

RECIPE FOR A BETTER, SAFER WORLD

Linda Grover
Global Family Foundation

I want to talk to you today about my own recipe for a better, safer world. It's called GLOBAL FAMILY Day. Before this brief talk is over I am going to issue a special holiday invitation to each of you and ask for an immediate reply. So please listen carefully.

GLOBAL FAMILY Day, One Day of Peace and Sharing every January first, is the new annual holiday observance that's been endorsed by the UN General Assembly, by more than 20 sitting heads of state and not once but twice by the U.S. Congress, the last time on September 25th. Conceived by children and promoted largely by children, it commemorates the first day of the 2000's, the United Nations' successful "One Day in Peace January 1, 2000". On that date, despite many dangers, nearly all of humanity behaved responsibly. Human violence of all kinds was nearly absent from the earth that day – an achievement, it seems to me, that's worth remembering, repeating and improving upon every year.

Whenever groups gather to talk about our 'common humanity' it's so we can learn how to get along better. I wonder sometimes why that doesn't just come naturally. Perhaps it has to do with our getting separated from one another as early humans spread out to populate the world, developing in the process different faiths, skin colors, customs and different holidays too. So naturally, over the last millennium or two, as humanity's started to come back together again, that's caused a few problems. Holidays after all are perhaps as powerful a cultural formative as could possibly exist. Holidays inspire, teach and motivate us. Holidays identify, unify, restore and renew our individual societies. And that's good.

What's needed now, I believe, is one simple ritual that can be shared by all. In addition to honoring our individual cultures' sacred holidays, we need to add annual observance of dates that are important to, and owned equally by, all of humanity. Earth Day is a good start, and the UN's International Day of Peace, marking the annual get-together of the world's leaders, is another. But there is also need for a day celebrated with similar ritual in every home, by every family. Something that's enjoyable and meaningful, like the American Thanksgiving which has served for hundreds of years to unite our citizens. Thanksgiving helps every new American feel like he or she belongs. It also helps us through hard times. It was vitally important in rejoining North and South after our horrific Civil War. Last Thursday most everyone in our country was doing the same thing; obviously that helps to bring us together and keep us together.

Although a good portion of the world's people already recognizes New Year's Day, the activities we participate in (or over-indulge in) on that day are by no means universal. And much of the holiday's former emphasis on forgiveness, on charitable giving, and pledges for the year ahead have been lost and forgotten. GLOBAL FAMILY Day is about restoring that meaning and purpose at the start of the year.

Okay, now we're getting to the invitation part. Here it is. Next GLOBAL FAMILY Day, and on January first every year, I invite you to break bread with (1) someone you care about, (2) someone who needs your help, or (3) someone you have had differences with. Could you do

that? Then let me add that if you can, it would be good to bake the bread, or prepare the bread yourself. Could you do that?

Breaking bread is universal. It reminds us of our individual cultures and beliefs. The sharing of bread is a signal of peaceful intent that almost surely predates the handshake. Also, because it involves gifting, it is often more powerful.

So think about it for a minute – think about GLOBAL FAMILY Day as your grandchildren or grandchildren's grandchildren might celebrate it – maybe using a recipe that you handed down. Imagine children all over the world going to bed on the last night of the year, excited about their family's plans for the next day, making bread in the morning and visiting with others the rest of the day. Pledging non-violence, helping the hungry, settling quarrels, building friendships. Trading recipes.

Today I come to you today urgently seeking partners to help millions around the world learn about GLOBAL FAMILY Day 2007, a new pragmatic tool to reduce hate and hunger – one that we need very badly right now. I ask this so we can begin to work together more effectively for the people of Darfur, and for every nation's hurt and hungry.

I'm asking this body to act so that just 33 days from now at least some people in every nation will know about, and will observe One Day of Peace and Sharing. We can do this. I refer you to the title of this gathering, Our Common Humanity in the Information Age. It is now not only possible for good actions and good news (like the advent of GLOBAL FAMILY Day) to spread around the earth in a heartbeat, it is vitally necessary if we are to overcome the effects of the bad news that assails us daily.

Here's one way we can spread the news quickly. Among all of us sitting here in this room we probably have contacts with the families of most of the heads of state in the world. Talk to them or write to them. Tell them GLOBAL FAMILY Day is a UN sanctioned holiday. Ask them to simply break bread with their people on this day of peace and sharing. If you say it right, they will get it. They will do it. And that will inspire others.

This pragmatic plan for greater peace and more abundant sharing differs from many proposals submitted to the United Nations. (1) It's already been approved in principle. (2) It costs nothing, but will stimulate trade, especially micro-businesses around the world (3) It is less controversial than motherhood, (4) We can have fun doing it. Let's therefore start breaking breads, not heads. And next January 1, let's make lunch, not war.