

Gateways

Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America ♦ Issue 82, Spring 2022



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WECAN

WALDORF EARLY CHILDHOOD
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A dragon puppet visits a Michaelmas celebration. Photo: Janene Ping

From the Editor

— Nancy Blanning

Considering Festivals—Creating Gateways through the Thorny Hedge

A “gateway” is a passageway from one space to another. In the stories we tell, there are doors, thresholds, passageways into the unknown and unfamiliar. Sometimes a treasure or solution to a critical problem lies on the other side of the gateway. To pass through this portal, effort is required. A doorway does not open magically and often requires courage and sometimes sacrifice to pass through. In the Grimms’ story of “The Seven Ravens,” the little sister journeys undauntedly to rescue her seven brothers who have been cursed into the form of ravens. She has to open the door of the glass mountain but has lost the drumstick gifted to her as a key that would open the passageway to entering. She sacrifices a little finger from her hand, which becomes the key to unlocking the entrance. Through this dedication to her task, her resolve, her brothers are returned to their human form.

The story of “Briar Rose” offers another picture. A longed-for royal child has been born. In celebration, a grand feast is held. There are thirteen wise women in the kingdom, but only twelve are invited to give their blessings to the child. Nonetheless, the thirteenth wise woman appears uninvited at the feast and curses the child, saying that in her fifteenth year, she will prick her finger on a spindle and fall down dead. But the curse is mitigated by the gift of the twelfth remaining guest who has not yet spoken. The piercing of her finger on the spindle will not result in death but a sleep of one hundred years. The story continues to describe how the royal parents try in every way to protect their child, but on her fifteenth birthday she sets out to explore all the rooms and passageways of the castle. She happens upon a tower she has never seen before, climbs the staircase, opens a door with a rusty key, encounters an old woman spinning, and pricks her finger. The destiny that was foretold manifests as she—and all the people of the castle with her—fall into a deep sleep.

And so it is for one hundred years. Then a young, brave warrior, who has heard legends of the beauty that lies within the castle, resolves to penetrate through

the thorny hedge that surrounds the palace, even at the risk of “dying a pitiable death” from getting stuck in the thorns. “I am not afraid. I will go and see the beautiful Briar Rose.” The time is ripe for the prophecy to be fulfilled and the beauty within the castle is found, awakened, and escorted back into the world, refreshed and renewed by the long night of sleep.

Taking on the questions of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) is our current thorny challenge. We are coming to the end of our first 100 years in the Waldorf early childhood movement,* and are being called to enter into the new world of our next century. This *Gateways* issue focuses on **Festivals** from the perspective of IDEA. We love festivals. They help us mark our seasonal, social, and spiritual passage through the cycle of each year. Our festival celebrations are an opportunity to build community on all of these levels—communion with the natural world, with each other, and with the spiritual world that surrounds and wishes to guide us.

Yet our festivals can also be painfully exclusive. Colleagues of the global majority with different colors of skin, ethnicities, religions, traditions, and heritages tell us of their pain and disappointment that Waldorf early childhood education, as they have thus far experienced it, has left them standing as outsiders. What the education offers is beautiful in what it is, but is not enough to support them and their children in affirming the rightness and value of their own personhood. How can we proceed to enlarge the existing space where everyone’s belonging is affirmed? This is our urgent question.

“Briar Rose” seems an apt picturing of what we are grappling with right now. Many of our assumptions about education, identity development, affirmation of the individual selves of the children, and pedagogical practice are being challenged. “Friction” is an element that keynote speaker Meggan Gill identified at the February 2022 WECAN North American conference. We live with this friction when something cherished is questioned or challenged.

Our sensitive skins are stabbed and rubbed. We are surrounded by contradictory points of view and advice about including IDEA in our work. And what is so bewildering, frustrating, piercing, distressing—and exciting—is that every view holds its element of truth. One person’s “rose” is another person’s “thorn.” If we stand rigidly rooted to single points of view, a thick hedge can grow thicker around our Waldorf castle. While we want to protect the goodness and beauty that lives within its wall, we want many pathways through the hedge to invite all visitors to come enjoy its wonders.

Friction is not bad. The rubbing of two points of view against each other creates warmth. Warmth can flare into destructive fire, yet it can also soften what has become stiff. WECAN wishes to help find gateways to Both/And. Getting there requires work. Different questions and viewpoints need to be expressed, discussed, and pondered socially and esoterically to find something that is not either/or, but a new inspiration that warmly recognizes everyone whose space in the circle of community remains unfilled.

Gateways is the name of this journal. Notice that it is plural. There is no single gateway suggested in the name, but more than one, perhaps many. The articles awaiting your consideration speak for themselves in suggesting different “gateways” into our educational future. Some defend, some call for change. Some

viewpoints are moderate, some extreme, depending on individual points of view. Readers are likely to feel a thorn prick or two as the series of articles is read. Yet what holds these expressions together is that each author cares deeply about Waldorf education. Each wants to see its beauty, goodness and truth manifested for the next 100 years—renewed, refreshed and awakened to greet the new morning of our world.

Thank you to contributors Anjum Mir, Jill Taplin, Meagan Wilson, Steve Spitalny, Somer Serpe, Holly Koteen-Soulé, Aimee de Ney, and Janene Ping for sharing their deeply considered thoughts. Each labored long and hard to find the right words and images to share in our festival considerations.

Surely when the Briar Rose castle awakened, there was a great banquet to celebrate. The tables were set splendidly and there were chairs waiting for everyone in the whole village. So may it be for our communities, too. May we find many pathways through the hedge. And remember: in the story, the thorns turned into large, beautiful flowers. ♦

Note

*While there was an early attempt to open a kindergarten class at the Stuttgart school, the kindergarten was not officially supported and recognized as an integral part of the school until 1926.

Focus—Consideration of Festivals

Reflections on Diversity

~ Anjum Mir

With the brilliant colors of sunset fading into a clear night sky, our community convened in the courtyard to send light into the longest nights of the year. Our school's Festival of Lights was a much-anticipated yearly celebration of diversity. Songs celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, Diwali, Las Posadas, Santa Lucia, and Kwanzaa were carried up by the seaside air. The Athan, the Muslim call to prayer—a simple, a cappella chant archetypal of the entire Muslim world, would close the evening as an invitation towards unity. The crowd fell silent as our friend, an exquisite reciter, slowly raised his right hand to his ear and sang out his first notes—clear as a bell, reverberating into the night air. It was breathtaking, and I felt delight for my sons who finally had a chance to share of themselves with the community. It was then that a giggle erupted from the circle and began to spread. My sons looked towards me with hurt and then left the company of their friends to find comfort in my arms. “Why are they laughing, Mama? It’s not funny.” There in our little huddle, the lovely ululating sound enveloped us and lifted us above the crowd. For a moment, behind closed eyes, I imagined that my community was floating up there with us in the same way that I had floated the whole evening with every song and chant. I know it was the unfamiliarity of the sound that inspired the giggles; but for my sons, it was a tender reminder that they didn’t quite belong.

Children live in the archetype. For most of my career as Waldorf teacher, I subscribed to this belief—not blindly, but comfortable in the wisdom that stood behind it. It was this same wisdom that allowed me to slip into the pedagogy twenty years ago even when others, steeped in it for years, felt me to be out of place. With the poignance of a childhood tribulation, I remember the moment when a renowned pedagogue looked me directly in the face and asked me “How can you stand to be here?”

How could I not? It was my children who led me here. Even before they were born, they were leading me. The mere possibility of them inspired me to seek out an education that would keep them connected and grow them into moral, self-knowing human beings. What’s more, in my studies to be a teacher, I found that anthroposophy supported me in understanding my own Islamic spiritual tradition in the same way that a well-crafted pair of lenses defines and sharpens what we perceive in the world. It was an unexpected gift that came out of my striving for my children.

Early on, my children taught me that to know themselves, they needed to be connected to their higher self—the one that is housed in their body and to whom Waldorf Education is ultimately directed. They intuitively understood that to master the opportunities of this life and to progress through it, they had to acknowledge, learn, accept, and command the sheath and circumstance into which they were born. To support them in this was my work as a parent. To support them in this must also be the purpose of a good education and the commitment of a devoted teacher.

When my first child was four, I realized that he needed more than the archetype. In fact, he told me so. The morning of my first doll-making workshop, he took my face in his able hands and looked me straight in the face and said, “Make her Khaki like me!” I’ve crafted many dolls since then, but his, my first, was a sandy-beige skinned, brown eyed, raven-haired sister that we named Baby Mona. I knew my children needed more, but there was a time when even my dearest colleagues assured me that the archetypes were enough to support their development. Yet I witnessed their repetitive struggle to locate themselves somewhere in the curriculum and the community. I also saw occasions like the Festival of Lights, when they perceived that others were uncomfortable with their differences. And then there were times where

I saw the deep and limiting effect of not finding yourself in the classroom such as the occasion when my daughter opted for knighthood over princessdom because she understood from the fairy tales that princesses and other goodly royalty were golden-haired. The same daughter told me that during the “Mother Holle” dress up, she wanted to be the girl with pitch or the brown loaf of bread. Crestfallen, I went directly to my kindergarten colleague. After an earnest conversation that challenged what we had always thought about archetypes, she made an effort to include stories and puppets in which my daughter could see herself not just in the characters who struggled, but in those who triumphed. And believe me, it was not lost on my daughter, who shared those meaningful, self-affirming moments with me.

Self-acceptance is a necessary step towards self-mastery. For children to experience themselves reflected positively in their immediate world, especially by the people that they love and value thus becomes imperative. Even as a mother, I constantly question whether my sons and daughters meet themselves in our family culture. Their world is not the world in which I was raised, and their struggles are unique to their time and their circumstances. I strive to know my children better so that I can continue to welcome them into their task of incarnating and so I can establish the connection through which I can deliver the nourishment and inspiration that will encourage them to know themselves. But it is teachers who hold children for most of their twelve waking hours a day during the school year—almost twice as long as children are home with their parents. Thus, the responsibility of making sure that students see themselves in the classroom is great.

In me, my children could always see a clear reflection of themselves at school. But what of the students who do not have this, who find themselves alone in their difference and in classrooms where the teachers are not prepared to consciously weave them into the fabric of the class? Their journey of incarnation becomes more challenging because at a time when they should be growing into their bodies and learning to command them, they are unsure that their bodies, the ones that look so different from the others and don’t fit in to the culture of the class, are the ones in which they wish to be. When we incorporate the uniqueness of these students in our classroom and curriculum, we assure them that they are in the

right body and the right place and thus facilitate the self-acceptance that is necessary for incarnation and spiritual evolution.

In our efforts towards diversity, most of us are still focused on the obvious: Do I have reflections of diversity in my classroom? But beyond the dolls with different skin color and the images in the décor, are the stories, the rhymes, the chores, the meals, the sounds and the music. Going further, the more important questions for the teacher are self-reflective: What are my experiences of diversity, am I open, where is my judgement, am I willing to change, how comfortable am I with what is unfamiliar to me, how can I become more familiar with what I don’t know, who can help me in this task, what do my students perceive from me? To those of us who feel resistance to or trepidation towards the new impulses and the re-imagining that we must do in looking for the kernel of Waldorf education that can inspire us forward—this work is necessary because it serves the children in their journey towards being a free-thinking human being.

When looking at Diversity and Inclusion work, we are no longer just speaking of changing practices, we are talking about changing paradigms and frameworks and, thereby, hearts and minds. Many schools have had long-standing diversity committees and many teachers have made sincere efforts towards inclusion and equity, but our understanding of the needs of the children of this day is evolving and calling for a different approach that is about having the courage to break from what is comfortable to meet the children where they are. Inclusivity practices such as calling upon parents to bring traditions and festivals of cultural significance into the classroom work to some degree, but can also have the opposite effect from the desired one. Over the years, there were a few occasions that I was invited into the kindergarten to bring a Ramadan or Eid story, just as other parents were invited to share Hanukkah or Chinese New Year. My children later told me that the out-of-the-norm experience was unnatural in the rhythmic life of their kindergarten. It would have been a true kindergarten experience if it had come from their teacher, who brought so many other festivals and stories with love and reverence. For my children, the disappointment continued into grade school, where despite the celebration of a rich array of historical cultures traditionally included in the curriculum, there was no acknowledgment of any days that were significant in Muslim culture. Most dispiriting for

them was that while many blocks received two to three weeks of study and attention, the Islam block in grade six was given a week at most or overlooked entirely if time was short. Personally, I was frustrated that on the occasion that Islamic history did make it into the sixth or seventh grade curriculum, I was often the one that was invited into the middle school by my colleagues as an afterthought to give a speedy overview of a faith tradition that is over 1400 years old, spans almost every country, culture, and race, makes up a significant percentage of the world's population, and which is currently one of the most misunderstood religions in the world. My preference at any stage of my children's schooling would have been to be a primary resource or a partner for their teachers. I would gladly have spent time in the summer, before the school year started, pointing the teachers towards authentic materials, teaching them songs, and sharing with them how I wished for my tradition to be represented.

Whether or not we have students in our classrooms that come from backgrounds different from our own or from that of the majority of the class, we must integrate diversity into our curriculum. In every classroom community there are differences, such as gender identity, socioeconomics, family constellation, family history, religion, and learning needs that are not necessarily obvious. Even if your class composition is superficially uniform, students do and will encounter diversity in the world. In order for them to go on to forge meaningful and dynamic relationships with any human being that they encounter, we need to integrate the rich reflection and spirit of as many peoples as we can into our classrooms.

It was once accepted that for teachers to be authentic and truthful in their work, they were obligated to bring only that which arose from within them. This notion is now being deconstructed, but for the first half of my career, I was expected to conform to the Euro-centric standard in the curriculum even though it was not what was natural to me—and I did it because I lacked self-confidence and credibility in the Waldorf community, and I was still learning. Internally, I always knew that I was working with the core principles of Waldorf education, but it was years before I was able to separate them from the symbols that I had inherited from my mentors.

When I finally found the courage and freedom to bring the archetypes in my own way, I had two realizations: first, that we inadvertently construct our

own archetypes by integrating the principles with the same practices and preferences over a long enough period of time. While these traditions have their virtues, they can also be responsible for inflexibility, a lack of curiosity, and a rigid adherence to what we come to believe is the way—sometimes even at the cost of our observations of the children before us and their needs in this time. Second, it was out of freedom that I recognized that to invite my students and families to partake of the nourishment and guidance that I wanted to provide and to give them the inspiration to meet me, I had to extend a bridge built of symbols that were familiar to them and to invite them into a space full of stories and traditions that were familiar and made them feel at home. Once they felt like I was striving to know them, they made efforts to know me and my offerings. And finally, whatever we bring out of striving for our students is authentically our own. We can make anything our own—a story, a symbol, a song, or a rhyme—in the same way that we learn a story before bringing it in the kindergarten; we seek it with the intention to nourish a need in our students, we commit it to memory, we digest it, and when we have metabolized it, we bring it to our students so that it flows from us to them just as the sun warms us with its rays. I have taken months to learn songs in languages that are not my own in order to create a space of belonging for parents and children in my class—a space where they feel that I am weaving them into the rich tapestry of our community, where they feel that their absence would make a fundamental difference, and where their presence is necessary. How I had wished that for my children.

Grasping our own identities, experiences of diversity, judgements that we hold, and frameworks for interfacing with the world can form a solid foundation from which we can begin to work with our students and their families—flexibly, consciously, and full of curiosity. We are called upon to ask ourselves how much we know about the diverse families that we hold in our care—on both obvious and subtle levels—and to what lengths we are willing to go to prepare the space for those children and their families in our community. Equally important is the source of our knowledge. Parents should be the first resource, as they are the ones who have already been supporting their child's journey, and the ones who have the right to establish their own cultural narrative. Building trusting and respectful collaboration is a necessity in

creating a space in which children and families can see and experience themselves. Sometimes this is a simple as asking the parents, “What would you like me to know about you and your child that can help me in creating an authentic and self-affirming space?” Other times, it will be a longer process that requires an invitation for participation where that parent can be in the classroom and witness their child in your care and where a child can experience their family participating.

To truly serve the children, our first task is reorienting ourselves to their fundamental qualities. Young children have sensory empathy, and thus learn and become through imitation. What they sense and experience becomes defining, lens-building parts of their world view, incorporated as capacities for connection and growth. Thus, if experiences of human diversity are absent or negative, even in the attitudes and judgements of the adults and community around them, children will spend their adult lives struggling, as many of us are, to reconstruct their perspectives once they find themselves in the world. Ideally, we would prepare children for their forging into the world with a diverse group of classmates. After all, studies have shown that for a child to integrate another child—different from them in some area of diversity—into their world view, they must engage in regular free play with them before the age of seven. In the absence of diversity in many of our schools, the responsibility for building this capacity in our students must then be taken up by the teacher and curriculum.

We also know that children are keen observers. Their ever-seeking senses stretch forth into the world looking for cues in the colors, sounds, and patterns that they observe as stimuli for their growth. They notice differences in humans in the same way that they notice flowers in a garden. They don’t judge them, but they notice them with clarity and honesty,

and we must acknowledge this. My daughters and sons noticed that their skin was different from that of their friends. They also noticed a pattern when all the puppets and dolls in the classroom looked the same and when those observable physical traits were echoed in the language of stories and songs that they heard. And while they may not have articulated it or seen anything wrong with it, they took it in and made connections and defined themselves accordingly just as my daughter, the knight, did.

Children want to be seen. They want the humans who mean the most to them to truly recognize them and reinforce their existence by making them feel at home. As parents we naturally do this by making time to observe our little ones, to understand their needs, by being responsive when they struggle, by acknowledging that they are individuals on their own journey. We first acknowledge their earthly identity by gifting them a name and calling them by it until they learn it and finally embody it with their own characteristics and biography. It’s a simple thing, but how I wish that my children’s teachers had made the effort to correctly pronounce my children’s beautiful Arabic names—the ones that I first gifted them as a symbol of their individual journeys. Hearing the true sound of their names would have been one beautiful reflection of them in the classroom and maybe even made the beautiful sounds on that day in the courtyard so familiar that all of the children could have soared with us in the night sky. ♦

Anjum Mir, a mother of four Waldorf students, has been a Parent and Child teacher for over 20 years in Los Angeles. She currently serves on the WECAN Board and is a member of its IDEA Committee.

Developing Our Thinking About Festivals

~ Jill Tina Taplin

Festivals are a part of all religions and of all healthy communities. They provide a structure for the year and could be described as the punctuation which helps the year to breathe and to make sense, as punctuation helps writing breathe and make sense. Festivals provide the opportunity for us to step out of our day-to-day life and stand for a moment fully in the present, with the opportunity to look backwards to past celebrations and forwards to future celebrations.

But traditional festivals come with baggage! They have religious connections which can contradict our aspirations to be truly inclusive. At a time when we are re-assessing habits and customs in our schools and settings, how can we move forward with our thinking about festivals? In this article I would like to consider how we might develop our thoughts about celebrating festivals with young children, becoming more inclusive without losing the richness of our traditions. In addition, how can we benefit each year from conscious engagement with festivals and their meaning?

Around the world, all cultures live with a seasonal cycle and a related agricultural cycle. Here in the northern hemisphere, the annual dance of earth and sun provides a seasonal round for the natural world and for traditional agriculture and horticulture. There is a clear progression through springtime birth and growth, summer nurture and blossoming, autumn nourishing and harvesting, fading into winter conservation and rest. In tropical areas, the summer heat may be the time when nature rests and conserves its strength, ready for the resurgence that cooler weather will bring. In equatorial regions, seasonal cycles may revolve around the arrival of rainy or dry times of the year rather than changes in

temperature. However, even at the equator there is a seasonal pattern to the ripening of fruits, for example. The Seasonal Cycle diagram summarizes the seasonal pattern in the northern hemisphere.

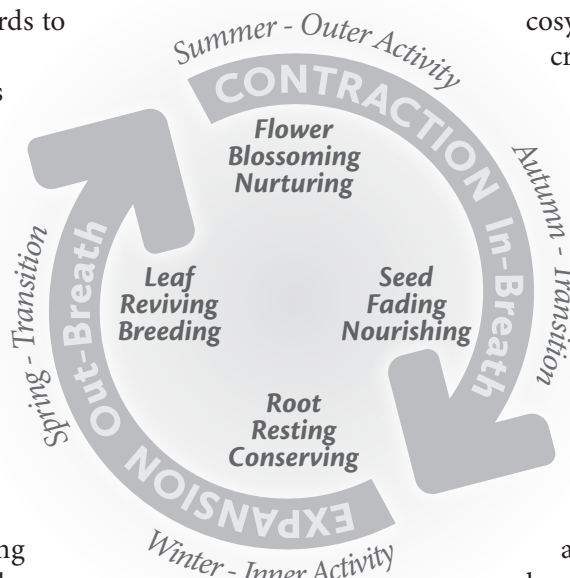
This natural cycle has an impact on human activity, on what we eat, what we wear, and our social

activities, and of course, it affects our psyche. In the northern hemisphere, in winter, we want to “hibernate” in cosy places with hot soup and apple crumble. In summer we like to be outside with our friends eating salad and fresh fruit. Although in many ways we are able to free ourselves from the seasons, including central heating, air conditioning, frozen and imported food, nevertheless we do feel more settled and clearer at certain times of year and are inclined to be flighty and distracted at others.

The traditional pattern of the academic year in the northern hemisphere has a long summer break (starting earlier and lasting longer the further north you go) and a fresh starting point as the chill of autumn begins to make itself felt in the early mornings. This is no accident but an accurate reflection of our seasonal moods. We can all feel how focus flies out of the open school window as the days lengthen and returns as they shorten.

Rudolf Steiner suggests that we are beings of not only body and soul, but with a unique spiritual element that we can actively develop through our soul activities of thinking, feeling and willing. The whole of our earthly existence is an opportunity, through our soul development, for deepening our manifestation of our spiritual blueprint, for bringing out our higher self. The cycle of the year, wherever we live, can make a significant contribution to that opportunity. Behind the changing seasons, revolving and mutually cooperating spiritual forces, which are reflected in

The Seasonal Cycle



nature, have the potential to support our development. When we celebrate festivals around the year with conscious intent, we take up that opportunity.

On this foundation, the Christian festivals of Europe have developed, and Rudolf Steiner connects these seasonal moods with the four archangels (see *The Four Seasons and the Archangels*) summarized in the diagram on this page.

It is important that, as adults, we go beyond both accustomed traditional celebrations and the cycle of nature. Rather than a cycle repeated each year, we can access a spiral of human development. Starting in the winter, when the plants and animals appear least active, we human beings have the chance to connect with our inner light, as reflected in traditional festivals of Christmas, Hanukkah and Diwali. At the darkest time of the year, we can feel the potential of the year ahead of us, as the door is opened to hopeful possibilities for us to learn from the experiences coming towards us. With the lengthening days, the soul expands and rebirth in nature is echoed by rebirth in our awareness of the reality of the spirit. The year continues to turn towards the time when the sun is most powerful, and with the spiritual awareness gained comes the responsibility to take some action. The outer world of light and warmth tries to distract us from serious study, but we can gather the strength for changing ourselves for the better in how we act and speak. If we succeed, then with autumn comes a personal harvest. Unlike the plant and animal kingdoms, this is no time for us to rest. As human beings, we need to stay awake as the power of the sun recedes and the nights lengthen. If the fruits of our inner work are to remain nutritious, we must pay attention to them when threats and dangers come, dangers such as our own laziness, inflexibility, or susceptibility to distraction. Then, at midwinter, we search once more for the light of hope in the darkness which will enable us to continue our journey.

This soul journey, with its fruits for the spirit, is supported by festival celebrations. The festivals themselves can become the signposts along the way providing an emphasis which we return to each year. With this understanding of the place of festivals in our development, we have a firm foundation when we look at how to celebrate festivals with young children and their families in an inclusive way.

Children, even city children, live close to the natural world. I am reminded of this every year as I see again the surge of energy that erupts in early spring in the kindergarten. In early February, when the outer signs of spring are hardly visible, the peace of January dissolves into chaos just as the bulbs push up through the frosty ground and the birds seek their mates through song and courtship displays. By June, these children are butterflies, flitting about from one thing to another when the sun shines and cast down by dull damp days. Our festivals can all be nature

festivals, from the gathering of harvest and courage to meet the dark in autumn, through finding the light of hope at the heart of midwinter, the re-birth of spring as the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, and the joyful cosmic rounds of midsummer dances.

The details of what we bring into those festivals come from our local community connections. We may be in a situation where the nativity story is appropriate as part of a midwinter celebration of light and hope in the darkness, or we may not. That will require sensitive conversations with our colleagues and parent communities. We may have to give up much-loved traditions, familiar stories, and old habits. That will create space for something fresh to come in. Rudolf Steiner was very clear that we would be creating new festivals (see *The Cycle of the Year*), and that words would need to change. Reference to Christ, he said, for example, might not be relevant in future times, but the spiritual meaning would be caught by other terms (see *The Universal Human*).

The Festival Cycle: *an annual opportunity for soul development*



In the busy practicalities of life in a Waldorf early childhood setting, giving time to planning festivals afresh in this way each year can seem daunting; just one more thing to add to the overflowing agenda. We must remind ourselves that this work is both for us and for the children and their families.

The watchwords for planning are to keep it short and sweet for the children, even if, in the case of community events, the adults would like to stay longer. The rhythm of the day is still your friend. Within it there needs to be a celebration in which there is at least one image or picture giving the essence of the festival's meaning, a symbol to which the children can form an attachment, and there needs to be a joyful ritual with which the festival is celebrated, something that is not part of the everyday.



Mood and essence?
How does this meet the child's nature consciousness?
How is this a festival of the universal human?

Preparation:

- ### Celebration:

- Afterwards:**

- Clear up
- Review
- Fading experience for the children

[illegible]

In a Steiner/Waldorf Early Years Group meeting, I remember a colleague with long experience as a kindergarten teacher, working in challenging circumstances, declaring that preparing and celebrating the festivals each year was a major element keeping her committed to her work. In the picture which Rudolf Steiner presented, we can see four major festivals at the cardinal points of the year, Christmas and St. John's marking midwinter and midsummer, Easter and Michaelmas marking the equinoxes. Between these, are traditional festivals which divide the year approximately into eighths: Martinmas, Candlemas, Whitsun and Lammass (which gets lost in our summer holidays). These have traditionally been celebrated in European Steiner schools and settings. They have Christian names, although they all have pagan histories before the arrival of Christianity. The names can change again to reflect our need to be more inclusive. They can all be celebrated with young children as nature festivals related to seasonal events. For the adults, an understanding of the soul's journey through the year and its potential for development can provide a foundation out of which images, stories and rituals for the children can be created, including contemporary inclusive transformations of traditional customs.

It is not easy to lay aside our comforting habits, when it comes to festivals, and to find the time and energy to develop fresh meaning and creative metamorphoses of those habits. Exploring new territory takes courage and can seem too much for early childhood staff already feeling overworked by day-to-day responsibilities. However, a conscious reappraisal of the festival year among colleagues will repay you, perhaps unexpectedly, by giving energy. Festivals with young children should be joyful events for everyone. When they are founded in a mood of spiritual endeavor, the joy is easier to find and, paradoxically for anything involving young children, a source of deep peace.

I wish you all a fulfilling festival year, and will finish with a list of resource texts, some of which I have referred to in this article. ♦

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- Foster, N (ed.) (2010) *The Seasonal Festivals in Early Childhood: Seeking the universally human*. New York: WECAN. This is a series of articles developing thoughts of celebrating festivals with young children and families and looking at various festival times of the year.
- Jaffke, F. (2011) *Celebrating Festivals with Children*. Edinburgh: Floris Press. This is a wonderful classic account of celebrating European and Christian festivals with all the attention to detail in which this author excels. Despite the limited range of festivals discussed, the insights into child development and the spiritual essence of the festivals make it very valuable.
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- Steiner, R. (1984) *The Four Seasons and the Archangels*. London: Rudolf Steiner Press. This is a set of five poetic lectures describing images for each of the four seasons and how the archangels work together. The last lecture gives interesting ideas to consider regarding how seasons and festivals work together in other parts of the world.
- Steiner, R. (1990) *The Universal Human*. Anthroposophic Press. A set of 4 lectures. The first and the last are helpful for Steiner's picture of evolutionary Christianity – not a religion to follow but a central turning point in the evolution of humanity
- Steiner, R. (1996) *The Festivals and their Meaning*. London: Rudolf Steiner Press. A wonderful compilation that you can go back to through the years, with lectures on Michaelmas, Christmas, Easter and Whitsun.
- Steiner, R. (1999) *The Calendar of the Soul*. Spring Valley, NY: Mercury Press. There is a verse for each week of the year, reflecting the soul's journey through the great in-breath and out-breath. There are so many alternative translations available and this is for life-long study.

Cultivating a Festival Life—an And, Also Approach

~ Meagan Rose Wilson

“What does a non-Eurocentric spiritual science look like?” Cory Eichman posed this question in his course, “Questions of Diversity and Race in Rudolf Steiner’s Spiritual Science,” filled with anthroposophists, eurythmists, Waldorf teachers, biographers and biodynamic farmers. Still muted, I gave an audible sigh of relief that others in this movement are asking the same question I have been grappling with since I fell in love with Waldorf education twelve years ago.

The festivals I celebrated as a child were almost entirely commercial. Although my ancestral heritage is primarily Christian, the spiritual essence of our traditions was stripped away over a handful of generations until during my 1980s childhood, all that was left of Christmas, for example, was patent shoes, red bows, baked gingerbread cookies, and a whole lot of battery-operated toys.

When my son and I began attending our first Waldorf parent-and-child class in Sydney, Australia it was a revelation for me to consider the inner mood of a holiday, its spiritual relevance or how the outer world might give us clues to better connect with our inner world in any given season (Kovacs 2007, p. 19). I resonated with the idea that traditions and celebrations were created by human beings to express our connection to something bigger than ourselves. Festivals throughout the world often share these common features: storytelling, singing, dancing, feasting, service and ritual. More often than not they are found within the context of a seasonal or cyclical calendar following the movement of the Sun or the Moon.

And yet, the Christian festivals I had grown up with were born out of Europe in the Northern Hemisphere. Throughout Australia, Aboriginal communities have their own unique ways of relating to their particular environment, climate, flora and fauna, but this ancient wisdom was and still is widely ignored—a result of the genocidal and colonial history we in the west are devastatingly familiar with. Copying and pasting symbols of new life like painted Easter eggs onto autumnal Waldorf nature tables felt counterintuitive and clumsy at best, and at worst, ignorant and missing the mark entirely.

Sowing and growing my own family traditions with an almost blank slate was liberating **and also** overwhelming. What kind of family culture and rituals did I want to seed for my family? How would I model these new values for my young children? What might I choose to include and discard from my own spiritual heritage, especially occupying a land where these traditions were not born?

In the lectures collected in the book *The Festivals and their Meaning*, Steiner recognized that my childhood experience of a spiritless festival life was increasingly becoming the norm and challenged his listeners to find the “true meaning” of the festivals (Steiner 1981, p. 16). Throughout each lecture it is clear that Steiner believed meaning could be found through a person’s experience and observations of the outer world: “...we see in Nature the outward expression, the countenance of the Divine Spirit of the Cosmos” (Steiner 1981, p. 26).

As early childhood educators, we know that “our task [...] is to try to transform everything we do, to transform our knowledge into activities: to make visible that about which we have been thinking” (Jaffke 2011). We endow nature tables with treasures found in our gardens and under the earth; we craft, create, and bake with natural materials and seasonal ingredients. We use the breathing in and out of the Earth as we observe it as constant inspiration and as a result are being called to reconsider European archetypes, such as King Winter, and to explore how more truthful archetypes might enter our seasonally-inspired stories, songs and verses.

For decades, Waldorf schools in North America and beyond have centered their festival life around the Christian-European festivals Steiner named: Christmas, Easter, Whitsun, and Michaelmas. It is essential we continue to model for our children the deep inner experiences offered through festival work; **and also** that we become more awake to our responsibility as educators to create a sense of belonging for all families and students in our care; **and also** to identify where some traditions may have become hardened under a white gaze. The lands we occupy in the United States, Mexico, and Canada are

not the original birthplace of these Christian-based festivals and the children in our classrooms come from a diversity of spiritual heritages. As teachers we can open a dialogue with the class family constellation in front of us **and also** observe the natural world around us in order to find clues that will help us to celebrate in a more inclusive way that is authentic to the lands we inhabit.

My work as a parent coach is with families who are interested in incorporating Waldorf-inspired values into their family culture, daily rhythms, and parenting approach. When it comes to festival celebrations I am acutely aware there is never a one-size-fits-all approach for any family. I believe this to be true for schools and classrooms across the world too. The human impulse to celebrate the festivals was described by Steiner as the active work the Angels are doing in and through us. Coming together as families and communities promotes belonging and provides a conscious opportunity to see the divinity in each other (Steiner 2008). Festival work can be seen as one of the most important spiritual thresholds we cross between a child's home, school and broader community. It is an opportunity to build bridges and to foster connection.

[O]ne of the most important tasks for humankind today and in the future is that we should learn to live together and understand one another.

—Rudolf Steiner

Below I share a series of questions teachers might use to spark conversation and create meaningful dialogue within their classroom communities. Whether they are used in the initial interview process; as prompts at parent meetings, or within start-of-the-school-year intake forms is up to each teacher and their school. Invite parents to share **and also** make it clear there is no pressure for any answers at all. Be aware and awake to the fact that even though two families may identify as having the same faith, the way they celebrate together might be vastly different. Every family will have a different capacity, willingness or passion to share their family traditions. Some families may be still exploring many of these answers for themselves.

- What festival(s) do you celebrate at home?
- What are the symbols, values and virtues associated with the(se) festival(s)?

- Is this a lunar or a solar festival? How does this fact inspire or change the way you celebrate each year?
- Are there parallels between this festival and the natural world around you? Is there a connection between what is happening seasonally and what this festival symbolizes?
- How do you set the scene for the festival in your home? Is there anything you do in advance before the first day to mark or model that this time is coming?
- How do you prepare the day before the festival?
- How are children involved during the festival? What do they look forward to the most?

How the answers to these questions might be used in a meaningful and authentic way is also up to the individual teacher and their school. With the diversity of answers received a teacher can consider how they might create a festival life within their classrooms that

- attunes the children in their care to spiritual and cultural parallels and differences (**diversity**)
- regularly honors and acknowledges what community members, classmates and friends are celebrating (or not) at any given time each year (**inclusion**)
- consistently reflects and includes festivals and traditions other than the ones the children celebrate at home (**access**)
- disrupts cultural norms which center the importance of some holidays or festivals over others (**equity**)

Reflecting and working with these questions is a regular and recurring practice or striving. Answers may slightly change each year as classroom constellations change, teachers' connection with the school community expands, and their own personal connection with the festivals deepens. Incorporating a new story, craft, or recipe into the rhythm of the day should not feel like an act of tokenism but a gesture of active and meaningful relationship. New traditions should consider the difference between appropriation and appreciation.

We can hold space in our homes and classrooms for traditions that have been passed on to us personally, as well as traditions that are within our wider class constellation, and also create space for traditions that are waiting to be born out of our authentic connection with our unique communities and the natural world around us. ♦

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A Roadmap for a Renewed Festival Life

~ Stephen Spitalny

Festivals can be celebrations of the seasons of the year and serve to connect us to the world of nature and the invisible worlds around us. A festival celebrates the coming together of earthly and cosmic forces and processes. Festivals also create communities of human beings in the celebrating of this dynamic interaction of earth and cosmos, the relation of matter and spirit. These seasonal celebrations mark the changing of the light, the relation of the earth to the sun and other stars and planets, and the connection to what is universal in the cycle of the year. Festivals can be the bearers of the spirit within the earthly seasons. They are points where earth-spirit and cosmic-spirit meet. And the annual festival rhythm can be strengthening to the developing physical body of the young child.

The reality of the past 100 years of Waldorf/Steiner education is that a strong tradition has evolved in many places, particularly the UK and the USA, where school community festivals have obvious elements of Christian tradition. This semblance of Christianity, whether in content or in name only, has been a barrier, a wall, and can be the deciding factor that prevents families from sending their child to a Steiner school. This wall is not welcoming and does not create a culture

of true inclusiveness. I suggest it is time to change the names, but not just the names. It is time to change the content of the festivals to represent universal spirituality, and eliminate the religious overtones. We have to scrutinize the images, songs, stories, and poems we choose and be awake to how these might affect the diverse members of our community.

In the future, it will not matter much whether what Christ is will still be called by that name. However, a lot will depend on our finding in Christ the spiritual uniter of humanity and accepting that external diversity will increase more and more.

—Rudolf Steiner, *The Universal Human* – Lecture 4

Rudolf Steiner sometimes mentioned what he named the “Christ Impulse,” something he described as standing behind our educational movement, or perhaps shining light into our movement. Here again, we have a choice of name for the Being of the Sun that can create unfortunate misunderstandings. Nonetheless, Steiner said we could know if that Being is connected to a particular endeavor if those activities

bring people together, if people are more united. Let us take up the work that is necessary to transform our schools so that all people are welcomed, included, and united!

During this time of COVID we have been isolated to varying degrees for many months, and our community festival life has been slumbering. This moment in world history is an opportunity to reinvent our festival life, both at individual Steiner/Waldorf schools as well as within the Waldorf movement. What an amazing opportunity to take hold of this moment and to remake our festival year and create something meaningful, and at the same time something new that is welcoming for all.

Cycle of the Year

Rudolf Steiner's ideas can guide our thinking about the greater cosmic forces at work in the four seasons and how it is possible to establish balance as a human being within those cycling seasons. These ideas can form the groundwork for new thinking about festivals.

Let us first consider the underlying gesture of the cycle of the year. In the depths of Winter, the Earth, in relation to the cosmos, is a being enclosed within itself. In Summer the Earth is given over to the cosmos, it engages with the cosmos. During Spring and Autumn there is balance and a transition between these polarities. Summer can be characterized as an exarnation experience, the earth is uniting with the cosmos. Winter can be described as an incarnated time, as a deeply inward situation for the earth. Winter and Summer could also be characterized as experiences of center and periphery. The gesture to finding balance in Winter is that we must remember to stay connected with the periphery while in Summertime we must strive to maintain our connection to our own center.

Steiner, in Lecture 5 of *The Cycle of the Year as a Breathing Process of the Earth*, described the cosmic tendencies that pull the human being in certain directions at different times of the year, and he suggested activities that then can help to bring the human being into balance. Through this struggle for balance and self-development, the human being can receive guidance from the cosmos. In the following, the words in **bold** are spoken by benevolent spiritual beings to aid the human being in finding balance throughout the cycle of the year:

Autumn—Look around thee

In Autumn we are called upon to be awake and attentive to what is happening in the world, to see in our fellow human beings the signature of the spirit and to awaken social conscience.

Winter—Be aware of the darkness

One must maintain a connection to Cosmic moral impulses. This is the human being's winter task in order to not be taken over by the tendency to dwell inwardly on one's own shortcomings and regrets.

Spring—Know thyself

In Spring, the human soul's tendency is to sink into the flood of uprising nature forces. The call to the human being is to "Know Thyself," to stay connected with yourself in this time of spring fever. The call is to truly look at oneself, to hold up the mirror, and see one's weaknesses and limitations and where one has fallen away from one's highest intentions.

Summer—Receive the light

In Summer, the human soul tends to give itself up to what is going on all around in nature. The tendency for the human being is to dream outside of oneself, to lose one's awareness of center, of self. To balance that tendency, the human is called upon to consciously receive the light that is streaming toward us from the cosmos. The divine spiritual world reveals itself as moral impulses, which the human receives as enlightenment.

This way of looking at the cycle of the year is connected to Steiner's Main Exercise which guides one into a practice of transforming the received light of the cosmos, the wisdom of the stars and planets, into human deeds of love.

New Ideas:

A task for our time, for right now, is to imbue festivals with this type of thinking, and at the same time make them welcoming and inclusive for all. The task is to create a community festival life that is inclusive and non-religious, and to imbue these celebrations with deep symbolism representing the realities of cosmic/earthly interaction and the activities of spiritual beings and forces.

Themes to emphasize within the flow of festival life:

1. Community—the living community of a school.

2. Ancestors and the Land—the ancient stewards of the land (who are still present), and those who have passed away and were connected to community members.
3. The Light—the wisdom streaming from the Cosmos.
4. The Earth—our one and only planetary home.
5. The Future—where we are going.

In the Fall/Autumn we can celebrate community, and honor the present moment we are in together. Later in Fall, we look to the past and honor with gratitude the ancestors and the land we are on. As Winter approaches, we can be aware of the possibility for egoism and of experiencing our own inner difficulties by kindling the light, the light that returns every year. In Spring, we celebrate the earth, and the growth and life forces—the uprising forces of nature—without losing connection to who we are as individuals, individuals who are striving to become better and better. And in Summer, we strive to remember to receive the wisdom that is encoded within the light that is streaming toward us to prepare us for the future.

What follows is a proposal for a new framework of the year. This is offered not as a rigid doctrine, but as an offering to stimulate thinking and to free us to create a more wonderful future together.

The following includes suggestions for early childhood festivals. For me, kindergarten festivals celebrate divinities and grand cosmic and earthly forces and activities in metaphoric/symbolic ways. Festivals for the older students (in the grade school) can celebrate developed human beings, those people who overcame themselves to become examples for others to strive toward.

A New Festival Cycle of the Year

The end of September:

For 100 years Waldorf/Steiner schools have celebrated *Michaelmas*. It is time to change the name and continue to celebrate the striving that is represented by that spiritual being and which that being is waiting to see in human beings. What shall we name this festival that will welcome all to community?

At this time of year in most of the northern hemisphere, we celebrate the annual return-to-school, and the diversity of the school community. We

focus on the present in this festival and we highlight activities and stories that help us evolve to become more truly human. We also can acknowledge that we are celebrating the *Spirit of our time* that is calling on us to develop social conscience and become courageous and intelligent. The call is to become less self-centered and develop the capacity to serve others. According to Steiner, the *Spirit of our time* is interested in humans becoming “cosmopolitan,” meaning the diversity of humanity living together in harmony. Questions arise, such as *what are the needs of our present time?*, and *who comprises our community?*

The Fall Festival; Re-Awakening to Community is the name the school which my kindergarten in the USA chose for this re-envisioned festival. *Fall* is one of the names used for the season between Summer and Winter, and has the added element of raising the question of what is it from which we have fallen. We have indeed fallen away from a connection with spiritual wisdom and true moral impulses, we have fallen away from a deep connection with the natural world, and—especially in this time of pandemic—we have fallen away from social community life. Our festival will still center the activities of working to overcome something that needs transformation, striving to become a better human being, and center the values of courage, intelligence and diversity of humanity. While the name may seem a bland naming of a festival for the season, it is in fact filled with rich possibilities for symbolic interpretation.

Our *Fall Festival* highlights a story presented as a play, in which something that is not right must be overcome or transformed, some evil must be redeemed. It may include a dragon as that which needs transforming, it may include a dragon that is a helpful, positive being, and it may not include a dragon at all. Each year we will celebrate with a different story representing the diversity of peoples on the earth in all ways and each year, each new story will create opportunity for conversation and community connection.

In our Festival Year, we now transition to a focus on the Light that is shining towards us from the cosmos.

Mid-November:

Lantern Walk—(not St. Martinmas) an intimate (small group) reminder to kindle our own light as the

days grow shorter and we head for the time of year when humans tend toward more inwardness. Lantern light radiates outward, just as our own light can shine on others. This is an evening, outdoor festival which each early childhood group celebrates separately to support the possibility for small-group intimacy.

Early-December:

The whole school community celebrates with a **Winter Faire** on a Saturday in December with fun, activities for children, crafts to do, music (again, not coming from a specific religion), vendors selling crafts, and food.

Mid-December:

The Garden of Light—On a Sunday evening in December (determined by various calendar considerations) each early childhood group has their own time with the Garden of Light so that the children are not sitting for too long of a time and the experience for children and parents is more intimate and not overwhelming.

The festival begins in darkness and ends brightly lit by the many candles. The central candle can be already lit when the children arrive, or someone can enter the dark spiral bearing a candle. He or she is not named nor referred to nor spoken about. It is left to the attendees to imagine for themselves what sort of being is lighting the candle. We have a moment to sit in silence together when all the children have had their turn and before the children are taken home to bed. Siblings can be included, both younger and older. Younger or less confident children are accompanied by one of their teachers. Consider holding this festival outdoors surrounded by trees, under the twinkling stars. Simply breathtaking!

We can carefully and consciously omit any songs or other symbolism that harkens back to any particular religions. If anything, this festival celebrates the Winter Solstice, when the days once again begin to lengthen. Perhaps it could even be scheduled on the day of Solstice, the shortest day of the year! Each year, the Light incarnates again, lengthening the days and offering joy to our souls. The Garden of Light is an imaginative experience of our individual spirit light

incarnating into life on Earth, and how our spirits shining together shed a mighty light.

April/May—Celebration of the Earth:

Earth Day—April 22. Earth Day is a worldwide festival of honoring our planetary mother, and we can highlight practices of sustainability as well as express gratitude to the very ground that supports us. Perhaps a celebration could include planting trees as a community. An important element for an Earth Day celebration can be the acknowledgement of our role as stewards of this our only planet with celebrated themes of conservation and reusing, recycling and reducing. Perhaps Earth Day could replace the May Faire, or somehow combine with elements of the May Faire.

Kindergarten End-of-Year Festival—The kindergarten teacher has shepherded the children during their life in the kindergarten garden of paradise, within the world of their comfortable home and garden. Now the older children are ready for a guide to help them explore the wider world.

Here in the USA, we gather on a warm morning in June, with blooming flowers all around. The sun is shining and the sky is blue. Birds are singing. There are many parents, grandparents and friends all watching with smiles and many tears of joy. In the center of the circle sit all the early childhood children and their teachers. The new first grade teacher is present and seated beside an empty vase. The children sing and then a story is told. The story tells of the fledglings who begin to wonder what lies beyond the forest, and that someone who sings a special song, a song of the future, would be waiting for them to lead them out into the wide world. The fledglings search for and then find that bird who will guide and support them along the way, into their future.

After the story, one by one, each child deemed ready for first grade is called by name, stands up, bids goodbye to their teacher and walks over to their new teacher to be welcomed, and the child offers a flower (from the kindergarten garden) for the empty vase. The new first grade class is led off for a short time

alone with their new teacher, and the younger children, who will remain in kindergarten, are acknowledged that they now will be the older and experienced kindergartners in the fall.

This kindergarten end-of-year festival (it is not named “Graduation”) is a rite of passage from one phase of development to the next. It is a type of initiation experience. It signifies the transition from a group soul experience to a more self-conscious state of being. The children for the first time are called on to stand up as individuals in front of all present. The new first graders are “handed over” by their kindergarten teacher to the teacher who will guide them through the next phase of life. In a simple yet profound way, all present witness this crossing of the bridge out of early childhood. This is a special rite of passage for all participants, including the parents.

The Young Child

With all these festival thoughts in mind, we must take into consideration the needs of the young child, the developmental stage of consciousness of the young child. One aspect to consider in creating a festival for young children is to keep it simple. So much can be done with gesture and mood that speaks more powerfully than elaborate choreographed events. It is important to avoid “festival indigestion,” especially for young children. By keeping our festival calendar simple, we support the child, and it creates less stress in the adults’ lives.

For all festivals, a mood of anticipation can be created through the planning and preparation. Including the children in the preparation allows them to experience and participate in the process of life, to more deeply root themselves into the yearly cycle. Though it can also be special for the children to arrive to the magic of an already created festival day, I include the children in the various aspects of preparation for most festivals with two notable exceptions, the *Garden of Light* and the *Kindergarten End-of-Year Festival*, which the teachers set up without the children.

Transforming Light into Love

A powerful guiding image for me is the light that streams toward us from the sun and stars, and the warmth and love into which we can transform that light. That is the essence of Steiner’s Main Exercise that I referred to above. Perhaps that is the central theme around which the variations of individual festivals can revolve. Perhaps this is the central theme of all spiritual traditions—turning wisdom into deeds of service and love. To me it is so important that our celebrations are so universal that no one feels excluded. I want all the families to inwardly experience the feeling that “this festival speaks to us.” I want to celebrate what is universally human and universally cosmic/spiritual. The spiritual can be celebrated without the specifically religious. In this way the community is united and can find strength and inspiration from each other in celebration of the Cycle of the Year. ♦

*The gift of light we thankfully take
But not shall it be alone for our sake
The more we give light
The one to the other
It shines and it glows and it spreads still further
Until every spark by friends set aflame
Until every heart with joy to proclaim
In the depths of our souls a shining sun glows.*

—M. Tittman

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An Invitation to Open Our Hearts: Creating the Festivals for Our Time

— Somer Serpe

As Waldorf Early Childhood teachers we have accepted the important task of providing an atmosphere of love, warmth, and gratitude in which the young child feels recognized and accepted as a newly arrived being from the spiritual world. We carefully weave reverence, beauty and intention into our environment, and prepare activities to acknowledge this journey while gently guiding the young child into the earthly world with joy and wonder. In the eyes of the child we can see our own souls' purpose as we begin the sacred task of renewing the relationship between the spiritual world, Mother Earth, and the wisdom of the stars. The festivals are the celebration of this sacred task and therefore need to honor what each child has come to earth already knowing.

The festivals bring us together in a social and spiritual deed. They are physical manifestations of the soul quality of the seasons. They unite our souls' rhythm with that of the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars. We know these rhythms deeply, and yet we also know that many of the physical forms of our beloved festivals do not speak to the universal human. In our attempt to remedy that, we have made well-intended changes to our festivals over the years in many ways. We have kept old traditions but given them new names so that we won't offend. We have incorporated as many cultural festivals as we can into one season so as not to exclude. We have celebrated the purely physical aspect of nature to eschew any spiritual ties. In some cases, we have even considered giving up the festivals altogether. Sometimes we have created these new forms because of or in spite of our own inner life. Often our "new" festivals can feel contrived, truncated and unenlivened. In the end, are we not left less united than when we began? Are we

truthfully meeting the children before us?

If we remember that each human is a spiritual being, then we can be unapologetically spiritual in our festivals. Moreover, our festivals can serve as a healing balm for our world at a time when society places the importance of science over spirituality and the individual over humanity. To imagine a festival life that honors every human spirit, we need to honor the spiritual essence of the cosmic year which has informed the beautiful festivals that we have come to cherish and will inform the new festivals we wish to create. To always be aware of and truly know the other, we can look to the festivals to inform each other, weave into each other and echo in one another.

This is a process of renewal like any other. It doesn't happen all at once; it is a living, breathing picture. This process doesn't discard that which came before, but it happens precisely because of the wisdom from which it was born. The transformation happens within us, not outside of us. There is a certain amount of individual work and self-reflection needed before connecting to the other. It is the being of love within us all that makes this possible. It goes into us, creates forces within us, weaves through us and then out of us. When the spirit informs us and we are open to receiving it, a certain alchemy must take place in order for us to bring it out into the social sphere in a way that truly unites us all.

How do we do this in a conscious way? We look to the spiritual world and we look to the wisdom of the earth. We look to the elemental world and the mood of the seasons. We look to the indigenous people who celebrated the land on which we stand and we look to the threads that are universal in all cultures. This is an invitation to consider the universal threads:

*Light and Dark, Warm and Cold, Movement
and Stillness, Balance and Breathing*

*Breathing Out and Breathing In, Nature
Consciousness and Self Consciousness,*

*Expansion and Contraction, Birth, Death,
Rebirth, Transformation*

Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter

Sun, Moon, Earth, Stars

Air, Fire, Earth, Water

Sylphs, Salamanders, Gnomes, Undines

Movement, Balance, Touch, Life

Astral, I, Physical, Etheric

Thinking, Feeling, Willing

Roots, Leaves, Flowers, Seeds

Food, Song, Art

Gratitude, Harmony, Love, Courage

We will begin to know these essential imaginations intimately if we consciously begin to feel the shifts in nature and the cosmos in our souls just as the young child feels them unconsciously. Then we can bring this essence into a physical form of celebration, bringing it to the children, their families, and our communities with love, authenticity and joy.

Once we have worked through the inner meaning of the season and the festival, we can ask the following questions of ourselves and with our colleagues:

- How can I bring this festival in a picture that captures the essence of this festival and is appropriate for the children in my class?
- How will I engage their senses?
- What part can the parents or families play?
- What is the giving and receiving in which we will all participate?

We can allow our heart wisdom to inform our deeds so that the festivals we create tend the garden of our souls and honor every young child's unfolding. As we honor our connection to the living, breathing earth and our spiritual foundation, let us not forget that we are on this sacred heart path together, and we have all we need within us to create a true festival life for the children, for each other, and for all humanity. ♦

Somer Serpe trained as an artist and then as a teacher, earning her Masters in Waldorf Early Childhood Education at Sunbridge College. Somer taught Nursery and Kindergarten at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School for 15 years and now leads an outdoor Parent and Child Program. Somer is assistant Early Childhood program director and core faculty at Sound Circle Center for Arts and Anthroposophy and is a Northeast Regional Representative for WECAN. She serves as a mentor for teachers and schools as well as an inspirational coach for parents. Somer enjoys biodynamic gardening, puppetry, singing, purposeful work with children and creating culturally conscious and healing stories for children and parents.

Heart-seeds Take Root

~ Holly Koteen-Soulé

What are we being asked to do?

To bring the incredible gift of Waldorf education into healthy alignment with the current social situation, to renew its essence out of our own deepened awareness and spiritual inspiration.

Anthroposophy and Waldorf education were inaugurated not for a specific group, but in service of humanity as a whole. That intention is being tested in our current social climate—and rightly so!

How can we not only meet the children and families who have come to us in the past, but also welcome those who have not yet felt invited?

In this process of re-examination, we find ourselves interacting with different kinds of social groups and other educational movements. This is not unlike having a friend who can mirror for us our blind spots. Entering into dialogue with others allows us to see ourselves in a different light. While this is illuminating, it is also uncomfortable, even painful at times. While we all know that pain is a part of change and transformation, it is still hard to let go of what we have held as cherished notions. We love Waldorf education. In all of life, however, letting go is the first step of bringing something new into being.

In many conversations with colleagues during the past year, there has been a growing appreciation for having been required by COVID restrictions to let go of what was familiar and build up programs primarily out of the warmth of our relationships and the healing forces of play in nature. For many teachers, successfully Improvising out of the essential aspects of Waldorf early childhood education has been a hidden blessing in an otherwise challenging situation.

In terms of our reawakened cultural consciousness, we are being called—not by outer circumstances, but by our inner sense of conscience—to look for the essence of our work and allow it to clothe itself in more inclusive gestures. We can't do this by ourselves. We need to do this in dialogue, as a movement, in collaboration with other organizations and individually with colleagues, both within and outside

of the Waldorf movement. We need to have honest, open conversations in which we are both speaking and listening, but listening more than speaking!

The sense of ripeness that many of us feel is compelling, but the accompanying sense of urgency can be overwhelming, especially in combination with the other challenges of the past year. How do we know we are on the right path?

My own experience tells me that this is a moment to let our hearts lead. If we let our heads lead, we may find ourselves leaning into new ideologies. If we let our wills go unchecked, we may end up with superficial solutions. More than anything else we need the intuitive sensing capacity of our hearts to stay present to the moment and to trust that what is ours to do is right there in front of us—in a child's eyes, a family's request, a colleague's question. Our open-hearted interest in others, uncoupled from our desire to be right or our fear of being wrong, is where we need to start, with genuine curiosity as to where it might lead us.

The heart also guides us in the realm of time. We are fortunate to have schooled ourselves in how to support the children by working rhythmically with time. The heart and lungs are organs of rhythm, and rhythm is above all what supports development in us as well as in the children. We know how it feels to be held in the healing flow of rhythm, in the breathing between taking hold and letting go, in moving with the cycles and seasons of life.

When we carry our questions over time, through many nights and days, pictures arise in response. The language of the heart is the language of pictures, imaginations, and archetypes. This is the well where we find soul-nourishing images to share with our children. The same well will be the source for new inspirations that allow us to reform the founding impulses of Waldorf education.

For me, the Both/And gesture has to do with understanding and learning to use the wisdom of the intelligent heart. It means letting the seeds of the conversations that we are having sift down

into my heart space. It means being willing to work collaboratively with my colleagues to bring the imaginations arising from those seeds-in-the-heart conversations into an unknown future. It is trying to bring those two activities of exploring and experimenting together into a tentative harmony and listening to how it sounds and resounds. At the same time, for me personally, it is clearly an opportunity to actually grow the capacity of my heart and become a more loving person. ♦

Holly Koteen-Soulé is Early Childhood Director for Sound Circle Center in Seattle. She served as kindergarten and parent-child teacher for 25 years at Seattle Waldorf and Bright Water School in Seattle. She is a member of the Pedagogical Section Council and a WECAN board member. Holly initiated calling together the newly formed Early Childhood Research group, which contributes to Gateways.

Thoughts on Michaelmas and why it may be time to reconsider its celebration

~ Aimee de Ney

Collectively we are deep in a time of reckoning and awakening as we move from the age of Capricorn into the age of Aquarius. For as long as we can remember white, Eurocentric, male, western religious images have been treated as the basis of culture in North America. Waldorf education is steeped in these traditions. When I stepped out of Waldorf schools and opened my own little school a decade ago, I was able to have agency and choice over the festivals I held for my students and families. Right away, I found myself unable to justify celebrating Michaelmas here in the Pacific Northwest. While the meaning behind the festival resonated—conquering our fears and taking courage as we step into the times of depths of winter—the symbology and customs felt antiquated and inappropriate for this time, place, and community.

It is now a decade later. After George Floyd's murder and the subsequent racial reckoning, I now look deeper into this intuition. What is the traditional Michaelmas story showing us and teaching our students, as schools continue to portray this medieval story and its festival images?

The gist of the story as I have encountered it is that through the help of the Archangel Michael, the soldier Saint George saves a helpless, white princess from the jaws of the evil dragon who is terrorizing the kingdom and countryside.

Here the dragon is portrayed as the embodiment of evil and destructive forces. Yet when we look around the world, dragons carry many messages and meanings. Most famous, of course, are the dragons honoring the Chinese New Year, who bring luck and prosperity to the people.

According to a creation story hailing from the Northern California Cahto tribe, all of creation was saved from drowning waters when an Earth Dragon, with the god Nagaicha riding on his head, came from the north and, with both his gaze and his body, created cliffs, islands, and a mountain range. His benevolence created the land of Indigenous Northern California.

In Eastern cultures dragons tend to symbolize water and the sacredness and freedom of water to sustain or end life. They symbolize strength and power; they rule the sky, the unknown aspects of the

cosmos, and the unconscious. They symbolize wisdom and riches deep within Earth's wells of wisdom. Snakes have long been associated with feminine wisdom, and the dragon is often considered to be in the same family as snakes.

Even in pre-Christian Europe, there were tales of benevolent dragons, respected and revered.

When the dragon is appreciated in this light—embodying earth, cosmic, and feminine wisdom and representing the life-giving properties of the natural world—what are the implications of the traditional Michaelmas story?

I understand the Anthroposophical view and sanctity of the Michaelmas festival. Yet teachers and school communities can celebrate the truths of the seasons and the festival life without centering on a story that is one-sidedly white, male, Eurocentric in its images. In seeking a deeper truth, we affirm the wisdom that lives in the earth, and is available for us to learn from when we make ourselves available.

In my community, during non-COVID times, we honor the time of the Autumnal Equinox with activities in celebration of the beauty and abundance of the land on which we live. This is a time to honor the land, the waters, the air, and to offer appreciation

and loving gratitude for the sustenance that the earth offers us. We come together as community and give thanks for this opportunity to connect and support each other before the darkness of winter envelops us in its close embrace. ♦

Resources:

- <https://www.ancient-symbols.com/dragon-symbolism.html>
- <https://www.worldbirds.org/dragon-symbolism/>
- <https://web.archive.org/web/20130204205517/>
- <http://www.pyramidmesa.com/ncal1.htm>

Aimee de Ney, MEd, spent her childhood playing in the woods of New England with her dolls, and carries this on as a Waldorf early childhood educator, doll maker, and puppeteer. After teaching in Waldorf schools in Washington State since 2001, she founded Bird Song Children's Garden in Olympia, WA in 2012. Aimee is a doctoral student at Antioch University in the Multicultural and Antiracist education specialization, researching pedagogy that prioritizes fostering love and healing for the Land, the Other, and the Self.

Storytelling and Puppetry Festival Arts

~ Janene Ping

*Ah, not to be cut off,
not through the slightest partition
shut out from the law of the stars.
The inner—what is it?
If not intensified sky,
hurled through with birds and deep
with the winds of homecoming.*

—Rainer Maria Rilke

Unique to the curriculum of a Waldorf School, festivals are a kind of homecoming—and an important aspect of cultural life for students, teachers, and parents. Festivals offer us an opportunity to create a “time out of time” where we seek connection with the eternal. In our hearts, we have the opportunity to create

a space for true encounter. Bridging the polarity between what may be uniquely diverse and that which is universally human, festival events are a threshold through which daily work and obligations can be left behind, allowing us to unite in remembrance of a larger reality. Traditions bring us to a place that connect us with our heritage and ancestors. When we create new celebrations, we plant the seeds of potential for humanity's future.

It is important that, as we breathe through the cycle of the year, we understand that universal laws and spiritual archetypes reveal themselves throughout the etheric patterns and elemental forces in the world around us. All life is dependent on the rhythms and cycles of the cosmos. Our earth expresses

this through seasons of the year, dramatic in some parts of the world and subtle in others. These support, affirm, and transform us through growth and transformation within ourselves. Our physical bodies, and also our souls, living between the ebb and flow of the cycles of the seasons, grow and change. The earliest civilizations established meaningful connection to the life forces of the earth by honoring cosmic events—solstices and equinoxes. Through time, these transformed to holy days and months when people's religious devotion moved them to commune in celebration within the church, mosque, or temple.

It is interesting that while festivals and holidays can hold moments of joyous celebration and an opportunity to connect with loved ones on a deep level, they are also often fraught with conflict. Many people suffer depression during intense holiday times. Family gatherings can be beautiful but also challenging in deeply complicated ways. The economic disparity of our society creates extremes of abundance or poverty; this intensifies when culture centers on materialistic consumerism. There is a hollowness that remains unsatisfied on an internal level if we miss the spiritual essence that is nourishment for the soul. If we attune to these experiences we can learn important truths about ourselves and our times. Our search for meaning within festival celebration can lead us back to an essence of our authentic origins and the divine within.

On an inner level, festival life is inspired through meditation, spiritual verse, and the arts. This is a needed balance to the outer business of life. Especially now, as the world is in such conflict, it is important that we engage in this way. In recent pandemic years, our celebrations have held elements of caution; we are not sure how large a gathering is right, inclusive larger community festivals have been curtailed. But at the core of our shared year, it is



essential that we find ways to celebrate festivals. We are united when we strive to overcome challenge; the silver lining has been that our gatherings for community events have been beautifully held outdoors. It is wonderful to experience communion with nature, especially for the young child.

In working with festivals, we can strive to replace business with tenderness. If we feel overwhelmed, it is time to slow down and re-orient our festival experience. By bringing mindful care to the tasks we take up, we connect with gratitude for the essence of our traditions and the joy of creativity. Children should be an integral part in the creation of festivals. For children, time connecting with family and friends—being a part of the stories or puppet plays, being in nature, making, baking, feasting, singing, playing games—can be a time within which the magic of the unexpected, filled with love, can unfold.

The celebration story or puppet play always seems to hold a special joy for the children. I remember Margret Meyerkort, a master early childhood teacher who taught at Wynstones in England, saying once that the puppet stage is like an altar for the young child to witness wisdom tales of what it means to be human. Once, at a festival puppet play's lifting of silk from the stage, a little boy who was watching shouted, *"This is*



the moment I have been waiting for!" The experience is one of entering a magical realm. The child's soul is nourished by living pictures of universal truths, revealed in the meaningful context of the fairy tale.

What do we mean by universal truth? It lies within spiritual archetypes and capacities of the soul that are available to every individual. Like the stars in heaven that fill us all with wonder—if we can but find a clear night sky—universal truths bring us into communion. We are united in a common field where we are one. This communion is an essential aspect of community festival life.

An example of a universal truth lies in the stories of courage that mark the Michaelmas festival. As we enter into the preparation of such a festival, we experience how incarnational life forces of the etheric are strengthened when meaningful relationship to self, others, and the world is affirmed, and goodness emanates from our work. One of the ways this manifests is when the puppeteer models service—to the essence of the story that the puppets play out, to the weaving of loving respect that is felt through community relationships built in the offering of a play.

Within Michaelmas tales such as those from WECAN's *Tell Me a Story* collection, we encounter the

child who takes courage to tame fear—in the form of a dragon. This courage, motivated by love, overcomes adversity and evil. This is a metaphor for how positive forces build immunity. How can we help children to meet their sorrows and fears? The modeling of courage and perseverance contributes to resiliency. Life forces are also strengthened when the wholeness of life journey/developmental process can be experienced through the unfolding story tableau; the integration of wholeness is healing. It is important that resolution to conflict is pictured and that the characters are able to come to rightful rulership of a kingdom where goodness reigns.

Dr. Michaela Glöckler spoke of how the gift of the etheric is eternal—it is reborn anew with each life. Insight into this eternal nature can be gleaned as we enter a timeless dimension where we begin with the question, "Once upon a time—when was it, when was it not?" We then come to the end of the story with such words as "And in the land of the tale, they live on still!" This leaves an open pathway to an intimation of a continuum beyond our material experience of daily life, that extends into the realm of soul and spirit.

It is essential that diversity and differentiation live in the story and puppetry images we share. This

is taken up through representation of our full world humanity. If we can enter into the living pictures of diverse characters who allow us to become “other”, we build capacities of compassion and empathy. Can we sense the transformational quality of these capacities? It is important that a *true* honoring of that which is diverse, in celebration of the people and cultures from which we have chosen stories from, lives in our offering. Unique difference is the signature of individual biography and children intimately connect to this. As pandemic parameters lift, I hope to be able to once again invite authentic relationship to this into our kindergartens. Extended community members, living diverse paths of devotion, can join with us to help bring appropriate stories and festivals to the Kindergarten. Our respect in honoring diversity is key—and the children take this in. Story telling and puppetry can bridge implicit and explicit modalities of learning that build familiarity with difference, so important for all of us.

As we work with cultural tales, ultimately, it is important to explore why we have chosen a certain story to bring to the light of performance. The task of the teacher is to pay attention to the phrasing and social references living within stories. Sometimes there are aspects of a text’s wording which are not appropriate for our 21st century—even though the essence of the story holds truth about our human journey. World wisdom tales live in every culture of the earth. In their former oral tradition, these stories evolved many times in the telling. How can we work with language so that the truth of the story shines through in a way that can be understood in our modern times? Study of a story, including its cultural roots, implicit and explicit messaging, language, and essential archetypes, helps us to develop insight in this process.

There is a great goodness and beauty within our human striving. Within all of the endeavors of preparation for a festival celebration, what is hoped for is to create is a moment when a numinous presence is felt, as when we see the stars in the sky, and in wonder are united with them.

The young child, so open in sensory experience, lives closely within the spiritual forces of the earth, and the journey of learning through the year is healthiest when in relation to the context of the natural world surrounding the child. Healthy reverence lies in recognition of the beauty of the earth and an honoring of the wonder of life that unfolds within it.

The universal, basic foundation of festival life lies in renewal of:

- The spiritual essence that lives within us—that which is eternal—reflection—song and the arts
- Our connections to our family, community, humanity—social—communion—nourishment
- The cosmic rhythms of life forces surrounding us—nature in time and place can be experienced in a profound way
- Wisdom teachings inherent in festival origin—stories and puppet plays

Janene Ping *has been working and learning with young children for 30 years, now teaching at Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School. She is founder and artistic director of The Magical Puppetry Theater. She also lectures and is president of the newly formed World Association of Puppetry and Storytelling Arts.*

For the Classroom

A Singing Game to Honor Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King

~ Holly Koteen-Soulé

Last January I asked myself the question, “If I still had a kindergarten class, how would I choose to share the legacy of Martin Luther King with the children?” I continued to live with that question during the WECAN Conference as early childhood colleagues began discussing which kinds of situations required explicit responses from teachers and which lessons could be most effectively brought implicitly, through stories, puppet plays or circles. What began to feel right to me was to bring his message through movement. So, I started working on a singing game that began with the words, “I had a dream.”

I had a dream,

And this is what I saw,

We lived in a house

That was big enough for all.

The project benefited from a long gestation and the encouragement of several colleagues. The verses were partnered with a Mood of Fiftys song and last

summer the Sound Circle Early Childhood teacher education students helped me finalize the gestures and the movements. What we discovered as we practiced the game was significant. There is a point when the two travelers are knocking on the door of the house: “Knock, Knock, Knock, may we come in?” The circle answers: “Lots of windows and a lovely door. Please come in, there’s always room for more!”

When the children in the circle say, “Please come in,” everyone steps back. This action makes the circle bigger. It is not a picture of opening the door and letting someone in, but rather of making the “house” bigger. We all delighted in experiencing how simply stepping back opened up the space and illustrated so eloquently and powerfully the whole gesture of what we were trying to share.

I am delighted to offer this singing game with *Gateways* readers, to honor Dr. King and to honor all of you who have worked so tirelessly and selflessly to support your children and families in the last two years. Many blessings on our continued journey together.

I Had a Dream

A Singing Game in honor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King

I. I had a dream
and this is what I saw.
We lived in a house
that was big enough for all,
Where you can be you
and I can be me,
Side by side, working joyfully.

*one step forward and arms swing forward as well
one step back and arms swing backward as well
make gesture of peaked roof
open arms widely
clap hands against neighbors on “you” 2 times
clap own hands together on “I” and “me”
repeat movements from lines above*

II. I had a dream, and this is what I saw,
We lived in a house big enough for all.
*Brothers and sisters, all kinds of friends,
Side by side, from beginning to end.

Repeat movements from Verse I

Song: "Journey Round the Seasons All"

Two children, or one child and the assistant teacher, travel counterclockwise around the outside of the circle together, while the other children move clockwise and sing. Gestures for the song are clear from the words and end with making the "house" again by forming a palm-to-palm connection with the neighbor on either side.

Journey Round the Seasons All

words & music - Holly Koteen-Soule

In win-ter, spring, sum-mer, fall. We

jour-ney round the sea-sons all.

sun, wind, snow, fal-ling rain A- last time

ro-und we go and home a- gain. A- gain.

III. The Travelers speak:

Knock, knock, knock!
May we come in?
Knock, knock, knock!
We're looking for our friends.

The rest of the children speak:

Lots of windows and a lovely door.
Please come in,
There's always room for more.

Hands make a round window overhead and then cross arms over the chest
Everyone in the circle opens their arms as they step back
Then reconnect palms, making the house bigger

Everyone repeats the last two lines and movements of verse II, from *Brothers and sisters.

Two children who were the "doors" now go around the outside of the circle while the song is sung again. This sequence can be repeated 2 or 3 more times.

IV. Last time: Repeat movements from Verse I

I had a dream, and this is what I saw,
We lived in a house that was big enough for all.
Where you can be you and I can be me!
What kind of house could that possibly be? *slower and softer*

The Village Pot: An Active Circle Imagination

~ Nancy Blanning

Look! Here is a pot.

Arms gesture big circle in front of chest.

Bend knees and do a little squat on "pot"

It can cook a lot.

Let's look inside.

Incline head to look down into the pot

The pot is bare.

Shake head to say "no"

We need some food

To put in there.

Refrain

A B A

Here's our pot.

Pot gesture as above

A D D A

Stir it a lot.

Stirring with right hand, left hand suggests holding the pot

AA A A B B B

Into it some vegetables

Hands, palms up, cupped like a bowl

Tip hand down to pour veggies into pot

B A D A

We'll plop, plop, plop

Clap hands on thighs with each "plop"

But, first, some wood let's chop, chop, chop

Jump legs open on "first," then crossed on "some", open on "wood," crossed on "let's," open on first "chop," crossed on 2nd "chop," then open on last "chop." This line and jumping sequence can be repeated 3-4 times (can add in arms mimicking leg movements)

Arms snake up, criss-cross, like flames rising

Repeat this line 3-4X

To make a fire big and hot

Refrain

Here's our pot.

Gestures as above

Stir it a lot.

Into it some vegetables

We'll plop, plop, plop

Here's a carrot. It's small, you see.

Hold up one index finger. Hands gesture "small,"

one palm held over the other

Shake head "no"

Not enough for you or me.

Gesture "small" as with first line

It may be small

Index finger rises to show growing

But it's grown this tall.

Chop one hand against the other

Let's chop it for the pot

Even if it's not a lot.

For Earth

Gesture down to earth, hands horizontal to the floor (but stay standing upright)

Rain

Hands held palms down at mid-chest, parallel to the floor, fingers gently moving to suggest falling rain

Wind

Swish arms over head airily or twirl once in place in a “windy” way

and Sun

Arms make circle above head as sun

Have worked so hard to grow just one.

Refrain

Here’s our pot.

Gestures as above

Stir it a lot.

Into it some vegetables

We’ll plop, plop, plop

(Cup hands like a bowl before speaking)

Words spoken quietly

These few grains of rice are all I have.

Indicate one hand cupped and other picking individual grains and letting them drop

To have so little makes me sad.

Gentle, sad head shake

There may be few,

But they will do!

Drop them in the pot.

Extend cupped hands and tip forward to pour rice into the pot

Though they may not be a lot.

For Earth, rain, wind, and sun

Gestures as above.

Have worked so hard to grow each one.

Refrain

Here’s our pot. Stir it a lot.

Gestures as above

Into it some vegetables we’ll

Plop, plop, plop

With our shovel now we’ll dig

Hands/palms together to suggest the blade, digging gesture—stomp foot and thrust down to same side as shovel digging into dirt

Maybe we’ll find something big.

We dig and dig, yes, we do toil.

Continue digging then flip “shovel” up over head to fling the dirt to drop on our heads

(Pause in speech to let the “dirt” fall on our heads)

We’re workers covered now with soil.

Gesture from head down “covered with dirt”

Brush dirt off from head

Rub down body from head

Arms, tummy, knees and toes

to these other body parts. Can also ad lib other parts

There’s even dirt upon my nose!

Rub nose

In the ground, is there a treat?

Here's a yam, potato sweet
But only one for us to eat.
It is not much. It's small, you see.
But earth gave it to you and me.
We'll clean it off
Chop
Then plop
For Earth, rain, wind, and sun
Have worked so hard to grow just one.

Refrain

Here's our pot. Stir it a lot.
Into it some vegetables we'll
Plop, plop, plop
Here we have an ear of corn.
Let's rub off the kernels,

Let's rub off the kernels,
Let's rub off the kernels.
Now the cob is shorn.
Now here's another ear of corn...
Scoop up the kernels.
Gently drop them in the pot.
Each tiny piece will help to feed a lot,
For earth, rain, wind, and sun
Have worked so hard to grow each one.

Refrain

Here's our pot. Stir it a lot.
Into it some vegetables we'll
Plop, plop, plop.
Now one more carrot,
Some celery sweet,

Three green beans

And a round, red beet!
Chop them.
Plop them.
Into the pot they go.
Now we have a soup just so!
For earth, rain, wind, and sun

*Hands holding the potato
Shake head*

*Rub hands together
chopping gesture
Hands clap on thighs
Gestures as above*

Gestures as described above

*Extend one forearm as ear of corn
Circle wrist of one arm with other hand and
move hand up with twisting motion to elbow"
(switch arms for variety)*

*Repeat using the other arm up to 'Now the cob is shorn'
Scoop hands together
Tip hands forward into pot gently*

Gestures as above

As above

*Extend index finger up as carrot
One forearm parallel to floor as celery;
stroke forearm with other hand
Hang hands, fingers down, move index finger,
middle finger, and then ring finger sequentially
as speaking, one finger per word
Cup hands to gesture round beet
Chopping motion (repeat line 2-3X)
Plop hands on thighs
Gesture toward pot
Raise hands in delight
Gestures as before*

All worked so hard to grow each one.

*(Sit on floor. Act as though smelling
and then eating the soup)*

Soup is delicious. Tummies are fed.

Rub tummy in satisfaction

Now let's have a rest.

Let's lie down and make our nest.

Lie down for little rest.

*(Rest for a short while. To "awaken",
sit up and very quietly sing the refrain,
doing small gestures with hands and fingers.)*

Alternative movements for the refrain:

When we can again hold hands and be close to each other—

When the refrain is sung, "Here's our pot," we can take hands and step together into the center of the circle, standing close together, to form the "pot" ourselves. "Stir it a lot"—move circle gently counter-clockwise.

"Plop, plop, plop"—drop hands and clap hands on our thighs.

Intentions of this circle

Sensory focuses:

- Provide active movement in place, at a time when children are restrained from moving freely through space.
- Maximize the opportunity for self-touch (rubbing, brushing body with hands) when normal opportunities for touch are not allowed.
- In future when touch is again allowed, group movement is cultivated. This nourishes experience of healthy boundaries—where each of us ends and another person begins.

Social / soul focuses:

- Direct consciousness of the natural, elemental world for its gifts to our lives.
- Hold gratitude for what we are given, even if it seems small and inadequate at the time.
- Picture that combined generosity to give what we can—even if it seems small and insignificant—creates community and "feeds" everyone.
- Rhyming couplets give assurance that there is a pattern of predictability, giving reassurance to the soul that some things can be depended upon, fostering a sense of security.
- Emphasizes the power of the social group cooperating.

Academic / pedagogical focuses—

- Rhythmic speech as speech model, modulation, pace.
- Modeling of sequence—discrete steps in an important order to lead to the desired result.
- Strong emphasis on rhyming couplets to prepare the ear for phonemic perception.
- Rhyming couplets prepare the capacity to anticipate what will come next because we can depend upon it.

Bhambhutia

~ Retold by Holly Koteen-Soulé

There are many versions of this story told in both India and Pakistan. The old woman outwits the forest animals with the help of a large pot. It has some motifs also found in the Norwegian story of “Three Billy Goats Gruff” and in the Russian story of “Mashenka and the Bear.” I adapted this story from Chandrika Bheda’s retelling in a collection of song-stories called *The Singing Sack*, compiled by Helen East on behalf of the National Folktale Centre. It works well as both a play and a puppet play. The lines delivered by the animals in the forest and by the pot are repetitive and the children enjoyed saying them with me.

Once upon a time there was an old woman who lived with her daughter, Sona, in a little house in a village in India. When Sona was grown and ready to be wed, she found a nice young man and they were married. She went to live with her husband in another village far away on the other side of the jungle.

The old woman lived by herself now, and after a while she began to feel lonely. She decided to go and visit her daughter. The jungle, however, was full of wild animals and there were no buses or trains in that part of the countryside. “I can’t even walk properly, now that I am so old,” she complained to herself. But she kept thinking and thinking, and at last she decided that she would take only a few clothes in a small bag, so that she wouldn’t have much to carry, and she would take a big walking stick to support her. So, one bright morning, she set off into the jungle.

Now, in the jungle there lived a lion. As the old woman approached him, the lion heard the sound of her walking stick, *thabook, thabook, thabook, thabook*, and said: “Who is coming by my way? *Thabook, thabook* is all they say!” Then he saw the old woman and he said, “*Docina* (old woman), I want to eat you.”

But the old woman replied: “Lion, oh lion, let me go, to my daughter’s a visit take. Round and plump will I grow, a finer meal will I make.”

The lion thought this was a good idea and he let her go, calling out behind her, “Old woman, mind you, come back soon!”

So the old woman continued on her journey. A little further on, there lived a tiger and when he heard in the distance the sound of the walking stick, *thabook, thabook, thabook, thabook*, he said: “Who is that coming by my way? *Thabook, thabook* is all they say!” Then he saw the old woman and he said, “*Docina*, I want to eat you.”

The old woman replied: “Tiger, oh tiger, let me go, to my daughter’s a visit take. Round and plump will I grow, A finer meal will I make.”

The tiger thought this was a good idea and so he let her go, calling out behind her “Old woman, mind you, come back soon!”

So the old woman continued on her journey. A little further on lived a bear, who also heard the sound of the old woman’s walking stick, *thabook, thabook, thabook, thabook*, and said: “Who is coming by my way? *Thabook, thabook* is all they say!”

And then he saw the old woman. “*Docina*, I want to eat you.”

The old woman replied: “Bear, oh bear, let me go, to my daughter’s a visit take. Round and plump will I grow, A finer meal will I make.”

The bear thought this was a good idea and so he let her go, calling out behind her “Old woman, mind you, come back soon!”

By this time the old woman had come to the edge of the jungle and there was a path leading to her daughter’s house. In a short time she arrived there safely.

There were many good things to eat and many enjoyable things to talk about and she lived at her daughter’s very happily for a whole month. Then the old woman decided that it was time to go home, but she was worried about the lion and the tiger and the bear, who all wanted to eat her.

“Stay a little while longer,” said Sona, “and we will think of something.”

So, another month passed while they thought about it and the old woman kept on eating and enjoying herself. By now she was so plump that she looked like a big round clay pot—a *bhambhutia*. That gave her an idea.

"I will become a bhambhutia", she said to her daughter. "We will make a big clay pot and then I will get inside and you can push it so that it goes rolling down the path all the way home."

They made a big round clay bhambhutia and the old woman squeezed herself into it. Her daughter put the lid on and pushed it off down the road from the front door.

The bhambhutia went rolling down the road and it made a sound like this: *Doolook, doolook, doolook, doolook*.

In the distance the bear could hear it coming. "What is making this noise?" he said to himself and when he saw the bhambhutia, he said, "Hey *doolook, doolook*, have you seen an old woman, a Docina?"

From inside the pot the old woman replied: "Which old woman we don't know. To our village we must go."

And on went the bhambhutia, *doolook, doolook, doolook, doolook*. But the bear was curious so it followed along behind.

When they came to the tiger, the tiger said, "Wait a minute, *doolook, doolook*, have you seen an old woman, a Docina?"

From inside the pot the old woman replied: "Which old woman we don't know. To our village we must go."

And on went the bhambhutia, *doolook, doolook, doolook, doolook*. But the tiger was curious too, and it followed along behind the bear.

Further along down the road, the lion was waiting for the old woman to come back. When he saw the bhambhutia coming he said, "Wait a minute *doolook, doolook*, have you seen an old woman, a Docina?"

From inside the pot the old woman replied: "Which old woman we don't know. To our village we must go."

This time the bhambhutia rolled all the way to the old woman's front door. *Doolook, doolook, doolook, doolook*. But the lion had followed the tiger and the bear and they all sat down to see what would happen next.



The old woman didn't come out. She just stayed in the bhambhutia and waited.

At last, it got really dark and quiet. The lion and the tiger and the bear all fell asleep one by one. At midnight the old woman crawled out.

Very softly she said to the bhambhutia, "Thank you bhambhutia, you have saved me. Now you may go and live where you please."

But the bhambhutia could not go anywhere on its own, so it stayed outside the old woman's house. And the bear went back to his cave and the lion and the tiger went back to the jungle. If they have not died they are still waiting for the old woman, but she is safe in her home with the bhambhutia to keep her company. ♦

Source:

This story is excerpted from the new WECAN collection *Truer Than True: A World of Fairy Tales for the Waldorf Kindergarten*, selected and edited by Holly Koteen-Soulé. The inspiration for the adaptation of this tale came from a version told by Chandrika Bheda in *The Singing Sack*, a collection by Helen East, published by the National Folktale Centre in 1989. We are so grateful for Ms. East's permission to publish our adaptation.

The Weaving of Karu and Resa

— Annie Sommerville-Hall

Once there was a little girl who lived in a happy village with her family and friends. Her name was Resa. The village was on the bank of a wide river. The river flowed on and was rich with fish swimming and jumping and plants growing. On the sides of the banks grew long strands of thick grasses. The villagers wove these into baskets.

One morning Resa came down to cut grasses by herself for the first time. She had just become old enough to help with this task. The grass was thick and hard to cut. She was intent on her task. When she finally looked up, her eyes grew wide, as she saw another little girl from a neighboring village across the river. This girl was dark, dark as the purple-brown hills when the sun sets. Resa had spend most of her days near the heart of her own village, and had never seen anyone like the other little girl before.

The girl across the river was named Karu. Karu had never seen anyone as light as Resa, like the palest pink sky at sunset. Karu thought Resa looked too delicate to cut the grasses, and wondered what her name was. She smiled at her.

Resa was surprised to see such a smile of light.

They worked in silence, and when each girl started home they waved goodbye.

They came every day to the river at the same time. One day Karu brought Resa a pair of gloves she had made, just like hers, so that the grasses would not hurt her hands. Resa brought Karu a banana cake she had made. The girls swam toward each other to exchange gifts. Karu heard Resa laugh as she examined the gloves. “I did not know she would be so loud and curious,” Karu thought. Karu took the bread, sniffed it, and smiled. “I did not know she would be so sweet and tender,” Resa mused.

As they worked together on the riverbank, sometimes singing, laughing, or eating together,

they began to get to know each other. Karu noticed that under Resa’s skin she seemed to glow, almost a beautiful peachy color. Resa looked at Karu one day in the sun and noticed this same colorful glow in an exquisite brown. They became like sisters.

They asked their parents, aunts, and uncles to build a bridge over the river so that they could visit each other in any weather. The girls worked together, played together, and told stories together. They wove their baskets together out of many-colored grasses, and each basket had a story to tell. Sometimes in the evening they would sit on the riverbank together as the sun was setting and tell these stories as the villagers gathered around. Their stories were woven richly with color and friendship, just like their baskets.

And as they grew, they told stories to their children, and their children’s children. They would all sit on the riverbank under a setting sun, listening to the sound of crickets, and the voices of these two sister friends, and look off into the rich dark hills, and the pale pink sky, and see the glow all around them. ♦

Annie Sommerville-Hall has been a Waldorf early childhood teacher at the Waldorf School of Atlanta since 1993 in both the kindergarten and nursery. Each year with the parents and children in her class, she collaboratively sews a quilt on a theme, “following a thread” just like a story can! She enjoys weaving stories from her experience in the world around her, and from the growth and understanding that the children bring. She finds inspiration for a story when the muse presents itself in an interaction, a challenge, in witnessing nature and relationships—in life. This story is one of two that Annie contributed to Tell Me Another Story (WECAN, 2019).

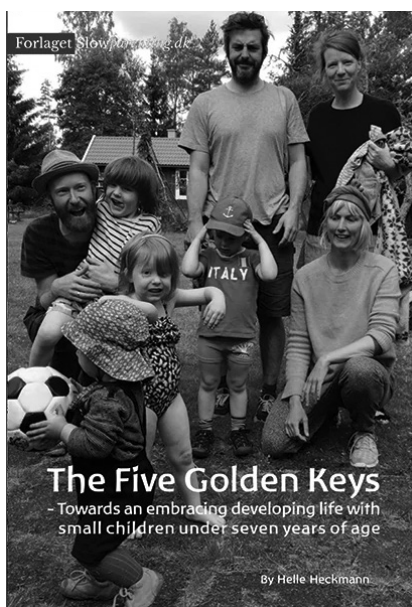
Book Reviews

The Five Golden Keys
– *Towards an embracing
developing life with small
children under seven years of age*
Helle Heckmann
(Slowparenting, 2020)
Reviewed by Laura Mason

While the world today's children live in is very different from the one their parents and grandparents grew up in, young children's developmental needs remain the same. Helle Heckmann's book *The Five Golden Keys* speaks to us of how to meet the needs of young children in five different ways—through sleep, movement, meals, rhythm and care. This little gem of a book shows us how as adults, we have the opportunity to weave together these five different threads to form a beautiful protective cloth in which to lovingly wrap our children—our own or those in our care.

Each chapter is dedicated to one theme and is followed by journal pages that allow readers to actively take up these topics in their own parenting or caregiving. Questions encourage us to carefully observe, consider what we're doing now, what our hopes are, and what we want to commit to changing.

In the chapter on sleep, we are presented with a picture of well-rested children who feel a sense of well-being and are settled in their bodies. If behavioral challenges arise, sleep may be the first place to look for an underlying problem. Newborns, who come to us with irregular sleep patterns, need our help to find their way to regular sleep rhythms and to develop habits that will lead to a healthy sleep life throughout life. Helle shares what we can expect from children of various ages, talks about the importance of naps and gives us ideas for helpful bedtime routines. She



also emphasizes the importance of healthy sleep for adults caring for young children and encourages us to find ways to care for ourselves in this realm.

In the movement chapter we hear about how independent movement experiences support brain development and strengthen the confidence and stamina of our children. Children who experience unstructured movement are better able to know their own capacities. Stepping in to help too often rather than giving our children the space and time to do things for themselves, even when they are frustrated, can lead to children losing their initiative. Helle helpfully urges us

to see everyday tasks as opportunities for children to practice important skills. Those of you who have worked with Helle will not be surprised to hear that she dedicates a portion of this chapter to taking walks simply for the sake of walking. Helle also touches on the gifts of the garden as a place for purposeful work that children can imitate. And finally, she pushes back on the idea that introducing academics early improves outcomes. Children need to use their bodies to learn!

In the first months of life, children's feedings are ideally experiences of safety, warmth and peace in the arms of caregivers. The introduction of solid food provides an opportunity for socialization at the family table and immersion in family culture through food. In the chapter on meals, Helle shares the importance of having children participate in the many components of mealtime, from food preparation and table setting to clearing up and washing the dishes. She encourages us to be fully present and seated for the full meal, without distractions, and to introduce good table manners through simple expectations and

modeling. She also reminds us to slow down, simplify, and recognize and enjoy the important sensory experiences children can have through food.

The fourth point of focus in the book is rhythm. Here we learn about how critical repetition and predictability are in helping children feel safe and secure enough to meet the world with confidence. While the focus is on the daily rhythm—including components such as meals, potty-time, a daily walk, naps, chores and self-care—we're also given ideas for working with weekly and seasonal rhythms. Helle encourages us to see our duties at home as a “labor of love” and to bring the type of structure we likely have in our work lives, into the home. This consistent structure will support our children in feeling secure.

The final chapter is on care. Our role as adults is to provide protection for the children, to determine what they are ready for developmentally and to be an “attentive presence” that accompanies them on their journey. Helle imagines us drawing a circle of protection around our children. This circle is very snug when they are babies, but it is continually redrawn as the children get older and need to turn

their gaze outward. She uses the term “reverse care” to describe the kind of care we're giving when we allow children to face appropriate challenges independently. Not rescuing the child from every obstacle is an especially important kind of care! She also encourages us in this chapter to minimize choice. We can care for the children by knowing what is best for them and being clear about our expectations. And finally, we are strongly encouraged to turn off devices in order to be fully present.

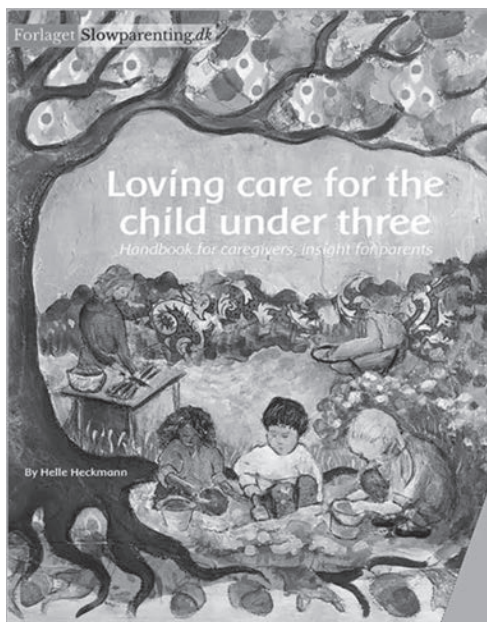
Helle closes her book with an invitation to stop and consider how we can truly make the child our priority. A dramatic life change is necessary when a child comes into a family. She hopes we can all recognize the need for this change and embrace it along with all of its challenges.

While this book is a quick read, it is dense with ideas for inspiration. I recommend it for new parents and for educators working with parents of very young children and can easily imagine it being a helpful supplemental resource for parents in parent-and-child groups. Happy reading! ♦

Loving Care for the Child under Three

Helle Heckmann and colleagues
(Slowparenting, 2021)
Reviewed by Heather Church

Almost twenty years ago when I met Helle Heckmann at a conference in Ontario, it was a life-changing experience for me. Helle gave meaning to my life's experience, my work with children, and the importance of speaking up for the needs of the young child. That moment was the beginning of my journey towards making Waldorf education my life's work. Over my twenty-some years of working with the young child, Helle has



come into my work life over and over again, inspiring me to move forward. I am honored to share with you Helle Heckmann's latest publication, *Loving Care for the Child Under Three: Handbook for Caregivers and Insight for Parents*.

Loving Care for the Child under Three is delightful in its physical form, filled with beautiful artwork and photographs. Most importantly it takes the reader on a journey of understanding and caring for the young child from birth to three. The book is a

compilation of a lifetime of Helle's work over the years, and is focused on supporting parents and caregivers. It especially emphasizes this valuable work of caring for the young child in consideration of the realities of our time on the earth. With the support of Rune Ravn Bratlann, Grete Lyngdorf, Robyn Hewetson, and others, Helle Heckmann shares many different aspects of their love-infused work with young children. Beautifully woven into each chapter are the "green pages," stories that deepen the subject of the chapter. It is a sharing of wisdom from Helle's many colleagues, friends, and parents from around the world.

The journey begins with the **Roots**, the inner work of the adults, which forms the essential foundation for caring for the young child. In this chapter Rune Ravn Bratlann, who lives and works in Denmark teaching anthroposophical studies, describes supportive practices of inner work and points to the fundamental task of love in education. Such inner work is essential for our times, for our children and for the future, for the intuitive capacities of the past are no longer available to us. We now have to develop and grow new capacities from the inside.

The first "green story" in the book is Shaunaq Puri's sharing of his journey towards "Finding Fatherhood." Shaunaq shares the highs and lows of his path to becoming a father in this time with incredible honesty and humility. Like the many other stories in the book, it is one that warms the heart.

Next comes the **Trunk**, a time for bringing stability in the first year of a child's life, developing the relationship between the child and the parent or caregiver, as well as the growing connection to the earthly world. This chapter covers subjects such as physical development, sustenance, rhythm, warmth, diapering and sleep. It also touches on budding outer relationships such as that between parent and child, care outside the home, and time outside for walks in nature.

Chapter Three, the **Crown**, looks at the whole picture of birth to three. The content in this chapter is carried by Grete Lyngdorf. Grete is an experienced Waldorf teacher who has worked with children from six to sixteen in home childcare and in Camphill Canada. She currently teaches Gordon Neufeld courses in Denmark. Grete describes this time in a

child's life as the new womb, the new umbilical cord. This is a time when we are actively creating a garden that is supportive to the development of a young child in the home and in the community. Grete shares Six Stages of Attachment as presented by Gordon Neufeld, a Canadian developmental psychologist and author of the book *Hold on to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers*.

The green sections in this chapter include "Life as Curriculum: Living Arts as Foundation of Care" by Cynthia Aldinger, and Lisa Bratlann's "About Grandmothering." Lisa begins by acknowledging that she has had three experiences of childhood: her own, her children's, and now her grandchildren's. "Each time I have been allowed to hold a small newly born grandchild in my arms, it has occurred to me more and more what a gift it is to become a grandmother: to be allowed to follow their incarnation process..." Once again, the green sections throughout the book are delightful!

Finally **Speaking and Listening – The Teacher's Greatest Tools** chapter closes the book, written by Robyn Hewet from New Zealand. Robyn has worked around the world as a teacher, a teacher of teachers, and a specialist in speech formation. Robyn takes the reader on a journey through the twelve senses and focuses on the higher sense of hearing. Helle is the writer of the green section this time and speaks about singing with the youngest children.

Beautiful illustrations by Danish artist Lise Meijer lead the reader through the book from chapter to chapter; they add a lightness and feeling of newness to each of the pages.

As Susan Weber says in the opening of the book, "Over and over again through these years, Helle has brought her very personal touch to this work. She is compassionate and respectful in every interaction with others—adults and children—and at the same time, without compromise in her ideals. It is a rare mixture and in my own heart and thoughts, holds her apart. She has led many a teacher and many a parent to a new insight that has been life changing even when the insight has been a painful one to hear—and then further, to accept."

Enjoy the journey! ♦

***Child of Nature—
Benefits of Nature
in Childhood***

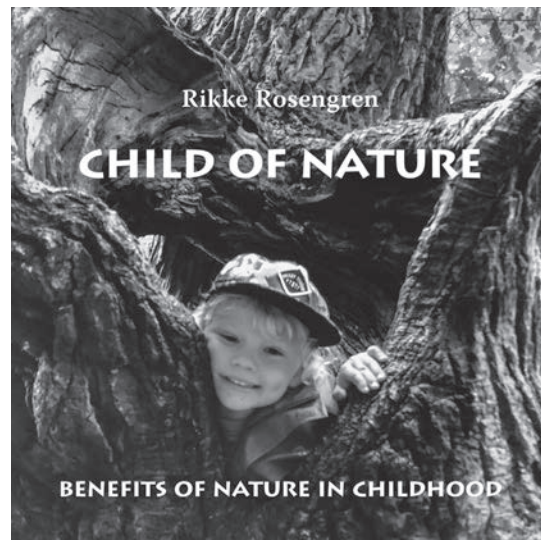
Rikke Rosengren
(Blue Pearl, 2018)

Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

Outdoor early childhood programs have been growing in number and popularity as an educational choice for many years now. Already common in Scandinavia and encouraged to our North American kindergartens by Helle Heckmann's example in Denmark, the number of outdoor programs on this continent has exploded with the pandemic. Out of necessity, many, many Waldorf programs have made the outdoors—forest, outside play yard, or even city park—their classrooms in order to stay in session during this pandemic. Now, after two years, this outdoor style is being affirmed as so beneficial for the children that programs will remain centered outside even when a return to the classroom is a safe option.

Children are thriving and teachers are happy, too, even with taxing weather extremes and practical, logistical challenges. Research affirms many benefits from more time in nature, which is no surprise. But seeing this shift can make some who have taught in the Waldorf kindergarten for many years feel like the world of our sheltering, aesthetically sculpted classrooms is being stood on its head. How to not get dizzy?

The new book *Child of Nature—Benefits of Nature in Childhood* is an accessible and teacher/family/care provider-friendly companion that can help with exploring these thoughts and questions. This book was published in pre-COVID 2018. It is not a justification for what early childhood classes



have done to stay in person during the pandemic. On the contrary, it is a practical, sensible, joyous celebration of utilizing the gifts of nature no matter what our setting and circumstances and thus nurturing and nourishing young children in the first seven years of life in body, soul, and spirit.

Bonsai (meaning “little tree” in Japanese) is the name of the program author Rikke Rosengren founded near Copenhagen in 1999 with 40 children total in the

nursery groups. Kindergarten groups were added a few years later. Enrollment now stands at 130 children with three nurseries and four kindergartens. The book describes what the children have experienced in their interactions with nature, and includes current research to further confirm that being in nature as much as possible offers enormous benefit to the children's healthy development. (Would that the Danish sources were also readily available in English for us to share with colleagues and families as well!)

The book is organized into chapters that together describe the essential elements we recognize in Waldorf early childhood education as support for healthy physical, sensory, and social development—free, active bodily movement; abundant opportunity for play; experiencing the environment and the elements through all the senses; rhythm; chances for risk-taking toward developing flexibility, resiliency, and self-confidence; and worthy role models for imitation. The children also need to see and participate in practical life with others in community. Into the rhythm of the week are also woven artistic activities—drawing, painting, older children wood carving with a knife, and so on.

This overview of Waldorf early education basics is done with clear and articulate vocabulary. As I read the book, I found I had been led through a well-reasoned description of a Waldorf early childhood program that could take place anywhere. Rikke describes the children's daily experiences in a simple yet vivid and accessible ways that are always accurate, truth-filled and objective. I highly recommend this book as a resource giving examples of how we can speak about our work to people outside of the Waldorf community and to families new to Waldorf education.

As mentioned above, the book includes many references to brain development and the advantages that an outdoor environment offers for exploration, varied sensory experiences, and so on, with current research quoted to back up these claims. For example, the Danish brain scientist Kjeld Fredens is noted for his support for children having time in nature. The following applies to children in all environments.

According to Fredens, sensory impacts are vital in regard to how the brain is stimulated and we are not able to sense anything without some kind of movement. When children are in nature, it is natural to them to move around—nature calls for the children to move, and thus, they get a lot of the varied sensory experiences with which nature is so saturated. . . Children need to be in movement, which the child is a natural part of, [and] is valuable and developmental for the child's body and learning. For the small child, it is especially through play that the integration between movements, senses and cognitive development takes place; a learning that is integrated into the whole body. (p. 36-7)

Brain development, movement, play, and sensory experience are shown to be essential partners in this brief statement.

My own school is urban with a major boulevard running along one side and a large park on the opposite. The park has open space and trees, but it is no forest. Rather than closing the book feeling discouraged by the limitations of our setting, I was surprised and delighted to find I felt inspired and energized instead. Nature is just outside our doors. It is up to us to consciously look at what we do have, and maximize the possibilities for bringing the trees and flowers into our classrooms through imaginative stories that describe their lives through the seasons. We can look to our outside space and imagine varied possibilities for movement that bring fun and call for a little daring, and so on.

A paragraph from the introduction summarizes the intention of this book.

The main parts of the book are based on our adventures in, experiences from, and reflections about the Bonsai kindergarten. The book addresses everybody working with children, who has an interest in creating an environment where children have opportunities to nurture their relationship to nature and, thus, their relation to themselves. The book is envisioned as one proposal on how to use nature as a context for educational work with children—not as a recipe, but as a selection that the reader can get inspired by and use to a greater or lesser extent. (p. 21)

With abundant gorgeous photographs, this book is a feast for the eyes. It overflows with reminders of the wonder, healthy challenge, and benevolence that arises from daily interactions with the natural world. The forest has its unique advantages, to be sure. But for city dwellers, *Child of Nature* can also open our eyes to the unnoticed possibilities of interacting with nature in our own environment as well. ♦



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Issue 40 - 2021

Theme: Diversity & Inclusivity
Festivals & more

The Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Care and Education

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It is of interest to anyone concerned with the young child and Steiner Waldorf early childhood education and care.

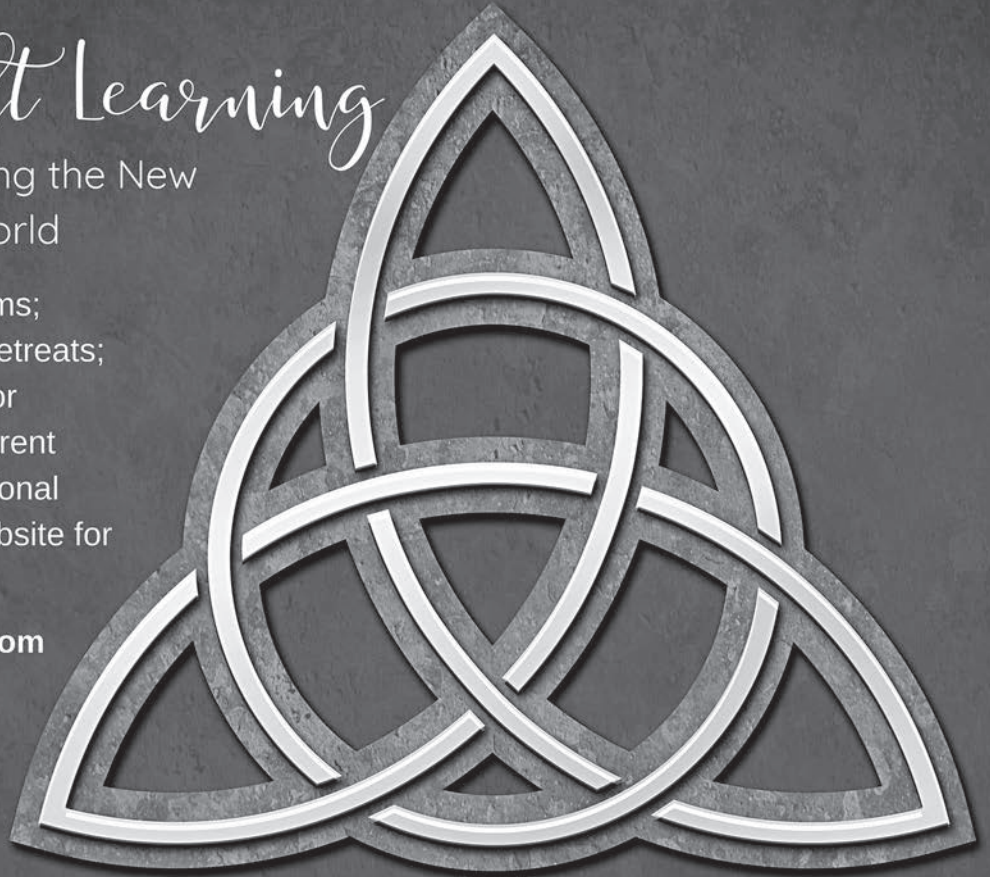
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For more information

Ruth Ker, ece@westcoastinstitute.org
250-748-7791

Birth to Three: Debbie Laurin
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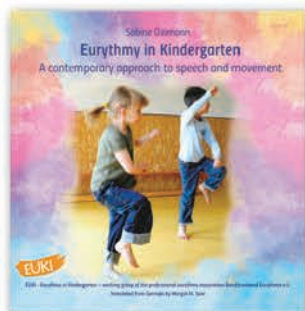
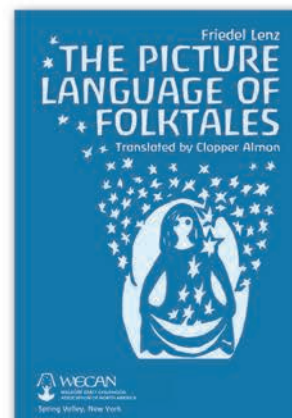
Books and Resources for Parents and Educators

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While creating economic safety and security for their families, twenty-first-century parents absent from the family and home for longer and longer working hours face the classic problem of our times: how can we give the best we can to the children we love, while also satisfying personal needs as well as the demands of society? This book offers perspectives from several adults who care for young children in different ways.

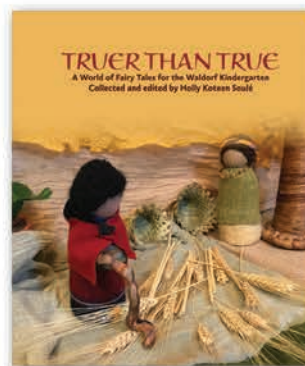
Fairy tales speak in a visual language - but what do these pictures speak of? In *The Picture Language of Folktales*, Friedel Lenz looks at traditional tales, originally collected and retold by the Brothers Grimm from 1812 to 1857, and their original images as part of the development of human consciousness. The characters of these stories are human beings living within two worlds - one which is physically visible and experienced through bodily senses and another that is not visible but nonetheless sensed.



Eurythmy in Kindergarten is a beautifully illustrated answer to the question, "Why eurythmy in kindergarten?" This unique, artistic form of movement, with its deep connection to the formative power of speech, is especially important for young children's speech development, which is increasingly under threat in our times. This lovely booklet is written for kindergarten teachers, eurythmists, students in training programs, and parents.

We will send a sample copy to each WECAN Member program and encourage you to order more for your colleagues and parents!

Truer Than True brings twenty-six wonderful tales from around the world to the home and classroom, and to all who love stories. These favorites of the Waldorf early childhood classroom were collected and adapted to enhance inclusiveness and understanding, and to share beloved stories that nourish families from many cultures. "The fairy tale is unique... in its capacity to offer seeds of solace and soul healing to the soul-in-becoming, and to be a wise and tender guide for us all. " - from the Introduction. Illustrated with full-color photos of puppet show tableaux.



The mission of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America is to foster a spiritually-based impulse for the work with the young child from pre-birth to age seven. WECAN is committed to nurturing childhood as a foundation for renewing human culture.

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