

## ‘COMPASSION MATTERS’

Albert Einstein once said that problems can only be solved when you work on them at a level higher than the level at which those same problems were created. It can be argued that most, if not all, of the present world problems are linked and locked into a view of the world and of humanity that is simply too limited to provide resolution to the painful polarizations and deep frustrations that now represent the fruit of those old, yet current, views. As all of us in Salina have witnessed in recent months, different religious views and discussions about the differences between religion and spirituality have been at the center of many of those polarized discussions.

The local Salina organization, the Spirituality Resource Center, began many years ago with the mission to invite exploration and dialogue on the question of how we can live at a higher level, moving beyond human-constructed divisions between us. Over the years, a number of interesting and diverse speakers were invited for programs in the community toward that end.

At present, there is a growing international effort to center humanity’s thoughts and behaviors on that deeper or higher perspective. It has found expression in a simple Charter for Compassion that is offered below. The SRC believes this Charter has value for all of us here in Kansas, particularly now as people contend with increasingly difficult local, state, federal, and international issues.

The SRC, as part of this larger effort toward a more compassionate world, would like to invite readers to participate in an ongoing public dialogue through a regular ‘Compassion Matters’ column in the Salina Journal. The SRC will submit thoughtful articles that come from you, the readers—from your thoughts and experiences—each of which should reflect a principle of the Charter for Compassion. We hope and intend for this to be a collective effort. We invite submissions that help move our hearts in positive directions, generate quiet reflection, sensitize us, and expand our levels of compassion for one another as we explore together a newer, smaller, healthier world. If we can together succeed in deepening the dialogue around inclusive spiritual principles and, more importantly, enrich and improve the body of our community life in new ways, we can show just how much compassion truly matters. Perhaps that is all that finally matters.

### Charter for Compassion:

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of

human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

If you want to be part of this ongoing dialogue visit the SRC website at [www.spiritualityresourcecenter.com](http://www.spiritualityresourcecenter.com). Click on the membership icon, then sign in to our guestbook to leave comments. Signed submissions, including name, address, and phone #, should be sent to [srcsalina@gmail.com](mailto:srcsalina@gmail.com).

Gerald Gillespie, January 2013