

Art of Peacemaking

October 3, 2016 by [Liz Fisher](#)



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Many communities around the globe commemorate this special day to heighten public awareness on issues related to peace. Since I consider myself a Peace Pagan, I was enthusiastic when I heard of an event where I live in Pacific Grove, California that utilized art and singing to bring everyone into the process of thinking about Peace.

The day featured several segments including a parade through the streets, led by a drummer and a piper, singing the 1960s anti-war anthem *All We are Saying is Give Peace a Chance!* The group ended up at a local Community Center where the old favorites *This Land is Your Land*, *We Shall Overcome* and *If I Had a Hammer* was interspersed amid inspirational talks, awards presentations, dancing and frivolity. These songs I have been singing periodically throughout my life. But in this setting with this theme they took on a presence that made me realize that sharing a vision of a Peaceful World with others is important to me. While the theme was serious, the joy was

quite a contrast to the stark realities of today's news of terrorism, drone attacks and sorrowful displacements. I again realized that to feel joyful as we face stark realities is not disrespectful or just a mood elevator for those attending, but rather an effective tool that reinforces tolerance, respect of Universal Human Rights and commitment to continued education and advocacy.



Maria Maldonado, a First Nation speaker and the mistress of ceremonies addressed those who came together to celebrate. She's standing in front of the "Peace Wall" (large sheets of paper) where participants wrote their comments, adding their own art. The Peace Poll behind her focused those attending on the message of the day, "May Peace Prevail On Earth."

She observed that every choice we make today affects seven generations of ancestors behind us and seven generations of descendants in the future. She asked us to Choose Peace / Teach Peace in all the interactions in our lives. "I may not be a PTA mom but I am a Peace Teaching Activist teaching that peace is a choice!" She also relayed the spiritual message coming through her tribal elders that now is the time women are to play a critical role in bringing peaceful resolutions to many conflicts. May it be so.

Local activists were honored for their contributions. Each wrote a brief statement, read by Maria Maldonado in a reverent manner, about what had motivated them to undertake the initiatives they have dedicated themselves to achieving. Acknowledging volunteer efforts on behalf of Peace in its many forms can provide to others both inspiration and ideas for their own initiatives. Even though I did not know any of these individuals personally, I feel a kinship to them because of their obvious desires to do something positive for better relations in the world. At the



end of the presentation we sang *Peace Train* by Cat Stevens which inspired a spontaneous line dance.

The art on the logo, an image of the blue earth surrounded by streamers, is derived from a flag made by a local resident Gwen Marie, which has been widely distributed around the world. She declared: “When creating the flag we were wanting to spread the vision about the ability of communities to connect around this issue of peace and dialogue.” These flags can be purchased at <http://instrumentsofworldpeace.com/> for a nominal donation as well as in bulk for promoting peace. Here in Pacific Grove they are flown from homes, at events and educational locations. “I think people are hungry for a symbol of peace,” said Gwen Marie. “The idea of peace is so big to grasp, but people can start right where they are in their little corner of the world and have a flag and make a statement that their hearts are open to peace. The flag has been well received. People want them because they make the statement they want to make.”

During the last year, a local high school charity group partnered with the adults who use the Center to create a Peace Garden, open to all. After the indoor festivities, a dedication of the Garden was held, followed by a reception featuring preschoolers climbing trees while people of all ages intermingled. The spirit of Peace was quite prominent in this place of living plants.



This handpainted pole and paper flag were also in the garden. The peace pennants were made by both young children and adults with inexpensive markers. Making simple Art, even occasionally, can be so useful to spiritual exploration and emotional support. It gives a chance to involve not just our brains but our hearts. Perhaps if we focus on being welcoming and peaceful more often we might be able to prevent or resolve conflicts more easily. We can incorporate opportunities in our gatherings for art or music making that all can undertake. Creating a bit on the spur of the moment can release frustration, a first step toward inner peace. Once this happens, we often find the strength to become leaders in an initiative that also allows us to express our own peaceful inclinations.

This message from Ms. Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) for the 2016 commemoration emphasizes the connection between personal and social expression:



To move forward, we need new ways of acting across the board, we need new partnerships between governments, civil society and the private sector, we need ways of empowering women and men. This must be our starting point – individual rights and dignity of every woman and man.

The UNESCO Constitution states that the defenses of peace must be built in the minds of women and men – through education, through freedom of expression, through intercultural dialogue, respect for human rights and cultural diversity, through scientific cooperation.

Drafted in 1945 after a terrible and devastating war, this message has never been so vital in societies that are transforming and are ever more diverse. Keeping the peace means building it every day, in every society, with every woman and man. It means living together, and working towards a better common future for all.



Celebrating Peace does not have to be confined to this day. Occurring at Autumn Equinox, it can launch the fall season. So perhaps during this harvest time of the year, we can all use a few of these ideas, or others they stimulate, to focus on Peace, encouraging those around us to do the same.

Paganism for me is all about celebrating the joy we find in community. Peace is a vital part of the bonding process and this event reminded me again of the power of the ecstatic and being together with others. These bonds lead to finding the solutions Ms.

Bokova on behalf of UNESCO was reinforcing. It comes down to each one of us discovering our best expression and having the courage to exercise it.