

Peaceways

CENTRAL KENTUCKY COUNCIL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE February 2021

The scary is getting closer

by Margaret Gabriel, Peaceways editor

Readers of a certain age might remember a drill when you were in elementary school. I've heard that some kids were directed to get under their desks and cover their heads, but at my school, St. Albert in Louisville, we left the classroom and sat cross-legged on the floor, holding our arms over our heads — probably because all of our classrooms had a full wall of windows. Great for daydreaming, but not so good for protection in the event of a nuclear attack.

While I clearly remember the drill, I have no recollection of ever being told why we were doing it.

Jump ahead to the next generation and my kids remember practicing "lockdown." On cue, students would push all the desks in a classroom against the wall, as the teacher turned off the lights and locked the door. Then they would all huddle together and the most important thing was to make no noise.

My adult son Carl is two years younger than my daughter, and doesn't remember being told the reason for the drill. Ellen, though, recalls discussing the possibility of an active shooter in the building when she was in high school. One question a teacher had no

answer for was "What should we do if the shooting starts in our classroom?" Talk about scary.

St. Albert's students weren't told the details about why we had to assume that uncomfortable position once or twice a year, but we certainly could see headlines and hear news reports about the possibility of nuclear attack. Maybe some of you have different memories — or were more immersed in reality than I was — but the danger

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seemed remote and unlikely to affect me and my friends. Even though the terrorist attack of Sept. 11, 2001, affected us all, for many of us the terror wasn't really close to home and was unimaginable.

As I watched the events of Jan. 6 unfold, it seemed to be another event that I never could have imagined. After all, on Dec. 13, 2000, after weeks of dispute, Al Gore conceded that election to George W. Bush and there was a peaceful transfer of power. Although over 2.8 million more people voted for Hillary Clinton than Donald Trump in 2016, on election night she conceded the election based on the number of electoral votes. The only talk about the election being rigged came from Trump as he argued that he had also won the popular vote. But there was a peaceful transfer of power.

On Jan. 6, I realized I've always taken the peaceful transfer of power

for granted when I saw an American citizen scaling the walls of the U.S. Capitol. Did it remind you of the storming of the Bastille?

The endless video of the insurrection reminded me there was very little diversity among the rioters. They were mostly white, we learned, and many were from the South. Could any of them be my neighbors? Given the percentage of Kentuckians who voted for Donald Trump, they very well could be.

The scary is very close, indeed.

So what's a peace activist to do? The hardest thing to do is listen, really listen. What is it about government that has failed people to the point that they think the only way to make their voices heard is with anger and violence?

Yes, they listened to and believed

Donald Trump's lies about many things, the validity of the election being the latest, but what made them so receptive to those lies?

It's easy to point to President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Congress and assume they are the people who must fix this. But there must be something we can all do to assure that this stain on the peaceful transfer of power never happens again.

During his inaugural address, President Joe Biden brought home the need for unity, saying, "And so today at this time in this place, let's start afresh, all of us. Let's begin to listen to one another again. Hear one another, see one another, show respect to one another."

Time will tell, of course, but I do believe that in electing Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, the American people have taken a step away from the scary, toward the unity we need.

Gun Violence

In America as of 1-29-21 2021 (year to date)

Killed	1,444
Suicide	1,914
Wounded	2,564

2020 (annual)

Killed	19,335
Wounded	39,424

Source: www.gunviolencearchive.org

Welcoming people intentionally

At the opening of PFLAG's January Zoom meeting, participants learned they were in a safe place and asked them not to repeat the information that would be shared in coming hour or so. "What's said here, stays here," they heard. "We are respectful of privacy." Following that disclosure, J.R. Zerkowski was introduced as a great advocate for the community, the founder of the LGBTQ ministry for the Diocese of Lexington and executive director of Fortunate Families, a national Catholic LGBTG+ family, friends and allies ministry.

J.R. asked that members share the information he had to share with anyone and everyone who might benefit from the knowledge that there are resources and love available to people of the LGBTG+ community who might have found



J.R. Zerkowski

those such a welcome difficult to access in the past.

J.R.'s outreach began when his church, where he provides music ministry every Sunday morning, was distressingly silent following the mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando. He asked for

and received permission from the leaders at St. Paul Catholic Church, Lexington, to begin an outreach to the LGBTG+ community.

The first meeting of the group attracted only two people, but in the years since then, "We've outgrown the living room at Brossart House at St. Paul, so now we meet at the Plantory," J.R. said.

As the ministry has grown and progressed, J.R. has learned about the need of the LGBTG+ community, "But the biggest thing we can do is welcome people intentionally and love people on the margins," he said. "We can tell people that they not only have a seat at the table, but they have a voice."

J.R. describes that message as a "tough sell, because many people have to unlearn things that are erroneous." He told the story of a young woman whose aunt and uncle learned she was gay. They believed in the value of conversion therapy and the woman was afraid they would tell her parents. She was looking for someone with a "compassionate heart," J.R. said, and he introduced her to Sister Clara Fehringer, St. Paul's pastoral associate.

Father Richard Watson, pastor at St. Paul, said that many churches are "leaps and bounds" ahead of the Catholic Church, but "St. Paul is trying to be an example for other Catholic parishes around us. We want to be known as a safe place for everyone."

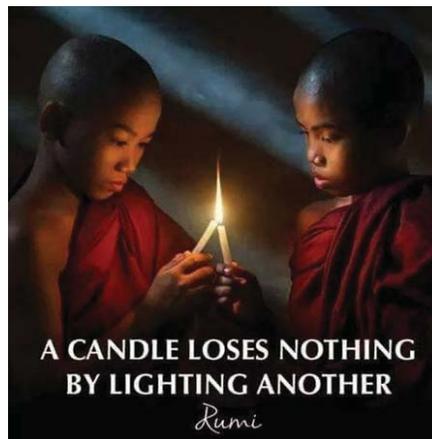
PFLAG holds support meetings on the second Tuesday every month. The next meeting is Feb. 9, *via Zoom*. The speaker will be Kadee Whaley, the co-founder of Read With Pride, a non-profit that supports inclusivity by promoting books for children and adults that reflect experiences of the LGBTQIA+ community.

CKCPJ on Facebook

If you have "Liked" the CKCPJ Facebook page, thank you. You've seen posts that are both informational and inspirational from a variety of people focused on local, national and international issues. If you haven't check it out!

Items from local and national publications and websites routinely appear on the CKCPJ Facebook page, so you can expect varied and enlightening posts. Check them out and be sure to share.

Recent posts include an opinion piece from the *New York Times* about white supremacy; a story from the Jim Crow era from the Zin Education Project; and an NPR story about the call for the release of Alexi Navalny.



The Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice

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Peaceways is published 10 times a year by the Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice, 1588 Leestown Rd., Ste. 130-138, Lexington KY 40511. The next issue of *Peaceways* will appear in March, 2021. Deadline for calendar items is Feb. 10. Contact (859) 488-1448 or email peacewayseditor@gmail.com.

Calendar for Peace & Justice

The council seeks to promote dialogue as a path to peace and justice. Consequently, we announce events that we do not necessarily endorse.

Tues., Feb. 2

CKCPJ peace action committee, 4:30 - 6 p.m. The committee will meet online *via* Zoom. To receive the needed link to attend the meeting, email Richard Mitchell at rjmq47@twc.com.

Tues., Feb. 9

PFLAG Central Kentucky, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. The speaker will be Kadee Whaley, co-founder of Read with Pride, a non-profit that supports inclusivity by promoting books for children and adults that reflect the experiences of the LGBTQUIA+ community. Please go to the PFLAG Central Kentucky Facebook page before the meeting and register to join and receive the Zoom link.

Tues., Feb. 9

CKCPJ health care action team, 4:30-6 p.m. The committee will meet online *via* Zoom. To receive the needed link to attend the meeting, email Richard Mitchell at rjmq47@twc.com.

Mon., Feb. 15

CKCPJ steering committee meeting, 5 - 6:30 p.m. The committee will meet online *via* Zoom. To receive the needed link to participate in the meeting, email Richard Mitchell at rjmq47@twc.com

Tues., Mar. 2

CKCPJ peace action committee, 4:30 - 6 p.m. The committee will meet online *via* Zoom. To receive the needed link to attend the meeting, email Richard Mitchell at rjmq47@twc.com.

Thurs., Mar. 4

Rank the Vote meeting to discuss organizing a grassroots campaign for ranked choice voting in Kentucky. For more information, see page 4.

Tues., Mar. 9

CKCPJ health care action team, 4:30-6 p.m. The committee will meet online *via* Zoom. To receive the needed link to attend the meeting, email Richard Mitchell at rjmq47@twc.com.

Mon., Mar. 15

CKCPJ steering committee meeting, 5 - 6:30 p.m. The committee will meet online *via* Zoom. To receive the needed link to participate in the meeting, email Richard Mitchell at rjmq47@twc.com

*Afflict the comfortable;
give comfort to the afflicted.*

Lexington agencies ask Mayor Gorton for eviction moratorium

In the late Fall 2020, CKCPJ was among nearly 40 organizations in Lexington and Central Kentucky that delivered a letter to Mayor Linda Gorton asking her to order an eviction moratorium for renters in Lexington. They asked that the initial order be in effect until May 2021 and extended every six months until the public health and economic crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic is resolved. "Keeping people healthy at home is smart, science-driven public health policy and compassionate economic policy," the letter said.

In September, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention promoted an eviction moratorium as good public health policy.

The letter continued, "In addition to being good public health policy, stopping evictions is fair economically. Since March, thousands of people in Lexington have lost income through no fault of their own ... The economic crunch has made

it hard for people to pay rent. According to an analyst at the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, over 1 in 10 Kentucky renters are behind on rent. A global pandemic wrecked the economy; that should not mean every day Lexingtonians lose their homes."

The LFUCG website (Dec. 17, 2020) states: "The Mayor does not have legal authority to issue a moratorium on evictions, but has directed city staff to take all other steps necessary to keep citizens in their homes, including providing additional funding, if needed. City leaders are in contact with Fayette County judges, and are closely coordinating with social service providers to ensure citizens are helped quickly."

The letter to Mayor Gorton goes on to say: "There is not enough rental assistance. While we commend the city and state for offering rental assistance, there is not enough to meet the need.

On October 21, the statewide Healthy at

Home Eviction Relief Fund closed after receiving too many applications. As of Nov. 4, covid19renterhelp.org, which coordinates the city's funds, had received 3,400 intakes. Available rental assistance in Lexington totals just over \$1.9 million, and the average household receives over \$1,700 from city funds. So, available city funds are likely to serve under 1,200 people, significantly fewer than the 3,400 intakes already received nearly a month ago. Some tenants who applied for rental assistance months ago have not heard back, and more have not even heard about rental assistance."

Although LFUCG has established a housing stabilization partnership program, limited resources leave Lexington renters anxious about losing their homes.

"We encourage Urban County Council to greatly expand rental assistance — both to help tenants behind on rent get out of debt, and to provide relief for landlords who have lost income during the pandemic. In the meantime, Mayor Gorton, tenants need you to order an eviction moratorium to protect them from losing their homes."

Racial disparities in Kentucky: Solutions

The Kentucky Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers hosted a webinar entitled “Racial Disparities in the Kentucky Criminal Justice System and the Pursuit of Solutions” via Zoom on Jan. 21. Two bipartisan panels discussed issues important to resolving the inequities that stand in the way of racial justice in Kentucky.

Discussion of no-knock warrants was opened by Rep. Ed Massey (R-Northern Kentucky) who said that all such warrants should be carefully reviewed and that served improperly, they “infringe on rights.”

Sen. Gerald Neal (D-Louisville) said no-knock warrants grew out of the “war on drugs” and believes no-knock warrants lead to over-policing and have proliferated into a major tool that has become too prevalent. “There’s a lot more to this than no-knock warrants,” Sen. Neal said. “That’s low-hanging fruit.”

Rep. Nima Kulkarni (D-Louisville) mentioned the way that police are trained to look at communities of color and the importance of establishing the proper relationship between the police and the community. “Both need each other,” she said. “Just dealing with no-knock warrants won’t fix the problem. They address a symptom, but that is a significant step.”

Addressing the vast contrasts between the law enforcement differences in rural, urban and suburban areas of Kentucky, Rep. Massey said that execution of warrants can be different in every

community, “but freedom and the right to be secure is not different.”

A second panel discussed body cameras and mandatory transfer in the juvenile justice system, which currently requires that if a juvenile is involved in a crime that involves a weapon, even if the involvement is peripheral, the case must be

“We have to have a culture of accountability.”

transferred from district court to circuit court, when the juvenile will be tried as an adult. The mandate takes away the discretion of judges and affects black and brown kids more frequently.

“We’re transferring kids because of property, not people, when it involves

gun,” said Pastor Ed Palmer, the chair of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

The panel discussed the advance of science in the area of brain development, pointing out that there is agreement that the human brain is not fully developed until the age of 25. Rep Whitney Westerfield (R-Hopkinsville) asked, “If we end mandatory transfer will it make communities more or less safe?”

The panel addressed the expense of body cameras and the difficulty of making such equipment mandatory in small communities that have fewer resources than Lexington and Louisville.

Responding to Sen. Neal’s insistence that the use of body cameras must be a priority, and that it is possible to create a path for making them that priority, Pastor Neal said the presence of cameras made no difference in the death of George Floyd.

“Cameras haven’t served us,” Pastor Palmer said. “We have to address the confrontational culture. We have to have a culture of accountability.”

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Kentucky launches movement for ranked choice voting

Celia Nolan, a Rank The Vote national organizer, described Kentucky’s Jan. 21 organizing meeting as “fantastic” in an email distributed to participants the next day. In one night, she said, Kentuckians for RCV gathered 50 in a Zoom meeting, raised \$2,376, selected leaders for eight action teams, and set up a base camp group in order to stay connected.

“You should be very proud of being a part of this early stage movement,” she said.

In ranked choice voting, voters use a preferential ballot to select more than one candidate and rank their choices, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. The candidate with the majority (more than 50 percent) of first-choice votes wins outright. If no candidate

gets a majority, it triggers a new counting process. The candidate who did the worst is eliminated and that candidate’s voters’ ballots are redistributed to their second pick. If you ranked a losing candidate as your first choice, and your candidate is eliminated, your vote moves to your second choice candidate. The process continues until there is a candidate with a majority of the votes.

To become involved in the movement, join Basecamp, using this link: <https://3.basecamp.com/4965569/join/9T8xR8wF8nTk> and review the RCV Movement Playbook, <https://www.rankthevote.us>

If you have questions, or to make a donation, contact Celia at celia.nolan@rankthevote.us. or call (781) 248-4566 any time.

White supremacy won’t die until white people see it as a white issue they need to solve rather than a black issue they need to empathize with.

Submissions to *Peaceways*

Articles submitted to *Peaceways* should show an awareness of and sensitivity to the CKCPJ's mission and concerns.

Feature articles should be no longer than 500 words, unless you are willing to have the piece cut to fit one page of *Peaceways* text. Pieces will be edited for clarity.

Please include references in the text for all quotations, statistics, and unusual facts. End-notes or footnotes are not used.

Please query submissions to peacewayseditor@gmail.com before writing a feature article intended solely for *Peaceways*.

For all submissions, the author's name, address, and phone number should appear on the body of the submitted text.

If you submit material that has been published or that you are also submitting to other publishers, be sure to indicate this.

Also include information about your relationship to any organization or issue mentioned in the article, for inclusion in a biographical reference at the end of the story.

Submissions should be made in Word format *via* email. Book reviews are usually solicited by the editor, but we welcome inquiries from potential reviewers.

Submission deadline is the 10th of each month. *Peaceways* is published monthly except January.

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your Kroger Plus card
to #16439 at
krogercommunityrewards.com.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Check with website for times when meetings are resumed

CKCPJ Steering Committee Meetings, third Monday, 5 p.m., Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave. More info: (859) 488-1448 or peaceandjusticeky@gmail.com. All are welcome.

Interfaith Prayer Vigil for Peace, every Thursday, 5:30 - 6 p.m. at Triangle Park (corner of Broadway and Main Street) in downtown Lexington. Contact Richard Mitchell, (859) 327-6277.

Migrant Network Coalition, first Monday, noon - 1:15 p.m., GLOBAL LEX, 1306 Versailles Road, Lexington. Contact Lindsay Mattingly, lmatingly@lexpublib.org, (859) 231-5514.

PFLAG Central Kentucky, second Tuesday, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. LGBTQ individuals of all ages, family members, friends and allies are welcome. St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 2025 Bellefonte Dr., Lexington. Visit info@pflagcentralky.org or (859) 338-4393. Speakers followed by confidential support group meeting.

Bluegrass Fairness of Central Kentucky, second Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Lexington Public Central Library, 140 E. Main St., Lexington. Contact Craig Cammack, chair, (859) 951-8565 or info@lexfair.org.

Wednesday Night GLSO "Heart to Heart" discussion group, 7 p.m., Pride Center, 389 Waller Ave., Lexington. GLSO operates Kentucky's only Pride Center, where they have quietly provided services to the GLBTQQA community for decades. More info, Pride Center hours, and other links at www.glsso.org.

Humanist Forum of Central Kentucky, first Thursday, 7 p.m., Great Hall of the Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Clays Mill Rd., Lexington. The Forum is a Chapter of the American Humanist Association. Meetings are open to people of all beliefs willing to express their opinions in a civil manner. Child care is provided. Contact President Staci Maney, staci@olliegee.com or (859) 797-2662.

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, third Thursday, 7 p.m., Episcopal Diocese Mission House at Fourth St. and MLK Blvd, Lexington. Contact Beth Howard, (859) 276-0563.

NAMI Lexington Support Groups, every Sunday, 2:30 - 4 p.m. Participation Station, 869 Sparta Ct., Lexington. Call (859) 272-7891 or visit www.namilex.org.

Christian-Muslim Dialogue Program, fourth Saturday, 10 a.m. - noon. All are welcome. Locations vary, call (859) 277-5126. The Christian-Muslim dialogue promotes understanding and mutual respect between Christians and Muslims. By exploring moral, cultural and political factors shaping the current context, the program promotes personal and collective responsibility to build a more just and peaceful world.

Dance Jam, every Tuesday, 5:30 - 7 p.m., Quaker Meeting House, 649 Price Ave. Move to the extent you are able. Sponsored by Motion Matters, \$7 per session to cover space rental. Contact Pamela, info@motionmatters.org, (859) 351-3142.

Movies with Spirit, second Friday of every month. Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Clays Mill Road, Lexington. Potluck at 6 p.m., film at 7.

National Action Network, third Thursday each month, 7 - 8:30 p.m. at the Central Library, Lexington.

Showing Up for Racial Justice, second Tuesday of the month, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Wild Fig Coffee and Books, 726 N. Limestone, Lexington.

To include a regular meeting of your organization in this space, contact Margaret Gabriel, peacewayseditor@gmail.com.

Me? Self-Deluded? A superficial look at self

Trick Mirror: Reflections on Self-Delusion. By Jia Tolentino. Published Aug. 16, 2019. Random House, 2019. 320 pages.

Reviewed by Jim Trammel

We watched the unthinkable Capitol Jan. 6 insurrection in national horror. In the middle of everything, though, one of the rioters trying in his brute way to justify himself, screamed into the recording camera: “You did this to us! We were good people!”

And I thought: “I bet you were. I probably bent an elbow next to you at the karaoke bar last year sometime. We probably talked about the Steelers or the Packers. We’re very much the same. And yet there you are, raging and trying to overturn the democratic process. What happened?”

New Yorker essayist Jia Tolentino has some key insights, and is the right person to deliver them, in her essay collection **Trick Mirror**. She spans the gaps between the print and electronic media, and attitudinally at age 32 she is neither a mouthpiece for satisfied Boomers nor disaffected Millennials.

Her essays in this collection are in the classic style approved by 16th century definer of the essay, the author Montaigne: It seems that she often starts writing before she knows where her thoughts will lead her.

Tolentino has had a fruitful young life for generating interesting information. Her bio spans birth to Phillipine parents, appearance on a sexy reality TV show, education at the University of Virginia and Peace Corps service in Kyrgyzstan – a much more varied palette than most of her fans.

The Internet affects us all with its toxic chemistry. It

encourages us to keep checking on ourselves, thus separating our personal development from our identity by putting a persona out there which may not be our essence at all. Look at your own example: In several locations at once, you could be a

respected authority in your field, a slavering fan of some celebrity, an aggressive political debater, and an expert gamer, all at the same time. And are any of them the real you?

The Internet compounds this tendency because to survive, the Internet has to continually top itself becoming more and more outrageous each passing day. Now we see how our Venn circles overlap, right? Rabid right-wing conservatism, no longer enough for the web, spawned the Q-Anon nonsense to feed the need for right-wing outrage.

From Q-Anon came the idea of a government secret society, which led to the election fraud nonsense, and my thrill-seeking beer buddy went down the rabbit hole and became a slobbering insurrectionist.

The only pill I can offer to cure this malady is an old baseball maxim I live by: “You pay for believing anything that isn’t so.” My bar buddy Cletus believed this voter fraud stuff, and now he’s facing charges. I hope he gets his head on straight before he gets in more trouble.

The other deep essay among the nine in this collection makes the point that the beauty-ideal



subscribed to by womanhood is being replaced by the ideal of being someone who is working on her beauty. You have to wear expensive Lululemon exercise wear to your barre workout sessions – your sloppy sweats won’t do. Why? To demonstrate your sincerity, your commitment to the cause of fitness.

Because I am a male not swimming in that societal stream and unable to detect its subtle currents, she had to explain the sinister aspect of this shift. Oversimplified: It brings the blessings of feminism to the exploitative need to always be working to improve oneself.

The other essays are fluffy *New Yorker*-style pieces on recent scams in the news, her reality-TV stint on “Boys V. Girls” and how it changed her, literary heroines, drug experimentation, and her ambivalence toward marriage with her long-term partner (with whom, however, she had a baby last August). You have my permission to race through these.

Reviewer Jim Trammel is still shopping around for a publisher of his essays on his unremarkable life.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Take an inventory of the disposable plastic products in your kitchen and bathroom.	Reflect on how your habits contribute to a "throwaway culture."	Get in the habit of carrying around a filled, reusable water bottle.	Refuse plastic bags at the store today.	Research where your disposable plastic products are manufactured.	Practice saying "No straw, please."
7	Buy washable, reusable face masks instead of disposable masks.	Use bars of soap instead of plastic dispensers.	Learn where you can buy food in bulk using your own containers.	11 "We cannot allow ourselves to be littered by endless fields of floating plastic" <i>Pope Francis</i>	12 92% of the United State's plastic ends up in landfills or gets burned in trash incinerators.	13 Pay attention to plastic trash you come across this week.
14	Use glass instead of plastic to store food.	15 Consider how your church, school or workplace can re-use single use plastic	16 The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimates that one plastic bottle takes at least 450 years to break down.	17 Reuse plastic for kids' art projects.	18 Save discarded plastic containers for growing food and flowers.	19 Purchase mesh reusable produce bags.
21	Carry reusable utensils with you.	22 Research plastic-free dental care products.	23 Boycott all bottle waters.	24 Bring a refillable mug to your favorite coffee shop this week.	25 Use laundry detergent in a box or try new laundry detergent sheets instead of bottles.	26 Did you know that the Vatican has banned the sale of single use plastic?
28	Have one meatless meal every week.	29 Talk with people you live with about a practice you can adopt together for the rest of the year.	30 Pick two or three new practices you personally will commit to for the rest of the year.	31 Email your plastics commitment to peacewayseditor@gmail.com		27 Find out about efforts to reduce plastic in your community.



The Central Kentucky Council
for Peace and Justice
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*The will of the people has been heard,
and the will of the people has been heeded.*

— 46th U.S. President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

How can you reduce single-use plastics?

by Margaret Gabriel

I hate to reference age again, but some of us remember an opening scene in the classic movie “The Graduate.” Mingling at a graduation party, recent college graduate Benjamin Bradford (played by a very young Dustin Hoffman) is taken aside by a friend of his parents, Mr. McGuire. The two go out to the patio.

“I just want to say one word to you. One word,” Mr. McGuire says. “Are you listening?”

“Yes, sir, I am,” Benjamin says.

“Plastics,” Mr. McGuire says with a conspiratorial air. “There’s a great future in plastics.”

I’m not sure that Mr. McGuire knew, in 1967, how prophetic that statement was. There was, indeed, a future in plastics and he was clearly encouraging Benjamin to get in on the ground floor.

Mr. McGuire may have vastly understated the future in plastics. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration estimates that one plastic bottle takes 450 years to break down. Did he know in 1967 that the future of plastics would be measured not in years, but in centuries?

Stay in the place where you’re sitting right now and count the number of plastic items in sight. From the chair in front of my keyboard, I can see the frame around my computer monitor, the cases of the hard drive and the router, a couple of picture frames on my filing cabinet, some pens in a pencil cup (although the cup is made of wood and metal — good for me!), the case on my cell phone. And I haven’t even turned my head to look around the rest of my office.

It looks like plastics are here to stay, all right, Mr. McGuire.

The Mercy Earth Challenge, a mission of the Sisters of Mercy, is committed to reducing plastic in 2021. While the use of plastics may not be reduced by focusing on such things

as computers and home appliances, the challenge is to reduce single-use plastics: water bottles, grocery bags, food packaging and disposable cutlery, among other things.

What can I do to eliminate those plastics, many of which

fall to hand many times each day? There are several suggestions on the Mercy Earth Challenge calendar which is included on the previous page in this newsletter. The original calendar was created for January, but I’ve changed it to March, also a month with 31 days. There’s no reason that you can’t start in February, though! On the 4th day of the month, there is a suggestion to “Refuse plastic bags at the store today.” In order to do that, it’s very important to throw a few cloth or mesh bags in the trunk of your car. (Buying mesh bags is suggested the 19th). In an effort to increase my own participation, I handed my husband Jim a cloth bag when he was on his way to Kroger last week. “Guys don’t use those things,” he said. *<insert eye roll emoji>* I do the best I can.

On the 21st, the suggestion is to carry re-usable cutlery with you. I’ve also learned that if you ask for “no cutlery” when you order take-out it helps the restaurant contain costs, so omitting plastic cutlery is good for the earth and for the restaurant’s bottom line.

On the 24th, we are asked to bring a refillable mug when purchasing coffee by the cup. In our COVID era, several of the stores I frequent are not allowing refillable mugs (how does that contain the virus?), so I plan to ask when that policy will be changed. That may require a call to the health department.

Review the calendar and see where you can plug yourself in. Nobody has to do everything, but imagine the reduction in single-use plastic if every *Peaceways* reader does something.

Take that, Mr. McGuire!

