

## *Prerequisites*

By Christine Loughlin, OP

Rudolf Steiner was a philosopher, scientist, writer, clairvoyant who lived at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He held that spiritual knowing can be acquired with the same scientific methods that bring about our knowledge of the physical world. While the latter comes through our senses, spiritual knowing comes through inner spiritual discipline. Steiner sensed that spiritual beings guide the forces of the natural world. Since seasons happen in the natural order, he identified four archangels with specific influence to accompany each season. Uriel is the angelic presence who delights in human imagination made manifest in summer's light, a time when the human spirit soars to the heights of creative activity. Uriel's task is to make sure our human expressions are one with planetary creativity since we all emerge from the same divine order. Quite a philosophy, one might say, but Steiner's insights continue on in the arts, science, education, farming, medicine and social matters. On occasion this summer, Uriel's gaze has entered my consciousness.

For the past 20 years, I've been doing my prerequisite requirements for learning to live in place. In today's culture it takes a long time to fulfill those requirements. We can't just plop down somewhere because we bring our old ways of seeing and doing and being—our pre-determined responses before we catch a glimmer of a new mode of questions forming. The assigned prerequisites are patience and humility, responsibility and service. A life time of learning really!

Each Tuesday morn since December we vigil in the local city square. Ten months ago our purpose was clear. We joined in action with people around the globe to dream a world beyond war. You could feel the planetary pulse as millions gathered to announce the coming of a new humanity prepared to embrace the prophetic vision of centuries past ~ our swords would become ploughshares. A stronger force of corporate power prevailed. A nation with its military in service to corporate control went forth once again to feed a corporate system built on consuming Earth's natural and human resources. *We destroy what we never have known.*

Ten months later still dressed in black in solidarity with the international group Women in Black against Violence, we continue to stand. In warmer weather the mind and heart settle more readily into a contemplative stance. A political button of the past turns inward—*the person is the political*. I reflect on the complicity in our own lives. Our own basic human needs are tied into the intricate corporate web. While we eat from our garden, our food supply is connected with a global system of finances and land management. Our clothes are manufactured in one country and assembled in another. Oil powers our cars, and is the substance that transports consumer products around the globe. In facing the complicity we engage the questions of these times. It requires humility to come home to the questions, not to stand outside or above them, but to locate oneself at the core.

When I return home to begin the workday, there hangs the Earth Charter on the office wall. The millions who flowed down the mountain roads and through city streets to say war was less than a human notion appear now like grass through sidewalk crevice and mountain rock. They bloom like flowers in the dry desert and stand sturdy like clinging brush on rocky shore. Together we embrace our time in all its complexity. The human spirit bows deep into the fire of archetypal energy and in great humility and courage sings out a new song:

*Let ours be a time to respect life in all its diversity  
Let ours be a time to care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, love  
Let ours be a time to build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable  
Let ours be a time to secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations*

Earth Charter

When we came here 20 years ago, our lives were committed to social change. We were motivated by a feminist response to oppressive structures. The stories of women's lives and the social/political analysis that held the stories revealed a system constructed to create dominance and powerlessness. We thought we were the agents to initiate the change; we have grown to recognize that the surrender of our very selves is the energy source required to spark a new world order. The best of who we are with our moral ethical choices is limited for the great work and human response that lies before us. We must address human suffering in the context of all suffering, and loss in the light of our human discontinuity with the natural world. What then is our responsibility and how do we become of service to what our times require? Our humble response is fourfold.

The stories of women and oppressed peoples of the world brought us here to initiate a center for the evolving of a women's perspective of justice. During the past two decades in communion with people everywhere we have opened ourselves to new scientific insights; we have learned the story of our unfolding universe. That we live in a cosmogenesis, a self-emerging universe, is the foundational story for all our programs. When we align our energy with primal order, beautiful bounty and sustainable systems appear.

We are committed to building a local food system. For five years the Community supported Garden (CSA) was an integral part of our mission. Now a new partnership with a larger CSA is emerging as we work to identify what each local landscape seeks to express. Farmers teach the art of living in place. What they establish must be tended and nurtured. The energy that pours forth to plant and harvest is transformed into the nourishment that feeds body and delights soul.

Our Religious Lands Conservancy project guides us in finding our own route to save the commons. Religious communities hold lands on rivers' edge, ocean front, countryside. We are located in places where the spirit was renewed in the natural world. What we held in trust of personal necessity now becomes Earth's necessity. We work to conserve congregational lands on behalf of the global commons.

Art is the discipline that forms the archetypal energy pouring forth in the world. Through the power of the human voice to sing a new song we learn our way into living *among the many*. O Beautiful Gaia, a creative arts recording project that took shape the past months, invites us to become one again with all that lives.

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