

CHILDREN ARE THE PRESENT THAT WE GIVE TO THE FUTURE

A Responsive Reading by Michael Brandwein

Children are the present that we give to the future.

It is our place to teach them the tools of life and leadership.

It is their place to use those tools to build a world of wisdom and warmth.

Sometimes the challenges and problems in the world seem overwhelming in number and complexity.

May we always understand.

Governments and nations are abstractions. They do not exist except as collections of people and their choices. It is the people who are important.

In every instance, it is the people who make the difference.

Between conflict or cooperation.

Between kindness or cruelty.

So we must always remember

The world is changed one child at a time.

Each child is changed one choice at a time.

Children learn to make choices by watching those around them.

They learn more from what they see us do than from what we tell them.

The young ones will watch us intently.

The older ones will watch us intently but pretend not to.

But all them will look to us as models.

And this causes us secret concern, for we know that we are imperfect.

We know that we make mistakes,

But being a model for a child does not mean being perfect. Indeed, if we were perfect we would rob them of the opportunity to observe how imperfect people should act when they err.

Children need to see its make mistakes and need to see what we do after we have made them.

There will be times when we need help.

There be times when we will be afraid to admit to others that we do not know what to do.

We must remember that to struggle in silence is not an act of strength.

To ask for help is not an act of weakness.

Some young people may demand more from us than we believe we have to offer.

Their appearances may deceive.

Those that appear most fearless may be the most fragile.

Those who appear most cool, may be most afraid

May we understand that the young people who cause the greatest challenges are often the greatest reasons we are here.

We are humbled by the difficulty of the task before us.

On the first morning of camp, we will hear the sounds that let us know that another journey of guidance and love has begun.

Not all the sounds will be pleasant.

There will be whining.

There may be anguished crying. There will be:

"I don't want to" and "You can't make me" and "I want to go home."

And then the children will arrive...

Children who are like plants.

Like plants, children need to be nurtured by a source of warmth and energy

We will be their sun

Like plants, they need to be nourished with a constant flow of sustenance and material growth.

We will be their water

Like plants, their continued growth depends on a firm and consistent foundation,

We will be their soil

Like plants, they need room to stretch and reach new heights.

We will be their sky

And in that sky is a rainbow, a band of harmonic colours. Colours, which enhance and support each other without losing their distinctively different qualities.

May, our children be inspired by the rainbow to appreciate the differences between people and become stronger through their diversity.

And in that sky are stars. The German-born American writer Carl Schurz said that our ideals are like stars. We cannot succeed in actually touching them with our hands. But like a sailor on the desert of waters, we can choose them as our guides — and following them we will reach our destiny.

These stars — our ideals — float over a special place that meets the needs of children of the world

They need a safe place to try new skills and roles, a place where they can risk without ridicule and fail without fear.

Let it be camp.

A place where they can learn about persons different from themselves; where they can experience groups more varied and therefore more personally challenging than those they might select for themselves.

Let it be camp.

A place where they can practice expressing their feelings to people who will listen more often to understand than to correct.

Let it be camp.

In a world of accelerating pace and sometimes thinning connections to families and communities, children need a place where people simply give them time, where people will focus on them individually.

Let it be camp.

They need people to devote themselves to the hard work required to make such a place not a distant dream but an immediate and continuing reality.

Let it be us.