

Journal

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**Note:**

*We have decided to call this publication a journal rather than a newsletter. There is not much news here. There is a lot of reflecting about peacemaking, ourselves and our relation to the world. —The Editors.*

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A JOURNAL OF INNER PEACE/WORLD PEACE

**The Second Coming**

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand:  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

—William Butler Yeats—1921

**SLOUCHING TOWARDS BETHLEHEM**

—By Bud Hayes, *Editor*

The title for this reflection is taken from the last line of the poem by William Butler Yeats, "*The Second Coming*." I have not been able to get that poem out of my mind lately. I think it wants an update so here goes. It was written in 1921, three years after the end of the First World War. Yeats was concerned about the violence let loose in the world. That concern is even more pressing now than it was then. The imagery of the poem is highly suggestive and menacing with faint strains of hope. Yeats had a cyclical view of history and believed that the two millennia of the Christian era were coming to an end, about to be replaced by something else.

I am in a study group working its way slowly through the book by James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews*. It is a mournful, wrenching account of how, from the gospel writers on, a bias against the Jews has been built into Christianity which contributed to the mistreatment of the Jews over the centuries culminating in the holocaust. The legitimization of Christianity under Constantine and alliances between popes and emperors in the Middle Ages often led to the exploitation, persecution and extermination of other groups as well as Jews. When Yeats suggests that the Christian era may be about at an end, my reaction is that, in the light of such a history, maybe it has yet to begin.

I do not claim prescience about what the future holds, but this I do believe, that if we are ever to have an era which is a significant departure from previous millennia, it will be an era without violence, at least the level of violence, massive, sweeping and relentless, which is about all that we have known. This journal speaks to the ingredients of that world without violence. We can make no claim

—cont. p. 2

**Mission Statement**

InnerPeace/WorldPeace advocates for nonviolence by means of spiritual disciplines, group meetings, education and activism. We believe there is a necessary connection between inner transformation and finding effective alternatives to violence in the world. We welcome dialogue with others.

—cont. from p. 1

that it will come. We can offer no finished answers. We can only point along a trajectory of hope, find stations of respite and renewal, and strive not to lose sight of the celestial lights of the spirit without which we would lose our way altogether. We are very much on a journey. Peacemaking is an ongoing dialogue, a movement between contrapuntal themes. Some of those themes you will find in this issue.

**1) Contemplation and Action.** This is an ancient tension at the core of living according to the spirit. More than one will write in this issue about what takes us deeper into ourselves and connects us with the other. Another will talk about things many Americans may not want to hear. Many in our vigil and Saturday morning groups incline towards more activism. Others deeply value the introspective and meditative stance which the group process supports. This is our distinctive dual focus—InnerPeace/WorldPeace.

**2) Protest and Affirmation.** There are many pairs of terms to describe this dimension of peacemaking: critique and construction, indictment and celebration, lament and witness, despair and hope. This dimension is less a matter of balancing than a process of transformation. Many of us are very angry and the list of grievances against our current culture and politics is long. The challenge is for the 'No,' for the many 'No's' to be taken up into the 'Yes.' The link between inner transformation and making a better world is at the core of our mission.

**3) Global and Local.** Here is another axis of our work. We are unashamedly global in our reach. We do not hesitate to challenge U.S. foreign policy and conduct. Most of us are close observers of the Palestinian/Israeli stalemate, with its wider implications for relations between the west and the Muslim/Arab world. But we want also not to overlook that some of the most effective and important peacemaking most of us will ever do is right here at home with our families, and in our local communities, doing the everyday things, building the network of relationships that sends the ingredients for peace back out into the world. So the conversation continues. We converse with each other on these pages, and, hopefully, we begin to hear back from you, our readers.



**In Search of a Vocabulary**

—By Bud Hayes

It frustrates me that we have to rely on the term "nonviolence" as much as we do in the peacemaking movement. Nonviolence tells you what we are not, but not what we are. For that we need other language. "Love" is the first word that comes to mind. It is a good word. If we're going to talk about nonviolence, we will have to talk about love. The word loses some of its cogency, however, because it is over-used in our culture. It is made to do too much, to cover too wide a range of meanings from the most trivial, to the most profound.

There are a number of Greek and Latin words which do bring out important aspects of love, words such as *eros*, *philia*, *caritas*, and *agape*. I'm not going to discuss their meanings here. Any standard work in Christian ethics will give you adequate

definitions of these terms and how they are to be applied. I want to go instead to our English vernacular and offer a triumvirate of terms which will help to bring out what it means to be nonviolent, what it means to practice love in all our affairs, from the most casual to the most intense encounters: unfailing civility, deep kindness and ecstatic affirmation.

**Unfailing civility:** We start with something external—behavior, manners. As we talk in our InnerPeace/World Peace meetings about our own proclivities towards violence, some of us admit to being practitioners of "road rage" in one degree or another. We discuss other situations where we allow ourselves to be sarcastic, irritable, insulting, impatient, demanding, blaming, etc. A number of us also report heightened awareness of these states and behaviors as a result of our study of nonviolence. I think I am not alone in beginning to experience a shift

—cont. on p. 5

**I AM THE FILLING, AND  
I AM FILLED.**

—By Demetrios Pappageorge

My participation in the Inner Peace/World Peace group has been one of questions and metaphors.

Questions 1 & 2: What will this group accomplish? Can I find a means of attaining inner peace here? When we started this little community, I imagined myself as some kind of hot glowing iron of positivism, and I would allow the skilled hands of the collective to forge me into a powerful force for God. People in our group encouraged me to meditate, reminding me, "It takes time." For me it takes more than time, a commodity of which I find myself in short supply; it takes a skill I do not yet possess. For you see, I have what the meditation experts have described as "*monkey mind*"; my attention jumps from place to place trying to listen to all the voices which shout for attention in my head. Usually the voices are rattling off items from my "to do" list, complaining that this quiet time is robbing me of the valuable minutes needed to get stuff done. Or else they rebuke me for being at the InnerPeace/WorldPeace meeting, saying that I should be at home with our ten-year-old to protect her from the twisted and materialistic messages of television.

When our meetings turn to world peace, I become so overwhelmed by the number and size of the world's problems, the incredible amount of information we consume about those problems, and my impulse to want to solve all those problems that I break into a sweat. Metaphor: When I take the time to peer inside, my mind is an over-crowded classroom filled with behavior-disordered students wielding art supplies, band instruments, and power tools.

Question 3: In this eventful life of mine, how much time do I actually have to work on inner peace and world peace? My life is busy enough with teaching, lesson planning, soccer coaching, play directing, paper grading, homework helping, household chores, taxi service for older daughters, bedtime rituals for our youngest daughter, church, committee work, and the Friday night peace vigil, and the dog, and the cat, and the two frogs,

and so on, and so forth. As it is, I get up before the rest of my family on the weekends to squeeze in a little uninterrupted paper grading just to stay above water. Do I actually have time to squeeze in anything else? Metaphor: I am the Incredible Plate Spinner from the circus, keeping all the plates spinning on their nine-foot poles to the delight and squeals of the crowd while voices yell at me to add yet another plate and another.

Question 4: Is there a way to find peace within this wonderfully full life God has given me while helping to bring more peace to the world? Slowly but surely I am learning that it is the loving little decisions made in simple everyday situations that will bring peace to me and those around me. I participate in our Friday night peace vigils, and peace activist meetings when I can, but more and more, I feel that this is my season for being a good father. Sending three under-loved, uninformed and ill-equipped daughters into the world would be throwing three live time bombs waiting to explode. Hardly a service to humanity. Launching three strong forces for God seems a better use of my energy. So, as I lie on the floor grading essays with the dog squinching me from the side digging his nose into my armpit looking for affection, and my 10-year-old daughter on the other side doing the same, I realize the answer may be right here in the form of a physical metaphor: I am the filling for this sandwich cookie of love, and I am filled in the process. I know that this is exactly what I should be doing at this time and in this place. These simple acts of honing my students' communication skills while providing warm armpits to cold lonely noses are two of the greatest ways I can help bring about peace.

...my attention  
jumps from place  
to place trying to  
listen to all the  
voices which shout  
for attention in  
my head.

**I HEARD THE NEWS TODAY,  
OH BOY!**

—By Mary Erkins

Have you ever wondered about the guy in the Beatles song who shot himself before the stoplight had changed? I used to think that the song was about that one guy, but I have come to think that it may be about all of us. Sitting in traffic, waiting for the light to change, has become, for me, a symbol of the dilemmas of modern life. I am surrounded by people, but really, I'm alone. I feel tremendous pressure to get somewhere, but I am standing still. I have a powerful vehicle at my disposal, but there are severe limits on how I can use it. I feel like I live much of my life at intersections of one sort or another. The cross currents there come from within and from without, and many of them conflict.

I like to think of myself as an idealistic, somewhat knowledgeable and caring person. Yet I can get immobilized by the things I think and know and feel. In trying to get educated about this very complex world of ours, I find myself reading different publications, entertaining opposing sides of political issues, studying history and cultures in greater depths, listening to speakers on timely social and economic topics, communicating with two of my brothers who belong to different political parties and trying to ferret out the truth in it all. Sometimes I feel exhausted, but I'm not ready to give up and I want to tell you why.

I am experiencing miracles daily. Just the other day as I was taking my 16-year-old daughter to school, a driver sped around us on the right, pulled in front of me, then slammed on his brakes as the car in front of him had stopped at the yellow. I slammed on my brakes to avoid rear-ending him, and Cristina and I felt the strong tug of our seatbelts as we lurched forward. In a split second, out of my mouth came, "Did you see what

that jerk did?!?" My darling daughter, who often, much to my dismay, uses foul language as a rite of passage into teenagedom said, "Chill out, Mom. Get peaceful. He's probably late for work." Out of the mouths of teens! "You're probably right,

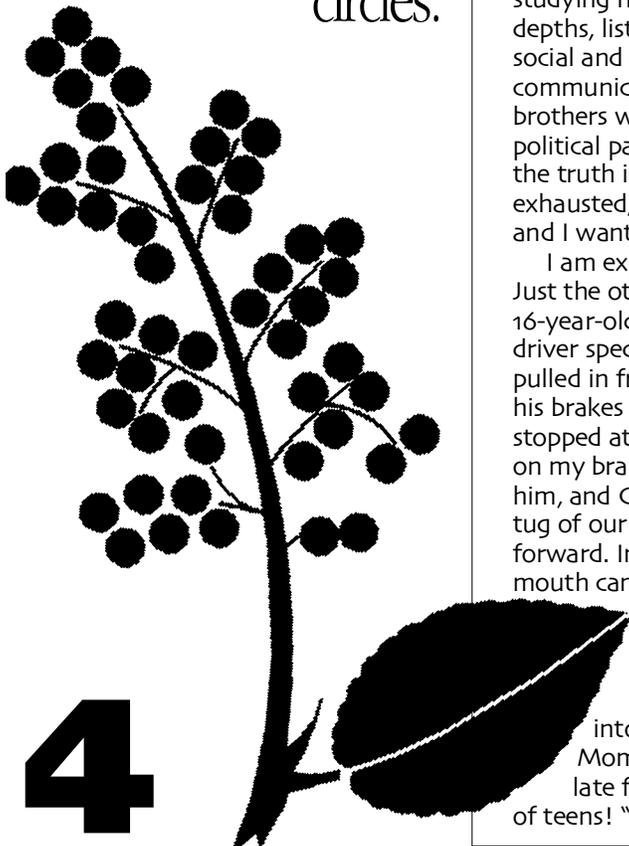
Honey," I said. "I do need to chill out and get peaceful. Thanks!"

Now HOW to get peaceful? I know and try to practice the usual things: proper rest, a healthy diet, regular exercise, some yoga and meditation, inspirational readings, prayer. But the thing that most easily transports me into an ecstatic state of peacefulness is the InnerPeace/WorldPeace group that I attend each Saturday morning here in Oak Park. I say "ecstatic" because along with the feeling of calm and connectedness, there is an excitement that comes from the sharing, the risk-taking, the educating of one another. My participation in this kind of a process takes me outside of myself. Through the months, now years, we have come to respect, trust and love each other despite our different views on some matters. That awareness—that our expressions will be received, respected and pondered, even when there is disagreement—is both exhilarating and peace-making. It affords the kind of "ecstatic affirmation" Bud Hayes talks about in his article in this issue, "*In Search of a Vocabulary.*"

Some people in the group have found the energy and direction to involve themselves in political and social action outside the group. This *InnerPeace/WorldPeace Journal* is an outgrowth of the fullness that some of us have come to feel from our involvement in the vigil and Saturday morning groups.

Yes, I believe that peace does begin with each of us, then moves to ever-widening circles. When leaving the Saturday morning group, I ride the momentum of those widening circles back to the maddening traffic and the complex, crazy world, but I carry with me a serenity which, hopefully, touches those around me, especially Cristina. Do you have such a reservoir? Can you and some friends begin to create one? Let us know your thoughts.

Yes, I believe  
that peace does  
begin with each of  
us, then moves to  
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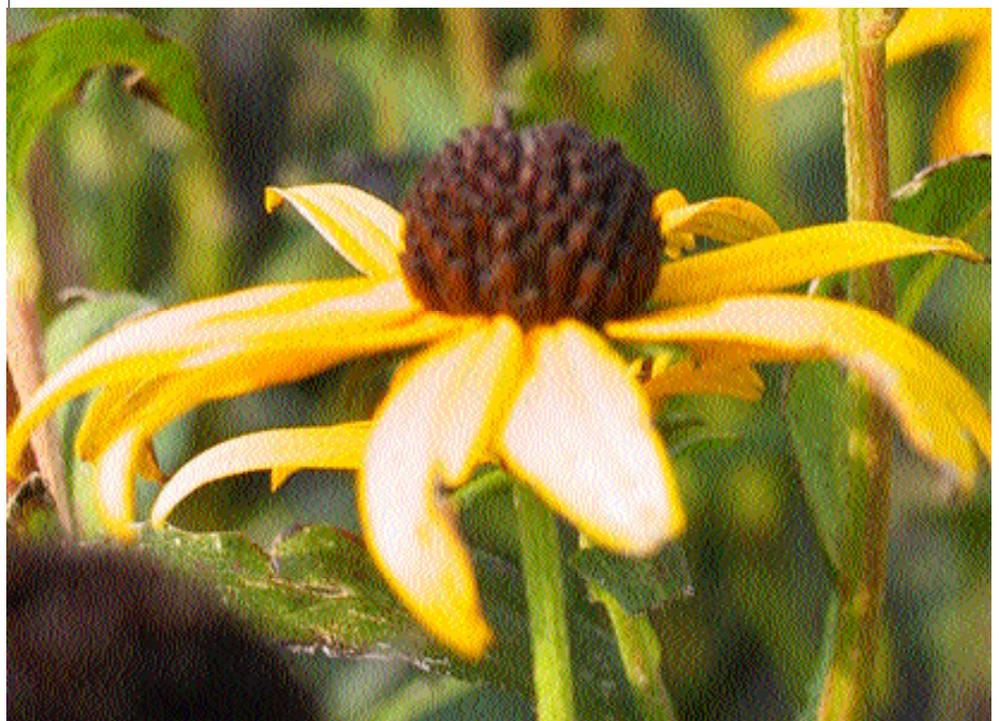
Deep kindness  
can't be forced or  
faked. It comes  
from within.

—cont. from p. 2  
in my “center of gravity” from reacting to other people’s behavior and moods, to a more consistent intentionality based within myself, a resolve to be courteous and civil in all circumstances.

**Deep kindness:** Now we look deeper into that altered “center of gravity” and find it to be grounded in an attitude towards the world that is consistently affirming, open, positive. This is more of a challenge. It is possible to be civil even if I don’t feel like it. Deep kindness can’t be forced or faked. It comes from within. It may come more naturally for some than for others, but it can also be cultivated. I find that I am being nurtured by the weekly meetings on Saturday mornings and the Friday night vigils, challenged but also affirmed, called upon to reach beyond myself but also receiving in abundance. I think my reservoir of kindness is deepening. This process can happen anywhere. Use us as a model. Talk with us, write, attend our meetings, but those of you who live outside the Oak Park area might want to think about starting your own groups. This is grassroots. What’s happening in Oak Park is beginning to happen in many communities. We do not need to be defeated by a culture of negativity.

**Ecstatic affirmation:** We have the least control over this dimension of

love. It is spontaneous, unplanned, a gift. It comes in those moments when there is a powerful meeting of minds and hearts and affections. In her article, “*I Heard the News Today, Oh, Boy!*” Mary Erkins describes how this sometimes happens in the Saturday morning group. The times when I have experienced ecstatic affirmation are unforgettable. Such moments anchor me in my “center of gravity,” take me even farther into deep kindness. I am nurtured and sustained by these moments. They reach back all through my life. Some I may have forgotten but I believe that even these leave a legacy, a foundation, a reservoir. We are frail creatures and it is not selfish to say that we need to be as much loved as loving. Unfailing civility, deep kindness, ecstatic affirmation—these are not solitary virtues. They come in the meeting of I and Thou, to use the somewhat neglected terminology of Martin Buber, a meeting where there is risk, openness, reverence for the other and a fundamental conviction about the sanctity of all life and about my place in it.



**WHY DO THEY HATE US?**

—By Walter E. Ziegenhals

At a recent dinner with my two nephews, Matthew and Mark, successful middle-aged lawyers in Michigan, the conversation turned to the war in Iraq, America's role in the Middle East and the issue of terrorism. "Why do they hate us?" these bright, well-educated men wanted to know. What have we Americans done to bring about the events of 9/11, earn the hostility of much of the Muslim world? How has it happened that there are men and women who hate westerners so much they are willing to die? That night over dinner I failed to offer anything like a satisfactory answer to the question of why.

Afterward I asked myself why it was so difficult for me to say something. Their question came out so easily. They seemed almost complacent in not knowing. And there I was, with very strong feelings on the matter, at a loss for words. How come? Well, for one thing, I think that to even begin to talk about why the Muslim world might hate us is to risk being seen as unpatriotic by most Americans. I think I may have felt some of that with my two nephews. Also I was afraid that if I really tried to answer their question, they might shut down and not hear a thing I said. To answer that question, we have to be able to at least begin to understand how the Muslim world sees us. That can be very threatening. Nevertheless I want to try. Like Jeff Olson in his article "Ready. Or Not?," I would like another opportunity to answer a question for which I wasn't prepared. If I get one, I'll say something like this.

*Why do they hate us?* First of all, there is no simple answer. Any effort to understand that question will be defeated from the start if the expectation is that it can be answered in one sentence as, for instance, when someone as respected as Dan Rather commented on British TV that the Muslim radicals who attacked the Pentagon and the Twin Towers were "jealous" of American prosperity and freedom. General Wm. Boykin, Donald Rumsfeld's undersecretary of defense, has said that "they hate us because we're a Christian nation." (*Chicago*

*Tribune*, 10/22/03.) President Bush has tried to explain Islamist terror as "an atavistic rejection of American freedom." In an article in *The Guardian* dated 9/18/03, Tony Blair has called Islamist terrorism "a virus, as though, like AIDS, its origins are inexplicable." (Karen Armstrong, *The Guardian* 9/18/03.) While each of these may contain a smidgen of truth, I think the real explanation lies in an area most Americans know precious little about—the history of American foreign policies and conduct.

*Why do they hate us?* To begin with, we must go back to the years immediately following World War II when "European colonial powers were responsible for deciding on, then freezing the boundaries that broke down the Islamic Empire into modern secular states." (Robin Wright, *Sacred Page*, p. 165.) Seen against their pre-World War status, the boundaries of Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon are artificial. We must remember—and Americans are reluctant to remember such things—that it was a President of the United States, Harry Truman, acting against the advice of his Secretary of State, George Marshall, who granted the world's first recognition of Israel in 1948. And it has been the U.S., along with other western nations, which has kept Israel alive at the "expense of the Palestinians, the Arab world and Islam." (Wright op.cit. p. 165)

*Why do they hate us?* "It isn't fashionable to say so," says Walter Russell Mead, senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, "but the United States is the most dangerous military power in the history of the world. Since World War II the United States has continued to employ devastating force against both civil and military targets." For example, Mead continues, "out of a pre-war population of 9.49 million, an estimated one million North Korean civilians are believed to have died as a result of the actions of American forces during the 1950-53 conflict there."

Almost 34,000 American soldiers were killed during the conflict, meaning that U.S. forces killed approximately 30 North Korean civilians for every American soldier who died." Mead goes on. "The United States dropped almost three times as

“European colonial powers were responsible for deciding on, then freezing the boundaries that broke down the Islamic Empire into modern secular states.”

—Robin Wright

## A JOURNAL OF INNERPEACE/WORLDPEACE



*This article was read by  
Walter E. Ziegenhals at the  
11/7/03 gathering of our  
Peace Vigil.*

*Each person who reads  
or speaks ends by saying:  
"Let peace fill our hearts."  
And the group responds—  
"Shalom for all!"*

much explosive tonnage in the Vietnam War as it used in World War II. The conditions of that unhappy conflict make civilian casualties difficult to estimate, but some 365,000 Vietnamese civilians are believed to have died as a result of the war during the period of American involvement. That is a ratio of 8 Vietnamese civilian deaths for every American killed in the war."

It can be argued that wars in Korea and Vietnam took place a long time ago, that even this astonishing slaughter by American military has been forgotten by now, that Asian, not Arab/Muslim people were the victims. Perhaps, but think of it this way. Korea and Vietnam took place in our lifetime—yours as well as mine—and, if they accomplished nothing else, these wars have taught third world people that Americans have the capacity and are willing to kill people of color in great numbers.

*Why do they hate us?* There are other foreign policy actions not normally reported on the front page of the *Chicago Tribune*. Consider two. Firstly, "in Indonesia (the world's largest Muslim nation), in 1965/66, a million (Indonesians) were killed with the complicity of the U.S. and British governments, the Americans supplying General Suharto with assassination lists, then ticking off names as people were killed." (*Voices of Sanity*, "Inevitable Ring to the Unimaginable," John Pilger.) Secondly, in Iraq (another predominantly Muslim nation), "at least a million civilians, half of them children...died...as a result of...the embargo imposed by the United States and Britain." (Pilger, *ibid*). Madeline Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State, when asked about these deaths on *60 Minutes*, said, "It's a hard choice, but I think, we think, it's worth it." (May 11, 1986). Imagine how the Muslim world reacted to that remark. Better yet, imagine how we Americans would have reacted had it been our children who died as a result of an Arab/Muslim embargo!

*Why do they hate us?* A recent report by *Human Rights Watch* "charges that the U.S. led military coalition in Iraq is often reluctant to investigate civilian military deaths, is not careful enough to prevent them and has failed to provide an accounting

of the casualties...hundreds of innocent Iraqis, the *Watch* reports, have been killed at check-points or caught in the crossfire in clashes outside the capital...just the fact that the U.S. military doesn't track civilian deaths indicates that they do not seem to care," said Joe Stork, acting executive director of the *Watch*. (*Chicago Tribune*.)

*Why do they hate us?* Arab/Muslim nations must be worried about who's next on the Bush Administration's hit list. Worry they should! Retired General Wesley Clark, recalling a conversation he had with a senior military advisor at the Pentagon in November 2001, reports that "the invasion of Iraq was being discussed as part of a five year campaign plan...and there were a total of seven countries, beginning with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia and Sudan." (*Christian Century*, 10/18/03.)

The burden of our military and foreign policy conduct hangs heavy on my conscience. I realize that to speak with as much candor as I just have would be incendiary in many quarters. I struggle with the question of how to reconcile being a patriotic U.S. citizen and a peacemaker. I want to support my country but I believe that peacemaking involves being able to put yourself in the shoes of your perceived adversary. I think when we do that, your question, "Why do they hate us?" is not so difficult to answer, even though we may not like the answer we get.

**Love  
Overcomes  
Violence  
Everywhere**

**L.O.V.E WORKS**

It is not possible—at least it doesn't seem possible right now—to reignite the Civil Rights Movement, nor would Martin Luther King, Jr., necessarily want us to. I am quite sure he would want us to continue his legacy in the form of constructive action. In fact, that was the direction he himself was taking before reaction cut him off. And it would not have to start, necessarily, as a great movement. Think now about one of the most gripping news stories of 1992, the healing conversion of a Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan, Larry Trapp, by a Jewish couple, Michael and Julie Weisser.

Michael Weisser is the cantor of the South Street Temple in Lincoln, Nebraska and a prominent supporter of democratic issues. In 1992 he and his wife started getting a series of threatening phone calls and hate mail. The police warned him that a prominent local Klansman, Larry Trapp, was behind most of those calls, and though they put a tap on Trapp's phone they could not quite prove he was the one harassing them. So Weisser was not able to do much to protect himself—by the usual methods. One day Trapp was yelling at him over the phone and he decided, with his wife's support, that he had to resolve this for himself. "I was real quiet and calm," cantor Weisser recollects. "I knew he had a hard time getting around (Trapp, who has since passed on, was in a wheelchair) and offered him a ride to the grocery store...He just got completely quiet, and all the anger went out of his voice, and he said, 'I've got that taken care of, but thanks for asking.'"

The Weissers had much more in mind, however, than just stopping the harassment. They wanted, if possible, to relieve the hate that this man was suffering, who (they later found out) had been disabled for life by a beating he received from a group of blacks. They now took the initiative, and called him. Not long after they went to his apartment for a friendly visit, taking a dinner they had made. When he opened the door of his apartment to meet the Weissers, Trapp pulled two rings off his fingers and handed them over to his still slightly apprehensive guests. They were Nazi rings. He was symbolically, and actually, renouncing the Klan forever.

Larry Trapp, by his own admission, had been one of the most hardcase white supremacists in the country, a man who "wanted to build up the state of Nebraska into a state as hateful as North Carolina and Florida." Perhaps it is for that very reason that his conversion, compared to some of the other card-carrying supremacists who have made the break, was so complete. "I denounce everything they stand for," he said of his former Klan associates. "But it's not the people in the organizations that I hate...If I were to say I hate all Klansmen because they're Klansmen...I would still be a racist."

This shows a sophisticated grasp of true, redemptive nonviolence—of heart unity. I would submit that this story takes us to the heart of loving community. The Weissers' brilliantly successful act is a model of how to apply courage and compassion to the curse of racism, which has responded to virtually nothing else.

From *Is There No Other Way?*  
*The Search for a Nonviolent Future*,  
by Michael Nagler, pg. 204-205.

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**“I AM LISTENING.”**

—By Amy Abbott Pappageorge

A kind man who sat with me in a spiritual formation circle was once moved to construct a frame and present it to me as a parting gift. Within the frame I read the words, “I am listening. What is the Lord saying?” A feeling of astonishment overcame me as I held the gift and pondered the words. Prone to “hardness of hearing,” I greatly wondered at this blessing of listening.

“I am listening. What is the Lord saying?” Over the years the passage has stirred my heart and mind; more to the point, it has posed one of my greatest challenges. Is it any wonder? My country speaks at the top of its voice; my mass media blares its news and entertainment; my home buzzes with family goings-on, and my own mind and mouth can outdo them all. To top it all off, since 9/11 I have been living by the motto, “Silence is the voice of complicity.” How is anyone to listen?! Least of all me?

My problem with listening has come into focus in Inner Peace/World Peace. In spite of my earnest efforts to hold my tongue and listen, my own voice pipes up more than I want it to. The kindredness of the participants and the significance of the conversations set my heart on fire and my words a-flying. I suffer hardness-of-hearing in another way, too. Make a reference to mass media, the goings-on of politicians, the wretched state of the world, and I want to spout off and plug my ears all at the same time! So many voices clamoring for my attention—including my own. That can make for downright lousy listening.

This whole matter weighing heavily on my heart, I have prayed and pondered and searched. And if I am listening correctly, a certain voice is trying to tell me: Amy, take care with what you choose to think about. If you let your mind dwell exclusively on the dark realities, whether the wars our government is waging, the lies that men in power proliferate, or the seeming apathy of the masses of Americans, you risk inhabiting that darkness. Such tremendous amounts of vital energy you consume thinking about human errors! In paying attention to all that is not right, you

risk living in reaction to that. Indeed, isn’t the bad news but a fetter that binds you to a limited way of thinking? Limited precisely because it can’t possibly encompass the fullness of reality.

Even as war and violence and occupations and oppression dominate the news and befog my mind, aren’t there also benign powers to which I can open my heart? How hard it is to set my heart on loving realities. But do it I must. Who, I wonder, do I admire and love? What do I celebrate? What inspires my awe? It never fails: a fire catches in my heart when I ponder the many bright and awesome realities: God, my precious family and friends, my eager students, the sages and saints and prophets, the beauties of nature and sacred verse and art and music and all the acts of kindness and justice and mercy too numerous to count.

“I am listening. What is the Lord saying?” I am hard of hearing; it’s true. But how I long to be present to God in a hearing way. And the more I pay attention, the more it seems to me that the Lord is attuning my ears, not just to human suffering, the prevalence of injustice, lies and wars, but also to a dimension of reality deep in the heart of things. More and more I find myself turning inward in prayer and in meditation. To be drawn to this *heart-reality* is not to stick my head in the sand and disengage from the struggle at hand. If anything, it strengthens my spirit and renews my resolve to stay involved.

“I am listening. What is the Lord saying?” I can’t presume to answer this. But I can’t deny this newfound desire to fix my heart on God and my living on love. As much as I need to denounce the darkness, I feel an even stronger need to affirm the goodness. And it follows that if I let my heart first turn inward in prayer and then turn outward in love, in family living and giving, in teaching and community work, and in acting for peace, I better position myself to listen to the Lord and to “string pearls for the delight of heaven.”

“Rake the muck  
this way.  
Rake the muck  
that way.  
It still remains muck.  
In the time  
I am brooding,  
I could be  
stringing pearls  
for the delight  
of heaven.”

—Hasidic verse

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## A JOURNAL OF INNERPEACE/WORLDPEACE

### READY. OR NOT ?

— Jeff Olson

Once last fall I was a drop-in visitor on the set of a local television talk show. Examining the equipment before the taping began, I was startled when the host approached me, introduced himself, looked me right in the eye and asked, "Jeff, what are you all about? What is most important in your life right now?" In a flash of self-doubt and confusion, I hid behind something vague and deliberately non-revealing, and thereby lost myself and an opportunity to be real.

My confusion was unsettling to me. I know in my gut that the power I have and the power I give up is directly related to my degree of clarity about

who I am and who I want to be.

I got another opportunity, however, when at a meeting of the West Suburban Faith-based Peace Coalition (WSFPC) in Illinois, volunteers were solicited to offer a prayer in an upcoming conference. I gulped twice and jumped in, knowing it was another opportunity to decide and express who I was.

The prayer below reflects the purpose of that conference and the wonderful mission statement of the WSFPC ([www.faitpeace.org](http://www.faitpeace.org)). It also expresses who I am and who I want to be right now. Thank you to the "servant leadership" of WSFPC and to friends who helped and continue to help me clarify my thoughts.

*Dear God,*

*We are many peoples of many faiths called to nonviolent peacemaking. We are here to re-create ourselves—affirming the sacredness of all people and all creation.*

*We are here to re-create our society—transforming from ways of violence to ways of compassion, reconciliation and mutual respect.*

*Behind the resentment and the anger and the violence in our own hearts and in the world is a deep hurt waiting to be healed. We are here to forgive. We are here to accept Your all-inclusive, unconditional love and to let it shine forth through us to light the way for all.*

*We are all one in Your love. The joy of others is our joy and the pain of others is our pain.*

*We pray for ourselves and our families where too often we experience the violence of blaming and judgment in our own hearts.*

*We pray for the many people affected by our wars.*

*We pray for the people in Columbia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Israel, Sudan...in all parts of the world touched by crisis and violence.*

*We pray for the men and women, and in some parts of the world, even children, who have taken up arms for their cause or for their military, in the hope that their service is worthy and noble.*

*We pray for our nations, our communities, and our families as we recognize how deeply we have all been affected by our wars.*

*Dear God, bless us all, heal us and restore us to Your wholeness as we seek to build a new life, a new world in Your love.*

Amen.



**MAMA YELLS AGAIN:  
A MOTHER'S PIECE/PEACE**

—By Mikki Symonds

Soon after the Bush administration attacked Afghanistan, my husband Flint, our two-year-old son, and I joined the circle of Oak Park residents in front of First United Church of Oak Park to witness peace. I did so because I could think of no other way to hold up peace as our only possible path to a safe world and our only path as Christians and people of faith. At the time, I was pregnant with our second son, and after birthing him in November, Flint and I returned after a brief hiatus with two sons to that space warm and bright with loving people, courageous words and hope.

Loving two sons sparked a series of thoughts that crystallized in the knowledge that we need to demilitarize. My thoughts began with the concern that Walker and Miguel might lose their lives not only painfully and without a comforting hand, but also doing so while trying to murder someone else's beloved child. Opening myself a little more, I recognized that we were hurting parents and children in Afghanistan. How many parents were condemned to watch their children die of exposure, preventable diseases, injuries or hunger? How many children watched their mothers and siblings die in childbirth? What suffering did we unleash there?

As soon as we had attacked Afghanistan, we heard that the Bush administration was looking at Iraq, North Korea and Somalia as possible targets. I felt like a prize fool. I had thought that once we had devastated Afghanistan we could go home on Friday nights and live each day as though bombs did not exist, as though we were not manufacturing missiles or as though we did not allow our citizens to own almost any type of firearm. How could I have ignored that in order to support weapons manufacturers or companies like Halliburton, in order to continue building an empire, we always will need another target? How can we escape attacking other people? Demilitarize.

The more I read the Gospel, the more I contemplate Christ, the more I read history, the more deeply I become convicted that supporting a military

drains the economy, creates misery at home and abroad and creates enemies. Moreover, I see no moral justification for creating weapons. We need to dream a whole new way of being in the world. We need to ask more "Why not?" and create ways to reinvest our connection to the land. I think that we can take all the monies that go into the death-making military machine and educate people to plant, to cook well, to build healthy homes, to provide health care to all, to sing, to dance, to play, to love truly and not selfishly, to teach and not to punish, to write, to plan with everyone's needs in mind, to think critically and for the future and to see with compassion. I know that the military provides jobs; I also know that it creates death. I also know that there are so many needs to meet now and all those funds that go into bombs can go into schools, hospital equipment, education and renewable energy, not to mention respected and well-trained employees.

Who am I kidding? Where is the model for such a life? Christ incarnate in us. Love allows us to dream for each other's welfare, and love births the courage we need to hope, plan and trust each other to make the unseen seen. God bless the French for the word courage, which comes from their Old French word "courage" for heart, mind and spirit.

Given my utter conviction in non-violence, I try to live a life of peace for my children; my neighbors, no matter what they believe or think about my ideas; my community; my nation and other nations. I feel devotion to the United States of America, and I hope to find ways to bring the dream of peace to fruition here.

Still, doing so taxes my patience and creativity. Living in a way that honors others requires that I change my habits and conception as an individual who can do whatever she wants to do in order to accomplish what she thinks needs to be done. Even though I know love, I sometimes reject it in favor of yelling at my children and experiencing the momentarily perceived expedience of stopping or starting some action. Sometimes, I do not honor them enough as persons to walk over to them, first lay my hand gently on theirs and wait a moment. I do not acknowledge them and their ability to

—cont. on p. 12

Blessed are  
those who can  
give without  
remembering  
and take  
without  
forgetting.

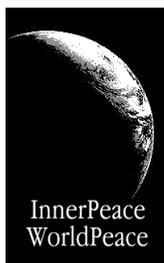
—Anonymous

—cont. from p. 11

choose better. I see Walker spilling his soymilk. I see Miguel putting his hand in his dirty diaper. I do not see that they are learning even while they are trying to test me. Nor do I seize the opportunity to practice love.

So dreaming on a grand scale does not require much love really, but taking those small steps to honor those around me demands a great deal of love. Thankfully, the more efforts I make in the service of love, the easier making those steps becomes. More importantly, each loving gesture and word opens my children and neighbors to act from the love in them. If I take the time to understand their realities instead of my ideas, they will not need to process my frustration, anger, thoughtlessness or just plain orneriness. They will be free to positively direct their energies. What

could happen if just we parents honored the love incarnate in our children rather than preoccupy ourselves with the mundane, the practical or the noble thoughts? Would we then free each other to love, dream and work courageously together?



**Fyi**

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Mary Erkins  
Bud Hayes, *Editor*  
Emory Mead, *Design*  
Jeff Olson  
Amy Abbott Pappageorge  
Demetrios Pappageorge

[budhayes@innerpeaceworldpeace.org](mailto:budhayes@innerpeaceworldpeace.org)



InnerPeace/WorldPeace  
319 South Harvey Avenue  
Oak Park, Illinois 60302

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