

ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 PEACEBUILDER NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2021 NUMBER 41

A NEW YEAR WITH NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR PEACEBUILDING

William Timpson, Robert Meroney, Del Benson, Lloyd Thomas and Kip Turain
Fort Collins Rotary Club

Jim Halderman, Rotary District 5450

Jeff Wright: Retired pastor, global mission worker and peacebuilder tour guide

In these newsletters of the Rotary District Peacebuilders, we want to invite readers for contributions and ideas, suggestions and possibilities for our efforts to educate others by promoting the foundational skills for promoting peace and civility, 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. In this issue we focus on peace parks and trails and what may be possible in your community. Visit our blog and comment if you wish: www.rotarypeacebuilder.com

RESOLVE FOR PEACE AND LOVE FOR A YEAR AND THEY SHOULD LAST

***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. He can be reached at Delwin.Benson@ColoState.EDU*

Add peace, love, and civil behaviors to your New Year's Resolutions, because we have no shortage of opportunities to build more peace among family, friends, individuals we do not know, community, and world. First and foremost, we need peace and love within ourselves and then we need to practice. We can influence ourselves most, and specifically create lasting behaviors that are directed toward more peaceful living.

New Year's resolutions are common and commonly broken because we do not take the time needed to form habits. Give yourselves at least 21 days of constant work to form better habits. That 1960s suggestion has stuck with us, but other studies suggest 66 to 254 days showing that each situation and person varies on coping mechanisms and successes. The key, is to stick with your goals and do not fret with small lapses (Retrieved 12-19-2020 <https://www.sciencealert.com/how-long-it-takes-to-break-a-habit-according-to-science>). May we all work on better habits of peace, love, and civility for all of 2021.

Yes, improve your mental and physical health: eat better; exercise more; visit health care professionals as needed; widen your circles of family, friends, and mentors; be more active in your clubs and organizations; and most of all, love. Appreciate yourselves and others.

In Covid times, we must add behaviors to wear masks, wash hands, and distance more from society which makes interpersonal connections challenging. These behaviors cannot immediately disappear after we get vaccinations. Hugs and handshakes will have to wait longer than we desire. We will need to find more unique ways that indirect and remote connections will lead to and broaden personal interrelationships. Humans are resilient, but they need to personalize, plan and to perform!

Personalize, Plan, and Perform

Personalize. The “want to” or the “why” comes before actions. It matters what is in your mind and soul. Optimists see the glass half full while pessimists see it half empty. We must want peace and love, or our actions won’t show well. I met two CSU professionals at a coffee spot who were from another country. We smiled, nodded, and continued the process next time with similar niceties and no substance. The last persons to share a meal in our home since Covid were those two men from Iran and a spouse. We started by talk during coffee, then dinner, because I broke the veil and we entered each other’s lives. One is now in Arkansas researching Covid Proteins. We talked yesterday and I’m trying to add him to our Rotary family with our developing category of Passport Membership. Because he feels that Fort Collins is his new home, this should be his Rotary home.

Personalize more with the will to make connections, the content of collaborations, and the method of calls. Try these for a year.

Plan. Plans are goals and destinations that include the interests, objectives, and intended journeys to get there. Enjoy each exploration. Plans are not simple. They need careful thought, sharing, and editing. Plans are intentions, and intentions are nothing without performance.

Perform. It is not what we say, it is what we do that counts. Practice civil behaviors of peace and love!

GOOD HOPE AND BAD HOPE

Robert N. Meroney, Ph.D. is a Rotarian and an Emeritus Professor of Fluid Mechanics and Wind Engineering with a long career at Colorado State University. He can be reached at Robert.Meroney@ColoState.EDU

Hope is a popular concept, especially at the beginning of the year when we have a clean new calendar and a fresh page open in our diary. Hope is often defined as an optimistic state of mind. Such hope is based on expectations for positive outcomes with respect to events in one’s own life or the world at large. Maintaining a hopeful attitude has been found beneficial for recovery from illness, relieving PTSD, abating chronic physical illness and terminal illness mental states. Scientifically, we know that such mental state releases endorphins and enkephalins to block pain.



In Greek mythology when Prometheus stole fire from heaven to share with mankind and infuriated Zeus, the king of the gods, he took vengeance by presenting the gift of Pandora (the first human woman) to Prometheus, who came carrying a jar (today often mistakenly called a box) containing sickness, death, greed, envy, hatred, mistrust, anger, revenge, lust, and despair. As Zeus expected, Pandora out of curiosity opened the jar and released the swarm out to pester man.¹ But Hope (Elpis) was also inside Pandora’s jar that had the power to heal the afflictions caused by the malevolent spirits. Thus, hope is frequently characterized by the symbol of a dove or a sparrow. In literature the American poet Emily Dickinson wrote in 1891:

¹ Painting of Pandora and box created by 19th century American artist Frederick Stuart Church. (Public domain)

Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all.

Although Hope is usually characterized as a positive trait, many have pointed out the downsides of its presence in terms like “false hope”, “hopelessness”, and “foolish hope”. Thus, it is wise to consider a number of truisms about Hope:²

1. We do not live in a utopia, extravagant fantasies, or a relentless longing for change can be debilitating. Temper hope with reality.
2. Hope can set one up for a fall, unrealistic hope can lead to disillusionment and despair when expectations are not met.
3. Hope should be tempered by being prepared for negative outcomes. Terminal cancer does not suggest you hope for a complete cure, so hope should be achievable.
4. Hope should not be limited to wishing or praying. If a goal is desirable it is appropriate to work for it.
5. Hope that somebody else will solve a problem leads one to forfeit personal responsibility, power, and control
6. A false hope can end up sabotaging progress (e.g., you hope to win the lottery so you can solve all your debts, so you do nothing more)
7. When hoped for outcomes do not materialize, it can lead to destructive anger. The Greek Stoics argued one is “better off” without hopes, better to focus on what you can do without the intervention of others, chance, or mystical intervention.

If you must hope, hope wisely. Let us HOPE to solve at least one problem this year.

A DREAM TO PURSUE

Poor People’s Campaign: A Call to Moral Revival, Then and Now

Jeff Wright was founding pastor of Heart of the Rockies Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Fort Collins, and is currently serving as a global mission worker appointed by the Board of Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. In 2017 he and his wife Janet led a tour to the Middle East to visit with those involved in peacebuilding on both sides of the conflicts there, the Israeli and the Palestinians.

A personal note for Rotarians: In 2016 my wife, Janet, led a training in EMDR in Cambodia. Because of flight complications, I arrived in Siam Reap a day before she did. It was a Sunday morning. I wanted to go to church. Arriving after worship at a Catholic church, the pastor said, “Come with me. I’m going now to a village where we feed the children. You can worship there.” Over bumpy, dusty roads in a distant, seemingly insignificant part of the globe, we arrived to find a concrete slab with a palm-leafed-roof, an outdoor kitchen, and about forty elementary school-aged children. After the priest spoke to the kids and while lunch was being prepared, I walked around. What, do you think, I found? [I’m guessing Rotarians will know. Not a Rotarian? Skip to the

² Paraphrased from the article by Leon F. Seltzer, “7 Downsides of Hope”, *Psychology Today*, July 2018
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evolution-the-self/201807/7-downsides-hope>

end of this article.]

In 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr., shared a dream with the staff at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Not *that* dream. An earlier one. He launched the idea of beginning a movement that would seek a “middle ground between riots on the one hand and timid supplications for justice on the other.” While King didn’t live to see his vision of a Poor People’s Campaign fulfilled, he envisioned it as “the beginning of a new co-operation, understanding, and a determination by poor people of all colors and backgrounds to assert and win their right to a decent life and respect for their culture and dignity.”

After King’s assassination in April of 1968, the campaign was begun under the leadership of Ralph Abernathy. Many leaders of American Indian, Puerto Rican, Mexican American, and poor white communities pledged themselves to the Poor People’s Campaign. Some of you will remember the creation in D.C. of Resurrection City, a settlement of tents and shacks on the Mall where thousands of protesters stayed for over a month, appealing to federal agencies to create policies that would lead to economic justice. According to [Stanford’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute](#), “Midway through the campaign, Robert Kenney, whose wife had attended the Mother’s Day opening of Resurrection City, was assassinated. Out of respect for the campaign, his funeral procession passed through Resurrection City.”

The campaign now

The Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival has responded to King’s hope for a “revolution of values” in America.



I’m delighted to say that a Disciples of Christ pastor, the Rev. Dr. William Barber, is co-leader of the campaign, along with the Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis.

According to the [Poor People’s Campaign website](#):

From Alaska to Arkansas, the Bronx to the border, people are coming together to confront the interlocking evils of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism. We understand that as a nation we are at a critical juncture—that we need a movement that will shift the moral narrative, impact policies and elections at every level of government, and build lasting power for poor and impacted people.

In 2019, leaders of the movement traveled across twenty-five states, encouraging the poor and their allies to mobilize, organize, register and educate. That tour led to a digital [Mass Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington](#). On June 20, 2020, 2.5 million people watched the livestream event. 3,000 letters were sent to governors and members of congress.

350 organizations—secular and religious—joined in supporting the virtual demonstration and call to action. This widespread support points to one of the keys to the current movement's work for equality: intersectionality. The word *intersectionality* was first used in the late 80s to describe the ways a person's many social and political identities (race, gender, class, disability, physical appearance and height, to name a few) combine to define how that person experiences life and views the world. The word is used now to describe the cooperative work of scores of global movements for justice—Black Lives Matter, the LGBTQ+ community, indigenous tribes in the U.S., Dalits in India, first peoples in Canada and aboriginals in Australia.

There's a widespread recognition that the differing injustices these and other groups face—and the policies and laws they seek to change—have common roots in structures and systems of discrimination and inequality. For example, this past summer the organization for which I volunteer, Kairos Palestine, issued a [Declaration of Support for Black Lives Matter](#) while in July an [Indian solidarity group protested](#) the Israeli court ruling that Palestinian prisoners have no right to social distancing. The Poor People's Campaign knows that the accomplishment of its goals "can only happen if those who are impacted link up with other moral leaders and people of conscience to break through the silos of our work and the divisions that have been wrought in our communities."

On September 14, President-elect Biden joined the Moral Monday Mass Assembly on the voting power of the poor. Over one million viewers watched as Biden said about his impending administration, "ending poverty will not just be an aspiration, it will be a theory of change—to build a new economy that includes everyone, where we reward hard work, we care for the most vulnerable among us, we release the potential of all our children, and protect the planet."

What I found in the middle of the field in Cambodia: Yep, it was a concrete structure supporting a clean water source provided by Rotarians. [Learn more](#).

For more information, check out the Poor People's Campaign's [Fundamental Principles](#) and its [policy and legislative priorities](#). Both are rooted in the commitment to see that "the interlocking injustices of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, the war economy/militarism and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism all be ended." You can find the Colorado Poor People's Campaign's Facebook page [here](#).

EDUCATION, NEW THINKING AND NEW INVESTMENTS

William Timpson, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus at Colorado State University in its School of Education and a member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club. He can be reached at william.timpson@colostate.edu.



Young men and boys gather daily to earn a rider on their bicycle taxis IN Ngozi, Burundi, East Africa. They pedal in the hot sun and driving rain, dodging traffic and navigating steep hills, both up and down. Every daytime waiting and working means less time for school even though the possibility of some money for food or family may take precedence over a different future. Sustaining efforts at peacebuilding will require study!

I had the opportunity to visit Hope Fountain Elementary School, talk to an English teacher there and several classes of students. They were shy at first but older students eventually were willing to ask a few questions. One, in particular, wanted to know what advice American students would give them

“Study hard,” I offered, “but trust yourself to think in new ways because you, your family and friends, your community, your country and the world will need all the creative help you can offer to get us out of our unsustainable practices. We will need all your help to build a sustainable peace here and elsewhere, to change our destructive attitudes and practices toward the environment and to find new models of business and financing that do not exploit others or the natural resources upon which we rely.”

“And it will involve complex challenges,” I added. “Take those bicycle taxis outside. Those young men could—should—be in school like you. Without an education, their future will be very limited. Yes, their families may need that small extra income but maybe there are other ways to accomplish both, earning some money and learning relevant skills.”

In his book, *Life After Violence* (Zed Books, 2009), Peter Uvin is quite clear in his research that most Burundians see the role of education as critical for the future since a life of subsistence farming is so very limited, especially as the population grows and available land shrinks.



Using the English that he had learned, this fellow in front wanted to know what advice American students had for them in Burundi. This is a private school and parents need resources to send their kids here. If they can get to graduation and enter a college, then the odds that they will find decent work increase dramatically. That said, there is a frequent lament about the lack of jobs, even for college graduates.

In this class at Hope Fountain Elementary School, I mentioned the idea that has surfaced in the U.S. referred to as the “Green New Deal,” that shift in thinking that would invest public monies in sustainable projects like the benefits of solar and wind power for renewable energy. I told these young people that their school studies will prepare them for what exists today but that we will need to tap their collective creative potentials for what we will need in the future.

In my 2019 book, *Learning Life’s Lessons* (Peace Knowledge Press), for example, I write about the New Deal legislation that President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law in 1935 that included the Social Security Act. Having taken the helm of the country in 1932 in the midst of the Great Depression, the Social Security Act (SSA) followed the popularity of other “New Deal” programs such as the Works Progress Administration which, for example, put artists to work on public commissions and the Civilian Conservation Corps which funded trail building in America’s parks.

These programs used public funds to put Americans back to work and inspire an economic recovery in the face of determined resistance to federal intervention by the previous Hoover Administration. Although it was initially created to combat unemployment, Social Security now functions primarily as a safety net for retirees and the disabled. The Social Security system has remained relatively unchanged since 1935.

In the 1930s, the U.S Supreme Court was lagging behind the populist wave that had propelled FDR into the White House. Reflecting a conservatism that had characterized Herbert Hoover’s presidency, the court had struck down many pieces of Roosevelt’s New Deal legislation. The President was himself inspired to do something radically different. He attempted to pack the court. On February 5, 1937, he sent a special message to Congress proposing legislation granting him new powers to add additional judges to all federal courts whenever there were sitting judges age 70 or older who refused to retire.

The practical effect of this proposal was that the President would get to appoint six new Justices to the Supreme Court (and 44 judges to lower federal courts), thus instantly tipping the political balance on the Court dramatically in his favor. The debate on this proposal lasted over six months. Eventually the seven-member court was able to defeat the court-packing by rushing pieces of New Deal legislation through and ensuring that the court’s majority would uphold it.

In our 2016 book, *147 Practical Tips for Teaching Sustainability*, I make reference to the new and creative thinking that Nelson Mandela brought to his presidency in South Africa. For example, Nobel Peace Prize recipient Bishop Desmond Tutu (1997) describes in his own book, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, what helped to inspire the emergence of South Africa from the horrors of its brutal system of white minority rule: “The first democratically elected government of South Africa was a government of National Unity made up of members of political parties that were engaged in a life-and-death struggle. The man who headed it had been incarcerated for twenty-seven years as a dangerous terrorist. If it could happen there, surely it can happen in other places. Perhaps God chose such an unlikely place deliberately to show the world that it can be done anywhere” (p. 280).

Accepting the world the way it is may block us from seeing other and better ways forward. We can use role-plays with people to surface polarized positions, but then emphasize listening, empathy, and negotiation to find common, creative and sustainable ways to move forward. I challenged these students at Burundi’s Hope Fountain Elementary School to believe that there were new and better ideas out there yet to be discovered. “Study and trust in your creative selves,” I repeated.

Indeed, we will need new and innovative thinking from people everywhere in order to shift the focus from security and military responses to conflicts to investments in people, their education and health. This is what Costa Rica did in 1948 when they abolished their military. Their political, societal and economic prosperity since then has been in stark contrast with the volatile histories of their neighboring states in Central America.

PREPARE THE SOIL; A PARADIGM FOR PEACE

Jim Halderman teaches court ordered, private, and prison-oriented anger management and communication skills. A Rotarian of 29 years he is a Past District Governor, district peace committee chair, and ombudsman for District 5450. He can be reached at jimspeaker@comcast.net

All too often I have watched my garden sprout and then die. After a few classes, I began to understand my struggles. When a seed is planted, the soil must be ready to supply the proper nutrients for it to remain healthy and grow. If the soil is not prepared, then the seed will wither and die. It is very apparent to me that Peacebuilding is no different.

Take the case of Megan Rice, the 82-year-old nun who broke into a plutonium facility in Tennessee to demonstrate its vulnerability. There were also protests against Canada’s International Global Defense and Security Show, through classes, speeches, marches but to little avail.

Then there are the works by the many noted leaders of the peace movement and war prevention (Lederach, Ury, Timothy O’Brien, Gene Sharp, and Erica Chenoweth, etc.), also to little avail. “Sprouts” soon died after a short period in the news, good conversation among friends, and conferences made up of the choir. Still we live in what Diana Ohlbaum, chair of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) calls a “Militaristic Paradigm.”

Diane Ohlbaum describes the Militaristic Paradigm by three assumptions. First is our feeling of superiority, that we know what’s best for others. Second, the concept that military solutions are

“strong” (therefore good), and diplomacy is “weak” (therefore bad). And third is an economic system predicated on violence towards people and the earth. I would add to that the belief all world resources are a win/lose solution, a zero-sum game.

So, how do we move our culture from this paradigm to a culture of peace?

The first step in the cultural change for peace is in the approach of our leaders – at all levels. We must demand greater integrity as an essential political value. Honesty, compassion, listening, justice, and equality should be essential electable characteristics. With these characteristics guiding our leaders, good policies will follow. Encourage leaders to focus more on GNH (Gross National Happiness), developing resources for the many, instead of GNP (Gross National Product) which measures how resources are developed for a few.

Aesop taught us all we need to know about national security in “A Bundle of Sticks.” Tied together, we are strong. Singular we are weak. True diplomacy, again following the essential characteristics set out for all leaders, creates the strength of “the bundle”. Following the essential characteristics prevents us from dividing nations into allies or adversaries. We will always fail to understand another nation when first referenced by non-positive terms.

The good news about “changing the culture” is you only have to change 10% of society. 90% follow while 10% lead. Change leaders, change the culture. The masses follow when leaders are respected. It is what Howard Zinn referred to as the “habit of obedience” by the many.

Walt Kelly was a famous cartoonist in the 50’s & 60’s. His political philosophy was illustrated through “Pogo,” one of the characters of the Okefenokee Swamp. His most famous line was: “We have met the enemy and it is us,” referring to mankind’s ability to create our own problems. In the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, “If humans can be trained for cruelty and greed and a belief in power which comes through hate and fear and force, certainly we can train equally well for greatness and mercy and the power of love which comes because of the strength of the good qualities to be found in the soul of every human being.”

When we, in our own lives, live in integrity and begin to demand it of our leaders, when we demand more humanistic values, when we move away from a militaristic way of thinking, when we see humanity as the strong woven bundle of sticks, then we can grow our GNH. The good news is that to do this, we do not need any more knowledge than what we now have. We don’t need to read more books or attend any more conferences or lectures. We only need to recognize the power of the bundle, the power of mercy and love, our better angels, and remain open to new possibilities. As Buddhists tell us, “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.”

Once we accept and expect the possibility for our leaders to change, then “the way” will present itself. When we are open to new ideas and open to what John Paul Lederach calls the Moral Imagination, we begin to notice things we might not otherwise.

Yes, necessity is the mother of invention. So long as we continue to develop nuclear weapons, to support existential climate change, and to more division on our planet, the stronger our need becomes for the Moral Imagination. Let us now begin to develop the soil and plant the seed for peace.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES, NEW CHALLENGES

*Kip Turain is a Rotarian and retired Colonel from the U.S. Air Force.
He can be reached at ruftrain@aol.com*

As we strive for peace, it is also important to understand the world we live in now. Through the course of my studies, it was offered to me that if I really wanted to understand a topic, and a position, it is important to read and study the alternative stance to your position. Only then will you better understand the broader picture of the topic.

Recently, three videos were shared that highlight applications of drone technology. They presented drone use, from forestation to firefighting to weaponry. Like most 'new things', emotions range from excitement to fear about the place of the 'new thing' in our lives. One fear that came to light about drones is their use by unethical, disgruntled, or nasty people. This comment focuses on the lethal use of drones and I share those concerns!

Weapons have evolved from fists, stone/clubs, swords, pikes, sling shots, catapults, and so on. One aspect about the progression of weapons is the standoff capability. The concept is to be able to reach your opponent yet stay at a safe distance yourself. As a military leader, you strive for the greatest effect on your enemy, with the least amount of suffering to them and with the smallest risk to your own forces.

With the evolution of weapons came associated rules of warfare. Chivalry of knights, not targeting officers and not shooting an aircrew member who has bailed out of their aircraft are some examples. These rules apply to all engaged in the fight. The understanding is that rational actors are involved in the conflict. Problems arise when irrational actors don't follow the rules. The rule followers then have a principled dilemma. Do they, then, disregard the established rules like their opponents, so as to not operate at a disadvantage? Do they continue to abide by the established rules even though their opponents don't?

Each of us, as actors involved with technological advances, also have a choice. We can bury our head in the sand and walk away from embracing the technology advances or be involved and shape the rules as the technological advances are incorporated into the options on the table. Of course, there are many different application aspects of technology that this concept applies to. Some aspects are kinetic, economic, technical, psychological and informational. Italian airpower theorist Giulio Douhet said, "Victory smiles upon those who anticipate the changes in the character of war, not upon those who wait to adapt themselves after the changes occur." As the U.S. is a recognized military leader and force in the world, I believe the U.S. needs to be involved in shaping the benefits and boundaries of the platform's use.

Sometimes it may be hard to fathom, but there are Rules of War and Principles of War that apply so a conflict does not go 'super nova' or degrade into total chaos. Principles of warfare are the evolved concepts, laws, rules and methods that guide the conduct of combat related activities during conflicts. The earliest documentation was Sun Tzu (circa 500 BC) and have evolved since then. A search of influential military thinkers corroborates this. (e.g. Machiavelli, Bonaparte, Jomini, Clausewitz, Corbett, etc.). If the rules are broken, then the offender must be held accountable for their egregious action.

Once technology is released, Pandora's box is open. Such is the case with the emergence of drones. Situations tend to take a terrible turn when lethal items (weapons) are in bad people's hands (irrational actors) and they take it upon themselves to do evil deeds (break the rules). History has shown that rational actor's desires are to contain a 'super nova' or prevent widespread chaos from ensuing. Examples are the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties, restraints on personnel landmines and abiding by the Principles of War.

As peace warriors, we all need to strive to educate and grow others to have the morals that drive individuals toward a culture of peace. At the same time, we need to engage to keep a cap on things that have been released from Pandora's box.

LIFE LESSONS FROM A PANDEMIC

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. He can be reached at ljtddat@aol.com

Winston Churchill said, "those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it." Since I don't want to repeat last year (2020), I spent the past few months attempting to learn from it.

In the Introduction to the book, *Total Life Coaching*, I wrote, "Life is continuously providing us with information or messages. When we do not listen, the messages become lessons. When we do not learn, the lessons become problems. When we don't address the problems, they become crises. When crises are left unresolved, they create chaos in our lives." Below are a few lessons I hope to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I learned: The importance of good government. Manuel Pastor is the Distinguished Professor of Sociology and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California (USC). He wrote, "that government is our ultimate backstop to a good society" [It] is the new common sense" (USC Dornsife Magazine, Spring/Summer 2020). Indeed, I hope all of us have heard that message and made it a "new common sense."

Dr. Pastor went on to write, "The pandemic disease has exposed systemic sickness --- our failure to provide universal health care, our marginalization of immigrants and others, and our devaluation of the caring work that makes lives possible. ...recognizing that grocery store clerks [sanitation workers, school janitors, homemakers, domestic servants, etc.] perform essential work..." From this I learned to redefine "essential workers."

I learned what Peter Kuhn, Dean's Professor of Biological Sciences at USC wrote: "Global citizenship is now more important than ever. COVID-19 and the challenges of racial disparities made us recognize that we are all in this together as we are sharing this one planet." (USC Dornsife Magazine, Spring/Summer 2020). The speed with which we can communicate to people living on the entire planet makes us all global citizens.

I was reminded of the importance of collaboration and cooperation when Kuhn wrote: "A global threat can only be addressed jointly to mitigate the impact by minimizing the loss of human life and the impact on society as a whole. ...my individual survival and well-being depends above all on the common good and on public health and well-being."

I learned how we are all interconnected. *“The catastrophic health threat that now exposes our weaknesses as a species also illuminates our connection. Under the threat of plague, we have been given the opportunity to reconsider how communities and societies depend on one another, despite long-standing, artificial divisions.”* (Essay by Phillip Morris, *National Geographic*, November, 2020).

I learned the importance of both science and always speaking the truth. Arie Kaptevn, Professor of Economics and Director of the Center for Economic and Social Research at USC, wrote: *“The pandemic shows the importance of science and truth.”* *“If anything good may come out of this [pandemic], it is a recognition that health and social problems are complex and solutions need to be based on sound science.”* I saw a bumper sticker that read, “TRUTH?...when in doubt, tell it.”

Another lesson: Universal health care is critical to human survival. *“It’s not hyperbole to say we are all pieces in a global chain of dominoes. Some of us are much more susceptible, but all are dangerously at risk of falling.”* ... *“We know with certainty that select groups of people will continue to remain at high risk of getting sick or dying from the virus for the simplest of reasons: They don’t have access to health care or, ...the work in essential frontline jobs where exposure is all but certain.”* *“Each time we enter a grocery store, we stare into the eyes of a desperate mother or of others who are unable to shelter in place. That’s the interconnection that we suddenly recognize: Some of our most vulnerable are our most essential.”* (Quotations from: *A WORLD GONE VIRAL: How the pandemic is changing our lives, National Geographic*, November, 2020).

I became aware of new ways for people to learn. *“One positive aspect of schools closing may be how districts are innovating to improve learning from home. Although equal access to tech remains a barrier, tools will be designed that may bridge divides. K-12 students will use technology to help with homework, set goals, and measure progress. And college students may find campus to be optional. Arizona State University president Michael Crow says. ‘ASU is one of a number of schools evolving into a new national service university,’ ballooning its enrollment to provide high-quality and low-cost education on a larger scale.”* (*National Geographic*, November, 2020).

My hope for 2021 was strengthened when I read *“Some of the most powerful lessons that we as a society are learning in this moment are long overdue. We need a plan to become much better prepared for future pandemics. We need concrete action to reform a system that has failed to meet its promise of racial equality. And we need to build a greater appreciation for our common humanity. These past few months have also shone a light on the fact that academic expertise is critical to solving our most complex problems. It is impossible to know what the future holds. But working together we can anticipate it, shape it and meet it head-on with creativity and compassion.”* (Amber D. Miller, Dean of USC College of Letters, Arts and Sciences).

PRIORITIES OF THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

See the RI website: <https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/about-rotary/our-priorities>. If you would 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/. You can find some of our past issues at the Rotary District 5440 website: <https://www.rotary5440.org/sitepage/peace-building-newsletters>. FEBRUARY—Transforming Conflict with Study, Commitment and Energy.