

An Introduction to the Community Peacebuilding And Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative Summary Paper

[CPCS Initiative Summary Paper: [“Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses: to resolve unprecedented challenges and discover our collective spiritual destiny”](#) (June, 2015--updated links, new preface June, 2016; 85 pages)]

Introduction--and Text and Research of Summary Paper
by Stefan Pasti, Founder and Resource Coordinator
The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative

The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative (www.cpcsi.org) 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.

Using a selection of statistics and observations gleaned from thousands of sources and decades of research--

[Note: papers including quotes with the highest relevance (and related source references)--a) the above Summary Paper b) ["Invitation Package for Possible Board of Directors"](#) (589 pages, 3.6 MB; Nov., 2013) c) ["IPCR Critical Challenges Assessment 2011-2012--Summary Report"](#) (444 pages, Jan., 2012)]

--this writer has identified ten challenges as the most critical challenges of our times (Note: here is a [two page description of the ten challenges identified](#)).

Careful arrangements of representative excerpts from such sources provide supporting evidence for each of the ten challenges (in Section II of the Summary Paper), encourage “connecting the dots” moments, and illustrate that there are unprecedented challenges ahead--

(Ex: #1 Global Warming; #2 Cultures of Violence, Greed, Corruption, and Overindulgence; #4 The End of the Fossil Fuel Era; #5 The increasing world population and its implications relating to widespread resource depletion— *with a special focus on the increasing number of people who are consuming material goods and ecological resources indiscriminately*)

--which will require unprecedented solutions.

Here is one example of the evidence—relating to the challenge of global warming and reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions—which has many serious implications:

“This is the first time in the history of mankind that we are setting ourselves the task of intentionally, within a defined period of time, to change the economic development model that has been reigning for at least 150 years, since the industrial revolution. That will not happen overnight and it will not happen at a single conference on climate change, be it COP 15, 21, 40 – you choose the number. It just does not occur like that. It is a process, because of the depth of the transformation.” [From an article (dated February 3, 2015)]

titled "[Figueres: First time the world economy is transformed intentionally](#)" at the website for the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (referring to Christiana Figueres, UN Climate Chief)(Note: Her term as UN Climate Chief was from July, 2010 to July, 2016)]

A Critical Need: More Awareness about the "Marginalization of the Treasured Wisdom of Religious, Spiritual, and Moral Traditions"

It has taken a lot of being confused about the cardinal directions on our "moral compasses" to get where we are (global warming can be understood as the cumulative result of many other unresolved issues which have, by themselves, become critical challenges)—and many of the unresolved issues contributing to global warming have been around since the dawn of civilization (Ex: Cultures of Violence, Greed, Corruption, and Overindulgence—also a critical challenge on the above ten point list).

Much emphasis is given, in the CPCS summary paper, to challenge #3 "A Marginalization of the Treasured Wisdom of Religious, Spiritual, and Moral Traditions"—which is described as a root cause of all the other ten challenges identified in Section II of the Summary Paper; **a serious blind spot with implications which are far from being fully appreciated; and one of the strongest indicators that there are unprecedented challenges ahead, and that we have an urgent need for problem solving on a scale most of us have never known before.**

Here are four indicators of the "A Marginalization of the Treasured Wisdom of Religious, Spiritual, and Moral Traditions" being referred to:

- 1) "Cultures" of violence, greed, corruption, and overindulgence—which have become so common that many of us accept such as inevitable, and which are in many ways slowing the restructuring of investment priorities needed to respond to an increasing number of other critical challenges
- 2) "It would be foolish to underestimate the challenge of checking the consumption juggernaut...." (Christopher Flavin, formerly of Worldwatch Institute; see last paragraph at <http://www.worldwatch.org/state-world-2004-richer-fatter-and-not-much-happier>)
- 3) "The satisfaction of one's physical needs must come at a certain point to a dead stop before it degenerates into physical decadence". (Mahatma Gandhi)
- 4) If readers carefully explore thirteen of the most representative and most well-known critical challenge assessments and solution guides from the past fifty years (see p. 25 of the CPCS Summary Paper for a list of the thirteen), 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.*

This writer believes we have an urgent need to make unprecedented progress towards resolving timeless challenges of human nature—even though such challenges are perceived as so much a part of the human

condition that most of us accept such challenges as inevitable. Thus, we are in uncharted territory, for 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.

Even further: consider the following quoted passages:

“... it is the business of the school environment to eliminate, so far as possible, the unworthy features of the existing environment from influence on mental habitudes.... Every society gets encumbered with what is trivial, with dead wood from the past, and with what is positively perverse. The school has the duty of omitting such things from the environment which it supplies, and thereby doing what it can to counteract their influence in the ordinary social environment. By selecting the best for its exclusive use, it strives to reinforce the power of the best. As a society becomes more enlightened, it realizes that it is responsible not to transmit and conserve the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as to make for a better future society. The school is its chief agency for the accomplishment of this end.” [From “Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education” by John Dewey (1916)]

“... there are truths which none can be free to ignore, if one is to have that wisdom through which life can become useful. These are the truths concerning the structures of the good life and concerning the factual conditions by which it may be achieved....” (italics by this writer) [From “General Education in a Free Society, The Harvard Report (1945)]

The passage by Mr. Dewey suggests that enlightened societies should recognize their social responsibilities to identify, preserve, and transmit only those cultural “building blocks” which contribute to “making a better future society”. And that “the school is its chief agency for the accomplishment of this end”.

However, **we now live in the most complex cultural landscapes ever created on Planet Earth**. The world we live in now is profoundly different from what the world was like when Mr. Dewey wrote the above passage (1916).

Widespread access to the search engines on the Internet; Wikipedia; YouTube; Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.); professional networks, etc. on Ning Platforms; iPhones and iPads; television networks; cable networks; newspapers; and radios mean that however carefully schools attend to their social responsibilities, there are countless ways in which “unworthy features” of our complex world can counteract, rather than reinforce, important educational goals.

It is in such a context—in the most complex cultural landscapes ever created, and at a time of unprecedented challenges—that there is a profound need for not just schools—but all citizens—to recognize their social responsibilities to identify, reinforce, and preserve only those cultural “building blocks” which

- a) contribute to achieving positive tipping points on the unprecedented challenges ahead
- b) reinforce the foundations for “the good life”
- c) “make for a better future society”.

Even as a result of this brief discussion, it may be possible for many readers to understand: **we are in uncharted territory, in the most complex cultural landscapes ever created.**

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 uncharted territory, in the most complex cultural landscapes ever created)--

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

Unfortunately, (as cited above) thirteen of the most representative and most well-known critical challenge assessments and solution guides from the past fifty years (see p. 25 of the CPCS Summary Paper for a list of the thirteen) *do not give serious attention to variations in human morality as a significant factor affecting the nature of the challenges of our times. **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?*

As young children grow into adults, the everyday circumstances of community life and cultural traditions provide “frameworks” by which they understand their experiences and make judgments about what is valuable and important. These “frameworks” (“trellises” for the growth of cultural traditions) shape the way people come into contact with each other, and the way they interpret facts, issues, and events—and provide the context by which people decide what are appropriate responses to the circumstances of their lives.

The challenges of our times are such that it is now critical for us to access the storehouses of wisdom and compassion 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. Are the “frameworks” we are creating at this critical time—which help us decide what are appropriate responses to the circumstances of our lives, and help us make judgments about what is valuable and important... are such “frameworks” the best efforts we can make to integrating wisdom and compassion into the everyday circumstances of community life?

This writer believes that a “constellation of initiatives” approach like the model described below, applied with faith, patience, and due diligence, can succeed in turning polarizing circumstances into collaborative efforts; making best use of the knowledge and skills each one of us has; and creating, developing, and accelerating a full array of solution-oriented activity. However, many serious questions remain, one of which is: *will we have enough wisdom to understand that it is just as important for others to maintain their faith, as it is for us to maintain ours?*

Collaborative Problem Solving and Community Education Needed—on a scale most of us have never known before

In Section IV of the CPCS Summary Paper (see p. 35-45), this writer describes **four collaborative problem solving and community education approaches, which are offered as an example of the kind of “constellation of initiatives” approach necessary to accelerate solutions-oriented activity, and accomplish the unprecedented cultural transformation ahead** (again, here is a [two page description of the ten challenges identified](#) by this writer)--

- 1) “Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses” Surveys
- 2) Community Visioning Initiatives
- 3) Neighborhood Learning Centers and
- 4) Neighbor to Neighbor Community Education

1) “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.

2) Community Visioning Initiatives can be described as a series of community meetings designed to maximize citizen participation in identifying challenges, and in solution-oriented activity. The more comprehensive Community Visioning Initiatives can last 6 months or longer. This writer’s interest in Community Visioning Initiatives was inspired instantly when, in 1994, he watched a video documentary titled [“Chattanooga: A Community With A Vision”](#) (13 minutes).

In this time of unprecedented challenges—and especially in the context of collaborative problem solving on a scale most of us have never known before—there are going to be countless opportunities for reconciliation. There are going to be countless opportunities for arriving at a new appreciation of the personal qualities, skills, and beliefs of our neighbors and fellow citizens—personal qualities, skills, and beliefs which we once might have thought were only being directed towards outcomes with serious negative consequences for many people. And there are going to be countless opportunities for all of us—ourselves, our neighbors and our fellow citizens—to become part of a system of mutual support and encouragement in our local communities, as we respond to multiple, unprecedented challenges.

One of the keys to appreciating the value of Community Visioning Initiatives: such collaborative problem solving processes can help people “become stakeholders”, with the faith that as they do so, and become involved in the education at the level of Neighborhood Learning Centers (and “voting” on priority challenges and priority solutions), *people will discover for themselves* just how much we all need to be learning to so that we can be part of the solutions... and how much we really need to be on the same side, helping each other.

3) Creating many Neighborhood Learning Centers can provide places—in local neighborhoods—for discussion, information sharing, mutual support and encouragement, and fellowship and friendship, so that the exchanging of information and resources can also make significant contributions to the process of building “close-knit” communities of people... (which are) communities with a healthy appreciation for each other’s strengths, communities with a well-developed capacity to resolve even the most difficult challenges—and communities which demonstrate a high level of compassion for their fellow human beings.

4) The Neighbor to Neighbor Community Education (NTNCE) Project advocates for a new section in local newspapers. The new section (NTNCE section) would be used to highlight and accumulate stories, personal experiences, and other forms of reader contributions which identify helpful people and valuable resources, and reinforce important community goals.

What we need now are collaborative problem solving and community education initiatives which carefully and continuously (through ongoing monitoring) seek to achieve a meaningful balance between the urgent need to “frontload” specific issue-related agendas, and an even more serious priority: for all of us to understand--

- a) how much we need to be learning to so that we can be part of the solutions
- b) how much we need to be making best use of the knowledge and skills each one of us has
- c) how much we need to be on the same side, helping each other
- d) that—wisely directed—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.

What will it be like then, when we will have such an expanded awareness of what we can become?

Section V of the CPCS Summary Paper emphasizes the importance of “Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses” Surveys by offering a five point list of recommendations which illustrate the potential of such surveys, what kind of partnerships might best realize that potential, and how to begin seeking out survey respondents. [Note: Collaborating organizations and institutions 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.]

That there has not yet been much attention given to designing collaborative problem solving approaches as comprehensive as the ones described in Section IV and Section V can—most likely—be attributed to the fact **that the need for problem solving on the scale the CPCS Summary Paper is advocated for is far from being widely recognized.** However, once the need for unprecedented forms of collaborative problem solving and community education become more commonly accepted—and the natural creativity and capacity for innovation which we human beings have shown ourselves capable of becomes more focused on designing collaborative problem solving and community education models—there are going to be countless opportunities for all of us (ourselves, our neighbors, our fellow citizens—and all of the human beings sharing this Planet Earth) to become part of a system of mutual support and encouragement in our local communities, as we respond to multiple, unprecedented challenges.

We now have unprecedented access to the storehouses of wisdom and compassion which have accumulated over 5,000 years of human experience; and we will need to make practical application of such wisdom and compassion—and go far beyond the kind of collaborative problem solving and community education most of us are familiar with—to overcome the most unprecedented challenges ever faced by humankind. What will it be like then, when we will have such an expanded awareness of what we can become?

The part of the title of the CPCS Summary Paper—“to resolve unprecedented challenges and discover our collective spiritual destiny”—is derived from the following question: could it be that in amidst the unprecedented culture change which we must achieve in the next 3-6 decades, our awareness of what we can do together, and what we can become through applying wisdom and compassion, will make it possible for a significant majority of us to believe that we can even make efforts to discover our collective spiritual destiny?...and that rather than being some kind of catastrophic disaster, our collective spiritual destiny could be much more like what the result would be if wisdom and compassion was integrated into the everyday circumstances of community life, in communities around the world?

This writer offers the following definition of world peace: a universal feeling of *sympathetic resonance* between the examples of leaders (as seen in the wise and equitable administration of cultural and natural resources); the personal cultivation of virtue throughout society; the ecological stability and sustainability of natural resources; and the current of Divine Grace.

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 advocated for by this 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.

CPCS Initiative Outreach

The current focus of The CPCS Initiative is outreach associated with the 85 page paper [“Recalibrating Our ‘Moral Compasses’: to resolve unprecedented challenges and discover our collective spiritual destiny”](#) (June, 2015; updated links and new preface, June, 2016) which summarizes the work of The CPCS Initiative.

Most of the outreach related to the CPCS Summary Paper is being done on the Twitter platform, through tweets to specific organizations and individuals—and by way of creating a **#CPbCSus** hashtag.

Hopefully, the #CPbCSus hashtag will also assist with creating a community of people who—like the CPCS Initiative Founder and Resource Coordinator Stefan Pasti—are focusing on minimizing disconnect and supporting maximum clarity on both the nature of the challenges ahead, and what collaborative problem solving and community education initiatives will make best use of the knowledge, skills, and resources each one of us has to contribute at this critical time.

Key outreach documents include:

- 1) [“Unprecedented Challenges Ahead–July 2016”](#) (2 pages; July, 2016)
- 2) [“Launching the Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability \(CPCS\) Initiative Hashtag \(#CPbCSus\)”](#) (5 page overview of the CPCS Initiative) (Nov., 2015)
- 3) the [“Preface to the CPCS Summary Paper”](#) (4 pages; June, 2016)
- 4) and this introduction to the CPCS Summary Paper (8 pages; Oct. 2016 and Jan. 2017)

Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative key phrase list:

critical challenge assessments, unprecedented challenges ahead, maximizing citizen participation, accelerating solution-oriented activity, collaborative problem solving, recalibrating our moral compasses surveys, community visioning, neighborhood learning centers, community education, community service, local newspapers, citizen peacebuilding, culture change, faith, wisdom, compassion, Twitter hashtag #CPbCSus