



Donatella Maestri Amendola
DNR

LEADERSHIP FOR A CHANGING WORLD

When Margaret Golding decided to start our partnership in 1924, perhaps she did not imagine what inevitable transformations Inner Wheel would undergo in almost a century of life.

One of the most significant changes, in my opinion, concerns the modification of the affiliation criteria through the years.

Inner Wheel was born as an association reserved only for the wives of Rotarians and, if in the past the link with Rotary had created an invisible connection that united the two clubs, today the context in which we operate has changed.

We know that, today, it is possible to form a club with members who have no connection with Rotary other than the logo and name that recall its beginning.

You may be wondering why I am talking about the origins of Inner Wheel when, instead, the future should be the theme of our evening. Margaret Golding had lived through a period of the twentieth century that would bring deep unrest throughout the world. We cannot ignore how our generation is witnessing a great instability today.

I think it is useful to remember what the experience of our founder was: if she had not been the idealist we know, with a gaze projected towards the future world and not still on the present, Inner Wheel would certainly have had a short life.

This allowed our association to go through a world war, a devastating pandemic, the great genocides and the holocaust, a cold war, the threat of the atomic bomb, the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

The English historian Hobsbawm has defined this century as "short", due to the density of these great events concentrated in such a short time, and which have contributed to changing the political and economic assets of the world, but also the mentality of human beings.

We cannot ignore how our generation too is witnessing a huge instability today.

What is the invisible link that binds the Inner Wheel of the early twentieth century to the present day and to those to come? It is based on its values, which remain unchanged overtime, and which define its well-known identity.

If the twenty-first century confronts us with new challenges, we continue to share the same vision of the world, a vision that, while enhancing the freedom of thought and action of the individual, puts him in relation with the whole of humanity.

We are not talking about a static Inner Wheel, but a dynamic Inner Wheel ready to understand the ferments of new epochs. An Inner that looks at the needs of humanity beyond its own personal interest.

We come to the present day. Twenty years have passed since the beginning of the new millennium, and our world is experiencing a difficult, unhappy condition.

If the values of our association remain unchanged, the structure of the Clubs has changed to adapt to the new demands that life imposes on us.

We have to interact with what is happening in the changing world around us, because if the changes in the world were to catch us unprepared our Inner would not have a future.

It is true that we must recognize the importance of the tradition and the past that preceded us, but it is a new Inner Wheel that will be able to attract people.

On the other hand, if it seems difficult for my generation to adapt to the transformations that society is facing,

it is natural for young members to adapt a hitherto unchanging structure to their new needs by creating more attractive clubs for a younger people.

Among us there are members who led a Club, a District, a National Council, and before being leaders we learned to rely on those who led us.

We offered our experience in promoting and proposing projects, we have sown friendship and optimism.

We have transformed inevitable failures into new opportunities without ever confusing leadership with authoritarianism. And this is what we need to convey to the clubs we come in contact with.

Respect and empathy towards others are essential qualities for a leader.

the work group must operate in an atmosphere in which harmony and serenity help action.

In a changing world the activity of a leader finds its meaning in, inspiring ideas and making the best of all members of the community in which he works by considering opinions and proposals with equal attention, encouraging the potential and attitudes of each one.

Clubs need to be flexible in the future to be efficient and positive and to attract new members or partnerships.

We need to be flexible in terms of the projects we choose to get involved with.

We need to make sure that what we are doing is important and relevant in our local community.

We must look at the real needs in the area: the way we act is reflected in the judgment that public opinion will have of us.

Covid-19 has had significant consequences in our habits and our lifestyle. Proof of this is the way we are communicating right now, and no doubt we should consider how we will be able to share our experience in the future of Inner Wheel.

We met in videoconferences with clubs from all over the world, and with the International President we witnessed the conduct of the convention online, which was unthinkable until a few months ago.

This means that the concept of reunion has also changed.

Without ignoring the value of face-to-face meetings that are a fundamental means to create and fortify our friendship, we must recognize that new technologies have made communication and meeting methods simpler and more flexible.

Inner Wheel of the new millennium will need dynamic clubs that can truly make a difference in the area in which they operate, clubs that continue to evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of local communities and professions.

I am confident that Districts and Clubs will be able to seize the opportunities that present themselves through innovation, flexibility and well-guided change. I trust a lot in the potential of the Inner wheel members: our goal is service: helping people and the world we live in is not a burden but a great privilege.

If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we aren't really living.

(Anatole France)