From the Editor

Stephen Spitalny

This issue of *Gateways* is filled with many wonderful offerings to support our work with young children. Thanks to all of our contributors for providing a wealth of inspiration and taking the time to articulate in writing what they are doing and thinking. Thanks also to all of those who are starting to put their thoughts into writing, hopefully in time for the next issue. (This means you.)

Included in this issue is an article taken from an upcoming book published by WECAN, *You're Not the Boss of Me! – Understanding the Six/Seven-year-old Transformation*, and a section from a book jointly published by WECAN, AWSNA and the Research Institute entitled *Developmental Signatures: Core Values and Practices in Waldorf Education for Children Ages 3-9*. Both of these books deserve a place on the *Gateways* reader's bookshelf! They will soon be available from the WECAN office. The continuing work of Emmi Pikler is highlighted this issue with two articles articulating the connections of Waldorf early childhood work with the RIE approach. There is a sentence in one of these articles that bears repeating: *The Real Work May be in the Real Work.* This could be one of the keynote statements about our work with the children in our programs. These are just some of the wonderful contributions to this issue of *Gateways*.

When I first became editor of *Gateways*, I was worried that all of the articles would have to speak from one voice, the *official voice of Waldorf,* as it were. Or perhaps all the articles would resonate with my own opinions. This has not turned out to be the case, as shown this issue by an article on a St. Martin's Festival. My own inclination would be to leave all mention of saints out of kindergarten, even all elements that speak of specific religious traditions. Yet this is a different voice than mine, and this article presents a wonderful picture of a community-building festival with young children and their families. Included also is an article by this editor which he hopes you will find interesting. Please keep in mind, it is the author's perspective. There is no "one and only way."

Fall is now fully upon us in the northern hemisphere, and along with the showering of cosmic iron, I feel the heaviness of world human need. What follows is a reflection of that heaviness, with specific examples, so be prepared.

So much is going on in our world. Sometimes it is hard to think that what I do on a daily basis with my kindergarten has meaning when I learn of situations that children in other parts of the world are experiencing and enduring. Two examples jump to mind: Northern Uganda and Zimbabwe.

In Uganda, children from five to twelve years old are at risk of being kidnapped and subjected to unthinkable experiences as their initiation into military rebel groups. The children not yet caught are living in fear, on the run, and hiding in basements and back alleys with no more than the clothes they are wearing. A movie called "Invisible Children" has been produced that is well worth watching. For more information, see www.invisiblechildren.com.

In Zimbabwe, it also is very hard to be a child, let alone to live there at all, for different reasons. It is a country not at war, yet the situation there is as so very dire. Basic commodities, fuel, electricity and drinking water are in all short supply and literally millions of people have fled to neighboring countries. Inflation is officially assessed at more than 6,000 percent (Can you even imagine paying $1 for something in January, and the same item now costing $6000?) and the unemployment rate is 80%. International donor agencies say more than a third of the country's population of 12 million will require emergency food aid in the coming months. An angry and increasingly desperate population is consistently prevented from voicing their complaints. All Zimbabweans are victims of economic and social collapse, but those who protest are targeted for police brutality, including mothers, who often take their babies to protests because they cannot afford to pay caregivers This has resulted in babies being detained by the police along with their mothers. Some of the women are subjected to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment together with their children, as the police do not separate the mothers and their children when they suffer this treatment. You may find out about Zimbabwe aid organizations at www.ancient-ways.org and www.crisisgroup.org (enter "Zimbabwe" in Reports by Country link).

I sincerely hope that what we are doing with

the children in our care will one day lead to a better world for all, a world of cooperation and connection. In the meantime, I am doing what I can to raise awareness (hence this mention), and to financially contribute to those who are working to bring aid to these and other situations where so many children are so vulnerable.

Rudolf Steiner said in Lecture Three of *The Study of Man*, particularly in relation to younger children: "Education demands a connection in the teacher's soul with the highest ideas of humanity. . . " — like compassion, empathy, and helping those in need.

To close, I offer a section of a Wendell Berry poem entitled "To A Siberian Woodsman." One can easily replace the Siberia and the Kentucky of the poem with any number of locales throughout the world.

I have thought of you stepping out of your doorway at dawn,
your son in your tracks.
You go in under the overarching green branches of the forest
whose ways, strange to me, are well known to you as the sound
of your own voice
or the silence that lies around you now that you have ceased to speak,
and soon the voice of the stream rises ahead of you,
and you take the path beside it.
I have thought of the sun breaking pale through the mists over you
as you come to the pool where you will fish, and of the mist drifting
over the water, and of the cast fly resting light on the face of the pool.

And I am here in Kentucky in the place I have made myself
in the world. I sit on my porch above the river that flows muddy
and slow along the feet of the trees. I hear the voices of the wren
and the yellow-throated warbler whose songs pass near the windows
and over the roof. In my house my daughter learns the womanhood
of her mother. My son is at play, pretending to be
the man he believes I am. I am the outbreathing of this ground.
My words are its words as the wren's song is its song.

Who has invented our enmity? Who has prescribed us
hatred of each other? Who has armed us against each other
with the death of the world? Who has appointed me such anger
that I should desire the burning of your house or the
destruction of your children?
Who has appointed such anger to you? Who has set loose the thought
that we should oppose each other with the ruin of forests and
rivers, and the silence of the birds?
Who has said to us that the voices of my land shall be strange
to you, and the voices of your land strange to me?

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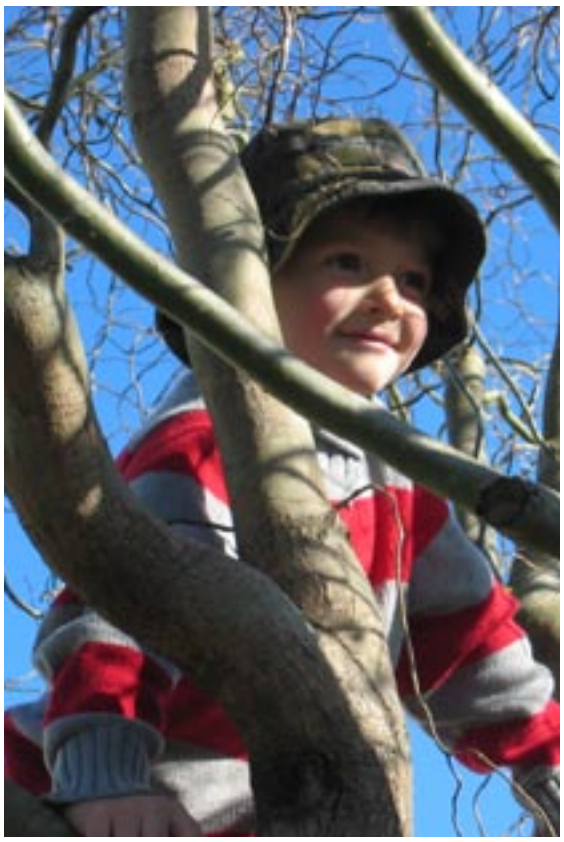

Photo courtesy of Stephen Spitalny