



2021, At Last!

December 30, 2020

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With gladness that 2020 is coming to an end, we can, at last, look ahead to the new year, a new beginning, a fresh start. The coming year promises to be better than this year. Considering we've dealt with a pandemic, crazy elections, and murder hornets, surely 2021 can't be worse. Can it?

Time to break out the New Year's resolutions. We have so many opportunities for self-improvement from which to choose. New this year is The Mirror – a talking mirror like the one in Snow White – that promises to make us fit. Or, we can adopt the old standbys: stop smoking or start a diet program.

Earlier this month, [Rev. Lydia Neshangwe offered an alternative](#) that has gripped me. Lydia visited Milwaukee Presbytery in 2019 as an International Peacemaker, from her home country, Zimbabwe. In her peacemaking ministry, she has recognized the world's focus on the technology of fighting. Certainly we see that in weaponry and the war-fighting machines that we develop. We also develop a fluency with fighting in our ways of relating, the words we choose to use, and the platforms we use to communicate. Twitter, for example, is better suited for hostility than peacebuilding. How does one exercise diplomacy through a tweet that allows limited characters? Lydia urges us to adopt the technology of peacemaking. She encourages us to seek new ways of relating that focus on the language of peace.

It has inspired my New Year's resolution: I'm going to diligently avoid social media with violent opening storylines or lead-ins. Think how often social media posts try to attract our attention with headings like, "Watch Smith utterly destroy his opponent..." or "Jones crushes opponent with her own words...". These posts entice us with verbs of violence, tempting us to watch the "other side" get ridiculed, embarrassed, demeaned, or dehumanized. They use the technology of fighting.

I have learned, however, the power of "clicks." My click on a link in a social media post gets counted and sorted. It's like currency to people who manipulate and control data. My decision not to click on links with "fightin' words" – when coupled with the similar decision of thousands (millions?) of others – makes a difference.

What if instead we choose to promote, share, open, and like the stories of peacebuilding? What if we highlight news of collaboration and selflessness? Could we transform the world's priorities? (You've caught me on a day when I don't feel too cynical and I still believe we can change the world.)

Adopting the technology of peace doesn't mean we put on rose-colored glasses and pretend that injustice has disappeared. The work against systemic poverty, corruption, structural racism, gender violence, and environmental destruction must continue. But, we have a choice of technology: will we **seek solutions to the problem** OR will we **utterly destroy our opponents**? We're conditioned to use the latter as our default, but for all the wars we've fought and the Twitter storms that have raged, have our problems gone away?

I pray this New Year's resolution will stick. I pray you will join me in the work of peacemaking. The new year is ripe with possibilities for peace.