

Jan. 1, 2012 – “The 11th Hour?”

Today, our search for truth and meaning will help us avoid approaching the reputedly apocalyptic year 2012 with cynicism. We will find a way to transcend uncertainty and act as though we could make a difference. Because we are the only ones who can.

In putting together the words for today, I rummaged through my file cabinet looking for an appropriate New Years Call to worship. And found this:

The old year ends, a new begins
With pages clean and new;
And what is written on each page
will now depend on you.

Somehow it sounded shallow and ineffective, given the uncertain times in which we live. So I wrote my own as follows:

This New Year is not just another stab at making resolutions and trying to get it right. It's a call to move deeper into the curious, alive essence of who we really are. To become evermore whole.

We don't need to be reminded that some of the best minds of our times are telling us that we're living an unprecedented series of crises.

The reality is that we're living in a natural period of cyclic change. It's natural for systems that are no longer sustainable to break down.

They break slowly at first and then very quickly toward collapse at

the end. It's hard to understand this when we're embedded in it.

From our limited point of view, it looks like chaos.

But, if we could see the bigger picture, we'd realize that systems that work well will continue to work well. What looks to us like chaos is coming from a fear-and greed-based materialistic way of thinking that is no longer sustainable.

So, today's participatory service will ramp up the way we observe the perennial New Years tradition of resolution-making. We will recognize—and meet (and honor—rather than deny)—the beautifully chaotic situation of the times in which we live.

We will “get” that it's clearly up to us (not our political, economic, military or religious establishment, or even extraterrestrials (evil or benign) to shape our apparently chaotic reality into a viable future. Whether or not we like it, we are part of a collective trance which includes a dysfunctional machinery of distribution in an excessively money driven culture. We are called to create a collective shift in reality. The direction is up to us.

If we need a tour guide for this trip we could do no better than the American Hopi. (see the film, “Koyaanisqatsi” and its sequels) In the Hopi language, the word Koyaanisqats means "unbalanced life."

In it, "The Hopi Elders Speak:"

“You have been telling the people that this is the Eleventh Hour.

Now you must go back and tell the people that we’ve passed the 11th hour. This *is The Hour*.

There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they are being torn apart, and they will suffer greatly.”

The elders say we must be aware that the river has its destination. We must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above the water. See who is in there with us and celebrate.

They go on: “At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally. Least of all, yourselves. For the moment that you do, your spiritual growth and journey comes to a halt.”

They go on: “The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves! All that you do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration. You are the ones you’ve been waiting for.”

Then the Hopi Elders tell us to: “Create your community. Be good to each other. And do not look outside yourself for the leader.”

They conclude: “It is time to speak your Truth.”

Then they give us things to consider: ✨ What are you doing? ✨ What are your relationships? ✨ Are you in right relation? ✨

2012 And the End Of the Mayan Long Count: An enormous amount of hoopla surrounds the year 2012. Dozens of books, hundreds of web sites, videos and motion pictures present a variety of terrifying scenarios about the end of the world. And almost as many others that point to a glorious collective global transformation—on or around December 21, 2012. What's this all about?

The main point, which many people are aware of, is that December 21, 2012 marks the end of an ancient Mayan calendar known as the "Long Count." This calendar depicts a 5,126 year cycle that began on August 11, 3114 BC and will end on December 21, 2012. The Mayan civilization originated in Central America around 600 BC and reached its height during the period 300 – 900 AD, when most of the large pyramids and major architectural structures were built. Though they maintained many different cyclical calendars, the Long Count was regarded as one "Great Cycle" for the earth.

Five of these great cycles define one Grand Cycle, a 25,630 year cycle corresponding to the length of the slow torque movement of earth's axis as it wobbles around—like a spinning top—one complete cycle every 25,630 years. But how could the ancient Mayans, whose calendars were created more than 2000 years ago, know anything about something so complex? How could they know about a major change or transformation of human civilization more

than a thousand years after their own civilization went into decline?

Though much has been read into the “end of the Mayan Long Count” and some kind of acceleration of human consciousness, nobody really knows what—if anything—is going to happen. So what can we say for sure is going to happen in 2012?

My nerdy Ph. D. astrophysicist grandson says there are, indeed, a couple of astronomical happenings that are a matter of scientific fact. But they're no big deal. And how the Mayans knew of this is a mystery to him. To me, the Mayans, themselves, are a mystery. I wondered if they were good guys or bad guys. So I went back to Google, and learned that, as is usually the case with reality, it's a continuum from good to bad, often depending on nothing more than your point of view:

For instance, according to Google, they placed boards on babies' foreheads to create a flattened surface. Another practice was to cross babies' eyes by dangling objects in front of newborn's eyes until they were completely crossed. It's said that they practiced human sacrifice and used human heads and skulls as balls in a game somewhat like soccer.

These are not exactly our idea of good ideas. But, hey...different strokes...Nobody knows exactly why their civilization died. Or why the mystique of the end of the long count.

Perhaps we'll know a lot more by our 1/6/2013 worship service. Perhaps not. Perhaps we will just *think* we know, when we really don't. But what's really important here?

What's important is the Koyaanisqats message that our early 21st century life IS out of balance. Even when you factor out the geomagnetic reversal of earth's poles, collisions with passing asteroids and evil aliens or benign extraterrestrials, we ARE living at a time of extraordinary and rapid change.

I'm no New Age Hopi prophet or prognosticator of Mayan calendars, avatars or messiahs. But I KNOW that SOME big historical cycle is shifting. Now...It's planet wide. Cataclysmic weather patterns are attributable to human behavior.

It's technological: cyber crime, drone wars, media wars, culture wars. World wide economic collapse: joblessness; boarded-up houses; Corporate greed and favoritism. Cuts in services for those who need it and perks for those who don't.

The SHIFT involves a huge leap in moral awareness. Moral values are very much in the news. Because people in high places are compromising their own (and our) integrity with irresponsible and scandalous behavior. Such as the world-wide financial crisis. Because we are clearly living in the midst of some VERY large scale change. I, for one, have an overwhelming sense of being overwhelmed.

It doesn't help when I hear that those who put off committing themselves to God until the eleventh hour...will probably die at 10:30. Because the screening line of last-minute committers will go way around the block, and the next block, and the next.

I'm getting this message from my Born again son. (The brother of the father of the astrophysicist). I thought he was born okay the first time. But no. He had to go and do it again! (At a revival meeting.) He points to the breakdown of systems. Not just economic and governmental systems. But belief systems. Moral systems. He tells me to commit to Jesus while I still can. Says I should give myself some lead time before Dec. 22, a year from now lest I end up getting trampled in the last-minute rush.

Makes me wonder: Where did I go wrong?

He says all I have to do is "suspend my disbelief." I guess he knows whereof he speaks. After all, at that revival meeting, he must have had to suspend the disbelief that I taught him when he was a kid.

I raised him right here in Marin, where the "New Age" spiritual movement came into being. New Age spirituality grew out of the resurgence of mysticism in the 60's and 70's. That's when astrology (which has nothing to do with astrophysics) got a boost and even highly regarded thinkers such as Carl Jung who popularized notions such as cosmic consciousness.

My now reborn son and his brothers spent time with Marin's own George Leonard, who popularized the notion of a "paradigm shift" and coined the term "Human Potential Movement." He was exposed to communes, EST, and mind-expanding drugs. He was exposed to one guru after another. Meher Baba. Muktananda, Baba Free John. He heard me talk about New Age philosophers such as G. I. Gurdjieff, Oscar Oscar Ichazo, and Claudio Naranjo.

He even went to a meeting with the Breatharian guy. (Anybody remember the breatharian?) A tall skinny black man who said he lived on oxygen alone. His followers didn't go quite that far. But we did eat only foods of a certain color for certain periods of time. I remember a week of nothing but yellow: bananas, lemons, grapefruit, certain squashes, yellow onions.

My kids watched me going to meetings at the Institute of Noetics (From the Greek *noēsis* / *noētikos*, meaning inner wisdom, direct knowing, or subjective understanding) which is headquartered here in Marin and still going strong. Way back then, I was introduced to the teachings of Barbara Marx Hubbard, who is still going strong. In fact, on Dec. 22, I participated in an international conference call with her and other.... progressive thinkers who are shouting their message loud and clear: that we can raise the consciousness of the world, if our commitment is high enough. Frankly I'd rather commit to this than to the born-again thing.

So...also for the Dec. 22 Solstice, I attended an event at Open Secret book store in San Rafael. It was sponsored by a internet-based group headquartered here in San Rafael called the SHIFT. It all reminds me of the Harmonic Convergence planetary realignment thing in 1989. Or the Y2K '99 thing. Even Khoutec. (Anyone remember Khoutec?) I'm beginning to wonder if we'll wake up a year from today, in 2013 and realize nothing has changed.

Nevertheless, in the UU spirit of honoring all belief systems, I've invited some SHIFT folks to speak to us some time next year.

I understand (with the logic part of my brain) that I, and this congregation, probably could raise a lot of consciousness for ourselves and the world. But I'm having trouble believing I could actually, really, really live it.

In fact, my eating, shopping and general behavior shows that I still buy into the tacit agreement that creates obscene wealth for a few while progressively impoverishing the rest of humanity. I am still doing my part in enabling (what appears to be) an unending political gridlock, and the corporate CEOs who are in bondage to it.

I know I can choose simpler (but less convenient) living alternatives that would manifest the profound interrelatedness of the web of life.

I can send letters to my congresspersons, or my mayor and city council. But that takes effort. It's often easier to stay on sidelines and cheer to my TV screen...as I sit in my comfy suburban bubble and watch

the wicked witches get dead: Saddam Hussein. Moammar Khadafy. Kim Jong Il. I watch Arab spring. Out of Iraq. Occupy. I could get behind Americans Elect, a new political group that wants to run a centrist candidate for president.

Come to think of it, here again it's a continuum: I actually am doing some (one little) thing that might just create the teeny tiny quantum leap. I'm spending a chunk of my time doing mind-numbing tedious data entry for a political campaign. Sometimes I think about making an excuse not to go to there today. Because I know I have a tendency to rush into things that are easy to start. Get bored...Then look for a way to make an easy stop. Once the initial excitement was gone, I backed out of the Fair Trade coffee/chocolate project that I started here. Did the same thing with our Green Sanctuary project once the documentation was complete a few years ago. Same with the nonviolent communication project that I spearheaded. I even did some very violent communicating around here a few years ago. Now, I'm burning out after three years managing our congregation's efforts on behalf of the Marin Interfaith Council's homeless efforts.

But now I have a new idea. I figure if I tell you guys about it, now, you might remember what I said and hold me to it. (In fact, I know a couple of you who definitely won't let me forget it.) I want to show another film to this congregation and invite the wider

community too. Or at least get everyone to watch it on YouTube. It's called "Thrive: What on Earth Will it Take."

THRIVE is a documentary that claims to lift the veil on what's REALLY going on in the world. The filmmakers claim, "We are at a critical turning point in human history. They claim the path we're on is leading toward a global police state. So we must change direction. But how? Apparently they offer guiding principles and specific suggestions that would lead to "freedom from war, hunger and domination." A world where no one is violated or coerced in any way! The answer? Inconvenient as it is, the answer seems to be grassroots mass actions.

At this point, I'm still looking for excuses to avoid moving out of my comfort zone. I imagine you are the same way. Wanting SOMETHING to be done. But not knowing WHAT to do. And feeling helpless, because...well, frankly, you don't want to go too far out of your comfort zone.

Or maybe I'm just imagining you feel this way to make myself feel better about feeling this way. So I'm now asking you guys to convince me that starting here, in this congregation, we can actually make a significant contribution to the SHIFT—first in conscious awareness, then in manifest behavior. (Or you might be better at arbitrarily changing your behavior first. And waiting for the awareness to come.)

What if YOU really knew Armageddon were coming in 2012? What if YOU really had just one year to get it right?

The prospect of one year to live can motivate profound changes, individually and collectively. How might YOU, I, collectively, live in a way that actually betters the world? What if we did the same collectively and worked together to ignite a whole new possibility for humanity in just one year?

Repeat Hopi Elders' questions. Meditation. Sharing about how we could influence the thread of events in 2012. What talent do you have that could be put to better use? How could you be more honest? Not just with others, but with yourself. Who could you speak to? What could you say to whom?

In closing: Let us reach out to everyone—PARTICULARLY OUR INSTITUTIONAL LEADERS, who might not respect our UU principles but WILL respect Albert Einstein.

“A human being is part of a whole, called by us the ‘Universe’ —a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”