



BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN  
NUCLEAR DANGERS & A SAFE,  
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

November 2021

## A Letter to Help the Year End

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Dear Friends,

It has gotten to this: a couple of months ago the base of the world's largest tree, the General Sherman, had to be wrapped in what looked like tin foil in an attempt to protect it from massive climate-driven fires. In the past 15 months, those fires have destroyed 13-19% of the world's sequoia trees. Some of those majestic trees had been alive when King David, Socrates, Jesus, the Buddha, Lao Tzu, and Muhammad walked the earth. These divine sequoias had survived all that nature threw at them, but they could not survive what we humans have wrought.

We were given this gorgeous planet, with but one duty: to preserve and protect it. It is really not that hard. We are to treat Mother Earth the way we would treat our mothers. Each gave us life, the most precious gift.

Instead, human beings have damaged, polluted, scarred, and destroyed. We have pumped immense quantities of carbon dioxide, methane, and other global warming gases into the atmosphere. We have created extraordinary amounts of highly radioactive waste that will be toxic for half a million years. In a world where, as Gandhi said, there is enough for each person's need but not enough for each person's greed, we have obscene wealth for a tiny few and obscene impoverishment for billions of people.

Each day, more than 10,000 times the world's energy needs shines on the earth from the sun. It is free, and falls on the deserving and undeserving equally. Instead we largely rely on fossilized sunlight from eons ago—coal, oil, and natural gas, the burning of which emits huge quantities of gases that trap heat and warm the planet. And we also still use slowed down atomic bombs—reactors—to fission uranium, with the risk of meltdowns, terrorism, and nuclear weapons proliferation. We think we are such a smart species, yet we are doing what no other species does: we are fouling our own nest, we are threatening our own survival.

During last year's fires, which ended up burning fully a quarter of Santa Cruz County, I had to evacuate for a month. I was generously provided sanctuary, first with Laura Giges, CBG's longtime bookkeeper and great friend, then at the extraordinary Trappist Monastery on the Lost Coast where I had previously lived. I escaped with what I could fit into the Prius—two boxes of old photos, two book manuscripts I had written years ago and have long wanted to return to revising, a small suitcase of clothes, and a laptop computer. For weeks I didn't know if that was all that I had left in the world, whether the house and books and the decades of CBG files still existed or were now merely ash.

I, however, had a place to which to escape, and some money in the bank with which to start over if necessary. But if we burn this planet up, by climate change or nuclear war, and if we poison it so that it is no longer livable, there is no place to which we and the other species here can escape. There is, as they say, no Planet B.

*continued on reverse*

I know that there are some billionaires who, acting like children who have read too much science fiction, have been wasting vast sums on space flight as a new toy, money which could instead help preserve this planet. They fantasize about a select few living on Mars, in a tin can breathing recycled air, whereas if that were ever to happen, those remnants would be dreaming of the long-lost green hills of earth.

Aldous Huxley once said, “Man has lived only too frequently on his planet almost like a parasite living upon the host it infests. And whereas many parasites are sensible enough not to destroy their host, because after all if they destroy their host they destroy themselves, man is not one of the sensible parasites. Instead he has very often lived upon his host in such a way as absolutely to ruin it.”

I am sure that the metaphor may have occurred to you that the coronavirus now wreaking havoc in the human population worldwide could be seen as the planet’s immune system fighting back at the parasite threatening its existence—us. Ironically, the characteristic so deeply manifesting in a significant portion of our population at present—a willful refusal to face reality, which threatens not just the individual but those around them—represents the larger human denial which threatens global environmental collapse.

The medicine needed to prevent this planetary threat is right before our eyes—serious, day-to-day work to wean us off carbon and plutonium as fuels, concrete actions to prevent and remediate pollution, coupled with living far more simply, consuming less, living more lightly and justly on the planet. Bridge the Gap works hard every day in those battles. Help us continue this work if you can.

Peace, and other responsibilities,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daniel Hirsch