

WINTER WORDS FROM THE HOUSE OF PEACE

So often it is from words of the past, from those who have endured suffering with strength and peace, that we are inspired in the crisis of the present and led into a vision for the future. And so we turn to these thoughts about Apocalypse, struggling as we all are to find our place in our times:

We are placed into these apocalyptic events; we have to behold death and destruction.

We hear the call: "Pray that your flight may not be in the storms of winter..."

Every one of us is a piece of apocalypse. Every one of us is of an apocalyptic nature. (Karl Konig 1964)

Some may call these "end times" referring to the rampage of evil and violence into which we have been thrust by truly shattering world events. Yet others may see that other side of Apocalypse: Revelation. The last biblical book, the Book of Revelation, leads us to a mighty uncovering of mystery and even majesty as a celestial script unfolds.

The Apocalypse is a majestic, imaginative description of the evolution of the world, of humanity, and in particular the evolution of the present condition of humanity as it progresses toward the future.

It is a prophecy, and therefore it is possible ...to link every aspect of it to our own time. (Thomas Weihs)

This prophetic element of revelation creates an unveiling, and as an apocalyptic people we share in that creation. If all goes well, we might even emerge as a people still alive with hope, a vast array of those who encounter in full measure the suffering and pain of the world as our own suffering and pain and thereby participate in the coming about of a new force for healing.

So often these days John and I are asked: Where can we find hope? Midst all this what really is hope? We live into this question. Sometimes it feels we are dying into this question. Above all we are searching, all within the web of community life where the intensity of the search is bound up with others. And in still, quiet, mostly hidden moments of truth we recognize as if for the first time:

There is a sacred divinity in each and every person. The Holy is everywhere. This is your Hope.

The House of Peace has been incredibly blessed for thirty-five years now with the experience of the ultimate divinity of refugees and those who would unite with them—above all, those whose uniquely enabling "disabilities" create a soul transparency and deeply human connection. We live with the Prophets of our time, the proclaimers that peace is possible, that the lie of war is every day in some remote corner overcome by truth, that the destructive forces of evil will be overcome if we look to each other in new ways, ready to sacrifice and suffer, to be wounded and to heal. Hope is a process. Hope is a community process. We commit to it and undergo its painful demands, and then, always, give thanks.

Peacemaking is hard, hard almost as war. The difference being one we can stake life upon and limb and thought and love. (Daniel Berrigan)

***Music is the art of the prophets that can
calm the agitations of the soul.***
(Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

The disharmony of soul agitations fills these days with a cacophony of confusion and distraction. Everywhere we hear the cries of fearfulness and anger, distrust and disbelief. And always the plea: what can we do in the midst of all this pain and oppression? Yes, we are in the streets, in the courtrooms, in the sessions of lawmakers and citizens. Yes, we are raising our voices and marching and chanting and pleading. Yes, we are in churches praying and shelters protecting and soup kitchens feeding. But how shall we confront the deepest meaning of dehumanizing evil and violence?

Having received a unique Christmas gift, we found ourselves on January 24 in Boston's famed Symphony Hall for a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with its spectacular Ode to Joy. We did know already that Beethoven experienced music as a "higher revelation" ...a mediator between the spiritual and the material life. We long have considered music as a universal language, transcending cultural, social and political boundaries...healing body, soul and spirit. The music of life at the House of Peace teaches that!

Settled into our seats in that crowded music hall, we were filled with "an expectation and awareness of a Great Presence". The extensive program notes described music as "in the blood...flowing with universal themes of brotherhood and humanity, reaching for something greater than ourselves."... that when hearing such music "we can share the power of art to elevate us and bring us together in our shared humanity." (Andris Nelsons, conductor)

Two hundred years have passed since this Ninth Symphony first sounded in Vienna (1824)—and still the universe vibrates with the immensity of it. Beethoven could not hear the words he chose from the supreme poet, Schiller...nor could he hear its heavenly rendition by choirs that would seem to echo from the heavens. And perhaps he did not realize in all the torments of his life's anguish that somehow from this poem and this song and this music, with its longing and foreboding, composed as it was during a time of war, that he was passing on to the ages a prayer...some would say an ultimate prayer for peace. It is an ode to joy—and to our humanity—and to our freedom:

***Be embraced, ye Millions! Here, the kiss to the whole world.
Brothers, sisters, beyond the canopy of the stars such a loving father dwells.
Joy, beauteous, godly spark.***

Carrying that question-- what can we do in these times?--into a sacred space that holds the forces of music's magic created for us a powerful response: live into the wonder of prophetic art. Here lies truth, freedom and strength for meeting every level of darkness, every manifestation of evil. Here lies wonder and all that is human. Here lies a glimpse into the paradise of the spiritual that can flow with healing, like music, into the blood.

God has wrought many things out of oppression. He has endowed his creatures with the capacity to create—and from this capacity has flowed the sweet songs of sorrow and joy that have allowed people to cope with many different situations. (MLK)

A VISIT FROM THE EURYTHMY LIGHT ENSEMBLE (October 2024)

The art of Eurythmy, introduced by Dr. Rudolf Steiner in Germany and Switzerland in 1912, strives to make visible the wonders of language and music through color and motion, form and sound. It has been experienced as a fundamental source of education and healing in Waldorf Schools and curative/social therapeutic communities for more than 100 years.

Imagine the joy at the House of Peace when the renowned Light Eurythmy Ensemble of Switzerland asked to include us in their tour with presentations for our many Afghan families, and our friends and neighbors. This group, which has performed world-wide, describes its current theme and work:

More than ever the Light Eurythmy Ensemble is seeking the connection between nature and human beings, to find what lies behind, above, within and underneath the surface of matter. They wait like a rose in the desert and need courage to face the needs of our time.

The sheer delight of the small children and captivated adults privileged to experience this rare event filled us with gratitude.



A WALK AROUND THE HOUSE OF PEACE

The House: The heart of the house is the kitchen and on these cold, snowy wintry days the heart of the kitchen is the ever-tended wood stove that simmers our pots, dries our wet boots and gloves, and warms us all, inside and out. Geraldine's welcoming presence and gourmet cooking are a main attraction for all our residents and guests, meals being a gathering point each day. The conversations in the living room (often by a roaring fire), the celebrations in the dining room, the serenity in the many bedrooms offer us a sense of peace and purpose for the essential tasks of this life sharing community. Mary Ellen continues to be, in many ways, our hearth keeper, helping to welcome our stream of guests.

The Gardens and Pool: Surrounding this venerable house (300 years old come 2027!) is an array of fruit trees, flower beds and flourishing gardens, expertly tended by Joel Pulkkinen, an anchor to the HOP. Through a garden gate there stretches the child-safe pool, carefully maintained by American Pool friends. Here all summer children, HOP special guests and others shout their joy in many languages. In the nearby St. Francis garden Vera tends the many bird feeders that attract whole flocks of beauty to us as we share some outdoor meals. Vera also continues her work at the Cuvilly Art and Nature Center and with the horses at Cedarwood Farm.

The Barn and its Upper Room: Climbing the stairs from the areas of shop, garden shed and wood storage in our venerable barn, so beautifully painted and repaired by Marinko and friends, we arrive at the central meeting place of the House of Peace, home to a wide range of important activities organized by our local Anthroposophical Society of Cape Ann. The airy, bright space offers us room for our Festivals and lectures, concerts and study groups, meetings and conferences. Once the center of the Ipswich Grange, this Upper Room is now witness to community events, large and small.

The Honeybee Library: This "tiny house" now holds a universe of wisdom as it is filled with books and lectures connected with our Anthroposophical work. A place of quiet beauty. It sits close by the

Toy House: where bats and balls, bikes for the very small and toys for all ages are stored.

The Thoreau House: At the top of the stairway up our back hill is our replica of the famous cabin at Walden Pond. It was built by volunteers many years ago and offers a refuge for reflection and renewal. Overlooking the historic town of Ipswich, but nestled near fields and forest, this little cabin holds great meaning for us.

The Cairn of Remembrance: Walking a bit further uphill we come to a small tower of stones, some of them shining gold in the hillside light, placed there by friends and visitors, known and unknown, who walk the small spiral around this tower to place a stone and a thought and a prayer for a loved one who has died. In this sacred sanctuary we call to mind those who have died in the violence of all wars.

The Stone Circle: On our way now to the serenity of nearby Baker's Pond, we approach the summit of the hill, calling us to a symbolic arrangement of great stones, set in a circle with orientation to the directions of Equinox and Solstice. Here we can feel the presence of the First Nation stewards of this sacred land which we, at the House of Peace, serve with a sense of history, of responsibility and thanks.

WHERE THERE IS RUIN, THERE IS HOPE FOR A TREASURE. (RUMI)
A little reflection on our life and work with friends from Afghanistan

The very first Afghan soldier/refugee to reach Boston after the evacuation in Kabul in 2021 came for a time to live with us at the House of Peace. Ahmad was the doorway, and when his great heart swung open many more Afghan refugees came to live in Ipswich. They left behind unspeakable ruin in their beloved country and have become for us inestimable treasure. The resilience of those who have suffered war and pain and loss continues to astound all of us who share life with them. Some have now reunited with family members who have resettled in California; some continue to build their lives in and near our town; and soon another large Afghan family will arrive, at last joining family members who came to Ipswich in 2021. Our House of Peace co-worker, Hailey Conway, is a central support to all our Afghan friends, above all the children for whom she and her many helpers, including Mathilde, HOP artist in residence from Germany, create endlessly exciting adventures.

Now we face an incredible crisis as the hope-filled treasure of life in a new country encounters the ruin of dehumanizing rhetoric and unjust persecution. The cutbacks and closures, the raids and deportations all combine to impede both the arrival of family members long-approved for entrance to the US and the well-being of those already here.

We stand against the oppression. We stand with the refugee. We stand with hope and strength along with courageous colleagues in the faith that even this form of ruin will not obscure the precious treasure that lives in the heart of each and every individual.



Mary Ellen with little Ghita (here for medical treatment)

Hailey with Afghan friends



The joys of our life at the House of Peace increase as the years flow on. Every form of heart-filled support that comes our way builds our community and strengthens us for our work. The financial underpinnings of all we do has been deeply helped by the Grant from the Cummings Foundation and by all the donations that come to us, large and extra large....None are small in the scheme of things here. All combine to offer care for those in need. Other gifts sustain and delight us: the apples of Russell Orchards; the veggies and biscuits of dear friend, Norman; the treats from Zumi's; the yummy extras given us after parties and church events; the endless, devoted hours of volunteer help from so many in every form imaginable, including the work of our devoted Board Members..... For all this, for every gift of beauty and for the quiet, powerful prayers upholding this Beloved Community: thank you!

KASPAR HAUSER
HIS MESSAGE OF HOPE FOR OUR TIME
(A Festival for our Time)

The eyes of the world must be always gazing on the children of the world. The conscience of the world must be always committed and responsive to the suffering of the children of the world. And so a festival that turns to the archetypal “Child of the World”—Kaspar Hauser—is a deed of vision and of conscience.

For several days in November (2024) we were among the many who gathered at the Camphill Communities of Copake and Triform (NY) to work intensively with the significance of Kaspar Hauser (1812-1833) whose powerful destiny is permanently engraved in the soul of this world. Dr. Karl Konig who founded the Camphill Movement with a deep awareness of the task of Kaspar Hauser once wrote:

Kaspar Hauser kept the true image of the human being alive for the future of humankind. He retained the immortal part of our spiritual existence and handed it over to us.

Keeping those words before us we shared in the riches of deep, spiritual research offered by those who have committed themselves for years to this unique being, entering a process of awakening to a true “Message of Hope for our Time.” Kaspar Hauser's life and death somehow contained the mysteries of those who come into this world with the burdens and immense capacities of “being different”...of holding in their essence of soul both profound suffering and the vision it enables. The relevance of this for humanizing work in these times of an onslaught of dehumanizing forces becomes ever more urgent. The significance of life in therapeutic communities that explore and activate the teachings and discoveries of Kaspar Hauser, especially through the lens of Dr. Konig's work, becomes ever more visible as the world's children cry out for healing and peace.

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From our beginning in 1990 the House of Peace has been inspired and accompanied by these mighty bearers of healing forces: Kaspar Hauser and Karl Konig. Our daily life in community with friends who have special gifts for offering special care to refugees who bear the wounds of war carries the intention to serve and to heal in the most open, honest and sincere ways available to us. Many have come to join in this task throughout these 35 years. Many more are needed, especially those who may feel the call to join a renewed team of leaders in this work. Please hear this invitation, share it with others, and know we are ready to enter a process with those who would consider uniting with this “thought of the heart manifested in community life”...this House of Peace.

IN MEMORIAM

Sometimes Light streams in with sudden surprises. Other times the illumination comes with quiet radiance, constant glow, unflinching steadiness and pure joy. Warmth is like that too...deeply penetrating, humbly healing and ever close by. With tear-filled eyes and grateful hearts the House of Peace celebrates the Light and Warmth and precious Life of our close friend, Kate Salandrea. From early days at the Waldorf School, through years of HOP Handwork Group. in devoted and challenging work as our Administrative Assistant, through all manner of celebrations of birthdays and more, Kate was with us: Light, Warmth, Joy. Her illness came suddenly; her death on the snow-radiant day of Feb.18, 2025 came peacefully. Her remarkable work in the world remains in the hearts of us all.

BIRTH AND DEATH GIVE BOTH SOUL AND SPIRIT BREATH

Who more than Kate would want us to share here a breath of happy family news and joy and great beginnings! In the course of this past year we celebrated wonderful events, especially involving Grandsons! Three young Schuchardts in Wheaton, Illinois were married in joyful ceremonies, filled with hope and happiness. And in western Mass, Kieran's son, Donovan Riley Robinson, wed Grace Pisano in a glorious, festive gathering of family and friends from far and wide. Grandsons Nico (9) and Tayo (5) came from Costa Rica (with Ethna and Ver-Nard!), and Colum was there with his son, Mason, now working as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ecuador. In all these precious moments there lies that awesome reality of The Web of Destiny, ever binding us, soul to soul, one to the other, seen and unseen, on this side of the Threshold and beyond. With thanks we bow before it.

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2025

*I had crossed the line of which
I had so long been dreaming.
I was free, but there was no one
to welcome me to the land of freedom.
I was a stranger in a strange land.
(Harriet Tubman)*

(There came a report from Rafah in Gaza of songbirds being carefully raised and cherished as gifts for children. The singing of the birds drowns out the humming of the drones and helps the children sleep at night and believe in a song for a New Day.)

EVERYONE SANG (Siegfried Sassoon)

*Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields; on—on--and out of sight.*

*Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away. . . O, but Everyone was a bird;
And the song was wordless;the singing will never be done .*