



## Peace, Civility & the Peace Flame

BY [Dennis Slattery for the Tidings](#) July 30, 2018

As I contemplated my choice of a working title for this piece – “Peace, Civility & the Peace Flame” – a thought occurred to me “Peace just isn’t easy, it takes a lot of hard work, commitment and dedication”. We live in a strange age that is served both well, and not so well, by social media. I think social media tends to magnify both ends of the spectrum. A look through Facebook will show you dear sweet moments of interactions between people. Sharing of birthdays and anniversaries, daily touch points into each others lives that provide us with substance and understanding of others. The kindness of people helping others through a difficult time, or the celebration of an accomplishment. People holding others up, helping out, sharing. Ideas bandied about, discussed, debated – sometimes very enthusiastically, yet respectfully. These are the positive touch points. Then there are the “others”.

The “others”, or as they like to call themselves – the “trolls”, their word, not mine. Their use of social media is to reach out, to demean, to disrespect, not to provide value but to simply disrupt and diminish. It is troubling. We have a really good example of how this works almost on a daily basis coming to us from Washington. It not an attempt to discuss issues, it is an attempt to diminish the others in order to elevate the “trolls” point. Bringing others down instead of reaching for higher ground, a better place, or a sharing of solutions. It is disrespect for disrespect’s sake. It has very little, if any, value – perhaps its only value as something to point to as a very bad example.

Peace is challenging. A culture of peace does not exist for the easy road, it is for the road fraught with all kinds of obstacles. It takes dedicated and focused effort. When we are among friends, peace comes easy. The hard work of peace lives where things do not come easy, when we disagree with each other and don’t see eye-to-eye. This is when the culture of peace is most important, most essential, when we should be most dedicated to the effort of working things out within the context of the community, for the best of the community.

One of my favorite quotes from John F. Kennedy “So let us begin anew -- remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never

negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate. Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us.”

Peace and the search for meaningful peace is hard, but it is the most worthy of goals.

This coming September 21, the International Day of Peace, the World Peace Flame shall be lit here in Ashland signifying our solidarity with other likeminded people around the world in pursuit of a more peaceful planet and to promote more pathways “through which we can recognize and work toward our commonalities, rather than our differences.” Peace is hard work, but it is the best kind of work.

The idea of the flame as the perfect symbol of the culture of peace, especially for how it will work here in our community. Not only will it provide the obvious symbol to shine the light of peace, but it’s going to take dedication and focused effort to help it shine long into the future. It will take people to tend the flame, to keep it lit, to help it continue to shine its light, literally and figuratively. In much the same manner, peace takes work, it takes caretaking, it requires working with others to keep the flame of hope lit during the darkest of hours. We have the ability in Ashland to be something special, to work to a higher order, to not let the “trolls” take their toll. When we discourse in a respectful manner we elevate our ideas. When we work through challenging processes towards a meaningful conclusion for the best of all concerned, we elevate our community. The Peace Flame glowing in Ashland should also represent our best shining example to the communities of the world.

Dennis Slattery has been an Ashland resident for the past 41 years. Dennis serves on the Ashland City Council and the Ashland Food Bank Board. Dennis and his wife Sandra are active members of the Ashland community.