
MORMONS JOIN IN PRE-DAWN PRAYER FOR PEACE

by Emma Lou Thyne

EDITOR'S NOTE: On 31 December, 1986, over 1,800 Utahns gathered at Kingsbury Hall to join with over 200 million people around the world in a global vigil for peace. Among the speakers at the event were Elder James M. Paramore of the First Quorum of Seventy and philanthropist and man of letters Lowell L. Bennion. LDS poet Emma Lou Thyne was also on the program and helped coordinate the event. Sister Thyne shares in the following account, some of the feelings and impressions she gained from joining in the World Peace Celebration.

IN THE HOME I grew up in, prayer and the sureness of its efficacy came as naturally as hot oatmeal for breakfast. It just plain worked. Like when any of us were traveling and Mother went to the barometer that had hung since pioneer days on an outside wall of some Richards home, set the gold and black arrows, and tapped with her fingernail to see what it augured for the next twelve hours. If it indicated storm—and it was never wrong—Mother began to “work on the weather.” Her heaven-bound injunction to get us home was like a supplication for the parting of the Red Sea. We each have stories of clouds scattering, fog lifting, even a hurricane changing its course as Mother carried on her silent dialogue with her Maker.

That certainty was what brought me to be part of the peace celebration on 31 December 1986. When all else had so lamentably failed, prayer would surely work; prayer and meditation on a global

scale.

But even the most hopeful of us could never have anticipated what happened that morning of New Year's Eve.

Actually, we planners had no idea what to expect. Who would come at 4:30 A.M. in the interest of something as ill-fated as peace had been in this year? The only time when all the world would be on the same day was noon Greenwich time which meant 5 A.M. here. If 200 million people in fifty-six countries on six continents had been said to be gathering, what did that mean to Salt Lake City, not exactly the place most traditionally receptive to the idea of inter-faith gatherings for much of anything? Probably not a packed hall full of as much excitement as variety.

But there we were: nearly 2,000 people, as various as the coats, parkas, serapes, and furs we wore to ward off a cold winter morning. The early hour had been part of the magic. We were survivors, part of something much bigger than ourselves.

Like the occasion itself, which had evolved without any formal organization or funding, the audience and program came together as one, with everyone a participant and no one a performer. No one was announced; readers and musicians were simply facilitators for the connections we came to make—within ourselves, with each other, and with the Divine Source of the peace on earth and good will toward all that had been so elusive in the Christmas season about to end.

Amazingly, it worked, the coming together and the connecting. And who might not suppose that the reason for our being there worked too?

After a slide presentation by Awakening Heart Productions and a Randy Stebbing animated graphics film, the program began exactly at 5 A.M.; Emma Lou Thyne, LDS, gave the introduction; Douglas Wolf gave percussion interludes; Leroy Chavez, offered a Navajo prayer to the Great Spirit; Andalyn Nosanchuk played flute; Shelley White, peace marcher, gave a declaration of respect for diversity; and Elder James M. Paramore, of the First Council of Seventy, spoke on our American heritage. Each took one minute to read or perform.

Only Phay Panh and Touch Venn, Cambodian refugees, were missing; they had their one-minute reading and translation of their peace poem prepared, but unfortunately Phay got up with a sick child and then slept through his alarm.

To a darkened hall, from a stage and orchestra pit lighted only for each to take a turn, the program continued: Eiko Kishimoto playing the koto; John Nuslein, world link, leading the audience in meditation; Father Kenneth Gumbert reading from the Catholic Bishops' pastoral on peace; John Rowland and a Gregorian chant, Ellen Furgis and her own message from the Greek Orthodox tradition.

Silences fit like the dark. No one was there to be seen, only to see.

Rabbi Eric Silver read in Hebrew, Parviz Mohebbi in Farsi, translated by Jan Booman-Saeed, Baha'i. Larry Ludwig on the sitar preceded Neila Seshachari's Hindu chant and Horace Kurdy's reading from the Koran. Kathy Ash, Ellen Bridger, Richard Stout and Jeffrey Wagner's string quartet led to a silence and then to Lowell L.

Bennion reading from the Book of Mormon, and to Chalo (Mark) Kalui, Baptist, reading in Swahili from the New Testament.

Robyn Simper, general chairperson for the event, spoke about forgiveness and lighted a single candle on the darkened stage in the darkened hall to mark a final seven minutes of silence. It was a hush unfamiliar and astonishing for those of us unused to such silences. A spiritual peace was probably palpable to everyone there.

Then Ardean Watts, chief planner of the program, began to lead and we spontaneously stood to sing “Let There Be Peace On Earth, and Let It Begin With Me.” On the stage and in the audience we took hands and raised them over our so different heads and smiled, grinned. It had all come true. It had happened. The connections had been made. We all could feel it.

In the benediction Reverend Richard Henry, Unitarian, expressed hope that governments would learn to follow people, and the still early morning air burst with “a joyful noise unto the Lord,” unto the rightness of the impulse that brought us together. People clapped and cheered and hugged, as Carrie Moore of the *Deseret News* reported, as if part of “the hugging, kissing, laughter and tears of a reunion of friends. . . . Yet the tie that brought hundreds together in the wee hours Wednesday wasn't mere friendship. It was peace.”

“Mother,” I thought, standing there between those participants so like and so unlike me, “here we are, working on the human weather, all of us. With the barometer being what it's been, headed toward storm, it's what we have. It's what will make the difference. I know it, just as I know you knew. Like your oatmeal for breakfast, it's bound to make us more able to face the day.”

Such was the mood at one reverential celebration on New Year's Eve in Zion.

POLYGAMIST LEADER PASSES ON

by Ron Bitton

ON 1 DECEMBER 1986, over five thousand people gathered in the Cultural Activities Center in Colorado City, Arizona to mourn the passing of LeRoy S. Johnson. The 98-year-old polygamist leader, who was widely regarded as a prophet by Mormon Fundamentalists, died at his home in the nearby community of Hilldale after a short bout with congestion and pneumonia.

Johnson had been a dominant figure in post-Manifesto polygamy for over half a century. He rose to prominence in the early 1900s, when Fundamentalists from throughout the Intermountain West began to gather in the remote Arizona community of Short Creek (known today as Colorado City). The town soon became a polygamist stronghold, with Johnson as one of its community leaders.

At some point in the 1930s, Johnson was ordained a member of the Council of Friends. This rather shadowy group, which functioned as a sort of alternative presidency for recalcitrant polygamists, was established by Lorin C. Woolley in 1929. Woolley claimed to have received the authority to perform plural marriages and to ordain others to do so directly from his grandfather John Taylor. Most contemporary Fundamentalist groups base their claim to priesthood authority on Woolley's claims. Johnson remained on the Council of Friends for the next fifty years.

In 1943, Johnson joined with his friend John Y. Barlow to establish the United Effort Plan, which they viewed as one more step in their efforts to create a millennial society in Short Creek. The United Effort Plan was a trust to which followers pledged their land, homes, and other property as well as a portion of their income. The

three families which originally entered into the trust were the Johnsons, the Barlows and the Jessops. Today the trust holds title to all property in Colorado City and the adjacent town of Hilldale, Utah. The Jessop and Barlow families remain dominant in the trust's activities.

The notorious Short Creek Raid in 1953 brought Johnson a brief moment of national prominence. When state and federal law enforcement officers descended in the town in the pre-dawn hours of 26 July, Johnson was the only community leader who avoided arrest. He spoke out strongly against the raid, denouncing it as "the most cowardly act ever perpetrated in the United States," and vowing that "this sand will drink our blood before we will give up our principles." The raid, which was widely viewed as an act of religious persecution, was the last significant government effort to suppress the practice of polygamy.

When Joseph Musser, the head of the Council of Friends, died in 1954, the Fundamentalist movement entered a brief period of weak and unstable leadership. This period ended in March 1954 when Johnson became head of the Council of Friends, a position he retained until his death.

The tenure of "Uncle Roy," as his followers called him, was an era of growth and consolidation for the Fundamentalists. Virtually all of the families that were broken up during the Short Creek Raid were reunited during the next two years. The paroled polygamists returned to Short Creek, the town changed its name to Colorado City, and the community went on as before, although with a slightly lower profile. The population of the twin communities of Hilldale and Colo-

rado City rose from 400 to its current high of 2,100. Careful management of the United Effort Plan created a substantial degree of wealth and financial security. Today, the county tax rolls assess the value of the United Effort Plan's assets at \$17 million, although private sources estimate the Plan's holdings may be worth four times as much. The Colorado City Activities Center, a \$2 million structure where Johnson's funeral was held, was one product of this new-found prosperity.

Within a week of Johnson's death, the Council of Friends had named Salt Lake City resident Rulon T. Jeffs, 81, as his successor. There was no immediate word on whether Jeffs would move to Colorado City, or if he would try to lead the com-

munity from his home in Salt Lake. Observers of the Colorado City community also wondered if Jeffs would be able to match Johnson's performance in balancing the rival interests of the Barlow family, who control the municipal offices in Colorado City, and the Jessops, who control the board of the United Effort Plan.

However, Colorado City Mayor Dan Barlow discounted the possibility that the passing of LeRoy Johnson would lead to more factionalist rivalry in the polygamist community. "LeRoy Johnson was a man of peace," said Barlow. "Those who followed him will handle the hardship of his loss peacefully."

ON THE EVENING OF PRESIDENT SMITH'S LEAVING

To watch the sunset
We climbed into the hills
But the sun looked as if it might go down
In shifts from blue, to grey, to darkness,
And leave the valley to watch bright stars made dim
with Sabbath smoke.
However, at sunset the wind came up and blew in thin
ice clouds,
Dust over the western hills from the deserts beyond Moab,
Bringing sage, spice, cinnamon, cedar oil
In long processions like the ones which carried
Jacob Israel, Mother Sarah, Father Joseph home,
Ruddy gold over the salt wastes,
Desolate places to be crossed;
But the sky was filled with trains of red
Darkened only to more royal and more somber scarlet,
Purple of the King of only kings of kings,
And we cannot say we wept with only sadness,
That our tears came only but of grief.

STEPHEN O. TAYLOR

STEPHEN C. LeSUEUR

*The 1838
Mormon War
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