

AN OLIVE LEAF

“GO AND BRING IN THOSE PEOPLE”

By Carol Lynn Pearson

Carol Lynn Pearson's compassionate and inspiring book, *No More Goodbyes: Circling the Wagons around Our Gay Loved Ones* (Walnut Creek, CA: Pivot Point Books, 2007) closes with a beautiful essay, "Filling our Wagons," from which the following is excerpted.

SOMETIMES I LIKE to climb up in what I call my "spiritual helicopter" and look down at life on the earth, my own life, the life of the human family. I like to see where we've been, imagine where we're going, get a little perspective on today. The journey is one of consciousness, I'm very clear on that. . . .

We can track consciousness from this high helicopter, you and I. We can look down at the landscape, watch history as it goes back and back and back. We can see the darkness of unconsciousness illuminated from time to time by the light of consciousness. Look! There—hard to believe—we thought the gods appreciated human sacrifice—we thought it just fine for one man to own another in slavery—we accepted the idea that women did not have souls—we were indifferent to the genocide of millions of Native Americans—large numbers of us accepted that Hitler's ethnic cleansing was a fine idea.

Looking down at that slowly moving demarcation, that border of "now," we see the ongoing birth of higher consciousness. It's not a straight climb, but surely it's three steps forward for every one back. Where, then, will our consciousness be ten years, thirty years, fifty years from now, assuming our world lasts? You have your list of hopes, I am sure. I have mine. I hope and believe there will be more consciousness of our human family being part of the larger creation, part of the environment. The feminine principle, both mortal and divine, will have established a stronger presence. We will be closer to a cease-fire over who owns God. Our religions will have remembered that each has deeply embedded in its platform a version of the Golden Rule. We will have stopped creating divisions and will instead celebrate our common humanity and divinity. We will be more reverent of the place and power of sexuality. Our heterosexual majority will have ceased reviling and persecuting our gay brothers and sisters, and we will look back and shake our heads and say, "Can you believe that in the name of religion



we drove these people to suicide?"

Not an impossible dream, I think. I know the human family, and I say with Anne Frank, "I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are really good at heart." I know the Mormon heart. It is a good and great heart. It is a heart that opens wide whenever a need is seen. . . .

IT was 1856. The last handcart companies were on the plains headed for Utah . . . [and] ill-prepared for an early Wyoming winter. . . . They waited, they died. Riders reached Salt Lake City on Saturday, October 4, to tell of their plight. The next day was the Church's

General Conference. . . . Brigham Young rose and addressed the congregation, saying,

I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Conference. . . . [M]any of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts . . . and they must be bought here; we must send assistance to them. The text will be—to get them here!"

TODAY there is a despondent gay man somewhere who has checked to see if his father's gun is still where it used to be. Tonight there is a lesbian who again cries herself to sleep over her awful alternatives, "You may choose between being gay or being a member of this family." Today there are parents whose tears are for the pain of their loved gay child, for the lack of support they receive from their church, for the condemning rhetoric they continue to hear. . . . Today there takes place a marriage ceremony for a young, gay man, anxious to please God and his church, and an eager starry-eyed young bride who believes her groom's romantic restraint has come from his righteousness. . . .

These people are still on the plains. I am asking you to load up the wagons. You can do it without fully understanding, even without fully "approving." You have the supplies, parcels of love, compassion, encouragement, respect, good information, and humility in knowing that there is much we have yet to learn. You have the words of Jesus: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me." And you have the words that still echo across a century and a half: Go and bring in those people now on the plains.