



The Sophia Sun

Newsletter of the Anthroposophical Society
in North Carolina

December 2009 Volume II, Number 9

The Virtue For December (SAGITTARIUS) CONTROL OF SPEECH BECOMES FEELING FOR TRUTH

(Opposites: GOSSIP, SLANDER, MORALIZING, DOGMA)

*Becoming attains the power to be,
In what is, becoming dies.
Achievement ends striving's desire
In prevailing will-force of life.
In dying, world-being matures,
Forms disappear within forms.
Existence, feel existence!
Rudolf Steiner*



In This Issue...

Advent Study.....	5
Holiday Party.....	7
Advent Spiral Walk.....	8
Holy Nights.....	9-10
From the Board.....	11
Branch Discussion.....	11-12
Parzival and the Mystery of Naming.....	13
News from Tammy in China.....	14
Whitted-Bowers Farm in the News!.....	16
NY Times Praises Waldorf Kindergarten.....	18
Rev. Kennedy's November Talk.....	20
Reflections on the AGM in Spring Valley.....	23
Choreocosmos Workshop.....	27
Carol Brick Offers Painting Workshop.....	28

Logo: "The Woman Clothed With the Sun" by Baron Arild Rosenkrantz (1870-1964)

ASNC and Initiatives, Dec 1 -31, 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
For information about events, or to add events for upcoming months, please email: lfolsom@nc.rr.com , or phone Linda Folsom at (919) 493-8323, or mail to 3118 Dixon Rd, Durham, NC 27707. Next calendar will be in February 2010. Items for that calendar should be sent by January 20, 2010.						
		1	2 Rose Cross Study Group-7:15p	3 Asheville Steiner Study Group-7p	4	5 EWS Holiday Faire
6 Advent study 4p Asheville Soul-weaving Study Group-2p Fifth Gospel Study Group-3:30p W/S-YValley SG-6p Greensboro SG-7p	7 ASNC Festivals Committee-7:15p	8	9 Rose Cross Study Group-7:15p Biodynamic Study Group-7p Wilmington Study Group-7:30p	10 Asheville Biodynamic Study Group	11 NDE course-Transformed into Life Winter Concert At EWS 6:30	12 Advent Spiral of Light at EWS 5 pm
13 Meeting of the First Class-10:45a (Review-9:30a) Advent Study 4p Fifth Gospel Study Group-3:30p W/S-YValley SG-6 Greensboro SG-7p	14 Santa Lucia at EWS	15	16 Rose Cross Study Group-7:15p Wilmington Study Group-7:30p	17 Asheville Steiner Study Group-7p	18 Shepherd's Play at EWS 10:30 am Advent Spiral 8p	19 ASNC Holiday Party at the home of Judy Frey 6p
20 Advent Study 4p Fifth Gospel Study Group-3:30p W/S-YValley SG-6 Greensboro SG-	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Holy Night at the Farm	25 Christmas Holy Night Ch 1	26 Holy Night Ch 2
27 Holy Night Ch 3	28 Holy Night Ch 4	29 Holy Night Ch 5	30 Holy Night Ch 6	31 Holy Night Three Kings Prep	January 1 2010 Chapter 7	2 Holy Night Ch 8

Calendar Details: December 2009

ASNC

Dec 7, 7:15p – **ASNC Festivals Committee** meets at the home of Margareta Bornhorst. Please join us if you are interested in continuing to bring the Festivals to our community. Call Margareta at 824-7337.

Dec 13, 9:30a – **The School for Spiritual Science, Meeting of First Class.** Review of last lesson at 9:30a, 10:30 AM Class Lesson. For more information please contact Suzanne Mays at 919-929-1073 or mays@ieee.org.

Dec 16, 7:15pm - **ASNC Board Meeting** – Meeting at the home of Board President Peg Carmody; for more details contact Peg Carmody, (919) 537-8142 or mcarmody@nc.rr.com

Christian Community

Mon Jan 11 - Next Christian Community **Steering Committee meeting** at the home of Linda Finigan.

Jan 22-24 – Gathering of The Christian Community. Patrick Kennedy will be here from DC/Baltimore for a weekend of fellowship. All events are free and take place at the New Hope Camp (Fleming Building and Oak Room) at 4805 Highway 86 in Chapel Hill. On Saturday evening Jan 23 Reverend Patrick Kennedy will present a public talk, with the topic to be announced. We will celebrate the *The Act of Consecration of Man* on Sunday Jan 24 10:30am. A Children's Story Hour begins at 9:30am. A community potluck will begin at 12:00 Noon. For information, email christiancommunity.nc@earthlink.net

EWS – check website at emersonwaldorf.org for details and updates

Dec 5, 10a - 4p - Holiday Faire.

Dec 11, 5p - 9p - Winter Music Concert at the United Church of Christ in Chapel Hill

Dec. 12 – Advent Spiral of Light – 5 PM

Dec. 14 – Santa Lucia Celebration

Dec. 18 – Shepherd's Play 10:30 AM

Other Activities of Interest

NDE –

NDE Study Group - Our meetings for the remainder of the year will be: December 15, January 12, February 9, March 2, April 6, May 11, and June 8. At the home of Robert and Suzanne Mays, 5622 Brisbane Dr, a few miles north of Chapel Hill, just north of I-40, off Mount Sinai Road. For more information, please call us at 919-929-1073 or mays@ieee.org.

Choreochosmos:

Jan. 10, 2010 - "The Foundation Stone of Love", 1p – 5p at the EWS Eurythmy Room. Talks and Movement with Kelly Calegar . For questions or more information, call Kelly Calegar, 919-361-0691 or visit www.eastcoastschoolofchoreoccosmos.com

Please Note

Updates on events may be publicized by sending out an email to the asnc list serve: asnc-list@rtpnet.org.

Please go to the ASNC website to learn how to join the list serve so that you will receive up-dates and events:

<http://anthroposophync.org/mailman/listinfo/asnc-list>

Study Groups:

Asheville Study Groups:

Steiner Study Group – 1st and 3rd Thursday's, 7-9pm. We are reading *Theosophy*. Contact Marie Davis at 828-273-5647

Soul-Weaving Study Group for parents - 1st Sunday of the month, 2-4pm.

Biodynamic reading group - 2nd Thursday, reading group (book to be determined) and 4th Saturday 10-12am hands on in garden.

Basic Books Study group – Mondays at 7 PM at the home of Margaretta and Bruce Bornhorst, 5800 Prioress Dr., Durham; currently reading *Occult Science*; call 824-7337 for more information.

Biodynamic Study Group – The Biodynamic Study Group meets twice a month: the first Wednesday at 7 pm to read, and on the last Saturday of the month at 10 am for work mornings. Tatjana Zybin, (919) 643-2663, or tzybin@att.net

Child's Needs Study Group – meets 10-12am one Sat. per month; currently reading *The First Seven Years: Physiology of Childhood* by Edmond Schoorel – call Lauren Mills for more details: 968-7721, or mills.lauren@gmail.com

Greensboro Study Group - Sunday nights, 7 pm. Currently reading Steiner's *Fifth Gospel*. Contact Sandy LaGrega (336) 292-7947 or Judy Boyd (336) 454-2451.

Pittsboro Study group – focuses on the social question. We will be reading *Spiritual Science as Foundation for Social Forms*. The group meets at the home of Jeff Barney at 760 Millbrook Dr., Pittsboro on Sundays at 6:30 PM. Contact Jeff Barney for more information at 919-260-0066 or email Jeff at ethicindiv@yahoo.com

Rose Cross Study Group – Wednesdays, 1:30pm, at the home of Judy Granberry, 95133 Vance Knoll, Chapel Hill, NC 27517, phone 967-4671 or at the home of Judy Frey 55207 Broughton, Chapel Hill 27515, phone 928-8749. Newcomers are welcome! We are reading Steiner's lectures on Faust. Please give Judy Frey a call before attending to check the group location and time for that week.

Fifth Gospel Study Group – Sundays at 3pm, at the home of Martha and Dirk Kelder, 120 Kenan Street, Chapel Hill. Phone: 942-4795. The Sunday Group is reading *The Fifth Gospel*, by Rudolf Steiner. We hope that everyone will feel welcome to join us.

Wilmington Study Group – The group is currently not meeting; however if you wish to start a group please contact Anna Bowman, (910) 792-0959

Winston-Salem-Yadkin Valley Study Group – The Winston-Salem-Yadkin Valley Study Group meets from 6-8 every Sunday at the home of Sarah Putnam, 7719 Whitehorse Dr, Clemmons, NC. The group is studying *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*. This group reads all the basic books and is now reading them in earlier translations/ editions, as a way of studying them in more depth. Call 336-972-8243 or 336-766-5445 for information and directions.

ADVENT SUNDAYS WILL BE HOSTED BY ROGER SCHULTZ



Advent began on Sunday November 29, at the home of Shannon O'Connor. The next three Advent Sundays will be at Roger Schultz's home (5624 Earl Rd. in Durham). Plan to arrive between 4:00 and 4:30. There will be readings and discussions followed by a dinner which Roger will provide, but would appreciate donations to help cover the cost. Keep posted to the list-serve for more details. Roger writes about the plan for the Advent Study this year:

"We invite all to help us enliven our experience of the Advent season, in line with indications provided by Prokofieff in his *Cycle of the Year*.

For four weeks we will try to nurture and develop our understanding of how opposing forces work in our soul to hinder our experience of this most wonderful season. We will also explore those qualities or virtues that enable us to resist such attacks.

Each week, however, the study will depend on those who come, and what they bring with them to share or discuss. This may range from personal experiences related to the soul conditions or qualities indicated, to literature illustrating them. What we wish to accomplish is to enliven our individual awareness of these soul workings as they work in each of us. We do not strive for an esoteric study as such, but to use esoteric understanding to enliven an experiential, inwardly experienced, approach to the season. Please email me at rms333@nc.rr.com if you would like the materials from which we will be working during our Advent study."

Advent Study Format:

Opening Verse
Discussion circle of week's experiences
Preview of coming week
Closing verse

1st week –Trials of the Physical Body and the Physical World

At the first meeting, we will consider the danger of identifying ourselves with the objects we surround ourselves with, and with a thinking derived from the physical world. For, if we do so, our sense of self would fall away from its source as leaves do in autumn.

We will reflect how the study of spiritual science gives us concepts gleaned from the spiritual world, enabling us to see ourselves as spiritual beings.

Virtue: Taking hold of oneself as a spiritual being

Danger: Identifying our self with our physical needs and a conception of self that is drawn wholly from the physical world

Challenge: Resurrection of our thinking; awakening to our spiritual heritage.

2nd week- Trials of the Etheric Body

During the second meeting, we will take up the theme of despair, the heavy, world-weary despair that grounds, immobilizes, and freezes us, a despair before life and world that threatens to stupefy our soul and spirit.

To counteract this pervasive despair, we will try to cultivate a sense of justice within ourselves; a sense that the world is just, that all that happens is in accord with the intentions of the spiritual world.

Virtue: Justice, world justice; (karma, acceptance of one's destiny and of the world events into which one is born)

Danger: Illusions borne to us by inner and outer perceptions; world weary despair

Challenge: Uprightness; to maintain our bearing before the world; to see the spiritual foundations of all life

3rd week – Trials of the Astral Body (the Soul)

When we meet during the third week, we will attempt to become aware of how self-love and immoderate desires work to obscure our experience of soul and spirit in the world. Immoderate desires are ones that subtly enchant us into a life of ease and comfort and habit – not the desires of passion that are more transitory and exhausting; as Prokofieff describes this situation: "...a boundlessly expanding sea of poisonous plants." What appears innocuous may have far reaching, deadening, and soul altering effects.

Counteracting this requires temperance before the world's in reaching into our soul, and prudence with respect to our own outreaching; thereby we maintain an inner balance.

Virtue: Temperance and prudence; maintenance of inner balance

Danger: One-sided tendencies; proliferation of one's inner life; immoderate desires; self-love

Challenge: Self-control; to prove that one can move with certainty and freedom in both higher and lower worlds; to serve divine power

4th Trials of the Ego at the Threshold

In the fourth meeting, we will consider how our passions, fears, and anxieties divert us from a truly fulfilling experience of this special season. As Prokofieff says of our soul tendencies during this time, we may become like "the rapacious eagle, the roaring lion, the angry bull". This often then leads us to self-delusion and deceitfulness as we fear to face the real, spiritual significance of our actions, feelings, and thoughts.

Cultivating courage as we face the world, and presence of mind within ourselves, enables us to 'hold on to ourselves', to unite the soul strivings that otherwise threaten to tear us asunder. United, whole, we are then better prepared to live into the mood of His coming.

Virtue: Presence of mind; courage

Danger: Passions (will), fears (feeling), anxieties (thinking); lack of unity in soul life; inability to face oneself honestly; deceitfulness

Challenge: To listen instantly to the spirit in all things; to find a single, firm point in oneself

4th week preview

Finally, during the last Advent week, as Christ draws near, we will consider the ordinary conception of our self as this arises from our experiences and is held together by this memory of our physical experiences. We will try to understand how this very conception and memory can hinder our recognition of the coming Christ and His meaning for us.

However, through wisdom, a wisdom penetrating both physical and spiritual realities, we can learn to recognize and realize ourselves as fellow spiritual beings in Christ. We will try to recognize the wisdom streaming into the ordinary events of our lives that reveals our higher purpose and nature, wherein we recognize our spiritual origin. Then we can unite our earthly, micro-cosmic being with His heavenly, macro-cosmic one; unite our earthly memory with His cosmic memory.

Virtue: Wisdom (of the higher self)

Danger: Illusions of self

(as in materialism - I am my physical body - and mysticism)

Challenge: To rise from the earthbound lower self and personal memory to the higher self and world (cosmic) memory (draughts of forgetfulness and remembrance)



JUDY FREY TO HOST OUR ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

All are invited to the Annual ASNC Holiday Party, which will be at Judy and Doug Frey's beautiful new home on Saturday, December 19 at 6 pm. It will be a Pot Luck. Judy's address is: 55207 Broughton in Governor's Club in Chapel Hill. This will be a purely fun event - no Studies. There will not be a gift exchange. In lieu of gifts, please bring some canned or boxed food, which will be taken to a state Food Pantry to feed the poor. For more information, please contact Judy at 919-928-8749 or email her at: damaris12@nc.rr.com

**ADVENT SPIRAL WALK
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2009
7:30 PM
AT THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN HOME NURSERY
3928 HOPE VALLEY RD.
DURHAM, NC 27707**

Young and old are invited to this beautiful, reverent tradition, also known as the Advent Garden, which has been held in Waldorf Schools around the world for over 80 years. A spiral of evergreens is arranged in a room adorned with crystals and other treasures of nature, at the center of which is a lit candle. Each participant walks one at a time with an apple that has a candle in it to the center where their candle is lit from the central Candle. As he/she leaves the spiral, he/she places the lit apple somewhere along the path. Gentle music will accompany the walkers. Cookies and warm cider will follow the celebration.

For more information, call Marie Nordgren at 544-9184 or email her at: amnordgren@aol.com. Parking note: If the circular driveway is full, please park across the street in Cardinal Drive.

THE ORIGIN OF ADVENT GARDENS

You will find that there are many articles about Waldorf Advent Gardens (also known as Advent Spirals) on the Internet if you do a Search; however, virtually every article states that the origin is unknown. Not so! In my own personal file of Festival articles, I found a March 1988 article by Helen Eugster entitled "The Advent Garden" in a European Curative Education magazine (*Heilpädagogik*). In it she cites a 1944 article that appeared in Ita Wegman's *Fondsblatt* entitled "Celebrating Advent with Children". In it, two co-workers (Johanna Russ and Frida Knauer) from the Sonnenhof Camphill Village in Switzerland report on their reminiscences about how it originated. All concur that it was brought to the Sonnenhof sometime between 1925 and 1927 (the date 1925 seems to have the most evidence to support it.) by a nurse known as Sister Gustel Wetzel, who said that she had adapted the idea from an Advent custom of Bavarian farmers. Gustel apparently married a Weleda worker and moved to the USA where all contact with her was lost. The coworkers would have asked her more about the custom if they knew how to contact her. Word about this magical celebration soon spread to Waldorf schools and Christian Communities where it was quickly adopted and spread throughout the world.

In some communities, a special story is told at the beginning of the spiral walk; in others an angel dressed all in white stands at the center of the spiral, reminiscent of the angel at the gates of Paradise. The Angel often accompanies small children into the spiral, so they will not be afraid. The favorite song to accompany the walk is Edmund Pracht's "Over Stars is Mary Wandering". "What Child is This?" is another favorite. Ideally, lyre music should accompany the ritual. The most elaborate Advent Garden I have experienced personally was at the Fellowship Community in Spring Valley. There, a huge spiral is created with 2-3- foot tree stumps adorned with large pine branches and magnificent crystal cluster formations. The effect is absolutely magical and very healing to all who witness it. If you have never been to an Advent garden, do put it on your list of things you must experience. It may be the most awe-inspiring event you have ever seen.

THE HOLY NIGHTS TRADITION AND A SPECIAL REQUEST

Each year for the last 16 years, our community has been gathering together during the Holy Nights for Study and fellowship. Why do we make this effort? Briefly, because it is the holiest time of the year, a time most conducive to meditation and inner work. During them, we commemorate the journey from Jesus to Christ: the Holy Nights commence with the birth of Jesus the man (Christmas) and end with the Birth of Christ the Redeemer (Epiphany – the Baptism at Jordan).

This journey leads us through the 12 constellations of the zodiac as well. Each day of the Holy Nights is paired with a month of the year and Steiner has said that each of the Holy Nights foreshadows the mood of the corresponding month. There is, however some discrepancy as to which day corresponds to which month. Some believe that Christmas Day corresponds to the sign of Aries and the signs proceed from there; while others hold that Christmas corresponds to Pisces and that the signs work backward. William Bento recommends a third view: that Christmas corresponds with Capricorn and the signs proceed forward.

It is important to note however, that the most solemn day of all the Holy Nights is the one right in the middle – December 31, New Year's Eve, which should be called The Christ Festival Day. Unfortunately, the materialistic world-at-large has made this eve into a time of luciferic revelry. How sad that this most important day is by-passed by the majority of mankind! It is the most auspicious night of the year for offering up one's spiritual intentions to the Spiritual Worlds. This year, Dec. 31 occurs at the Full Moon, so it is especially conducive to meditation.

Because of the sacredness of these 12 nights, our ASNC Board is making a special request this year: In your thoughts and meditations, please think about our Branch - who is our guiding Being, what are the spiritual impulses our community wishes to bring to birth? It is especially beneficial to have such thoughts before going to sleep while asking the spiritual worlds guidance in this regard. Perhaps in one's dream life, inspirational thoughts about this will result. One practice you might like to take up during the Holy Nights is to keep a spiritual journal. Those who are inclined might like to paint or draw each day as well as write.

This year our community has chosen *The Gospel According to St. John* by Rudolf Steiner as the book for Study. Reading the actual Gospel to accompany it is highly recommended. This is the fourth year that we have chosen to work with a book rather than each household doing their own thing. The hosts are, of course, free to present the material and anything extra in whatever style they choose. Those who cannot attend the Holy Nights are encouraged to read on their own to be with us in spirit. The *St. John Gospel* is an especially important one. Following this article is the schedule of host homes for the Holy Nights. It is a good idea to phone the host beforehand, so they know how many to prepare for. All are welcome. Don't feel shy about attending if you have missed some of the Nights. It doesn't matter whether you attend one or 12. Naturally, the more one puts into an endeavor, the more one gets out of it. Hope to see you at the Holy Nights!

***If in your heart you make
A manger for his birth,
Then God will once again
Become a child on earth.***

-Angelius Silesius

HOLY NIGHTS SCHEDULE

Thursday December 24 Christmas Eve	4p - 8p	<p style="text-align: center;">Come one! Come All!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Celebrate the first of the Holy Nights at Infinity Farm. Sing Christmas carols to the cows and goats and sheep and learn about the significance of this tradition. Afterwards everyone has mulled cider, hot soup and bread. Children take home a homemade ornament. Please bring the whole family!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Joy and Bob Kwapien and Adam Gori Infinity Farm, 1600 McDade Store Road, Cedar Grove 732-1840</p>
Friday December 25 Christmas Day	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 1, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Kathleen and Bob Wright 4615 Greenglen Rd Durham, NC 27705 c-672-0149, h-309-9622</p>
Saturday December 26	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 2, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Roger Schultz 5624 Earl Rd. Durham, NC 27712 475-7180</p>
Sunday December 27	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 3, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Shannon O'Connor 4817 Mt. Sinai Rd. Durham, NC 27705 259-5252</p>
Mon December 28	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 4, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Judy Frey 55207 Broughton, Chapel Hill 928-8749</p>
Tuesday December 29	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 5, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Marie Nordgren 3928 Hope Valley Rd. Durham, NC 27707 824-8748</p>
Wed December 30	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 6, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Peg Carmody 11 Bolin Heights Chapel Hill, NC 919-537-8142</p>
Thursday December 31 New Year's Eve	9p - 12:30a	<p style="text-align: center;">Making of the Three Kings Prep Stargaze around a fire while mixing the THREE KINGS PREP (gold, frankincense and myrrh) and discussing Prokofieff's "The Cycle of the Year As a Path of Initiation", chapter on Advent/Christmas. Please bring light hors d'oeuvres.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Joy and Bob Kwapien Adam Gori Infinity Farm 1600 McDade Store Road, Cedar Grove 732-1840</p>
Friday January 1 New Year's Day	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 7, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Bruce and Margaretta Bornhorst 5800 Prioress Drive, Durham, NC 27712 824-7337 (cell)</p>
Saturday January 2	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 8, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Barbara Cain 111 Steele St Durham, NC 27707 360-8509</p>
Sunday January 3	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 9, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Linda Folsom 3118 Dixon Rd, Durham, NC 27707 493-8323</p>
Monday January 4	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 10, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner Please join the Mays when they light the candles on their tree.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suzanne and Robert Mays 5622 Brisbane Dr. Chapel Hill, NC 929-1073</p>
Tuesday January 5	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 11, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Judy Granberry 95133 Vance Knoll Chapel Hill, NC 27517 967-4671</p>
Wednesday January 6 Epiphany	2p - 4p	<p style="text-align: center;">Spraying of Three King's Prep Meet at the barn. Wear good walking shoes. Depending on how many come it will take about 2 hours or less</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Joy and Bob Kwapien and Adam Gori Infinity Farm, 1600 McDade Store Road, Cedar Grove, 732-1840</p>
	7p	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 12, <u>The Gospel of St John</u> by Rudolf Steiner</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Margaret Heath – hostess At the home of Linda Folsom 3118 Dixon Rd, Durham, NC 27707 493-8323</p>

From the Board:

At the November 14 Branch meeting, we built a very full picture of our community. I was touched by the warmth and depth of feeling that was shared. We would like to see two things come out of this conversation: The first, that we start putting together a good history of our community. Kathleen Wright and Hank Passafero have volunteered to help with this endeavor. Watch for developments next year in this process. We will be putting out a call for any old documents you might have about conferences, guests, newsletters. If you want to keep them also, please send us copies, as we will not return what is sent. We will have a couple of 'sorting sessions' to organize what comes in. Many hands will make light work-and maybe some fun while we do this. When we have seen what we have, we will decide how best to store it and display it. The second idea is that we hope you can hold our work together in your meditations, especially during the Holy Nights, and see what comes to you, especially in regards to our name and the beings working with us. We are not suggesting that these things be discussed at the Holy Night gatherings. We will ask at our next Branch meeting if anyone was able to do this and to share if anything did come to them if they wish. We hope your holidays this month are meaningful, love-filled and joyful. See you soon!

Warmly,
Peg Carmody

BRANCH MEMBERS DISCUSS THE CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR BRANCH

On November 14, 2009, thirteen Branch members and a guest gathered for a warm, lively, reverent and sometimes irreverently-humorous discussion about our branch. Members went around the circle after having been asked to come up with a word, a phrase or an imagination that characterizes our community. This is in preparation for deciding on a name for our branch.

The one virtue that kept coming up was the great love, compassion, and strong heart forces we have here. We all seem to come together when there is a crisis to help those in need. Others expressed the gratefulness they have felt for the support they have received. It was noted that we come from all parts of the country and have very diverse backgrounds. The vast majority of us are getting old; most are well over 50 and the concern for needing younger members is strongly felt.

Other virtues that were observed: "faithfulness" to one another, that we have been together for so many years now and have stuck together through thick and thin. A number of people voiced the idea that although many members have moved away over the years so many have moved back. Again and again, the idea that we have great warmth, friendship and patience in spite of having had difficulties with each other was expressed.

Another word that was repeated was how "grateful" we feel for one another, how well we "talk" to one another, how so many visitors have said how impressed they are with this aspect of our community.

One member noted that our community is approximately 28 years old, the time of the Saturn return. Old Karma is now burned away and the feeling of this prevails. We see it in our humor with one another and how we look out for those in need. He reminded us that Steiner told the members of his time that they were not yet meant to be esotericists, that they had to work out their Karma with one another first; then in the next

lifetime they would be able to work together. That same feeling pervades our community. We have spent 28 years burning and balancing the old Karma. Now we are ready to do real work.

Another described an imagination Steiner gave to illustrate the situation that handicapped persons are in, that really describes us all: Imagine that a concert pianist has been invited to give a performance. But when he arrives at the concert hall, he finds that he has been given a piano with many broken keys – how can he do what he has been asked to do? The piano is of course the physical body; the pianist the Individuality. So many of us have that feeling that there are so many blocks to our fulfilling our mission, that we cannot be who we really are, that we are unrecognized, unappreciated, and in many ways “damaged”. There has been so much physical and mental suffering for most of us. So many have expressed over the years that they feel like “prophets unaccepted in their own land”. Many, if not most, moved here because of dreams of working for Anthroposophy. At least 10-20 have had their hearts broken, dreams shattered from being rejected in some way by Anthroposophical institutions (the Waldorf school, Christian community or even the community at large). It sometimes feels like this is a “required” test on the Path of Initiation - that one is in some way rejected by the thing he feels most drawn to in Anthroposophy. In spite of this, we stay and find other niches. Some are still searching. Like so many others said, she feels that all this points to our next life together being so much better. As one other put it, we are all going through the “refiner’s fire” this time.

Other members spoke of our connection with the Michaelic angels and how Anthroposophy is really all about relationships with spiritual beings, incarnate and discarnate.

Another member likened Anthroposophy to a river that we have all been coming to - it is always there, yet ever-changing.

One noted that we are not “shy” about expressing our opinions; yet how good we are at getting along after “blowups”; we have learned not to take things personally. We have learned tolerance and understanding.

Our guest Joanna Carey, noted what “great orators” we have in the community; but lest we get too swelled heads, things we need to work on were spoken of as well. Several noted that we tend to have events for ourselves only. There is not enough outreach to the world at large, especially in trying to reach folks 20-40 years of age. We need to have a stronger impetus to bring our work into the world.

Our conversation will continue in the next few months as we aspire to understand our community’s higher purpose and the Spiritual Being(s) who is(are) working with us.

- Kathleen Wright

The soul's eye mirrors,
The earth's light of hope:

The world's holy wisdom
Speaks to human hearts.

The father's eternal Love
Sends the Son to earth

Who, full of grace, gives
Heaven's brightness to humanity's way.

Rudolf Steiner, from a notebook 1914

Parzival and the Mystery of Naming

By Edward Scholdt

As I have entreated you, dear reader, so was Parzival entreated not to leave the safety of his home; but he disregarded these entreaties and set out blithely on his way. He comes then, near the end of a day of misadventures, to a woman sitting on the ground and holding a dead knight in her lap. Until this moment, Parzival has not known who he is; now he encounters the being who will name him his name.

We know Parzival's name before he does; what we may not know, however, is that "Parzival" is the name given to any human being who follows the Grail Quest, just as "Arthur" was the name given to the human beings who led the taming of European astrality. The story of Parzival given by Wolfram von Eschenbach at the turn of the 12th century sets forth the path opened by the first Parzival and that each Parzival since then has followed—that you will follow, if you persist in the foolhardiness from which you still have the chance to turn.

Who is this being, then, who names us our spiritual name? Until now, Parzival has not thought at all about his name. His mother has called him "good son, fair son, dear son"—and the thought that these are not his true name has never occurred to him. Now he comes riding through the forest and sees Sigune, sorrowing and lamenting, holding the dead Schionatulander in her lap. Sigune asks him: "Who are you?"

Sigune has not seen Parzival since his birth. She grew up under the guardianship of her aunt, Herzeleide, Parzival's mother, after her own mother had died, long before Parzival's birth. Sigune is Parzival's elder cousin. She met Schionatulander when he was squire for Gahmuret, Parzival's father. After the death of Gahmuret in battle in present-day Iraq, Schionatulander returned to Europe to take stewardship of the lands over which Gahmuret and Herzeleide ruled. It was in defense of those lands that Schionatulander has been killed.

Schionatulander's death comes fifteen years after the birth of Parzival. When Parzival is born, two weeks after the death of Gahmuret, Herzeleide decides to withdraw into the forest of Soltane. This will make it possible for her to protect her son from the destiny his father suffered; and so she forbids her courtiers to mention any of three things to Parzival: God, because she blames God for her suffering; knighthood, because she does not want Parzival to become a knight; and his name. She forbids her courtiers to name Parzival his name because she knows that hearing his name will awaken in Parzival a memory of his spiritual task, and he will leave her to follow that task.

Nevertheless, when Parzival is fifteen, he does learn about God and knighthood. He determines to leave Soltane and seek knighthood for himself. Herzeleide realizes she cannot stop Parzival from going, but burdens him with advice she hopes will prevent him from taking up his spiritual task.

Now, however, Parzival is about to hear his name. Sigune asks him: "Who are you?" Parzival gives the only answer he knows: "*Bon fils, beau fils, cher fils*, my mother calls me."

Through the darkness of her grief a light shines for Sigune. She recognizes Parzival by the timbre of his voice: it is the same as Sigune's. "I know you," she tells him. "You are Parzival."

Now the die is cast. Although he is not yet aware of it, Parzival will be drawn ineluctably into the Quest for the Grail. He will rail against his fate, he will curse God,

but he will not be able to escape. He will become aware that he should have asked the Question and did not, he will become aware of his other misdeeds and the suffering they have caused, and with his growing awareness will come a steady increase in his own suffering. This is Parzival's path.

It is a path Parzival would not have followed had he stayed at home and not heard his name. We live our lives for the most part unaware of our true name and not knowing its power; and thank goodness, or we would find ourselves beset by the same trials and suffering through which Parzival had to pass.

NEWS FROM TAMMY IN CHINA

The first part of this letter was received by air mail from Tammy. It begins with a reference to her Michaelmas adventure in Vietnam with her friend Suong.

November 22, 2009

Dear Friends:

Hello and thank you for your support. I deeply appreciate it. These last 3 months have been very interesting ones and very meaningful as well.

The month I spent with Suong was helpful for our friendship and working relationship. She is much more isolated in her work than we are in China. China's Waldorf movement is growing so fast and foreign teachers are frequently visiting. Now I am looking for ways to bring Suong in touch with China, so she can feel more community support. Recently, about 3,000 dollars was raised in China to support the Tho Trang Kindergarten. Friends of Waldorf Education is willing to support a visit to Hong Kong and Southern China where Suong could visit many kindergartens, which have a similar landscape and climate to Vietnam.

Since returning to China, I have begun to travel and consult at different kindergartens. My last year at the kindergarten in Beijing didn't allow me so much time to visit other kindergartens. I've been to Shenzhen and Zhuhai in Guangdong province. I went to Haikou on Hainan Island, a new kindergarten that cares for many two-year-olds. They are very busy! Tomorrow I'll visit Guangzhou's kindergarten and grade school. This week I'll accompany an old friend/journalist as he looks at the high school system in Shenzhen.

Later in the month, I'll work with Trudis, German kindergarten teacher. We will support and train the 7 kindergartens in Beijing.

Good wishes for the Holy Nights and the New Year!

P.S. I am sorry I forgot that I wanted to let you know about the Lijang Conference. Many of you supported this work. The days we spent together were very uplifting and positive in terms of personal growth for all of us, I believe. The goal of the conference was to help people take inner work into their lives, and to work with Goethean observation and biodynamic agriculture. The main teacher, Ben Cherry, remarked: "we always talk about a rhythm in our lectures, but we don't achieve it in our workshops, but this time we did." The content of the workshop was concise, and the observation, drawing times and practice concentration times were very valuable. We made a great compost pile for three families combined. The physical beauty of the village lent itself well to creating opportunity for good conversations, good coffee and walks in nature.

The financial support went to the young people who are connected to Partnerships for Community Development, a Hong Kong based non-profit. This organization provides training for farmers, tries to improve methods and practices in the

countryside for sustainable agriculture; it encourages relationships between the country and the city (often in transporting organic good to Waldorf communities to sell.)

As Ben felt he could speak more deeply about spiritual thoughts than in other places in China, I felt we all benefited greatly.

My plan is to check in with participants to see if their lives have changed, or rather have they changed their lives, and do they need more support such as another conference? Thank you again!

December 3, 2009

In just five years the development of Waldorf Education in China is far beyond what I ever anticipated it would be. The school was bitterly cold the first December. The handful of students who weren't the teachers' own children went home early for the Chinese New Year due to the cold. The teachers and staff who were all volunteers stayed together in the made over "countryside fishing vacation resort". Challenges were numerous, but we did have a huge Christmas tree that came out of the field from a near by tree nursery. In the Chinese New Year, teachers went home to warmer places; some to the south and some to the north (where there is heating inside). The following year we had an Advent Spiral. Now in the years following this, schools talk about and often are celebrating Dong Zhi, a traditional Chinese mid-winter festival.

I am happy to report that the Chengdu Waldorf School has finished the licensing process for all three parts of its organization: kindergarten, grade school, and training center. Hundreds of teachers have received training in early childhood, grade school, biodynamics, and curative education. Chengdu, having completed this process, will strengthen the position of the other grade schools (Guang zhou and Beijing) and the numerous kindergartens spread across the country(over 40). The Chengdu Waldorf School now has 100 kindergartners and 80 grade school students.

My work in China continues to be busy, as I am invited to various kindergartens. Many kindergartens are parents in apartments creating an education for their children and many are large centers, which are changing over to Waldorf Education. The sincerity and the warmth of the Chinese is present in all the initiatives.

In Beijing, we are preparing for two visits of coordinators from Freunde's volunteer project and Trudis Bruckner, a teacher trainer. These two visits give the 9 or 10 initiatives in Beijing a chance to work together. The growth in Beijing is so fast that it really is hard for those of us in Beijing to keep up with the development.

The question of accrediting the kindergartens has come up. This task is certainly great. The first small step is to document who is studying and who is working in the kindergartens. We've begun with a Chinese-English form that we can email. This is certainly a new phase in the development!.

Tammy Hughes

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CONGRATULATIONS TO WHITTED BOWERS FARM ON ATTAINING DEMETER CERTIFICATION!

We are delighted to report that the Whitted Bowers Farm was granted Demeter Certification as a biodynamic farm this past September. This requires a long and rigorous process. Their farm is now one of only two biodynamic certified farms in the South – the other being in Tennessee. On October 29, they were further honored by a really great write-up in the *Herald Sun*, which we are happy to reprint below for our readers (for more info check out www.heraldsun.com):

Raskin: Biodynamic farming combines spirit, stewardship

10.29.09

It's October and Rob and Cheri Bowers have been planting blueberries, digging sweet potatoes and tending the Southern heirloom apple trees and grape arbors. They've also been carefully charting the movement of the moon, Mars, Venus, Jupiter and Saturn.



The Bowers run Whitted Bowers Farm in Cedar Grove, the only certified biodynamic farm in North Carolina (and, much of the southeast, actually). Biodynamic farming combines the cosmic influences of the sun, moon, planets and stars with stewardship of the Earth to preserve our planet's vitality and increase people's connection to their food.

It all began with Austrian philosopher, social scientist and Waldorf Schools founder Rudolf Steiner. After World War I, Europe was experiencing severe agricultural fertility problems -- the land was used up and not producing.

Steiner's answer was a type of farming called biodynamics. Similar to organic farming in the shunning of manmade fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides, this method -- part ethos, part plain hard work -- is different in one profound respect: It focuses on preparing and treating soil and plants with specially designed, super-charged manure and carefully concocted herbal preparations such as oak bark, valerian, chamomile, dandelion and stinging nettle to enhance the vitality of soil and plants' ability to metabolize light.

In biodynamic farming, the farm is as much a living, breathing entity as the farmer, says Bowers. "This is a spiritual philosophy as well as a farming philosophy," he explains. "It's all about good stewardship of the Earth. Biodynamic farming has strict limits on how much imported fertility can be used on the land. We do everything we can to produce our own on-farm fertility in the form of compost and intense cover cropping."

In biodynamic farming, it's as much the spirit of the preparation of the land as it is the process.

"Steiner thought many of society's ills came from not getting a spiritual benefit from food," Bowers notes. "He believed food has both a nutritional and spiritual content. So, all preparations are done with full intent and in a sacred way. Everything we do on the farm is informed by what's going on with the moon and planets. We forget that's the

way farming used to be; just ask any old-time farmer and he'll share that planting folklore."

But, it's not just folklore, it's hard science too. All you have to do is sit on a beach and watch the ocean ebb and flow and you realize just how much the Earth is subject to planetary forces. Twice a day, in certain parts of world, the moon pulls as much as seven trillion tons of water. Plants, like people, are comprised primarily of water. How can there not be an effect?

Check any Farmers Almanac and you'll see entire sections devoted to astronomy and full moon cycles -- moons given exotic but telling names from ancient Native American culture such as Full Wolf Moon, Full Flower Moon, Full Corn Moon, Full Worm Moon, Full Sturgeon Moon and more. Biodynamic farmers incorporate the known effects of the moon and planets on light, warmth, moisture and earth in their agricultural practices.

And it shows in his asparagus, strawberries, heirloom tomatoes and melons, berries, grapes, figs and sweet potatoes, Bowers believes. Part history, part folklore, part ancient wisdom, part mindfulness, the results are the same -- extraordinary flavor.

"The taste of the food is vital," he explains. "I can't tell you how many people say 'I don't know what it is but these fruits and vegetables just feel alive.' There's a vitality and life force to the food that consumers can taste and feel."

"Farming is difficult," Bowers concludes. "Anybody who farms well and consciously is doing a great job. Biodynamics works for us because we feel more alive, we're building our soil and a habitat that are rich and bountiful and lovely. Biodynamics demands a certain consciousness. In our certification, we're required to give life outside of the farm -- to balance cultivated farmland with wild land to allow other life, native flora and fauna, to flourish. Farming this way makes us feel we're doing something right and good for the planet -- and people -- and that feels good."

Melanie Raskin is one of 35 volunteers at the Carrboro Farmers Market, which has been bringing local foods to the community for more than 30 years. Sixty farmers and artisans sell vegetables, fruit, meats and fowl, cheese, cut flowers, baked goods, plants and crafts at the Carrboro Town Commons on Saturdays, 7 a.m. to noon. For more information go to carrborofarmersmarket.com. © heraldsun.com 2009



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NY TIMES PRAISES WALDORF FOREST KINDERGARTEN IN SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK

By Kathleen Wright

Much to my amazement, *The New York Times* printed a very favorable front-page article about the new Forest Kindergarten at the Saratoga Springs Waldorf School in New York. Let's hope the whole world takes note! The article was especially dear to my heart, because it just so happens that my Grandson is in that class and two pictures of him appeared in the slideshow that accompanies the article on their website. (one is included at the end of this article.)

I did some further research on Forest Kindergartens and there are many articles from around the world about them on the Internet – just Google “Forest Kindergartens”. There is even a Wikipedia entry about them, so if you have the time, there is some very impressive reading out there. Research has proven that children who attend forest kindergartens far outperform public school children in every area!

Below is a reprint of the *Times* article :

New York Times, November 30, 2009

For Forest Kindergartners, Class Is Back to Nature, Rain or Shine

By LIZ LEYDEN

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. — Fat, cold droplets splashed from the sky as the students struggled into their uniforms: rain pants, boots, mittens and hats. Once buttoned and bundled, they scattered toward favorite spaces: a crab apple tree made for climbing, a cluster of bushes forming a secret nook under a willow tree, a sandbox growing muddier by the minute.

They planted garlic bulbs, discovered a worm. The rain continued to fall. It was 8:30 a.m. on a recent Wednesday, and the Waldorf School's “forest kindergarten” was officially in session.

Schools around the country have been planting gardens and planning ever more elaborate field trips in hopes of reconnecting children with nature. The forest kindergarten at the Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs is one of a handful in the United States that are taking that concept to another level: its 23 pupils, ages 3 ½ to 6, spend three hours each day outside regardless of the weather. This in a place where winter is marked by snowdrifts and temperatures that regularly dip below freezing.

The new forest kindergarten, which opened here in September, is an extreme version of the outdoor learning taught at more than 100 Waldorf schools, all but a handful of them private, scattered throughout the United States. They are based on the teachings of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner and emphasize the arts and the natural world, with no formal academic curriculum until first grade.

“I loved the idea of her being outside every day,” said Kim Lytle, whose 3-year-old, aptly named Forest, is the youngest in the class. “If you have the proper gear, I think it's a really healthy thing to experience the elements and brave the world — and not just on a sunny day.”

The children's “classroom” is 325 acres of state parkland known as the Hemlock Trail, and a long-empty farmhouse, which the state has licensed Waldorf to use for the year. The school also has regular indoor classes at its main building.

On this day in the fledgling program, whose tuition is about \$7,000, the rain did not taper off, yet the kindergartners remained outside until lunch. Circle time — songs and dancing — took place in the center of a field, behind a farmhouse, followed by a snack of apples and pineapple



chunks at picnic tables. The children cut bittersweet vine to make wreaths, splashed in puddles, and, in the sandbox, did some imaginary cooking.

“We’re making something that’s cheesy,” said one girl.

“It’s cookies,” said a boy.

Max Perez, nearly 5, carried a bucket to the swampy edges of the field and scooped up some water. He and the others mixed the sand into gobs of glorious mud. After an hour, Max paused, peering out from his wet hat, and asked, “Is it raining today?”

In some ways, the program is not unlike other kindergartens. Signs declaring a peanut-free zone are taped throughout the farmhouse. There are bruised feelings and scuffles and potty jokes. But the biggest challenge is one not found in traditional classrooms: ticks, lots of them.

Though virtually unknown in the United States, forest kindergartens are increasingly common in Scandinavia and other European countries like Germany and Austria.

Sigrid D’Aleo and Carly Lynn, two Waldorf teachers, proposed adding one in Saratoga Springs because, over the years, they had seen students at their best when outdoors.

“Their large motor skills developed, they worked out their social issues in a better way, they had more imaginative play,” Ms. D’Aleo said. “Children’s senses are so overtaxed in these modern times, so here, it is very healthy for them.”

Richard Louv, author of “Last Child in the Woods,” a book arguing that children have suffered from diminished time outside, said he had heard similar things from educators around the country.

“It helps us use all our senses at the same time,” he said. “It seems to be the optimum state of learning, when everything is coming at us in lots of different ways.”

Alane Chinian, regional director of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, said of the Waldorf school’s use of the Hemlock Trail: “We are delighted to have them there. It expands our mission and furthers the park’s goals of providing nature education to children.”

Here in Saratoga Springs, the children crossed into the forest at midmorning, greeted by the rich smell of earth and leaves. A fallen branch had created an arch to climb through as if they were entering a hidden place straight out of a storybook.

Trails had been worn through the thickets. An old stone wall ran through the center of the trees toward huge teepees the children had built from sticks and vines.

Everywhere, there were things to discover. A branch balanced on a split tree trunk became a seesaw. A teacher sawed thick stumps into logs the children used to bridge bogs. A pit became a monster house, complete with boys standing in the rain shouting warnings: “You don’t want to come over here! You’ll get smushed!”

Piper Whalen, 5, turned toward her own treasure: an enormous fallen tree. She climbed



on and lifted her arms. “I’m riding a roller coaster,” she said. “Come on and ride with me.”

The raindrops continued to fall until, finally, it poured, hard enough to splash though the canopy of trees. The children were delighted.

“It’s wet!” exclaimed one. “My hair is getting a drink of water!” another said.

Piper began to laugh. She stuck out her tongue and turned her face toward the sky.

Photo by NY Times photographer: A student saws as Declan MacNeal looks on. Declan is

the Grandson of *Sophia Sun* editor Kathleen Wright. His Dad is her son John, who teaches 7th grade at the Saratoga Springs Waldorf School.

The Son of Mary: the Feminine Powers of the Soul and Spirit And Their Role in the Renewal of Christianity

A talk by Rev. Patrick Kennedy on November 21, 2009.

(Summarized by Linda Finigan, edited and reworked by Patrick Kennedy)

The background for the explorations for this evening's talk was a question. In one of our Friday evening gatherings that we somewhat humorously call "Christian Community 101" someone asked about the nature of the Second Coming of Christ and what, if any, connection this might have with the emerging awareness in our time of the Divine Feminine, or "Sophia". This question touched on the deepest realities of our time and on what must begin to happen within Christianity if it is to have any positive future and so I offered to address it within a longer talk. What is offered here can only be taken as one aspect of an unendingly deep subject.

First, we need to explore our assumptions about the nature of the "second coming", a name or title which itself is very misleading. Why? Because it implies that Christ has left! But this, indeed, is not at all what the gospels tell us. In the Gospel of Matthew it is Christ who promised "I am with you always, even to the end of the age," (Matt 28:20) or "wherever two or three are gathered in my name there I AM also" (Matt 18:20). After uniting with the earth at Golgotha, His Ascension into heaven should be seen not as an abandonment of the earth, but as an *expansion*, that is ascension *and* de-cension, a permeating of all earthly and heavenly spheres (Ephesians 4:9-10). The Gospels tell us that Christ is with us; what has *left* us, what we have lost, is something else entirely.

In order to recognize what we have lost, we began creating a list of many of the central thoughts of Christianity that are no longer understandable for the modern soul: the Virgin Birth, dual lineages of Jesus, angels, miracles, the trinity, transubstantiation, and especially the central truth of Christianity - *the resurrection* - were written up. We had to acknowledge that for the modern soul, Christianity and Christ himself had become incomprehensible, something we no longer understand. What has happened?

For the Gospel writers, and all peoples of their time, the *real* world was the eternal spiritual world and the "unreal world", the world that passes away, was the world of the senses. In our time, the prevailing consciousness has reversed. Now, for the majority of the souls in the West, the "real" world is the physical, and the Spirit is viewed as illusory, as a product of opinion and superstition. Our thoughts and mode of knowing are directed exclusively to understanding the world of the senses and we have become blind to the spirit. And if we have become blind to the spirit, we are blind to Christ, for although Christ is here - in everyone and permeating all things - he is *not of this world*. His kingdom is not of the nature of the transitory and passing nature of the sense world. He permeates us and the earth with his *eternal nature*. But we have become outwardly seeing and inwardly blind; Christ is with us, but we can not "see" him because we no longer understand him.

With this in mind, we could recognize that what we have lost is not Christ, but the knowledge of him, the *wisdom* of Christ—*the Sophia*.

So what is it that could bring about the renewal of Christianity, a new perception of Christ? Nothing other than a search for the knowledge or wisdom of Christ, which was - and is - the mission of that spiritual movement that goes by the name of Anthroposophy. Modern Spiritual Science (Anthroposophy) provides the means to understand everything that has become non-understandable in Christianity (such as the list of items with which the talk began). However, it does require more than learning new

facts; it requires a total revolution and transformation of the soul - beginning with thinking - in order to perceive and receive the reality of the spirit.

This soul transformation for the reception of the spirit is, and has always been in some form, the process that one undertakes when one seeks initiation into the knowledge of the worlds hidden from the senses. The process of initiation is the process to prepare the soul for the birth of the spirit. We can achieve this catharsis, the purification of the soul, through exercises in moral development, through meditation and prayer, and by taking in thoughts of the spirit. The purification of the forces of the soul, the purification of our feeling, thinking and willing, make one's own soul a virgin soul.

Pure thinking, loving feeling, devoted, accepting willing, open up the soul to more than the abstract truths of existence. This opening allows the grace moment to take place, the moment of inner *conception*. It is a real event in the life of the person on the path in which a new higher life stirs within the womb of the soul.

This event in the life of the initiate has been portrayed artistically over millennia.

Think of Isis holding Horus, of images of the Madonna shown with the child, often emerging from an opening in her middle. All of these images are a representation of an experience of *knowing*, of inner wisdom being fructified by the spirit. In medieval annunciation paintings, Mary is almost always shown reading a book (the scriptures), meditatively pursuing knowledge. And we see her at the moment when this knowledge becomes new life within: her head lifts from the page and a ray of light shines down from the heights and touches her head. It is the moment of the *conception* of the divine child. These images of Mary are a depiction not only of a historical figure, but of our soul, the human soul, and the Christ child presents to us an image of the eternal human spirit, the higher self. Anyone who seriously and devotedly follows the path laid out in Anthroposophy will themselves experience this annunciation moment. It is an intimate, but completely real and objective experience of the striving individual that comes as a moment of grace on the path of self-development, where they begin to experience "Not I, but Christ in me".

But how does this relate to the specific mission of the Christian Community? One could say this mission is to facilitate that spiritual conception, that higher knowing, *in community* through the Eucharist, the center of the seven sacraments. There too, it requires a "Mary-Soul" to receive the new presence of Christ. In the service, this knowing is spoken of in an amazing way. We follow the movement of the book from the right to the inside left of the altar - from outside to inside - a representation of leaving the outer world, of crossing the threshold. There, during the stage of the service traditionally known as the Transubstantiation, but better understood as the *Transformation*, the sacred act of knowing is described this way: the *congregation* knows Christ in freedom.

Here the priest speaks out of the soul of the community, and the offering is brought through "*our* pure thinking, *our* loving heart, *our* willing devotion". In the Eucharist service, we call the Act of Consecration of Man, we approach the divine ground of existence through the Mary-Soul of the community, who is able to be the "virgin soul" in which the Christ-Spirit can be born. In the service, it is the community that becomes the bearer of Christ, as we hear at the central, most intimate part during the Transformation portion of the service: "Christ in us".

This reality is brought to the congregation in another way: through what is pictured in the vestments. The vestments provide the picture of the supersensible human being: the physical body (black cassock, invisible to the congregation), life body (white alb), the human soul (the chasuble in its variety of seasonal colors), the personal ego (the tri-cornered hat beneath which the priest as individual speaks). We see the priest walk in wearing these vestments, but also bearing something at the level of the heart: the veiled golden chalice. Once this chalice is unveiled, we see how it is open

and empty to receive from above, yet sturdily connected to what is below as well. In the chalice we behold the picture of the transformed, purified human self, the Mary/Sophia "I." In the course of the service, through our inner act of offering our thoughts and feelings to the Spirit, the congregation can become this golden vessel, the receptacle for the higher life.

It was hoped that by the end of the evening we could have a sense that Christ's return is not so much about where he has gone, but about how we have become blind to his presence and it is a renewed possibility of understanding him, of "seeing him" in the spirit that is enabling his reappearance - and how this is served both through the nature and mission of Anthroposophy and The Christian Community. This is also what Rudolf Steiner shared from his spiritual research, that it is Holy Sophia, or knowledge of Christ, that will enable His reappearance. Patrick concluded with a recommendation of further reading: *Isis Mary Sophia* by Rudolf Steiner.

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WALDORF CALENDARS FOR SALE

The ASNC Board is selling Waldorf calendars that were created by the Chicago Waldorf School as a Fundraiser. The calendars will be sold at the EWS Holiday Faire on December 5; however, if any are not sold, you are welcome to purchase them. The cost is \$15. Please make your check out to "ASNC". To order, please call Peg Carmody at 537-8142 or email her at: mcarmody@nc.rr.com

Reflections on the Annual General Meeting/Conference October 2-4, 2009: Creating Living Connections: Christian Rosenkretz and the Social Impulse

By Kathleen Wright

I must confess that although I have been a student of Anthroposophy for over 37 years, I had never been to an AGM of the national society before this one. I think it was the name AGM that was so uninviting – it sounds like a rather dry business meeting. Now, having been to one, I think it far more appropriate to call it “The Annual Family Reunion and Retreat”– for indeed, that is what it was - a gathering of over 300 of us, old friends, many of whom I hadn’t seen in 20 years, current friends, people whose names I have been seeing in print for years and finally got to meet, and most refreshingly, so many young people, full of energy, enthusiasm, wanting to change the world (May they do a better job than we have!)

It was the group from the Youth Section led by Elisabeth Wirsching that actually opened the Conference. They wanted to do it differently than the usual opening lecture format, so a group of them took the stage at the Threefold Auditorium and proceeded to give us impressions they had from a talk they had had earlier which was entitled “Recognizing My Inner Tools: The Living Lemniscate” (They had been having a conference of their own just prior to the AGM Conference) and then they split us up (yes, all 300 of us so tightly packed into the auditorium) into small groups for us to discuss our thoughts about their talks. While I applaud their intention, after having driven 500 miles, my etheric body was somewhere back in Virginia or at the very closest Maryland, so I was in no condition to have many thoughts at all, much less come up with brilliant insights. Most others seemed to welcome the novelty and the gesture for action, rather than the usual passivity conferences seem to have. For myself, it was the only point in the conference where I felt somewhat uncomfortable and “put on the spot”.

The weekend was jam-packed with activity – Eurythmy performances of the Michaelmas *Calendar of the Soul Verse*, small discussion groups, wonderfully inspiring lectures by Virginia Sease, Dr. Gerald Karnow, Michael Ronall and Torin Finser, great vegetarian meals prepared by a world-class chef who now works full-time at the Threefold Café, Speech Exercises with Michael Steinrueck, a performance of Scenes 3, 7 and 11 from *The Portal of Initiation*, live Balkan music with dessert, a Class Lesson for the members of the School of Spiritual Science and finally, initiative group meetings, the General meeting itself, which actually turned out to be quite fascinating. (see page 24)

In all, I had a magnificent time, took 63 pages of notes, and hope that I do some justice in the following short articles about what I learned and wish to share with you. Hopefully, more of you can go to the “Family Reunion” next year. I know I will be there!

Anthroposophy Worldwide

On Saturday afternoon, participants had to choose one of 11 workshops. I chose “Anthroposophy in the World: An International Perspective” which was led by Virginia Sease and Elisabeth Wirsching. Here are the notes I took:

How the Goetheanum used to be: in 1979 a worldwide meeting was held for 1,000 participants by invitation only. Virginia Sease was chosen to go. The conference was all in German. Today, no meetings are closed and there are English signs everywhere. In 1998 the first English conference was held; previously there had only been “English weeks”. The Youth Section is now encouraged to work with the other Sections. The future is meeting the past. There are now more students than ever in the

Youth Section. They do not need to be members of the General Society to belong to the Youth Section.

A question was brought up about the work in China. Hans Molder of New Zealand is being sponsored by the Goetheanum to work there. Harry Wong was at the Michaelmas Conference in Dornach. A suggestion has been made that a Youth Corps go to countries to help out.

The ELIANT Free Choice movement (regarding organic food) needs 1 million signatures (they have about 850,000 so far). Even though it affects Europe, signatures may come from any country. If you have not already signed the petition, please do so.

The Anthroposophical Society worldwide has about 50,000 members. The greatest growth has been in the East. In Europe, the numbers have actually declined, largely due to older people excommunicating. Unfortunately, the Eastern countries cannot afford to pay dues. The USA and Canada are growing.

What is happening in Africa? The Society is growing in Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania (mostly due to Waldorf education). South Africa has several thriving Waldorf schools and there is a Eurythmy School in Capetown. There is a Danish man working in Kenya.

Anthroposophy in Muslim countries? There is the SEKEM initiative in Egypt. It is a college and biodynamic farm. Check out Sekem.com to learn more. The leader of SEKEM will be coming to NY for a Conference in the Spring of 2010.

The Youth Movement in Brazil – “Youth Without Weapons” is an anthroposophical youth initiative in which young people become mentors and learn how to communicate.

Japan – There is a cult-like following of a sci-fi author named Okawa, who talks about Steiner in all of his books. He often deals with the theme of reincarnation. Most Japanese bookstores now carry Steiner’s books because of the inquiries Okawa’s books have generated! A word about karmic relationships in connection with Japan: In the migrations of the Nordic and Easterners into Europe, there occurred the sacking of Rome by the Huns and a great mixing among the peoples. The Easterners who went to Southern Europe had a connection with Christianity. These souls are now incarnating in Japan, according to Steiner. He also said that American Indians would be incarnating in Europe in these times. [I found this especially interesting because last year I read an article in *Germany Today* about the fascination that Germans have with the Native Americans and how they have amusement parks with the native American theme. They love dressing up and acting out as native Americans.] The Europeans of that medieval period are also incarnating in Europe. Emerson had an incarnation as the daughter of Henry II. (Henry was a king who opposed the Church and was excommunicated. As a penance, he had to stand in the snow for three days.) Tacitus, the author of *Germania* was also an incarnation of Emerson.

NOTES FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, OCTOBER 4, 2009

The meeting began with the introduction of the members of the General Council and announcements of upcoming events which include: the Hearbeet Youth Conference Oct. 9-11, 2009, A Conference in Austin, Texas on the 100th anniversary of Steiner’s announcement about Christ Reappearing in the Etheric, performances of the four Mystery Dramas in German July 29-Aug. 1 at the Goetheanum; a Conference at the Goetheanum Aug 2-7 called “Stepping into the 21st Century Spiritually” – programs for it should be out by Christmas.

After this, James Lee read the list of members who died this past year.

Torin Finser, who has been General Secretary for two years now, said that he wants to look forward in his report, rather than backward, because the next three years will be very significant for the Society and the world. From 2010-2012 there will be several important anniversaries, which we will be observing: the 100th anniversary of the St. Mark's Group in NY; the 100th anniversary of the announcement about Christ in the Etheric; the 150th birthday of Rudolf Steiner. There are many points of view to the year 2012. Torin asked that we look at these three years as a whole to "celebrate, commemorate and intensify our work". This is an opportunity we must seize.

He asked that we realize the importance of our relationship to the Goetheanum and increase donations. US donations have been very low. We need to have a development plan. Torin reported that he attended a Michaelmas Pageant in New Hampshire and was impressed with a poem Helen Ann Ireland had written for it, which he read. It began:

"We see again, but with new eyes;
Our hearts beat again, but with new warmth;
our hands toil with care...
we will meet the beast with courage;
we will meet the beast with compassion;
we will heal the beast with our love.-
We are free!"

Marijo Rogers gave a report on membership. In 1994 the US Anthroposophical Society had 3,547 members. It is approximately the same today. The problem is not with money, but with the connections between people that is needed to get the numbers up. There are 78 recognized groups and branches. Three recently joined and there are members from all three present at today's conference. Next year's AGM will be in Chicago.

There are some changes in the office in Ann Arbor: Cynthia Chelius is in charge of membership, Rudolf Steiner House and conferences. Linda Leonard is doing bookkeeping. Audrey Brown is working part-time as a receptionist. Carol Turner is working part-time as an accountant. There is a new accounting system. Kathy Severin is the Director of Outreach and prison work. John Beck is working closely with Marion to increase communications. Judith Soleil of the Steiner Library is working closer with Ann Arbor and has been putting the books of the library online. The library's goal is to have 80% of the books on line by 2010. Marion predicts that there will be an increase in membership this year. We will reach out to lapsed members and friends again this year.

In August 2012 there will be a large conference in Ann Arbor.

The CAO met and gave a grant to the Eurythmy School to work on the Foundation Stone Meditation. Branches can request to have a performance of it. There are plans for seminars on core themes such as the Basic Books. They will be working with groups, branches and the School of Spiritual Science to develop these.

The Spring Appeal brought in \$15,000. The windows at the national headquarters need replacing. This will save thousands of dollars in heating.

Jerry Kruse then gave the Treasurer's Report: He opened by saying that 10% of our dues paying members are at the Conference. Our fiscal year ended on 6/30; most others' end at the calendar year. We will be transitioning to a calendar year – an 18-month period ends on 12/31/09. Our last audit was in June 2008. Since 2003, our membership has declined by 20%. Our highest membership was at the end of 2002. We have been getting around 100 new members each year, but 1200 have left (1 in 4 left!) Dues receipts have also declined – 30% since 2003 in spite of a 10% increase in dues. Operating costs are up by 34%. Mailing costs have also been high. Operating reserves

increased by 12% due to bequests. We had a net loss of \$41,247 for the year ending 6/30/08. A complete report is available on the Anthroposophy website. As of 12/31/08:

Total Revenue: 92,6009
Expenditures: 263,913
Net Loss: 171,304

How are we managing? Positions have been cut. Part-timers with no benefits have been hired. To cut programs would have been the death of the organization. Future actions to be taken: increase membership, reduce reliance on dues, reduce costs. At least 20,000 people in the US consider themselves anthroposophists; yet they do not belong to the Society. We can reduce costs by having teleconferences instead of travel costs; increase research for the School of Spiritual Science and take Anthroposophy out into the world. We need to increase revenue from conferences, lectures, programs, etc.; increase bequests, donations, the Michael Circle (which Ernst Katz introduced); currently 45 people have joined the Michael Circle. They have pledged to donate \$1,000 a year for 5 years to the Society. Collective groups may be formed to support this endeavor. Members are asked to carry Anthroposophy brochures with them. This is "a statement of faith that we want the Society in America to continue."

Next, Ann Finucane gave a report from the Eastern Regional Council. The ERC has 53% of the Society's members yet the square mileage is much smaller than the other two regions. Herbert Hagens has decided to step down from the Council. She announced that there is a biodynamic apprenticeship program in Kimberton, that there was a Portal of Initiation Conference in Spring valley this past summer. In July, Ann attended the Yukon Conference known as "Encircling Light". There was a Michaelmas Pageant in Hudson New York that had 550 participants! March 5-6 2010 there will be a conference in NY for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the St. Mark's Group. In April there will be the annual Steiner Books Seminar.

Nathaniel Williams and Elisabeth Wirsching reported on the Youth Section. Elisabeth began by saying that Rudolf Steiner founded the Youth Section in 1924 to give the Society a "fresh shower". Their theme is "we need each other on a human level". There was a booming, then a period of sleep, which is necessary for seeds to germinate. Now the youth movement is growing all over the world. It currently has 10,000 young people (over 17). There was a youth conference in Romania, and in Romania there is a youth member on their General Council. Nathaniel introduced the Initiatives of Kathleen Morse and Per Eisenmann. He reported on the Youth Conference in Portland, Oregon, which asked the question: "How can we find a unity that will still allow us to be individuals." He reported on Network M (intergenerational work), and ThinkOut Word (peer-led trainings).

Matthew Temple and Leslie Voy spoke further about the Youth movement. The current group began in the 1990's. The Youth Section does not require membership in the General Society. They commit to one another. They want to renew society, inspired by Anthroposophy. They listed their 5 conditions and read their Vision Statement, which includes goals of courage, compassion and imagination. There are 4 branches of the Youth Section : research, mentoring, sharing and meeting. Members of these branches have 1 or 2 year commitments. Each branch has an elder supporter. They are seeking advocates to support the youth, become mentors, attend events and donate to their scholarship fund. Matthew gave the following website: na.youthsection.org for more information. Approximately 30 youth attended the AGM conference, They ended the meeting by singing "Da Pacem Domine" for us.

Coming in our next issue: synopses of lectures from the conference



The East Coast School of ChoreoCosmos

Presents

The Foundation Stone of Love



"In the Middle Ages a definite high stage of I-development was spoken of as the 'Philosopher's Stone'.

*In the writing of Valentin Andreas on 'The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz', the stage of the I 'become sun-like' is described as the 'Knighthood of the Golden Stone'".**

Presenter: Kelly Calegar*

Pianist: Aviva Enoch

In this half-day workshop we will learn the Sacred Dance of the *Foundation Stone of Love*, a cosmic meditation given by Rudolf Steiner 82 years ago. In between movement sessions there will be talks and dialogue about the *seed force* which enables a connection with the cosmic dimension of existence.

Such a connection is essential for the development of the 'I become sun-like'.

The human being, who is increasingly developing on the moral plane, eventually realizes that her/his task on Earth is to participate in *building* the future.

The Sacred Dance of Eurythmy, especially with regard to the Foundation Stone Meditation, is an extraordinary help. By bringing this meditation alive inwardly through movement, the human being begins to attain a sovereign 'I' which can work upon one even on the level of the will – transforming life even in to the depths of physical substance.

Thus, one develops an increasingly effective ability to participate in the transformation of the Earth for the realization of our future – the Jupiter Stage of existence.

Sunday, January 10, 2010

1 – 5 pm Emerson Waldorf School*

Suggested contribution \$40

www.EastCoastSchoolOfChoreoCosmos.com for more information*

Carol Brick Offers Painting Course: Artistic Expression and Self-Development as an Experience of Spiritual Science

"In art man gives back again to the eternal what he has received for the earth"... "In art ability must be won,...won through work". Rudolf Steiner Colour (from his notes)

"Creativity is actually hidden in the nature of every human being and is part of his well-being. To stimulate this is certainly right and beneficial. But nevertheless the great question is what, when and how? What is one going to make, when is the right time to do it? And how to do it?.....For some people the artistic exercises and experiences are part of their inner development, and so they go more deeply into the philosophic or religious backgrounds connected with them." Eva Mees-Christeller The Practice of Artistic Therapy

The newly-formed Anthroposophical Arts Council is pleased to announce the first of its sponsored/supported classes and workshops exploring the Arts and our practical experience of them as helpful to self and spiritual development in our own lives. We will begin our exploration of the arts in the New Year with an introductory watercolor experience for both novice and more practiced painters. We will attempt to reveal to ourselves the spiritual nature of color as described by Rudolf Steiner and based on Goethe's observations. "If we go about it in the right way our knowledge need not remain abstract but can be made concrete in art, and especially so in such an ever changing medium as colour"...The "I" itself is within the colour."... "Colour actually bears the "I" and astral body into the physical and etheric bodies." "One can get right away from theory and reach the artistic." "It means that we should try to have a conversation with the colours so that they themselves shall say how they wish to be on the surface of the picture.....We must follow Goethe's approach in a living way in our thinking so that we can continually go further. This can only be done through Spiritual Science." (Rudolf Steiner, Colour)

Although this Introductory Class will stand alone, it will precede a four-week series of classes for those who wish to go into a deeper study, which will include Goethe's color theory and experiments and work with lustre and image colors while maintaining a truthful expression of the spiritual nature and gesture of the colors. Spiritual scientific principles and approach will be followed as we share in this experience of watercolor painting.

Carol Brick will be leading us in these color experiences. Carol has worked as a teacher in Waldorf Education for more than 25 years as a class teacher at Emerson Waldorf School and elsewhere, and also as a handworks teacher here at EWS and at the Waldorf Institute of Mercy College in MI. She has given artistic workshops to Waldorf teachers in several different Waldorf schools here in the mid-Atlantic region and in the Northeast, and has offered painting classes for several groups here in the Triangle area over the last several years.

This first Introductory Class will be held in **Oak Lodge at Camp New Hope, Rt 86**, just north of the EWS. Saturday, **Feb 13, 10 am-4 pm**. Please bring your own bag lunch. There is a very small kitchen with a refrigerator in Oak. Snacks and drinks will be provided. **Payable at the door: \$35 plus \$4 supply fee = \$39**

Pre-registration is necessary to know how many people to expect so that we have enough supplies on hand. Please call **Margaretta Bornhorst 919-824-7337** or **Carol Brick 336-694-5493**.

The Sophia Sun

Newsletter of the Anthroposophical Society
in North Carolina

P.O. Box 16024

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Note: On line, the newsletter is in color; mailed copies are in black and white, except for the cover; this is due to the high cost of color printing.

Submitting articles, letters and ads:

Please send UNFORMATTED text in Microsoft Word to
kathleenwright51@peoplepc.com.

All calendar items and Study group information should be sent to: lfolsom@nc.rr.com.

If you have any questions, please contact: **Kathleen Wright, at 919-309-9622 or 919-672-0149 or kathleenwright51@peoplepc.com**

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What is Anthroposophy?



Anthroposophy, which means “the wisdom of man”, is a spiritual philosophy and path to self-knowledge, which “leads the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the universe”, according to its teacher, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Rudolf Steiner was a brilliant “Renaissance man” from Austria who was a philosopher, scientist, artist, playwright, architect, social activist, teacher and meditator, who had a direct perception of the spiritual worlds. Anthroposophy, which is also known as Spiritual Science, teaches, among other things, the laws of reincarnation and Karma. It has a Christ-centered view of world evolution. Steiner founded the School of Spiritual Science, as well as the General Anthroposophical Society, which he described as “a union of people who desire to further the life of the soul – both in the individual and in human society – on the basis of true knowledge of the spiritual world”. In addition to giving over 6,000 lectures, most of which have been made into books, he helped to found many initiatives that are still thriving today including: the Waldorf School movement, anthroposophical medicine, biodynamic farming, and Eurythmy. Based on his indications, hundreds of initiatives have developed such as: the Curative education movement, the Camp Hill Villages for the handicapped, Weleda remedies, Dr. Hauschka cosmetics, WALA, True Botanica, Astrosophy, Rhythmical Massage, the Alliance for Childhood, The Christian Community, Anthroposophic Prison Outreach, Lazure painting, Demeter, advancements in architecture, science, social and economic reform (The Threefold Social Order, community banks), mathematics and painting. In addition, there are many publishing houses and libraries dedicated to his works throughout the world. For more information, check the national website at www.anthroposophy.org or our local website at www.anthroposophyNC.org

