

Global Peace Services USA

...an idea whose time has come

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Greetings from John Eriksson, President, GPS USA

This Winter 2017 issue of the GPS Newsletter opens with an article by GPS Board Member Dr. Ronald Ridker, "Climate Change: The State of Play One Year after the Paris Conference." It is an evidence-based, enlightening and sobering update of his Newsletter article of a year ago on "The Paris United Nations Conference on Climate Change: Accomplishments and Future Challenges."

The second article is by Chelsea Hochstetler, "An Elementary School Student... and a Syrian Refugee." After receiving a Master's Degree in International Migration and Public Policy, and several years teaching English, Chelsea went to Lebanon to research English education for a small non-governmental organization called Social Support Society that runs six schools for Syrian refugee children in the Beqa'a Valley. Chelsea's description of the work being undertaken by the Society under daunting conditions is inspiring.

The third article is by GPS Board Member Dr. Sovan Tun, "Buddhist Solution to Psychological Obstacles for a Peaceful Mind." Dr. Tun, a practicing Buddhist, explains how following Buddhist principles can eliminate stress and thus result in a peaceful mind.

The last article, "Hate Crimes Close to Home," describes two such crimes that impacted churches in Montgomery County, Maryland, in mid-November, and the non-violent steps that were taken to come to terms with what happened. Healing support from surrounding religious communities played an important role. Dr. John Eriksson, with the help of others who experienced the healing process, wrote this article.

If you are on email but have not yet received our monthly Peace Dispatch, please let us know by sending your email address to globalpeaceservicesusa@gmail.com or by sending a note to P.O. Box 27922 in Washington, DC 20038-7922. Readers tell us they value the Peace Dispatch for its highlights of current books, articles, films, conferences and other events with a focus on the varied dimensions of peacemaking and peacebuilding.

In order to continue and expand our current work, such as the GPS Newsletter, and the Peace Dispatch, we do need greater resources. Please consider making as generous a tax-deductible contribution as you can to GPS. This may be done by mailing a check to the postal address shown above or through our website www.globalpeaceservices.org. Please note that GPS has a new phone number: 301-681-6968.

Climate Change: The State of Play One Year after the Paris Conference

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which came into force in 1994 and was ratified by virtually every country in the world, has held 22 Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to date. The most successful of these (COP 21) took place in Paris in December 2015. The last one (COP 22) took place in Marrakech, Morocco, a year later.

At the time of the Paris Conference, each country committed itself to undertake measures to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by specific amounts. To achieve unanimous agreement, these so-called Indicative Nationally Determined Commitments (INDCs) were made voluntary. When it became evident that they did not add up to a sufficient reduction in GHG to keep temperature from rising by more than 2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level, countries committed themselves to formally review and upgrade efforts every five years. This essay is concerned with what has happened since, and what is likely to happen given the results of the presidential election in the United States.¹

Events during the first 12 months after the Paris Conference

Compared to the 20 Conferences of the Parties that preceded the Paris Conference, it is only a small exaggeration to say that COP 21 led to an explosion of activities that drove climate change policies forward in 2016. In October, 191 member countries of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) signed a carbon reduction and offset scheme for air travel. Later that month, 197 parties to the Montreal Protocol added hydrofluorocarbons to the list of chemicals the protocol banned in order to reduce damages to the earth's ozone layer. Most important of all, the threshold to bring the Paris agreement into being was achieved on October 4, several years sooner than expected; and the agreement formally came into force on November 4. There were other less dramatic but at least as important events. Rich countries strengthened and upgraded their pledges to finance the Green Climate Fund (a fund to assist poor

countries with their mitigation and adaptation efforts). Some countries reduced their fossil fuel subsidies and introduced, or made plans to introduce, a carbon tax or a cap and trade scheme. Pressures on corporations to report on and find ways to reduce the financial risks arising from climate change—for example, the possibility that some of their assets will be “stranded” and that a tax is likely to be placed on their GHG emissions—has been growing and inducing them to change their reporting and investment planning processes. An increasing number of subnational government entities are taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint.

Market forces have sent mixed signals. The cost of electricity produced by solar cells and windmills has plummeted, inducing a dramatic expansion—albeit from a very small base—in the availability of non-fossil energy. This, plus the expansion of natural gas supplies in the US and a few other countries, because of the new fracking technology, has continued to shrink the coal market. On the other hand, the price of petroleum has dropped and slowed the growth in efficiency of its use.

Of course, this year was also capped by an event that some fear could reverse much of this progress. Just four days after the Paris Agreement formally came into force, the US elected as its president a man who claimed that climate change was a “hoax.” More worrisome yet, after his election, Mr. Trump selected people for his transition team and proposed cabinet posts who were at least as outspoken as he on these issues. At various times, one or more of these appointees proposed dropping President Obama's Clean Power Plan, drastically curtailing the power of the EPA to regulate pollutants and limiting the capacity of NOAA and NASA to continue their research into climate change.

The Marrakech Conference

The US election results, which became clear the day after the Marrakech Conference opened, led to an atmosphere of shock, uncertainty and worry about the future of international efforts to control climate change. How much was campaign rhetoric; how much sincere conviction? Even the US delegates had no answers. Secretary of State John Kerry, in a speech to the delegates, made a valiant attempt to continue the momentum created in Paris. In the end the delegates heeded his advice and vowed to redouble their efforts to

¹ A good review of the Paris Conference and what it accomplished can be found in the May 2016 issue of the Global Peace Services USA Newsletter (https://gallery.mailchimp.com/b30a65808cde35d97ddde99a3/files/Vol_17_No1_rv_5_23_16_Final.pdf). It includes a review of a panel discussion organized by Global Peace Services and a web address to the discussion, itself.

move things forward without counting on continued US leadership and financial support.

The purpose of the Marrakech meeting, which ran from November 7–18, 2016, was to lay the foundation for implementing the Paris Agreement, the goal being to complete this work by the 2018 meeting of the COP. A governing body to manage the process was established and the parties broke up into subgroups to consider different, and sometimes contentious, views on how to deal with various topics. In order to achieve unanimity in Paris, a number of issues had been papered over with assurances—many from the US delegation—that they would be sympathetically dealt with during implementation. For example, in Paris, INDCs were accepted without much concern about the form that they took: some parties, mainly from rich countries, specified targets in absolute terms; others, mainly from poor countries, used intensity targets or made their targets conditional upon receiving financial assistance to implement them. There was also no attempt at uniformity in selecting target dates, which led to difficulties in comparing and monitoring levels of effort. This led to differences in how to report on performance and how to compare levels of effort. In general, the developing countries were in favor of differentiation, the developed countries in favor of uniformity. There were a host of such issues. See <https://www.c2es.org/international/negotiations/cop22-marrakech/summary> for a list with explanations. Most were handled by allowing the issues to air and assigning responsibility for their resolution to working groups tasked with reporting conclusions and recommendations at the next COP meeting, scheduled for November 2017 in Bonn, Germany. Such squabbling over procedural issues was probably inevitable, but may have become more contentious because of uncertainties about the role that the US would play going forward.

Prospects for the Future

The anxiety about the havoc that the new US administration might cause is understandable but overblown. Trump and his team can eliminate some of Obama's regulations on where drilling can take place, can stop the implementation of the Clean Carbon Program, can hobble the EPA and reduce federal funding for new climate-related research, can fail to provide funds to the Green Climate Program and other international initiatives that the Obama administration promoted and promised to support. But they cannot withdraw from the Paris Agreement for four years

without breaking international law; they cannot stop California, the seventh largest economy in the world, and other US states and cities from proceeding with programs already in place to reduce GHG emissions; they cannot stop insurance companies and corporations from taking steps to protect themselves from the financial consequences of extreme climate events; and the Army Corps of Engineers and the Navy will insure that whatever infrastructure program the administration comes up with includes a large component to protect their facilities from sea level rise and other climate related events. The Trump administration will find that they can do little to resuscitate the coal industry without reversing powerful technological and market trends that have been responsible for coal's loss of market share and the decline in its labor force. And they will find themselves under growing lobbying and financial pressure from the renewable energy and nuclear power sectors of the economy as these sectors and their labor forces grow in size.

But even if these countervailing forces result in Trump and his team giving up their more extreme proposals, several areas of concern remain. First, the human tendency to try to solve problems by ameliorating symptoms rather than dealing with causes seems to be growing. In the climate field, this means reduced emphasis on mitigation—the effort to reduce GHG emissions—and greater emphasis on adaptation—finding ways to reduce the damages caused by emissions, an approach favored for obvious reasons by the fossil fuel industry. Another reflection of this is the tendency to try to solve migration problems, which climate change could make dramatically worse in coming decades, by erecting barriers rather than dealing with the underlying problems.

Second, the world needs to anticipate and plan for a withdrawal of US government leadership and finance from efforts to create an effective, global response to these problems. Three examples of initiatives taken by the Obama administration help make this point. The US and China were the first countries to announce their INDCs; if they had not taken the lead in doing so, many other countries would have procrastinated or come up with much softer targets. As a way to encouraging countries to develop and publish Mid-Century Plans that are more stringent than the INDCs, the US along with Germany, Canada, and Mexico did so just before Kerry's speech at Marrakech. And the US, along with several other countries, made contributions to the Green Climate Fund in partial fulfillment of their 2020 commitment.

Withdrawal of US leadership from activities of this sort could result in a falling-apart of the consensus and enthusiasm for joint action in a host of areas. Eventually, though, new leaders will emerge,² but that will take time and probably involve numerous false starts.

It is too soon to know whether the INDCs are having any impact on emissions. But they probably are not. Temperature is continuing to rise, which probably means that global emissions are continuing to increase. Some countries have experienced declining emissions; but in many cases it is due to changes in technology and market conditions, not because of new policies. A recent study³ concluded that a number of major emitters, including the US, have yet to put in place the policy changes and institutional arrangement needed to bend the emissions curve downward. The US is a case in point. Its INDC calls for a 26–28% reduction from 2005 in GHG emission levels by 2025. The US has experienced a reduction of over 50% of the 2025 goal, not because of policy changes, but because of technological and market changes that have resulted in a substitution of natural gas for coal in the production of electricity. The effect of these trends are beginning to peter out; significant policy changes, like putting a significant price on CO₂ emissions are likely to be needed to make more progress. This is certainly the case if the US target of 80 percent reduction announced at Marrakech is to be taken seriously.

In addition, William Nordhaus just published a paper, “Projections and Uncertainties about Climate Change in an Era of Minimal Climate Policies,” December 2016 (Cowles Foundation Discussion Paper No. 2057) that uses an updated version of his well-respected and vetted Dynamic Integrated Climate-Economy model (DICE) to conclude that the 2 degree target is now close to impossible to achieve, and that even a target of 2.5 degrees

will be very difficult to achieve without major policy changes initiated soon by nearly all countries.⁴ His findings assume a plausible degree of technological improvements, but nothing like the carbon-capture-and-storage (or use) technologies that are being successfully applied in several coal fired plants in different countries—one in Canada, another in Texas, a third in India. These are costly, capital-intensive enterprises that must find a profitable use for the carbon they take out of smokestack emissions to have long run economic viability. Their prospects could change overnight if there were a realistic price imposed on CO₂ emissions by major coal-using countries. There is no prospect of that happening soon; and even then it will take many years for this or some other technology to be scaled up to a global level.

In the interim, an almost inevitable chain of events that has already started in some parts of the world will continue and intensify: temperature increases will result in continued sea level rise, intensified coastal storm surges and increasing droughts and floods in larger parts of the world. These events will result in increasing migratory pressures and conflicts on a scale far greater than anything we are observing today.

The last of the four papers presented at the GPS panel discussion (referenced in footnote 1) went further, arguing that even if the 2 degrees temperature target could be achieved, it would not stop devastating sea level rise before the end of this century. This led to a characterization of the Paris Conference as fiddling at the margins of the problems, equivalent to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. The Marrakech meeting, which focused on ‘procedures for establishing procedures’ to implement the Paris Agreement, served only to reinforce this image.

☞ Ronald Ridker

² China is sometimes mentioned as likely possibility. The Chinese government is putting in place a national cap and trade system; they appear to be a decade ahead of their INDCs schedule for reaching a peak and beginning a decline in the use of coal, and they have already achieved global leadership in renewable energy innovation and production. They can be counted on to exploit the leadership vacuum the Trump’s trade and climate policies are likely to create. But these activities are all in their own self-interest; will they encourage and help finance global efforts?

³ See http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Averchenkova-et-al_2106-in-depth-country-analysis-docx.pdf

⁴ A similar, though somewhat less dire assessment has been made by Salawitch et al. in Paris Climate Conference: Beacon of Hope (Springer, 2017). They conclude that the global temperature increase can be held down to no more than 2 degrees Celsius if all the INDCs are achieved by 2025 and the momentum continued to 2060 such that, by that time, at least half of global energy is attained by processes that emit no GHGs. Nordhaus’s model requires that this figure must be approximately 93 percent.

An Elementary School Student... and a Syrian Refugee

About two hours outside of Beirut, nestled in a small village deep within the Beqa'a Valley is Ghazza School, an ordinary Lebanese elementary school. On any given school-day its occupants number around 250 students and 12 teachers. Just as children all over the world do, these children attend classes from early morning until mid-afternoon. This school may seem unremarkable, and until quite recently, it was. The children come, they play, they learn, and at the end of the day, they leave. What makes this school remarkable however, is not what happens during the day, but rather, what happens after the last student has left. At 3pm, it transforms. By the time the small Lebanese school lets out at 2:30, hundreds of other children are crowded around the front of the school, their heads peering into windows, with the littlest ones spilling into the entry-ways as they move to the side to make room for the Lebanese children to leave.

There, they wait. When the very last student steps onto the gravel outside of the building, the halls swarm with 470 Syrian elementary students and their 25 (mostly Syrian) teachers all of whom live in the surrounding refugee camps and, for the luckier ones, in a few unfurnished buildings that pepper the country-side. This is more than double the school's morning population.

This is not a remarkable situation merely for the clever way that this rural Lebanese school leads a double life, but also for a situation far more sinister. While going to school from 3pm until 7pm may seem odd, what is most unusual is the fact that these children are in school at all. The reality is, the majority of Syrian refugees are children, and most of these children are not currently in school nor have they been for the last five years. These children are already being called "The Lost Generation." By the time the conflict ultimately ends (and the average conflict lasts 17 years) there will be no-one to rebuild Syria.

The civil war in Syria has ripped the country apart dissolving peace and order into factions and displacing 10.5 million people (over half of Syria's population) both within Syria (as Internally Displaced Persons) and outside of Syria (as first asylum seekers and then hopefully, having completed the registration process with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as refugees). Most of those people are, not knocking along Europe's borders as many might think, (according to the UNHCR only 10% of Syria's refugees are trying to get to/are in Europe) but are housed in refugee camps within three countries: Lebanon, Jordan,

and Turkey. Lebanon alone has 1,055,984 Syrian refugees. Lebanon is a tiny and already fragile state and the infrastructure does not exist to accommodate them. One in five people in the entire country are now Syrian refugees, and many of those refugee children have not been in school since the war began.

I came to learn in some depth about the educational possibilities before Syrian refugee children, when I traveled to Lebanon in April of this year, with my newly minted Master's degree in International Migration and Public Policy (coupled with several years spent as an English teacher). I went to Lebanon to research English education for a small non-governmental organization (NGO) called Social Support Society that runs six schools for refugee children in the Beqa'a Valley.

Providing educational opportunities at this time is critical. These children and their families all live in the surrounding refugee camps and it would be charitable to call these camps pleasant. In the winter the thin tent walls do little to protect against the cold, and in the summer the tent walls trap heat. What is more, the tents, which were only meant to be a short term solution, can be both over-crowded and dirty. I visited in the spring, and on an unremarkably warm day, the inside of the tents were already sweltering. These tents, by any stretch, are not an ideal situation for anyone let alone children, and they do little to inspire optimism.

Despite the terrible situation in the camps, I was struck by how incredibly warm and generous Syrian refugees were towards me. Children curiously followed me wherever I went (and loved to give me stickers and drawings) and I was regularly invited into homes for meals and for countless coffees (imagine being invited to a meal by a refugee?). I stayed for a week with a family, and despite our language barrier (as my Arabic is limited, and most Syrian refugees do not speak English) I was treated as one of their children (as I was only a few years older than the eldest girl). We would mime out conversations. Somehow through the taking of what seemed a million selfies, we forged remarkable bonds and still text each-other in broken English to this day.

Against all odds, these people are resilient. One of the greatest hopes for healing is giving these children a safe place to start to learn how to live in a peaceful society despite everything that they are currently going through. This is what Social Support Society, and many NGOs

like it, are doing by giving these children an education. They are not only improving the lives of thousands of children, but they are also giving them hope.

This hope has not just come in the form of math, reading and writing, but also in other ways. A refugee children's choir now meets every week at one of Social Support Society's schools and has already performed at the American University of Beirut and in Tripoli. Social Support Society has also attracted the attention of many international donors. Along with the crucial monetary donations, one NGO in Canada has provided tolerance and behavior training, another group has provided full civics education curriculum, another group, 100 computers and several have stepped up to provided critically needed trauma therapy workshops. Through these collaborations, despite their circumstances, these children will learn that peace and hope are an option and that despite their experiences so far, violence is not the only way to achieve an end.

Throughout my time in Lebanon, I had the opportunity to interview several of the Syrian English teachers. I have never seen such passion for education as I did in some of these teachers. They teach with the urgent knowledge that what they are doing today—teaching Syrian children to read and write—is the only thing which will give their country a future. One thing which most resonated with me, was the fact that nearly all teachers in these schools are Syrian. This provides not only a much needed income for these refugee teachers (as any sort of legitimate occupation or livelihood is difficult for refugees to find—most of the children's parents, for example, have to find creative ways to make money and in many cases are surviving simply on meager savings) but also because these children are especially vulnerable. Having teachers who intimately understand the trauma that they have gone through, helps the children immensely to cope with a new life in a strange land. These teachers were ecstatic at the existence of Social Support Society's schools, but at the same time, they were also sad. For it turns out that, as with all things, the situation is far more complicated than it seems. Simply having the structure in place for children to get an education is only half the battle. The other half is getting children to go to school.

Only 40% of the funding needed for this current crisis in Syria has been covered. Therefore, what little funding is received goes towards the most immediate needs of providing food, medicine and shelter. Education for children is not the first priority. Besides funding, Syrian refugees also have the additional problem that in Lebanon, no refugee camp is a legal settlement, and likewise, refugee schools are not legal schools. They are

unaccredited. Any Syrian student who graduates from one of these refugee schools cannot go to college nor have their education recognized by anyone as legitimate. One family that I met while I was working in Lebanon got around this by sending their children on a journey back to Damascus so that they could take accreditation exams in Syria with the hope of one day sending their children to university. For them, the chance of a future was absolutely worth the potential risk.

Even without the benefits of accreditation and government support, many NGOs like Social Support Society have stepped up to fill this critical education void and give children a hope for a peaceful future.

The unfortunate reality is that even when there are schools for children to attend, they often do not go. One teacher spoke sadly about his efforts to get students to go to school "I go door to door begging parents to send their children to learn." The problem he said is that these children are more useful to their parents on the streets making money selling candies or Kleenex or in the fields working. Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and refugees in Lebanon therefore have severely limited rights and protection (Fortunately, Lebanon is bound by the principle of *non-refoulement*—that no refugee be returned to a dangerous situation). Lebanon does not allow for any sort of work permits or rights for refugees, and their resources are few. Out of desperation, parents forfeit their children's education. But with the opportunity to give children an education, these courageous teachers do not give up. As one teacher said somberly, "Syria will be lost if they do not go to school, these children are our future." And so, he goes door to door.

So, what can YOU do?

1. You can lobby to increase refugee intake within the United States. This is a thousand times more important now with a new administration taking office in Washington, DC. A refugee's best option is to get asylum in a country that will give them rights and allow them to work, get educations, and have a peaceful future far from the violence of their past.
2. You can help refugees right now where they are: There are many NGOs now working on the ground in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey that are doing their best to improve the lives of refugees. The Social Support Society's Relief Educational Assistance Project is an NGO initiative run out of Beirut, started and organized by locals on the ground. They are a 100% volunteer operation with no overhead costs. All

donations go directly towards educating children, providing them with after school activities, school meals, trauma support and clothes. As an added

incentive for families to keep their children in school, these families are also given additional food assistance.

☞ Chelsea Hochstetler

Buddhist Solution to Psychological Obstacles for a Peaceful Mind

Introduction

At the very first two verses of Dhammapada, a collection of sayings of the Buddha, the Buddhist scriptures mention an important point in the Buddha's teaching:

1. Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind, a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.
2. Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with a pure mind, a person speaks or acts, happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow."

That is human mind, which plays the central role in the Buddha's Teaching. Thus, mind must be tamed and purified in order to achieve peace and happiness. However, psychological obstacles should be understood before purified mind can solve them.

Psychological Obstacles

The Buddha is not a name. It is a title given to Siddharta Gautama, the name of the Indian prince who took the title of Buddha, meaning the enlightened one because he pointed out the Four Noble Truths:

"Monks, it is through not realizing, through not penetrating the Four Noble Truths that this long course of birth and death has been passed through and undergone by me as well as by you. What are these four? They are the noble truth of dukkha; the noble truth of the origin of dukkha; the noble truth of the cessation of dukkha; and the noble truth of the way to the cessation of dukkha. But now, monks, that these have been realized and penetrated, cut off is the craving for existence, destroyed is that which leads to renewed becoming, and there is no fresh becoming." (Digha Nikaya 16) The Pali word dukkha is generally translated as suffering. However, the word embraces all types of dissatisfactions or displeasures, including pain, sorrow, worry, fear, despair, irritation, agitation, frustration, etc. The definition of dukkha is given as follows: "Birth is

dukkha; aging is dukkha; illness is dukkha; death is dukkha; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are dukkha; association with the unbeloved is dukkha; separation from the loved is dukkha; not getting what is wanted is dukkha. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are dukkha." (Samyutta Nikaya 56.11) Also, the Buddha indicated the three characteristics of life: life is dukkha; life is impermanent; and life is no self. The mind is not at peace because it holds onto things as its self or belonging to its self. Thus, it causes stress and dissatisfaction or suffering since those things are inconstant. One should not cling to the five aggregates of life: form, feeling, perception, fabrication, and consciousness. (Samyutta Nikaya 22.48)

The Buddha named three "roots of evil": "Monks, these three are causes for the origination of actions. Which three? Greed is a cause for the origination of actions. Aversion is a cause for the origination of actions. Delusion is a cause for the origination of actions." (Anguttara Nikaya 3.33) From the three roots of evil emerge their numerous offshoots, such as anger, cruelty, avarice, envy, conceit, arrogance, hypocrisy, vanity, and other erroneous views.

Furthermore, five states of mind that the Buddha called five mental hindrances are likely to prevent people's efforts to successfully carry out their upright life (Anguttara Nikaya 9.64):

1. Sensual lust – It is an obsessive hankering for gratification of the senses. Extreme craving for wealth, for enjoyment of sex, and for intoxicants (Alcohol and drugs) will cause sorrow.
2. Ill will – It is a feeling of hatred or dislike. It is the emotional opposite of the above desire. Both ill will and lust distort the entire mind and thus hinder awakening to truth and block the path to freedom.
3. Sloth and torpor – It is the obstacle to strenuous efforts. It makes the mind rigid and inert, and thus, causes mental sickness and laziness.
4. Restlessness and worry – When the mind becomes restless, it cannot concentrate. It manifests agitation, impatience, and excitement. Mental worry is just as harmful. When one worries over one thing or another

or over misfortunes, that person never has peace of mind.

5. Skeptical doubt – This hindrance is the inability to decide anything definitely, the lack of resolution to make a firm commitment or to pursue the good act.

The five hindrances are great obstacles to the mind progress. They cause much suffering.

Path to Peace of Mind

The four Noble Truths pointed out by the Buddha are comparable to the ways medical doctors use to treat a disease. We have learned about the disease of life in the first noble truth, that life is suffering (Dukkha). The symptom of the disease of life (suffering) is craving or desire that causes all the psychological obstacles to the progress of life. The diagnosis of the suffering permits the Buddha to prescribe a set of rules or directions to take care of the psychological obstacles. The set of rules are called the Noble Eightfold Path or the Eight Middle Paths. The eight paths of living are classified into three aggregates. The aggregate of virtue includes right speech, right action, and right livelihood. The aggregate of concentration includes right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The aggregate of discernment includes right view and right resolve. (Majjhima Nikaya 44)

1. Virtue. It is obtained by abiding by the five precepts.
 - a. Right speech: speech without lying, gossip, harshness, and idleness.
 - b. Right action: no killing, no stealing, no commitment of sexual misconduct.
 - c. Right livelihood: no trade of persons, meat, weapons or trade with dishonesty; good use of own wealth to maintain correct life; help to others in need.
2. Concentration.
 - a. Right effort: effort to abandon defilements of the mind; effort to prevent evil from arising, such as anger, delusion; effort to cultivate wholesomeness in oneself.

b. Right mindfulness: It is cultivated through a practice called “the four foundations of mindfulness:” body, feelings, states of mind, and phenomena.

“And what, monks, is right mindfulness? Herein, a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief concerning the world. He dwells contemplating feelings in feelings... states of mind in states of mind... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief concerning the world.” (Digha Nikaya 22)

c. Right concentration: cultivation of mind through meditation.

3. Discernment.

- a. Right view: seeing the four noble truths providing the knowledge of the true nature of existence.
- b. Right resolve: referred as right intention or right thought to catch the purposive or cognitive aspects of mental activity with threefold intentions: intention of renunciation, intention of good will, and intention of harmlessness.

Conclusion

The Noble Eightfold Path will lead to the end of suffering. By following the set of instructions provided by the Buddha, peace of mind is obtained. To appreciate these precepts, one needs to sit in concentration and let go of the five clinging aggregates: form, feeling, perception, fabrication and consciousness. If you do not believe this yet, you can give it a try by sitting in concentration and letting go of the aggregates. You will let go of the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, and fabrication. Thus, we should keep on studying the mind and developing the mind as a strategy to contemplate and overcome stress.

☸ Sovan Tun

Hate Crimes Close to Home

We live in Montgomery County, a suburban Maryland county known for its cultural and ethnic diversity, within—as well as among—neighborhoods and for its inclusive orientation and interpersonal relations. So it came as a shock when we learned that on the night of November 12, 2016, a nearby church had been

victimized by a hate crime. The FBI defines a hate crime as a “criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.”

The church in question, an Episcopal parish, was located in a very diverse area with significant proportions of populations of African and Hispanic origin. When the parish's priest arrived at the church early Sunday morning November 13, he discovered much to his disbelief that an outside wall had been defaced with the following phrases painted in large white strokes: "TRUMP NATION. WHITES ONLY!" Also upsetting was the fact that this defacement faced a memorial garden including a columbarium* where a number of deceased parish members had been interred. Then a Hispanic priest, also on the church staff, arrived, equally upset, having found that the large banner facing the main street on the other side of the church had been similarly defaced. The banner had welcomed all, in Spanish, to the early afternoon Spanish language service. That message had been blacked out and the banner turned around with a new message boldly painted: "TRUMP NATION. WHITES ONLY!"

While this damage has left an indelible imprint on this congregation, the impact was mitigated by the support quickly forthcoming from a number of nearby religious bodies of various denominations and faiths. My own Lutheran church, probably closest geographically to the scene of the hate crime, sent members, led by our pastor, to support the priests and congregation throughout the following week. When I attended the Spanish language service the following Sunday, November 20, the church was full, including representatives from at least a dozen other religious communities. One-by-one they spoke about their love, respect and support. I said that our church viewed the hate crime as an attack on us as well as an attack on them and that we were there to support them. Another attendee, a friend of Global Peace

Services and a participant in its events, came with her husband and young daughter and son from their home in Columbia, MD, in adjacent Howard County. She spoke eloquently in Spanish (her native tongue) and subsequently in English. She said that on hearing media reports about the hate crime, her first reaction (as a female Latina) was fear for herself and her children. But spiritual friends helped her transform her fear into love for the victimized and even for the perpetrators, while condemning their terrible acts. The service concluded with a moving presentation by three persons from Ohev Shalom, a well-known synagogue in nearby Washington, DC. Members of the synagogue had painted a large banner hanging over the rear of the church that cited in English and Hebrew the commandment: "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself."

As of mid-November, according to the police, the incidence of hate crimes in our county had increased by 17% over the same period in 2015. Most hate crimes have occurred in or on schools, but another nearby church (United Church of Christ) had its "Black Lives Matter" banner defaced several times. My experience suggests two antidotes to hate crimes: (1) support those victimized and (2) transparency. The hate crimes described above were publicized in the local print and broadcast media. Another potential antidote employed by one victimized church was to invite the perpetrators for a conversation. There has not been any indication that this invitation was accepted or successful.

*A columbarium is a sepulchral vault or other structure with recesses in the walls to receive the ashes of the dead. It is often placed in of a memorial garden.

☞ John Eriksson

Global Peace Services USA

The newsletter of Global Peace Services USA is published regularly. GPS USA is incorporated in the State of Maryland and is tax-exempt. Current board members are: Anna Amato, John Eriksson, Robert Muscat, Mindy Reiser, Ronald Ridker and Sovan Tun. We welcome contributions and comments. To contact us:

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