

Small Talk – September 8 2021
By Michael Small

The school buses are back on the road as the 2021-22 school year begins. Watch for busses, children walking and playing around their schools and their homes. Let's all be safe! My thoughts (and yes, my prayers) are today with all the teachers, students, administrators, staff, and especially the school bus drivers. In some ways that bus driver is the most important person in the school system, for they are the first person the child or student sees each morning on their way to school, and often the bus driver is the last person from the school that the child or student sees. A smile of welcome, and a kind word makes a difference in the day – a farewell and best wishes for the afternoon and night also makes a difference.

I trust that all who work in our educational institutions are together working for the best outcome for each child, student, and young adult. The future of the planet depends on these young people to be fully educated with a yearning to learn and do more, grow safely, mature and be healthy, and with wisdom passed down to them from their teachers and elders they will make a difference – for a kinder world. May they be filled with a willing and open spirit to better humanity and the earth.

From the 43rd chapter of Isaiah the words to me still ring true when the divine speaks – “I have called you to serve the cause of right; I have taken you by the hand, and I watch over you. I have appointed you to be a covenant people, a light to the nations: to open the eyes of the blind, to free captives from prison, and those who sit in darkness from the dungeon. I am God! This is my Name! . . . And now I declare new things!”

Even in my early 70's I still remember those first days of school, especially grade school – for a “new thing” was happening, a new start, a do-over of sorts. I can even remember the smell of the newly cleaned rooms with floors freshly waxed!

That first day of school my grades were perfect, I was at the top of my class – new notebooks, folders (we called them peechees), pencils and paper in hand. Though, I realize that today children, students and young adults will be differently equipped. It might be an iPad, tablet, or laptop in hand. But those first days of school were, for sure, a new start – yes, a new thing, a new day, a new opportunity for all kinds of possibilities! Everything was possible

A new thing. The text speaks about being a light to the nations, opening the eyes of the blind, freeing the captives, and releasing those who sit in darkness.

It is my hope that this new day, this new school year will bring about that light, that eyes and ears will be open, that those who are oppressed and impoverished may be set free and for those whose days are filled with darkness – that they will be gifted with the light.

If able, take time to thank a teacher for their hard, challenging, and precious work. Take time to be in touch with a child or student and ask them about their day. Listen to what

they have to say. Respect and honor students who are stretching the limits and going places we never imagined possible. And with them, hope for and imagine a future that will become blessing.

Whether we are in our 70's and 80's, 30's or 40's – no matter your age – as school begins, as students gather together for the first time in over a year for too many of them, know that all of us are in this together. Our task is to pay attention, stay connected with one another, and walk side by side. This day is a new day, and a new thing is being done!

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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