

Zoeterwoude, February 20, 2019

Dear Mr. Villumstad,  
dear Stein,

First of all I hope you're fine.

Recently Dr. William Vendley forwarded you the letter that I wrote in name of our board, with suggestions for the coming World Assembly in Lindau. An Assembly with the important theme: '*Caring for Our Common Future*'. Bill advised me to contact/call you.

In the letter we mention, on page 1, three ways of *new thinking*. We kindly but urgently request you to put these topics on the agenda.

The topics are hot right now and I would like to add some more thoughts to them.

Ad 1. We see spiritual teachers, courses, yoga-teaching, mindfulness etc. trying to bring people back to their 'inner self', because many people feel burn-out, empty inside, their will and brains ignored their own identity, their spirit, their soul. There are new movements all over the world of the younger generations who ask for different attitudes. For example: young adults who started living in simple ways - sharing goods with others instead of owning everything one can use, we see the increase of Tiny Houses where they want to live in; young women in South Korea, who stand up to be who they *are* instead of letting themselves be remade by plastic surgery; there are youngsters like Greta Thunberg and with her many others are standing up for more protection of our planet. New-economy- thinkers like Kate Raworth a.o. stood up in the last years. They want an economy that's serving the whole society, not only the wealthy ones.

We need real democracy! Politics is not to increase power for a few, politics should be the way to organise society and especially to take care of the ones who are most vulnerable. Politics should *include people and peoples*, instead of setting people up against each other for the benefit of the actor.

All this is only possible *if we find satisfaction again* in being social, in being a person with meaning to others, being a 'blessing' for others, for society. It's possible if we realize and value that our strength is not in patronizing the other, but in developing our own skills to become the best version of ourselves. *Isn't that what all religions and life-philosophy's offer us in their sayings, in their holy books?*

Ad 2. Peace-education can help with the above topics. Peace-education aims at including people and building a society on that principle. Peace education will teach children and young adults values, values in action. Not values just on themselves. Peace-education will in it's teachings help students to think about solutions of problems they will face in life, real solutions that don't exclude people. We have to

help young people to develop their strength to dare to stand up for the right things to do. For example: we have the knowledge about 'revenge' - but we often don't act in a way that we care for that. Coercion and oppression might temporarily and superficially seem to be working, but the day will come that people's free spirit will try to get free from the hurting chains of oppression. And as a boomerang it may come back to the oppressor.

'Minorities' of colour, nationality, gender etc. are asking for respect and recognition for their history - respect for the good things their ancestors brought to the world, and recognition of the bad things that men have done to other people (f.e. slavery) - peace-education should teach a more correct view on history.

Ad 3. Last week we faced the worldwide warning of the Red Cross of 'growing' risk of nuclear weapons and asking people to lobby their governments to sign and ratify the *UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) of 2017*; next to that there are many groups and organizations with similar goals like ICAN, UNODA (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs), RfP Statement A Nuclear-Weapon-Free-World, August 5, 2017, ECRL in their statement of October 2010, WCC, Pugwash, The Pope, Mayors for Peace, World Medical Association, WMA, IPPNW, IALANA, Tribunaal voor Vrede, NVMP, PAX, Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor - Norwegian People's Aid, October 2018, Med. War Resisters International (WRI), students all-over Florida and other States of the US marched against weapons etc. Weapons are not the way to peace. Fear is not the way. The world has become too small to ignore others, to steal from others or to fight them with weapons. Only friendship disarms. *We have to develop new thinking about becoming good neighbours to each other, worldwide.* And we have to do it fast, since the present direction we're going into cannot last much longer and this needs generations to work on. We need strong people who dare to stand up for the rights of everyone. We should not wait for a new world war that will teach the survivors the lessons of love, solidarity, compassion, forgiveness. Should we? *We are interdependent* - much more than our actions show.

Our organisation is formed by people from many religions and philosophies of life. We all know the Golden Rule. But there is much more that connects us as religions and philosophies of life. It's the self-search on our behaviour, the struggle with ourselves, our fears, our greed, our desire for power, our longing for more... We should look at what we value in our thoughts and what we value in practice.

This worldwide assembly might become the place to start a real new thinking. *Experiencing that we are human beings with many talents, but that, by misuse, might become our handicaps.* We can only prove the value of our religions/philosophies if we put our energy in kneading ourselves into the person God have meant us to become, a blessing to each other and to life in general.

With warm regards from the Netherlands,  
In name of our board,



Mirjam Ateş-Snijdewind  
President of Religion for Peace Netherlands