

Dear Editor:

We are living in a time and a place where it is easier to blame our neighbor rather than work with them, to use drones to drop explosives rather than food, to look the other way, rather than help. But that is not what we are called to do.

Our faiths remind us that “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18) and “You shall also love the stranger” (Deuteronomy 10:19). If a neighbor or a stranger has been turned into an enemy, which is happening all over the country and world, then we are told to “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

Imagine how much better this country and world would be if we could lead with love rather than hate? Love makes us pause when we feel wronged, to try to find the reason why and maybe consider if we had any part in the problem. Love encourages us to be patient and to forgive. Love makes us work harder to find common ground and to compromise. Love makes us speak with respect and kindness, even when we disagree. Love allows us to see from another person’s perspective.

If the love bar is too high, maybe we could start by remembering some of Robert Fulghum’s lessons in his iconic essay “All I ever needed to know I learned in Kindergarten”: “Share everything. Play fair. Don’t hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don’t take things that aren’t yours. Say you are sorry when you hurt somebody.”

We each have a part to play in making this country and world a more peaceful and cooperative place where everyone has at least the basics they need to survive. There are enough resources on this beautiful planet to support all who live on it. It begins by recognizing and respecting the dignity of each person, thinking of

everyone as our neighbor, despite our differences, and working towards peace and wholeness one neighborhood at a time.

Please join us,

The Rutland Area Interfaith Council

Reverend Dr. Tom Atkins, Rutland United Methodist Church & Rupert United Methodist Church

Rev. Msgr. Bernard W. Bourgeois, Pastor, Rutland - Wallingford Catholic Community

Pastor Karen Braeutigam, Shrewsbury Community Church

Pastor Michael F. Dwyer, Pittsford Congregational Church

Pastors Braden and Lindsey Etcheson, Neighborhood Church, Rutland

Pastor Michelle Fountain, United Church of Ludlow

Reverend Sarah Ginolfi, Trinity Episcopal Church, Rutland

Reverend Tyrrell M. Hanley, Grace Congregational Church, Rutland

Pastor Michael Mario, First Congregational Church, Springfield

Reverend Shirley Oskamp, Religious Affairs Chair of the Rutland Area NAACP

Reverend Jenei Rossigg, Union Church of Proctor & First Congregational Church of Cornwall

Reverend Karen Skalla, Church of the Wildwood, UMC, Chittenden

Reverend Patti Stratton, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & First Baptist Church of Rutland

Reverend Barbara Threet, Unitarian Universalist Church of Rutland

Rabbi Michal Woll, Rutland Jewish Center