

Peace Reimagined

A Year of Gifting Series

A Celebration of Charities

Background and Introduction

In the midst of the 2020 pandemic I wanted to find a way to make a difference. The first opportunity was when I read about the shortage of face masks in our country and was called to connect with the 55+ community that I live in and had an email blast sent to the talented community I'm surrounded by. 35 women stepped up and although I don't sew, was able to help coordinate the collection, pick up and distribution of over 6200 masks to hospitals, nursing homes, shelters and emergency workers. I lovingly called our group the Face Mask Warriors and they were incredible. A television news story was done thanks to one of our Face Mask Warriors, Carolyn Morris, a gifted Master Quilter, her family works with the local sheriff's department and the project grew from there.

Secondly, I discovered a pile of poems starting from my adolescence collecting dust in a file cabinet and old journals and had an epiphany that this was the perfect time to reflect and maybe put them in a book. Initially I thought it would be something to pass onto my family—a simple book. Synchronistically it was the very next morning that June Lucarotti introduced herself while on a Zoom meeting with a group called "Business Honoring Spirituality" and announced that she's a book writing coach. I reached out right after the meeting and she said to start I write three new poems. The first new poem I wrote on May 15, 2020 is titled "Pandemic Blues," a poem that reflects the moment we were all isolated and uncertain about what the future would hold. In some ways it was, not unlike my youth, a mystery.

Thirdly, I was inspired to see how my poetry could bring prosperity to others and decided to expand a concept I'd shared with my charity in 2008, during the financial crisis, called, "A Year of Gifting", a blog I created so I could share the good work that other charities are giving birth to in the world. My charity was on hold for a time because I had to get a corporate job to support myself. During this time of hiatus I had family illnesses and chose to spend time with them. My mission remained in my heart, on my mind and on my vision board through these years, like a cocoon waiting to reemerge.

The poem that will follow titled "The Journey Begins" was really an invitation written in April of 2003 in anticipation of a visioning day for what is now known as the Imagine Peace Foundation. On June 28th, 2003 I sent the invite to 40 people from all over the country, thinking maybe a handful would show up to be present at a meeting in my home in Aurora, Colorado. Much to my surprise, thirty-six people were present. Some flew in and showed up to co-create a magical place where people of all ages, from all places can learn all the special ways we are different through education, creativity, and spirit, so we can leave also appreciating all the wonderful ways that we are the same. With that inner connection we can become like the pebble tossed into the water becoming ripples of change that will spread peace to the world one person at a time.

The Imagine Peace Foundation was inspired by the birth of my first grandson, Alex, born in the Fall of 2002. His mom had a challenging birth and had to spend the next 6 months undergoing a series of surgeries. During this time I took care of Alex and reflected on what kind of world he could grow up in, what small steps could I take to make the world a safe, loving, compassionate and peace filled place for

him. What could I do to make our planet a place that is cleaner, a place of inspiration, and provide a future filled with possibilities. This is a dream every grandparent embraces for their grandchildren. One night after Alex was asleep I watched an episode of Oprah that I had recorded, it was Martin Luther King, Jr's. birthday and his "I have a Dream Speech" was presented. After watching it that night I stayed up till 2 a.m. drafting my own dream. A dream I took steps with an amazing group of people to initiate to create peace and love in this world.

My career for the past two decades has been as a Realtor. Previously I worked as a financial services professional. After the events of 9/11 and the sudden ending of a relationship just days before I was to be married, I went into a time of solitude and reevaluated my life for a year. It was during this time that I found out I was to be a grandma. I made the decision to leave the financial services career I had created over 13 years, leave behind my security, my pension and do what I could to begin working toward this vision. It's at this time I got my Real Estate license and began the journey of imagining peace.

In 2007 with the mortgage crisis, and temporary transition, I had to put on hold my dream of Imagine Peace Foundation, devastated I took a corporate job to make it through a challenging time. During this time of sadness that I couldn't work on Imagine Peace full time, I brushed myself off and remembered something Dr. Arun Gandhi told me at our first event in January of 2004. The event was called Wings of Unity and inspired by a beautiful work of art created by Victoria Kwasinki, a painting with angels uniting the continents in a breathtakingly beautiful display of colors. I asked Dr. Gandhi for some words of wisdom and he said, "Don't be a peace organization that argues with other organizations about how to achieve peace. That happens too much out there". I took that to heart and have always put collaboration at the forefront of everything I do with my business and our charity. In that spirit in 2008 I started a blog called "A Year of Gifting". I wanted to feature different charities and the good work they do in the world and asked my audience to donate \$3-10 during this difficult financial crisis so these charities could know they are cared for and to bring them prosperity to hopefully get through another week or month. I asked this to be done without mentioning where it came from, but as time went on I started to receive calls. Calls that were a blessing to me as my own charity struggled. A horse rescue charity said they didn't know how they were going to feed the horses that month and they received \$400.00, they were so grateful and that inspired me to continue.

In 2013 when I went back into real estate full-time I started Homes That Give in honor of my grandma, whom since early childhood, taught me to give back and have continued to celebrate charities every time I have a closing by having a client choose one of the A Year of Gifting charities to donate to. These charities and more will be featured throughout the book.

It is because of this mission that I share with you an anthology of poetry I wrote over the decades. My way of expressing my feelings, dark and light, joy and sorrow, regrets and transformations, all capturing how I felt in a moment. I've learned to accept the shadow side of myself and the light that peers through after. My hope is that we can all learn not to cast judgement on those feelings that some may label as negative, but to embrace all those layers of emotion and allow them to give birth and meaning to a new way of being. A way of being that brings us empathy and compassion to those who are walking their path, those who may be struggling to find a new way to bring them meaning and value in a world of transition. It is my dream that through this struggle and transition we can all find acceptance, not only

for ourselves, but for each other. In this acceptance, we find self-love, the first step in creating peace in your life.

My other hope is that in reading these poems, you will recall a moment in your life when you were angry, sad, regretful, peaceful, silly, joyful, calm or a combination of these emotions, and that you will be transformed or feel connected to your own heart in some way. Maybe think about something in a new way or just enjoy being in the moment. Take my hand and come with me on a journey of emotions, dreams and imaginings. They will lead down a path of discovery of the darkness and light inside of you and through it all, you can choose peace.

You will see different charities featured throughout the book. So many of them contribute to creating their part of peace in the world. Please consider giving back to them, holding them in your heart and sending them thoughts or words of appreciation and love. Truly isn't that all we want for ourselves, our children and grandchildren. For them to know they are accepted and loved for who they are, the dark, the light and all the places in between.

The proceeds from this book will go toward Phase 1 of our vision to create an ImaginePeace Mobile. Imagine PeaceMobile was inspired by Rafael Benitez, the Vice President and one of the original co-creators of the Imagine Peace Foundation. Phase 2 of Our vision is to create an Imagine Peace Center with 12 rooms that will allow it's visitors to explore peace in a variety of interactive ways. It is my hope that these poems will inspire other artists to join our cause, contribute their works of creativity and love, and to give our united dreams wings to fly so we can all live in a world that we reimagine.