



Winter Words from the House of Peace

From the unholy debris of polarizing politics, laws lying in ruin, and language recklessly defiled, a bold word emerges: **Sanctuary!** It echoes across the land—and the world—even as forces not sanctified, not spiritual threaten millions of people. It leaps over a wall of concrete senselessness, over executive orders for cruel exclusion, over flames of fear-inciting rhetoric. It soars unfettered into the very hearts of newly-awakened citizens who, like Victor Hugo's Quasimodo would rescue the helpless innocent one from certain death, transporting her to a tower of holy safety, all the while crying out: "Sanctuary! Sanctuary!"

Perhaps we could create an imagination of seven concentric circles of Sanctuary. The outer, all-encompassing sphere would have us see the entire **World as Sanctuary**: a holy habitation, free of nuclear weapons, free of war—poised always to nurture its inhabitants with the earth's genuine harvest.

Next: **Nation as Sanctuary**—our nation—immersed in true freedom, our people—all people—bound in true equality and protection of rights, our life permeated with an ever renewed sense of true brotherhood and sisterhood...nation made holy again in the real greatness that is truth.

And then: **Sanctuary States**, something like islands impervious to the storms of injustice where laws uphold rights and social services fill human needs...where leaders ponder deeply the right order of working within our endangered constitutional system.

On then to **Sanctuary Cities**— currently the focus of hard-working, hopeful people of vision in large urban areas and small rural towns. Sanctuary that says, "You are welcome here—safe here—needed here. Your rights are sacred here."

Sanctuary schools and **churches** must create also a mantle of protection—students and teachers in solidarity with the immigrant, refugee, the "other." And churches who courageously uphold the right of one fleeing to shelter in holy spaces because now the churches recognize, maybe more starkly than ever before: These are truly holy people.

I must pause here to share a vivid picture. From medieval times, within the inner recesses of churches, close by the Tabernacle that held the "Real Presence," the Transformed Bread, there would shine the "Sanctuary Lamp"—always lit with the reminder: "This dwelling is inhabited." Recently, in a small glass case at the rebuilt Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki, Japan I saw once again the blackened, broken, twisted fragments of a once majestic Sanctuary Lamp that had been suspended before the high altar of this first and greatest Christian Cathedral of the Orient. Lost in painful meditations before this symbolic relic I had to ask: Is not the destruction of a cathedral and its praying people by an atomic bomb the ultimate violation of Sanctuary?

Traveling circle by circle in an inward movement we come to Home as Sanctuary. Community—where the bread is shared and the joys and pains felt in common—where young and old—friend and stranger are woven together in the rich tapestry of life... All kinds of homes. All kinds of families. All manner of security in the daily undertaking of life together. No one must ever violate these sacred premises. No one shall call anyone "illegal" here. All rights apply. This place is holy.

Finally we come to the innermost circle—the profoundly central space of Sanctuary: the "I" of each individual. The ages resound with the mighty simplicity of it—the overwhelming awe of it: "**I AM a Temple**—a place of eternal sacredness—a being on Earth reflecting Beings beyond. I AM—you are—we together must be holy.

And so we spiral back to that outer great world circle—protecting even while we are sheltered; nourishing because we are fed; alone but powerfully accompanied—ever courageously creating, even in the face of whatever comes towards us, true sanctuary.

Carrie Schuchardt
February, 2017

Let the Children Come

At the core of true sanctuary is the sacred human heart. And the core of that holy human heart is the reverent innocence of the child. And so when children come to the House of Peace, the community feels stronger, purer, even sanctified. And what children have come! Precious little ones with vibrant, resilient life forces that have survived accidents, illnesses, and the traumas of war.

As winter stretches forth to find the warmth of spring, so do our two boys from Iraq reach out to the healing that warmth and flowering beauty promises after a too-long winter of pain. Our 14 year old, here with his father, bears a name meaning “guest” or “seeker” --- “the one who seeks God’s help.” And how that help has come to him. Only 48 hours after his arrival the Executive Order, “Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States,” went into effect. Had the arrival of this child been delayed the fate of his injured leg would have been so different. But now our young friend has begun to take his first steps into his future.

So too, little Dilbereen, burned in an Iraqi refugee camp, finds his toddler steps supported by a true “band of angels” who have accompanied him through months of agonizing separation from his parents to a joyful reunion and new beginning. He is here now at the House of Peace with his father, mother, and infant brother, resuming treatments at Shriners’ Hospital, thriving with new hope for healing.

These two Yazidi families have endured the catastrophe of war --- the desecration of their land and their people. We can only try, with the powerful support of the ever growing circle around us, to consecrate each day for the transforming of our small community into the mighty sanctuary they need.

Another two great beings blessed our summer months, sent with the message that “God is not yet despaired of men.” Toka and Faraz, she in need of serious spinal surgery, he in transition to a more secure life in a new country --- she (age 7) from Jordan, he (age 9) from Iran --- both of that indomitable “tribe” of children with Down Syndrome --- sent with a wisdom “tremendously enlightening for the deepest secrets of life.” Two lively children, two wonderful mothers: successful surgery, a long recovery, and safe journey home for precious Toka --- and a marvelous Ipswich school and beautiful new home for Faraz. For both, we rejoice ---- Sanctuary.



Immediately after the Executive Order of Jan. 27, 2017 banning the entry of everyone, including legal immigrants and refugees, from seven majority-Muslim countries, the House of Peace began receiving urgent requests to counter this profoundly damaging ban. Amnesty International brought us to Washington to testify before Senate staff on the impact of this Executive Order. Here in part is Carrie's testimony given on Feb. 14, 2017 in the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

My name is Carrie Schuchardt and I am here today with my husband John, founders of the House of Peace in Ipswich, Massachusetts. I am here as a voice for the voiceless with whom we live: adult refugees fleeing war and injured children of war.

I ask you to hear their voices, to hear and respond to their pleas. And I am asking for Senators of conscience and compassion to take legislative action to protect human lives that are now at risk of abandonment by the Executive Order of January 27. I will share with you the faces and stories of a few, and try to speak for the countless other children who are in need of urgent medical treatment.

Since its founding in 1990 the House of Peace has welcomed hundreds of refugees fleeing war from more than 30 countries. Together we share a healing, safe, secure sanctuary and an enlivening community life.

During the past ten years we have centered our work in partnership with the Iraqi Children's Project and a network of Boston hospitals on offering secure and healing hospitality to children coming for urgently needed medical treatment. Each child is accompanied by a parent or guardian. Most children have come from wars in the Middle East. All have severe, sometimes life-threatening injuries. All have suffered through the tragedies and traumas of war.

[The stories of several House of Peace children were given here with the urgent plea: Keep the door open for them and all those who must come.]

Ours is a journey – a journey towards moral awakening. Joined by veterans of war who have experienced the carnage of children caught in war, and by peacemakers striving for the abolition of war, we name this ban, this wall, these Executive Orders, immoral and illegal, cruel and criminal.

In recent days we have heard the unthinkable question: "Is the United States any longer a safe country for refugees?" That forces us to ask ourselves in the most honest way possible: "If the refugee is no longer safe in America, then who is safe in America?"

Security is not in opposition to compassion. As I have learned from all our children, our security lies in our compassion. The deeper, more inclusive and far-reaching our compassion – the greater our solidarity with those who suffer – the more extensive and intensive will be our security, our stability, our right standing in the world community.

There is a ban, with other bans to be ordered, walls, all kinds of walls constructed against compassion, against medical treatment of children. We know, I am sure, within the conscience of each of us, we know what we must do. And so I beg you, I beseech you, let the children and their families come. Let us be a beacon of hope and healing for all the wounded children, building foundations for trust and the law of love... For always love is the only solution. It is our universal human calling from ages past and in this present moment of moral awakening which we have seen arising across the land.

The prophet Isaiah gives us the courage to redeem these times:

Hide those who have been driven out.

Do not let the refugee be persecuted.

*Let those who have been driven out stay with you,
be their refuge against the destroyer.*

The holiness of heaven is in this world where we live.

Japan is a land of mountains, surrounded by powerful seas. In the early days of the new year we experienced that “holiness of heaven” in Japan in a deeply moving way as we joined the monks and nuns of the Buddhist order Nipponzan Myohoji commemorating the 33rd anniversary of the death of their founder, The Most Venerable Nichidatsu Fujii. Honored to participate as delegates from America we traveled to Mt. Kiyosumi, consecrated by Nichiren Daishonin (1222-1282) as a sanctuary. Here in 1253 this great spiritual leader first chanted to the rising sun Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo.

Since its founding in 1917 the monks of Nipponzan Myohoji have continued that chant, walking the world in ceaseless prayer for humanity’s survival through the abolition of nuclear weapons and all war. In our January ceremonies at the Mt Kyosumi Peace Pagoda Most Venerable Nichidatsu Fujii’s words inspired us in a profoundly relevant way as we heard again his 1981 address: “Sanctuary”:

Any attempt today to ensure one’s own safety while failing to prevent the perils and calamities posed by nuclear weapons is nothing but a dream within a dream. It is imperative for all religious workers to awaken to this.

Several days later the American delegation traveled to Okinawa, that beautiful Japanese island that means, “A rope in the open sea.”

Yes, here too one can find the holiness of heaven, but as John describes, it is ever more visible in the beauty, courage, and steadfast resistance of the people whose land and lives are daily shattered by the ear-splitting horrors of U.S. warplanes and Osprey helicopters. Forty U.S. military bases have taken over much of this tiny island, just 60 km, long, 10 to 20 km wide, destroying the natural and human environment. It is here where jungle warfare training centers sent young Americans to die in Viet Nam, here too where Agent Orange was sprayed on people and land. Now bases are expanding, pristine coasts and coral reefs are being destroyed for new air strips, and there is the feeling of exercises and preparations for new escalations in the “endless war against invisible enemies” (Zinn) and defenseless peoples.

Sanctuary? ... here? How shall that be possible? Words from Most Venerable Nichidatsu Fujii:



“Just as the height of winter is the prelude to spring, the fear that shrouds humanity can be seen as a harbinger of peace, leading to a sudden upsurge of spiritual vigor sprouting in the hearts and minds of humanity....”

Humanity’s challenge in the latter half of the 20th century is to choose between extinction and great unity through reconciliation. It is in turn a choice of victory for violence or for human spirituality...

The path for genuine universal liberation is there for humanity to choose with courage, faith in humanity and spiritual values. ...”

“The time has come when we can no longer sit or stand idle but are compelled to rush out of the confines of our homes. The time has come to look up to the heavens, bow to the earth, voice our concerns to one and all and share our grief...”

In the pre-dawn hour of Valentine's Day (February 14th, 2017) a friend with a great heart suddenly crossed the threshold at his home not far from Washington, D.C.

Richard Dancey was ordained in 1980 as a priest of The Christian Community - a Movement for Religious Renewal. During his many years serving the congregation in Devon, Pa., Richard and his wonderful family accompanied the pre-House of Peace community during our years at Camp Hill Village, Kimberton Hills (Pa.). Richard's absolute genius at heart-expanding work with young people in classes, conferences and summer camps will be remembered by all those touched by his interest, compassion, wise guidance and enthusiastic support.

We offer here his Nov. 16, 2016 sermon: From We to Me to We.

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored
He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword
His Truth is marching on*

The words of The Battle Hymn of the Republic come directly from the Book of Revelation (Rev. 14). They live in the blood and in the heart of the story we are in, both in this land and in humankind today. On the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the great Jewish Prayer is prayed: The Ashamnu. Ashamnu means "we are guilty" and it confesses what we are guilty of, what we have to atone for. It prays and confesses, "We betray. We steal. We scheme. We are cruel. We are violent. We slander. We lie. We ridicule. We disobey. We abuse. We corrupt..." And it goes on. It speaks out of a consciousness of "collective responsibility," of WE.

The Offering of The Act of Consecration begins with the words: "Receive Divine Ground of the World, weaving in widths of space and in depths of time, this offering, brought to You through Me, your unworthy creature. I bring it because to You have also flowed my strayings, my denials of your Being, my weaknesses." The Ashamnu and the opening of the Offering reveal a Great Movement in our humanity and in the consciousness of our humanity: we are moving from WE to ME.

We are waking up to ourselves as the individual Being we are, no longer defined by blood, folk, race, tribe. In that movement, with that movement, comes chaos, turmoil, confusion, and the fateful rise of Egotism, Meism, like never before. In that movement comes something beyond civil war, a kind of conflict of all against all, where each tries to take and hold on to whatever he or she can for as long as possible. We are in the throes of this apocalypse in our culture, our politics, our economy, and it is worldwide. Around the globe you can see the Grapes of Wrath being trampled.

What is the meaning of this? What is the Spiritual World asking of us, of you and me, of all of us?

The Ashamnu and the beginning of the Offering point to a way forward, a way through: a movement for the first time in history, for the first time in the story from Me, out of Me, into freedom, to We. As individuals and as individuals waking up and working together, to begin to see the Truth of our "collective guilt," our shared-responsibility, and the Deep Solidarity in the mighty working out of Atonement, of Healing Salvation. That is the Call: from ME, out of the I, in freedom, to WE. That is no battle hymn, no call to war. That is a "We shall overcome." That is the Glory and Hallelujah for today and our children's and grandchildren's tomorrow. That is the Truth that marches on.

The Community at Large or The Large Community

Our 300 year old house has magical powers to stretch and expand, with very short notice, to shelter our guests from near and far.

As some children returned to Iraq and Turkey having completed medical treatment, many new children and their parents came. Our long-term House of Peace companions—Mary Ellen, Geraldine, and Nick—continue to offer each one the warmest of welcomes and the most caring hospitality. A host of volunteers provide a range of creative activities and outings, while Peter Swiatek, an indispensable co-worker, ably translates from Arabic to English and back again—not always an easy task.

The extreme drought of summer was a serious challenge for most of Massachusetts. Two magnificent young German interns here transformed those dry months into a waterfall of productive happiness. Jan Schlerbach and Lauens Benesch left no part of our lives untouched by their enthusiastic and capable spirits. With help from Ruta, Krista, Mari, and Raina—Carole, Saira, Jen, and Kate, Emily, Robin, Jane....and many more—the work gets capably done—the guests get heartily surrounded—the life flows on giving water to the parched lands and thirsty peoples.

And WEDDINGS! The summer Solstice celebration of Kieran and Christianna, with bonfire under a Supermoon! And the August Festival of Marriage of Ethna and Ver-Nard atop the mountain at the New England Peace Pagoda. These, like the celebration with Colum and You Lee last year, were precious House of Peace reunions, packed with alumni families and friends. We are so grateful.

The community rhythm flows: Festivals and study groups, a retreat with our Christian Community Seminarians, peace vigils and meetings, talks given and received, Board gatherings and strategizing take place in the light of these New Times, troubling times, world-changing times, that call us to know: The hour has come! Together we must be ready.

We have a website! www.houseofpeaceinc.org Enjoy a glimpse into this House of Peace.



In Memoriam

Life and death are interwoven around the mystery of the beating heart. How we rejoice at the infant-lives that are connected with us! And how we mourn, yet greet with quiet acceptance the deaths that also are deeply connected with us. Many such crossings have filled this past year as family members and friends, neighbors and colleagues have yielded to the solemn ending of earthly heartbeat.

Such a beloved one was Daniel Berrigan, close friend of John and Carrie, and of countless others all around the world. Priest, poet and prophet, Dan gave without measure to the work of building up peace by tearing down the structures of war – be naming the “hardware” of war, by creating true plowshares out of the deadly swords of war.

During our last visit to Dan, we breathed in the benevolence of his presence and the peace of his silence. But as we prepared to say farewell, how astonished we were when he took our hands, looked deeply into our eyes, and asked the question he had always asked us at every meeting:

How are the children?

Always his concern – always his love – the children. Not only, of course, the House of Peace children but all the children – all the beating hearts – all those we must feed with the risen bread. His poem:

Some stood and stood and stood.
They were taken for dummies
they were taken for fools
they were taken for being taken in.

they were asked, and
why do you walk?
Because of the children, they said, and
because of the heart, and
because of the bread

Some walked and walked and walked.
They walked the earth
They walked the waters
They walked the air.

Because
the cause
is the heart's beat
and the children born
and the risen bread.

Why do you stand?

The cause of feeding those in our care - in all the ways that true nourishment must be given - is ever more urgent and ever more difficult. These are harsh times for these who have lost so much and yet ask of us so little. We are receiving urgent calls to spread our mantle ever wider. We turn to you to share your strength with us that the bread be there for all the children who come to us - of every age, with every need, from every corner of this earth. Our own heart beat resonates with thankfulness and renewal.

Enclosed is my gift for the House of Peace:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Amount: _____

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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 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable and educational corporation, supported by voluntary contributions.

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*There is only one rule by which to judge
if God is near us or is far away,
the rule that God's word is giving us today:
everyone concerned for the hungry, the naked, the poor
for those who have vanished in police custody
for the tortured, for prisoners, for all flesh that suffers
has God close at hand*

*We have the ability, we have the means, and we have the capacity
to eliminate hunger from the face of the earth
We need only the will.*

~John F. Kennedy

June 4, 1963