**Sharing a Good Deed in a Weary World**

 **Unfortunately, we are bombarded with many differences within our communities fueled by national unrest, the reality of increased deaths, and the continued financial and emotional turmoil in families. We often have trepidation on how we talk to family, friends, and acquaintances about the current events of the day. Too often social media posts are cruel and acidic. With that in mind, I raise the question, “What can we all do that will be received with little resistance from others?” Kindness may be a partial antidote and a balm to soothe the brutal hurt that so many people feel in their soul from our current situation.**

 **The world situation has created less opportunity for face-to-face communication and opportunities for nurturing interactions. Americans of all ages have suffered from this situation during the pandemic and even before as we have relied more on instantaneous communication social media than any direct communication. There are about 2.4 billion individual Facebook users globally.  Five hundred million tweets are sent each day. According to Socialnomics, more people own a mobile device than a toothbrush. Are these activities causing us to disconnect from our communities, forget the need to show kindness to others, and lose sight of the world outside our screens? Psychologists, education leaders, and religious leaders have all lamented about the potential continued changes in how social organizations will fit in our daily life post-pandemic.**

**Social scientists see fewer physical encounters in groups as a detriment to social interaction skills that promote finding commonalities. In the past, Americans with different points of view were perpetually forced to confront one another face-to-face before social media.** **Robert Putnam, well-known social scientist and author, says, “There is a shrinking sense of community…We have large [but] shallow networks like Facebook and fewer close networks.”**

 **Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville traveled all over the United States in the 1830s and was struck by the influence of religious, fraternal, and civic organizations, and societies on American democracy and concluded that they made communities stronger, more interesting, and possessing a singleness of purpose. Tocqueville might see things differently today.**

**Often, many people seem to argue just for the sake of arguing and subscribe to a theory that there are two points of view – the one that is wrong and mine.**  **One must remember that to argue, and prevail, is to break down the truth of the person you are differing with. It is painful to lose what you see as truthful, so be kind, even if you are right. Unfortunately, through social media we receive other people’s reality that often is riddled with statements that are not grounded in personal knowledge and little empathy for others.**

 **Everyone is affected by an act of kindness. Kindness is contagious and you never know just how big of an impact a small gesture of kindness can have. Doing good for others feels good. Showing kindness to others is just as rewarding as receiving it from someone else.**

**Recently, a random act of kindness in the pick-up line at a local restaurant made my day. As I started to pay, the cashier said the person in front had bought my breakfast. After honking my horn, I passed that kindness to the next person in line – such a good feeling in the receiving and giving. In the words of St. Francis of Assisi, “A single sunbeam is enough to drive away many shadows.”**

**As a clinician, I visited many schools where teacher signs were a regular part of the environment. One of my favorite signs could help us all maintain kindness with our fellow man. Stop and think before you post, tweet, or speak… Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it necessary? Is it encouraging? Is it mindful? Mother Teresa tells us** **kind words can be short and easy to speak but their echoes are truly endless**.  **How many of your mothers told you, “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all”? Others may not remember what you said, or what you did, but they will always remember how you made them feel.” Why not leave them with something positive?**

**With all this in mind, my challenge to readers is to consider doing some acts of kindness for different people in your world – immediate family, older relatives and acquaintances, friends, co-workers, service workers, Facebook friends, neighbors and so on. The action does not have to be elaborate or expensive, just meaningful with a kindness intent. Watch them pass it on to other people. Oh, and don’t forget to show an act of kindness to someone with a different point of view than you. Remember, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. I contend that to heal the divisiveness in our nation begins with small steps of conciliation and kindness to the people in our own daily orbits. Seneca has said “Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness”. A quote from Shakespeare is often appropriate as an ending. “How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a weary world.”**

**This article is part 1 of a 3-part series on kindness published in the Hickory Daily Record on three Sundays in February 2021 by Warren Hollar. You may access hyperlinks to these articles on the church webpage.**