

BLÁTHÚ NEWSLETTER



An update for members and friends

Spring 2022

The beauty of all things, radiant and fair,
How it pours through my heart; how it fills me with gladness!
In the people I meet this same beauty is there;
It reflects in their eyes, both in joy and in sadness.

And when our eyes sparkle or twinkle or shine,
When warm love is flowing in the way that we live,
Then the water of life in ourselves becomes wine,
And to God this can be the great gift that we give.

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Welcome to this first BLÁTHÚ Newsletter in 2022

As spring opens the blossoms around us, we say a fond farewell and thank you to Fiona Coady, who has served so well as National Coordinator of BLÁTHÚ for the past several years. Fiona's role here has now been created anew, as two distinct areas of responsibility, with two new staff members taking her place: as NC, Ruth Marshall, and Gary Rush as CEO.

As the new National Coordinator, let me introduce myself. Mine is the voice that will greet you when you



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



phone BLÁTHÚ for information; the hand and eye behind the newsletter and website. I will most likely be in touch with you about renewing your membership; organising publicity, posters and taking bookings for CPD workshops and courses; and liaising with our NDO, Ulrike Farnleitner.

I have been doing some of these things quietly in the background for a while, but now I hope to be in the office regularly on Mondays, and will be checking phone and email regularly for messages at other times. Please do get in touch!

About myself, I am a storyteller, a heritage specialist, an author, crafter, natural mindfulness guide, amongst other things. I love poetry, folklore, traditional crafts, and I have been



teaching both adults and children about our traditional seasonal festivals since my book “Celebrating Irish Festivals” was published in 2001. I was a tutor in ALFA for 5 years and a course director of the Steiner kindergarten teacher training in Ireland for 7 years. I feel sure that some of these skills and experiences will find a good home in my work for BLÁTHÚ. I look forward to working with you.

You will notice that a small doll appears on several pages of this newsletter. She is a traditional Ukrainian “Motanka” doll. Handmade from scraps of cloth, these dolls were originally made as a fertility symbol and a household guardian - something rather like our own Brideóg.

These dolls have no face, and would often have a colourful cross shape where the face would be. They are made of natural materials - hay, straw, wood, herbs, dry leaves, grains, seeds - and some are even filled with fragrant herbs. Sometimes, parents would place the Motanka doll in a baby’s cradle to protect the newborn’s health and aid sleep.

She is making herself seen in these pages as a small act of solidarity with Ukrainian families who have lost their homes. Perhaps their Motanka dolls have come with them on their long journeys?

Is it not quite wonderful that, despite the physical distance, and cultural differences, we find we have such a similar tradition? As we reach out in peace and friendship to families who settle here in Ireland, whether they are from the Ukraine, or other dispossessed peoples, perhaps we may find that we have even more in common.

In peace,

Ruth Marshall, National Coordinator

We welcome your contributions to the newsletter

Whether you are a teacher, practitioner, parent, or if you are just interested in what BLÁTHÚ does - we would welcome your contributions to the newsletter.

Perhaps you would like to send in your seasonal reflections, good ideas, articles, stories, songs, book reviews, crafts, patterns, recipes.....

All your suggestions that can enrich our experience, and ultimately, nourish the children, are very welcome.

Please send your contributions to: Ruth Marshall, email: nc.blathu@gmail.com

The newsletter will be distributed 4 times a year, in March, June, September and December.

Submission Window for the Next issue: Please send any articles etc by Fri 27th May 2022

NEW LIFE - NEW RELATIONSHIP

Thoughts for parents...

by Ulrike Farnleitner

Spring has come with St. Brigid's day and one can feel her subtle cloak of new life spreading over the land. In some places we can see daffodils slowly pushing through the earth, in sheltered areas already blooming, snowdrops busily shaking their little white heads in the cool breath of February. Soon we will discover the small white blossoms of the Blackthorn. Our daily task, joy and delight can be to admire the wonder of Nature in its many forms and expressions.

A daily look at my winter jasmine gives me some sense of contentment, I observed over a long period the development of these tiny little buds on the delicate branches.

Since my childhood I tried to witness the growing of buds and blossoms, but I never "saw" them stretching and growing, always only the result of this process in my noticing. I surrendered to this fact of not seeing, but the curiosity has stayed with me to this day—the curiosity and the wish to connect and to witness life coming to its expression.

How often do you as an adult stop with your child on your way to school, back home or in your spare time and offer all your interest to observe the trunk of a tree, the moss that's growing around, the climbing ivy, or discover the clouds mirroring in the puddles?

Did you and your children ever decide to make friends with nature for yourself and through regular visiting?

Children imitate what values live in us adults. They simply mirror us as well as form their own. They take in our lifestyle, without judging, they integrate into their whole being our joy, our contentment, even our stress.



In the book *"The Little Prince"*, the fox tells the little prince:

*"...I have not need of you and you have no need of me. But if you tame me, you and I, we will have created a relationship, and so we will need one another. You will be unique in the world for me."**

It is the fox who teaches the Prince how to create relationship, to see with one's heart instead of just with one's eyes.

**from: "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, translated by Michael Morpurgo (2018) Vintage. Penguin, Random House*

May I suggest:

Befriend a piece of nature, and like any friendship, it needs revisiting, the warm approach of regular connection while finding love and peace in the meeting of befriended souls.

RUDOLF STEINER'S WRITINGS

By Ulrike Farnleitner

My connection with Rudolf Steiner's work is like a journey of treasure hunt and discovery. I stand in front of my book shelf and suddenly I am drawn to a book, I take it and either I check the content chapters, being curious why I was called to take it, or I open it randomly and start reading. Most of the time I get engrossed in the interesting reading and look for a pen and paper for writing down some notes. Answers, questions for a future task ahead – here they are written down in printed letters, keeping me thinking and considering. What is so special with the way he describes the thoughts and insight? Why am I so engrossed and nourished by his writings? What is the difference between his early writings and the later ones? What do I discover?

It seems to me that when RS spoke to audiences in different countries, he addressed them with a different mood of soul, depending on what their nationality was. And so I discovered that my Austrian soul, even after 20 years in Ireland expands differently when I read a lecture given in Austria to lectures given in Berlin. So how is it for you, as you might struggle reading his translated lectures, where not only the region plays a role, but also the skill of the translator. Isn't there a saying, "lost in translation"? I guess with an attitude of flexibility and humour we can overcome some of the gaps that occur, and as we have so often heard Leonard Cohen singing,

"there is a crack in everything, that's how the light comes in".

Anthroposophia, the wisdom of the human being shines through - whenever I engage with it, nourishing my head, heart and hands.

ECCE HOMO

In the heart-the loom of feeling

In the head-the light of thinking

In the limbs -the strength of will.

Weaving of radiant light

Strength of the weaving,

Light of the surging strength

This is the Human being.

"Everything that adults do makes an impression on the child's soul. These impressions work their way into the child's breathing, circulation and metabolism, and can affect that child's health in later life."

- Rudolf Steiner

RHYTHM - AN ANTIDOTE TO STRESS

By Ulrike Farnleitner

One of my friends used to say: *“Rhythm, this does not come naturally to me. It takes so much effort to create it, I am not sure if I want to do it.”*

What she meant was that it requires effort to establish rhythm at first into our non-rhythmically modern life with all its random situations, caused by phone, emails, wishes and sudden desires. For example, I will have my coffee now and not later.

Self-discipline for adults might at first sound old-fashioned as we insist on our free will. Using the image of the daily workout in a gym, we know that only by regular exercising will our muscles be strengthened. On a spiritual soul-level, we could therefore use this analogy and regularly pour this **random will** into a vessel of clear intent and see what form we manage to mould including our failing and succeeding. You can find helpful indications in the book *“Anthroposophy in Everyday Life”* by Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophic Press.

There is one downside, that our inner judge might stand up and laugh at us and discourage us, but again we can succeed, nevertheless. It takes twice as much effort and all mystical/spiritual teachers make you aware of this challenge.

It was not only Rudolf Steiner who gave a wealth of exercises that should be done regularly; all spiritual teachers insist that only by doing so, will you grow into that form and shape that you want to achieve.

What are the gifts of rhythmical engaging?

In reality rhythm is such an important part in our life that we only notice it when missing. Our heartbeat, our breathing, is life-supporting until stress or sickness occurs. We can even look at a bigger cosmic picture that portrays our connection to rhythm in a larger and smaller way.



If we take a close look at human life, as can be read in Rudolf Steiner’s book *“The Education of the Child from the viewpoint of Spiritual Science”*, we still have distinguishable epochs in the following:

- the first years of the human being up to the change of teeth,
- then the next few years up to puberty,
- then the years up to the twenty-first year.
- and then the years up to the twenty-eighth,

and further on, many more seven-year periods in human life, with ongoing signatures of the seven-year life phases, which show us that they are different in their whole character, that new kinds of faculties appear during and after living these epochs.

If we look at those rhythms, it might become quite clear to us that there is a rhythmic course in human life that can be found in a certain way in the starry heavens. Rudolf Steiner connected all earthly growing with the cosmos and its gifts.

JOIN BLÁTHÚ TODAY!

As a member of BLÁTHÚ, you are part of a recognised professional body which, through its mission and actions, is committed to furthering the profile and formation of the Steiner-Waldorf Early Years services and pedagogy.

During the lockdowns, we suspended membership fees, but now that “normal service” is resuming, we need to ask you to renew your membership. BLÁTHÚ depends on your membership fees.

Types of membership:

Associate membership is available to organisations such as VCOs, Universities or Colleges who wish to associate themselves with BLÁTHÚ, receiving updates and discounts to BLÁTHÚ events.

Cost: €65 p/a

Individual membership is available to members of the general public and parents of children who may be attending one of our member settings, receiving updates, newsletters and discounts to BLÁTHÚ events.

Cost: €25 p/a

Settings Membership is open to Kindergartens/Early Years Services as organisations which allows you to avail of FULL benefits. 3 contact persons receiving correspondence, usually lead teacher, assistant teacher & the committee secretary. All members of staff/committee can avail of discounted entry to BLÁTHÚ workshops & events.

Cost: €75 p/a

New or smaller initiatives such as parent & toddler groups can take out **reduced** membership, which means they can avail of full benefits with one person receiving correspondence & discounts.

Cost: €35 p/a

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP?

Benefits to All Members

- Join with members nationwide strengthening Steiner Education throughout the Early Years sector.
- Receive the quarterly BLÁTHÚ newsletter
- Receive a discount on BLÁTHÚ events and publications
- Receive regular updates & job vacancy information
- Mentoring and support

Additional Benefits to Full Members

- BLÁTHÚ is a recognised professional body
- BLÁTHÚ represents you at national and international levels
- Your service's website can be linked from listing on www.blathu.org

So, what do I do now - how do I join BLÁTHÚ?

Contact the National Co-ordinator, Ruth Marshall: Email: nc.blathu@gmail.com or tel: 089 241 1816, and request a membership form, or download the form from our website

BLÁTHÚ'S CPD PROGRAMME FOR 2022

As part of our implementation Plan for 2022, BLÁTHÚ has committed to a year long programme of CPD workshops. We will be offering 4 CPD workshops:

- A Practical Approach to Literacy through Storytelling and Puppetry;
- Out of Doors - valuable and essential outdoor time for children of all ages;
- Play and Resilience;
- Celebrating Festivals in a Cultural Context of a Kindergarten in Ireland

These workshops are open to teachers, practitioners, parents - and anyone else who is open to learning more.

12th March **Storytelling & Puppetry; Ballymoney Kindergarten, Gorey, Co Wexford**
11th June Play & Resilience; Kildare Steiner School/Kindergarten
10th September Out of Doors; Farnyard Kindergarten, Strawberry Hill, Cork City
Nov/December Celebrating Festivals. Date & venue tbc - see below for this great opportunity

**This workshop had to be cancelled because there were not enough bookings, but we do hope to reschedule it*

A Great Learning Opportunity:

Would your Kindergarten or Early Years Service like to host the November/December CPD on Celebrating Festivals? This could be a wonderful opportunity. During the season of Advent, hosting a workshop exploring how we can enrich the life of our kindergarten and homes through celebrating culturally appropriate festivals, could nourish all who attend - a gift to your local community!

Alternatives:

While we are committed to offering these four CPD courses in 2022, we can still be flexible about how we do this....

Does this sound familiar? We have all become accustomed to working on Zoom over the past two years, and this has perhaps made us a little reluctant to book and make the effort to leave home for an in-person course on a weekend, when we could be at home enjoying a family day.

We may also be able to offer some short online presentations, on a variety of themes, some of these in collaboration with other early childhood bodies.

Please tell us what you you would be interested in - what themes, subjects, etc do you want to know more about? Is there a particular facilitator or presenter whose workshop you would love to attend?

Please let us know what you need, and then BLÁTHÚ will try to include your interests in our planning.

Contact Ruth 0892411816, or email nc.blathu@gmail.com



FOR THE SEASONS - VERSES



I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

The Tree - a finger game

Thousands of stars

Hundreds of growing leaves

(arms outstretched above head, fingers outstretched)

Tens of twigs

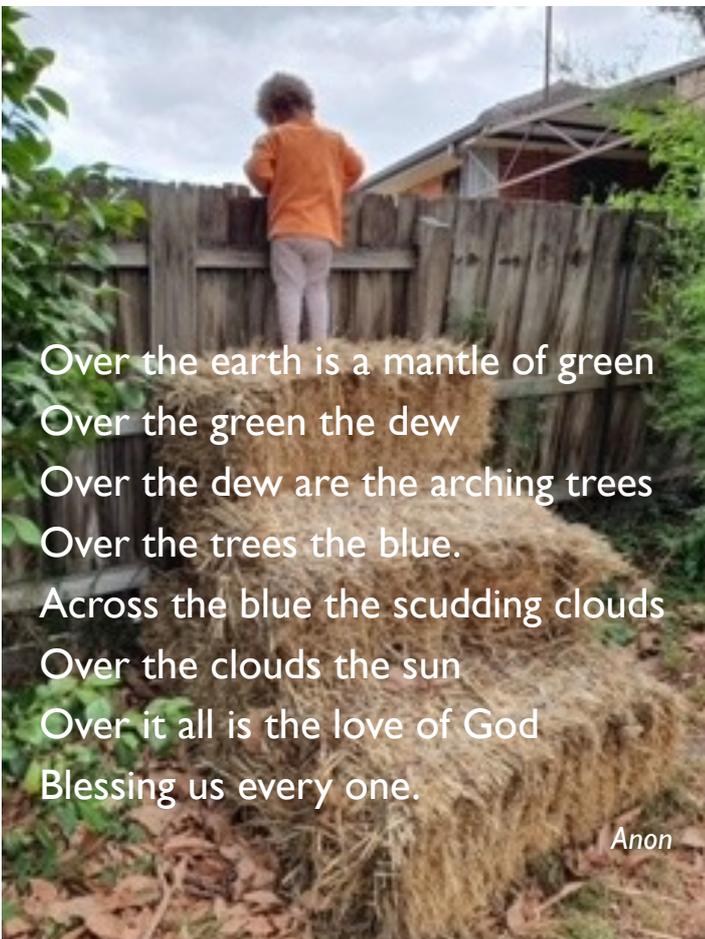
A few branches

(straighten arms like a tree branch)

And one tree

(stand upright, arms crossed, hands on shoulders)

From "Waldorf Games Handbook for the early years"



Over the earth is a mantle of green
Over the green the dew
Over the dew are the arching trees
Over the trees the blue.
Across the blue the scudding clouds
Over the clouds the sun
Over it all is the love of God
Blessing us every one.

Anon

FOR THE SEASONS - CRAFTS

Pattern by Ruth Marshall

A KNITTED GNOME for every Home

MATERIALS:

Small amounts of 4 ply wool for body and double knitting weight for hat in two contrasting colours.
Around 40cm of cream/white yarn for nose
Knitting needles: 3mm and 4.5mm
Wool fleece for stuffing, (you can also use synthetic toy stuffing) and for beard
Big-eyed blunt needle for sewing up
Needle and thread for sewing beard in place
4 glass marbles – OR - a small bag of rice, peas or grains.

ABBREVIATIONS:

K - knit; P - purl; sts - stitches
st st - stocking stitch (knit 1 row, purl 1 row, repeat)
K2tog - knit 2 together
YO - yarn over needle



BODY:

Using 4 ply yarn and 3mm needles, cast on 40 stitches
Row 1: Knit
Row 2: P1, P2tog, YO, P1, P2tog, YO; repeat to end of row, P1
Row 3 onwards: Knit in stocking stitch until work measures 3 inches from start.
Break off the 4ply yarn, and change to DK, and 4.5mm needles

HAT BRIM:

K2 tog, K2tog; repeat to end of row. (20sts)
Work the next 5 rows in stocking stitch.
On a purl row, with wrong side facing, pick up loops and knit these along with the stitches you already have on the needle. This creates a small brim for the gnome's hat.

HAT:

Work 4 rows in st st
Row 5: K2tog, knit to 2 sts left; K2tog
Row 6: Purl
Repeat these last 2 rows until just 4 stitches are left
Next row: K2tog, k to end (3sts)
Work 4 rows in st st. Pull yarn through these last 3 stitches, and gather up, leaving enough of a tail; of yarn for sewing up.

ASSEMBLING THE GNOME:

BASE:

Using strong yarn, thread it through the holes at base of body, gather and tie a strong knot.



With body inside out, sew from base to halfway up the back, using mattress stitch.
Sew up the point of the hat, and sew downwards from there. Sew up hat brim. Then begin to sew the body down from there, leaving a 1 inch gap.
Turn the right way out through the gap, and fill hat with fleece so that it is firm.
Place 4 marbles (or a small bag of rice or lentils) in the gathered bottom of the base to give it weight and stability. This will help it to stand. Fill the body with fleece until it is quite firm. Sew up the gap.

BEARD:

Take a little bit of fleece and shape this to form a beard. Centre this beneath the hat's brim at the front of the gnome. Sew in place using needle and thread, so that your stitching is invisible. Give the beard a trim or tease the fleece until it is a good shape.

NOSE:

Using a length of cream coloured wool, make several stitches at centre top of beard, immediately below the hat brim. Now make several stitches at right angles to these, covering them. Repeat, until your gnome has a sweet little bulbous nose.

A GNOME PHOTOSHOOT in NATURE



These gnomes love to spend some time outdoors. This one has found his way into the Rosemary bush! Notice that his hat is the same colour as the flowers.

When you have finished making your gnome, why not go out into nature, and find a place - in your garden, or in the woods, or by a pond - somewhere that your gnome might like to help things grow. This could be somewhere that matches his own colours - like the daffodil gnome and the rhubarb gnome, below. I hope you will have fun making, and then taking photos of your knitted gnome.

If you would like to, please send your best photo to Ruth at: nc.blathu@gmail.com.



WARNING:
Because they contain marbles, or a rice bag, these gnomes are intended as **ornaments** only, for use in a nature display and are not safe or suitable as toys for very young children.

FOR THE SEASONS - NATURE

by Doris Potter

I recently read that in Chinese medicine one is advised in spring upon waking to go outside, loosen ones hair and move gently around. This apparently helps prevent illnesses in summer. However this may be, it seems to be good advice to greet the morning and nature at this time of year, when every day new surprises meet us.

How about going for a morning walk to see whether the **Blackthorn** is out?



Blackthorn/Sloe - Prunus Spinosa (Rose family)

You can look in the hedges along the lane ways in our country side or at forest edges and you may find the shrub or small tree with delicate white flours in early spring, usually in March, but sometimes already in February.

The shrub has long spiky thorns, the leaves appear after the flowering, and later in October you can find the little dark blue fruits, not unlike small plums, but bitterly sour. The fruits are traditionally used in making sloe gin, after the first frost. Apart from the abundance of the blossoms in spring, the plant seems to hold back its potentials.

Blackthorn is one of the first shrubs to flower in spring, and one of the last to fruit in Autumn. This long growing process through 3 seasons, as well as the holding back the sweetening process in the fruit, bear the signature of a healing plant. Its flowers, leaves, bark and fruits are all used medicinally.

In anthroposopical medicine, Prunus Spinosa is widely used. You may know the drops and the elixir, and its strengthening qualities, especially in times of convalescence and fatigue.



Not so many people know that it is the *blossoms* that are used in these drops, and also in the massage oils. They particularly help with blood purifying and stimulating the metabolic processes.

So while you are out and about, you may enjoy foraging the delicate smelling blossoms for a very pleasant herbal tea. Just be aware to pick them from clean areas, away from traffic fumes or where "Round-up" has been sprayed.

I dry them, add them to my mixtures of herbal teas, and sometimes I make my own massage oil, by infusing them with organic Sunflower oil or almond oil.

Recipe for massage oil:

- Take a big jar clean and dry it well
- Fill half the jar with the dried flowers
- Cover with organic sunflower oil/ almond oil about ½ cm higher than flowers
- Keep for 6 weeks in a warm place, like a sunny window sill or near a radiator, shake most days
- Then drain through a piece of cloth and fill into bottles
- Use it to massage away spring tiredness

The joy of creativity

by *Lindsay Myers*

Creativity is widely recognised to be one of the greatest tools in achieving success. It is “the mother of invention”, the highest form of intelligence and the trait that will best equip our children to survive in the post-Covid world. But how can we teach our children to be creative? We might better ask what we can do to enable them to show us their creativity – for as Picasso so astutely recognised, “every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain one when he grows up.” Children may have oodles of creativity but they have increasingly less time in which to express it. Free time, as we all know, has become a luxury in our modern world, and as parents and educators it is all too easy to fall into the trap of thinking that the “organised” child is the happy child. We want to guide our children on their journey, to bring out their talents and to equip them with as many life skills as we can, but we must never forget that the stops that they make along the way to pick up a stone or a feather are as important as are the hours spent learning to swim, play the fiddle or twirl in ballet shoes.

I will never forget the day when I collected my daughter from school and decided in the spur of the moment to go to the beach instead of heading straight home. I had a headache and I just needed some fresh air. It was a hot summer’s day and the sea was full of people swimming. We didn’t have our swim gear with us so we sat down on the sand instead. We didn’t have buckets or spades or inflatable mattresses. We didn’t have a ball or a Frisbee but we did have each other and it didn’t take long for my daughter to come up with some things for us to do. We used our fingers to draw cats and dogs in the sand, we played a game of naughts and crosses with shells and stones, we followed all of the footprints that we could find to see how far they would take us and we took our shoes and socks off and went paddling in the water. The sea was full of slippery strands of seaweed that wound themselves around our feet, and at first we tried to avoid them because whenever we tried to pull them off ourselves, they would slither out of our hands and back into the sea. They were slimy and squidgy and they were all squiggly like snakes, but my daughter



discovered that if you sneaked up on them really quickly, they wouldn’t see you coming and you could grab one, offer it to your partner to hold and then pull gently till the strand snapped in the middle. The person with the longest end was the winner. The more we pulled, the shorter the seaweed strings became and the shorter they became the more we laughed. For a while it seemed like there was no-one else on the beach but us, and that there was nothing more important in the whole world to do than to tug at seaweed.

Play is like that – it makes you forget everything else and it is undoubtedly the best form of therapy there is.

Why is it then, that as adults, we so rarely make the time to do it, persisting, instead, in seeing play as something that belongs exclusively to children? If we have really grown out of our need to play, why is it that this word can be found in so many of the things that we do as adults? Do we not play instruments, compile playlists of our favourite songs, go out to plays at the theatre, play sports and play all of our ideas off each other? When you think about it our lives revolve around play just as much as do those of our children, even if we would never admit it. What is different, of course is that when we play, we always like to know in advance where our play is going, we want to know what the rules of the game are and what exactly we have to gain from investing our precious time in it.

Children on the other hand never give as much as a second thought to where their play will lead. They just “go with the flow”, “make it up as they go along” and surrender completely to the present moment – if they are lucky enough, that is, to have those moments in which to be present.

When it comes to play, children have way more to teach us than we have to teach them. The best thing that we can do is to give them the time to

BLÁTHÚ WELCOMES CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OUR READERS

engage in it, to provide them with opportunities for unstructured play and to better connect with them by following their lead.

Children stop playing not because they grow up but because they come to understand that work is far more important than play, so important in fact that those who assert children's right to engage in it often do so by declaring that: "play is the work of childhood"! Is it really? It is serious stuff, for sure but is work really the only thing that can be serious? What if we were to view work as play rather than the opposite way around.... what would happen then? Perhaps this whole binary system is just a product of our need for opposites, our need to distinguish between matter and spirit, nature and culture, child and adult, when really, as Rudolf Steiner, maintained, the true meaning of life cannot be found in ideological polarities but in holistic thinking.

When I think about the malleability of opposites, I am always reminded of these words of Diane Loomans:

*If I had my child to raise all over again,
I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.
I'd finger paint more, and point the finger less.
I would do less correcting and more connecting.
I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.
I would care to know less and know to care more.
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.
I would run through more fields and gaze at more stars.
I'd do more hugging and less tugging.
I'd see the oak tree in the acorn more often.
I would be firm less often, and affirm much more.
I'd model less about the love of power,
And more about the power of love.*

- Diane Loomans

Together Again, After the Storm

by Carol Brogan

For me, the beating heart of the Waldorf Kindergarten has to be parental/family involvement and celebrating the festivals.

The pandemic robbed us of something so precious that sets us apart from other early years pedagogies. Our entrance yard and changing room lay devoid of the hustle and bustle of the traditional morning arrival time. Our yearly parent and mentoring workshops cancelled and the gardens and schoolrooms empty during Martinmas and first Sunday of advent. We had to stop inviting our non Irish parents to read a story in their own language and English to the Kindergarten group.

The lack of festivals upended a curriculum I had begun to take for granted, as the festivals which punctuate were cancelled one by one. In my setting, we consider the settling-in period to happen over months (not a couple of days of drop offs!), and so the cancelling of the family picnics we use to introduce the new families to



Kindergarten over the summer were also sorely missed.

Now that the restrictions have lifted and the festivals are back, we have invited the families into Kindergarten with relish! The family birthday celebrations (where the parents and grandparents are invited for a birthday story time) are beginning to once again play their role in instilling trust between Kindergarten staff and parents and it is really beginning to show in our interactions with the parents.

Having our families back has breathed life back into our days and we'll never take this special part of our curriculum for granted again!

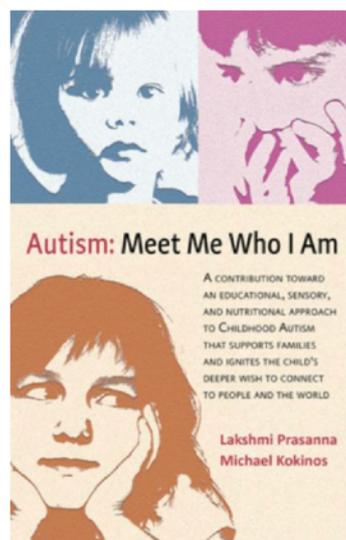
BOOK REVIEWS

Autism, Meet Me Who I Am

by Lakshmi Prasanna and Michael Kokinos,
Lindisfarne Books, US, 2018

The book, **“Autism, Meet Me Who I Am”**, promises to contribute towards being an educational, sensory, and nutritional approach. It touches our hearts when you read Lakshmi’s journey as an engaged paediatrician with a successful team working at her Clinique in Hyderabad caring for high risky pregnancy and new born babies. This city became famous for helping babies and toddlers with developmental delays.

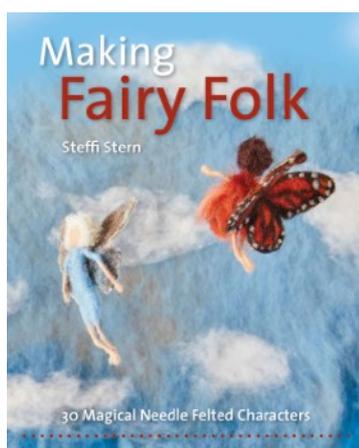
Her approach was to observe children contextually, and to look behind the diagnostic labels. Many questions arose in her. Among them were, why is the child different with different people, or in different environments; what influence does different types of food have on the child with autistic tendencies. The research adopted an unusual approach of visiting families in their homes and staying with them for a number of days, thus fully gaining an insight into how medical questions have changed into a social, pedagogical and environmental one. One big insight that comforted my empathic heart while reading was, that they were not rigid, instead they took the lead from the children and their families.



“Behaviour is language and these children are relieved when meeting a capable translator” pg 12.

These researches were done in India where Lakshmi and Michael, a physiotherapist, met and worked together by putting their heart and professional skills into their ongoing work to help families and children.

If you are interested in overcoming some “label locked thinking”, this book is a gem. I feel privileged to have heard Lakshmi and Michael speaking at a conference in Switzerland, however through reading this book and following their journey I feel even more deeply grateful to them, their teams and all the children in the world who teach us what is truly essential to us. Let’s explore what Amruth means by saying in a sentence who she truly is “A heart of unconditional and all flowing love” pg70



Making Fairy Folk by Steffi Stern

Hawthorn Press, ISBN 978-1-912480-51-7

This colourful book offers instructions for creating 30 representatives of the elemental realms of earth, water, air and fire, such as fairies and sprites, gnomes, animals and birds from wool fleece, using needle-felting techniques.

Even a beginner to needle-felting could make something really lovely following these clear and simple instructions accompanied by step by step illustrations, and full colour photographs of the finished beings. Includes a comprehensive list of materials, tools and techniques. Never a fan of needle-felting myself, I do feel inspired to have another go. I might even try to make the kingfisher!

Steffi Stern is the author of four craft books from Hawthorn Press, and is the needle felting expert on UK craft TV channels.



Good thoughts, prayers and financial support

Dear Friends of ELIANT,

The unbelievable has now happened – not only threats and demands but a military attack in the centre of Europe on a culturally rich and peace loving country. We need to look at the history of the last 30 years in order to understand what is happening. For this we strongly recommend the [video](#) by Gerald Häfner "Europe's responsibility for promoting peace". It is in German with English sub-titles.

We sincerely hope that negotiations will lead to a speedy solution. Those with friends in the Ukraine can experience directly the courage, disbelief and the will to campaign for freedom and self-determination. We can also experience how prayers, good thoughts and hope can provide strength and mutual support to people and enable them to find inner peace and confidence despite their many concerns and fears. What can we do? How can one person help? War brings uncertainty for everyone. People flee. Those who remain suffer trauma and face sirens, bombs, destitution and fear.

ELIANT has direct contact to people in Ukraine via the Waldorf schools. This means that any [donation](#)

made to Waldorf schools and emergency education initiatives for traumatised children, will get to those for whom it is intended.

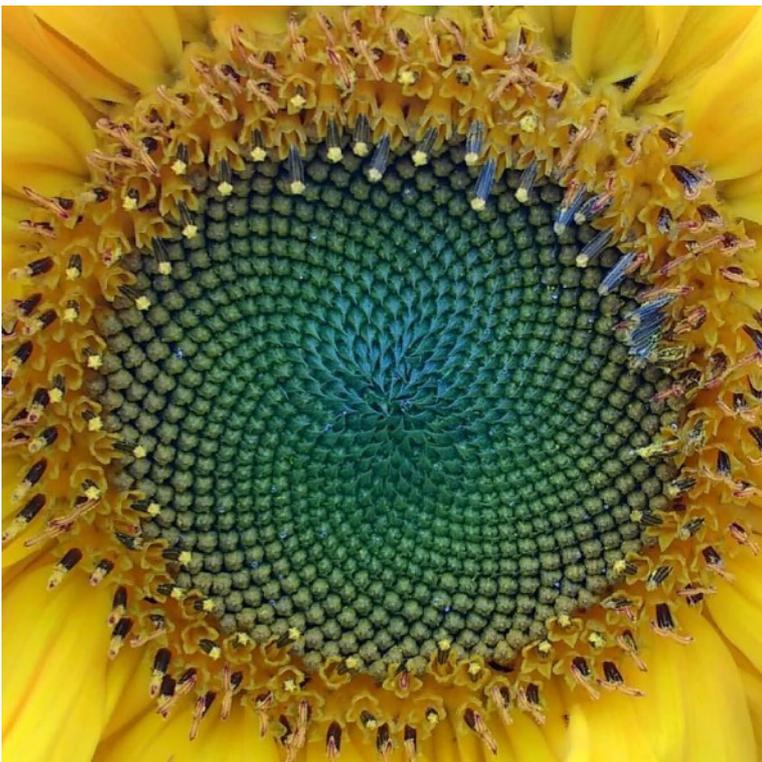
Contributions towards health care can be made [here](#) via the account of the Ukrainian Medical Association in Germany (Ukrainischen Ärztevereinigung in Deutschland e.V).

It is also very important to remember that escalation is always the result of confrontation, one-sided guilt declarations and the demonisation of the opponent. This is where prayers for peace, hope-filled thoughts and courage can help. All actions ultimately have their origins in thoughts and that is what each one of us can help bring about – a culture of peace on a small scale can bring hope globally. The archangel Michael is the guardian angel of Kiev and Ukraine – he stands for the overcoming of fear and aggression.

With a deep hope that this military escalation can be brought to an end and a positive future found for Ukraine, I send warm greetings on behalf of the whole ELIANT team

- Michaela Glöckler

ELIANT : European Alliance of Initiatives for Applied Anthroposophy www.eliant.eu



“The very first step in nonviolence is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves, truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving kindness.”

- Mahatma Ghandi

“I truly believe the only way we can create global peace is through not only educating our minds, but our hearts and our souls.”

- Malala Yousafzai

“It is my conviction that there is no way to peace - peace is the way.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

Dear friends

The suffering inflicted on innocent children and families in Ukraine is weighing on the hearts and minds of people around the world.

As UNICEF Executive Director Catherine M. Russell stated, "the past eight years of conflict have inflicted profound and lasting damage to children on both sides of the line of contact. The children of Ukraine need peace, desperately, now."

From our colleague in Odessa, we hear how the situation is worsening every day. Families are forced to leave the security of their homes and seek shelter underground or flee with their children to unknown destinations in the hope of finding a welcoming shelter in safer places. But although all schools and kindergartens are closed, this crisis is strengthening the solidarity among her Waldorf colleagues in Ukraine.

The international Waldorf movement is reaching out to our Ukrainian colleagues and families by offering three kinds of support coordinated by the Freunde der Erziehungskunst.

IASWECE is reaching out to you to ask for your help by making a donation. Knowing that our thoughts and feelings are powerful tools for change, we want to share a "Prayer for the Peace in Ukraine" written by a Ukrainian eurythmy student. (** Anne O'Reilly kindly translated this into Irish for BLÁTHÚ.)



Paidir le haghaidh Síocháin san Úcráin:

Deinim slabhra a fhí as éirí na gréine,
Slabhra cosantach,
a thabharfaidh beannacht agus barróg
do mo mhuintir,
agus a bheidh mar phaidir don chroí.

Deinim é a fhí le gach smaoinemh,
le focal croíúil,
le mothúcháin daite leis an mbogha
ceatha,
le gníomhartha áille,

Deinim é a fhí le gach cill,
le gach adamh,
an slabhra cosantach
d'Ollmháthair na Cruinne



Prayer for the Peace in Ukraine

I weave a Chain of Dawn,
I weave a Protective Chain,
That will greet and embrace my kindred,
And will be a prayer for the heart,

I weave it with every thought,
I weave it with a cheerful word,
With rainbow-coloured feelings,
With beautiful deeds,

I weave it with every cell,
I weave it with every atom,
The protective chain
For Mother Earth!

What are you doing to create peace today?

People respond to news of war, and rumours of war, in different ways.

Some go on marches, write to politicians, donate money to worthy causes, and help in practical ways, but we are not all called to such actions.

Some of us respond differently, especially when we are used to finding peace and nourishment in nature. Of course, there is room for all of these approaches, and more.

Traditional wisdom tells me that creating peace in my own heart, adds another drop of healing waters to the great lake of peace that can ripple out from my small gesture.

An Invitation:

Take yourself to somewhere beautiful today (or not so beautiful, it really doesn't matter), and ask yourself the question:

"What am I doing to create peace today?"

- Walk slowly, breathe gently and look around you. What natural materials are there for you to use, without causing harm to any living thing?
- Find a place of peace within your self, and then use these materials to create your own peace symbol on the ground.
- You might want to walk clockwise around your symbol, speaking aloud one of these verses, or another prayer or blessing from your own tradition.
- If you would like to, take a photo of your symbol, and share it with others, encouraging them to do the same.

Thank you for joining me in this gentle act.
www.ruthmarshallarts.weebly.com



May there be peace in the East,
May there be peace in the South,
May there be peace in the West,
May there be peace in the North,
May there be peace throughout the whole world.

Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you

Peace in my heart, that I may start,
to create peace in the world.



On the 14th January 2022, our dear friend and colleague, Jude Donlan, took her last gentle breath.

I was blessed to be there on the day we laid her body to rest surrounded by her family & many good friends. Her Uncle shared a story of Saint Francis of Assisi that summed up Jude's beautiful connection with nature. She had an authentic, natural, playful, vibrant, free spirit and she always saw and expressed the joy, magic and wonder in

the natural world around us. Jude was very connected to spirit, so mindful, gentle and peaceful. With her natural caring nature Jude started her working life as a nurse before she went on to work in the Burren Sonas Kindergarten and the Galway Steiner Kindergarten, from its inception and for many years. Jude worked so wholeheartedly and with such joy and humility, sharing her resources and insights with her community. She created such a magical experience for the children and the parents alike with her warmth, kindness and sense of fun. She epitomised the Steiner philosophy of nurture, rhythm, finding joy in nature, and meeting the children where they were in their development. Her commitment to the children, incredible work ethic, bright smile and love of nature permeated everything she did. She brought love, kindness, compassion and fun to the lives of all around her and had this way of gently teaching everyone, by her example. She modelled grace, wonder and reverence for the children. She will

be fondly remembered by the families whose lives she touched with her unique personality, caring ways and for gently instilling an anthroposophical ethos into their homes. She held the most beautiful safe space for so many without even knowing.

As a friend, a teacher, an earthmother, a soul sister she reminded me to reconnect with the things that really matter: our earth, our children and our own inner child. The Dalai lama said, "If you contribute to other people's happiness, you will find the true goal, the true meaning of life." I believe that Jude found this, her playful energy, sense of fun and bravery is all around us, and I am enriched by having studied, travelled, worked and danced with her. Deepest condolences to Jude's family and close friends on this loss and blessings on your journey into the stars Jude. You will be remembered in the spark you gave to so many children.

By Ziva Ellis

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Stories for Peace and Friendship

Don't we all know how a story can reach right to the heart of a matter, and touch us in a way that nothing else can?

BLÁTHÚ would like to make a collection of your **stories about friendship and peace** to support us all - adults and children alike - in these uncertain times.

Stories that nourish our souls in just the same way that a warm stew feeds the body.

Storytelling is one way of offering helpful pictures when someone feels desperate, or cannot see even the tiniest light at the end of the tunnel.

The uplifting images that a good story well told offers us can be a torch, a candle flame against the dark.

Please send your stories to Ruth at:
nc.blathu@gmail.com



KINDLING



KINDLING
The Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early
Childhood Care and Education



Issue 40 - 2021

Theme: Diversity & Inclusivity
Festivals & more

The Journal
for Steiner
Waldorf
Early
Childhood
Care and
Education

Published twice yearly in the UK, available as printed copy or PDF (for worldwide subscription) KINDLING contains themed articles (Issue 39 and 40 are both on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) songs, stories, crafts, research, health, information, book reviews, news and more...

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

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