

Convergence of Critical Challenges Alert to Peacebuilders, Chaplains--from cpcsi.org

(issued in February, 2017 by CPCS Initiative Founder and Resource Coordinator Stefan Pasti)

To:

There is much that can be done to accelerate solution-oriented activity at this critical time

My name is Stefan Pasti, and I am the founder and resource coordinator of The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative (at www.cpcsi.org).

The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative provides research and analysis for critical challenge alerts, and research and support for collaborative problem solving and community education initiatives which seek to maximize citizen participation, and accelerate solution-oriented activity.

This message is a *Convergence of Critical Challenges Alert* from The CPCS Initiative, and it is being sent to:

- 1) peacebuilding organizations and peacebuilding graduate study programs
- 2) chaplains and offices of religious and spiritual life at universities and colleges
- 3) national and international organizations associated with religious and spiritual life in higher education

I realize I may be making an unusual request--asking people to give their attention to a message from someone they do not know... and from someone who is lacking traditional credentials. *And yet... I see something... and it doesn't seem like many other people see it.*

I believe people working in the peacebuilding field, and people working in the field of religious and spiritual life in higher education, may be able to see what I see, and do much to accelerate solution-oriented activity at this critical time.

"... remaining within the temperature goal of 1.5°C ... would require net-zero emissions at some point between 2040 and 2060 (even if negative emissions technologies can be deployed at scale), thus

requiring radical near-term reductions in energy sector CO2 emissions, employing every known technological, societal and regulatory decarbonisation option.”

The cultural transformation necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and mitigate global warming is, by itself, enough to justify the highest level of warning since:

- a) there is uncertainty about how negative feedback loops are triggered
- b) there is a quickly closing window of opportunity for staying below +2°C (+3.6°F)
- c) investment in the energy sector requires long-range planning
- d) although there is much very credible information available--about what causes global warming and climate change, how widespread the negative impacts are already, how catastrophic negative impacts could be in the future, and what we can do to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and minimize negative impacts--we live in *very complex cultural landscapes*, and there are many different kinds of moral compasses attempting to navigate such landscapes.

So even though it might not be necessary, included below are 13 resources relating to understanding and mitigating global warming and climate change--which may help educators who are in need of such resources.

- 1) Overview--[“The Carbon Story”](#) (with helpful visualizations in an interactive story line from 800,000 B.C. to 2013) at The Global Carbon Atlas website (an affiliate of The Global Carbon Project). “The Global Carbon Project is a scientific program that aims to draw a complete picture of the carbon cycle on planet Earth”.
- 2) The Wikipedia webpage titled [“Carbon Dioxide in the Earth’s Atmosphere”](#) is a most comprehensive overview, which includes sections titled “Past concentration”, “Atmospheric carbon dioxide and the greenhouse effect”, “Atmospheric carbon dioxide and the carbon cycle”, “Atmospheric carbon dioxide and the oceanic carbon cycle”, and “Anthropogenic CO2 emissions”. Graphs and charts include: “Life Timeline”, a pictogram of the Greenhouse Effect, and a very helpful diagram of the fast carbon cycle.
- 3) The World Resources Institute has a blog entry titled [“The History of Carbon Dioxide Emissions”](#) (dated May 21, 2014). The eleven graphs and charts include “1960-2011: Per Capita Emissions in the West--Stable, but High” and “2011: The Top 10 Emitting Countries Still Make Up 78 Percent of Global CO₂ Emissions”.
- 4) NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration--U.S. Government Agency) has a webpage titled “Global Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet”, which includes links to graphs and charts in five subject areas: Carbon Dioxide, Global Temperature, Arctic Sea Ice Minimum, Land Ice, and Sea Level. To access the five subject areas, begin at the “evidence” webpage (<http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>), and then click on “Vital Signs”.
- 5) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s webpage [“Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#)

[Data](#) provides four charts which include “Global Emissions by Economic Sector” (chart data from 2011-2015, with helpful details).

6) On January 31, 2008, a nationwide “teach-in” on global warming and climate change (an all-day symposium called “Focus the Nation: Global Warming Solutions for America”) took place at more than 1,500 institutions (mostly colleges and universities). Included here are two articles about that nationwide “teach-in”:

a) [“Campus joins national Focus the Nation “teach-in” with Jan. 31 global warming symposium”](#)

(University of California, Berkeley)

b) [“Students, Faculty Join Focus The Nation Teach-In”](#) (Bowling Green State University)

7) [ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability](#) “is the leading global network of more than 1,500 cities, towns and regions committed to building a sustainable future.”

8) The Compact of Mayors “is a global coalition of mayors and city officials pledging to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions, enhance resilience to climate change, and to track their progress transparently” (for more details, see November 13, 2016 Press Release [“The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy Announces its Global Impact”](#)).

9) On 25 September, 2015, a bold new global agenda to end poverty by 2030 and pursue a sustainable future was [unanimously adopted by the 193 Member States of the United Nations](#) at the start of a three-day Summit on Sustainable Development. On 1 January 2016, the [17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)--adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN summit--officially came into force.

10) On 15 December, 2015, [in Paris, France, a historic agreement was reached](#), as 195 countries adopted a new universal, legally binding global climate deal. [The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016](#) (as of 8 February 2017, 129 Parties have ratified of 197 Parties to the Convention).

Here are two summaries of the Paris Agreement which this writer felt were especially informative:

a) [“The Paris Agreement: Turning Point for a Climate Solution”](#) (from staff at the World Resources Institute)

b) [“Judging the COP21 outcome and what’s next for climate action”](#) (from staff at E3G)

11) The [Executive Summary of “World Energy Outlook 2016”](#) [released on November 16, 2016 by the International Energy Agency (IEA)] includes the following assessments:

a) “Countries are generally on track to achieve, and even exceed in some instances, many of the targets set in their Paris Agreement pledges; this is sufficient to slow the projected rise in global energy-related CO₂ emissions, but not nearly enough to limit warming to less than 2°C.” (p. 2)

b) “The transformation required for a reasonable chance of remaining within the temperature goal of 1.5°C is stark. It would require net-zero emissions at some point between 2040 and 2060 (even if negative emissions technologies can be deployed at scale), thus requiring radical near-term reductions in energy sector CO₂ emissions, employing every known technological, societal and regulatory decarbonisation option.” (p. 5)

12) A Press Release (dated December 12, 2016) from DivestInvest titled [“Assets Pledged To Fossil Fuel Divestment Surpass \\$5 Trillion, Says New Report”](#) includes:

a) “According to a new analysis released today by Arabella Advisors, 688 institutions and 58,399 individuals across 76 countries have committed to divest from fossil fuels.”

b) “What began on a few college campuses in the U.S. has spread to every corner of the world, squarely into the financial mainstream. Divestment has permeated every sector of society: from universities and pension funds, to philanthropic and cultural institutions, to cities, faith groups, insurance companies and more.”

13) CPCS Initiative document [“59 Recommended Sources on Twitter--for News, Information, and Solutions on Global Warming and Climate Change”](#) (7 pages; Feb. 2017)

Unfortunately, what we have now is a **convergence of critical challenges** (here is a [two page description of the ten most critical challenges identified by this writer](#)).

Even with such unprecedented collaboration efforts being made...

During the three to eight decades of unprecedented cultural transformation needed to achieve--and adjust to--carbon neutral economies, this writer believes many serious blind spots will be discovered--issues which are far from being fully appreciated now, and issues which are serious enough to cripple our best efforts, if not remedied.

One such blind spot, which this writer has identified (and rated #2 in his list of the ten most critical challenges of our times), is “A Marginalization of the Treasured Wisdom of Religious, Spiritual, and Moral Traditions”.

Consider the three observations below, all of which have many serious negative implications--

a) “The satisfaction of one's physical needs must come at a certain point to a dead stop before it degenerates into physical decadence.”

b) “Taken together, the bottom half of the global population own less than 1 percent of total wealth. In sharp contrast, the richest 10 percent hold 86 percent of the world's wealth, and the top 1 percent alone account for 46 percent of global assets.”

c) “The global drugs trade and the global arms trade are integral to violence in both developing and industrialized countries. Even modest progress on either front will contribute to reducing the amount and degree of violence suffered by millions of people. To date, however--and despite their high profile in the world arena—no solutions seem to be in sight for these problems.”

It should be clear to most readers that the virtuous conduct (the discipline, restraint, wisdom, understanding, compassion, forgiveness, etc) necessary--to transform the negative outcomes associated with the three observations above into examples of the treasured wisdom of our human heritage being more fully appreciated, and applied in the everyday circumstances of community life--would inspire "waves" of additional goodwill.

And yet... if readers carefully explore thirteen of the most representative and most well-known critical challenge assessments and solution guides from the past 50 years (see p. 25 of the CPCS Initiative Summary Paper for the list)(link provided in "Key CPCS Initiative Documents" section below)--

--they will find that these critical challenge assessments and solution guides *do not give serious attention to variations in human morality as a significant factor affecting the nature of the challenges of our times.*

"Way Beyond" Uncharted Territory: the need to make unprecedented progress towards resolving timeless shortcomings of human nature

This writer believes that the challenges of our times are such that it is now critical for us to access the storehouses of wisdom which have accumulated over the many centuries of human experience, and which have been confirmed again and again as essential to individual well-being and social harmony by the saints, sages, spiritual leaders, and sincere practitioners of all religious, spiritual, and moral traditions.

Unfortunately, much of the real treasured wisdom of religious, spiritual, and moral traditions now seems to be hidden--and thus in need of being re-discovered. These "hidden" resources include teachings which inspire and encourage people to:

- 1) sacrifice personal desires for the greater good of the whole
- 2) find contentment and quality of life while consuming less material goods and ecological services
- 3) prefer peacebuilding which supports and actualizes mutually beneficial understandings, forgiveness, and reconciliation—*and which abstains from violent conflict resolution*—as a way of bringing cycles of violence to an end
- 4) use resources carefully, so that there is surplus available for emergency assistance
- 5) support community life and cultural traditions which "... bring to the fore how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help, as well as to those who receive it".

Are we headed in directions which are consistent with the Treasured Wisdom of Religious, Spiritual, and Moral Traditions? Does the content of traditional mass media, Internet media, and Internet social media, provide evidence that wisdom and compassion are "coming through the mist as much as they

should be”? Are our communities examples of our success at passing along to future generations the most treasured wisdom human beings have accumulated in more than 5,000 years of human history?

Do most of us believe that our moral compasses are sufficiently calibrated to overcome a convergence of unprecedented challenges in the most complex cultural landscapes ever created on Earth?

If we have serious concerns about the nature and reliability of our moral compasses at this critical time, and let those serious concerns go unresolved (even now, when we are in the most complex cultural landscapes ever created)

- 1) we may lose significant traction and critical momentum on challenges for which there is an urgent need to reach positive tipping points
- 2) we may do more to create widespread cynicism, rather than confidence, about our collective capacity to resolve the unprecedented challenges we face.

This writer believes we have an urgent need to make unprecedented progress towards resolving timeless shortcomings of human nature—even though such shortcomings are perceived as so much a part of who we are that most of us accept such as inevitable. **Thus, the uncharted territory we thought we were in to achieve carbon neutral economies might be more accurately described as “way beyond” uncharted.** There should be no one who has any doubts: there is no culture or association of societies that ever existed on planet Earth which has had to resolve the kind of challenges the next few generations of people will have to resolve.

It is the complexity of succeeding in integrating wisdom and compassion into the everyday circumstances of community life--at this critical time when wisdom and compassion are so urgently needed--which has persuaded this writer to make what contributions he can, and to issue this Convergence of Critical Challenges Alert.

We need a plan of action along these lines--

- a) which goes beyond the efforts currently in progress
- b) which will exponentially increase the likelihood of success
- c) which can assure us that wisdom and compassion will be “coming through the mist as much as they should be”
- d) *which people from every variety of circumstances can trust*
- e) *which will help people discover for themselves how much we all need to be learning so that we can be part of the solutions... and how much we really need to be on the same side, helping each other.*

“Constellation of Initiatives” Approach

The CPCS Initiatives’ “constellation of initiatives” approach to collaborative problem solving, community education, and citizen peacebuilding (offered as an example of the kind of “constellation of initiatives” approach necessary to fulfill the above requirements, and help accomplish the unprecedented cultural transformation ahead):

- 1) Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses Surveys
- 2) Community Visioning Initiatives
- 3) Neighborhood Learning Centers
- 4) Neighbor to Neighbor Community Education (NTNCE) Projects in local newspapers

[For a detailed overview of each of these, see p. 36-45 in the Summary Paper [Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses: to resolve unprecedented challenges and discover our collective spiritual destiny” \(85 pages; June, 2015, updated July, 2016\)](#)]

Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses Surveys

Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses Surveys:

- a) are a very careful and conscientious approach to identifying critical challenges and solution-oriented activity--*and to comparing that input with working definitions for “right livelihood” and “moral compasses” (to increase consensus on such definitions)*--which could do much to increase the reliability of our “moral compasses” at this critical time
- b) can help citizens in every variety of circumstances to understand and appreciate the need for Community Visioning Initiatives and Neighborhood Learning Centers
- c) can provide starting point input for the kind of workshops needed in Neighborhood Learning Centers, and the kind of sharing which can be done through a Neighbor to Neighbor Community Education (NTNCE) section in local newspapers.

Opportunities for Colleges and Universities To Accelerate Solution-Oriented Activity

Organizations and institutions collaborating to administer Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses Surveys will participate in building clearinghouse websites for many of the survey topics (Ex: “critical challenges”, “field specific solutions”, “key collaborative problem solving processes”, and working definitions of

“right livelihood” and “moral compasses”) *which can continue to aggregate contributions after the survey is over*. Thus, the organizations and institutions (and especially the colleges and universities) helping to launch such surveys would benefit, as they would be on a fast track to pioneering cutting edge educational curriculum and educational experiences which are highly relevant to resolving the challenges of our times.

We need to achieve significant positive tipping points on three key indicators... before negative feedback loops in many areas destabilize social cohesion

This writer offers the following three key indicators as a way of measuring if we are On Track with the cultural transformation necessary to resolve the challenges of our times--

1) Now... only a small percentage of people understand the following insight, *and are able to apply it in the everyday circumstances of the communities they live in*.

The investments of time, energy, and money (the “votes”) each of us make in our everyday circumstances--

--can result in countless ways of earning a living which *contribute to--rather than impair--*

--the peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts necessary to reach positive tipping points on many critical challenges at the same time.

We need a high percentage of people who understand this insight--*and are able to apply it in the everyday circumstances of the communities they live in*.

2) We need to be on the same side, helping each other.

3) We need to be making best use of the knowledge and skills each one of us has.

Key CPCS Initiative Documents

The following Key CPCS Initiative Documents--

1) this Convergence of Critical Challenges Alert

2) the CPCS Summary Paper [[Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses: to resolve unprecedented challenges and discover our collective spiritual destiny](#)] (85 pages; June, 2015, updated July, 2016)]

3) a recent [eight page introduction](#) (Oct. 2016; Jan. 2017) to the CPCS Initiative Summary Paper

--identify ways of minimizing disconnect and supporting maximum clarity on both--

- a) the nature of the challenges ahead
- b) what collaborative problem solving, community education, and citizen peacebuilding initiatives will help maximize citizen participation and accelerate solution-oriented activity at this critical time.

You can help pass on to future generations the most treasured wisdom human beings have accumulated in more than 5,000 years of human history

Human morality is not a constant—it is not something which is the same throughout the centuries of human existence; and thus it is something which can become degraded or raised up, depending on the leanings of human aspirations. *What if cynicism causes human aspirations to lean towards degrading aspects of human morality, instead of uplifting aspects of human morality, at this profoundly critical time--when we are at one of the most significant crossroads in the evolution of life on Planet Earth?*

The challenges ahead are unprecedented. This writer believes we will need to achieve significant positive tipping points on three key indicators (listed above)--and we need to achieve those significant positive tipping points before negative feedback loops in many areas (climate change disasters; greed and corruption; the consumption juggernaut; water shortages; global inequities, overindulgence, malnutrition, and disease; unsuccessful transitions to carbon neutral--and ecologically sustainable--economies; transitional unemployment; loss of trust in institutions responsible for guiding public discourse; negative stereotypes; cynicism and violence; etc) *destabilize social cohesion...*

... and that until we have reached significant positive tipping points on the above three key indicators, the highest level of warning is justified.

The subtitle of the CPCS Initiative Summary Paper “resolve unprecedented challenges and discover our collective spiritual destiny”--and discussion by this writer in support of that subtitle--are efforts at making the followings points:

- 1) at this critical time, we have an urgent need to make unprecedented progress towards resolving timeless shortcomings of human nature
- 2) after more than 5,000 years of human history, we have the treasured wisdom necessary to make unprecedented progress towards resolving timeless shortcomings of human nature
- 3) if the leanings of our human aspirations are towards discovering our collective spiritual destiny, we may gain more momentum towards more positive tipping points than anything else we could do.

This writer believes that if many people could see and feel the practical value of carrying out the kind of collaborative problem solving and community education initiatives brought forward in the CPCS Summary Paper (again, see p. 36-45 in the CPCS Summary Paper), such collaborative, solution-oriented activity could become a common experience... a common cultural tradition... a cultural tradition which can link many diverse communities of people together, in a fellowship of people working towards the greater good of the whole... and a cultural tradition which can help pass on to future generations the most treasured wisdom human beings have accumulated in more than 5,000 years of human history.

Resource Sharing in a Time of Unprecedented Challenges

I am sharing what information and resources I have--and inviting questions, comments, resource recommendations, constructive criticism, and any other helpful input--as a way of supporting and reinforcing our collective efforts, so that such efforts can realize their potential to accelerate solution-oriented activity at this critical time.

For a Peaceful and Sustainable World,

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