Script for SILCR Human Rights Day December 2021

* Good morning everyone and a very warm welcome to all Soroptimists from across the region, beyond our region, friends, speakers and to Brenda Lowe – Divisional President of Inner Wheel for Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Unfortunately, one of our speakers Roni Cherneva is feeling pretty rough with Covid, and, although we are sorry not to have Roni with us and wish her a speedy recovery, it has afforded us the opportunity to pay tribute to two very active Soroptimists who, sadly, have recently passed away. We shall also be hearing from Caitie Holden who was sponsored by the Region to attend our Federation Conference in October.

As we embark on our celebration of Human Rights Day, I now ask Angela Spellman of SI Newbury to read our Vision, Mission and Principles.

In 1948, representatives from the 50 member states of the United

Nations came together under the guidance of Eleanor Roosevelt

to devise a list of all the

Human Rights that everybody across the world should enjoy. On 10th

December 1948, the General assembly of the United Nations

Announced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – 30 rights and

freedoms that belong to us all. These rights and freedoms include the

right to asylum, the right to freedom from torture, the right to free

speech and the right to education. It includes civil and political rights, like

the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy. It also includes the right

to social security, health and education.

This year’s Human Rights Day Theme “ EQUALITY – Reducing inequalities, Advancing Human Rights” relates to Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. The principles of equality and non-discrimination are at the heart of human rights. Equality is aligned with the 2030 Agenda, at the core of which is the need for action to tackle poverty, empower women and girls, and address the climate emergency. Solutions must be found for deep-rooted forms of discrimination that have affected the most vulnerable peoples in societies, including women and girls, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, LGBTI people, migrants and people with disabilities among others. To quote the Secretary General, “ Everything we do during and after this crisis (Covid-19) must be with a strong focus on building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and the many other global challenges we face”.

* I now ask Molly Byrne Robinson and Jonaki Ahtek to deliver your readings.
* I light this candle to remember the plight of women and girls across the world.
* And now – Sue Payne – will you please deliver your reading.
* I light this candle to celebrate the contribution of women in our communities across the world.
* And now – Joan Howe will you please deliver your reading
* I light this candle to celebrate the contribution made by Soroptimists in our local communities.
* And finally – Jenny Vince was going to deliver our next reading but, unfortunately, she fell yesterday, sustaining a head injury and injuries to both knees. We wish Jenny a speedy recovery and thank her daughter, Sarah Darby, also a member of SI Oxford for undertaking the reading.
* I light this candle in recognition of the work of Elders fighting for Human Rights across the world.

And that concludes our celebration of United Nations Human Rights Day. Thank you to all our readers.

I now call upon our Regional secretary Rita Beaumont to conduct the

business element of our meeting.

* It now gives me great pleasure to welcome back Linda Shall – a Soroptimist and member of our Region. Some of you will remember that she gave a short introduction to COP26 back in October. I am delighted that she agreed to return today to explore the link between Human Rights and Climate Change.
* It is now time to pay tribute to two Soroptimists in our Region, who, sadly, have died since we last met in October. I invite Pauline Panter to read a tribute to Jill Hackett and Kathleen Martin to deliver her tribute to Anne Lines. Our thoughts are very much with SI Thames Valley and SI High Wycombe.
* I’m now going to invite Helen Byrne to introduce Caitie Holden to us.
* We now turn to our second speaker – Dr. Sham Qayyum. Sham is a multi award winning legal academic whose expertise includes race, religion, ethnicity and the law. I first heard Sham speak when he was invited by my Club’s President to talk at a Club meeting back in July, and was delighted when he agreed to speak to us today at our Human Rights celebration.
* Well, that brings us to the end of our conference and I think it has left us all with plenty to think about and to take forward. A huge thank you to all our speakers, our readers, to Pauline and Rita for their help in devising the programme, to the ever supportive Exec. and to all of you for joining us as we celebrate Human Rights Day.

I confirm the date of the next meeting as Saturday 5th March by Zoom when we will be celebrating International Women’s Day.

Now all that remains is for me to wish you a very Happy Christmas and a healthy , happy 2022.