

From the Editor

— Nancy Blanning

The first lecture of *Study of Man* (now also published as *The Foundations of Human Experience*) always strikes me as the early childhood educators' chapter. Rudolf Steiner describes how the little child comes into physical life from a pre-earthly, spiritual existence. In the spiritual world from which he descends, the individuality has accomplished all he can for development there and resolves to come to earth to continue the journey. Steiner emphasizes that we must

be conscious that physical existence here is a continuation of the spiritual, and that we, through education, have to carry on what has hitherto been done by higher beings without our participation. This alone will give us the right mood and feeling to our whole system of teaching and education, if we fill ourselves with the consciousness: here, in this human being, you, with your action, have to achieve a continuation of what higher beings have done before his birth (Rudolf Steiner, *Study of Man*, Rudolf Steiner Press, 1996, page 17).

This provides us with the foundational picture of a kindergarten birthday story. A little child feels called to leave the heavenly garden, choose parents, and come to play and learn with family and friends, old and new. Human beings want to grow in all dimensions. That growth is supported by love and acceptance, security in the care and nurturing of those around him. The children seek challenges and strive to explore, supported by our attentive consciousness. They come to earth to develop capacities and skills through having new experiences in this lifetime. We celebrate whenever they achieve new physical, cognitive, and social/emotional milestones. Yet Steiner emphasizes that as educators “we have to carry on what has hitherto been done by higher beings without our participation.”

In other words, we are charged to continue the work of the angels. And what is the angels' work? The angels share imaginations and pictures of goodness, beauty, and truth, which are objective realities in the spiritual world. The new human being comes seeking

these on earth as well. The spiritual and earthly worlds are reflections of one another. The little child comes with earnest anticipation that she will find resonance between the heavenly home she has left behind and her new earthly world. When that harmony between heaven and earth is experienced, then the child can rejoice in knowing that all is one; spirit lives in matter; as above, so below. There is heaven on earth. She can celebrate that she has made the right choice in coming to us because she experiences earthly life as a continuation.

The angelic hierarchies share imaginations and pictures in the spiritual world. As Waldorf educators we know that we, too, share pictures and imaginations with our children that link them with their previous experience in the spiritual world. Through story, puppet play, nursery rhyme, and song, we offer pictures to support the child stepping into earthly life. This issue of *Gateways*, dedicated to Storytelling and Puppetry, is a festive sharing of these gifts. We have little stories and vignettes that picture how people work and play through each day in practical ways. These are guideposts for the children, models for the child “apprentice-to-life” to imitate. You will find some delightful examples in this issue.

Our major contributors go deeper as well. For our stories to link heaven and earth, they must be true. You will find the word “archetype” mentioned many times in the following pages. The dictionary defines “archetype” as “the original pattern” or “perfect example of a group of a type.” We can also think of this word as referring to images in stories that truthfully link heaven and earth. Rudolf Steiner describes that “in the spiritual world, these archetypes exist for all things; physical things and beings are copies or imitations of their archetypes.”

Archetypes are imaginations of the angels. There exist archetypal images for the prince and princess, lion, simpleton, and so on. The world of fairy tales is populated with archetypes that we can study and learn from. As we select and compose stories, the images

we use must be a truthful reflection between worlds. The articles that await you speak to this task and responsibility. Susan Perrow, therapeutic story writer and international workshop facilitator, writes of “The Mystery and Magic of Metaphor” as a reassuring and potentially healing encouragement for each child on her path to incarnation. Janene Ping, kindergarten colleague and puppeteer, guides us into the world of Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition as we enter the domain of story and puppetry. Suzanne Down shares her expertise as puppeteer and puppetry trainer with an excerpt from her forthcoming book, a consideration of the worker character as archetype. Jennifer Aguirre, an accomplished “puppetry apron” performer, shares a delightful picture with us of how to bring this form of puppetry in a very practical way. Estelle Bryer of South Africa is a puppeteer with decades of experience in a context so different from North America. Some of her fascinating biography is shared in an excerpt from the WECAN publication, *The Rainbow Puppet Theatre Book*. A short puppet play from the book is also included for your enjoyment.

Then we switch focus to a different consideration of “story.” Pamela Perkins, Waldorf educator, home-care provider, and now Waldorf grandmother, shares an excerpt from a longer research paper that pictures how our relationship to story (and the most profound story for each one of us is our individual human biography) begins in the womb. She recounts the great journey of going from sound perception to meaning to picturing so language can be a vehicle for us to re-encounter the archetype in story.

Story needs to be truthful but can also be amusing and entertaining. Song is often story. Included is a song shared by Jill McCormick of the Santa Fe Waldorf School. With this story song, a physically bump-tious, tearful encounter during clean up time was turned into a stabilizing and healing moment.

In each issue we also want to acknowledge and learn from our Waldorf colleagues internationally.

Louise deForest takes us into the world of Ak Lu’um International School in the jungle of the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. A “green” school based on ecological principles has developed out of dedication and a will to accomplish much with few resources.

The Spring 2014 issue of *Gateways* will focus upon the element of “story” from another perspective. The story we all carry with us is the human biography. This most fascinating tale of all begins even before conception—as our kindergarten birthday story reflects—and unfolds through the seven years we have the children in our care. The child is a continuous story of development, as one moment prepares for and supports the next. The continuous thread of this unfolding is the next story that *Gateways* wants to follow. We invite contributions that will describe our children in their stages of growth from birth up through the transition into grade school. Please share your experiences and insights with infants, toddlers, nursery and kindergarten aged children, and rising first graders. The more we understand where the child has come from and what we are helping him move toward, the stronger and more embracing can be our teaching.

Outside of our Waldorf community, storytelling and puppetry can be looked upon as something sweet, perhaps even quaint in comparison to the technological, sophisticated images that engulf us today. Why would we want to hang on to these rather old-fashioned means when other things more alluring in their complexity can be instantaneously accessed? As Waldorf educators we want more than to teach testable content or to entertain. We are charged to help the children find the truthful archetypal images they knew in the spiritual world here on the earth as well. When we share our carefully chosen stories in verse and rhyme, in song and dance, in tale and puppet play, we are striving to continue the work done by beings in the spiritual world. There is nothing quaint or old-fashioned about this. Affirming the links between heaven and earth through story archetype is mighty work. ♦