*Sent to all Members*

December 22, 2024  
  
Dear {%FName%},

Rotary Minutes are provided by District 6220 Governor Roger Utnehmer (Oot-name-er).

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Merry Christmas to our Christian Rotarians. Happy Holidays to those who are not and a “Civil New Year” greeting to everyone.

Not all Rotarians recognize Christian holidays. That is important to remember as I will mention again.

Less risky, I hope, is a New Year’s Greeting of “Best wishes for a civil New Year.”

We desperately need more civility in our discourse. Rotary can play a significant role in modeling civil discussion at our clubs. May the new year ahead be one in which Rotary Clubs provide a safe forum for the discussion of important issues with respect and decency. May we not fear programs that present both sides of important issues. May Rotary be the model of restoring civility in our clubs, our communities and throughout the world.

One discussion worthy of having might be the role of Christian prayer at Rotary meetings. All our members are not Christian. Our exchange students, visiting Rotarians and guests may share other religious beliefs or none at all. Does the practice of Christian prayer pass the Rotary Four Way Test?

I ask that because I’m writing this from Kentucky where I’m consulting a group of radio stations. One recommendation I made to a group of young broadcasters is to join a service club like Rotary. They become valuable members because they can provide public image assistance, news coverage of club activities, and publicity for events.

One young millennial objected strongly. He had just visited a club and was uncomfortable with the emphasis on Christian prayer. He said to me, “I go to my church to pray or do it privately. I don’t go to Rotary to pray. While I may be Christian my wife is not. I’m not interested in Rotary.”

Unfortunately, a recent Pew poll indicated that 36% of millennials do not identify with a religious denomination. Might that mean we risk alienating a possible third of potential members when a non-denominational reflection could be as effective as a Christian prayer?

Something like:

“May we pause and reflect on what brings us together in Rotary;

The Four Way Test, Service Above Self and our collective desire to bring peace, friendship and understanding to our club, our community and our world.”

A civil discussion on a topic like this could be a great way to start a New Year of Civility.

Merry Christmas. Happy Holidays and best wishes for a “Civil New Year.”

ROGER UTNEHMER  
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District Governor 2024-25  
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