

From the Editor

Nancy Blanning

When we began work on this issue of *Gateways* in the glory of midsummer, I never gave a thought to the approaching tenth anniversary of September 11. I have an admittedly poor memory for dates or how long ago something happened, focusing rather on the needs and callings of the present moment. We were collecting and inviting articles to continue our commitment to picture the diversity and richness of our Waldorf work with young children in North America and worldwide. I was following that plan and intention in selecting content for this issue.

But then something very curious began to happen. This issue of *Gateways* seemed to have an intention of its own. The articles began to speak and weave together in an unexpected way. Each *Gateways* has the same thematic thread running from issue to issue rather than an announced subject theme. The research and pedagogical articles, artistic activities, and practical suggestions are all directed to help us understand the growing child in body, soul, and spirit and help educate him and her into the wholeness of life. That remains true with all you will read in this Fall offering. But there is perhaps more as well. And here the story unfolds.

Some years ago a colleague, Lincoln Kinnicutt, sent me an addition he had written to expand upon a multicultural Advent circle. He had a Muslim child in his class for whom he wanted to include something familiar from Islamic tradition in an Advent journey of finding light in the winter darkness. He consulted with the child's mother for ideas. With her help, the *Hajj* circle resulted. I have held on to this since that time, wanting to share it with other teachers. With *Gateways* calling for ideas to enrich our experience of diversity and with Advent around the corner when this issue comes to you, this seemed a perfect time to share this imagination.

More background information was needed to put this piece in proper context. One conversation led to another. Ultimately I was talking and emailing with the Muslim mother with strong Waldorf connections. What an amazing and privileged experience this has proven to be. I have been humbled in recognizing my

ignorance of Islamic culture and belief, awestruck by the beauty of the stories, and inspired to see similar imaginations and story threads common in Christian and Islamic stories. In the midst of this wonder, suddenly it struck—the tenth anniversary of September 11, a time of such tender sensitivity—was coinciding with this publication. The mood of our country and world seems to be the most divisive, fractious, and rancorous I have known in my lifetime, with accusation, suspicion, and intolerance burgeoning in every corner. In contrast what I was learning about the *Hajj* imagination had been imbued with respect, reverence, and expression of a deep desire to be mutually understood and recognized without prejudgment. The challenge of how we can honor one another as human beings and peoples is an urgent consideration for ourselves, our Waldorf education, and our world.

With these thoughts in mind, I began to actively look for what the other articles might offer to help us deal with our post-September 11 world. I have been surprised and encouraged to see how our general thematic thread is also very specific to these challenges. The first two lead articles on movement—the second part of Renate Long-Breipohl's "Movement with Soul" and a summary of one keynote lecture on movement from last February's East Coast WECAN conference—emphasize how sensory development through movement creates not only the essential foundation for stable, objective orientation in space and time but also for healthy social life. We also have an excerpt from a little known volume, *Ideas and Encouragement for Teaching Eurythmy* by Nora von Baditz. This expands upon the importance of eurythmy for young children's healthy development, which Renate Long-Breipohl refers to in her article. Rudolf Steiner is quoted as saying, "If one does eurythmy with little children under seven they acquire an ego force that neither school nor karma can give them." Goodness knows that our future world will benefit from this.

To live together in community, we have to be supported and gently and gradually guided into living

with others. The description of the Cottage Garden home program and the excerpt from the new WECAN publication, *Trust and Wonder*, describe this first step into social life. A report of international work in Costa Rica reminds us of cultural differences and the diversity of our work but also the common intent we have for helping healthy children grow into healthy and generous world citizens. Thank you to Celia Riahi and Barbara Audley of Cottage Garden and Joyce Gallardo and Teresa de Jesus Savel for these contributions.

The *Hajj* circle insert and the brief support articles speak for themselves. To me they have proven to be small but mighty, having become the beginning and end point for organizing this issue. Lincoln Kinnicutt and Alexa Clark Abdelatey have been tireless resources and inspiration with their work. These are accompanied by a playful hand gesture game from the new Ellersiek publication, *Dancing Hand, Trotting Pony*. These hand games stimulate the speech center in the brain and promote speech development, an essential for effective social interaction. Additionally, they are filled with joy. We must all have joy to develop optimism in our lives and the capacity to see different and unexpected things in life as interesting variations on human experience rather than as irritations or threats.

Finally we have three book reviews. Peter Selg's *Unbornness* reminds and reassures us that we all come from the same divine, universal source that remains constant in us no matter what geography, folk soul, language, culture or religion our destiny prescribes for us. *The Tear* by Nancy Jewel Poer is a tender story

about the death of a beloved grandmother and how a young child is helped to see this loss as a great transition. Birth and death are universal experiences we all share, which can bind rather than separate us. Thank you to Susan Weber and Laurie Clark for providing looks into these new resources for our work.

The final review features *Connecting with Young Children: Educating the Will*, by former *Gateways* editor Steve Spitalny. Steve observes how ours is a world of increasing isolation, which Waldorf education was founded to counter and heal. This book strongly reminds us of how profoundly the experiences we offer to children affect their development. The children imitate what they experience of both outer activity and inner attitude of the people around them. Steve states that for teachers "the task is to help the child relate to and connect with all aspects of life in ways suitable for [his] development, so that later as an adult many realms of connection are available to him. This is a social path toward cultural renewal and a more peaceful world, one individual at a time."

The images we share with the children through story and circle imaginations are powerful in quiet ways. All pictures of outer activity and inner attitude that honor, respect, and appreciate the diversity of our world help to build these "realms of connection." In this post-September 11 era, it is quite a thought that a circle time could change the world. If we work with our quiet tools strongly enough, perhaps a new Nobel Prize will have to be created for "outstanding contribution to world peace and tolerance through Waldorf Circle imaginations."

Seeking Your Contributions

As always, *Gateways* is open to submission of your contributions of all kinds as well as questions and comments regarding past issues.

For the next issue, we are particularly seeking articles on the topic of ***Practical Work in the Kindergarten***.

Please submit articles via email to publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

The deadline for the Spring/Summer 2012 issue is **February 15, 2012.**

