



December  
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# Ploughshare

## ***A Peace of Mike's Mind...***

*by Rev. Mike Morran*

Our Whole Souul Living Theme for December is Salvation. We don't necessarily mean this in the heavenly sense. I personally think of it in a wholeness sense. I think everyone who lives in this world needs a little salvation from the forces that keep us compartmentalized, isolated, fractured. The whole planet needs salvation from our own worst, human impulses of short-sightedness and greed. Sometimes salvation is just hanging on to a little hope.

Please see *Mind* on page 2

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## ***A Few Missing Pieces***

*by Erin Kenworthy, DRE*

Three days ago, in a grasp at normal family time fun, the kids asked if we could do a 500 piece puzzle. So the boys and dad poured it onto the kitchen table and started sorting.

After an hour they abandoned it. So I picked up where they left off... starting on the edge pieces like I always do. As I struggled to get the edge completed, there was a whisper of "pieces are missing. Stop now and throw this puzzle away." But, when given a direct challenge, I can be stubbornly persistent.

The next day, I approached the table to find that much of my work had been undone by my kids during breakfast. So I redid the edge, and started sorting the inside pieces by color.

Please see *Pieces* on page 3

## *Mind from page 1*

Thinking about this I remembered a small wonder. Years ago, my motorcycle had a tenant. Every morning for about two weeks I would find a beautifully formed spider's web in the space between the gas tank and the right handlebar. The spider was never to be seen, though I often looked for it before swiping away the web and tooling off to wherever I was headed that day. I don't mind spiders and tried leaving the web alone, but there is a need to steer, and the freeway wind always destroyed it anyway.

The motorcycle was clearly beyond the comprehension of the spider. My eight-legged tenant was persistent in repeatedly spinning its web in righteous oblivion to the bigger picture.

It doesn't appear humans are so different when taken as a species. Civilizations come and go. We build homes and cities on fault lines, on flood plains, in the path of hurricanes, etc. and when the earth moves or the wind blows or the soldiers arrive we tremble and hunker down much like my spider must have done every time I started the engine of the motorcycle. We pollute the planet, engage in senseless wars, pour our resources into creating implements of mass destruction, create economic and political systems that exploit the many for the sake of the few, and elect leaders who don't serve our best interests.

I think that if my spider had a glimpse of the bigger picture, it would have moved to a more suitable location where the quality of its life would have improved dramatically. Whether or not we see the big picture, humans don't have the option of just picking up and moving to a new location. We have to find a way to make this work. Salvation.

Religion, at its best, gives a language to ideals and relational notions that go beyond the short sightedness responsible for so many of our present ills. Science grapples with what is, but not with what to do about it. Perhaps if enough of us insist, some of the decisions about deforestation, health care, bomb making, refugees, violence, and resource distribution might be made with a bigger picture in mind. Too much of the world has to hunker down and tremble.

There has got to be a better way.

Peace, and Merry Christmas,

Mike

## *Pieces from page 1*

After the kids went to bed that night, Jason and I worked together on the puzzle for close to two and a half hours. It was frustrating. At 11:30, Owen woke up in pain from a major stubbed toe that had bruised under the nail. That was the end of puzzle time for the day.

The next day, after each meal I spent time working in the puzzle alone, chipping away at areas using various methods.

A note about the puzzle at this point, it is of the grand prismatic spring in Yellowstone. It shows the location of our engagement and to celebrate, we picked up this puzzle in the Old Faithful Lodge that same day, 13 years ago. So, we do really like this particular puzzle, challenging as it is.

That night, I completed the puzzle and was not surprised to find that there are 7 pieces missing, and one chewed beyond usefulness by our puppy/dog.

2020 has really often felt like trying to assemble a life, a routine, a set of expectations while missing several key pieces, and with little to no knowledge of if/when those pieces might return. So we keep moving forward, broken and frustrated because choosing to scrap the puzzle is not an option and because you want to prove you can do this difficult thing even without all the resources you need. And then you are done, but not quite.

We are all missing a few pieces these days. It's been a long and rough 8+ months in my house. Staring at this puzzle felt like achievement and disappointment all rolled up into one exercise. We've made it this far, and we've lost some things. Time, health, connections, people, financial footing, friends. But there still is a picture there. Do you see it? Cheers to those of us feeling a bit rough around the edges, chewed up and spat out, and focused on the empty spaces. But don't throw out the puzzle just yet. Sit with it a bit, Maybe you'll find another piece on the floor under the table after you walk away. Honor what it has provided and when you are ready, keep it or let it go, but know that you are making space for whatever is coming next.

With you in the good and the bad moments, facing the future together,  
Erin



## *When We Work Together*

*by the Racial Justice Project*

FUSD's Racial Justice Project recently decided to support Patricia Jonietz' dream of having a local Little Free Library just for kids! Ruby Hill, a multicultural neighborhood, now has its own Little Free Library at 1780 S. Raritan Street, only four blocks from an elementary school, where kids pass on their daily walks to school. It is our hope all the neighborhood children come and take a book, read a book, and return a book. The library is dedicated to school-aged children and stocked with books on all subjects, both fiction and non-fiction, with a focus on multiculturalism.

Thanks to Karl Jonietz who built the structure, and he and Patrick Whorton who installed it. Thanks to Kathy Glatz who donated the site. Thanks to Mary Sullivan for snacks and book donations; Mary even found, in a second-hand store, a fascinating book about establishing a Little Free Library. Thanks to Robyn Rissman for the posthole digger. A neighbor joined us and donated rocks to stabilize the structure--he thanked us for the books that his son can read. He was amazed that he did not need to pay money, get a card, or leave an IOU.

We also installed [despite some nasty tree roots] the second KIDS Little Free Library at 135 N. Perry Street, thanks to Cindy Pincus! The structure used to live at RMPBS, but was left behind when they moved. They donated it to volunteers who rehabbed and re-labeled the structure and it now lives in a West Denver multicultural and multilingual neighborhood. Although it is on private property, it is next to a public trail to a park and should get good traffic. We dedicated the library to the neighborhood Kids and hope they enjoy visiting it. RMPBS is thrilled to hear of the library's new home! This was our second library project, and we hope to continue adding books to both locations over the coming year.

Our plan is to add books to the libraries for a year. If you wish to make a donation please contact Patricia Jonietz at 720-360-1884 or [plj001@me.com](mailto:plj001@me.com) or Kathy at [k.joym@yahoo.com](mailto:k.joym@yahoo.com) for donation and COVID protocols.

As schools close due to Covid, we may indeed fill a need for kids yearning to read! Thanks to all who contributed labors of love and sheer energy to install these, and to book donors! Like the other 500+ Little Free Libraries in Denver, this library is a gift to build community, because books and reading are the building blocks of equity.

## *Tomatoes During a Pandemic*

*by Joe Verrengia, Vice President of the Board of Trustees*

And the pandemic drags on. Even before the current surge in infections and the Governor's new color code (Purple is the New Red and so on...) everyone has experienced days – or weeks - when we're tired of it all and can't find motivation.

At our monthly FUSD board meetings, we've discussed ways to snap out of our Covid-19 lethargy, and whether these tricks might benefit the congregation.

Typically, I resist self-improvement gimmicks. But one method known as the Pomodoro Technique captured my attention. Pomodoro is the Italian word for tomato. Based on my mostly lousy experience growing tomatoes in Denver, how could anything called pomodoro boost productivity?

The Pomodoro Technique is a time management method developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s. It uses a timer to break down work into 30-minute intervals. You work for 25 minutes and take a five-minute break. Each interval is known as a pomodoro, or tomato. [www.pomodortechnique.com](http://www.pomodortechnique.com)

But why pomodoro? Because Cirillo used a wind-up kitchen timer shaped like a tomato. Cute.

There are a couple of additional steps to his method.

At the end of each 25-minute pomodoro, take your pencil and make a checkmark on a notepad. If you have fewer than four checkmarks, you take a five-minute break.

That's enough time to stretch your legs, drink a glass of water and maybe stand outside for a few deep breaths.

After four pomodoros and four checkmarks, take a 15-30-minute break. Then you can have a snack, walk the dog, or call someone.

Then reset. Resume your 25:5-time splits.

The whole point is to encourage focus and workflow. Most of us can concentrate for 25 minutes.

What happens if you finish your work before your timer rings? Don't take your break early, Cirillo cautions. Use the remaining time to review and edit your work. Ask yourself what you have learned. Think about what you will do better in your next pomodoro. Take notes.

Don't stop until the tomato rings.

Cirillo recommends buying a tomato timer and use it exclusively for this technique. It \$8.99 online, so it's affordable. It's a novelty with a certain kitschy appeal. The physical act of winding the timer sets your intention to work. Hearing it tick creates momentum. The ringer becomes a reward.

If you want to be modern, the Pomodoro Method has been digitized in various apps that you can download on your smart phone. You also can use your phone's stopwatch and alarm features.

Does the technique work? Well, I wrote this article in three pomodoros.

Next, I'm going to sort through keepsakes boxes stored in our crawl space. I've been putting this off for years, and the pandemic hasn't exactly increased my motivation.

What if I break up the work into manageable increments? Going through every box might take me 20,000 pomodoros. Or 200,000. That's about when a coronavirus vaccine becomes available and I can go out again.

## *Whole Souul Living*

Our Whole Souul Living Theme for December is **Salvation** (in THIS Life). In truth, most of us need some salvation: from old habits and limitations, from creeping materialism, from a broken economy... The nation needs some salvation: from partisan politics, easy answers, and outright lies. The world needs some salvation...: from pollution, too many people, and senseless wars... You get the idea.

- What have been the saving events, experiences, or disciplines in your life?
- Who have been the saving people in your life or experience?
- When and how have you saved someone or something else?
- Is there a "Saving Grace" available to human beings? What is it?



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