



CREATION CARE



The World and all that is in it belong to the Lord, the Earth and all who live on it are His! –Ps 24:1

Northern Ohio District, Church of the Brethren, Stewardship Advocate, Clyde C. Fry, cceseven@embarqmail.com

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WE ARE TOLD THAT HAND-WASHING FOR 20-SECONDS IS A KEY DEFENSE IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS-19.

Kara K. Root reported, in the Alban News Letter (3-16), that she found those 20-seconds of handwashing to be awkward and boring until her husband asked her: "Did you know that it takes 20-seconds to pray the Lord's Prayer?" **That turned her boring hand-washing into a blessing!**

Remember George S. Schuler's 1924 hymn: "Make Me a Blessing?" What a great way to turn a burden into a blessing, not only for the one who prays it, but for all who are attuned to the spiritual wave-links that touch their inner spirits.⊕



FEDERAL FAILURE

Governance is a matter of **stewardship and justice**, something that followers of Jesus are always interested in. Politicians and civil leaders are responsible for the care, use, and wise implementation of all the resources, information, and knowledge that affects the well-being of our society and its people.

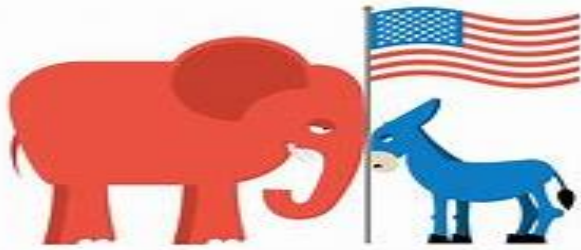
In January 2019, Dan Coats, Director of National Intelligence (DNI) at the time, a cabinet level position, presented a 42-page "Worldwide Threat Assessment" to the Senate

Intelligence Committee which said it represented the "collective insights" of the nation's 16 intelligence agencies. On page two the report stated: "**We assess that the United States and the world will remain vulnerable to the next flu pandemic or largescale outbreak of a contagious disease that could lead to massive rates of death and disability, severely affect the world economy, strain international resources, and increase calls on the United States for support.**" The Senate was not impressed and the Administration did not "trust" the Intelligence Agencies. Coats was soon out (July 2019) and replacements were installed one after another.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched epidemic prevention programs abroad following the 2005 bird flu scare known as **Predict** which searched for dangerous animal viruses that could potentially infect humans. (Some suspect that COVID-19 may have jumped from bats to humans.) Former USAID Director Dennis Carrol reported that both the Bush and Obama administrations were "enormously supportive" of the program, but the current administration was not and allowed it to "collapse into hibernation."

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also had programs abroad that were **aimed at stopping future outbreaks at their source**, but was dramatically downsized by the current administration. The CDC itself has faced political pressure negatively affecting its transparency and program implementation.

In consultation with our District Executive Minister I sent an issue of CREATION CARE NOTES (see the District Web) to the District Board (3-7) raising the need for our congregations to carefully consider how we can respond to this national/international crisis. As followers of Jesus we must act calmly and confidently in the midst of public chaos, as many citizens are hoarding essential supplies and some are buying guns and ammunition to protect "me and mine" from those who may be driven by desperate need and fear. **Because the crisis may worsen beyond our wildest imaginations, fear and loneliness will grow among the physically healthy and pain, fear, and isolation among the sick. Jesus-people must brave the dangers and invent new ways of reaching out to the multitudes.** ⊕



CHRISTIANS AS STEWARDS OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Romans 13 talks about our duties toward the state authorities. This passage has been widely used to deceive Christians into obeying unrighteous laws and giving support to immoral, inadequate, and/or tyrannical leaders and governments. **Such interpretations contradict the scriptures. Followers of Jesus should never seek to obey human leaders or their laws in violation of the divine principles found in the scriptures and traditions of the body of Christ.** The scriptures and Christian history record many instances where believers resisted the authorities in the name of righteousness. **In reality, the Church and its people must often act as the public conscience when society or government loses its moral compass.**

Followers of Jesus believe, and scripture teaches, that we are all the “children of God” and stand equal before the throne of grace; differing in gifts, but equal members of the whole body. The only form of government that truly recognizes, elevates, and functions out of that understanding is representative government. The National Geographic (NG), coronavirus edition (3-20-2020), states that the Quakers believed that mutual respect, meaning that everyone should be greeted in the same respectful manner –with a handshake, rather than a bow, curtsy, or hat doffing. According to NG, that is how handshaking became the common form of greeting in America and why it is so difficult to refrain from doing it during this virus crisis. The handshake is a symbol of equality and mutuality.

All believers must be the guardians of representative government and resist, and seek to correct, any flaws that may weaken it, whether by the abuse of “pomp-and-circumstance,” partisan political appointments, gerrymandering, or election by something other than voter majority. Those whom we elect must represent “we the people” and not territories or special interests.

Representative government requires a vigilant and informed citizenry that can discern the difference between evidence and innuendo, journalism and propaganda, fact and fiction. Lack of evidence-based information subdues thoughtful processes and arouses emotional-based decision making.

Political campaigning has become big business, surrounded by a huge for-profit industry whose vested interests promote a long-drawn-out process that requires the sale of their wares; print materials and vast media exposure, etc. It has fed the development of what has become known as **pedia**; the production of fake news and propaganda. Again, a whole industry has grown up around producing false, exaggerated, and misleading information. **The goal of pedia is to deliberately misinform and mislead the public; even to the point of destroying the reputation and personal lives of candidates and public officials!** It is an anti-democratic, “no-holds-barred” system whose mantra is “the end justifies the means.” This is unacceptable to followers of Jesus and we must resist it, expose it, and demand accountability and justice.

How can believers find accurate information about the candidates running for office and those who are considered for appointment? There are a number of ways, but I will only talk about the one that I consider to be of special importance.



VOTE SMART FACTS MATTER

Vote Smart is a non-partisan research group that collects and organizes facts about candidates using the kind of categories any responsible employer would demand before hiring anyone for a job.

BIOGRAPHIES: Education, work experience, etc. – who are these people really?

VOTES: What have they done for you?

POSITIONS: What do they say they’ll do for you – or to you?

RATINGS: What are their references?

SPEECHES: What do they say?

FUNDING: Who’s paying them?

Through **VOTE SMART** thousands of conservatives and liberals stand together as a barrier to those trampling the truth. Vote Smart defends their fellow citizen’s right to the facts. Political office-holders are servants of the public!

There are many easy-to-use tools that allow any voter to easily find what they want to know on the politician they want to know about. They track 40,000 politicians and offer millions of facts about them. Check it out. ☺

INFORMATION FLOW. WHAT EFFECTS DOES IT HAVE ON FORMING VALUES AND OPINIONS?

90% of U.S. media are owned by only 5 corporations!

Remember, they are businesses that must produce profits by attracting and holding large numbers of customers. This reduces things down to what satisfies appetites, pumps-up ratings and makes sales; not necessarily to what is needed for the common good. They have created an obsession with domestic politics that adds to a narrow nationalism which colors world events and warps our understanding of them. ☹

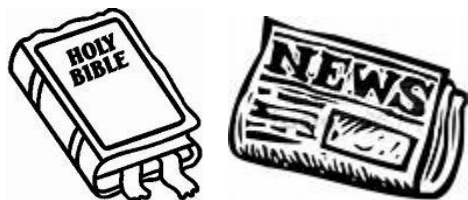


UPS PLANS TO PURCHASE 10,000 ELECTRIC DELIVERY VANS BY 2025 AND SAYS THAT THEY ARE CHEAPER TO OPERATE.

GREAT BRITAIN HAS MOVED UP ITS BAN ON THE SALE OF NEW GASOLINE AND DIESEL CARS THERE FROM 2040 TO 2035.

A SAMPLE RECIPE FOR HAND SANITIZER

Three parts 99% alcohol to two parts aloe vera. you can also add 8 to 10 drops of scented oil if you want to smell nice. An alternative mixture is a 2-to-1 ratio of 91% isopropyl alcohol to aloe vera. ☺



THE BIBLE IN ONE HAND AND THE NEWSPAPER IN THE OTHER

I received an email awhile back in which the writer said that this newsletter and the sister publication, Peace Advocate News, by my daughter, Linda Fry, were “thought-provoking and down-to-earth” because “*you have the Bible in one hand and the daily newspaper (or its equivalent) in the other.*” I had never thought of it in those terms before, but it reminded me that I was raised to believe that the followers of Jesus are meant to apply the scriptures, and the principles found in them, to everything that we confront as we live-out our lives in this world. **Nothing in this life lies outside of the interests, reach, and influence of our “Jesus Faith!”** The One Volume Commentary editor, J.R. Dummelow, wrote: **“FAITH is the means where-by the WORD is vitally appropriated and realized in action!”**

Perhaps the Pietistic influence, on the Anabaptist movement, helped to push some Brethren away from engagement in the secular stream into a “bubble-church” of “other-worldly” spirituality, but in my case, in spite of my tendency for prayerful withdrawal into my contemplation closet, I have always resisted an “other-worldly” church. **The ways and worries of the world are not distractions meant to interfere with our spiritual journeys, but targets for our Christian endeavors; because the people engaged in the**

“worldly wilds” are the harvest fields into which believers go to labor in love and grace in Jesus’ name; so keep your bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. ☺

WE FACE MORE THAN A VIRUS THAT STRIKES AT THE BODY, WE ALSO HAVE A VIRUS THAT STRIKES AT THE MIND.

History shows that the best way to stop the growth of a pandemic is radical social distancing. This means that we must shut-down businesses, social gatherings, and be willing to stay-at-home. At this writing several states have given state-wide shut-down orders, including Ohio, and more are on the way. **Many believe that the proper motivation for social distancing can only come when we picture ourselves as already sick with the virus so that we can see the necessity of the demands to be confined.** I can see their point, but is that all that should be said about mindfulness?

The Apostle, in Philippians 4:8 urges us to seek to control our thinking by filling our “minds with those things that are good and deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable.” Negative thinking eats away at our core, but positive thinking feeds it. If life gives you lemons, make lemonade; but thinking, even positive thinking, is not enough.

I know that it is hard for us to wrap our minds around the enormity of the COVID-19 infection, but **the greatest need in this pandemic is not just sober thinking, but abundant loving.** Remember the two great commandments (Mark 12:28-31) to love God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves? **To have that love reduces our fears (I John 4:18) and fearlessness reduces the siege mentality, hoarding, and self-indulgence that pushes and shoves its’ way toward social disintegration.**

To love God means to trust God; remember: “He’s got the whole world in his hands; He’s got you and me brother, in his hands.” That confidence will take us through anything. **Loving God with are “all” makes us Christocentric, and that gives us the inner balance we need to deal with whatever life throws at us.** When tough events knock us off balance, it may take some time for us to regain our balance, but regain it we will.

To love one’s neighbor as one’s self builds community. We do not thrive in isolation; we only wither there. We are made for community because it takes the blending of our different gifts to meet our needs and develop our potentials. John Donne wrote: “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.” ☺



BE ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR NEIGHBORS WITH HIDDEN NEEDS

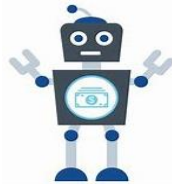
A Pew Charitable Trust survey found that one-third of American families had no savings, including 10% of families making more than \$100,000, and that **70% of families could not cover a \$2,000 expense.**

This means that many families live from hand-to-mouth. With COVID-19 closing down work-places, incomes for many will stop. At this writing federal help may be on its way, but whether it will reach those who really need it is still unclear.

Congregations and their members can rise to the occasion by checking on their neighbors, food pantries, meals, and funds. ⊕

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE THAT CAN THINK FOR ITSELF?

According to *Business Insider*, a significant advance in Artificial Intelligence (AI) was made by Google engineers when they built a four-legged robot that was able to teach itself how to walk. Through trial and error, the robot learned to walk in 1.5 hours, a significantly shorter time than it takes most humans to learn to walk.



We humans have always been at the top of the think, reason, and learn list and, most importantly, to influence our thinking and align our actions with ethical and moral considerations. Just how far can AI go in its thinking/reasoning abilities? In what context will that take place? Can and will the considerations of ethics and morality play a part? It seems to me that these questions should be of special interest to Christians. ⊕



GOOD STEWARDS LIVE WITHIN THEIR MEANS

In the last three years the Federal Deficit has grown by 3 TRILLION dollars. We should note that every President and Congress since 1957 have increased the national debt! When the current president took office, the debt stood at \$19 trillion;

three years later it stands at \$22 trillion. In January Trump signed a deficit budget that would increase the debt by another four trillion through 2029. **And now, we have COVID-19, the cost of which will undoubtedly throw us much deeper into debt with trillions of dollars more!**

Spend more and Tax less, has been the political sales-pitch to our consumer-drunk public for years now. "Eat, Drink, and be Merry;" let the next generation pay! That's a poor legacy for us to leave behind. We should do better. Followers of Jesus can do better, vote smarter, and discipline our wants by matching our spending with our real needs. ⊕



THE TEN-YEAR ALINEMENT

Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution calls for the counting of all INHABITANTS of the country, every ten years. The 14th Amendment uses that count to determine the number of representatives each state can have. Census data provides the basis upon which more than \$675 billion in funding is distributed among the states. It is estimated **that every uncounted person can cost a county about \$25,000** in federal funding over the decade.

By law the Census Bureau is required to protect your privacy and keep your answers confidential. Personal information cannot be used against anyone by any government agency or court, and it can't be accessed by the police department, DHS, ICE, FBI, or CIA. Census information is safer than your credit card or bank account.

The Census Bureau has prepared a **Faith Communities 2020 Census Action Guide** which is available at [2020CENSUS.GOV](https://www.census.gov/2020CENSUS.GOV). District and Congregational leaders should make use of this informative guide and use its ideas.

Participation in the Census is a civic responsibility, a Christian duty, an act of *stewardship, and faith in our nation.*



A WORD TO THE WISE: BE PREPARED!

In spite of all of the nationalistic pipe-dreams, the world is a community whether we like it or not. The spread of COVID-19 proves that. We live in a world-wide community that impacts us in many ways. **In the United States, we import vitally needed natural resources from all over the world, depend on the labor and manufacturing in many nations for certain foods and a vast variety of products, use and benefit from the intellectual property of persons world-wide, and yes, suffer from many of the diseases that break-out around the globe.**

Consider just this small modern list: Mad Cow disease (90's), Anthrax (2001), West Nile Virus (02), SARS Virus (03), Bird Flu (05), EOLI (06), Swine Flu/H1N1 (09), EBOLA (2014), ZIKA Virus (2016). All of these invaded various populations around the globe.

And now COVID-19, a virus that is invading nations around the world in ways that remind us of the so-called "Spanish Flu" of 1918-1920, that killed millions.

The scriptures are full of "watch and live in readiness" advice. But so many don't live that way and are now paying the price as they panic. Living hand-to-mouth, swimming in debt and doubt, without personal salvation; they are consumed by fear and driven by the self-preservation demanded by individualism. **"Lay up for yourselves, treasures in heaven," be prudent, and trust God.** ⊕