



# *The Beginning of Peace*

*A Monthly Newsletter by Sarah Granby*

Happy Holidays!

This is the time of year when many spiritual traditions have big celebrations - Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and others. In all of these spiritual traditions we see similarities of hope, miracles and faith. In celebrating these holidays, I believe we show our natural human tendency towards a belief in miracles, celebration of new life, and faith in the divine.

Organizations like Seeds of Peace, which brings together youth leaders from areas of conflict, give me hope, help me believe in miracles and inspire my faith. Seeds of Peace started by bringing together Israeli, Egyptian and Palestinian youth leaders in order to know and understand each other better. It is an internationally recognized organization that has received support from leaders from around the world. *The Faith Club*, an inspirational book I recently read, is about three women - one Muslim, one Jewish and one Christian - that came together after the 9/11 tragedies. It is a real, raw story of three women who are open and strong enough to explore their faith and beliefs in depth. As I read this book, I realized that this is how we will find peace - one small group of people at a time doing exactly what these women are doing. World peace does not mean that we find one religion that all of us agree upon; it means respecting all the different ways that people have (or do not have) for worshipping. If we expand our belief system, we can see that there is the possibility of a world in which people of all different religions live together in respect, peace and harmony.

I was raised Presbyterian and my tradition is to celebrate Christmas with my family here in San Diego. Last year, though, I had Christmas dinner with a new "family." I was on a cruise in which we were assigned to a dinner table - eight strangers with whom we would spend every evening for eleven days. This group turned out to be a very special group. We had a unique connection that was deeper than what you would expect after just a few evenings together. And it was at Christmas dinner in 2006 that I looked around at this group of eight special people - Muslim, Jewish, Protestant and Catholic - and saw peace, because I knew that we would have felt just as much of this family feeling had we been celebrating another's tradition. It was a group of people with very different spiritual beliefs respecting each other's ideas. And on the last day of the cruise, a Muslim member of our table led us on a meditation- another new experience for the majority of the group.

At this time of year, let us look beyond our own faiths and spiritual beliefs. Let us look into another's religion, not needing to change our own faith, but wanting to respect another's. This is the true path to peace. I wish you all a blessed and joyous holiday season and new year full of hope and love.

In peace, hope and love,  
Sarah

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