

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

“Why Community Renewal?”

Albert Einstein, in surveying the cultural landscape of the twentieth century, observed, “Ours is a generation in which we have perfected the means and forgotten the purposes of life.” No commentary could be more wrenchingly accurate for so much of the activity around us. We all know that. And that is why it is important, every now and then, in the buzz of busyness, to stop, step back, take a breath, and redirect our thoughts to the “why” of life’s work.

Knowing the “why” of your life and your work is absolutely critical to the directed power to achieve purposeful results. Compare, for instance, Benjamin Franklin’s razor sharp truth, “He who has a clear end in mind, makes all things serve.” To the meandering reminiscences of the park bench jockey, who confides to a fellow squirrel feeder, “You know, I’ve learned a lot in these last 65 years. Unfortunately, most of it has been about aluminum.” We were made to be shaped and sharpened by the “why’s” of everything we do.

Just a few weeks ago, a friend precipitated that very philosophical pause that refreshes by asking me, “Why Community Renewal?” So I stopped. And I thought. I listened. And I went aside – alone. “Why?” As you can attest by reading this issue of *Renewal News*, we are a flood of activity, events, happenings. Quiet time in the car brought the clarity I remembered and needed again. “Why Community Renewal?”

I believe that we are dedicated to community renewal because first and foremost it is *our duty*. The prophet Amos spoke God’s demanding sentiments when he said, “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like an never-failing stream.” We are here to follow the orders of the One who formed us and called us to live together in a fellowship of lives devoted to seeking each other’s well being. We are commanded to love one another. It is our duty.

But as high as that calling to duty is, there is something even higher as reason to commit ourselves to community renewal. Devotion to the renewing of our community in caring love reminds us of *our design*. How painfully poignant to witness a fish out of water. It thrashes! It gasps and gasps! It must have the ocean. We were made for community. No one lives to himself alone. We were designed to swim in the ocean of kindness. Physiologists now tell us astonishing things. They tell us that when we *give* an act of kindness, our serotonin level increases! And our immune system is strengthened! But further, when we *receive* an act of kindness, our serotonin level increases! And our immune system is strengthened! And amazingly, when we human beings even *see* an act of kindness our serotonin level increases! And our immune system is strengthened. We were made to swim in the ocean of human kindness. It is our design.

But there is something even greater than our duty and our design as critically great as those “why’s” are. Our dedication to renewing our community is the highway to reach the richness of *our destiny!* We are fulfilled only as we serve others. We are complete only as we give ourselves to others. And we are perfected only as we seek to love others. What strange paradoxes in the realm of God’s Spirit! Our individual destiny is inextricably bound in the mutual love which only fellowship can provide. “As surely as you have done it to the least of these, My children, you have done it unto Me.” Why? Indeed!!

God bless you all as we go forth together into this season of peace and a new year of hope.