

WINTER WORDS FROM THE HOUSE OF PEACE

From the Prophet Isaiah 2:4

*And the most High shall judge among the nations,
and shall rebuke many people:
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.*

From the United Nations Charter Article 2:4

*All Members shall refrain in their international
relations from the threat or use of force against
the territorial integrity or political independence
of any State.*

This connection between Isaiah 2:4 and the UN Charter 2:4—does it not alarm us? alert us? even inspire us? Imagine the power of it: nations rebuked by the Most High, turning away from all threat and use of force and violence, renouncing all war. We ponder all this, recalling the many times over decades of peace-making that we have gathered across from the UN in New York. There we have witnessed and prayed in the shadow of the famous “Isaiah Wall” which bears the inscription of this 8th century Jewish prophet, revered also in Christianity and Islam.

But here we are now, immersed in the dangerously expanding, indescribable tragedy of the destruction of the very lands and peoples at the sacred center of civilization. Here we are now, appalled by the incapacity of the international community to halt the desecration of life. The heart-stopping slaughter and starvation of Gaza brings the House of Peace into ever deepening contact with our close friends there who ask for prayers...calling for “every house to be a house of prayer for us because it is so very difficult here...” We connect with our colleagues who have suffered war in Iraq and Syria as they mourn this time when “the wounds have all been opened again.”

It brings us to the streets with our partners from Veterans for Peace, Jewish Voice for Peace, Not in My Name, Quakers, students and more. We deepen our bond with Combatants for Peace, an organization, a community of Israelis and Palestinians who are a force for healing where nonviolence and civil resistance, education and activism can build a free and peaceful future.

It brings us to the brutal realization that the tonnage of toxic weaponry poured upon a tiny area will render that land permanently uninhabitable for its two million citizens. Can we fathom this kind of criminal “climate change?” This phenomenon of the illegal displacement of an entire people?

The unceasing massacre brings us to our knees as we try with every inner force to accompany the dead and the dying, above all the children....the children....Theirs should be the Kingdom of Heaven. Theirs instead is the violation of the Kingdom of Childhood. And it is this that we stand against in every moment of these cataclysmic days. And we do so by standing with, standing for all that is most sacred and holy, the treasure of life itself. Again, the ageless wisdom and hope of Isaiah for all peoples:

***I will turn the darkness before you into Light and your healing will quickly appear...
Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, my unfailing love for you
will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed.***

**ARISE, THEN, WOMEN OF THIS DAY
ARISE ALL WOMEN WHO HAVE HEARTS
SAY FIRMLY:...OUR SONS SHALL NOT BE TAKEN FROM US TO UNLEARN ALL THAT
WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TEACH THEM OF CHARITY, MERCY AND PATIENCE.
WE, THE WOMEN OF ONE COUNTRY, WILL BE TOO TENDER OF THOSE
OF ANOTHER COUNTRY TO ALLOW OUR SONS TO BE TRAINED TO INJURE THEIRS....
FROM THE VOICE OF A DEVASTATED EARTH A VOICE GOES UP WITH OUR OWN.
IT SAYS: "DISARM! DISARM!
THE SWORD OF MURDER IS NOT THE BALANCE OF JUSTICE."**

This timeless proclamation was issued in 1870 by abolitionist activist, Julia Ward Howe, who witnessed the carnage of the American Civil War and the devastation of mothers and sons in the grip of violence. Its message formed the basis for Mothers Day for Peace, now a U.S. May holiday sadly devoid of its original intention.

But Mothers worldwide continue to carry this call in the midst of the catastrophe of all wars. We are awestruck at how this passion for peace is powerfully embodied in the women of Israel and Palestine. On October 4, 2023 thousands of women gathered to protest the ongoing occupation of Gaza. There were representatives of the Israeli "Women Wage Peace" and the Palestinian "Women of the Sun." Their call went out to political leaders to find ways to negotiate an end to the bloodshed and chaos of division. Three days later a nightmare of violence erupted: the Hamas attack on Israelis and then the ceaseless attack on the defenseless population of Gaza...the killing of women and children, the unspeakable transition from apartheid to genocide.

The women have risen up. Their voices, even at risk of hostile and violent reprisals, can be heard above the incessant bombing and destruction. The coalition strengthens with "Women in Black" and "The Mothers Cry" adding their lives to the swelling masses seeking a ceasefire, the delivery of humanitarian aid and the freeing of hostages and prisoners. Julia Ward Howe's timeless question resounds in them: "Why do not the mothers of mankind interfere in these matters to prevent the waste of that human life of which they alone bear and know the cost?"

THE RIGHT SONG AT THE RIGHT MOMENT COULD CHANGE HISTORY. (Pete Seeger)

These women of Israel and Palestine have created that right song. They know that "Music is what we need when language fails us but we cannot remain silent." (Cornel West) Here are some lines from "Prayer of the Mothers" by Yael Deckelbaum, Lubna Salame and Miriam Toukan.

***Between the sky and the land there are people who want to live in peace.
Don't give up, keep dreaming of peace and prosperity. The walls of fear will someday melt
And my gates will open to what is truly good.
From the north to the south, from the west to the east, hear the prayer of the mothers,
bring them peace, bring them peace.***



'If I must die, let it be a tale'

Sometimes a story, sometimes a poem can hold a prophecy. Such is this now well-known message of Rafeet Alareer, the late Palestinian writer, poet, activist, and professor at the recently bombed and destroyed Islamic University of Gaza. Prof. Alareer, father of six children, was killed by a strike in northern Gaza on Dec. 7, 2023. He had requested of friends that, in the event of his death, this poem be sent out to the world, a final testimony of a might man who inspired his students to use language to discover and live their dreams.

*If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze--
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself--
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up
above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love
If I must die
let it bring hope
let it be a tale*

ROSES IN RAFAH

There is a boy in Gaza.
His name, Qasim, means "generous" or "one who shares."
The father of Qasim is a farmer.
From all the devastation of his bombed land,
he managed to rescue his roses.
And so his young son gathered the flowers
and made his way from refugee tent to tent in Rafah,
calling out his wares to the exhausted survivors
of war and death, huddled in pain and cold.
Suddenly midst the colorless ruins of precious lives
came the brilliant flame of red roses
and the infectious smile of the "one who shares."
Said one astonished young father:
ROSES IN THE MIDST OF WAR.
THERE'S NOTHING MORE BEAUTIFUL!

ONE HUNDRED YEARS

Rhythms of time carry us in the rushing streams of human deeds, placing before us intentions and consequences. What was said and done one hundred years ago washes up on the shores of our times with powerful significance. At the House of Peace, we pay special attention to words and actions born midst horrific adversity...offered for all civilization...planted as seeds with commitment to work for nurture and growth.

In December, 1923 on a windy hilltop in Dornach, Switzerland, eight hundred people from many countries crowded together for a "Christmas Conference." This historic event was called by Rudolf Steiner midst the post-war abyss of World War One. It was held near the ashen ruins of the magnificent First Goetheanum, a building destroyed by arson one year earlier, the heart felt center of the emerging work of Anthroposophy, an edifice of inestimable value. On that Christmas Day in 1923 in a cold, crowded carpentry shed, a call to the cosmic Human Soul was sounded for the first time, a meditative renewal of Ancient Mysteries, an enlivening embrace of Heaven and Earth: cosmos... creation... hierarchies... humanity. Rudolf Steiner named it the "Foundation Stone Meditation, implanting it in that most sacred temple...the human heart. Its mantric rhythm continues to resound in the depths of our contemporary civilization, echoing in hearts in the world wide movement of Anthroposophia and beyond. It lives in every corner of the world, spoken out in more than forty languages that cherish its universal message.

We mark the significance of the words of the Israeli/Palestinian song (see p 2) :

From the north to the south, from the west to the east ...

Hear the prayer of the mothers--bring them peace, bring them peace

which connect us to this verse from the Foundation Stone Meditation:

The Spirits hear this in East, West, North, South.

May human beings hear it.

Some communities throughout the world carry this Call to Humanity as the heart piece, the very core of their work. Dr. Karl Konig, founder of the international Camphill Movement, created with others a culture of community life with practical and effective means, both inner and outer, to fulfill this mandate for transforming and humanizing life for "humankind dancing at the abyss." He stood firm midst the tumult of his times, addressing the chaos of apocalypse. As we live and suffer through, question and commit to, the cataclysmic challenges of our current catastrophe we are strengthened by these words of Dr. Konig who is a special guide and inspiration for the House of Peace:

Dear Friends, we are placed into apocalyptic events....The archetypal image of the immaculate human figure must again and again enter earth existence. It must make mistakes, it must carry the pain of sin, it must suffer entanglements, it must experience happiness and disaster and go through it. ...Every one of us, every single person is a piece of the apocalypse. Every one of us is in this sense of an apocalyptic nature....Nevertheless we carry within this apocalypse the immaculate pure image of God whereby we can recognize each other.

(Dec. 20, 1964).

The House of Peace intends to confront the suffering of the earth and its displaced peoples with a thought of the heart manifested in community life where some of the givers of healing are themselves living with developmental differences and special abilities. (The Founding Principles and Purposes of the House of Peace)



Summer brought a kind of miracle to the House of Peace. Our eldest member, Mary Ellen, suffered a sudden life-threatening illness. The combination of expert medical care, devoted rehab and visiting nurse staff and the outpouring of prayer and care brought her back to health and to her home. Surrounded by her helpers, especially Tamera and Hailey, and many close friends Mary Ellen continues to offer her unique and lovable style of unconditional hospitality.

Geraldine, always a shining center of our household, was honored in a wonderful way by Ascension Memorial Church where she has worshipped and volunteered for thirty years. Her church community surprised Geraldine with “a token of love, pride and gratitude for her faithful service, cheerful presence and her compassionate heart.” How blessed we are to share life with her!



Vera had a glorious autumn celebration of her 50th Birthday. She is a major helper in our daily life which includes the faithful care of her chickens. We call her an “animal whisperer” as Vera has extraordinary capabilities to nurture the family of animals at the nearby Cuvilly Arts and Earth Center where she is a daily volunteer. Here we see Vera gently holding Hadia, a frequent visitor to us all.



As for our energetic, problem-solving, indomitable co-worker, Hailey, the House of Peace gives thanks every day! No job is too big or small, challenging or worse for her enthusiasm and creativity. Hailey is a lively helper with our Afghan children and the little ones at nearby First Church as a Sunday school teacher. Her support of Salma from Egypt through burn treatment is a treasure for us.

So many other friends make life here possible: Kate in the office, Joel on the land, Cameron in the garden, Colleen and Saira filling social and tutoring needs, young people from schools and churches assisting where needed....it is a phenomenon of “love made visible” and we are so thankful!

Only help from person to person - the meeting from Ego to Ego - the becoming aware of the other's individuality without inquiring into his confession, world-concept, or affiliation – but simply the meeting of two individualities eye to eye, will create that healing community which can stand up to the threat against the inner existence of the human being. This will be effective however only if one takes into consideration a fundamental knowledge derived from the heart. (Karl Konig)

Let those who have been driven out stay with you; be their refuge. (Isaiah 16:3)



Momina and Ayesha welcome baby sister, Asma!

Life with our friends in the Ipswich Afghan community continues to grow and thrive. Children are flourishing in school and nursery settings where expert teachers and staff offer

devoted assistance. Summer and vacation camps, outings and neighborhood activities fill their days. Their mothers, all expert seamstresses, are discovering exciting ways to share and sell their beautifully crafted aprons, etc. All our Afghan men have meaningful employment. The House of Peace continues to welcome these cherished friends for regular visits, festive meals, summer swims and long term hospitality. The economic and social challenges of our times are daunting. The courage, resilience and optimism of these people is inspiring. The presence of all refugees in our community is a vital reminder:

It is the obligation of every person born in a safer room to open the door when someone in danger knocks. (Dina Nayeri)



Past and future meet in this joyful graduation celebration at Univ. of New England in May of 2023. Dan Thai (far right) is now a Doctor of Osteopathy. His sister, Khiem (next to Grandfather Thai), is a Physician Assistant. Proud uncle, Dr. Hue Thai, and his wife, Khanh, shared this special event with many other family members. The Thai family bond with the House of Peace continues to deepen and grow (see Newsletters of Feb. 2013 & 2023 on www.houseofpeaceinc.org)

We remind ourselves and our ever-expanding circle of guests, friends and supporters that Gratitude and Trust are the permanent pillars upholding the life and work of the House of peace. To all who surround us with countless forms of inner and outer assistance we offer our thankfulness. The ongoing generosity of the Cummings Foundation and the great support of family and friends from California to Germany have enabled us to spread our help far and wide. We sustain the operation of two bakeries in Afghanistan, await the return of two burn patients from Egypt coming for more treatment, and in whatever ways we can work to meet the needs of all those who come to us.

***For all that has been--thanks.
To all that will be--yes.***

IN MEMORIAM

At the top of the House of Peace hillside sits the Cairn of Remembrance, a quiet place for connecting with those who have died, a special space for reflection and renewal. A small spiral surrounds the ever growing tower of stones placed there by visitors who enshrine the presence of loved ones in their hearts. Many are golden stones prepared by the House of Peace and carried to the hilltop, shining in the sun and reflecting rays of warmth in cold hard times. This past year we climbed often to this Cairn, over and again accompanying those who have crossed over – among them Godson Christopher Root; Camphill friend Ben Matlock; Bosnian survivor of atrocity, Chevka; all victims of war and violence, especially the widows and orphans of Ukraine, Russia, Israel and Gaza.

We walk the spiral carrying a gleaming stone as if it were a candle in an Advent Spiral, placing our offering in this tower that tells so many stories now. Such a story is that of Lukeria, a schoolmate of Grandson Nico in Costa Rica. A tragic accident as she played with her sisters and friends took Lukeria at the age of ten. Discovered soon after her death was her journal, holding this prayer written in her native Russian just two weeks before she died. We offer it here as we have offered it at the Cairn as a song for all children, far and near, bearers of light and hope.

Lord, I will be with You

*Teach me to pray, Lord
and I will love your prayer.
And with your prayer like a bird
Up and up I will fly straight to You.
It's calm and quiet where You are,
The angels always sing songs.
But no one still knows
Where is Heaven, where is Heaven.*

Enclosed is my gift to the House of Peace

Name _____

Address _____

Amount _____

978-356-9395 1 High Street, Ipswich, MA 01938 thehouseofpeace@yahoo.com *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.*

*House of Peace
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2024

*So I say to you: Don't give up.
Don't give up on the things
that have great meaning to you.
Don't get lost in a sea of despair.
Stand up for what you believe in.
(John Lewis)*

Thanksgiving Weekend, Nov.27, 2023, Burlington, Vt: Three lively 20 year old international students, lifelong friends, visiting family, celebrating a birthday, were shot and seriously injured. All are from Ramallah in the Israeli occupied West Bank. All are brilliant stars midst the dark night of hate crimes. Hirsham Awartani , who has a bullet lodged in his spine, resulting in paralysis from the chest down, describes himself: "I am but one casualty in a much wider conflict." He composed this poem as a sixth grade student in Ramallah (age 12).

**HOPE DWELLS IN MY HEART / IT SHINES LIKE A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS
[THIS] LIGHT CANNOT BE SMOTHERED
IT CANNOT BE DROWNED OUT BY TEARS AND THE SCREAMS OF THE WOUNDED
IT ONLY GROWS IN STRENGTH
THIS LIGHT CAN OUTSHINE HATE / THIS LIGHT CAN OUTSHINE INJUSTICE
IT OUTSHINES SEGREGATION AND APARTHEID.
AS OF GREEK LEGEND, PANDORA OPENED A BOX / AND WHEN SHE DID THAT,
ALL THE EVIL ESCAPED
BUT LUCKILY, PANDORA CLOSED THE JAR BEFORE HOPE COULD ESCAPE
AND AS HOPE STAYED IN THAT JAR / HOPE WOULD NEVER ESCAPE
SO I ASK YOU ONE THING, LEARN FROM THAT STORY
LEARN TO NEVER GIVE UP HOPE
LEARN TO LET HOPE GIVE POWER / IN THE DARKEST OF TIMES
AND LET THE LIGHT SHINE.**