

LIVING PEACE

**The 2019 Art of Peace Tyler
Peace Poetry Anthology**

**LIVING PEACE –
THE 2019 ART OF PEACE POETRY TYLER ANTHOLOGY**

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Poetry, Peace, International Day of Peace

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FOREWORD

Each year when we begin planning for our Tyler, Texas, Art of Peace celebration of the United Nations International Day of Peace, September 21, we select a theme to inspire our poetry and visual art entries. This year's theme is *Living Peace*. This summer, from across Texas and the United States and around the world, over 130 poems arrived! We were delighted to read the many ways poets interpreted and responded to the idea of *Living Peace*.

After weeks of reading and re-reading every poem received—and being inspired by all of them—our committee made the difficult decision of choosing those to be included in the 2019 anthology. What a surprise to find the selected poets were as wide-ranging as the original submissions. Peace is alive and well in the world!

In these pages, you will find outstanding poems from poets in over a dozen Texas cities (Tyler, Temple, Arp, The Woodlands, Houston, Temple, Round Rock, Austin, Dripping Springs, San Antonio, Lytle, Benbrook, Fort Worth, Grand Prairie, and Copperas Cove), from nine other states (Kansas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, California, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Florida, and New York, Virginia), as well as from nine countries beyond the USA (United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland, India, Bulgaria, Israel, Nigeria, Trinidad & Tobago, and Australia)!

The collection moves from moments and environs of peace through evidence of the anguishing need for peace to ways we can find and build peace. These beautiful poems are inspiring on their own, and they speak to and affirm each other as a group! I hope you enjoy reading the collection as much as we have.

To those whose poems appear here as well as those who were not selected, please know your words touched our hearts and can change the world. This month, in celebration of the United Nations International Day of Peace, the founding group Peace One Day, and Art of Peace Tyler, please share your poems. Send them to friends, read them to your family, give printed versions to strangers, and post them online. They are needed now more than ever!

To poets, readers and peacemakers everywhere, thank you for all you are doing to make the world a better place by *Living Peace*!

In Peace,

Anne McCrady

Contributing Editor/Publisher of *Living Peace*

Co-founder of Art of Peace Tyler

Founder/Owner of InSpirity

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Resounding are the archangels
of quiet.
My heart is forging peace.

Margarita Serafimova
Sofia, Bulgaria

IT'S EASY

Peace comes out shy
Like a deer
From your shadows

And drinks from the silence

And not wanting
To scare her back
Into the deep woods
Of your life
You remain still
Watching

Gerry Grubbs
Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

FOREST SANCTUARY

We shed city's skin to enter forest sanctuary --
An island surrounded by metropolis
but free of its noise, stink, traffic, crowds.
The beating of drums the only sound from without
Announcing the commencement of a Buddhist ceremony.

We walk along sun-dappled path through trees so old
And so tall, their stories so long, we feel insignificant.
Corkscrew vines hang from their branches like Tarzan rope swings
And tree roots, like spider veins, run rampant along our path
Ready to trip us as we look skyward at birds alien to our eyes.

Young lovers on bench turn shyly from one another as we pass.
They nod in greeting and we, much older lovers, smile in return.
A sudden rustle of leaves catches our attention. Following the sound
We come face to face with a mouse deer as surprised to see us as we him.
We apologize for disturbing his morning ablutions as he scampers away.

Like a temple of and to nature, this refuge exists
As a peaceful haven where prayers of all living things
May be voiced without words and heard without judgment.

Judy Rosner
Sarasota, Florida, USA

MEDITATION

From out the earth flows
my breath and the oak tree:

om

the air that quivers a thousand leaves
shimmers down into my abdomen

mani

the spires and troughs of radiant energy
vibrate the cells of our bodies as one

padme

containers of light, we overflow
pulling the sun down to our roots

hum

In the vibrating stillness of a summer morning,
saturated, I feel all the shades of green:

*chartreuse, avocado, swirls of teal and jade,
feathering of mint and pistachio, lonely darkness
of olive beneath the pallor of faded pear.*

Shade and sun weave connection, peace:
exchanging breath and life, grounded
each in our own rich earth.

Diana Conces
Round Rock, Texas, USA

WHAT WHISPER THE STARS?

What whisper the stars,
to all listening life,
that trees stretch
so high and sway so ecstatically,
that birds in glorious
glossolalia exalt,
that every flower and flowing cloud
and quickened creature
receives and rejoices,
comports in peace, each with each,
sustaining this intricate web
of all being--- except?

Michael Baldwin
Benbrook, Texas, USA

PEACEFUL MORNING

I am barefoot in the park.
Lightening blue dragonflies,
hang on the pond grass in the wind.
A black crow, and two turtles,
poke their heads-watching.
A fish jumps by the cattails,
teasing a fisherman.
No one owns this place but God,
but I walk as if I do,
exposing unpolished toes to cool grass,
like animals feel,
enjoying the sun-warmed rocks,
like the lizard, and the turtle.
Why are we any different?

Nicole Metts
Copperas Cove, Texas, USA

LEON CREEK

I do not think of them on this trail,
their necessary violence,
need to hunt.

This trail is shaded and winding,
undulated, peaceful.

I walk with no fear of lions.

Intermittent stream,
your pools and ponds
tranquil in the morning sparkle.
Trapdoor webs along the bank
elaborate jewels of globular pearl.

Whitetail throw up their heads
with my passing,
chew the sweet grass
no fear in their eyes,
I am no hunter.

I share this space for a short time,
they, graceful in their understanding.
Peace grows with sharing,
it is not a pie diminished
with each slice.

Charles Darnell
San Antonio, Texas, USA

U PICK

Hot July morning, sun a burner left on high.
Raspberries, beveled treasures; sour pie
cherries, ruby globes, filling the cardboard
picking box. I'm by myself, listening
to the chatter of my neighbors in adjoining rows.
Some of us are up on ladders; some are down
in the brambles and briars. We all think
we're in high heaven, after the long winter,
late cold spring. If this were a protest march,
would a few be carrying opposite signs,
shouting invectives? Maybe so, but we're here
in this small orchard, sharing recipes, tips
on preserves, how to make a good pie. We cradle
our baskets as if they contain unruly jewels.
And then we go our separate ways, licked
by the thick tongue of the sun, to bring some
sweetness to our families, blinking
our blind eyes in the multilingual light.

Barbara Crooker
Fogelsville, Pennsylvania, USA

First published in Poet Lore

TO BE NAMED

every single cell organism,
every blade of grass,
every insect, every fish,
every bird, every beast,
every person
has a name

written across the star-scrolled universe
known and remembered by the one
who gave them life

and each deserves
that for which they were designed
peace, most holy, most divine,
peace

Terry Miller
Houston, Texas, USA

THE COVE

Mediterranean waves
creamy rough rocks
deeply crevassed and sun-drenched
a cool breeze
a lapping and splash
the distant voices of snorkelers
muffled by their masks

a plane scrapes the air
overly loud as it lowers
to land at Nice
huddled below
the Maritime Alps

spectacular blue sky
Côte d'Azur
bright yellow buoys
mark safety for swimmers
yachts keep away
people scrabble over rocks
to claim their space
or share a spot

multilingual chatter:
French, German, Spanish, English
shared joy in water and warmth
coolness in the heat
international relaxation

moments of individual peace

Lorraine Whelan
Bray, County Wicklow, Ireland

**THE CRONE IS GIVEN A TINY EMBROIDERED NOTEBOOK JUST
LARGE ENOUGH FOR HAIKU**

ugly fat June bugs
thudding against the window—
funny summer hail!

raindrops hit my face
if a haiku falls with them
I'm here to catch it

cloudlady tosses her
drifting mantle of grackles
to man-in-the-moon

In December sun
birdsong amid bare branches
a blend of seasons

birds are elements
firebird and waterbird
earthbird and airbird

the long meeting done
driving down the cooling streets
peace settling at last

Don't we know by now
we are all brothers, sisters
in the motley garden

notebook exhausted
I scrawl the last failed haiku
on a maple leaf

Janet McCann
College Station, Texas, USA

RALPH BUNCHE PARK

erupts across the street
from the United Nations
as this peace monument
celebrates the American Dilemma
through Ralph Johnson Bunche,
a barber's son,
grandson of a former slave
lifting above the Locust and Plane trees,
thrusting up out of the island,

the fifty-foot obelisk inscription pointing skyward,
its bluestone climbing,
translating suffering and poverty
into bread and rice and freedom
to banish hate and intolerance,
carving musical letters onto Manhattan's sky
to proclaim peace,
singing its song to the world,
stony rhythms ascending to unison notes of praise.

Stanford Searl
Culver City, California, USA

YOGA

peace of mind takes the texture of water again.
lots of wonders this flow does in nature's state.
the state of nature is the spirit of man.

the spirit of man wears a calm lake like victoria;
flowing steadily, taking a still step towards anywhere
her cape flies her to; across the earth crust, her bed.

that is how our souls soar, just close your eyes,
our inner layers of power flexed to reach every angle,
every atmosphere of the room's geography. we speak;

conversing with serene elements fictional to naked eyes;
taken beyond the concrete to see abstract faces.
our minds are wheels taking us through slopes

to reach the ethereal; to reach neverlands & paradise.
the darkness within the eyes closed hide treasures
for the mind to x-ray & discover like appendages.

man becomes a calm water, taking in the light & the heavy
without raging like high tides; just ripples of expansion
to give more room for the nights & days of life to inhabit.

Rilwan Tukur
Lagos, Nigeria

ON A JUNE AFTERNOON

I sat with a monk in Changchung,
sipping Longjing tea,
on a sweltering and still June afternoon.
At once astute and at ease,
he seemed to know the answers
to so many questions.

Apprehensive and anxious, I questioned his agenda,
for ushering me into his temple;
me, an awkward American,
arriving on his doorstep without appointment.

In a kind voice and with smiling eyes,
he leaned in and said, "All is well.
There is no purpose to this meeting,
I do not wish to convince you otherwise.
Let us sit, and drink tea, and simply be,
on this free and easy June afternoon."

Alison Sterken
Tyler, Texas, USA

PRAYING THE PEACE

A generous woman
with gentle countenance
and gifted hands,
Aunt Dottie rippled piano keys
for leotarded dancers at “the studio,”
and twirled hair around pink and green rollers
for caped ladies in whirling chairs
at the Goldstein-Migel beauty salon.
She beamed a dimpled smile,
a welcoming heart.
We sat on the porch in the yellow glider,
her cheeks bright pink
in the Central Texas summer,
spooning into bowls of cold vanilla “cream.”
She fanned her face with a kitchen apron,
looked around at the world,
and pronounced her familiar, inclusive prayer:
“Oh, Lord Jesus, help us all.”

Carol Thompson
Tyler, Texas, USA

LIVING PEACE

She walks daily in our midst
Swaying in and out of our lives.
Can't you see her? Maybe not--
A cloak of humility - her favorite dress.
She draws closer
A steady, determined gait.
Now there is no mistaking!
Her tranquil presence a soothing balm.
The rhythmic in and out of her breath;
Those sensitive eyes, that clarity of vision,
The non-wavering gaze.
A solace to the soul.
Hands offer a kind, gentle touch,
Arms encircle - a strong, warm embrace.
Hear her resolute voice
Of earned wisdom and earnest grace.
With compassion she hears your words.
With tenderness she listens to your heart.
A worker for the common good.
A voice for the oppressed.
Yes, Living Peace, she walks among us.
Hear, heed her call. Pay attention!
Emulate, follow her lead that all
May live in peace.

Brenda McWilliams
Tyler, Texas, USA

PIECE OF PEACE

Sitting here at the pool with my wife, we watch our children play, and it seems a dream.
As a teenager, I ran constantly to escape the guerillas needing more bodies.
Eleven years I waited at the refugee camp, watching doctors and engineers leave,
While we farmers watched the seasons go by – no planting, no harvesting.
But here we are in Houston Texas! Who would think a farmer was needed here,
Among the tall buildings, highways and so many people.
The first year, I worked as a security guard at night, by day trained as an urban farmer.
I learned how to plant, what to plant and how to sell my produce.
I got a full acre of land near our apartment on a schoolground and began.
First the raised beds full of compost to counteract the clay soil here.
Then the seeds of plants that would pay my way – tomatoes, squash, onions.
I sold almost all year at farmers markets and made enough to reduce my security job
hours.
The next year, I kept up the farmers markets and sold to restaurants – pickier!
I added peppers, arugula and herbs I've never heard of, basil, cilantro.
Now I have three acres and no security guard job but more security.
People contract with me for a sack of fresh vegetables each week,
I have more restaurant customers and my wife sells at the farmers markets.
She recently told me that Houston was a piece of heaven,
But I thought – no, it's a piece of peace.

Adamarie Fuller
Houston, Texas, USA

THE ALBANIAN BOY

Beside me on the plane a boy, Albanian
Like my father's fathers in clean ill-fitting clothes.
He sleeps mostly, breathing heavily. His knee,
His elbow stray outside their allotted space
Until his breath his existence is in mine. His head
Lolls against my shoulder and I think:
One of us wants to be held and held still
And cared for not confined and if put down alone
Put down only to be taken up again.

One of us has been is now a refugee.

Stephen Cribari
Minneapolis, MN, USA

PENDULUM

After the election, when neo-Nazis
sieg-heiled in hotel ballrooms and New York
subway windows were blackened with swastikas
and threats about Jews and ovens, some nights
I'd wake at 3:00 a.m., rehearsing
the logic I'd use to sway my senator
if only I could get him to listen, some nights

remember the kindness of strangers
when we married: all those straight people
genuinely happy for us—the rabbi
who discounted his fee
because you had to wait so long,
my aunt and cousins, my sister, my father-in-law,
and I'd feel the situation wasn't so dire

though my other sister tells me God
through prayer can heal impure thoughts,
and the Westboro Baptists still protest
under *God hates fags*
while politician and pundit debate
whether people like me should exist,
and I find myself

thinking about the Jews of Germany,
that they were assimilated, that they had fought
for their country alongside their neighbors—their kindred—
who they never imagined would betray them, and I think

how fickle we are, how frail.
And then I remember the three hundred Jews
of Assisi, gap-hidden
between sanctuary and crypt,
the bogus documents printed for each one,
the German officer who heard their muffled footsteps
between the breaths of his daily prayers
and kept his silence—how not a single one of them

(cont'd)

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(cont'd)

was taken, and how in the subway
the passengers took out tissue and hand sanitizer
and erased the marks of hatred.

Cindy Huyser
Austin, Texas, USA

First published in Red River Review (Summer, 2017)

A JUST RESPONSE

(1 Samuel, 28)

What good is it to ask a medium
when in your heart you know
why God has turned his face?
King Saul, relying on his dreams,
had exiled wizards, conjurers.
Though he had turned away from God,
he trusted that his Israelites
would always beat their enemies.

The Philistines were strong,
outnumbering his troops,
and Saul without a sign from God
shook like a frightened youth.

At night, disguised in common clothes,
he sought an outlawed medium.
When asked to conjure Samuel, beloved
prophet recently deceased, the woman knew
she was deceived and pleaded for her life.
Saul's desperate voice cried out to her,
bring Samuel, bring Samuel.

Disturbed in his eternal sleep,
the prophet clutched his cloak
around his bones and scolded Saul,
predicting his demise within a day
Faint Saul fell down and cried.
Compassionate, the woman now redeemed,
roasted her fattened calf, baked bread
and forced the king to eat,
a meal shared by deceiver and deceived.

Christa Pandey
Austin, Texas, USA

DISCOVERY

My son holds a machine gun,
the body black plastic, handle orange, excavated
from the lower strata of a waiting room toy box.
“What’s this, Mama?” he asks, his round belly
a reminder of his still recent toddlerhood. Here,
between Good Housekeeping and the artificial
banana plant, rising cobra-like, a rhetorical challenge:
and how might I serve the taxonomy of weapons
technology, of killing made ever-more convenient?
“What do you think?” I ask, finally. He frowns,
rotating his find, feeling its molded parts, pausing
with the orange handle on top, barrel pointed down.
“Toucan,” he pronounces, with a scholar’s confidence.
And there it is. Not the phoenix or ethereal dove,
but a wild bird, alive with tropical color, its neon
beak almost touching my son’s juicy, sun-ripened cheek.

Kristen Van Tassel
Gypsum, Kansas, USA

A PIECE OF PEACE

Oh how I long for a slice of sky to call my own.
A moment when stormy spirits are free of thunder
A place where the air is ripe with real freedom
A distant horizon desperate for the light of day.
A sun that uses the night to cover its own head
Where time releases its relentless grip on the day
It is never dark enough to hide my pain
Peace! It seems eludes me still.
Maybe if I could turn back the hands of time.
I'd have a chance to say goodbye to my Dad
Or make good on promises to my children
Or be more than a social media moment.
Still peace escapes me...
I wish I could make peace with my first wife
Make more right turns instead of left ones
Give in less to past temptations
Resist the relentless indulgence of flesh
But I am a tornado, An act of war
An unforgiving duplication of lies
Oh how I long for a slice of sky to call my own.
A moment when stormy spirits are free from thunder
A peace I can live in if only for a piece of time.

Michael Guinn
Grand Prairie, Texas, USA

KADDISH

He's a magnificent wild ass of a man, my brother Ishmael
So bold, so strong, built solid, with eyes that can see far.
I can make people laugh
When I make a sound like a goat.
We carefully never talk about our mothers,
But we just as carefully never talk about our father.

Our father was buried with honor yesterday
Our eyes burned at the close of the tomb.
We are not likely to meet again after this,
or not to tell stories about,
but we're together now twisted into a braid
of anger and grief and relief.

Tonight we shared wine at the top of the mountain.
There were so many stars overhead we split the sky in half
and still had too many. We used stones for pillows,
hard and gritty and with a smell like death.
We passed the sweet wine back and forth,
the taste burning down on my empty stomach.

We prayed together up there, to our father Abraham's God,
"Lord God, creator of all, lover of all, maker of all,
mysterious, powerful, gracious, may we have peace,
peace for our father, peace between brothers,
peace over the whole land, amen, amen."

And the wind carried our words up to the dark, to
the cold, small lights in the silent dome of sky.
We breathed in the cool night air together.
We breathed out into the future.

Rachel Ann Russell
Vienna, Virginia, USA

SAVAGE

I foraged my rights
through boundary lines
of your red earth,
dug deep with rifle blast
and battle strap
of leather weight . . .

Then turned to scavenge
savage ruins:
painted clays
maize
masks
boat bark
breechclout
baskets
beads
stone point
cradleboard
and pipes
of peace.

Sharon Young
The Woodlands, Texas, USA

Original Publication was the Poetry Society of Texas A Book of the Year (1993)

RAISED

“being raised in a house with stories and garlic gave me courage”
Naomi Shihab Nye, *The Tiny Journalist* (2019)

and you
raised our hopes
helped us believe
fought despair
with love
raised our downcast eyes
to see the world
clearly
to acknowledge
our part in it
to open our hearts
to it

Jim LaVilla-Havelin
Lytle, Texas, USA

SEARCH

You ask me
what I've discovered
as I gauge your will to suffer
by the length of the pause I pose
between us. If you hold my eyes
and don't smile but slightly frown
where sad news frowns
I won't need to prophesy
for your search has began
I can only offer bread-diluted wine
and thin coat to console the deepening
of your oncoming winters.
But should your ego smile
within this pause as if you trust
the truth is dust – then why ask discoveries?
I would persuade you
to visit your mother and beg her mercy
for your back-tossed scraps. She will break
then stir you on to solid food.
But I see now
you have transcended frown and fakery
with the oh of your mouth
and that soul search in your eyes.
So come
beyond these war-windbag curtains
into the sun where lions are hand-fed
- we have love to discuss.

Jan Price
Ballarat North, Victoria, Australia

*First publication was STUDIO, 727 Peel Street, Albury, 2640 NSW
Australia*

CRYING FOR INSPIRATION

“The world is crying for inspiration.”
Her words struck me hard and wouldn’t leave.
I had never thought of the world in this way.

Yet, we are crying, aren’t we?
Deep within, no matter who we are,
we search for stability and safety.
We search for new, better, and different.

But there are so many choices for everything
in life, that we are left overwhelmed,
grasping for clarity.
Is this the kind of inspiration we mean?
Crying for inspiration?

Or is it inspiration for a peaceful world?
One where we can reach out and be loved.
Inspiration to stop the suffering,
to work together, to be creative,
to find unique answers to save our planet.
Inspiration to understand each other,
to save each other,
to have trust and hope,
to live in a respectful world.
Yes, we are crying for

Inspiration.

Antonia Salinas Murguia
San Antonio, Texas, USA

Previously published in Walking In the Footsteps of Faith (2009)

WINGS OF PEACE

The dove of peace
Emblem of an ever-young hope
Spreads its wings
To shelter a continent
Broken by war
Replacing the cruel Imperial eagle
With a better emblem.
How long can its offer
Be refused?

D J Tyrer
Southend-in-Sea, Essex, United Kingdom

Originally Published in Great War: To End All Wars? (Atlantean Publishing, chapbook, October 2018)

THE WILDERNESS

Roar and let your silence
be heard,
Go back to the beginning of time
when the universe already existed.
Close your ears and let
your mouth listen,
Here in the nothing everything emerged.
Wash your soul and
let life implode.
Epilogue
Starting with the beginnings of the creator,
Take no thing, formulated and
in that pregnant
moment, of becoming,
Let it all vanish

Rajendra Shepherd
Trinidad & Tobago

THE SONG OF PEACE

Once, you were a pretty bird
With the rainbow's colours in your mouth,
Singing hallelujahs that were heard
From east to west, and north to south.

Once, you soared in the firmament blue
And touched our hearts with brotherly love,
The world was one because of you
Embodied as a white winged dove.

But greed and power made us blind
To the beauty of your radiant light,
We could not ever comfort find
When plagued with enmity and spite.

We locked you in a cage of gold
And threw away the golden key,
Your legacy was bought and sold
And tarnished by humanity.

With guns and bombs, we fought for gain
Nations clashing against each other,
Bringing war and causing pain,
To every father, every mother.

But hope will one day set you free,
That all the peoples of this earth
Will live once more in harmony,
And rejoice in your rebirth.

Then you will soar the heavens clear
And nations shall their fighting cease,
That all the world can once more hear
Your beautiful song of peace.

Jeevan Bhagwat
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

BEFORE WE WERE PEOPLE

“What were we before we were people?”
Her four-year-old eyes searched mine.
I fumbled for answers, finally shrugged,
“I don’t know.” Her face was aglow. She said:
“Before we were people, we were parrots!
We had wings. We could talk. We could fly.
We were lots of colors. We were nice to each other.
The parrots all had their own beds.”
“I love it!” I said. “Where’d you learn that?”
She snuggled close. “It was a dream.”
So we talked about dreams and parrots and peace,
closed our eyes and heard wings overhead.

Amy L. Greenspan
Austin, Texas, USA

LET'S SHINE TOGETHER

Your religion leads you to Divine,
My religion leads me to Divine,
Let's together seek the Divine!
While you face day, I face night,
Together we experience universe's delight!
You know something, I know something,
Let's discuss to know everything!
You own land, I own land,
Together we own universal Motherland!
Together we are stronger,
So, why the barriers?
Let's be merrier,
Let's be peace carriers!

Forum Shah
Kolkata, West Bengal, India

WHAT IF A BIRD

What if a bird, let's say a crow,
opened its beak
and emitted a sweet twitter
as it strutted down the street,
perched on a lamp-post
or hid in the branches of a tree?
Would its cousins ignore it
or answer back?

What if a bird, let's say a swift,
built its nest in a crevice
in Jerusalem's walls?
Would it fly across the Old City
and meet its cousins
who nest in the Western Wall?
Would they circle together at dusk
and dawn, circle and call?

What if a bird, let's say a dove,
flew across a wilderness,
its throaty coos traveling
across the mountains
as it dropped a branch
on each peak?
Would any note its voice
or understand its call to peace?

Ruth Fogelman
Jerusalem, Israel

From Ruth's latest book, What Color Are Your Dreams

HONEY BEES

your soft buzzing disappears
into a hole in the porch roof -
where inside there sits
a network of gold and flaxen combs,
writhing with your striped and gentle lives.

best to let alone - my home has become yours.
though our lives are not the same,
we will find harmony -
and i promise to avoid your stings,
not to send you away with poison,
not to take your dreams of building a home in mine,
not to steal the sweetness that is yours,
but to celebrate what we can offer each other.

move past whatever our history may be,
we coexist. we will give rather than take from each other.

Genevieve Hartman
Elmira, New York, USA

THE PLEASANT VIRTUE OF SURRENDER

The backyard hammock, a minister,
offers a sermon on peace.
A lesson of lying still
yet always, still moving.
Bridled to a greater will. Swaying
through midday summer sunlight's rays
that pierce this canopy of leaves.
Eyes dazzled into closing,
resurface through pools of cool shade.
Rapt in traceries of emerald stained glass.
Earth's cathedral soaring in pointed arches,
a cicadas' choir lifting their tranquil hymn.
Something in these brief spells of blindness
contrasting moments of holy, blissful rest.
Some incredible peace manifests
in the pleasant virtue of surrender.

Hugh P. Burke
Temple, Texas, USA

PEACE IS A STRANGER

Peace is a stranger to the rigid.
A guest of the flexible.
An unbending force as powerful as a hurricane
How good it is to receive peace from the world.
But better to give peace to it.
Here I am...
I've become the world's teenage barometer.
Peace becomes a trophy of my heart's universal oneness.
The real in me longs for that peace to be revealed
The unreal in me longs for power to be in control
Name-fame-hunger-fascination-fixation
I'm denied even a glimpse of my future
Denied the satisfaction that peace brings
That my heart definitely wants and needs
I want to sit down and make a deal with peace.
But this mind constantly refuses it reason
I am powerless to peace my new enemy
At sixteen, Peace is almost Impossible
It is Illusive, necessary, complicated
Sold and socially packaged to the fragile
And here I am, a captive soul, lost
Held hostage by the potential of peace
But peace is a just a stranger to the rigid
A guest of the flexible like me.

Manaiya Guinn
Grand Prairie, TX, USA

A LASTING PEACE NEEDS STAR-LIT SKIES

Ample skies, wrapped 'round the Earth,
ignore the borders men have drawn.
Share with us all, by giving birth
to widespread Peace – from dusk 'til dawn.

From dawn 'til dusk, too, let Peace play
a “Seek and Find” game. By design,
Stars borne in freed Peace light our way –
know quite precisely how to shine!

Sweet Sun, reveal the glowing grin
world Peace can trigger. Make Star wars cease!
Let no bad mushroom clouds barge in –
we'll need Clear Skies, for lasting Peace.

Nancy Fierstien
Dripping Springs, Texas, USA

THE ROAD

Here is the road: the light
comes and goes then returns again.
Be gentle with your fellow travelers
as they move through the world of stone and stars
whirling with you yet every one alone.
The road waits.
Do not ask questions but when it invites you
to dance at daybreak, say yes.
Each step is the journey; a single note the song.

Arlene Gay Levine
New York City, New York, USA

*Originally Published in Bless the Day: Prayers & Poems to Nurture Your Soul
(Kodansha America, Inc. 1998)*

IN A LANGUAGE OF FORGETTING

*A Stanley Kunitz Cento**

To proceed on my journey
Clouds took me by the hand
Words came
Less image than thought
Lost syllables in a language of forgetting
Here everything waits to be renewed
Who can understand the way
The last stretch toward home
Great events are about to happen
And like a child again
If I could cry, I'd cry
In death as in life
Who's named I AM
Showed us the way
Peace! Peace!
Now and forever
For this you were born

Kathleen Gunton
Orange, California, USA

**Each line is drawn from a different poem in Stanley Kunitz's collection, Stanley Kunitz - The Collected Poems*

PEACE

Let me state the obvious:
Increasing peace in your life
increases peace in the world
maybe not by much,
but God doesn't appear
to be biased against increments
considering the way time accumulates
or disease.

Make peace just as insidious
with a few surreptitious words
or subtle deeds
keep placing straws
on that camel's back
Don't expect discord
to just knuckle under
It has its own proponents
But at least you won't be giving them
the run of the place.

Michael Favala Goldman
Florence, Massachusetts, USA

DIRECTIVE

Go slow.
Be forgetful.
Fire your ambitions.
Be averse to the distractions
of this rushed American life,
the prosaic mess of dailiness
in which we're all immersed.
Be the spark that glows
in the heartland of that darkness
and might possibly, if you're lucky,
spark flames of real fire. Be kind.
Be enduring, even if it kills you.
But don't, please, whatever you do,
be a ruthless spewer of platitudes.
The spirit of love, all that really
matters: let your heart
be open and your
mind burn brightly.

Joe Blanda
Austin, Texas, USA

MONUMENT

May you thrive in the coming crystal-booted biogenic future. May you be prepared. Know your new muscles, the insect angle of your arms. You are new. New Citizen of Grass. You will be speck & function. There is cursive script all over you for someone else to read. Amen your secrets. Amen your hard joys, holy & humbled, gone tight when you understood The Terror of the Glory. You will have one hundred nameless daughters who will remember the girls & women that we forgot. You will all be Citizens of Grass, saying each woman & girl's name simultaneously, slowly, round after round, harmonies of loss. As you finish a jewel will appear on your tongue. Spit it out. Begin again. These stones will be sent to what is left of their families. Some will hold them in confusion. Some will weep. Some will come yearly to collect. You are a living reparation. When some come screaming that you mangled their names, that it has no business on your tongue so shut your mouth, shut your mouth, shut your mouth. They will be right. You will be silent & still. Your organs will slow with yearning. The songs of your daughters will cause crystals to grow inside you, reaching out, metabolizing into angles & facets. Thousands of years from now, standing alone in the sand, your sharp lines & clean edges will sing all of their names at once. The vibrations will bounce off magnetic fields, ping off of old satellites (masterless dogs) circling the earth. The transmission will travel further than any man ever imagined.

This is loss.

This is love.

This is remembering.

Shannon Quinn
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

This poem originally appeared in Geez Magazine.

OUR KIND

after Naomi Shihab Nye, "Kindness"

Let us be kind;
kith and kin,
Our kind,
of blood,
Our kind
of chlorophyll,
Our kind
of mineral,
Our kind
of water,
Our kind
of air,
Our kind
of fire, of light,
Our kind,
humankind,
our kith and kin,
kind,
let us be.

Katherine Durham Oldmixon Garza
Austin, Texas, USA

DUTY

They must turn and do good – they must seek peace and pursue it. 1 Peter 3:11

The world needs you, poet.
You, with the ability of words and
pen, to make them powerful enough
to be heard above the din of battle and
soft enough to ease them into the hearts
of those who pursue peace.
The world needs you, poet,
You, who have always known the power
of the pen to praise, proclaim and
promote the common good.
Your duty.....to take pen in hands.
To praise peace in your writing.
To proclaim it with “your spoken word.”
To promote it by your peaceable living.
And to pursue it, as the just way, of
life for all mankind!

Sue Roberts
Arp, Texas, USA

SMALL ASPIRATIONS, AN APPLICATION FORM

*I should dearly love that the world should be ever so
little better for my presence. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*

I need to be subsumed in some great cause.
Should anyone have such, please let me know.
Dearly I yearn for concord beyond laws,
Love of brothers and sisters that will grow;

That “From the many, one” might be a pledge
The standard bearers wave through rain and snow.
World’s hope for peace might just begin to fledge
Should we manage to keep ramparts low.

Be certain that I’d strive, never ceasing,
Ever eager, not yielding to despair,
So fearful of the world’s mess increasing,
Little gains would be all I’d need, to dare

Better, bigger, braver acts releasing,
For others, all my kind concern and care.
My dedication would be to piecing
Presence with awareness, empathy, repair.

Christine Boldt
Temple, Texas, USA

SAY THAT

In the census of cynics
and those who wish
for wars to end or men to see
beyond their cruel greed,
do not write our names.
Say that we have always known
wishing is not enough.

Instead, count us as laborers,
public servants, people who love
struggling children into new lives,
parents who pray for the safety
of families we have never met,
people willing to pay the price
to build peace in other places.

Say that we live eager
to share a meal or a mile or smile,
that our hearts cross borders
to resist the world's bullies.
Speak our dreams as promises
to the neighborhood of nations
that our doors will always be open.

And when the time comes
for us to answer for our actions,
explain our sacrificial choices,
tell our stories, hold our truths,
resting in the legacy of living peace
and inspired by so many others,
let us respond by asking,
What else could we do?

Anne McCrady
Tyler, Texas, USA