



Turning the Page on a New Year

Welcome 2022

I love opening a new calendar for a New Year. There have not been any disappointments or challenges to mar the perfection of beautiful blank pages that are to be filled with the hopes, dreams, and intentions of an amazing year ahead.

Many are focused on setting goals and resolutions for things we want to do. So often those resolutions fall to the wayside before January is over.

What if we were to think beyond our personal self-goals. What if we actually thought of things that can make a bigger impact in the world. As my friend Sammy Blindell says, "We are One Drop in a vast ocean. Together we can create a ripple effect to become the change we want to see in the world."

What would our world look like then?

- Would we be kinder to each other?
- Would we respect our differences?
- Would we work together toward common goals?

I have just returned from an amazing 2-week trip to Costa Rica. It is a place I had heard was magical in so many ways. I had not done a lot of research on the places I would visit. I usually prefer to allow things to unfold as they are supposed to without expectation. In doing so I am rarely disappointed and often delighted and surprised by the things that I learn.

I have some amazing take aways from my Costa Rica Adventure that I would like to apply to the upcoming New Year.

In a world filled with turmoil. Where our 24-hour news cycle has us believing that the end of the world as we know it is near. Where war and chaos threaten us, both at home and around the world. Where COVID is an ever-present threat. What is the newest variant today?

Costa Rica is an oasis of peace and tranquility.

I discovered a place that abolished its army in 1948. John Lennon would be inspired. Costa Rica was largely overlooked by the Spanish Conquistadors as it had no gold. Surrounded by countries embroiled in never ending conflicts, coup d'état, dictators and government corruption, Costa Rica is a democracy focused on providing three essential things to its population: Education, Housing, and Health.

Twenty-seven different political parties are contending in the February elections. Despite their differing viewpoints they manage to work together for the good of everyone. We could all learn something from the ability to find common ground that allows the government to do its job for the people it serves.

Costa Rica enjoys a rich diversity of cultural history including immigrants from Europe, Africa, US Ex-Pats, the Caribbean islands, ex slaves, native populations, missionaries, environmentalists. As with most countries it is not without its historical problems of discrimination and marginalization of some groups at different times. Their focus is always how to move forward today.

None of us can change the past. We have only today to change our attitudes and make something better. As a result there is a renewed celebration of the cultural diversity that makes up the citizenry.

Costa Rica was the final connection between North and South America to emerge from the sea. It was born of volcanos and movement of the Caribbean plate as it collided with emerging volcanic mountains, many soaring to over 11,000 feet. Even today there are 6 active volcanos and 61 dormant or extinct ones. The capital city of San Jose is rocked by nearly daily earthquakes, although I did not feel any when I was there.

It was never part of the Maya or Aztec empires and as such there are no ancient ruins as in its neighbors to the north. The people of Costa Rica were largely left alone to flourish, cultivating the rich volcanic soil and year-round growing season they were gifted the abundance of the land. Agriculture remains the #1 income producer in the country. While the Spanish were looking for and exploiting the surrounding countries for their gold, it is Black Gold-COFFEE, that is the powerhouse behind the agricultural power of Costa Rica.

Costa Rica's stability in the world and welcoming business environment has attracted many Technology companies. Costa Rica is known as a chip producer, which is growing again as many tech companies are looking to relocate from China. The current chip shortage is accelerating the growth in this area.

Tourism is the third area of income power. Known worldwide as a location for Eco-tourism due to the rich diversity unique ecosystems and accessibility. Costa Rica has a long history of preservation of these national treasures. Many of the first visitors were scientists that came to study the flora and fauna. As a result, this tiny country has 25 national parks, 8 Biological Reserves and 32 protected zones, 11 forest reserves, 58 wildlife refuges, 15 wetlands/mangroves covering 25% of the country. Consider that only 2% of this protected land is accessible and you have a country that is committed to preserve it's rich bio heritage.

I was blessed to be able to experience many of the unique biospheres in my two-week journey in this beautiful and amazing country.

The people of Costa Rica are good stewards of the environment in which they live. They recognize the value of the gift they have in being blessed to live in such a beautiful place of abundance and diversity. They understand that if even one of the unique biospheres is destroyed there can be a domino effect on the environment from which there is no recovery.

This is what I mean when I ask you to be the change you want to see in the world. Think beyond the typical New Year's Resolutions that fall to the wayside much too quickly. Think about what you can do to create a positive ripple effect in a world filled with anger, hate, selfishness, and blame.

Stop blaming others for the things that are wrong in your life and think about what it is that you truly want. If it is world peace. Then world peace starts with you forgiving yourself and others and finding a common ground upon which to build a peaceful world.

Feed the hungry, provide clean water to those who have none, support health, wellness and nutrition, teach others how to provide from themselves and their families, be a leader in faith, hope, and love and focus on the positive in each and every person you meet.

If you want a better relationship with Mother Nature and the environment start in your own backyard. Feed the birds, plant a vegetable garden, raise chickens, get a bee hive, plant trees and flowers, rescue a spider, and/or build a bat house.

Be the change you want to see in the world.

If we all take a few small steps, we will not only turn things around we will feel good about our small contribution to making the world a better place for all.

And isn't that what we all desire?

As you open that perfect unspoiled calendar for 2022...

What will you write on its pages?

