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# COMMON SENSE II

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*Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today's series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.*

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November 2019

Thanksgiving Issue

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## Being Kind and Thankful

By Barb Anderson

I have said before that Grand Rapids people are very kind and helpful. This continues to be true throughout our state. Some try to belittle this trait by calling it Minnesota Nice. We shouldn't be ashamed but rather be proud and, as Thanksgiving approaches, thankful for our outlook on life.

With what is going on in the federal government and politics today, the nation as a whole could us a lesson or two in how to be Minnesota Nice. To begin

*Minnesota Nice*

with, every one of us has the opportunity to set the tone. Language that uses putdowns and name calling is not Minnesota Nice and only serves to put discourse on an angry footing. Secondly, we should listen carefully instead of just waiting to jump in with our opinions. For example, a friend told me she was not going to vote as it was too difficult to decide whom to vote for. Those who know me can only imagine what my initial thoughts were, but I realized that listening and hearing her out was the only way to move forward and maintain our relationship.

How we frame our responses can determine how we are received. It's the job of each of us to work to get us out of the mess our public discourse is in. So let's think about something nice to say to others



during this time of cultural divide. How about saying, "Isn't the snow beautiful!" even if you wish it weren't there or saying, "Planning for holiday parties will be fun," even if you are not a

good planner but may love attending the parties?

After setting a positive tone, we each need to do our part to help our world. That's hard to do alone. Try joining a group whose ideas you agree with; there are lots to choose from. Some care for those who need help, such as the homeless or hun-

gry; many others work on the challenge of climate change; others accept clothes and household goods you may no longer have a use.

An efficient way of effecting change is to be politically active. Educate yourself about the candidates and their issues, and work for those you want to be elected next year. All campaigns need help with a wide variety of tasks, and it's a good way to meet dedicated people. A word of caution: when you begin to work with these groups, don't be rude (think Minnesota Nice) so others don't think you're crazy.

Minnesota Nice is about more than setting a positive tone and exhibiting a generosity of spirit and working with others. It's also about giving. My own history of giving started when I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and living in Wisconsin. A friend was very ill; the doctors said she had cancer. St. Jude's Hospital was not yet open, but someone who was working on it was able to bring the family to a facility free of charge for her healthcare. I



I asked my dad now anyone could do that. He explained how people gave money to help others. I had a dollar and gave it to my dad to give to the group. I've been giving to St. Jude's ever since. My one dollar wasn't much, but together with other donations it meant a lot.

So what I believe is important to move beyond our current culture of divisiveness is the language we use, the time we give to what we believe in, and the understanding, love, and respect we give others. There is also the place we give money to help support others in trouble and too far away for us to aid physically. To help our country, our community, and our families, we need to expand on Minnesota Nice to make it American Nice.

*America Nice*

## Our Younger Son and Islam

By Nancy Rudd

She came to the United States in 2008. She has dual citizenship in the United States and Pakistan. You wouldn't know that English is not her native language. When she uses endearments with her daughter, she slips into her native tongue of Urdu.

I remember when I first met her. She came to our house on our younger son's birthday weekend. He didn't tell us of her dietary restriction, which would pose a problem with the meals I had planned. She had a sense of humor that was subtle. From that very first weekend, I said that she was beautiful inside and out. We bonded before this, but her finding out that I had phone banked for Obama in 2008 cemented the relationship. I can't even remember how the subject of politics came up.

Our son always said that he would never get married and never have children. That changed this past year on January 20<sup>th</sup>. The woman he married brought into our family a six year old girl. I've never seen three people happier, and their marriage has made our family complete.

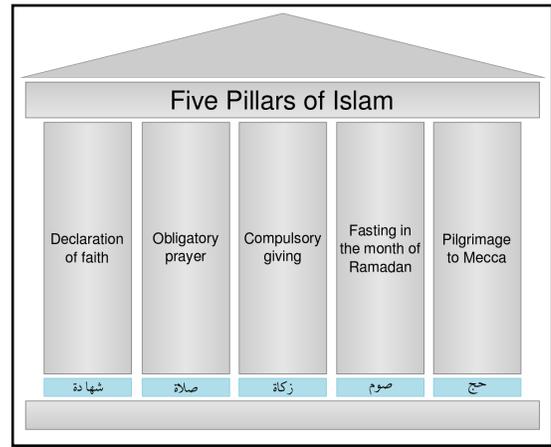
I raised our sons Catholic, but I told them that there are things that the church teaches that I didn't believe. Our younger son was an agnostic, and he



called one evening and said that he would be converting to Islam. I told him that we are all God's children. Their wedding took place in the house of friends. An aunt and uncle from Calgary

were the closest relatives of hers that would attend. Maybe it was because we were the groom's parents or just because it happened to be how the Muslims greeted everyone, but in a sea of many colored hijabs and light brown faces, we didn't feel the least bit out of place. I would find out later that part of the Islam religion teaches that you must be at peace with God, yourself, and people around you.

A Muslim is a person who practices the religion of Islam. I believe that the Islam religion is the most misunderstood of the world's main religions. Just like Judaism, Islam teaches that Abraham, Moses, and Jesus—among others—are prophets. So many people mistake radicalized "Muslims" with the religion itself. There are radicalized "Christians" who believe in white supremacy or "Christians" who blow up abortion clinics. They obviously haven't read the words of Jesus.



There are five pillars of Islam:

- The Muslim profession of faith is there is no other god than God (Allah), and his messenger is Muhammed.
- Muslims are to perform prayers five times a day facing Mecca.
- They are to give money to benefit the needy.
- They are to fast from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadan. This month reminds Muslims that they are all in need of assistance from Allah and that some are unlucky and need assistance from them.
- If they are financially able, once in their life they are to make a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Just as there are Reformed and Orthodox Jews and too many denominations and sects of Christianity to count, there are Muslims who consider themselves modernists of Islam. They follow most of their religion but are working for equality, civil rights, democracy, and progress. Although my daughter-in-law is a Muslim, she doesn't cover her hair in a hijab. She is not subservient to men. In fact, she is a good match for our strong-willed son. She does practice other parts of Islam. She doesn't eat pork or drink alcohol, and she follows the five pillars of Islam.

She and her daughter celebrated a version of Christmas with us last year, and we have plans to do the same this year. Our older son's wife put up her Christmas tree and her crèche as usual, and we exchanged gifts after a delicious meal that didn't include pork or alcohol. Muslims believe in the Gospel of the New Testament but not that Jesus is the Son of God. I always text them a happy Eid-al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan, the three days of celebrating after a month of fasting.

As my husband said at the wedding, "If we get to know each other, we find out that we have more in common than we have in differences." For that we are grateful.

# I'm Thankful to Live in Interesting Times

By Vicki Andrews

May you live in interesting times. Is this a blessing or a curse? The idiom dates back to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. While many claim it is of Chinese origin and that it is an ancient curse, there is no known equivalent expression Chinese, ([www.writingexplained.org](http://www.writingexplained.org).)

Perhaps the expression became best known when Robert Kennedy used it in a speech in 1966. He said, "There is a Chinese curse that says, 'May he live in interesting times.' Like it or not, we do live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty, but they are also the most creative of any time in the history of mankind." I don't disagree with his thought, but if RFK were alive today, I think he would agree that times today are even more full of danger and uncertainty.

We are facing possible extinction of not just the human race but perhaps all life on Earth. This could happen in the foreseeable future; some say within 20-30 years if we don't take the threat to our Earth seriously and work together to save it.

This means all Americans, Canadians, Latinos, and all European, Asian, African, and Australian people!

The Climate Armageddon endangers all countries, and if we don't cease our contention and dissention, we simply won't survive. Unfortunately, that includes our children, grandchildren, all the children of the world, as well as all creatures living on the Earth.

Wait a minute. The topic this month is Thankfulness. How does that fit into this talk of doom and disaster? Well, I am very thankful that we are beginning to wake up and understand the threat—not all of us are there, but more and more are every day. The evidence is becoming indisputable, and I believe there is a possibility we can overcome the odds and make the changes that can keep our planet livable. Today we live

in a time when we can see what's happening around the world as it happens. Although often tragic and frightening, it can also wake us up and raise our awareness quickly. As we see fires raging in California and Australia, droughts in many parts of the world, massive flooding in others, bone chilling temperatures in some and unbearable heat waves in others, we know that something is very wrong. If we will only listen to the climate scientists and other experts, we will know what is wrong, and we can learn how to make it right. I'm thankful that we do have the ability and the knowledge to fix it and that our planet can continue to support life, but only if we work harder than we've ever worked before and cooperate as we have never done before. I'm thankful that more and more people are realizing this and are joining together to raise the alarm. I'm grateful for Greta Thunberg and her efforts to awaken the young people of the world; now more and more of our elders are speaking out; more and more of our mothers and fathers, more and more teachers, doctors, people from all walks of life are encouraging us to face the future with renewed vigor and determination to save this wonderful Planet Earth. Climate rallies and climate strikes are bringing us together with one voice. We need to keep this going and growing. If we listen, if we pay attention, we can do it. This may be the most critical period in the history of the Earth, in the history of humanity. What a time to be alive and aware! What an opportunity we face! We can save the Earth for our children and all future generations, and we're beginning to realize it and commit to it. And for that, I am thankful.



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www.wrongkindofgreen.org



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Environmental Activist

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## Thanksgiving

By Bob Passi

As I get older and the end gets a few steps closer, I become a bit more nostalgic and philosophical. I look back at the good things that life has provided for me, and I am thankful. Of course, life has also contained things that were not so good including some tragedy and trauma, but the good things renew my spirit and remind me of the supporting environment I have been supplied with; that keeps me going with a sense of hope.

Well, here we are as a human race, and an existential threat is staring us all in the face with much



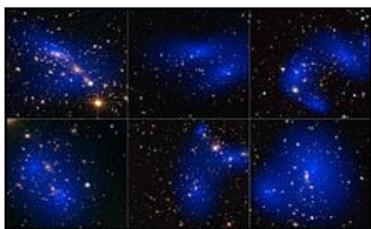
ACT RIGHT by kyoshiroelric

which is available within each of us? Will we form communities to work together to reconnect our tattered ties to nature, the planet, and the great web of life?

It is indeed time to be thankful for a planet that has been sustaining us for the entire length of our human existence, despite all of our trials and errors, our wars, and our destructiveness. Sometimes this destructiveness was a result of our naiveté, but lately it is out of our sheer wantonness and destructiveness.

We have begun to think of ourselves as superior to the great natural plan that existed long before our species appeared. That original plan will continue to sustain the planet long after us if we continue on our present arrogant and destructive path.

Our current leaders and their paradigms and visions become expressions of a strange kind of hubris. They urge us to think that we, with our finite human intelligence, can understand the infinities of that great web of life about the universal energy hidden in the unknown dark matter and dark energy, can ignore nature, the planet, and even universal energy and make better choices without any guidance from outside. We are



living with the results of such “leadership.”

In the face of all that, it is still a time for me to express my thanks for the natural world that has been the source of my existence, my food, shelter, and clothing, my survival on so many levels, albeit with the help of some human inventiveness.

It is time to express my thanks for the human relationships that have sustained me: my friends and family, a supportive community, and sometimes even strangers.

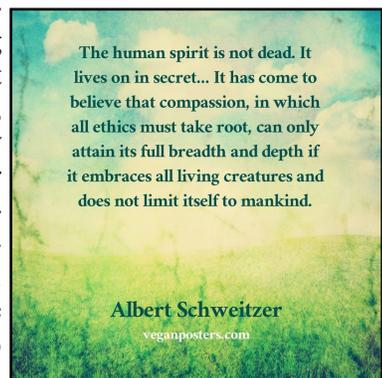
All of this is within a universe that, in spite of the predominance of its unknown dark matter and dark energy, somehow provided the basic human spark of life and welcomed and supported me into the human family as a part of this matrix—so complex and unknowable that we are only granted glimpses of how it works.

Somehow, we have created a human world at war with itself. Every day we can choose the light with relationships, openness, life-supporting options, community, and a sustainable future, or we can experience the dark, seeing threats in all the shadows, distrusting what we do not understand and “the different,” lashing out defensively with rejection, walls, violence, war, and death. Dark or light—whichever one we choose to invest our energy in—will bring forth a world in which we will have to live. We must choose which is most likely to sustain the human race on this planet.

We know that the human spirit is about: the spark of life that connects us to each other, to humankind, to nature, to the entire matrix of life, the supportive energy of the universe.

I am thankful to have been chosen to exist as part of this universal energy, manifesting itself in this great human experiment, knowing that I rely on that energy for my continued existence as does the entire human race. What better choice can I make than to invest in this remarkable experiment of humanity? Every day I will pay homage to that great honor, serving as I can with my limited abilities, the continuation of those supportive connections to all the rest of life. All I need to have is the humility to remember the source of my existence, my connections to the planet, and my dependence on that great web of life that sustains me.

The human spirit is not dead. It lives on in secret... It has come to believe that compassion, in which all ethics must take root, can only attain its full breadth and depth if it embraces all living creatures and does not limit itself to mankind.



Albert Schweitzer  
veganposters.com

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## Hot Enough for You?

By Valerie Conner

An almost capacity crowd showed up at St. Andrew's Lutheran Saturday, November 16<sup>th</sup> to hear meteorologist Paul Douglas talk about climate change, Caring for Creation: A Christian's Perspective on Climate Change. Rather than harp on the gloom and doom aspect of the issue, he took a more upbeat approach. He neutered the deniers by saying that as a by-nature skeptical scientist, until the late 80s, early 90s he was not on board with the idea of climate change. The data, however, continued to show trends that convinced him climate change is real.



He assumed we knew the difference between weather and climate. For those deniers who recognize blips in weather such as three "500-year floods" in the past three years, he likened those events to an epileptic whose seizures are more frequent and violent. The trend is the key. For example, in Minnesota since statehood in 1858, there have been 16 extreme weather events; eight of them have occurred since 1990.

The question remains, what are we going to do about it and when. Will the when be in time?

He noted that the Earth will continue; our existence is less assured and will certainly change. During the Q & A session, the audience noted the visible changes in the local flora and fauna. He mentioned a friend told him he was thinking of buying beachfront property in the Naples, Florida area; Paul suggested the friend save some money and buy five blocks inland because it won't be long before that will be beachfront. He then talked about what we can do to mitigate the inevitable.

He believes the political tide is turning and that big business is adjusting. Discussions need to revolve around practical solutions and the fact that nothing is personal. We're not talking about who has done what but about leaving a sustainable life to future generations.

The event was recorded and will play on ICTV.

## Thanksgiving: It's about Time

By Valerie Conner

As the political climate intensifies even more, we political junkies need a break. For that reason we've tried to focus on the positive this issue. You'll note that there are fewer articles this month. Apparently not everyone is ready to go there. They'll be back next issue.

In any event, it's important from time to time to assess where we are in the greater scheme of things. Just as the Earth will continue despite climate change, we will survive this political upheaval. We can be thankful for:

- Having had wise founding fathers who provided for unscrupulous politicians.
- That Trump hasn't yet destroyed all of our norms and institutions.
- That good people are coming forward despite the threats to their careers to do the right thing and testify to Congress and the American people.
- That the 2019 elections indicate people are becoming "woke" to the situation and are willing to start taking back our country.

We can look forward to an enlightened electorate in 2020 and wake to better times ahead. Our next issue of *Common Sense II* will come out in January. May you all have a great holiday season and face the New Year with renewed energy and hope. We'll need it.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date /Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Tues & Thurs 2-5 pm	DFL Headquarters
Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)	3rd Tuesday 6:30 pm	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday 6:30 pm	DFL Headquarters
DFL Social Club & Lunch	1st Wednesday Noon	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	3rd Wednesday 5:30 pm	DFL Headquarters
Working Families Alliance	1st Monday 6:30 pm	Dutchroom
Earth Circle	3rd Saturday 2:00 pm	GR Public Library
Circles of Support	Thursdays 6:00 pm	811 NE 4th St. GR
Haven: A Place for All	Mondays 5:30	Kiesler Center
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	January 10, 2020	conray@arvig.net