

RESPONSE TO THE STEPHEN USHER AND WILLIAM UNDERWOOD ARTICLE

I have hemmed and hawed about being in touch with the Portland Branch newsletter editor about the article by Steven Usher and William Underwood that was on the front page of the November edition. Given that the concern keeps whispering to me, I am now writing.

Here is my attempt to communicate my reactions: I find the article to be useful with helpful ideas for Waldorf schools in the current economy. What I find even more useful about the article is how it shows me every single place where I am afraid and stuck in limited thinking.

I am grateful that I have the time, skills and resources to explore and come to terms with fear when it attacks. Not everyone is that able or willing to face fear. Even though what is being said is probably accurate, I am wondering if the way it is said is a hindrance to clear thinking and doing.

I question the choice of certain vocabulary to relay information, specifically the use of "death spiral". I also question the article's sole reliance on money as the way to meet the current situation (does the word crisis have to be used?) (Does using the word crisis hobble some readers with fear?) This article seems to be written for the choleric out there that need to be hit over the head with a 2x4 before they will listen. Hopefully, a piece in a newsletter could speak to all temperaments.

Back to the issue of money as the only way presented to meet this challenge: I would hope that we could begin to be more creative in our thinking and expand to include alternative means of "funding" a school.

John Bloom has written an article to RSF customers about the current state of affairs and he gave me permission to share it with others who might be interested in reading a piece that seems to bring in more options and ideas while still remaining quite realistic.

Warmly,

Sandra Burch, Portland, Oregon

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS: THE PRESENT ECONOMIC CHALLENGE

By John Bloom, Director, Organizational Culture
RSF Social Finance, San Francisco, CA

"A crisis is a terrible thing to waste."

Van Jones, author of the *Green Economy*

It is fair to say that many non-profit tax-exempt organizations have benefited from years of growth, both in participation and from charitable support. The current economic predicament has brought or will likely bring all of that growth, the assumptions it has been based upon, and a concern for future stability into sharp focus.

Even if your non-profit has yet to experience the stress of the economic decline internally or operationally, the external realities of everyday economic life will impress themselves upon all your decisions, from budgeting to financial aid, to tracking of receivables. Your position in response to the circumstances can further the contractive gesture stimulated by uncertainty, or engender an engaged and opportunity-based new thinking of what might be possible in order to overcome the challenges. But, this will require revising the concept of the organization's economy, the relationships that hold and drive it, and tools beyond money that make the program work. In the face of crisis, the deepest values will be called upon and tested, unaddressed or unresolved issues with money will come to the fore, and a willingness to confront its advertant power and the school's needs for it will be central to moving toward a positive future.

The primary currency is trust—your ability to sustain trust in each other, in the community, and for the community served by your organization. Engendering trust from that community is crucial for achieving sustainability. The need for creative, flexible, imaginative thinking to change old habits and establish new ones, to consider a multiplicity of options and solutions, to take some social risk, and to share power appropriately within the organization, will be significant. It is essential to rediscover that wealth includes more than money. Social, financial and organizational sustainability can be achieved by rediscovering the many aspects of our common wealth.

Toolbox

What tools do you have available to address the changing circumstances? First and foremost you have your own individual and collective intelligence and capacities—which should not be underestimated. After all, money was invented in the first place as a very portable accounting system. If you think first within the framework of money, revenues and expenses, assets and liabilities, there are some tools and approaches to consider. However, while they are core to the organization’s financial history and possibly connected to debt and other obligations, the options are relatively

limited to reallocations, reductions and additional revenue streams. When money (or even credit) is in short supply, as is currently happening, there are some avenues for temporary solutions you can take. It is important to note, also, that each school will have a differing set of circumstances and priorities:

- Broaden the fundraising base
- For schools, consider an incremental tuition increase balanced by lowering operating costs in order of program priority
- For schools, extend tuition payment plans (“soft loans”)
- Create a portfolio of contingency expenditures or reductions including possible positions or programs, and salaries (With a plan to restore them).
- If the organization has more than enough reserve funds to cover three months of operations with no income, consider paying down some debt with the excess in order to free up operating cash. (This option should be considered in the framework of interest costs, and whether or not the debt can be renegotiated to being interest only for an interim period, as one example)
- For schools, gather families that are affected with those not affected to brainstorm how they might work together to sustain the school. (Do not presume or assume that those who are unaffected should automatically feel responsible for the others. The social challenge is very real and personal in this arena).
- Renegotiate contracts with service providers where possible recognizing that they will be affected by the economy too
- Renegotiate lease terms or other non-debt based occupancy costs, if possible
- Consider other revenue streams such as active summer programs

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The *Portland Anthroposophic Times* is published twelve times a year by the Portland Branch of the Anthroposophical Society in America to serve members and friends in the wider anthroposophical community. Printed copies of the newsletter are available at the Steiner Storehouse, Portland Waldorf School, Cedarwood Waldorf School, Shining Star and Swallowtail School. The newsletter and calendar are also posted on the Portland Branch website at www.portlandbranch.com.

Questions, suggestions and submissions may be sent by e-mail to anthroposophy@earthlink.net. Items selected for publication in the Portland Anthroposophic Times may be edited for style, content and length. The deadline for submissions to the *Portland Anthroposophic Times* is the first day of each month for publication in that month’s edition. Submit calendar items to branchcalendar@mindspring.com no later than the first of each month for publication in the next edition.

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The above suggestions, along with others that will surface in the process, are full of challenges. However if the situation is left unaddressed, the organization may not survive. Implementing these require hard decisions and tough management. While it is nearly impossible for a large group to make these kinds of decisions through consensus, it is possible to consent to a small leadership group that can make these decisions on behalf of the whole. In all cases, transparency is the essential principle. Regarding personnel, the change process needs to be as objective, strategic and mission-based as possible, while at the same time being mindful of legal considerations. The critical point is to maintain vital and irreplaceable staff members even if it means a voluntary

and hopefully temporary reduction of salaries or benefits.

Tools outside the box

As our conventional currency is dissipating, the concepts and practices of complementary currencies are looking more opportune, realistic, and, frankly, necessary. Understand that such currencies are meant to complement not replace federal currency. They are specific tools to address different aspects of economic activity, and need to be tailored for, and probably by, your community.

First, it is important to note that there are whole local economies operating around the world with no money whatsoever. This is not a miracle. Rather it is the result of recognizing the basic, and by far most important, tenet of economics, that of using our capacities to transform natural resources (including those of the mind) in the service of meeting each other's material needs, and to create and maintain real agreements around ownership and use. On an even simpler level, the essence of economic life is matching unused resources with unmet real needs. Here is a practical example: A recently unemployed constituent (unused resource) is unable to pay for needed services. The organization, thus short of the cash, has the opportunity to have its real needs met by the unemployed person. No money needs to change hands in this first exchange. However the needs chain does not stop there. This exchange could be valued and recorded as a number of hours (or some other currency) expended which would accrue to the "now employed" person, who could redeem them for the service he or she could no longer pay for in cash. There would never be a shortage in the creation of time as a currency, for example. Most non-profits would be severely hampered in their work if it were not for volunteer time willingly provided. Such time exchanges happen informally all the time in childcare groups, for example. But to make such a system a conscious part of the organizational economy would augment whatever financial circulation is maintained.

- Time currency is not the whole solution, but it is one very important tax-exempt tool that is already practiced in multiple contexts. One need only go to www.timebanks.org to get a basic introduction and access to the inexpensive software package that serves as a tracking system. The system needs to be customized and there needs to be some re-education as time represents a different economic paradigm—although we all value our time.

- The process of bringing together real unmet needs with unused resources in a community requires a different kind of management than most non-profits are designed for. Where there is already a formal structure for volunteer management, the system can be built upon as a foundation. Where there is none, the organization will have to "invest" in getting to know the community deeply, to map where all the resources are, and to reconsider what the unmet needs might be that are integral to the life and mission of the organization.

The beauty of such systems is that the agreements that make them run are developed, maintained and held by the community that creates them. This quality of community self-determination is the polar opposite of the indirect, impersonal, opaque money system about which we have heard so much and understood so little. As powerless as the stock market and banking credit world might make one feel, the ability to create one's own "currency" is both empowering and a bit unnerving because it requires community trust, clear agreements, and letting go of the idea that our economic lives are authored by someone other than ourselves.

Brief historical context

If it provides any comfort, the United States actually has a long history of creating local and complementary currencies. Social ingenuity, common purpose, a sense of fairness, generosity and independence are all characteristics that seem to surface in times of economic stress. That history ranges from the issuance of notes in the American colonies (this intentionally disturbed England's banking and governmental hegemony) and in many ways led to the American Revolution, to the "greenbacks" that were issued under Abraham Lincoln that were in populist contrast to the credit issued by the private banking system, to the scrip that was developed by local communities during the Great Depression. The problem has always been a means of accounting for and circulating value in support of the human capacities to provide not only for oneself, but also for others. Evident in this historical imagination is the motivating presence of financial and economic crisis—something akin to our current situation.

The field of complementary, local and business to business exchange currencies (LETS and GETS) has been percolating for quite some time, somewhat in anticipation of the failure that has already occurred through federal currencies and global markets. Their use is emerging very quickly, partly in response to current

circumstances, partly because people want to reclaim the power and support of economic life.

Concluding Thoughts

The tools outside the box are not as obvious, plentiful, or as prescriptive as the more conventional tools of financial management. It is likely that all the tools at your disposal will be needed, and the tendency is to be more comfortable first working within the conventional currency system. This work needs to be taken up by the delegated responsible parties. However, I strongly believe that the conventional currency model, while not likely to go away all together, is a picture of the past. Whether through the current recession or simply by hitting an upper limit to what can be charged for tuition or price for service, the conventional model will not lead to sustainability over time even in normal economic times.

A complementary approach to currencies is not about eliminating or replacing federal fiat currency, but rather adding additional tools for building economic community life. Tools outside the box represent an opportunity for reimagining the future with additional tools and capacities; they are about possibility and community self-empowerment through agreements; they are about self-governance. For any organization concerned with weathering the current crisis and with developing a sustainable future, a serious consideration of current finances along with building or rebuilding community through new approaches that match and account for matching unmet needs with unused resources is essential. This is the opportunity that is knocking, and it is up to you and your community to respond.

[This article is intended for RSF Social Finance clients and may be circulated, reprinted, and shared with permission provided appropriate attribution.]

HOLY NIGHTS RECAP

By Tom Klein, Portland, OR

We have been doing Holy Nights readings since the mid 1980's when a small group including Owen and Patricia Lynch and Dolores Julien began this tradition. This year we read the lecture series about the *St. Mark Gospel*. Each evening - from December 26th when we met at the Takacs' newly remodeled home to January 6th at Chrystal's home - we met at a different home each evening. Each day we read some and ate some and enjoyed each other's company. There were snowy

evenings and rainy evenings but all the evenings were filled with warmth. In all 41 people attended; about 12 each night. I was very pleased to see so many young people this year. I look forward to next year when we will be reading the *St. Johns Gospel* lectures which we have read in 2002, 1996, and 1987. I hope to see you there.

OPEN COMMUNITY EVENING - JANUARY 18TH

Dear Portland Community,

A small group of young Anthroposophists will gather at the Portland Waldorf School between January 16-19 to work around questions of initiative and community development in social engagement work and the future of the Youth Section in North America. Each individual who is attending represents an organization, an event or a movement that is working with or inspired by Anthroposophy; together we represent an age range from the early twenties to the mid-forties. What connects us is our motivation to be active in our communities while exploring Anthroposophy in our daily experiences—as students, parents, and colleagues. We are inspired and energized, motivated by the future and the possibility we witness in others—our peers, our elders—and the global community as it shifts and adapts to new questions and issues.

We invite the Portland community to join us for our **Open Community Evening on Sunday, January 18 at 7:00PM**. We will be sharing our thoughts on the Youth Section and our work, both that which brings us together and that which we strive towards each day in the Portland Waldorf School's Music Room (2300 SE Harrison Street). There will be personal presentations from individuals who are asking questions about how to do the work they are doing in the face of new realities--parenthood, work and bills, and more.

We are asking for a \$5 donation to supplement scholarship costs for participants but no one will be turned away for lack of funds. For more information on the Meeting, or our Open Community Evening, please contact Leslie at (503) 819-3399 or at na.initiativemeeting@youthsection.org.

Please let us know if you will, or think you will, be attending. And help us pass the word along--invite others!

All the best, Leslie Loy *on behalf of the North American Initiative Meeting Planning Group*

Portland Anthroposophical Society Calendar - January 2009

Ongoing Events and Study Groups

Anthroposophical Medicine Study Group

Once a month Monday (after the second Sunday) at the Takacs Clinic 7-8:30 PM. John Takacs at johntakacsdo@hotmail.com or Kevin Kane at drkev@involved.com.

Curative Education

Second and fourth Friday 7:30 PM – 9PM study of Rudolf Steiner's *Education for Special Needs*. Call Betty Baldwin for information 503-747-6367.

Deepening Our Experience with Six Basic Exercises

Saturday 9:00-10:00 AM once a month. Beginning and advanced students welcome. 2525 NE 13th Ave, Portland, OR 97212. For information call Twila at (503) 281-9349 or write her by e-mail at Twila@spiritone.com.

Karmic Relationships

Working through Rudolf Steiner's Karmic Relationships Cycle of lectures. Call James Lee for information 503 249-3804 or e-mail him at anthroposophy@earthlink.net.

Mystery Dramas, with Speech-Formation Exercises

Two Wednesdays a month, 7:30 - 9:00 PM in Portland. Currently working with Rudolf Steiner's *Portal of Initiation* and the *Genesis* lectures. No acting experience necessary, just a love of the Word. Call Diane Ramage at 360 241-7854 for information.

Mystery Knowledge and Mystery Centers

Meeting once a month on the fourth Thursday at 7 PM at Bothmer Hall. Contact Joan Takacs by e-mail at joantakacs@yahoo.com.

Occult Science

First and third Tuesdays from 7:30 - 9:00 PM at 3046 NE 33rd Avenue, Portland, OR 97212. Contact Donna Patterson and Bob Kellum at 503-331-7393.

Portland Waldorf School Community Choir

Every Monday morning from 8:45 - 10:00 AM (at the Portland Waldorf School, 2300 SE Harrison Street, Milwaukie) in the music room of the high school building, whenever school is in session. Anyone in- and outside the PWS community who enjoys singing songs through the seasons, across the centuries and around the world is very welcome, including drop ins. This event is free and a community builder. More information: Marion Van Namen (503) 956-4046.

Portland Youth Discussion Group

Come join the Portland Youth Discussion Group as we pick-up *Becoming the Archangel Michael's Companion* in order to understand what our task, as the youth of the world, is in the 21st Century. There is something new and exciting in the air among the young people as a new generation prepares to take on the responsibility of this world and so we gather to hold both that space, to marvel and to share what others are doing in the world and to work more deeply with one another. We welcome new people who are open to exploring Spiritual Science and conducting their own research and those who are interested in learning more about the youth in Portland, the North American and International Youth Section and more! There is so much going on. For more information about when and where we meet, please contact Leslie Loy at (503) 819-3399 or leslielal@yahoo.com.

Waldorf Education and Teacher Training

Lectures and courses conducted throughout the year by the Micha-el Institute. Contact John Miles at 503/774-4946. johncmiles@usa.net.

Upcoming Events

JANUARY 8-29

Micha-el Institute

1/8 The Social Evolution of the World; 1/15 The Threefold Social Order for today and its future development; 1/22 The Waldorf School as an expression of the Threefold Social Order; 1/29 The Social Tasks for Humanity – now and in the coming age; held in the Music Room at Portland Waldorf School, 2300 SE Harrison, Milwaukie. Contact 503 774-4946 or email johncmiles@usa.net

JANUARY 10 – FEBRUARY 21, 2009

Contemplative Arts Classes

Six Saturday morning classes, 10:30 – 12:30, beginning January 10 (no class Jan. 31), designed to promote inner well-being. Using basic color, line, movement and breathing exercises, we will slowly strengthen our capacities to enter into active relaxation, bringing harmony and balance into our thinking, feeling, and willing. No previous artistic experience necessary. Bothmer Hall, 5919 SE Division. \$125. Cheri Munske, 503-484-4133 or woolhorse@earthlink.net.

JANUARY 16-19

Youth Section Meeting Portland

A small group of active youth will gather at the Portland Waldorf School, 2300 SE Harrison, Milwaukie, to work around questions of taking initiative and developing community. What connects us is our motivation to be active in our communities while taking on Anthroposophy in our daily experiences. For more information on the Meeting please contact Leslie Loy at (503) 819-3399 or contact her by e-mail at na.initiativemeeting@youthsection.org.

Sunday, JANUARY 18

Open Community Evening

We invite everyone who is interested in learning about youth activity and the questions young Spiritual Scientists in North America are asking to join us. 7:00 PM at the Portland Waldorf School, Music Room, 2300 SE Harrison, Milwaukie. \$5 donation. For more information on the Open Community Evening, please contact Leslie Loy at (503) 819-3399 or contact her by e-mail at na.initiativemeeting@youthsection.org.

Mondays, JANUARY 26- MARCH 2

Experiencing the Planets

Marion van Namen and Diane Ramage invite you to study the planets and their influences through music, movement and speech. Classes will be held at Bothmer Hall, 5919 SE Division Street, Portland from 7-9PM. Register by calling Marion van Namen by phone at (503) 956-4046 or contact her by e-mail at marion@octavemusictherapy.com. Cost: \$195 for 5 sessions, or \$50 per class. \$15 discount for signing up before January 19th. Small scholarship available, no class on 2/16. If you register with a friend then he or she gets in at half price.

JANUARY 21

Portland Branch Council Meeting

7 PM – 8PM study of the theme of the year followed by a business meeting at the home of Ruth and Tom Klein, 3609 SE Center, Portland OR 97202, phone: 503-777-3176. All Branch members are welcome to attend

Sunday, FEBRUARY 8

First Class of the School of Spiritual Science

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required – Discussion on Lesson 14 at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Lesson 15. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807 or Diane Ramage at (360) 241-7854.

FEBRUARY 5-26

Micha-el Institute

2/5 Kindergarten to Grade 5 Eurythmy; 2/12 Middle and High School Eurythmy; 2/19 Therapeutic Eurythmy and Movement; 2/26 Eurythmy as a Performing Art; held in the Music Room at Portland Waldorf School, 2300 SE Harrison, Milwaukie. Contact 503 774-4946 or email johncmiles@usa.net.

FEBRUARY 14

Family Bingo Night

Cedarwood Waldorf School's 6th grade will be hosting monthly Family Bingo Nights on Saturday evenings beginning in January. Bring your friends for an evening of fun, prizes and a cookie from our concession stand! A good alternative to the all-pervasive movie/video.

FEBRUARY 28**Mothers, Daughters, Women and Friends**

Cheri Munske and Susan Beck of Austin, Texas, will co teach an artistic workshop in support of understanding and strengthening the intimate female bond. Using color as the expressive language, we will explore, glorify and unearth how we bond with one another. 10:00 AM- 1:00 PM Bothmer Hall, 5919 SE Division St. \$99 for a couple. Contact Cheri Munske by phone at 503-484-4133 or by e-mail at woolhorse@earthlink.net.

Sunday, MARCH 8**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required - Discussion on Lesson 15 at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Lesson 16. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807 or Diane Rumage at (360) 241-7854.

Sunday, APRIL 19**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required - Discussion on Lesson 16 at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Lesson 17. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807 or Diane Rumage at (360) 241-7854.

Sunday, MAY 10**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required - Discussion on Lesson 17 at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Lesson 18. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807 or Diane Rumage at (360) 241-7854.

Sunday, JUNE 14**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required - Discussion on Lesson 18 at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Lesson 19. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807 or Diane Rumage at (360) 241-7854.

AUGUST 1-8, 2009**Encircling Light-Expectant Silence**

Anthroposophical Society in Canada hosts this conference on the North in White Horse, Yukon. Full details about all aspects of the Conference will be available on our website, www.encirclinglight.ca, which will be in operation early in 2008.

BUILDING BRIDGES


By Will Allen Dromgoole

An old man going along the highway came at the evening cold and gray, to a chasm vast and deep and wide, through which was flowing a solemn tide.

The old man crossed in the twilight dim, the sullen stream had no fears for him. But he turned when safe on the other side and built a bridge to span the tide.

Old man said the fellow pilgrim near, you are wasting strength with building here. Your journey will end with the ending day, you never again must pass this way. You've crossed the chasm deep and wide, why build you the bridge at the eventide?

The builder lifted his old gray head. Good friend, in the path I have come, he said, there follows after me today a youth, whose feet must pass this way. This chasm that has been not to me to that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be. He too must cross in the twilight dim. Good friend, I am building the bridge for him.



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