of human experience which religion attempts to connect us to through religion and dogma. Sometimes it succeeds and sometimes it fails. Religion is a bridge to the spiritual, but the spiritual lies beyond religion."

Why is spiritual awareness and practice so important in healing? Philosopher Teilhard deChardin once said, "We are not physical beings having a spiritual experience. Rather we are spiritual beings having a physical experience." In order to heal ourselves more effectively and powerfully, we need to begin addressing our basic nature as human beings. I believe that nature is fundamentally spiritual.

What helps me to arrive at this conclusion are a few hard, scientific facts. Our bodies are mostly liquid...not solid. On a lower level, they are mostly empty space. If it were not so, x-rays would not be able to pass through them to create images on a photographic plate. There are elaborate "systems" operating all the time inside our skin, about which we have little or no awareness, but which are crucial to our being alive: a digestive system; a nerve-system; a healing system; an immune system; a communication system; a vascular system; an energy system; and several others. All of these systems usually function in an integrated and coordinated fashion. Who's in charge of them? Who controls the coordination and balance of all these systems? If not us, who? Just because we don't know how to operate all these systems doesn't mean we don't do it. If we don't digest our food, who does? If we don't fight off disease, who does? Clearly, as living human beings, there is a lot more going on inside us than we are consciously aware of. But we're "doing it," whether or not we are aware of it. Almost all of the processes we call "life" are controlled by informational energy being transformed and used to initiate and control bodily processes. So it's not much of a stretch to conclude that we are each a powerful "spirit" that is in control of all the inner activities going on every second of every day. Chardin was probably correct!

If we are essentially human spirits, it becomes no wonder that we heal best by beginning the process of increasing our spiritual awareness...awareness of our own true nature. Following that, we can learn effective spiritual practices that have been known for centuries to be helpful

in the balancing and healing of our lives. Let's not always wait until we are sick, in pain or dying. Let's get on with it today...now!

DO YOU AND NATURE HAVE SPIRITUALITY OR EVEN A SPIRIT?

Del Benson, Ph.D. 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.

Is nature merely chemical reactions, genetic mutations, and random chances acting in a soup of energy? Does the lick of a lion mean anything to the cub? Does nature have spirit or spirituality? Does spirituality mean anything beyond humans? Spirit is my favorite outcome and therefore an important word to me; what does it mean to you?

Spirituality however conveys mixed meanings ranging from religion, to supernatural, to unbelievable; what does it mean to you? Nature lives off nature and wolves eat lambs rather than *dwell with lambs* as it says in Isaiah of the Bible leaving one to question this aspect of spirituality. Until peace is granted by the spiritual Father in the Bible, we cannot trust the *leopard with the young goat or the lion with the fattened calf or child. The cow and bear will not be peaceful together and lions and oxen will not eat straw together. Nursing children should not play in the hole of cobras and weaned children should not put hands on the adder's den unless they expect to be bitten.*

To make sustainable and peaceful acts with the land and civil actions with people, we cannot afford to wait for the day when lions will lie down with the lambs or even expect that to happen, because we spiritually believe it will happen. Instead, peace building and actions toward civility are processes that we can start by using our spirit:

1. A positive human spirit believes better outcomes in our lives and lifetimes are possible.
2. A vision for the future includes others especially persons who were previously in conflict or perhaps who merely were not communicating.
3. Make plans toward agreed upon interests and missions for accomplishments.
4. Use the spirit that you will work hard with your talents, time and treasures to achieve desired outcomes.
5. Use the spirit that you will help others with their talents, time and treasures to achieve outcomes.
6. Realize and step aside in good spirit and find someone else to help if you are in the way.

Make spirit work for you and those around you. Perhaps a positive spirit will add to your spirituality!

THE SPIRITUALITY OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Lindsey Pointer, PhD in Restorative Justice at Victoria University of Wellington, is a past recipient of the Rotary Global Grant Scholarship. She works as a restorative justice facilitator, trainer and researcher.

“Spirituality is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power

and to one another is grounded in love and compassion."

- Brené Brown

I love this definition of spirituality from Brené Brown. To me, spirituality is rooted in a deep awareness of our interconnectedness. Restorative practices are powerful because they provide a genuine experience of that connection. Acknowledgment and nurturing of our innate connection is at the root of the restorative philosophy and drives the restorative social movement. This excerpt from the forthcoming *Little Book of Restorative Teaching Tools* explains more.

Excerpt from [The Little Book of Restorative Teaching Tools: Games, Activities, and Simulations for Understanding Restorative Justice Practices](#) Forthcoming March 2020

The restorative practices field has experienced immense growth in recent decades. What began as an effort towards criminal justice reform has since expanded into a social movement dedicated to making restorative practices integral to everyday life and moving families, schools, communities, and society towards more peaceable ways of interacting. As Christopher Marshall explains, this restorative social movement has the broad aim of the "creation of interpersonal relationships and societal institutions that foster human dignity, equality, freedom, mutual respect, democratic engagement and collaborative governance."¹

The vision of a restorative community involves the regular and widespread use of restorative practices that build relationships, provide a sense of fairness and justice, and facilitate healing. It also involves going about basic community functions in a way that nurtures "just relations," or relationships characterized by mutual respect, care and dignity² and honors our innate connection to one another. In describing the philosophical grounding of restorative practices, Howard Zehr makes a connection between the beliefs and practices of restorative justice and the concept of *shalom*.³ Shalom is often translated as "peace," but actually implies a broader vision that emphasizes "right" or "just" relationships between individuals, between groups, between people and the earth, and between people and the divine. It emphasizes the connectedness of all things and provides a helpful philosophical basis for the expansion of restorative practices into other areas of social life. Davis draws on the southern African concept of *ubuntu* in her description of the restorative ethos.⁴ Ubuntu means "a person is a person through their relationships" and speaks to humans' connection to each other, as well as to the natural world. Restorative communities are those which embrace and encourage this awareness of our interconnectedness.

PRIORITIES OF THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

¹ Christopher Marshall, "The Evolution and Meaning of the Restorative City Ideal: An Introductory Essay," (unpublished, Victoria University of Wellington, 2016).

² Jennifer J. Llewellyn and Brenda Morrison, "Deepening the Relational Ecology of Restorative Justice," *The International Journal of Restorative Justice* 1, no. 3 (2018): 346–47.

³ Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press, 1990), 268.

⁴ Davis, *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice*, 18.

See the RI website: <https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/about-rotary/our-priorities> If you would you like to respond to one of the pieces in this newsletter, check out our blog www.rotarypeacebuilder.com and join the conversation! If you would like to contribute to a future newsletter, visit www.rotarypeacebuilder.com/submit/. See the Rotary District 5440 website for past issues: <https://www.rotary5440.org/sitepage/peace-building-newsletters>. Future issues may explore the following: February—Coping with Stress; March—Nuclear Weapons, Use, Probabilities and History.