



## The Homeschool Journey Newsletter

Christopherus Homeschool Resources  
Waldorf-inspired Parenting and Education

Hello friends,

We now have live-streaming on [our Locals group!](#) I have posted about this on the group and those who have paid the small monthly fee (\$5) can post questions for me to address. Those who are paid members can also post in the chat box during the live stream. Anyone who joins the group can watch and read. I will have two sessions devoted to this (two so that busy homeschooling parents in various timezones are more likely to be able to find a time that works!)

9pm Eastern Friday 13 August  
4pm Eastern Saturday 14 August

[Please join us!](#)

### Celebrating Family Festivals



Our topic for this month's newsletter is celebrating family festivals. The celebrating of festivals is a reason many are attracted to Waldorf. This of course can become problematic in the schools---how to celebrate festivals without offending anyone. This is a pity---one would hope that a festival from any community celebrated with heart and out of what lives deeply in those carrying it would communicate its spiritual core to all people, regardless of different faiths and cultures. But if the school community is not founded in and does not work out of anthroposophy---out of an invaluable tool for understanding the spiritual worlds---then such striving can be elusive. People are indeed put off---and that can include those with whom the spiritual tradition presumably resides.

A core foundation of anthroposophy is the understanding of how spirit is expressed both by the natural world around us and by human beings. We are deeply connected with the Cosmic rhythms of the Earth and of the spiritual worlds. Those of you struggling to find and create your own festival life in your family might do well to look first to Nature, to see what is unfolding there.

Right now, summer is upon us here in the Northern Hemisphere. In Northeastern and Midwestern US, the long hot days bring ripening in the vegetable garden. Summer flowers are at their best, the cone-flowers, goldenrod and echinacea playing host to butterflies, bees and other pollinators. Nature is abundant.

But the green of the trees already looks tired: a few more weeks and fall will be upon us. Though we are only halfway through August, there are hints here and there of red. Autumn is not so far away.



Autumn heralds the great cycle of the seasonal festivals which begins with Michaelmas. The great archangel Michael (pronounced MIKA-el who is like God) is known in many religions either as himself (in Christianity, Islam and Judaism) or as a related figure, as in Hinduism. Michaelic figures---upright, brave, and uncompromising in facing evil in all its manifestations---are to be found in all spiritual traditions.

Today, in our world staggering beneath the weight of lies, fear, division, deceit and political manipulation, we need, more than ever, the uncompromising guidance of Michael. It is he who can help us ever and again commit to the clear heart-warmed thinking and courage we need in order to stand firm as lovers of freedom and of truth. ([Click here if you would like to read and listen to my words regarding truth in last month's issue of this newsletter](#)).

For me as a Christian, Michael is a guide to Christ. Rudolf Steiner often referred to Michael as the 'countenance of Christ'. In anthroposophy, regardless of whatever religious tradition one might stand in, one can understand the Christ Being as having to do with the human 'I'. Just as the Buddha brought the capacity for compassion to humanity and Moses brought a relationship to the Law, so Christ, as a spiritual being of the Cosmos, is concerned with the free development of the human 'I'.

Some of you might need to chew over these words for a bit---and that is how it should be. This is not about just slipping an overcoat named 'anthroposophy' on. It is about how one grows in relation to the spiritual worlds in one's destiny as a human being and whether anthroposophy can be a help on that journey. [Here is a blog article I wrote which might help you as you think about this](#).



In terms of festivals, what is of vital importance is that your family festival life is grounded in the authenticity of your and your spouse's spiritual/religious life. Just as Waldorf schools in India, Israel, Japan, Egypt and China find authentic and meaningful ways to celebrate the appropriate festivals in their communities, so each Christopherus family can also strive to bring

meaningful and nurturing family traditions to their families.

#### Here is some help with that!

First of all, if you are interested in a path of Christianity which seeks to work deeply with the cycle of the seasons, here is a book for you. It is written by a priest of the [Christian Community](#), the church founded out of indications by Rudolf Steiner (my husband is a Christian Community priest)

[This book](#) is as relevant to those in the Southern Hemisphere as in the Northern Hemisphere.



Here is a verse written by another Christian Community priest (Adam Bittleston) which some of you might find helpful when contemplating the seasons and one's deep relationship to the Earth:

*Spirits of the Heights  
Have sent their messengers:  
Stones under our feet  
Upon the sustaining earth  
May we be upright.*

*Spirits of the Heights  
Have sent their messengers:  
Flowers and trees around us.  
Upon the living earth  
May our hearts waken.*

*Spirits of the Heights  
Have sent their messengers:  
Birds and beasts about us.  
Of all earth's offspring  
May we be guardians.*

*Spirits of the Heights  
Have sent their messengers:  
Light and dark, life and death.  
In all earth's changes  
Christ may we find.*

[Steinerbooks](#) carries a wide selection of festival books. Whether you are Jewish, Muslim or Christian---or struggling!--, whether you are of Caribbean, Indian or Irish heritage---or a mixture!--, there is a book in their catalog which can help you think through festivals in your family. Search *family life* for the titles.

[If you click here](#) you will find a selection of articles focused on the seasons and festivals that I have written over many years. These articles also include a few on bringing a seasonal awareness to the scheduling of one's lessons.

And I do urge you all to read the ones on Epiphany and Advent in particular, not necessarily because those are festivals you might celebrate, but because the qualities of reverence, awe and wonder which I describe are key to a nurturing festival life regardless of what one's religious tradition is.

#### Letters from fellow homeschoolers

*Each month I ask readers to submit pieces focused either on the present newsletter or the one to come (upcoming topics at the bottom of the newsletter). The following are personal submissions from fellow Christopherus homeschoolers. The first is in response to July's topic of 'truth' ([visit the Homeschool Journey archive to see that newsletter](#)) and the second is focused on this month's topic of 'festivals':*

Looking around and seeing civilization is crashing and the desperate attempt by so many "activists", "liberals", and the like is making it so much less elegant of a fall, however, a new civilization may be built now. One that is love-based, and true. If something is part true, is it true? A Question I spend some time with, and ultimately if I follow it out to the end, I find the answer is no. I know the answer is Love, I know that there is a group soul that we are all apart of and that doesn't diminish our individuality at all, I write all of this to say thank you, to say that we will build together, we are the way, the answer, and the truth. I constantly remind myself to keep my eyes on the prize and to remember I am here for a reason and that's what matters. Raising children in this time can easily break your heart a hundred times a day, but holding strong to what is absolutely needed is more important than anything and the luxury of sentiment is no longer a way I can spend energy. Thank you Donna and all your posse! Peace be with us all.

T. E.

AND

Festivals are such an important part of our family life and now our community life, too, as we began sharing them with friends and family over the years. My dearest memories are from these festivals -- children lighting their apple candles and adding them to the advent spiral in the forest or moving Mary along her Star path each evening; flying kites on mountain tops for Michaelmas; lantern walks and puppet shows on Martinmas; tossing our May Day flowers and crowns into the river and watching them float away....

We have been celebrating and shaping our own festivals for 12 years now and each year it gets richer and richer. This year, we came together with extended family to celebrate Candlemas. When I told my cousin that we often like to make earth candles, melting down our advent candle stubs, she offered that the easiest place to dig holes in the frozen soil would be under the row cover where she had left carrots to winter over. We decided to harvest the carrots while we were at it, which was such a joy in the middle of winter to brush away the snow, peel back the covers and see their green tops against the dark soil then pull up their vibrant orange flesh. When we saw the holes from the harvested carrots, the children and adults all had the same thought: pour the wax into the carrot holes! We did and then went inside for soup, music, and recitations while they hardened. We came back outside to "harvest" the carrot candles under the stars, lighting them for a moment first and feeling the connection between the magical memories of Advent and the joyful anticipation of the coming Spring. Lighting those lumpy, carrot-shaped candles with the dirt still clinging to them at our dinner table through the rest of the cold months buoyed our spirits in such a profound way.

Festivals for me are about this connection -- connection between the seasons and celebrations; connections between the earth and the spirit; between each other. As a family, we tell time by the festivals and our understanding of time itself is rich because of them.

Janis Craft



Thank you to those able to pay 'break even' and 'supporting' levels for your Christopherus materials. This in turn enables us to offer a low income option for those in need. This is of course still a high price for some folks: anyone who wishes to [make a donation to help their fellow homeschoolers](#) pay for their Christopherus curriculum is urged to donate here. 100% of monies donated will be split between those requesting assistance. We give many thanks to those of you who have already made a donation.

We are in the process of switching over to eco non-plastic packaging instead of the seriously worrying plastics we have been using (anyone else notice that awareness of not using plastic was one of the first things to go out the window during pandemic-time?). This switch will take a little while as we need to first use up our stocks of plastic packaging.



My life's work, whether as a youth worker, teacher, parent educator or writer of curriculum, has always been focused on the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health of children. To not condemn the use of masks and anti-social distancing for children would be a gross act of treason against my own conscience. Look at this photo and weep.

All feedback on this issue and for the upcoming topics welcome!

September---tests and testing  
October---raising bi- and multi-lingual children  
November---the therapeutic aspects of Christopherus/Waldorf

Til September,  
Blessings on your homeschool journey!  
Donna