

## *Introduction*

### *Joan Almon and Stephen Spitalny, Co-editors*

*Gateways* readers will recall that a few years ago we announced a new editor, Nicola Tarshis, who unfortunately became ill and could not continue the work. Susan Howard and I then co-edited a few issues while we sought a new editor. We are pleased to announce that Stephen Spitalny, kindergarten teacher at the Santa Cruz Waldorf School, has agreed to take on this role. In this issue he has served as co-editor.

Steve is well-known to kindergarten teachers on the West Coast and to many others nation-wide through the articles and stories he has contributed to *Gateways*. In this issue Steve describes the path of a Waldorf teacher, and his article on small groups describes his work with the children. His lantern story sheds yet another light on his creativity and love for stories and festivals. We welcome Steve to this work and look forward to future issues of *Gateways* under his able leadership. — J.A.

As Waldorf kindergarten teachers, we endeavor to serve the needs of the young child by “continuing the work of the hierarchies.” How do we work toward this goal? We strive, on the one hand, to understand the human being, through study of the stages of child development, and on the other hand to perceive the being of the individual child through objective observation. We also continually work to be more aware and conscious ourselves, and this helps us to live more fully in the present and to become open to the support of spiritual beings in our work.

It is also important to consider relationships both with colleagues and with parents. More and more we experience challenges with our colleagues, which can hinder our ability to be fully present for the children. The children take in deeply the way we relate to other adults, and this has an effect on the very forming of their organs and on the way they themselves will form relationships.

These are all aspects of self-education which are vital to our ability to stand among the children. As Margret Meyerkort says, “Only she who educates herself has a moral right to educate the child.” A spiritual practice, such as that described by Rudolf Steiner, is a necessary element of self-education, and Steiner’s research into human development and karma is invaluable for our work with children.

In relation to the children and parents one meets, it is most helpful to ask: What is this child asking of me? How can I best serve this individual? In this way we embrace our own karma and the karma of the other. Rather than complain about how difficult a particular person is, or wonder what is “wrong” with this child or parent, we can ask: What is there to be learned here? How can *I* best meet this situation?

In this way we can also learn to develop gratitude for challenges. Both in professional and personal life, we often remember most vividly those we have worked with who have helped us to create new capacities by challenging us. A mood of gratitude for these experiences in turn cultivates enthusiasm for joyfully embracing one’s karma.

Steiner spoke about warmth, enthusiasm, and joy signs of ego activity. Let us welcome the challenges the children bring us as a call to self-development! I quote from Meadows in Christopher Fry’s play *A Sleep of Prisoners*.

*The human heart can go to the lengths of God.  
Dark and cold we may be, but this is no winter now.  
The frozen misery of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move,*

*The thunder is the thunder of the floes,  
The thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring  
Thank God our time is now when wrong comes up to face us everywhere,  
never to leave us till we take the longest stride of soul men ever took.  
Affairs are now soul size.  
The enterprise is exploration into God.  
Where are you going?  
It takes so many thousand years to wake,  
But will you wake for pity's sake.....?*

— S.S.