



House of Peace

Winter Words from *The House of Peace*

Oh, Had I a Golden Thread

*Oh, had I a golden Thread
And needle so fine
I'd weave a magic strand
Of rainbow design
Of rainbow design.*

*In it I'd weave the bravery
Of women giving birth,
In it I would weave the innocence
Of children all over the earth,
Children of all earth.*

*Far over the waters
I'd reach my magic band
Through foreign cities,
To every single land,
To every single land.*

*Show my brothers and sisters
My rainbow design,
Bind up this sorry world
With hand and heart and mind,
Hand and heart and mind.*

*Far over the waters
I'd reach my magic band
To every human being
So they would understand,
So they'd understand.*



When the wintry Monday news came on January 27, 2014 that our beloved friend, prophet and bard – Peter Seeger – had joined the mightiest of choruses, our souls swelled with music. Song-flooded memories filled us and tears overflowed. It was indeed a time to weep, to turn even to this purpose under Heaven.

In our House of Peace that perches daily on that chasm between a time of war and a time of peace, the Pete-given image of the Golden Thread stirs us to the core. Imagine with us the picture that arises:

Some Unknown Weaver, a Sophia-style Seamstress, wisely plies the ever-so-fine needle, threaded with golden slivers of destiny. With patience and vision she slowly creates a “magic strand.” A kind of cloak of many colors emerges - under the gaze of this one who sews, a community of lives struggles, grows, endures. Far over the waters the magic band of rainbow design stretches... through foreign cities, to every land.

Slowly, painfully, steadily the House of Peace offers hand and heart and mind, struggling in small ways to bind up the wounds of this sorry world. The colors dazzle: here the deep violet of women from African nations, fleeing with their tiny ones, guests and friends, just now from Nigeria, Uganda, Congo. Then the unimaginable indigo of Afghanistan, sending its sorely wounded children, burnt and broken by unending war. Blue and green embrace as the land we till and the nearby sea radiate their healing forces. And the yellow – the most golden of all threads – our “special friends” – our long-standing House of Peace Welcomers – those whose “impairments” are the yellow-rich source for the repair of so many broken lives who come to us.

A shimmering orange orb pervades – a glowing circle of those who surround and carry the community in solid, sometimes heroically giving ways. And the red, the heart-color: is it not the courage of the ones who never give up, despite every obstacle their new country of refuge presents them? We think especially of the Iraqis close to our heart for these many years, themselves extending help to the next ones while still, always recovering from their own wounds.

It is a sacred rainbow tapestry this Golden Thread has woven, a kind of altar cloth placed upon our table where the song is sung, the bread is blessed, and the meal shared out in humble hope to feed children over all the earth.



*La Vierge Cousant
(Virgin Sewing)
Chartres Cathedral*

*Carrie Scheuchardt
February, 2014*

Precious Friends

Perhaps we will say more now of the most golden of all the threads of this House of Peace life.

There is Barbara, living here since 2003, lending us a share in the Buddha-beauty of her Down Syndrome. Her days as a Special Olympics champion swimmer and as a latch hook rug expert may have passed, but her resilient presence, even as shadows would seem to fall upon her, lightens the way for one and all.

A full summer of intense care, supported by our sister E. of Nigeria --- in itself a profound experience for us of hope and healing --- has given way to a winter of return to her beloved day program --- Petalworks. Maybe there is, as many would marvel, a kind of miracle here. But somewhere around early August, as Barbara smiled from her bed beside the glowing west windows of her room, clutching, as always, her favorite rainbow silk scarf, the spark had returned. The turning back to life from what seemed a final passage was a rare moment for all who shared it. So, on we go toward her Easter-time Birthday, grateful for each day together.

Geraldine also has an April Birthday --- and this one will be exceptional. On April 5 at the Camphill (Ghent, N.Y.) Breezeway Gallery there will be an opening reception for an exhibition of Geraldine's art entitled "A River of Peace: The Artwork of Geraldine Ortez." A dazzling array of watercolors, pastels, and acrylics of landscapes, Native American portraits, and nature scenes will be on display for two months. This is a rare opportunity to appreciate the world through the eyes of one so specially gifted. We are grateful to Joan Allen and Camphill Ghent whose initiative has brought about this special event.

And then there is Mary Ellen, overseeing from her wheelchair all the comings and goings of the busy House of Peace. No one, nothing escapes her interest, care and consciousness. Mary Ellen, Carrie's sister joined our community in 1998 after retirement from a 32 year career as a mail clerk with U.S. Customs in Boston. She has lit up our life with an irrepressible enthusiasm and resilience. Soon she will turn 75 --- even as our Ugandan baby turns 1 --- how they love each other! Just as she is slowly taking fewer steps, the little boy has learned to walk. The connections are all so real, so deep, so important. This golden thread truly creates a magic band.



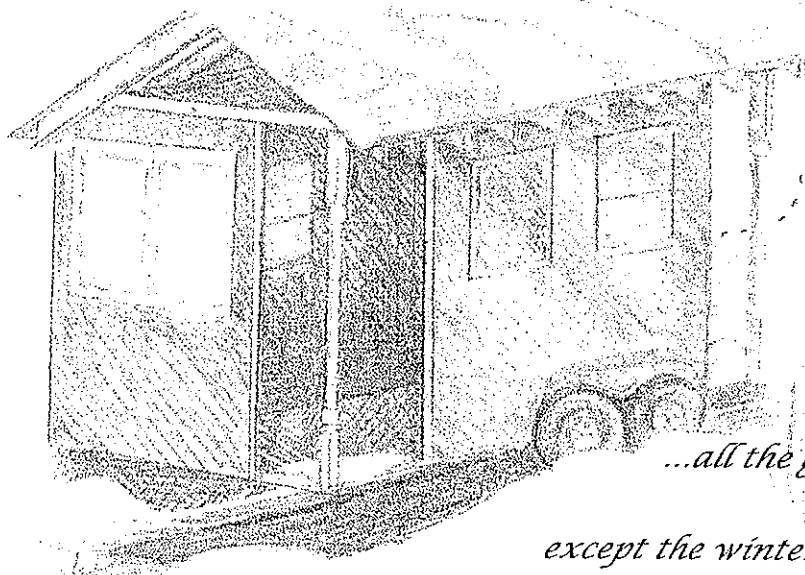
*Mary Ellen and baby, Geraldine,
and Barbara*

On Building a Honeybee House

The crisis of the honeybee is a major environmental catastrophe. In September, 2013 the House of Peace received a generous grant from the Massachusetts Charitable Society for the construction of a mobile classroom and Honeybee Workshop. Inspired by our long-term colleagues and experienced bee keepers, Dave and Mary Mansur of Tomten Beeworks in Ipswich, this unique structure on its movable trailer will house a long-desired honey and beeswax workshop providing ongoing opportunities for residents and guests of the House of Peace to participate in the artistic and therapeutic activity of candle making.

We are grateful to Mr. Frank Lloyd and the Committee of the Massachusetts Charitable Society for their enthusiastic, insightful response to this project. (An excerpt from the proposal follows.)

Honeybees are undergoing a crisis due to environmental and other threats. Colony collapse disorder, poorly understood by scientists, appears to have expanded dramatically in the past year, wiping out up to 50 percent of the hives needed to pollinate many of the nation's fruits and vegetables. How does this crisis, and the outreach we propose, relate to the goals of the House of Peace? The House of Peace's work is based on the principles of interconnectedness: the suffering and hardship caused by war or violence, be it across the globe or in our local community or school, affects us all. Healing occurs through connection as we open ourselves to the diverse strengths and vulnerabilities of one another. Similarly, solving the plight of the honeybee may depend on re-establishing a healthy connection between people and the pollinators that sustain us – a connection disrupted by practices such as pesticide use and factory farming of honeybees. The Mansurs and others who have introduced people in need to the complex, mysterious, creative activity of a beehive have seen directly how the suffering honeybee and the suffering human being can help one another.



*...all the garden locked in ice -
a silver frieze -
except the winter cluster of the bees...*

(Carol Ann Duffy)

Steven's Circle

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela

Problem: How can children believe in these words when the streets they must walk to attend school are riddled with bullet holes from deadly powerful weapons that take the lives of their family and friends?

A small circle of students in a large Boston school is deeply engaged in working through the consequences of the tragic prevalence of guns and violent crime in their community. Every middle-school student in "Steven's Circle" has been personally impacted by the violent death of a loved one. Every student in these sessions that are now in their third year carries grief, loss, fear and profound suffering on their young shoulders.

Steven's Circle was founded in 2011 as a collaboration between House of Peace, the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute of Dorchester, Ma., and the Dever-McCormack School – under the inspiration of social studies teacher (and House of Peace alumna) Ethna Riley. It is designed to serve and support students who have lost a friend or family member to violence, or have been impacted by community violence in a significant way.

Tuesday afternoon study hall sessions offer academic support and encouragement. Thursday gatherings offer a time and place in which these students can receive urgently needed help to deal with the impact of violence on their lives through discussion, projects, and group activities. Students create a community of solidarity and understanding with other students who have related experiences and become empowered to be leaders in peace-building, conflict resolution, and violence prevention.

The dynamic is powerful: internal healing through grief support
 external healing through peace education.

House of Peace interns have been attending Steven's Circle from the beginning, recognizing the challenge, opportunity, and honor of supporting this huge endeavor. In many ways the results can't be measured – but the students eloquently describe the effects:

"I feel that I'm being helped on this and that I'm not alone."

"Steven's Circle is a group that brings you together... Everyone [leads the group], we do this together."

"I really appreciate just coming together, the unity and love."

"This class is a class that we have a family in, and I chose it so I can be part of the family again."



"Sing Me the Music of Healing"

Tommy Sands and his son, Fionán, received a glorious welcome last March from Steven's Circle (seen here with founder Ethna Riley).

“And the Song goes on.....beautiful.” Rilke

Music of many kinds resounds in this House of Peace. Concerts on our behalf are a regular high note in our year. Irish folk singer Tommy Sands --- himself so deeply connected to Pete Seeger --- came last March with his son, Fionan, to warm the last days of Winter. Soon after, Treasa O’Driscoll, also of the Celtic Bardic tradition, gave a powerful offering of music and poetry. (She will return to us April 26 with a special program.) Eric Clemenzi and Steve Belleville, guitarists extraordinaire of *Kangaralien*, have played here twice to delighted audiences. The annual “Voices of Peace” Concert in October, arranged by Peter Stewart, featured a whole youth chorus from St. Mary of the Sea School in Beverly, filling the Chapel of our beloved community at the Sisters of Notre Dame. And, as always, a solemn though joyous mood, at our annual Festival of All Souls in November, was created by singers from the New England Conservatory of Music, under the direction of our close friend, Lyle Davidson.

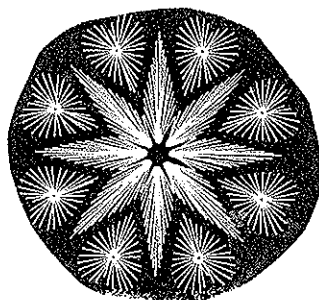
To these musicians, and those generously preparing more offerings, we are deeply grateful.

Summers at the House of Peace are always filled with intensified activity. Guests from far corners of the world converge. Many are young volunteers whose skills and enthusiasm support us in countless ways. Just as various youth groups gather with us throughout the year, so a summer youth group convenes. To all these co-workers, interns, short and longer-term helpers (including many wonderful grandchildren!), we are especially thankful. Your contributions are lasting.



But before the warm glow of the Summer months draws us into a different consciousness, there is still some Winter to endure --- to say nothing of the wildly anticipated “Upstart Spring.” There are North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice and Veterans for Peace events to organize. There are Anthroposophical Study Groups to prepare and Cape Ann Waldorf School happenings to attend. Our sister groups that share our work with friends with special needs will gather with us in various settings. Anxious calls for help from homeless refugees will come and the circle of friends to help them will surround us. There will be good-byes and tears shed as we thank those who have given so much during their time living at the House of Peace.

New friends will arrive --- we hope our faithful readers and supporters will be among them. Welcome!



In Memoriam

*To everything there is a season
And a time for every purpose under heaven.*

A time to be born, a time to die

A time to plant, a time to reap

A time to kill, a time to heal

A time to laugh, a time to weep

A time to build up, a time to break down

A time to dance, a time to mourn

A time to cast away stones

A time to gather stones together

Blessed giants of justice and peace, of community's unprecedented power, and of music's unequalled forces have passed over to the other side of the River they call the Jordan. Nelson Mandela, born just ten months before Pete Seeger, died only seven weeks before him. Their lives were given to dismantling the evil architecture of oppression and singing forth new structures of peace.

Their deaths have left our hearts overflowing with gratitude for their greatness, with wisdom to discover our own small greatness, with bittersweet sorrow for an era past, and courage to build toward what must yet become. Both these prophets knew that ours is a time for turning--- and assured us that "it's not too late."

Each week at the House of Peace, before the Thursday sunrise, we gather to recollect and reflect, to recall and remember the community across the threshold: family, friends, and colleagues, victims of war and violence, those who in peace cross over with the prayers of loved ones to guide them --- and those who, in abject loneliness and abandonment, in terror and in torture, slip through the Gate on unknown angels' wings. It is our earnest effort to be present to those who have died, even as they, to our quiet astonishment, can be so present to us.

A time of war, a time of peace

A time of love, a time of hate

A time to embrace

A time to refrain from embracing

A time to gain, a time to lose

A time to rend, a time to sew

A time of love, a time of hate

A time of peace.... I swear it's not too late.

In all our times of turning towards the needs of those who seek the help of the House of Peace, your support of every kind has been present. We thank you for your gifts offered in such wonderful ways!

Enclosed is my gift for the House of Peace:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Amount: _____

House of Peace, Inc is a therapeutic community serving victims of war, in companionship with adults with disabilities and offering education for peace and moral awakening, incorporated in Massachusetts in 1990 as a 501c3 tax-exempt charitable and educational corporation supported by voluntary contributions. (Attorney General's Division of Public Charities Account 027187)

