Greetings,

As I reflect on the past 12 months I am saddened by the ongoing strife in the world that seems to be the result of the unwillingness of individuals and groups to walk a mile in another’s shoes, to consider other viewpoints, and to choose mutually beneficial compromises over ideological “purity”. But I am gladdened to see our youth once again finding their voice and rallying around numerous causes throughout the world. From Time Magazine’s “Person of the Year” Greta Thunberg focusing on climate change to Jaclyn Corin who focuses on the March for Our Lives anti-gun movement, and from Hong Kong’s mass demonstrations on democracy to the global movement for gender equity, the world is seeing young people engage in activities to make it better. Perhaps these movements are not viewed positively through the lens of the more traditional political activism and seem to upset the staid and conventional processes, but they are showing that the young are involved in trying to make positive changes for their future, something many of our traditional politicians have overlooked in their quest to remain in their positions or in response to lobbyists.

It appears to me that the activism of youth demonstrates their connection to each other, focuses on making life better for all, transcends the boundaries of faith, looks beyond typical economic concerns, and belies the thought that this is a generation that’s disengaged from society and doesn’t care about anyone but themselves. This seems to be a positive development and certainly one that can greatly impact political discourse and action as these individuals reach voting age.

As we balance the scales of hope and despair, love and hate, individual gains and group success, the desire for the status quo and the need for change, it may be that the optimism of youth is a refreshing breath of air that clears our minds for a moment to look at the greater picture. It certainly seems that we’ve temporary lost our way from some of the basic humanistic tenants of society.

So, given the recent examples of our students and children, I hope that each of us can aspire to, and work toward the idea of right over wrong, the hope for peace, the love of family, the sense of community, the feeling that there is a life worth living for every human being, and the belief in something much bigger than any one individual. Let us take to heart the words of Nelson Mandela, “May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears”.

With that in mind, I wish you, your family, and friends a wonderful and joyous holiday season. I hope that all of you are able to reflect positively on the past year, that you have the opportunity to relax, enjoy the festivities, reflect on the blessings in your life, and above all, share the holidays with family and friends. May the New Year bring you faith in the future, hope for better times, health, happiness, success in meeting your New Year’s resolutions, peace, and the opportunities to share the positives in your life with neighbors, friends, and family.